National Report

Tunisia

Feminist Narratives and Gender Representation in Media and Popular Culture

Discourse Analysis, Dominant Narratives, and Representational Gaps

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Executive Overview:

Media in Tunisia serves as a mirror reflecting societal contradictions, where competing discourses regarding the identity of women and men collide. While official outlets promote Tunisia's image as a "pioneering state" in women's rights citing a 68% favorable representation according to reports by *I-Watch* (2021) independent media reveals in 74% of its content a significant gap between this image and the daily reality of Tunisian women, as confirmed by *The Carter Center* (2023).

In this complex landscape, the female body emerges as a battleground, occupying space in 62% of media content according to the *Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation* (2023). This representation is not merely incidental imagery but reflects a deeper conflict between opposing societal currents.

This shift is not limited to female imagery; the representation of masculinity is also undergoing a clear crisis. Recent studies have recorded a 23% increase in feelings of anxiety among young males, as noted by the *Atlantic Council* (2025), signaling deep transformations in gender roles.

Behind these figures lie glaring representational gaps. The "ordinary woman" is absent from 81% of media coverage, while rural women are marginalized in 85% of programs, according to statistics from the *National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists* (March 2023). Furthermore, reformist discourse remains absent in 73% of content, reflecting the media's inability to propose comprehensive developmental visions.

In the face of these challenges, the potential for change emerges through digital platforms, where youth contribute to 42% of alternative narratives, as indicated by reports from the *Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation* (2023). This new dynamic demonstrates that the media landscape in Tunisia, despite its complexities, remains a vibrant space for reshaping social perceptions.

Introduction: Methodological Framework and Research Purpose:

This report aims to provide national teams and researchers with a unified, practical analytical framework for monitoring and analyzing gender representation in Tunisian media. The research seeks to produce systematic and comparative knowledge on a regional level while maintaining sensitivity to the Tunisian national context and its specificities. The goal is not to measure the "impact" of media on the audience, but rather to map the patterns observable in media production, discourse, and representational gaps regarding gender and feminist issues.

This study proceeds from the hypothesis that gender discourse in Tunisia is not a monolithic block, but a mosaic of intersecting and conflicting narratives reflecting deep societal divisions. This conflict reveals a symbolic battle between competing narratives:

- **The Official Narrative (Narrative of Achievement):** Focuses on legal progress and the state's history of "liberating women," presenting Tunisia as an "exception" in the region.
- **Counter-Narratives (Narratives of Crisis):** Arising in independent media, artistic works, and civil society, these focus on the massive gap between legal texts and lived reality, exposing the persistence of patriarchal structures and structural violence.

This conflict is not merely a difference of opinion; it is a reflection of a broader battle over national identity, the role of religion in the public sphere, and the meaning of social progress in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

To achieve the research objectives, a **Content Analysis** methodology was adopted, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches through three main stages:

1. **Stage One: Mapping Media Platforms:** Identifying and classifying the most influential media platforms in Tunisia based on reach, target audience, and significance in shaping gender discourse (Television, Print/Digital Media, Advertising, Music, and Social Media).
2. **Stage Two: Monitoring and Analyzing Content Samples:** Selecting and documenting approximately 70 diverse samples (episodes, articles, songs, etc.) using a standardized monitoring form covering metadata, key themes, tone, framing, and selection justifications.
3. **Stage Three: Data Analysis and Reporting:** Analyzing collected content according to specific indicators: how gender narratives are represented, use of stereotypes, representation of victims/perpetrators, and language used.

1. Identification of Influential Media Platforms:

Understanding how gender narratives are formed requires identifying the channels through which they flow. The selected platforms constitute an integrated **ecosystem** where diverse discourses interact, from popular entertainment to academic critique.

Television and Cinema:

Despite the radical shifts caused by the rise of digital media, television and cinema remain central to shaping collective consciousness. Television, especially during Ramadan, acts as a shared space that unifies the daily experience of Tunisians. Channels like *El Hiwar Ettounsi*, *Attessia*, and *Watania* serve as the backbone of the television landscape, attracting the largest segment of viewers. Cinema, while relatively elitist, remains a field for deep experimentation and deconstruction of cultural and political structures.

The Digital Space

The digital sphere in Tunisia is highly vibrant and influential, with internet usage reaching approximately 7.25 million users (about 59% of the total population).

- **Facebook:** The dominant platform, reaching nearly 8 million users and 82% of adults (18+), making it a primary channel for public discourse.

- **Instagram and TikTok:** Target youth demographics, playing a central role in shaping the attitudes of the new generation. Instagram (3.5 million users) focuses on lifestyle/fashion, while TikTok (5.2 million users, with two-thirds aged 13-24) is a central tool for reaching adolescents.
- **YouTube:** Used by approximately 7 million users, it serves as a primary channel for educational, entertainment, and news-related audiovisual content.

2. Television Drama and Critical Cinema:

2.1.Television Drama:

Studies of modern Tunisian series, such as *Nuba* and *Raqouj*, show that drama has moved beyond superficial or purely comedic narratives. *Nuba* marked a turning point in reading symbolic violence and social stigmatization, particularly that directed at the female body. Here, the female body is no longer just a biological entity or an aesthetic element; it has transformed into a site of struggle.

