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STUDENT ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY IN EGYPTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION; CASE STUDY: FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, CAIRO UNIVERSITY.

A Thesis Submitted to the

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STUDENT ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY IN EGYPTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION; CASE STUDY: FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, CAIRO UNIVERSITY.

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Supervised by Professor Laila El Baradei

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore stakeholders’ perceptions of an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education. The significance of the study stemmed from both theoretical and practical considerations. Theoretical considerations originated from the dearth of studies tackling student academic freedom, while practical considerations, as reported by local and international non-governmental organizations, were related to infringements on student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education. The study’s main research question was: How do students and faculty members perceive elements of an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education? In this context, the study explored the perceptions of students and faculty members regarding the parameters of student academic freedom along with the elements of an effective policy to protect such freedom. The case study selected for this study was the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS), Cairo University. A qualitative methodology was adopted, where 25 in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of students and faculty members. The collected data demonstrated that participants conceptualized student academic freedom in terms of three elements: freedom to conduct research, freedom of expression inside classroom, and freedom to select specialization and courses. In addition, participants referred to a number of internal and external sources of threat to student academic freedom in FEPS. Internal sources of threat included pedagogical methods, political indoctrination, and professors’ authority. External sources of threat comprised lack of university autonomy, climate of fear, restrictions on data collection, and imposed red-lines. To eliminate sources of threat, participants put forth a number of suggested policies and solutions which included: providing a legal protection for faculty and student academic freedom, embedding academic freedom in FEPS internal regulations, and raising awareness on academic freedom issues. Based on previous literature, international experiences, and interview data, the study suggested a number of recommendations regarding an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education. Recommendations included multiple policy levels and actors and covered Higher Education policies, FEPS internal policies and regulations, civil and political rights and freedoms, and raising awareness and advocacy.
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Chapter One: Introduction

I. Introduction

Academic freedom is an essential part of the educational process in universities. It enables universities to fulfil their role as an engine of social progress by enabling a space that allows for the expression of diverse views, critical minds and creative endeavours. The freedom of faculty to teach and students to learn without arbitrary restrictions and censorship constitutes the essence of academic freedom. For faculty members to fulfil their role, their freedom to research, publish, teach, and express their views on any subject within their professional specialization has to be protected. Although literature on academic freedom has been overwhelmed with protecting faculty members, academic freedom is about the freedom of scholars including students. Since scholarship is understood in terms of the pursuit of knowledge as a common goal, it necessarily includes both professors and students (Macfarlane, 2011).

In Egypt, both faculty and student academic freedoms have been restricted and constrained, imposing barriers to universities in accomplishing their educational mission. While academic freedom is often presented as an absolute and universal concept, there is much elusiveness regarding the understandings and perceptions of the concept in different contexts. Accordingly, an important step in designing a policy for protecting academic freedom in Egyptian universities is to understand how it is understood and perceived by the subjects it is supposed to protect as well as the stakeholders who are responsible for designing and implementing such policy. In this context, a sound and effective policy that protects student academic freedom in Egyptian universities is best informed by the perceptions and experiences of two main stakeholders: students and faculty members. The research study aims to investigate stakeholders’ perceptions
of the characteristics of an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher education. This is conducted through exploring how students and faculty members at one of the Egyptian public faculties: Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS), Cairo University, define and interpret student academic freedom and perceive the elements of an effective policy protecting such freedom. The study adopts a qualitative research design where 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of students and faculty members. Based on previous literature and data collected through interviews, the study proposes policy recommendations pertaining to protecting student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education generally and FEPS specifically.

The research begins with stating the research problem, main research question and sub-questions as well as the study conceptual framework in chapter one. Chapter one also presents a discussion of the methodological tools employed for answering the research questions and meeting research objectives. Chapter two then proceeds with an overview for the trends in the literature on academic freedom, the features of the emerging and new trends and the gaps in the studies on academic freedom. It also examines academic freedom policies in the Egyptian universities and ends with presenting the most important international experiences regarding academic freedom policies. Chapter three presents and analyzes data collected from semi-structured interviews while organizing them into main themes and sub-themes and linking them to previous literature on academic freedom. Finally, chapter four summarizes and interprets the study findings. It also proposes some recommendations based on the study conclusions regarding elements of effective policies for student academic freedom.
II. Statement of the problem

