

**Names on social network sites: Facebook in particular
from a sociolinguistic perspective**

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For the past few years social network sites, Facebook in particular, has been excessively used by youth. Most of whom are university students. It plays an active role in their own daily lives. They use it because they found it a facilitate method of communication where one can keep in contact with friends and peers. According to Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook is designed to make people able to connect with others (Baloun 2007). As a rule, to be able to communicate on Facebook, you have to open an account. The users' names revelation is required when opened an account. The choice of a name is determined by the site's Terms of Service (ToS) which stipulate that Facebook users must use their real names and personal information to contact with others (Arrington, 2008). To this, Nazir (2012: 257) claims, "whenever someone opens an account on Facebook, s/he has to choose a particular user name that is displayed". Moreover, Dumortier (2009) points that on Facebook, participant's profiles revealed publically using real names with other real world identification signs so that interaction and communication occur between real-world subjects. Furthermore, Gross and Acqistis (2005) find that 82 percent of Facebook users disclose, among other personal information, their names. In their study on Cypriot students, Taraszow, T., Aristodemou, E., Shitta, G., Laouris, Y., & Arsoy, A. (2010) assert that all Cypriot Facebook members published their real names, and 97% revealed their gender. It seems then that they- the Facebook users- have to use names, real or nick, "with the 'real' referred to an actual name as it was not possible to know whether a particular name is a member's authentic name or not" (Taraszow et al. 2010: 88). The choice of a name on Facebook depends most on how the users, whether male or female, prefer to be displayed to the public; with women choice of names completely different from men's. However, risk is definitely

associated with the disclosure of their real names. As a result, Facebook users, youth in particular, care about their privacy (Raynes-Goldie, 2010), and so they exclude their personal information as a strategy to protect themselves (Young& Quan-Hass, 2009).

Names as elements of a linguistic system are an interesting area for many researchers. It has been suggested that, in addition to linguistic meaning, names may convey socio-cultural implications (, Li 1997, Salih and Bader 1999, Busabaa 2011). They occupy a unique position within human cultural and social systems. A name often reflects the social status of its holder; man or woman. It is a "part of the individual identity" (Beans, 1980: 308), and is believed to have an influence on the character of the bearer (Guma, 2000). Haferkamp & others (2012) assert that naming is a specific linguistic act intimately linked with values, traditions hopes, fears and events in people's lives.

The current research is an attempt to study how language is functioning in the social networking site as far as Facebook users' names and gender differences are concerned. On the belief that male and female linguistic behaviors may somehow differ (Lakoff, 1975), speech styles used by men are socio-linguistically different from women's (Holmes, 2000). Similar to this, the choice of names in the social network sites, Facebook as an example appears likely to emphasize gender-related roles. On online social networking sites usage, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) find that women were found to change the appearance of their website more often than men. A glance at Facebook users' profiles, make one starts to ask whether the Facebook users, men or women had used real names or nick names as revealed on their profiles. Zhao et al (2008) point that person's legal name is the most important identifying information on Facebook users' profiles. However, It seems quite rather that a name loses its real identification for the role it is associated with. The sociocultural motivations stand beyond the choice of this name or that by males or females has been profoundly changed and so varied. Names as

revealed on Facebook users' profiles represent some traits beautifying their users. They become no longer a part of one's real identity. Zhao et al, (2008), asset that Facebook users predominately claim their identity implicitly rather than explicitly. If they have to disclose their own identity, it is woman "who, somehow, like to have i.d.'s not on their own names but on nicks and also that they acquire names which symbolize some traits" (Nazir,2012: 257). Moreover, women and not men tend to use group names for their presentation (Haferkamp and others, 2012). Hence, females don't disclose themselves to other users on Facebook. It seems that social and traditional roles associated with women had effected greater on their intention and willingness to be showed out not in face to face communication but also on the social network sites.

The purpose of the study :

Names on Facebook constitute a part in the user's profile; male or female. The study is intended to identify the reasons that influence Facebook users' choice of names, real or nicks among Hadhramout University students, Yemen. and the strategy they use to explain that choice. Additionally, it aims to figure out gender difference in the use of names on the social network site, Facebook.

The importance of the study :

The study analyzes gender differences in the way young people disclose their personal information through their profiles in the social network site, Facebook, in specific, their names. The choice of names as linguistic element is dealt with here from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Limitation of the study :

This study is limited to certain particular group of people. These are Hadhramout University students. So the results might be limited to this group of people.