Symbolic Conflict:

Through this conflict, contradictory messages are conveyed: on one hand, violence is exercised upon it as a means of control, while on the other, it appears as a tool of resistance and a symbol of liberation.

Critical Cinema:

Contemporary Tunisian cinema has demonstrated, through prominent works, a remarkable capacity for profound social and institutional critique. The film *Noura Dreams* (Noura Tahlam), for instance, did not attack individual characters so much as it exposed the hypocrisy of the legal system through Article 236 of the Penal Code. Through the story of a woman facing the restrictions of both law and society, the film bared the stark contradiction between legal texts and lived reality, making it not only an artistic discourse but also a protest document against the legislative structure itself.

In the same context, the film *Porto Farina* offered a satirical yet deep reading of the "economics of the female body" within the traditional marriage system. Through dark comedy, the film was able to deconstruct the relationship between honor, money, and the body, revealing how a woman is transformed into a subject of economic negotiation rather than a free agent.

Although the audience for these cinematic works may be limited in number, their value lies in their ability to spark heated debates in festivals, seminars, and critical articles, which quickly permeate the broader public sphere,whether through media discussions or the circulation of excerpts and insights on social media. Thus, the impact of cinema becomes qualitative rather than quantitative.

The strength of television and cinema lies in the fact that they do not merely provide fleeting images but create collective experiences that transcend the moment of viewing to become a subject of ongoing discussion. Ramadan dramas, for example, establish dialogues in cafés and among family members about the behaviors and attitudes of characters, reflecting drama's ability to drive the audience toward critical thinking, even if subconsciously.

It is clear, then, that television and cinema in Tunisia remain decisive spaces for shaping gendered narratives. While television, through Ramadan dramas, reproduces debates in a popular and mass-market fashion, critical cinema plays a deeper role in questioning legal and social structures, even if its impact is indirect. In both cases, these two media open the way for questioning stereotypes, building alternative worlds, and fostering discussion around gender in a way that makes it part of the daily and cultural dynamics of Tunisian society.

2.2. News and Digital Platforms

These platforms are the "think tank" of public discourse. They frame issues, provide analyses, and influence policymakers, activists, and intellectuals, who in turn influence public opinion.

Evidence and Examples:

- **Economic Media (*Business News*):** Chosen because it represents a non-traditional entry point to the issue. By linking gender equality to economic growth and development, it provides "pragmatic legitimacy" to feminist demands and addresses a segment of the elite that might not be swayed by traditional human rights discourse.
- **Critical Cultural Media (*Kapitalis*):** Its importance lies in its ability to connect cultural phenomena with social structures. When it analyzes the concept of "toxic masculinity," it expands the understanding of violence from a mere physical act to a comprehensive cultural system, thereby raising the level of the debate.
- **Field Journalism (*Hakaek Online*):** Its role is vital in resisting the "normalization" of violence. In a media world seeking sensationalism, the daily and continuous monitoring of "ordinary" cases of violence is a political act in itself, because it screams that the "normal" is not natural, but a persistent catastrophe.

2.3.Digital Popular Culture (Music and Podcasts)

YouTube and podcasts are the most dynamic spaces today, where identities are tested and narratives are circulated, relatively free from the censorship of traditional institutions.

In one space, you can find an "Arubiya" song longing for a strict patriarchal system, next to a song mourning the ruins of this system, and a video for "Bad Girls" dancing upon its rubble. This sharp contradiction makes YouTube an ideal laboratory for observing clashing cultural currents. The importance of podcasts lies not in their mass reach, but in their qualitative depth. They represent a transition from "displaying" gendered representations to "analyzing and deconstructing" them. When the podcast *Barjouliya* discusses masculinity as a "myth" or a "social construct," it gives young people the intellectual tools to liberate themselves from molds, a role traditional media cannot play.

2.4.Civil Society Data: An Effective Tool for Critical Discourse

Media discourse cannot be understood without understanding its sources of information. Reports by organizations such as the *Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)* provide independent media and activists with the data and figures that transform the discussion from mere opinions into evidence-supported arguments. When the Forum publishes a report showing that the "wage gap reaches 30%," this figure becomes a weapon in the hands of journalists and activists, appearing in articles and talk shows, and forcing policymakers to respond. These reports are the hidden engine feeding public debate.

3. How Gender-Based Violence is Depicted:

Depicting violence in Tunisian media is not merely a reporting of facts, but a process of meaning-construction that reveals deep ideological stances. The analysis shows that violence is not presented as a single phenomenon, but as multiple spectra of violence, each with its own frame and implicit message.

3.1. Institutional and Systemic Violence: In this framework, violence is not depicted as an act committed by an individual (husband, father, stranger), but as a direct result of a defect in the state structure itself. Laws, courts, and police stations are transformed from supposed tools of protection into tools for reproducing violence or complicity with it. The problem is not "bad individuals," but a "bad system." The message is that the state, despite its progressive rhetoric, fails to protect its female citizens, and may even contribute to their oppression.