Freedom of inquiry, expression, and association inside universities is considered a part of the general civil liberties in a democratic society. In light of the relationship between academic freedoms and democracy, questions of academic freedom emerge during periods of transition and democratization aspiration. In the aftermath of Egypt’s 25\textsuperscript{th} of January revolution, demands for legal and institutional reforms that would ensure academic freedom in Egyptian higher education emerged. Prior to the revolution, Egyptian universities have imposed severe restrictions on both faculty and students’ academic freedom. The 2005 Human Rights Watch report showed how violations to academic freedom in Egyptian universities, conducted by both state and non-state actors, created a climate of fear where members of academic community engaged in a process of self-censorship that stifled creative thinking. A wide array of state repression tools were employed to control academic freedom including police presence on campuses, political appointments of university presidents and deans, and restrictive laws and regulations for censorship. Those tools were restricting academic freedoms in the classroom through censoring book courses and class discussions, while interfering with conducting academic research through permit requirements and trials. Also, violations extended to restricting on-campus student activities and violently dispersing demonstrations. After the 25\textsuperscript{th} of January revolution, few reform efforts were directed towards protecting faculty and students’ academic freedom in Egyptian universities. Three main gains were achieved in this regard. The first gain was the enactment of a pre-revolution court verdict stipulating the withdrawal of security forces from university campuses. In addition, universities amended their internal rules to make sure student activities and elections were free from security intrusion. Finally, the law for selecting university administrative positions was amended to give faculty members the right to
elect their deans while neutralizing security influences (Abd Rabou, 2014; Lindsey, 2012). However, after four years of the eruption of the revolution, reforms were reversed with even some dimensions of academic freedom becoming more restricted and limited than before 2011. In June 2014, the law for electing university leaders was re-amended giving the Egyptian president the right to appoint university presidents and deans from a list of three candidates. Moreover, police forces presence on campuses was maintained through monitoring and indirect involvement in university affairs as well as violent dispersals of student protests (Lindsey, 2012).

In addition to state encroachments on academic freedom, students face additional source of restriction stemming from professors’ censorship and the nature of the learning process inside universities. Rote learning, the dependence on the professor as the main source of knowledge and lack of interactive learning techniques that encourage student participation and critical thinking are factors that limit student’s freedom to learn, to express their views and to conduct research. A preliminary assessment of the status of student academic freedom in the Egyptian universities could be measured by examining constitutional and national legal protection of academic freedom as well as the internal executive regulations and policies articulated by universities and faculties. The lack of constitutional and legislative frameworks as well as university regulations that define and protect both faculty and student academic freedoms is one of the main indicators for the poor protection and health of academic freedoms in the Egyptian universities.

Accordingly, the first step to protect student academic freedom is to articulate a formal clear policy that defines and provides the sources of protection along with the limits of such freedom. Since the stakeholders’ perceptions, knowledge of and experience with a formal policy affect their degree of adherence to and enforcement of such policy, a sound student academic freedom policy should be informed by the opinions of its main stakeholders. In this context, Lubell (2003)
referred to the importance of “perceived policy effectiveness” by arguing that if a policy was perceived effective by its stakeholders this would facilitate attraction of political and administrative resources and urge stakeholders to cooperate (Lubell, 2003, p.309). This suggests the need for the current study which explores and compares the perceptions of students and faculty members regarding the parameters of student academic freedom along with the elements of an effective policy to protect such freedom. The case study selected for the study is the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS), Cairo University. The study aims to explore the perceptions, meanings, attitudes, interpretations and experiences of students and faculty members at FEPS regarding the concept of academic freedom and its protection policies. This exploratory approach prevents the researcher from jumping into pre-determined assumptions about student academic freedom and suggesting corresponding policies to protect students and foster their academic freedom based on such assumptions. In this context the main research question is:

**How do students and faculty members perceive elements of an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education?**

And the study’s sub-questions are:

- To what extent do the existing constitutional, legal and institutional frameworks in Egypt protect student academic freedom?
- What are the main features of the international experiences on student academic freedom policies?
- How do students and faculty members at the Faculty of Economic and Political Science (FEPS) perceive and define the parameters of student academic freedom?
• What are the main sources of threat to student academic freedom, as perceived by FEPS students and faculty members?