Methods of the study :

The study has followed two procedures:

First: names had been collected from the participants' profiles then they were analyzed in percentages showing who of the two groups use real names more than the other,

Second: a questionnaire consisted of 20 items was given to 100 participants and then analyzed tracing the reasons for participants' choice of names, real or nicks

The study group is consisted of 2061 Facebook users' names chosen randomly from the students' profiles. They were provided by them voluntarily. It took two months to collect these names and to divide and analyze them. All of the participants were co-operative. The study group has showed that most of the participants were 20 to 28 age old and were university students and have an account on Facebook.

The questionnaire which was given to 100 students, males and females was divided into two sections; in the first section, personal information of Facebook users were collected (age, sex and level of education). The second section of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items whose responses varied from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) in form of a five point Likert type scale. In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, three experts had been asked and requested to read it. Based on the feedback received from the experts, the items were modified and finalized. The items have been distributed to show the reasons that influence the participants' choice of a name on Facebook in one hand, and then the strategy the users use to explain their choice. Percentages were provided, showing those who choose to reveal their real names overtly and who do not.

Analysis and findings :

Names and Facebook users' profiles :

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively and quantitatively. Frequency of names distribution had put into percentage score for each number of names. The names collected from the participants' profiles were first separated by gender then they are categorized:

1. Real names used by real users of that name, men or women.
2. Nick names used by males and females.

Table 1. Frequency of names distribution

	Gender	Real name		Nick name		Total
		Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	
1	Male	530	66,75%	362	28,57%	892
2	Female	264	33,25%	905	71,43%	1169
Total		794	100%	1267	100%	2061

Names which were overtly represented by the users on Facebook profiles are those of males. They constitute 66, 75 % while females' constitute 33, 25%. In this respect it is men who constitute the highest in percentages and are overtly presented on social network sites than women. In contrast Females use of nick names constitutes 71.43 while males' constitute 28.57%. A glance at the nick names used by women shows that women place higher priority on creating a positive self-presentation by using names that are almost related to spiritual meaning or ideal traits:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| taj al ghalala, | - expensive crown- |
| bayaad al thaleg, | - snow white- |
| al um alghaliah, | - the adorable mother- |
| gheebetak tanhi hadoori, | -your absence denied my presence- |
| bareeq al amal, | - the enlightenment of hope- |

these are some instances of names used by females. Men, however, are less concerned. Accordingly, females use nick names on Facebook more than males do while males use real names more than the females. This result confirms Nazir (2012) finding. The use of nicks by females can be explained in terms of being predominantly showed up their identities implicitly rather than explicitly (Zhao and

others, 2008). The result, on the other hand, contradicts Taraszow et al, (2010) finding who find that most people regardless of their gender enter their full personal names in their profiles. Nevertheless, it is found that females who are level 4 started using their real names on Facebook profiles. The researcher believes that as they grow up on age and level of education, they are maturely grown on character and knowledge of the world so they become so confident to show up their identity to the public.

Reasons influence the choice of names on Facebook and the strategy

Facebook and the users' accounts :

The questionnaire was distributed among 100 students (50 for males and 50 for females), 80 university students were actually responded to the questionnaire items. 15 of them did not answer properly and the other 5 questionnaires were missed. The 80 questionnaires were answered by 34 males and 46 females as shown in the table and graph below:

Table No (2). The actual number of the responded answers of the questionnaire

	Male	Female	Total
No.	34	46	80
%	42.5%	57.5%	100%

To begin, a Facebook user should have at least one account. The participants had been asked (item 20) whether they have two Facebook accounts and the majority responded negatively. 37.66% of the females have one account in comparison to 14.28% of the males. Nevertheless, 10% of the females whereas 9.09 of males agreed that they have two accounts. The figure below reveals the responses in percentages.

