

# Good essay on egypt cultural dimensions

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Egypt has one of the oldest cultural histories. It has even been named one of the most prominent historical site attracting millions of tourists each year. It was one of the countries to get civilization. Its complex and stable culture has been used to influence the development of other cultures such as the African, European and Middle East. This has also been brought by occupation of this country by people of various origins. An example is the Nubians of South Sudan to the south, Egyptians forming the largest percentage, Greeks and the Turks. Their religion which is basically Islam has contributed a great deal in the shaping of their culture since it has very strict expectations of its followers.

This culture is expressed in form of sports, music, social lives, dressing and exchange of greetings and mode of addressing meetings. However, its culture is being eroded slowly by the on come of westernization. Culture plays a very big role in a society. It gives people a sense of belonging and unites them. It also instils morality in the people since everybody looks out for the other. Egypt has a very rich culture which distinguishes them from other nations and is potrayed in music, social festivals, sports and common ettiquete.

Sports are very appreciated in Egypt since they bring a lot of people together. Football is the main sport that the people of this nation love. It has advanced to great levels since the government has taken the upper hand in financing the football clubs. The rich oil tycoons have also been said to finance these clubs. Most of their players do not even venture into playing for other nations like the English Premier Leagues and La Liga since they are well paid at home. The country has a great national team called the

pharaohs which was formed in 1921. This team has been ranked the best in Africa. It has proved its excellence by winning the African cup of nations seven times, three of which were in a row (Mazhar 2012).

It has also been known to be the first African football team to join FIFA. It was even ranked the ninth best team in the world in 2010. History has shown that this sport has always been held in high esteem point this country. For instance, it was the first country in Africa to play in the World Cup in 1934. It also has a record in the World Military Cup where it has won five times. The Mubarak regime has even been constantly accused by the Egyptians of using football to make people forget the real issues facing them ( Mazhal 2012). These show how football is appreciated in this country.

There is a local Egyptian premier league called the Etisalat Premier League named after the sponsors. When the sponsors changed to Vodafone, the name changed to Vodafone Premier League. The teams enjoying most of the support are El Ahly and El Zamalek. They have some of the most celebrated players in the country. They seem to be the only teams competing since they always take the top two positions. They have a total of 27 stadiums in the country where these games are held. These teams enjoy support from non Egyptian fans across Middle East. These teams have had a great falling since the onset of the political uprisings in the country.

Other teams with a base in Egypt include; basketball, handball, squash, tennis and roller hockey. Earlier on, this country was famous for boxing, wrestling and weight lifting. Sports have played a big role in uniting the people of Egypt and its hoped that after the infamous political uprisings, they will still remain highly placed by the locals. A lot of effort is being put in place

to grow these games into big investments.

Egypt is a Muslim country and its dressing code is considered as conservative due to their religious beliefs. The many tourists visiting this country holding great culture are almost expected to follow these dressings' codes. Though there are no rules dictating this, the stares and comments that are got from the locals signify that they do not like indecent dressing. They are expected to dress in long skirts and dress at least covering up to the knees. Indecency is considered immoral and one brings shame to their family if found dressed in appropriately. Their clothing has a lot of attachment to the traditional wear.

The men have no big issues concerning their dressing. The only obligation they have is not to wear tightly fitting clothes or display their wealth through dressing. The accepted clothes are just a normal trouser, a shirt or a T-shirt. However, it is very uncommon to find men wearing short shorts. This is not allowed unless it is on the beaches. The most common type of dressing they have is the galabiya. This is the loose white robe they wear to cover up their inner clothes which fits up to the ankle. They also wear turbans on their heads or the Arafat kafiya which is red and white in color. The blue and white head scarf is called the Arafat kofiya. All these are worn to observe their religious obligations.

Women have various concerns about their dressing. Normally, a Muslim woman is expected to be well covered from head to toe (Michael 2007). The women wear the long and roomy abaya. This covers all the clothes they are

wearing inside. They then cover their hair with a veil or hijab which is also known as the burka. This is according to the Muslim belief that the only uncovered parts of a woman should be the hands and face only. These dressing codes are changing with time due to the on come of civilization and westernization. The non Muslim women, mostly Nubians wear long dresses formed of horizontal fabrics of different layers. These dresses are added a transparent layer when the people are attending festivals like weddings. Islamists are calling on the women to cover themselves fully and reject the western influence.