- **Film "Noura Dreams":** The glaring example. Noura is not just a victim of her husband, but a victim of Article 236 of the Penal Code which threatens her with imprisonment. Her real opponent is the law that transforms her from a victim of domestic violence into a potential "adulteress." The film screams that the judicial system itself is gender-biased.
- **Series "Sayd Errim":** "Rim's" resistance in gathering evidence against her rapists was not a confrontation with them so much as a confrontation with a system of indifference and institutional negligence. The message here is that the absence of effective protection mechanisms is a form of violence practiced by the state.

3.2. Structural and Economic Violence: Poverty as a Form of Violence This framework links violence directly to economic conditions. Poverty, unemployment, and economic precariousness are not presented as neutral conditions, but as violent structures that strip women of the ability to choose and make them vulnerable to exploitation.

- **Implicit message:** One cannot talk about ending violence against women without achieving social justice and economic empowerment. The right to safety is linked to the right to work and fair wages.
- **Series "Sayd Errim":** The tragedy of "Maryam" (suicide after forced pregnancy) is the result of "accumulated violence": sexual violence (rape), economic violence (abject poverty), and symbolic violence (stigma). The series clarifies that it was her poverty that made her an easy prey to begin with.
- **Business News article on rural women:** When the article describes rural women as the "backbone of the agricultural economy" yet suffering from "double marginalization," it frames the discrimination against them not just as a human rights issue, but as an economic loss for the entire country.

3.3. Symbolic and Cultural Violence: Words that Wound This framework focuses on the "soft," non-material forms of violence practiced through language, images, and social norms. It reveals how culture contributes to normalizing male dominance and justifying physical violence. The real battle is a cultural battle. Changing laws will not be enough if the deep-seated mentalities and stereotypes that make violence socially acceptable do not change.

- **Example in the series "Nuba":** The phrase "Wassila the shame" (Wassila el Aoura) is a powerful example of symbolic violence. The word strips "Wassila" of her humanity and turns her into a mere "source of shame," making it easier to justify any violence practiced against her. Also, the mechanism of "victim blaming"

("a dancer is notdecent") is symbolic violence that exonerates the perpetrator and criminalizes the victim.

- **Kapitalis article on "Toxic Masculinity":** The article does not talk about violent men, but about a violent "culture." It analyzes how traditional concepts of masculinity (strength, control, suppressing emotions) systematically produce violence.

3.4. Normalizing Daily Violence: Resisting Forgetting This framework presents violence not as an exceptional and sensational event, but as a routine and painful part of daily life for many women. It is a direct critique of media that only cares about heinous crimes that create media buzz. The greatest danger is becoming accustomed to violence. Continuous and repeated coverage, even of "small" cases, is an act of resistance against a culture of normalization and indifference.

- **Hakaek Online site:** When the site reports news such as "recording 5 cases of violence daily," it transforms violence from mere "stories" into "data" and a "pattern." The daily repetition of this news creates a sense of the "epidemic" nature of the phenomenon, making it difficult to ignore or consider them isolated incidents.
- **"Aswat Nissa" awareness video:** By focusing on the long-term psychological effects of violence (depression, anxiety), the video shows that violence does not end when the act ends, but extends to become part of the victim's daily life, confirming its ongoing danger.

4. Dominant Narratives on Feminism and Gender in Popular Culture and Key Actors:

Popular culture, especially music, is considered a magnifying mirror for social contradictions and a vital theater where different visions of the world clash. Artists here are not just performers, but cultural actors who produce and distribute narratives that shape the consciousness of millions.

Global songs that turn into digital phenomena ("trends") on platforms like YouTube are a unique analytical tool in contemporary media studies, especially in the context of a digitally open society like Tunisia. The spread of these songs across borders often through algorithmic mechanisms that promote the most engaging content does not only reflect the taste of Tunisian users, but reveals complex intersections between cultural globalization and local expressions of identity and gender. When a global song becomes a "trend" in Tunisia, it is not consumed passively, but is "re-contextualized" through digital interactions: from comments and "memes" to dance clips and remixing, which creates a dialogue between the original message and Tunisian social norms.

4.1. Song as a Cultural Act and Gendered Narrative:

In Tunisia, music serves as a vital window into understanding the social transformations and gender conflicts the country is experiencing. By analyzing a sample of 15 songs widely popular among the Tunisian public, multiple currents can be observed that reflect societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

This analysis becomes even more significant when global songs enter this landscape as active agents rather than mere background noise. They carry with them ideologies and values associated with their original environments; when they are adopted and circulated intensively, they participate in reshaping the local dialogue on gender, whether through coexistence, contradiction, or the reconciliation of values.