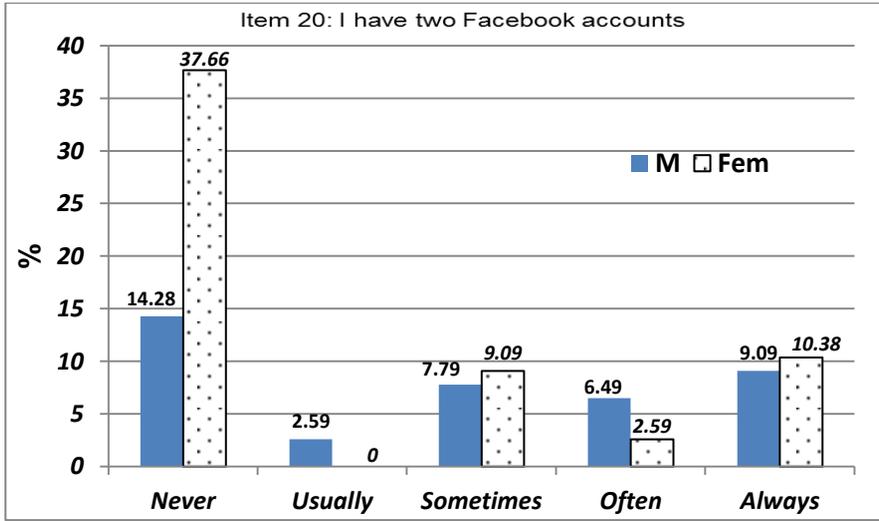


Figure No 1: responses in percentages to (item 20)

As the majority of the participants agreed that they have one account, their response to (item 1), 'I use my real name on Facebook' reveals a great difference among males and females. While 30% of the males use their real names, 23.75% of the females never use their real names. Their response to (item 18), 'I prefer using a real name on Facebook' 20.51% answered 'always' whereas 21.79% of females' respond negatively. By asking them whether they prefer using nicks, 13.92% of the females responded positively, however, males responded negatively with 24.05 % to (item 19) 'I prefer using nick name on Facebook' and 23% of them never use a nick name (item 2). This suggests that how consistent are males in their response. decision and determination to be showed out using their real identity.

According to the results mentioned above, females use nick names on Facebook noticeably more than males do. This contradicts again Taraszow et al, (2010: 88) finding who point "the majority of the subjects published their real names (96.2%) in comparison to a partial name (3.8%) or a fake name (0.0%)". In addition, the females' positive response to use nick name may be put as Zhao, et al (2008) point that

psychologically, women place higher priority on creating a positive self-presentation, while men are less concerned.

The two figures below compare the responses in percentages of male and female to the use of real names (Fig.2) and nick names (Fig. 3) respectively.

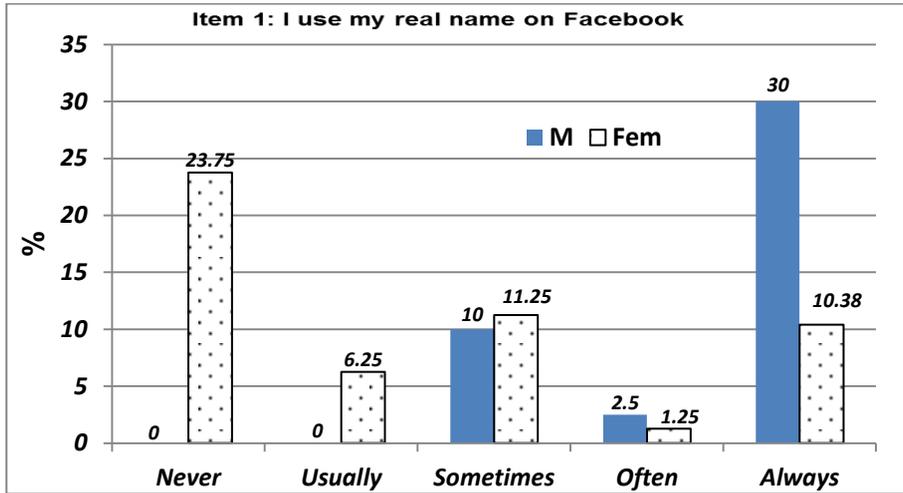


Figure No 2: males and females responses to "I use my real name on Facebook"

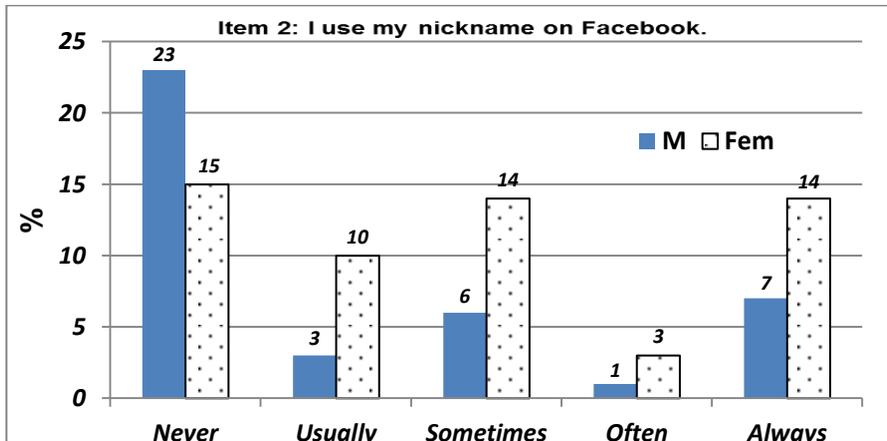


Figure No 3: males and females responses to "I use my nick name on Facebook"

