

Dumbing Down or Reaching Out? Facebook in Kurdistan and Nasser Razazi

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ABSTRACT

There has been much debate on how Web 2 technologies and social media have contributed in empowering the disempowered. Over the last decade, Kurdish people have widely used social media as means against external and internal threats. As such, many have begun speculating that social media have provided a platform for doing the unthinkable, namely, creating a harmonious, integrated and independent Kurdistan. Yet, there are alternative perspectives which although acknowledge the emancipatory benefits of social media and Web 2 technologies, are cautious that popularization of debates may marginalize the authentic and more sophisticated leaders of thoughts.

After giving insights on how Facebook has been received among Kurds, this paper will study different trajectories of online debate in the case of Nasser Razazi's recent assertions. In these assertions, Razazi who is an iconic Kurdish singer and former member of a Kurdish rebel group in Iran, had criticized Kurdish parties and said he no longer favored independence from Iran. As a result, thousands of Facebook users of Kurdish background participated in online debates on his position. Here, I conducted a mixed method study on a sample of 217 comments by users on some pages and posts regarding Razazi's recent assertions and showed how Facebook debates in Kurdistan might contribute to a "dumbing down" process, or, help Kurdish people to build a working civil society.

Keywords: Dumbing Down; Kurdish Culture; Nasser Razazi; Social Network

Introduction

The new communication facilities and particularly Web2 technologies have made it possible for a majority of people to participate in online global debates. It seems that scattered voices in all parts of the world –and in Kurdistan in the Middle East- are no longer suffocated in silence and in this new global arena, we can have everyone expressing his or her opinion on key issues. Of course, Web2 technologies have done many good things to us, but we should not neglect the dark side.

Contrary to what is known as the information and communications revolution, and particularly the Internet, promises to revitalise democracy and promoting public sphere, the new technologies are seen by some as destroying the pillars of the fourth estate (Williams, 2003). The phrase “dumbing down” is used to explain this process and can suggest that the culture being supplied less sophisticated or complicated or tasteful, or thoughtful, or statusful than a past one, but it is also used to refer to the public or audience being served, who are thought to have declined in taste, intelligence, and status (Gans, 1999, p. 80).

For some commentators, while there may be more information available, the quality of this information as well as general awareness is declining. This is a threat to democracy. Public ignorance and apathy is growing as the serious, challenging and truthful is being pushed aside by the trivial, sensational, vulgar and manipulated (Williams, 2003, p. 230). In the pessimistic but not so much unrealistic words of Neil postman (2013, p. 14):

As things stand now, the geniuses of computer technology will give us Star Wars, and tell us that is the answer to nuclear war. They will give us artificial intelligence, and tell us that this is the way to self-knowledge. They will give us instantaneous global communication, and tell us this is the way to mutual understanding. They will give us Virtual Reality and tell us this is the answer to spiritual poverty. But that is only the way of the technician, the fact-monger, the information junkie, and the technological idiot.

The media’s drive towards a market orientation has led the coverage of politics to emphasize personality, scandal and soap opera-style aspects of political life. This in turn has led political campaigners to attempt to adapt their media products, pseudo-events and promotional activity to the news values and frames. They try to capture the news through the use of dramatic rhetoric, carefully constructed short clips of speech or music, and stunts; what is not released, as it is not interesting to the media, is the political detail (Lilleker, 2006). This process can further exacerbate as the social web is taking us into a network of citizens whose

tastes have been dumbed down by the media. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that we have entered a new and even more revolutionary phase in the development of the Net as a global communications platform; a phase characterized by information pull rather than push, user-generated content, openness, sharing, collaboration, interaction, communities, and social networking. New generation Web-based communities and hosted applications, such as social-networking and social-content websites, blogs, wikis, mash ups, RSS feeds, podcasts and vodcasts, virtual realities, and mobile applications (Tagg, Stevenson, & Vescovi, 2012) are beginning to have a major impact on our lives. Facebook can become a platform on which everyone can share and raise his or her voice, but, this voice may be lost among many more voices who speak without responsibility or only joined Facebook to have great times. This is more or less a phenomenon that can be seen everywhere in Facebook.

In this study, I am going to see if Facebook in a geographical region known as “Kurdistan” has provided a platform for a serious and challenging. My case is the debate on Nasser Razazi’s recent assertions. I have taken a mixed method approach to see if in our case Facebook has acted as an agent of reaching out or it has simply contributed in dumbing down the Kurdish public. But, before that, let us have an overview on the context we are going to study.