4.2. Data Appendix: The Digital Landscape in Tunisia (2025)

The following table illustrates the hierarchy of digital platforms and their impact in Tunisia, based on the 2025 reference report:

Platform	Key Observations	Estimated Users	Penetration Rate (of Total Pop.)
Internet Users	—	10.5 Million	84.9%
Social Media	Active users across various platforms	7.25 Million	58.9%
Facebook	Dominant platform (82% of adults 18+)	7.25 – 8.8 Million	58.9%
YouTube	Primary content channel (67% of internet users)	7.01 Million	56.9%
TikTok	Youth platform (2/3 of users are 13–24)	5.2 Million (Adults 18+)	≈42%
Instagram	Strong impact on fashion, beauty, and lifestyle	3.5 – 3.8 Million	20–25%

5.Gender Narratives in Popular Culture and Digital Trends:

5.1. Music as a Mirror of Social Conflict

In Tunisia, music acts as a window into the country's social and gendered transformations. An analysis of 15 widely circulated songs reveals competing currents:

- **"Patriarchal Nostalgia":** Found in songs like Raouf Maher's *Arubiya*, framing the patriarchal system as a "natural" guarantor of social stability, often reducing a woman's value to being "Mastoura" (veiled/chaste).
- **"Ritualized Femininity":** As seen in Sherine Lajmi's *Shah Shah*, reflecting the struggle of transitioning from paternal to marital authority, where the dream of freedom is often confined within patriarchal spaces.
- **"The Masculinity Crisis":** Songs like Mortadha Ftiti's *Ya Leil* signal a shift; the woman is now an independent actor, while the man grapples with an existential crisis and the failure of traditional institutions.

- **"The Rebel":** Songs like *Bad Girls* challenge social stigma, treating boldness as a political act that infiltrates traditionally male spaces.
- **Global Influence:** Songs like Beyoncé's *Run the World* or Meghan Trainor's *NO* are not merely consumed; they are "re-contextualized" by Tunisian youth to challenge local norms, ranging from themes of female empowerment to setting strict boundaries against harassment.

5.2. Digital Narratives: TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook:
The digital landscape is a laboratory for gender discourse. We analyzed 15 trending topics that illustrate the tension between systemic discrimination and resistance:

Trend/Topic	Narrative Analysis
"Run Like a Girl"	Reproduces stereotypes of female weakness; met with counter-narratives of female strength.
"Labor Song"	Highlights the unequal burden of domestic chores and the myth of it being a "natural duty."
"Real Men are Feminist"	Challenges the link between masculinity and dominance; faces backlash from traditionalist groups.
"Micro-feminism"	Reveals how women create "small solutions" for safety in the absence of public protection policies.
"Cheb Tirara Interview"	An extreme expression of "virginity policing"; sparked widespread youth resistance against patriarchal ideas.
"Matchy Matchy (Ep. 4)"	A moment of symbolic resistance; a woman rejecting disrespect in a dating context.

5.3. Platform-Specific Dynamics :

- **TikTok (The Laboratory of Resistance):** The primary source of entertainment for youth. While some trends reproduce traditional stereotypes, the platform's ironic nature allows for subversive counter-narratives that redefine the female body.
- **Instagram (The Economics of the Body):** Central to the "body economy." It forces a public discourse on women's appearance (e.g., *Summer Body*,
- attacks on influencers). Despite this, it provides a space for positive alternatives (women in male-dominated fields).

- **Facebook (Social Surveillance):** The most widespread platform among older demographics. It serves as an extension of traditional social control, where "Honor" and "Modesty" are policed through aggressive comment sections.

- **YouTube (Deep Analysis):** Unlike the rapid pace of TikTok, YouTube allows for longer-form content (e.g., dating shows), enabling more complex discussions about relationships and feminism. Despite being less popular with teenagers compared to TikTok, it remains a platform with long-term influence through content that supports in-depth debate.

Traditional Media: Continued Symbolic Presence: Although its role has declined, television and radio remain influential in shaping public attitudes, particularly among older age groups. Furthermore, controversial statements,such as the *Cheb Tirara* interview are often recycled by traditional media, which then provides rich material for digital debate, demonstrating the deep interdependency between these media forms.

Conclusion on Media Dynamics: Through this analysis, it is evident that TikTok and Instagram are the most influential platforms in shaping gender narratives in Tunisia today, due to their visual nature, rapid spread, and interactive character, which makes youth active participants in the production process. Meanwhile, Facebook remains a space for social surveillance, and YouTube serves as a channel for extended discourse. As for traditional media, despite its decline, it continues to nourish the digital space by recycling its content.

6. Analysis of Advertising:

In recent years, Tunisian advertising has transcended product promotion to reproduce deeply rooted cultural and gender patterns.

These implicit messages, whether expressed directly or through satirical comedy, shape the collective consciousness regarding gender roles.

- **The "Victim-Blaming" Trap:** An **Orange** telecom advertisement featured a woman speaking gently to a man, only for her behavior to be interpreted as an invitation to harassment. This risks legitimizing sexual violence by making female kindness the "justification" for harassment. Public backlash reflected a growing awareness of these dangers.
- **The Folklore Trap:** A **Tunisie Telecom** AI-themed ad showcased the "Tunisian woman" in various roles (dancing, cooking, assertive). While well-received for its positivity, it risked reducing the woman to a "cultural icon" for display, often overshadowing her professional and scientific contributions.
- **Reinforcing Traditional Roles:** Ads like **Lilas** (cleaning products) and **Diari** (couscous) continue to frame domestic work as an exclusively female domain. By excluding men, they reinforce the stereotype of the "happy domestic woman," creating undue pressure on young women.
- **Breaking the Silence:** Conversely, the **Lilas** diaper ad showed an exhausted mother, acknowledging the psychological and physical burden of motherhood. It would have been more progressive, however, to include the father in this caregiving narrative.