Reasons and strategies :

Reasons of using real names or nicks have been variably implemented

Maintaining existing friendships is one reason for the users to use real names (item, 5, 7 and 8). The result shows that while females fluctuate, the males are still consistent in their responses. The highest rate for males' responses is 'always' whereas females swing between 'sometimes' 18.75 % as the highest, then 'never' 17.5 % . Using a real name, makes it easy for the users to connect with friends shared same interests, needs and academic issues such as daily studies, research, project writing, and homework.

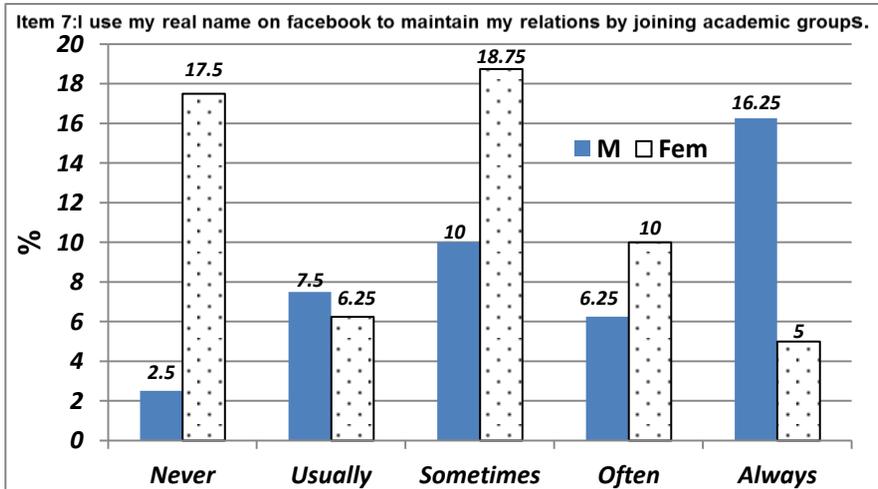


Figure No 4: Maintaining relations with others

Making new relationships on Facebook with friends and contacting with them is another reason for the participants to use real names. The results revealed that Facebook users disclose their names when they were mainly dealt with friends or people with whom they often interacted. This is true for males. When they want to make new friends, joining new groups, or building new relation with people around them, males used to choose real names. The highest

percentages of the males reveal their tendency to find old friends (24.35%) and to make new friends (18.91%). Contrary to this, the females reject the idea of using the real name either to find old friends (19.23%) or to make new friendships (22.97%).