Facebook in Kurdistan

Kurdistan is a region in the Middle East and is consisted of four parts in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. It is estimated that there are about 28-30 million Kurds either living in Kurdistan or other countries as diaspora. Kurds have generally great sense of identity and hence, for many decades the region has witnessed many uprisings by Kurds, which until recently had not culminated in a concrete gain. With the empowerment of the Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey’s conclusion that suppression only exacerbates the situation, and global empathy with Kurds as opposed to ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Kurdistan is taking steps towards change.

The armed conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish insurgent organization, the PKK (Partiye Karkerên Kurdistan), has been one of the longest lasting internal wars in the contemporary world. The PKK, founded in the late 1970s, initiated guerrilla warfare against the Turkish state in 1984. It remains an active military force with substantial popular support among the Kurds of Turkey after three decades (Tezcür, 2014). PKK is listed as a terrorist organization for many countries and its head Abdullah Öcalan was arrested in 1998 and sentenced to death by Turkey’s government (The sentence then commuted to life imprisonment).

Democratic Union Party (PYD), which has close ties to the PKK, took charge of a broad zone stretching from Ras al- ‘Ain on the Euphrates River to the Iraqi border. Clashes between the armed wing of the PYD, the Popular Protection Units (YPG), and various opposition militias became more numerous and intense during the winter of 2012-13 (Lawson, 2014).

Like other cultures, the Facebook sphere of Kurdistan is supposed to more or less reflect the issues in the real world, although here –like other regions of the world– entertainment has the upper hand. Yet, a review can show that Facebook in Kurdistan is generally more “serious” when compared to other neighboring regions. This seriousness was augmented when ISIS posed an existential threat to Kurdish civilians in Iraq and Syria. At this point, social networks and particularly Facebook started a more important role for Kurdish people.

The official Facebook page of former US President Barack Obama has received more than ten thousand comments by Kurds calling for US support to stop the terrors of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and to rescue the Syrian Kurdish border town Kobane. The posts were a symbolic act aimed at pressuring the US Government to play a leading role in the fight against ISIS (UNPO, 2014).

The YPG’s battle against ISIS has allowed it to spread its messages about Kurdish independence to a Western audience. This is apparent from the final piece of advice offered to potential YPG fighters on Facebook. If joining the YPG is not for them, the advice says, Westerners can still help the Kurds by expressing solidarity with the Kurdish cause (Radio Free Europe, 2013).

Fighters in the Syrian Kurdistan have developed a page named “Lions of Rojava” to recruit foreign fighters to battle ISIS. As in mid-2019, the page liked by more than 46,000 users and has many depictions of foreign fighters from North America and Western Europe fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Kurdish Peshmargh.

Matson, a recruiter for Kurdish fighters, told CNN in an interview “I’ve had ex-military come from Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Canada, the United States, and Australia” (Oaten & La Canna, 2014). In 2014, Brian Wilson, a 43-year-old Desert Storm veteran from Ohio, was one of the few Americans who traveled to Syria to help the YPG (Warren, 2014). Two British soldiers named Jamie Read and James Hughes travelled to Kurdistan and took up arms against ISIS. They spent a little over three weeks on the front line. Jamie Read and James Hughes met American Jordan Matson, who as I said, was a recruiter for Lions of Rojava. Matson was himself active and has been wounded once (Townsend, 2014).

Yet, Facebook has not been totally friendly with Kurds. I mentioned that PKK is a popular party in Kurdistan, but, it is known and listed as a terrorist organization. Therefore, Facebook is strictly sensitive not letting people to promote PKK on this platform. Other Kurdish organizations have also been subject of Facebook tough measures. The Peace and Democracy Party was a Kurdish political party in the Republic of Turkey. Only days after closing down the Peace and Democracy Party’s (BDP) Istanbul provincial branch’s page on Oct. 24, 2013, Facebook closed the BDP headquarters’ page due to the use of the word “Kurdistan.” The party announced the shutdown, accusing Facebook of increasing censorship,

which it said is a result of the company's constant cooperation with the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013).

Facebook's director of Facebook Policy in Europe, Richard Allen, has admitted that the popular social networking site actively bans pages belonging to Kurdish politicians or groups that allegedly praise the PKK. Allan said it was forbidden for users to praise or use the logos of organizations listed as illegal by the European Union and the United States including the PKK (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013).