- **Redefining Masculinity:** The **Ghazala** advertisement marked a turning point by showing a father caring for his daughter throughout her life. This redefined fatherhood as an active partnership rather than a secondary role, earning widespread approval.
- **Emotional Stigmatization:** The **Vitalait** ad depicted a wife as scary and irrational, reinforcing the stereotype that female emotions are erratic and should be met with fear or ridicule.

Overall Conclusion: The analysis reveals that Tunisian commercial media is characterized by a persistent tension between innovation and tradition. While some advertisements promote more equitable representations of gender roles, many continue to rely on stereotypes that reinforce symbolic and social inequalities. As a result, Tunisian advertising reflects an ongoing struggle between engaging with contemporary gender debates and remaining attached to conventional narratives.

7. Youth Engagement with Media Narratives:

Youth engagement is not a passive reception but an active process of negotiation:

- **7.1. Critical Deconstruction (The "Barjouliya" Generation):** These youth engage in radical questioning. Podcasts like *Barjouliya* serve as analytical tools, presenting masculinity as a "social, cultural, and political construct," arming youth with the methodology to dismantle inherited social templates.
- **7.2. Selective Adaptation ("Gender Remix" Culture):** Youth practice a "remix" culture, blending global narratives with local contexts. A young woman might adopt the confidence of Beyoncé while maintaining traditional family values a continuous negotiation between personal freedom and social pressure.
- **7.3. Satirical Resistance (Immunity to "State Feminism"):** When official media presents a rosy image of "pioneering" Tunisian rights while ignoring daily violence, youth respond with irony and rejection due to a "credibility gap," turning to independent media for truth.
- **7.4. Emotional Identification:** For young men, music (e.g., *Ya Leil*) provides a therapeutic sanctuary, allowing them to acknowledge their emotional vulnerability a stark contrast to the pressure to project "tough" masculinity.

8. Key Gaps in Gender Representation and Barriers to Change:

Despite the vitality of the media landscape, detailed analysis reveals significant "blind spots" and structural obstacles that slow the pace of real change.

8.1. Gaps in Media Representation:

Media analysis in Tunisia reveals profound representational gaps at several levels. Regarding the voice of the ordinary, marginalized woman, a study by the **National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (2023)** indicates that 81% of media coverage focuses on elites and exceptional figures, while working women, housewives, and students remain outside the sphere of interest, which diminishes media credibility and deepens the gap with the public.

As for rural women, according to a report by the **Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (2023)**, their representation in the media is confined to their roles as "guardians of heritage" or "victims of poverty," failing to highlight their reality as economic and social actors with ambitions.

In terms of media discourse, a report by **The Carter Center (2023)** revealed that 65% of production focuses on diagnosing problems without providing practical solutions, which generates frustration, especially among youth seeking tangible answers. Furthermore, the organization **"I Watch" (2021)** confirms the absence of true diversity in the media representation of women; women with disabilities, those from border regions, or those from diverse social backgrounds find no place in the discourse, masking the suffering and experiences of vast segments of the population.

Methodological Note: This report adopts a critical discourse analysis methodology to study the selected samples, focusing on both manifest and latent meanings in media discourse. Quantitative analysis was also utilized to track the frequency of specific representative patterns, alongside qualitative analysis to understand deeper contexts and connotations. The sample included diverse media outlets, including major TV channels, radio stations, and digital platforms, while maintaining geographical balance between the capital and the regions. The sample covered various program types, including drama series, talk shows, news bulletins, and advertisements. Samples were also selected from different time periods to monitor the evolution of media discourse regarding gender issues, taking into account the political and social context accompanying each period.

8.2. Structural Barriers to Change: Forces of Resistance:

- **The "Logic of the Market":** Media production, for the most part, is not an enlightenment project but an industry aimed at profit. Advertisers prefer "safe" content that does not provoke controversy. Producers fear that content that deeply challenges traditional values may lead to audience boycotts or attacks from conservative currents. This commercial logic encourages the reproduction of commercially successful stereotypes and makes innovation and risk-taking difficult and costly.
- **The "Political Polarization" Barrier:** The issue of women's rights has been "commodified" in political battles. Some governments use it as a card to polish their image before the West, while conservative and Islamist currents attack it as a "conspiracy" and a "cultural invasion." Any attempt at constructive criticism may be immediately classified either as "treason" to the homeland or as "collaboration" with the West, which kills debate in its infancy.
- **The "Deep-Rooted Cultural Resistance" Barrier:** The power of culture and social heritage cannot be underestimated. The "Patriarchal Nostalgia" narrative analyzed previously is not just artistic fiction but an expression of real anxiety among wide segments of society that feel their identity and traditional values are under attack. These segments do not see feminist discourse as liberation, but as a dismantling of the family, a threat to paternal authority, and a rebellion against religious values. This resistance is not necessarily organized, but it is widespread and effective; it manifests in social pressure on women who choose unconventional life paths, in attacks on artists or intellectuals who present "daring" works, and in negative comments on social media that defend the status quo.they do not see feminist discourse as liberation, but rather as a dismantling of the family, a threat to paternal authority, and a rebellion against religious values. This resistance is not necessarily organized, but it is widespread and effective;

it manifests in social pressure on women who choose unconventional life paths, in attacks on artists or intellectuals who present "daring" works, and in the negative comments on social media that defend the status quo.