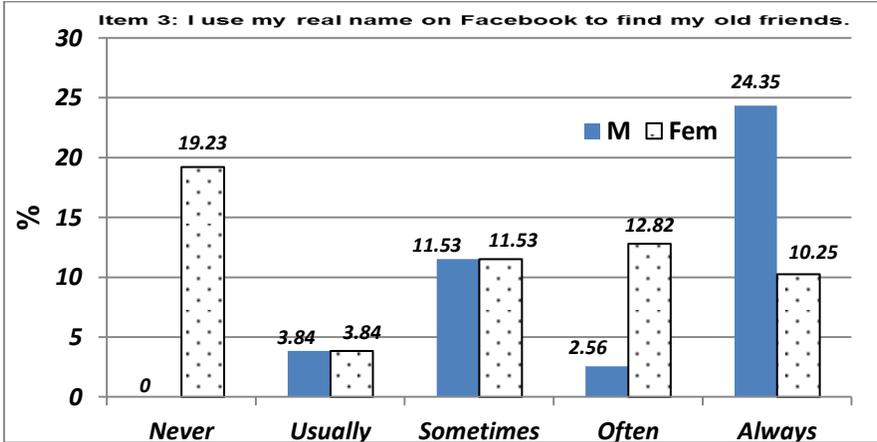


Figure No 5: use of Facebook to find old friend

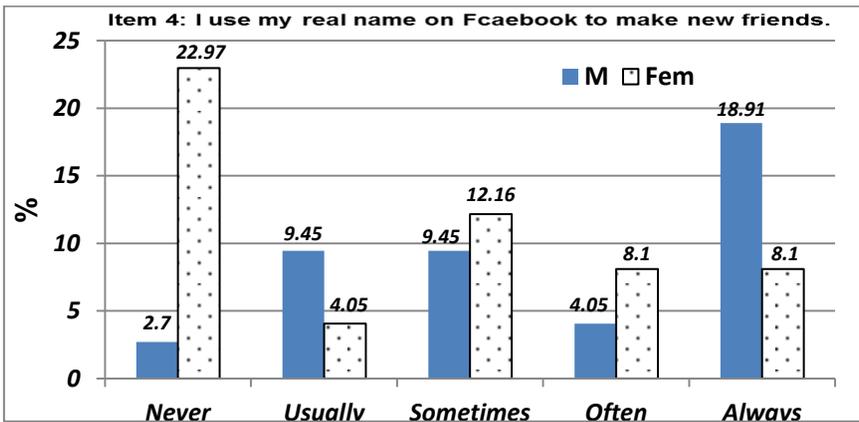


Figure No 6: use of Facebook to make new ones

To sum up the above, Facebook users disclose their names when they were mainly dealt with friends or people with whom they often interacted, maintaining and making real friendships. This occurs profoundly with men rather than with women. It can be assumed then

that men and women have different reasons regarding disclosing their names on Facebook. Communicating with others is a profound crucial social reason for Facebook users' choice of names. Unlike men, women prefer communicating with people they do not know. The results showed that 16.25% of females respond positively to (item 9) comparing to their response to (item 3) and (item 4). Specifically, it is found that females tend to use Facebook not to contact with old friends or make new friendships overtly, they prefer communicating with strangers. This can be seen as in figure No 7.

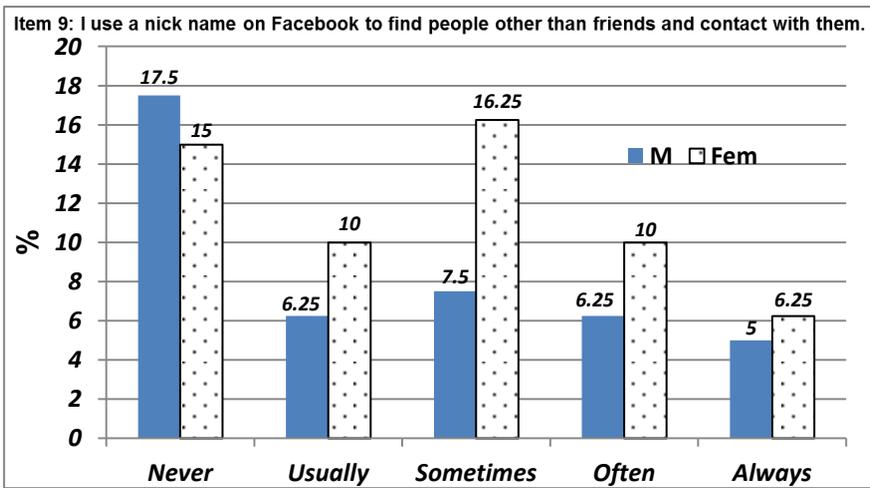


Figure No 7: use a nick name to contact with strangers

As the result shows that females use nick names on Facebook noticeably more than males, they were asked if the reason to use a nick name is so that no one can know them. 20.51% response negatively which is unexpected result. However, to achieve privacy protection strategy 16.66% of females responded positively. It seems then that the majority of females purposely use nicks but they were not aware of the reasons.

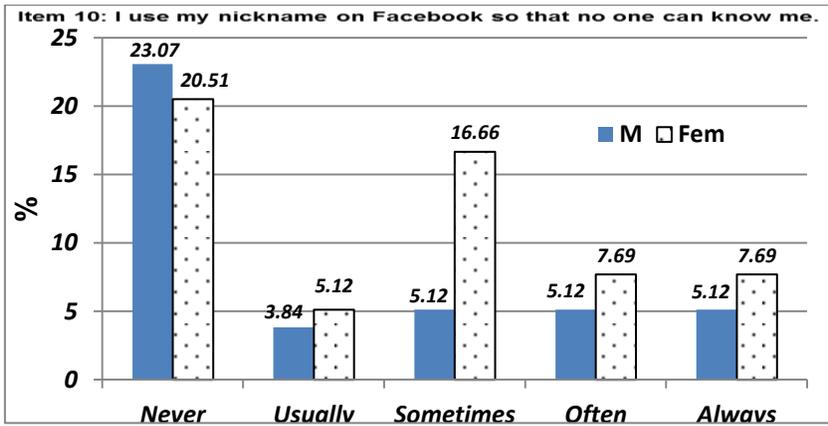


Figure No 8: use of nick name so no one can know me

Sharing private information freely with others is a strategy used by Facebook users so that they use nick names. Surprisingly enough, 25.64% of females denied this statement though they use nick names. While 23.06% varied between 'usually' and 'some times'. Comparing to this, males are still consistent more and more than females. What the results suggest is that males (16.66 %) refused to use nicks for sharing private information and so are more likely to disclose their names overtly than females. Thoroughly, choosing a name overtly can make users more easily traceable in their real life.