• How do students and faculty members perceive the components and characteristics of a sound student academic freedom policy?
III. Conceptual framework

Despite the apparent international agreement on the importance of academic freedom and its central value to the well-functioning of the modern university, there is much disagreement among different scholars and international organizations regarding the definition and parameters of such freedom. As elaborated by Bligh (1982), cited in (Burgess, 2013, p. 35), “everyone seems to agree that academic freedom should be defended, but there is little agreement or clarity about what it is. Unless we know what it is and can justify it, we will neither defend it convincingly nor exercise it responsibly”. The elusiveness that is associated with academic freedom necessitates presenting the historical origins of the concept, its different theoretical definitions, as well as the international agreements and covenants defining and protecting academic freedom.

The historical origin of the concept of academic freedom is related to the emergence of the modern university in Europe. The first formal recognition for the freedom of individual academicians was in the Dutch universities in the years 1574-1575. However, the articulation and development of the modern concept of academic freedom is associated with the emergence of the German universities. The German concept of academic freedom had two elements: Lernfreiheit (freedom to learn) and Lehrfreiheit (freedom to teach). Lernfreiheit (learning freedom) referred to freedom of students to learn with the absence of administrative restraints in the learning process. This included freedom of students to choose the university at which they would study, to select the courses they would like to learn, and to be exempt from all constraints except final examinations. Lehrfreiheit (teaching freedom) referred to freedom of faculty members to teach and do research without restrictions imposed from the State or administrative interference in the teaching process. This included the right of professors to design the syllabus,
to select methods of teaching, and to choose the subjects they were going to teach based on their professional experience. They were free from all constraints except those related to professional values and neutrality in dealing with controversial issues (Locher, 2013; Burgess, 2013; Borhan, 2009; Rupe, 2005; Metzger, 1955).

The concept of academic freedom was transmitted to universities in the United States through American scholars who returned from Germany in the late 19th century (Locher, 2013). The influence of the German concept became evident after the formation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915 and its publication of the first Declaration of principles. The AAUP has been concerned with issues of academic freedom and tenure. The AAUP’s definition for faculty academic freedom included three basic rights: freedom of faculty to conduct research and publish their results, freedom to teach and discuss their subject in the classroom, and freedom to express their opinions outside university without being subjected to institutional censorship or discipline (AAUP 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure). In 1967, the AAUP issued a “Joint Statement on Rights and freedoms of students” which expanded academic freedom to students. The AAUP defined student academic freedom as “freedom to learn depending upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community”. In this context, students have the right to free expression in the classroom, to take reasoned exception to the data presented, to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, and to be judged solely on an academic basis not on opinions.

In addition, the concept of academic freedom was defined by different international organizations and conferences. For example, the World University Service (WUS), an international non-governmental organization dedicated for protecting the right to education,
issued the Lima Declaration of Academic Freedom in 1988. The Lima declaration defined academic freedom as “freedom of members of an academic community individually or collectively in pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, production, creation, lecturing and writing”. Members of academic community include all those teaching, studying, doing research, and working at universities. Another definition for academic freedom was provided by the first annual Global Colloquium of University Presidents in 2005 as: “the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead”. Moreover, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, related to the right to education, was interpreted in 1999 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to include and protect academic freedoms. The committee asserted that the right to education could not be fulfilled in the absence of the academic freedom of staff and students. It defined academic freedom as: “freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing”. In the same manner, the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic freedom and Social responsibility of academics (1990) and the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility (1990) sought to define and protect academic freedoms.

It is worth mentioning that declarations and statements addressing academic freedom associated such freedom with university autonomy and independence either as part of academic freedom or one of the necessary conditions for protecting faculty and student academic freedom. Accordingly, some literature differentiated between individual and institutional academic freedoms. Individual academic freedoms refer to freedoms of members of the academic
community while institutional academic freedoms denote independence of institutions of higher education. However, the general trend is differentiating between the concept of academic freedom as representing freedoms of faculty members and students and the concept of university autonomy as representing one of the prerequisites for protecting individual academic freedom. The Lima Declaration stipulated that institutions of higher education should enjoy a high degree of autonomy in decisions related to administration and determination of policies of education, research, allocation of resources and other associated activities. The state should not interfere with the autonomy of universities and should prevent interference by other forces of society. Thus university autonomy reflects the independence and control of the university over managing its internal affairs without interference from outside forces whether state or non-state actors. In this context, university autonomy is considered one of the important conditions for maintaining and protecting academic freedoms of the academic community.