The climate of this region also dictates the dressing. Since most of it is covered with a desert, it is always hot and sandy. This calls for light clothing and low heels. This is why the cotton type of clothing is most rampant here. This country also produces cotton therefore the local clothes industry is the biggest market of this product. It is very rare to find the locals wearing heels as everyone almost wears sandals.

Egypt has been named as one of the countries with very low gender equality. As reported in the Egypt Daily Nation (2013), it has been ranked as position 126 out of 135 by the World Economic Forum. It is said to be struggling with issues concerning economics, education and politics and creating a balance between the women and men in these fields. In the economic sector, women are usually discriminated. In informal settings, the women are paid fewer wages than their male counterparts regardless of whether they are doing the same work. This pulls down the finances of women since they are not paid

what they deserve. There are also careers which women were forbidden to take but this is changing with time.

Women are seen to be most affected by the low literacy levels. Most families prefer sending the boy child to school while the girls are left at home helping their mothers. They are even married off at very tender ages. However, the few women who get a chance to attend school become the most educated than their male counterparts. Research has shown that 65% of the masters and doctoral qualifiers are women. This signifies that if they are given a chance, these women can really excel academically. There have been reports of women being sexually harrassed. This has increased tremendously with the political uprisings. They are gang raped and even beaten mercilessly. When a woman is educated, the whole community is educated. Empowering them economically will grow the country. Great efforts should be put to make sure gender parity is achieved.

Women have also been left out in the political arena of Egypt. For instance, the constituent assembly has no liberal women as members. During the Morsi rule, women were the minority in parliament holding on 8 seats out of the 498. This signified that their leadership outputs were unappreciated and definitely not welcome. Legally too, men are the only people who can pass their Egyptian citizenship to their children while women cannot. This may change due to the various groups and laws that have been put in place to cater for the welfare of women. The Arab uprisings are fighting for womens rights and gender equality. The three forces needed to win this battle

include; Islamic teachings, national gender related reforms and the influence of western perception of womens rights (Megahed 2011).

Their music has taken a big role in shaping their culture. Since history, they believed music was invented by one of their gods called Hathor. Their music has evolved from playing harps, flutes, and clarinets. They mostly performed this music during their festivals and when carrying out rituals. One of their most prominent folk music is the Sufi dhikr which was performed during rituals. It has also been performed during weddings and other traditional festivals.

Their main form of music is the Arabic music. It is very similar to jazz music. The audience of this type of music is expected to participate in the performance where they are expected to clap, sing along and even make requests to the performer to repeat some sections of the music which they love. This country has produced some of the world's most famous Arabic singers. An example is Amr Diab who has produced a hit song “ Habibi” which has been played all over the world.

This music however has a blend of African, Western and Egyptian influences. The pop genre of music has also been prominent being supported mainly by the youth. This music has been known to address issues facing the society such as social and administrative issues. The world renowned belly dance is said to have originated from this country. Locally it is known as the Raqs Sharqi. The religious aspect of the Egyptian people has also influenced the creation of religious music. The Coptic Church has made it possible to have

the liturgical music; the Muslims have the Koran recitations and the mystical branch of Islam's have the Sufi music.

Greetings has been the oldest form of showing affection to people you love. They are considered to come first before any other form of communication takes place. In Egypt, this display of affection is very common amongst people of the same gender but they cannot be displayed in public by people of different sexes or even a married couple. The types of greetings common in this place are exchange of hugs, handshakes and kisses on the cheeks. This is however limited to people of the same sex especially in public.

When a person is in a hurry, they do a scout salute if they want to greet their acquaintances. They place their hand over the forehead. When men are exchanging handshakes, they are expected to clasp each other strongly. They can even use both hands to show how close they are. At times, this handshake can be accompanied by a soft touch on the elbow or shoulder of the person they are greeting. These types of handshakes are not extended to women. Surprisingly, the left hand is considered unclean in the Arab world. One should never greet the others using this hand. It is common knowledge in the country that unknown men should never approach a woman in Egypt. They are expected to ask other men whatever they wanted to inquire about the lady.