Facebook also actively bans contents against Kemal Atatürk (Rivlin, 2013). Atatürk is the founder of modern Turkey and the leader who is generally hated in Turkish Kurdistan because of the brutal suppression of the Kurds in the first half of the 20th century. Atatürk also tried much to eliminate Persian words in traditional Ottoman language and Persian and Kurdish languages have many common words.

This short introduction shows how Facebook is politically important in Kurdistan. Yet, that does not mean that Facebook's uses in Kurdistan are substantially different from other parts of the worlds. Here again we see how on Facebook in Kurdistan celebrities and entertainment media attract more people than serious politics do.

Table 1 Some of the most popular Kurdish pages on Facebook (numbers of likes are in thousands; courtesy of Rozhan Sayfur, MA student in Communication at University of Tehran, Iran and Shirin Mohmmad, BA student in Kurdish Literature at Garmian University, Iraq).

Helly Luv	Musician/Band	1155	AHOOL	Company	225
Xendan	News/Media Website	1152	KurdMAX TV Entertainment Channel	TV Channel	224
Mansour barzani	Politician	1121	Dang Show	Musician/Band	220
Masoud Barzani	Politician	979	Qubad Talabani	Politician	198
Kishey Computer	Computers/Internet Website	794	Ranj Sangawi	Writer	196
Rudaw	Broadcasting & Media Production	730	Tahsin taha	Musician/Band	186
Naser Barzani	Public Figure	719	Kurd Muzic	Broadcasting & Media Production	146
Dashni Morad	Musician/Band	700	Halkawt Zahir	Musician/Band	145
Masroure Barzani	Politician	609	Kurdistan Democratic Party	Political Party	144

Kurdsat Broadcasting Corporation	Broadcasting & Media Production	543	Jalal Talabani	Politician	132
Evin Aso Fan Page	Public Figure	455	Kurd	Interest	132
Kurdistan TV	Organization	397	Kurdistan	Landmark	119
Mazhar Khaleghi	Musician/Band	265	Standard Kurd	Media/News/Publishing	109

As we can see in the above table, even in the highly politicized region of Kurdistan in which politics relates to every aspect of daily life, entertainment overwhelms serious debate. Getting back to my objective, I am taking the case of Nasser Razazi to see how debate is represented as regards to his recent assertions on Kurds being cousins of Iranians.

Nasser Razazi is at the same time a popular singer and a former member of Komalah, a leftist Kurdish rebel group who fought against the Iranian central government for decades. But, recently Razazi has made assertions on the Iranians and refused to say he is still willing separation of Kurdistan from Iran. He said he was an Iranian but the Iranian Kurds have rights which must be regarded by the Iranian regime. These assertions were not so much appealing for some Kurdish activists who aspired an independent and united country of Kurdistan.

Methodology

My main aim in this article was to explore if the debate over Razazi’s recent assertions can lead either to dumbing down or reaching out. There are currently two Facebook pages with the name of Razazi but they actively delete unfavourable posts and comments and hence, I decided not to use the material on these two pages. Instead, I reached for pages in which all the messages –including impolite ones- were left undeleted. I collected 217 comments with their “likes” and “replies.” There were 185 men, 18 women and 14 users with unknown gender in my sample. I then started to categorize the content according to their themes and positions. I gave a numeric code to each category and this helped me to do quantitative statistical operations using IBM SPSS. Therefore, this study is a mixed method analysis comprising of a qualitative and a quantitative phase. This approach will help us to find out if our categories found in the first section have any significant relationship with our variables in the quantitative phase.

Findings

I found 6 main themes in my material. As we see in table 2, about 30 percent of the comments were argumentative while 60 percent of the comments were emotional. Overall, about 73 percent of the respondents expressed support for Razazi and only 18 percent opposed his recent comments.

Table 2 Six main categories and their frequencies

	Frequency	Percent
Argumentative (pro)	47	21.7
Argumentative (con)	14	6.5
Emotional (pro)	111	51.2
Emotional (con)	25	11.5
Abuse	15	6.9
Tagging someone else	5	2.3
Total	217	100.0

As I said earlier, the codification of the categories I drawn from my material helped me to seek if there was any significant relationship between variables. I only found two significant relationships. There was a strong relationship between gender and number of likes a post can attract ($\chi^2= 44.969$, $P<0.001$ and Cramer's $V= 0.323$, $P<0.001$). The debate was something based on logic and it had nothing to do with gender. But the fact that female respondents got more likes can show that "debate" was not the only concern of Kurdish users of Facebook and there was a powerful sexist atmosphere here (and this is a widespread feature of social networks everywhere that young women get more attention).

