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Audio Documentary Script
Audio Production

Young women living alone in Egypt

This audio documentary is about girls living alone in Egypt. In the documentary, we will try to explore their lives and see the obstacles they face and how they overcome them.

Hello guys, My name is Engy Elzakazeky and my partner is Mahy Mohamed, who will speak to you later but for now, let me tell you a brief about our story.

MUSIC FADE IN (00:00-00:10 seconds from the beginning of Christmas Eve song)
MUSIC FADE OUT

Each person has their own definition of independent life, some people think it is taking decisions on your own, while others say it is the fact that you're living alone away from your parents.

MK "Independence is relying on oneself and being financially independent and also making decisions that affect one's life that have to do with one's own choices" (:7)

That was Munira Khayyat, a Sociology professor at the American University in Cairo

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MUSIC FADE OUT

FG: "It was like you are a girl, you should stay home as long as we are not far from the campus, we have been in a long debate about that. At the beginning, they were really fighting me." (:10)

That was Fatma Gamal, an American University in Cairo (AUC) student, who is majoring in Computer Science, who decided to live alone. Fatma is living in the dorms and her parents are living in a residential compound called Rehab, located in Cairo which is 15 minutes away from the university.

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Letting young women to live alone in Egypt is a decision that is not approved by many Egyptian parents. How will people perceive you? Why do you want to be independent? Did your friends influence your decision ?all these questions have crossed my mind personally while I was taking my decision to have a summer abroad semester this year as I am going to travel to Los Angeles in California in the United States and I don't know how will people from my country will perceive me.

MK: "There is a sort of widespread tendency or a perception that it is not okay for women to live alone because people will make certain judgments based upon the fact that a woman is living alone and therefore she can do what she wants." (:15)

One might say that living independently is, overall, a good experience. Although living alone is considered a good experience to explore yourself as an independent human, but there are some challenges that independent young women face other than the perspective of the society.

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MUSIC FADE OUT*

FG: "It was the first time to depend on myself, to take the decisions, to be the one who is responsible for taking every step or every decision and what was really challenging is that I'm the only one who is taking the consequences. Sometimes I blame my parents for the decisions that we took because they should or they shared the consequences with me but now I am the only one who decides, so the consequences are on me ." (:15)

Some young women can't be encouraged to take the decision to live alone for financial reasons.

MK: "I think one of the biggest challenges that young people can face is financial independence because once one became financially independent it becomes hard to make claims upon them" (:10)

While other young women might perceive the experience of living alone in a different way, like Nourhan Zayed.

NZ: "It is so much better than living with my parents, i learned a lot of thing , I didn't learn when i was living with my parents,now i can cook , wash my clothes "(:06)

A girl from Alexandria who decided to study Integrated Marketing Communication at AUC, while her parents are living in Alexandria, thinks that it is more beneficial for her than living with her parents.

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Hello guys, I'm Mahy Mohamed and I will complete the story for you.

As for me, I wanted to take the decision to have my own life alone away from my parents and I discussed the issue with them and the common answer that I get from them is "no" you can't live alone because of the society's perception and I think Nourhan has faced the same problem.

NZ: "Three or four years ago if I said to anyone, I am living alone they will think that my parents are not here or they don't care about me, now many people totally accept it"

MUSIC FADE IN (00:00-00:10 seconds from Stuff song) MUSIC FADE OUT

Now, let's have a look at Nourhan's normal daily life and see how is it like being a young independent woman.

FADE IN (NAT SOUND of cooking)

NZ: "Well, I am cooking now my dinner in the dorms and my favorite meal is Fatoosh, actually it is a Lebanese meal and I learned it from my roommate, she is a sweat Lebanese girl. While I'm standing, I just remembered my mother, she used to stand every day, cooking our dinner, I really miss my mama's food"(:18)

This was how Nourhan's normal day at the dorms is going, despite that she misses her mother, yet Nourhan tried to have another family, so, for now, we will go and see how Nourhan's social life is going.

FADE IN (NAT SOUND of the restaurant) FADE OUT

NZ : "It is the weekend, finally I finished all my papers and I'm hanging out now with my friends, we are sitting in an Indian restaurant in the fifth settlement, in new Cairo , it is called Maharaja, I usually go to this restaurant when I'm craving Indian food" (:17)

FADE IN (00:00-00:14 from the beginning of Blues Infusion song) FADE OUT

Well, let's go back in time and see what happened in the past with the Egyptian women. Qasim Amin was an Egyptian jurist and one of the founders of the Egyptian national movement that called for the equality between men and women and to be more specific, he called for the women independence. At the beginning of the 1990s, Amin believed that the liberation of women will liberate the Egyptian society. Amin wrote a book called: "The liberation of Women " in 1899, in his book, he put a huge emphasis on women's education. He wrote another book called "The New Women " that also targeted women's freedom.

FG: "I found this to be a really good experience to give me the ability to decide what I want to do, to have the ability to think depending on myself and not on my parents or the family or on the relatives, so it was a really good experience personality wise"

Looking at the economic perspective, according to the Global Gender Gap Index, women in Egypt participates in the labor force market with 26 percent, and according to the International Monetary fund (IMF), raising the female labor force participation rate would increase the Gross Domestic Product of Egypt by 34 percent.

MK : "I think there aren't any enough jobs to go around you know, and you have to be qualified, and also if you want to maintain your life at certain standards, I mean if you stricken out on your own, you are going to have to make sacrifices in that respect" (:15)

Well, back to our story, Fatma Gamal has more to tell us about her life, and especially, about her relatives.

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FG : "I am from the middle social class so whenever I talk about this with my family, it leaves a bad impression, why am I staying on campus, I should stay home as long as I am in the same city ,you know ,they trust me and they know I'm not doing any bad things but they prefer

me staying at home and I don't see any sense in this ,it doesn't make any sense because I am in the same city I have to stay home , I don't have to do anything just because the social rules said so”

Well, the issue of young women's independence will remain debatable especially in the Egyptian society, but, we hope that in the near future the society will be more welcoming to give the young women their full independence.

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MUSIC FADE OUT*

This audio documentary was produced Mahy Mohamed and Engy Elzakazeky for the audio production course at the American University in Cairo, taught by professor Kim Fox in the Spring semester of 2018.Special thanks to Fatma Gamal, Nourhan Zayed and professor Munnira Khayyat and the credits to Christmas eve, stuff, blue infusion,acoustic and Dure Marie songs.The NAT sounds are collected by Engy Elzakazeky .