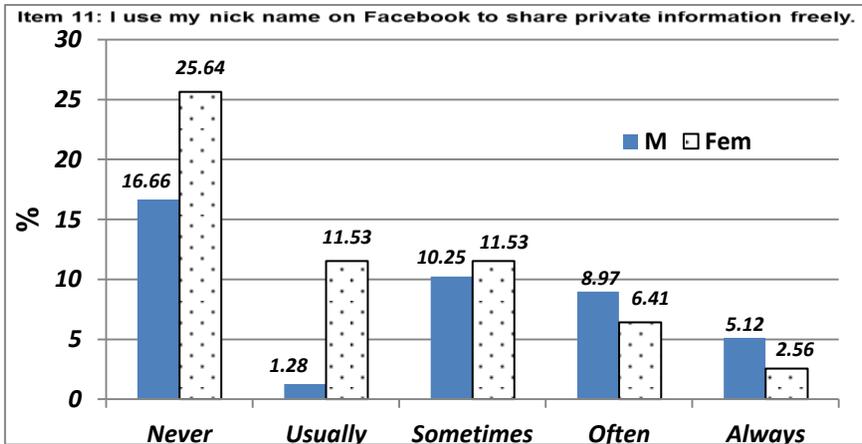


Figure No 9: use nick name to share private information freely

To discuss political issues, the majority of males disclose their names. 25.64% of them never use nicks to deal with political issues comparing to females. Remarkably, 29.48% of the females disagreed to use nick names as a strategy to deal with political issues. Though they choose nick names they respond rather negatively. It can be assumed that political issues are not included within their priority. The society norms reject the idea that women can speak on politics. It is not a part of women's culture in the Arab world in general and Yemen in particular. It is still specific to men. In addition, It is certain that discussing political issues using a real name might cause a threat for the privacy and security of the users and so will expose their identities and threaten their privacy (Taraszow et al, 2010).

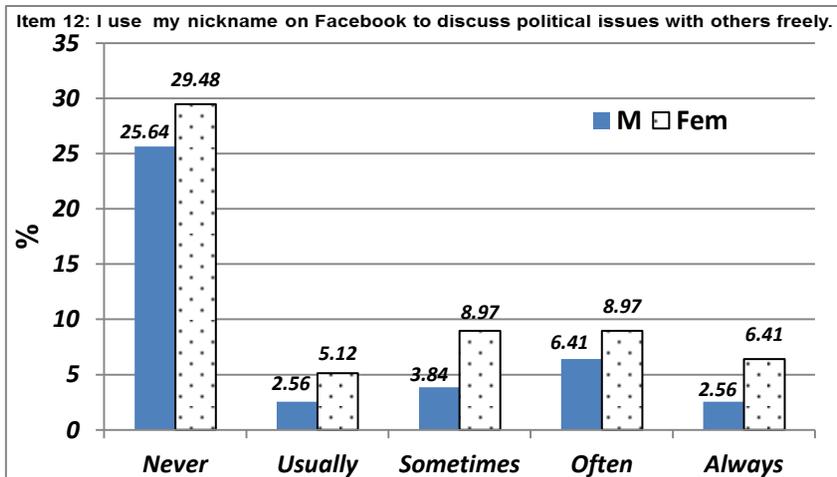


Figure No 10: I use nick name to discuss political issues

Using nick names to speak on taboo on Facebook is not accepted by the females. Yemeni society is still somehow conservative. For either social or religious reasons women's speech is generally more conservative than men's. Socially, Women are shy and feel embarrassed to deal with taboos. Though females may use swear words among themselves. 11.53% of females admit that sometimes they use nick names for this purpose while 37.17% were negatively

responded. In her study, Qanbar (2011) claims that it is males who use taboo more than females. Meanwhile, 28.20% of males do not agree to use nick names. Men are readier to coin, utter slang expressions and overtly prefer using their real names even when handling taboo. To this, Holmes (1992) states that to express their masculinity, males appear to use less standard linguistic items interestingly enough than women.