Also, I found that different categories of comments had different percentages of likes by users. I said I categorized comments into 6 main categories. Crosstabulation test showed there was a strong relationship between category of comment and number of likes ($\chi^2= 62.443$, $p<0.05$ and Cramer's $V= 0.24$, $p<0.05$). I discuss more about it when I present my findings on each category.

Argumentative (pro)

I could not find any significant relationship between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of replies and comments in this category. Instead, I found a strong and significant relationship between this category and

number of “likes” ($\chi^2 = 29.382$, $p < 0.005$ and Cramer’s $V = 0.368$, $p < 0.005$). Examples include (the last column represents the number of “likes” a comment got):

Foad	Man	Does this insults have slightest connection to our culture? Only a small minority –and not our whole society- insult Razazi.	3
Taher	Man	Only followers of parties insult Razazi. They do it because parties only want to be accepted and venerated and they do not want to diffuse the culture of criticism.	5
Majid	Man	Not all of our passions are due to our enemies.	4
Naser	Man	Attitudes of Razazi are true and that’s why Kurdish parties are biting him.	6
Erfan	Man	Iranian and French revolutions were based on the art but Kurdish parties failed to recognize this and they damage and delimit art.	3
Kardo	Man	Nasser Razazi has a long record of fight and this entitles him to express his opinion on political issues.	4
Ali	Man	For the last several days I have fought this way of thinking. Does it mean Nasser Razazi who have actuated three generations of the people of Kurdistan with his patriotic songs has no right to criticize? What do you have to say about our political leaders who have distanced from our aspirations and no one criticize them?	4
Reza	Man	Yes, unfortunately in our society only the one who is dead is revered.	4
Sarhad	Man	Yes, artists in Kurdistan can express their opinions but as it seems that obvious mistakes of the Kurdish politicians must remained concealed, it is better for some that Razazi dies!	2
Fardin	Man	I doubt that we can call these political factions parties, because a party has a particular definition. Conversely, as these groups used to have popular support, they still think they are representing people and hence, they claim they are owners of martyr’s legacy.	4
Shahla	Woman	Those who talk of “art for art’s sake” are still unaware of the duty of the art. The art has no meaning per se. The duty of art, poetry, theater etc. is to use constructive criticism and contribute in enhancing the pleasance of life and develop humanity. If we delimit the art to the idea of “art for	7

art's sake," it will soon become converted to market concepts. Like everybody, Nasser Razazi has right to express his opinion as others have right to criticize him. No party in this environment has the right to denounce or abuse the other. Both sides in this arguments are Kurds and are from one land. This kind of talking will get us nowhere and will leave us with shame. Let's develop capacity to tolerate criticism. I am sorry for the current situation. We can possibly not be agreeing with Nasser's opinions but this does not mean he has no right to freedom and expression.

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| Zeinab | Woman | Nasser Razazi is under a cowardly and inhuman attack. I think this people would even defy his right to life, if they can. I cannot understand what is their objective in all these attacks and invectives, because, unlike Peshmargeh parties, Nasser has no financial resources. Why these people are so worried about Nasser? | 7 |
| Niaz | Man | Like other groups of the society, artists have right to express their opinions. They have more fine feelings and hence, they can better understand people's pain. Moreover, the idea of "art for the sake of art" is wrong as arts are for humans. The art which exists for the sake of art will be short-lived, but, when the art enjoys a human approach, it will live forever. Nasser belongs to the latter approach and he is a Kurd first, and an artist secondly. He was a peshmargeh, before becoming a prominent artist. Therefore, the humanist art of Razazi cannot remain silent on developments and events. | 6 |
| Shwan | Man | Our main problem is that 90 percent of political activists have no proper understanding of politics. | 1 |
| Ahmad | Man | People have right to accept or reject any political thought. Razazi has served the people as a freedom fighter peshmargeh. Artistic fame of Razazi cannot stop him from intervening in politics. Artists like other people have right to have political expressions. Those who think artists should be away from the realm of the politics, are not well informed. | 1 |