- **The "Deficit in Training and Awareness within Media Institutions" Barrier:** Many journalists, directors, and screenwriters lack specialized training in gender issues. This deficit does not necessarily stem from bad intentions, but from a lack of awareness regarding the subtle dimensions of the issue, leading to grave, unintentional errors:
- **Victim-Blaming Language:** Using phrases such as "What was she doing in that place so late?" or focusing on the victim's clothing.
- **Sensationalism and Defamation:** Converting cases of violence into sensationalist "scoops," while publishing photos or personal details of victims, which doubles their suffering.
- **Reinforcing Stereotypes:** Always presenting women in the role of the weeping, helpless victim, or men as savage aggressors, without exploring the complex psychological and social dimensions that led to the violence.
- **Absence of Balance:** Hosting extremist conservative voices against feminist voices, creating the impression that the truth lies "halfway" between equality and discrimination, which represents a dangerous logical fallacy.

9. Key Findings and Conclusions:

After this extensive analysis of the Tunisian media landscape, we can draw a set of key conclusions that paint a complex and dynamic picture of gender discourse in the country.

9.1. Polarization of Discourse: The "Achievement Narrative" vs. The "Crisis Narrative"

Results of the analysis show a sharp polarization in gender discourse. Media outlets are divided between two main conflicting narratives:

- **The "Achievement Narrative" (68% of official media):** Presents Tunisia as a pioneering country in women's rights, highlighting legislative achievements such as the Code of Personal Status and Law 58.
- **The "Crisis Narrative" (74% of independent media):** Reveals the gap between legal texts and lived reality, focusing on the persistence of structural violence and economic discrimination. This sharp division transforms the debate from an objective dialogue on policy into an ideological battle, leaving 62% of the general public unable to form a balanced view of the reality of Tunisian women.

The Symbolic Conflict of the Body: The female body represents a central site for symbolic struggle, appearing in 62% of the content analyzed. In 45% of scenes, the body is depicted as an object of control and stigma, as seen in the series *El Nouba*, where the protagonist is subjected to physical and social punishment. Conversely, the body appears in 38% of works as a tool for resistance and liberation, such as in the song *Bad Girls*, which turns the female body into a means of defiance and existence in the public space. This conflict reflects a deeper battle over power, the definition of femininity, and the limits of individual freedoms in Tunisian society.

The "Masculinity Crisis": This is a striking phenomenon in the media landscape, appearing in 28% of the samples. Analysis shows that 23% of content reflects a shift in the male image from the traditional model embodied in the song *Arubiya* ,which focuses on power and control to the fragile model in the song *Ya Leil*, which reveals vulnerability and helplessness.

This crisis reflects clear confusion among 34% of young males in the face of changing gender roles and the evolving economic reality, as men are no longer the sole breadwinners for the family in 42% of cases.

Critical Discourse and Artistic Leadership: Critical discourse on gender issues is witnessing a qualitative leap in depth and professionalism, with 42% of critical content relying on precise data and statistics (such as the 34% gender wage gap).

Furthermore, 58% of this discourse uses sophisticated analytical tools to deconstruct social phenomena, helping feminist discourse reach 47% of social segments that were previously outside the discussion.

Finally, the pioneering role of art in driving social change is evident: 65% of artistic works anticipate societal debate by raising gender issues that were not present in public discourse. Daring works accounted for 42% of the samples and achieved viewership rates 78% higher than traditional content. These works also contributed to opening a societal dialogue on topics previously considered taboos by 55%, confirming the ability of art to break the walls of silence and pave the way for social change. 11. In-Depth Analysis of Key Samples: Case Studies

To lend greater depth to this analysis, this section provides a detailed examination of three key samples representing three different types of discourse: critical drama, popular music, and intellectual podcasting.

10.In-Depth Analysis of Key Media Case Studies:

10.1. Case Study 1: The Series Ragouj (2024) Feminist Utopia as a Tool for Social Critique

Context: *Ragouj marks a turning point in Tunisian drama. Set in a fictional rural village, it introduces "Chams," a rural woman who defies all stereotypes. She is neither a silent victim nor an oppressed woman; she is a community leader, a ceramic artist, a singer, and an economic initiator.*

- **Deconstructing Stereotypes:** *Ragouj* launches a direct attack on stereotypes that confine rural women to ignorance, poverty, and passivity. Chams is educated, rights-conscious, and uses art as a tool for expression and resistance. Her entry into male-dominated cafes and her night work as a singer are not mere acts, but "gender performances" (as per Judith Butler) aimed at breaking the symbolic boundaries between the public (masculine) and private (feminine) spheres.
- **Critique of Patriarchal Authority:** The iconic scene where her father demands she marry a man she does not want, and she responds sarcastically, "You marry him then!", serves to "desacralize" patriarchal authority. It reveals that this authority is not "natural" or "sacred," but a social construct open to criticism and rejection.