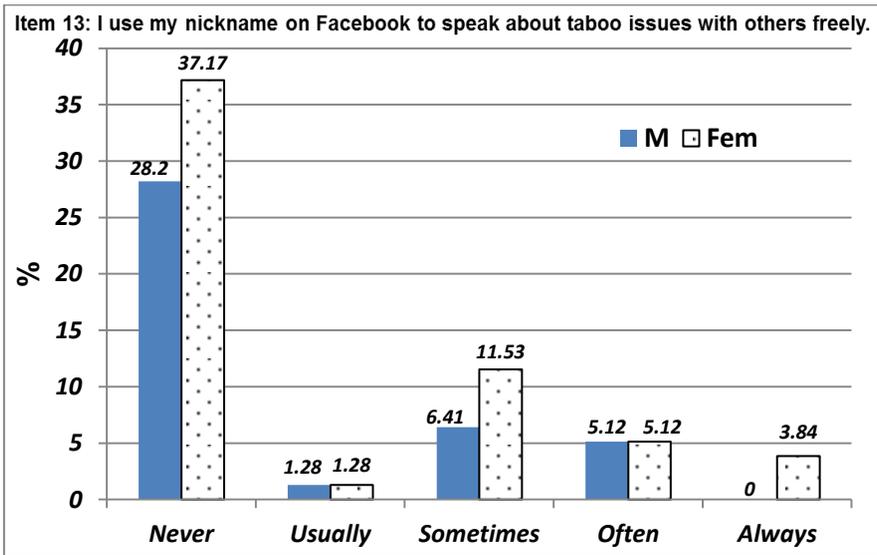


Figure No 11: use nick name to speak about taboo

Neither abusing others nor to be abused by others are considered profound reasons for females to use nick names. 33.33% denied that they use nicks to abuse others while 15% admitted. To be abused by others is also rejected. 29.33% of females believe that they are not afraid to be abused by others. This is not an expecting result. To protect face and not to be insulted by others are assumed to be within the strategy of using nicks. However, this is rather denied by the female participants. To be hidden, a strategy used by Facebook users is also refused by females. While 11.53% of males and females agreed that sometimes they use nicks so that they may not be overt to others, 29.48% of females answered never which is a corresponding result to

the reason because of social conventions (item 17). Where 19.50 of females respond positively comparing to men who denied using nicks for these above mentioned reasons. The figures below reveal the responses to items (14, 15, 16, and 17) in percentages respectively.