Roya	Woman	If your ideas come to be in conflict with those who are in power, even if it happened only once, they will put you under heaviest pressures until you withdraw.	4
Jamal	Man	I am not agree with all of what Razazi says, but the history has shown us that musicians like Farabi and Roodaki were at the same time experts in linguistics, philosophy and mysticism.	0
Amin	Man	Razazi is Victor Jara of Kurdistan. Those who say artists should not intervene in politics have no sense of what politics is. Politics extends to our most private aspects of our life, namely, to our bedroom. How is that possible that one has not any political ideas?	2
Abdollah	Man	The problem is not limited to what they did to Nasser Razazi; the main problem is that in Kurdistan there is no toleration of freedom of speech and criticism.	1
Yusef	Man	My friends! In our society there are many groups and different ideas. Those who attack Razazi are representing a small minority and perhaps even Razazi himself has no idea of what they say.	1
Sirvan	Man	Some of our friends has misinterpreted this post. The writer of this post is defending Razazi's right to freedom of expression.	0
Adnan	Man	In our dead worshiping society, only the dead are venerated. That's why we make artists legends, only after they die. I am quite sure those who denounce Razazi today, will praise him after his death.	0

Argumentative (con)

I could not find any significant relationship between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of replies and comments in this category. I found no significant relationship between this category and number of "likes."

Examples include:

Farshad	Man	In my opinion if somebody insults another person, he or she should expect to be insulted. In the most ideal condition, we can perceive that Razazi has made a criticism, so, it is quite natural that he will be criticized	2
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by others. A democratic man must remain silent when two parties are criticizing each other. Right or wrong, Nasser is criticizing a political group and those members of such political groups have right to criticize him back. We cannot assume freedom of expression for Nasser and withhold the same right from others.

Sabah	Man	It is better for Nasser Razazi to forget politics and only talk about the art.	2
Nashmil	Woman	Nasser has to understand the borders of politics and art. Nasser’s popularity is due to his art, and not his political thoughts.	7
Kamran	Man	We love Nasser and we also criticize him. But, we do not let others to attack him. Like blacks who call themselves negro but do not let white people to call them so.	0
Shahrok h	Man	I agree that everyone in the society can be a political activist. But, political activism needs minimum prerequisites and this is a mistake that we enter the realm of politics without proper knowledge of it.	3
Ehsan	Man	In my opinion at the current situation it is wrong to act without circumspection. The current situation needs more responsible treatment.	4
Younes	Man	I acknowledge that everybody can express his opinion in politics. Therefore, Nasser also has right to have political expressions. But, the problem is that Nasser’s position on issues are not stable and he frequently changes his positions.	0
Hiva	Man	Nasser is a great musician but I doubt his views make sense in politics.	5
Borhan	Man	Nowadays everybody knows that politics is a distinct knowledge. Nasser should not enter this realm without proper knowledge.	3

Emotional (pro)

I could not find any significant relationship between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of replies and comments in this category. Instead, I found a strong and significant relationship between this category and number of “likes” ($\chi^2 = 29.382$, $p < 0.05$ and Cramer’s $V = 0.314$, $p < 0.05$). Examples include:

Bijan	Man	I totally agree. Long live!	2
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Hiva	Man	Thank you Sir.	2
Rizan	Woman	I do agree and I am sorry for abusers.	3
Baran	Woman	I do agree. You said the most important point.	2
Shirzad	Man	Bravo! Death to your opponents.	3
Ahmad	Man	This was the best analysis of the year.	5
Shahla	Woman	Nice analysis. Thank you.	2
Alian	Man	Shame on Razazi's enemies. He has dedicated his whole life to Kurdistan and no one has right to insult him.	6
Rahman	Man	The truth is bitter.	3
Shahoo	Man	Peace be upon you.	2
Bahar	Man	May pains of Nasser Razazi transfer to the body of his enemies!	5
Sooran	Man	We the Kurds are destroyers of our castles.	5
Obeid	Man	Your points are right.	2
Delshad	Man	Razazi is a great freedom fighter.	1
Sara	Woman	I thank you.	2
Amir	Man	Congrats and I do agree with you.	1
Chenoor	Man	Weldone.	1
Salah	Man	Razazi has dedicated his and his family's lives to defending his cause. He alone has done as much as all Kurdish parties did. We all owe him.	5
Atoosa	Man	This is the best analysis. Viva!	1
Faroogh	Man	Of course it is right.	1
Borhan	Man	What Nasser Razazi said is the view of all the people of the Iranian Kurdistan.	3
Baran	Man	I am for you on this.	1

Emotional (con)

I could not find any significant relationship between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of replies and comments in this category. I found no significant relationship between this category and number of "likes."