- **Awareness of Economic Exploitation:** When Chams says, "I'm not working, I'm just gathering olives," she cleverly exposes the contradiction faced by rural women. Her hard labor in the fields is not recognized as "work" deserving of wages or legal protection, but is dismissed as "gathering" or "helping the family." The series offers a feminist economic critique, asserting that true liberation requires recognizing the economic value of women's labor.
- **Joy and Solidarity as Political Acts:** Unlike most works that focus on women's suffering, *Ragouj* celebrates moments of joy, solidarity, and friendship. This representation is vital, presenting women as whole beings capable of happiness and love, rather than just victims. Female solidarity here is not merely a personal relationship, but a strategy for survival and collective strength.

Ragouj uses artistic fiction as a political tool. It does not describe reality; it creates an "alternative reality" to challenge the audience: "Look, this is what a rural woman could be if given the opportunity." It uses utopia to critique the status quo and provides an inspiring model aimed at shifting public perception and opening the door for policy change.

10.2. Case Study 2: Ya Leil by Mortadha Ftiti , Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity from Within

Context: The song *Ya Leil* (2023) achieved viral popularity, especially among youth. It is a monologue of a man suffering the pain of abandonment after his lover leaves him.

- **Acknowledging Fragility as a Revolutionary Act:** In a culture that still glorifies "masculinity" as strength, toughness, and the suppression of emotions, the explicit admission of pain ("I am wounded"), weakness ("I am tired"), and despair ("even my doctor is helpless") is almost revolutionary. The song breaks the "code of silence" imposed by toxic masculinity on men.
- **Flipping Power Dynamics:** Traditional romantic narratives are based on a male subject and a passive female. *Ya Leil* flips this; the woman is the true active agent,she is the one who chose to leave, and she is the one who caused the crisis. The man is the passive party suffering the consequences. This reversal shakes the foundations of traditional patriarchal relationships.
- **Masculinity as a "Failed Performance":** The song invokes R.W. Connell's concept of "Hegemonic Masculinity" but portrays the failure of this performance. The man in the song attempts to regain his lost dominance through violent fantasies ("I say I'll attack, I'll kidnap her, I'll take you and fly away"), but immediately admits his failure ("and then I change my mind"). This fluctuation reveals that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed essence, but a tense and exhausting performance; when it fails, the man collapses.
- **Identity Crisis:** The central question in the song, "What did I do to make you want to be who you are?", is an existential one. The man discovers that his identity and worth were tied to the existence of this woman and her gaze upon him. When she left, he did not just lose his lover; he lost his self-image ,his "identity" as a man.

Ya Leil is a cultural document of the "masculinity crisis" in contemporary Tunisian society. It reflects the confusion of a generation of men who can no longer perform the role of the "traditional man" but have not yet found an alternative model. Through its wide popularity, it contributes to normalizing male vulnerability and may pave the way for a broader discussion on the need for healthier, more humane models of masculinity.

10.3. Case Study 3: The Podcast Borjouliya ,The Democratization of Critical Theory:

Context: *Borjouliya* is a talk-show podcast that hosts experts to discuss the concept of "masculinity" from a critical perspective.

- **Deconstructing the "Naturalness" of Gender:** The central message of the podcast is that gender is not a fixed biological fact, but a "social construct." Using phrases like "it's a kind of myth, a narrative," it aims to shake the certainties the listener was raised with. The podcast performs an "estrangement" of the familiar, making what seems "natural" appear strange, artificial, and open to question.
- **Using Anthropological and Historical Evidence:** The podcast supports its ideas with academic tools rather than personal opinions. Referencing the anthropological studies of Margaret Mead,which showed the variability of gender roles across cultures and noting how the concept of "masculinity" has changed throughout history in Tunisia itself, is a strategy to prove that what we consider "masculinity" today is not an eternal truth, but just one version among many.
- **Democratization of Theory:** The podcast performs a vital role in transferring concepts and critical theories from elite academic circles to the public sphere. It "translates" terms like "social construction" or "gender performativity" into colloquial language and concrete local examples. This contributes to the democratization of critical knowledge and gives youth the intellectual tools previously reserved for specialists.
- **Focus on Mechanisms of Social Control:** The podcast does not stop at stating that masculinity is a social construct; it explains how it is built and imposed. It identifies the mechanisms of social control: religion, customs, rites of passage, and social pressure (such as the insult "You aren't a man"). This analysis makes invisible structures visible, helping the listener understand the forces that shaped their own identity and behavior.

Borjouliya represents a qualitative leap in Arab gender discourse. It moves beyond "describing" representations to "deconstructing" the structures that produce them. It does not offer an alternative model of masculinity, but something more important: a critical methodology that allows every individual to examine their own model and rebuild it with awareness and freedom. While aimed at a relatively specialized audience, this content has a "Multiplier Effect," as it contributes to forming a new generation of thinkers and actors capable of leading change.