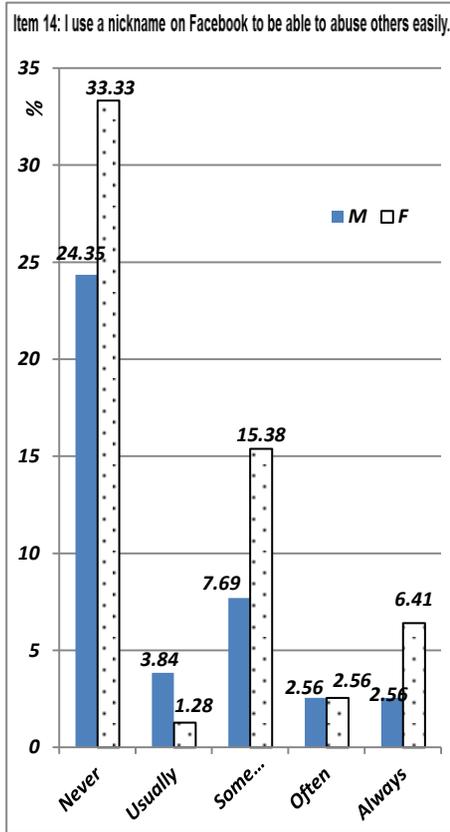


Figure No: 12

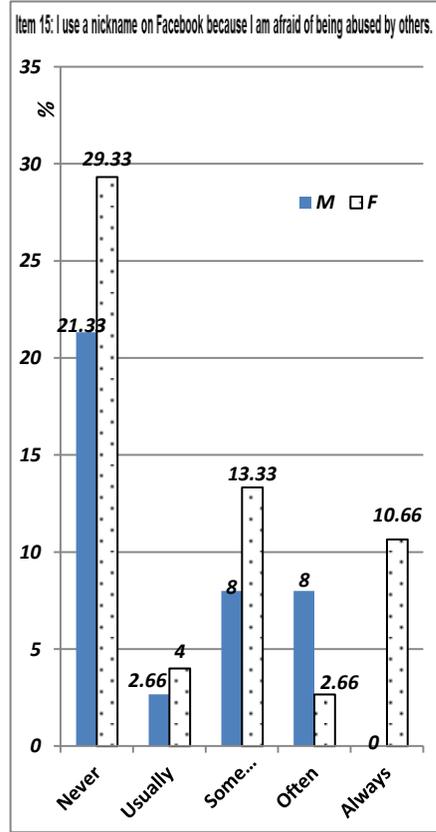


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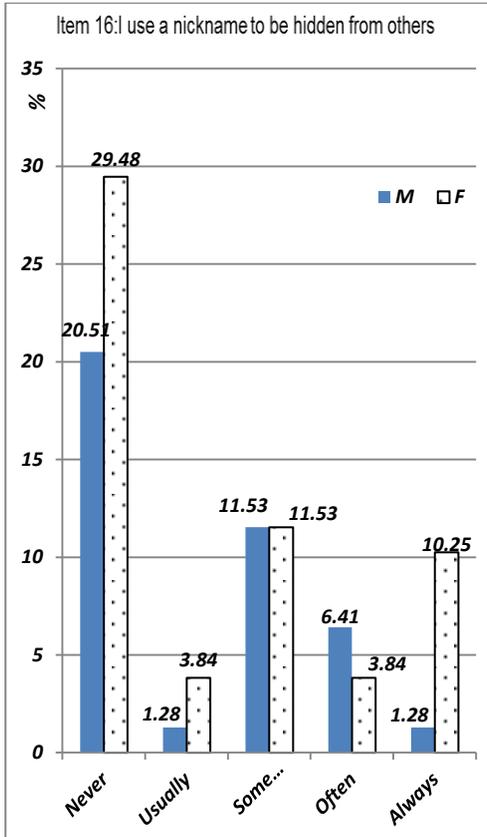


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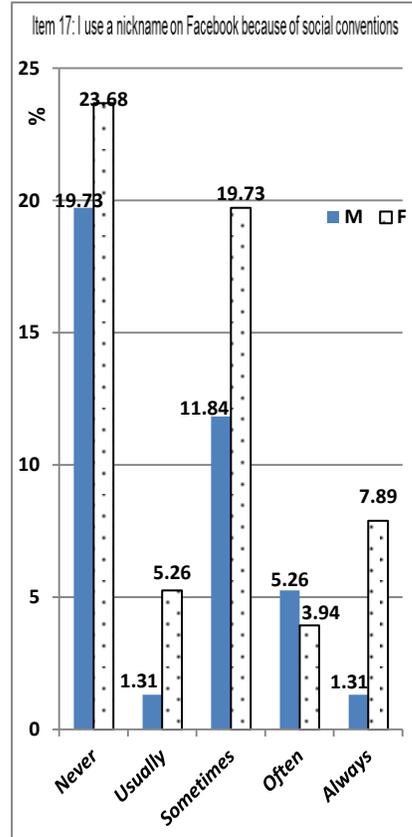


Figure No: 15

Discussion and Conclusion :

The results showed that there was a significant difference among females and males in the disclosure of their names on the social network site, Facebook. The majority of females use nick names on Facebook noticeably more than males do while males are more likely to disclose their real names more than females. This contradicts Taraszow et al. (2010) finding who assert that the majority of the participants use their real names (96.2%) in comparison to a fake name 0% regardless of their gender. The reasons to disclose names vary. Providing a real name by males show how far they adopt

strategies of self-presentation which help them to be consistent on their responses. Specifically, name revelations make it easy for Facebook users to maintain their relationships, build up more friendship with people they know, and exchange their real-life information personally and academically. This runs along with what Raacke J1, Bonds-Raacke J. (2008) claim that the vast majority of college students are using these friend-networking sites for reasons such as making new friends and locating old friends. Contrary to this, females prefer using nick names to connect with people they do not know. The use of nicks by females relates to the invisibility of women in public sphere and their desire to associate themselves with their ideals (Zhao et al, 2010). Additionally, the use of nick names by women shows that women place higher priority on creating a positive self-presentation by using names that are almost related to spiritual meaning and ideals while men are less concerned. It can be assumed that women might be unaware of the reasons beyond their choice. Based on the above results, the choice of names by males or females emphasizes gender-related differences in Internet communication, the Facebook in particular. The use of nicks by the majority of females is helpfully indicated as a strategy women use to hide their real personality. Contradictory, they refused to admit that.

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