Examples include:

Fazel	Man	We have two great Razazis. The first great man is immune to people's criticism of the second great man. Some defend the first great man. The first man is a legend and although the second great man is biologically alive, in reality, he is dead in the hearts and minds of people.	2
Mohammad	Man	We are an underdog nation who got nothing and are surrounded by our enemies. This was not a proper time for what he said.	1
Zana	Man	Nasser Razazi must only sing and write songs. He should not do anything else. He is destroying his fame.	1
Faroogh	Man	Nasser has confused hedonism with freedom fighting.	1
Rebvar	Man	What is this stupidity?	2
Ali	Man	Nasser has greatly damaged his reputation.	2
Kami	Man	Have you heard the proverb that says the baker should work with bread and the butcher works with meat? Nasser why don't you take this proverb seriously? I am still confused about your profession; are you a poet, a politician, or a singer?	1
Shahriar	Man	Nasser Razazi has damaged his own fame. He peeps everywhere.	0
Seyed Hassan	Man	Everyone should express his opinion in his field of profession. I don't know music, so I do not allow myself to go to TV and teach people music. The only problem and misfortune of Dr. Ghasemlou was his Kurdish nationality.	1
Arsalan	Man	Even our enemies cannot insult our martyrs as good as Razazi does.	1
Halmat	Man	No one among you has seen Razazi's interview. We are not saying he has no right to speak. But, he should speak positively, instead of insulting us. People have always loved Razazi, so he should not bite the hands that feed him and act cowardly.	2
Mina	Woman	Nasser should remain silent where he has no knowledge.	0
Karim	Man	Bread for baker and meat for butcher!	0
As'ad	Man	Razazi should think before starting to speak.	0
Ghader	Man	Shame on Razazi who insults martyred leaders.	4

Soheila	Woman	Don't take Razazi's words seriously.	3
Ata	Man	Nasser has betrayed the legacy of our martyrs.	5
Mostafa	Man	After the death of his wife, Razazi has spattered himself.	3
Khaled	Man	Nasser used to be my idol, but he has no value for me now.	4
Sirvan	Man	Artist Nasser, yes; political Nasser, no.	9

Abuse

I could not find any significant relationship between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of likes and comments in this category. Instead, I found strong and significant relationship between this category and number of replies ($\chi^2 = 30.754$, $p < 0.001$ and Cramer's $V = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$). And, I am not intended to present some examples in this category!

Tagging Somebody Else

Some people tagged a friend in order to invite him or her to either join the conversation or become informed about it. I could not find any significant relationships between gender and this category. Also, I could not find any significant relationship between number of replies and comments in this category. I found no significant relationship between this category and number of "likes."

Discussion and Conclusion

One important factor in helping societies developing a better life is promotion and preservation of "debate" in the public arenas. Yet, the rise of entertainment industry in our contemporary societies has contributed in declining public tastes in a process which is called "dumbing down." Advent of Web 2 technologies paradoxically has helped both processes. Facebook has provided a platform for expressing opinions and thoughts without many political, geographical, societal and technological barriers that existed before. Nevertheless, Facebook has given voice to masses who are by nature less sophisticated about problems in complicated environment around us. Therefore, masses can easily impose their priorities on pop culture on elites as both of them enjoy more or less equal place on Facebook's platform.

One other finding of this study is pervasive sexism on Facebook. Other studies (see for example (Mabe, Forney, & Keel, 2014; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013; Wang, Burke, & Kraut, 2013)) have already shown women are more likely to be “liked” on Facebook. Our study also revealed that although discussions on Razazi’s Iranophile assertions is a very serious matter, the “sex” has proven an important factor in determining if one’s opinion will be endorsed by others. Also, the very fact that only one tenth of those who were participating in these discussions are women, shows that –in this case- women in Kurdistan are still behind men in engaging in public discussions on key issues.

We saw in this study that about 7 percent of comments are verbal abuse either to Razazi himself or to other participants. This is not much but a little rise in number of these comments will have a very negative effect. People who are well educated and are supposed to provide useful insights are generally less comfortable with engaging in such spheres and hence abuse in comments will push elites aside and makes forum a platform for violence and hate. And finally, despite all the above problems, we should not underestimate the power that Facebook has given to the oppressed. Historically, Kurds have been much under pressure from many forces in the region or even global powers. Until recently, Kurds were experiencing chemical attacks, massacres and defamation. So, they will not simply denounce Facebook because fun pages have more likes than serious pages.

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