These greetings also were based on a person's social class and religion. The people are divided into three social classes; upper, middle and lower. These



statuses are brought by the wealth ones family has. It is rare that people of different social classes interact. In any type of greeting, the woman is supposed to extend her hand first. If she did not, the man is expected to bow down his head as a form of greeting. Cigarettes are also used as a form of hospitality when offered. Flowers are however not acceptable since they are reserved for weddings and the ill.

Hospitality has been part of the Egyptian culture for a long time and they are expected to extend this to their guests at all times. The Egyptians are known to refuse offers made to them the first time. One should repeat the offer severally so that they accept it. It is a moral obligation to help others. A typical example is when foreigners visit their country and get lost. One may find a crowd of people gathered around him to offer direction and help whenever possible. This has earned them a reputation of being very kind and helpful.

The social activities of the Egyptians are filled with festivals and rituals. There are various rituals which are used to mark different stages in life. One of them is the naming ceremony which takes place one week after a child is born. It is mostly a family affair to welcome the newborn into the family. Circumcision is usually the next step. Both the male and female undergo circumcision before they reach puberty. The boys undergo this while they are still infants. Marriage is also celebrated since it is taken as a great achievement in life. Death is also part of the social activities that bring people together. The Egyptians mostly bury their dead one day after death. Condolences are given immediately. They are then given again after forty days and then after a year. These festivals bring people and families

together therefore creating strong family bonds.

Since it is a Muslim country, the greatest festival is obviously the Ramadhan. These people fast from morning to evening worshipping Prophet Mohammed. During this month of fasting, the non Muslims are not expected to fast. However, they are prohibited from smoking, chewing gum, eating, drinking and smoking in public. Another religious festival is the Moulid an -Nabi. This is the celebration of the birth of the prophet Mohammed. It is accompanied by song, dances and a lot of fan fare. The spring festival is also celebrated by all Egyptians regardless of their religious affiliation. These Egyptian families set out to sail the River Nile and while doing this exchange greetings with the other families they meet there.

The sharia law is used in the country to solve matters. They follow the Koran teachings to determine what is right and the wrong. This law has been known to be harsh to social offenders. Stoning to death has been passed as a sentence because of immorality. This shows a good social life is encouraged. When addressing people, the first thing a person should do is greet them. One address people by their given name and normally a title can be used. Some of these titles include; ' hajj' for a person who has just arrived from Mecca, ' muhandis' for engineer, ' duktor' for a doctor or 'am' for all men. It is considered impolite to call someone by their name only.

The most common type of greeting is " Assalamo Alaikum". This is an Islamist greeting which means, " peace be with you and God's blessings be with you." This is to encourage Muslims to spread their love and peace message wherever they go. It can be used in any part of the day and has no gender restriction.

Age also matters a lot when addressing people. The young people are expected to show great respect for the elderly. They are not required to answer back when told something by the elderly. They should also not remain seated when an elderly is standing up. It is also disrespectful when a person goes back on his word. When a person is sitting down, they are advised not to sit with their legs crosses. This is because showing the sole of one's shoes is considered an insult.

Conclusively the Egyptian culture has proved to be very diverse. This has been brought by the fact that the habitants of this country come from different ethnic collections and have different religious beliefs. Their most celebrated form of enjoyment is sports with football being the most celebrated. Their football teams have done incredibly well both at home in the African Cup Football and also worldwide in the world cup. Since it is a conservist country, the dressing modes are closely monitored. The most affected gender is the women. Since they are Muslims they are expected to dress modestly so as not to shame their families. They are expected to cover themselves fully from head to toe exposing only their hands and faces. Music has also been part of their lives for a long time.

The most common types of music are Arabic and the pop songs. It has been a home to some of the most prominent Arabic musicians who have spread their impact all over the world. Greetings are part of the etiquette taught to everyone since an early age. Lack of greetings when one meets somebody for the first time is regarded as being impolite. The woman is expected to be the first to extend her hand in greetings. Handshakes and cheek kisses are not allowed to people of different genders. This country, just like the rest of

the African nations, is struggling with gender equality. Their women are oppressed and are not expected to be vocal in the society. Some are not taken to school which makes their bright future cut short. They are also not appreciated in the political world where very few are elected as leaders. The Egyptians have also had a record of being quite polite and helpful. All these diverse cultures have definitely made Egypt a hot stopping point for tourists who want to enjoy this rich African culture.

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