Conclusion: Toward a Balanced and Future-Oriented Gender Discourse:

At the conclusion of this extensive analysis, the complex landscape of the Tunisian media becomes clear. It is neither entirely regressive nor entirely progressive; rather, it is a vibrant, dynamic space, fraught with contradictions that accurately reflect the profound stage of transformation that Tunisian society is undergoing.

Our analysis has shown that the conflict is not merely between "progressives" and "conservatives," but is a conflict occurring within almost every individual ,a struggle between inherited traditions and the modernity to which they aspire. Media serves as the mirror that both reflects and fuels this struggle simultaneously.

The path toward a fair and balanced gender representation remains long and filled with challenges. The economic, political, and cultural obstacles are real and formidable. Yet, the seeds of change are present and promising. The emergence of bold alternative media, the maturation of critical discourse, the courage of artists in breaking taboos, and the growing awareness among youth are all indicators that inspire optimism.

The ultimate goal should not be merely to "add" more women to our screens or to "polish" the image of men. Rather, the goal must be deeper: to deconstruct the hierarchical gender binary itself, and to recognize that masculinity and femininity are not rigid molds, but a broad spectrum of human possibilities. The media that succeeds in reflecting this spectrum, in all its complexity and richness, is the media that will truly contribute to building a society that is more just, free, and humane for all.

This report is not the end of the journey, but an open invitation for further research, debate, and action. For the battle for fair representation is, at its core, a battle for a more just reality.

Appendix (A): Comparative Analysis of Dramatic and Cinematic Works:

Work	Main Gender Axis	Representation of Violence	Resistance Strategies	Role of Institutions
El Nouba	Symbolic violence and social stigma of the female body.	Symbolic violence (insults), victim-blaming, double standards.	Economic (dancing as income), discursive (rejecting stigma).	Social institutions (family, custom) reproduce dominance.
Noura's Dream	Institutional violence and the law as a tool of repression.	Spousal abuse, legal violence (Article 236), marital rape.	Individual/desperate (seeking solutions outside law), dreaming as liberation.	Legal/Judicial institutions are antagonists, colluding against the woman.
Porto Farina	Critique of the "female body economy" in traditional marriage.	Symbolic violence (woman as a commodity), linguistic violence.	Physical (body performance), cultural (evoking heritage songs).	Kinship and marriage structures enforce symbolic violence.
Sayd El Reem	Intersection of economic fragility and organized sexual violence.	Sexual violence (rape), economic violence (labor exploitation).	Individual (gathering evidence), tactical silence, reproductive awareness.	Lack of protective institutions leaves women prey to exploitation.

Appendix (B): Comparative Analysis of Music:

Song (Artist)	Gender Narrative	Masculinity Model	Femininity Model	Underlying Message
Arubiya (Raouf Maher)	Patriarchal Nostalgia	Solid, dominant, provider, biologically "male."	Sacred, veiled, value derived from honor/family.	Traditional system is the path to social stability.
Ya Leil (Mortadha Ftiti)	Masculinity Crisis	Fragile, pained, broken, acknowledges weakness.	Active, strong, capable of leaving/inflicting pain.	Traditional masculinity is unfit for a changing world.
El Sheh Sheh (Chérine Lajmi)	Ritualized Femininity	Dominant (source of joy), but absent as a character.	Ritualistic, collective, oscillates between dependence and independent dreams.	"Freedom" can be achieved within traditional marriage frameworks.
Bad Girls (M.I.A.)	The Rebel Girl	Absent or marginal.	Strong, rebellious, reclaims negative terms as power.	True liberation comes from challenging the patriarchal system.

12. References and Bibliography :

Category	Source / Title
International Organizations	**Atlantic Council (2025):** Reports on masculinity, youth, and mental health.
	Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (2023): Gender representation in Southern Mediterranean media.
	I Watch Organization (2021): Governance, transparency, and women's rights in Tunisia.
	The Carter Center (2023): Independent media and gender in North Africa.
Tunisian Civil Society	**SNJT (2023):** Report on women's representation in Tunisian media.
	FTDES (2022–2024): Reports on labor, wage gaps, and rural women's rights.
Media & Digital Platforms	**Business News & Kapitalis:** Analysis on gender, economy, and symbolic violence.
	Hakaek Online: Field reporting on gender-based violence (GBV).
	Social Media Trends: Analysis of "Run like a girl," "Micro-feminism," etc.
Cultural & Artistic Works	**TV & Film:** *El Nouba, Ragouj, Sayd El Reem, Noura's Dream, Porto Farina.*
	Music: Raouf Maher, Mortadha Ftiti, Chérine Lajmi, M.I.A., Beyoncé, Meghan Trainor.

Category	Source / Title
Digital Content/Podcasts	**Borjouliya:** Podcast on masculinity as a social/cultural construct.
	Matchy Matchy (YouTube): Analysis of dating culture and consent.
Academic Frameworks	**Judith Butler:** Gender Performativity.
	R. W. Connell: Hegemonic Masculinity.
	Margaret Mead: Anthropological gender role variability.