Based on the aforementioned definitions, student academic freedom refers to freedom of students within higher education institutions to pursue and transmit knowledge through research, study, discussion, production, writing and publishing in a hostile-free environment without interference or being subjected to punishment. It is worth mentioning, however, that components and elements of student academic freedom are susceptible to contentious views. Some trends provide a wide definition for the components of both student and faculty academic freedoms. In this regard, academic freedoms are not restricted to activities directly related to the educational process such as teaching and research. Rather, they include other on-campus freedoms such as freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. The AAUP exemplified this trend by including wide array of rights and freedoms while stating “the minimal standards of academic freedom of students” in the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of
students. In addition to freedom of expression inside classroom, students’ rights and freedoms included freedom of association, freedom of expression through activities and conferences, participation in institutional government, and freedom of student publications. Following the same trend, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on the repression of academic freedoms in Egyptian universities provided a wide definition for academic freedom. It defined academic freedom of members of academic community as comprising four freedoms: freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly (HRW, 2005).

On the other hand, there are views that tend to narrowly define the concept of academic freedom and restrict it to freedoms and rights directly related to the educational process. For example, the first annual Global Colloquium of University Presidents in 2005 in its statement on academic freedom asserted that academic freedom was related to the activities of faculty and students that were “closely related to or impact upon the educational, scholarly, and research purposes of university”. In the same context, the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), an Egyptian association concerned with defending academic freedoms and student rights, differentiated between academic freedom, university autonomy, on-campus freedoms, and general freedoms. For AFTE, academic freedom is a right that is enjoyed by faculty members and students inside Higher Education institutions and includes freedom of research, publishing, teaching and discussion inside classroom. However, freedoms of association, assembly, and demonstration of members of academic community are considered among the general political and civil rights they should enjoy as citizens. Such freedoms do not belong to academic freedom but their situation negatively or positively affect academic freedom.

It became evident through the aforementioned discussions that student academic freedom constitutes a controversial and nebulous concept that lacks a unanimously agreed upon
definition. In this context, the study sought to reach a definition for student academic freedom that was grounded in perceptions and views of students and faculty members in the Egyptian context instead of imposing a pre-determined definition. Most of interviewed students and faculty members tended to adopt the narrower definition of student academic freedom. They believed that student academic freedom was more related to direct educational activities inside classroom. They differentiated between academic freedom, on-campus freedoms, and university autonomy in the theoretical sense. However, they argued that strong interrelations existed between the three concepts as the status of on-campus freedoms and university autonomy affected the degree of student academic freedom. The study’s definition, as derived from participants’ responses, will be clearer while discussing definition of student academic freedom in Chapter Three.
IV. Research methodology

This section discusses the methodological tools designed and employed for answering the research questions and meeting research objectives. It begins with recalling the main research question and purposes. It then moves on to stating the theory of inquiry adopted by the researcher and the corresponding research design. Moreover, the research methods are described in detail covering the rationale behind the selected methods, their advantages and limitations, and the selection of the study sample. To justify and validate the selected methods, alternative methods are examined and assessed based on their ability to answer the research question. The chapter ends with discussing the researcher’s position and possible sources of subjectivity and biases.

A. Research design and case study

Since the selection of the appropriate research design and methods depends on their ability to answer research questions as validly, objectively, and accurately as possible (Sproull, 1988 as cited in Ghareeb, 2010, p. 84), it is necessary at this stage to recall the research question and objectives. The main research question is: How do students and faculty members perceive elements of an effective policy for student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education?? In this context, the study aims to explore the perceptions, meanings, attitudes, interpretations and experiences of students and faculty members regarding the concept of student academic freedom and its protection policies. The researcher selected Faculty of Economic and Political Science (FEPS) at Cairo University as the case study. FEPS was founded in the academic year 1960/61 at Cairo University. It offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in three main specializations:
Economics, Statistics and Political Science. In addition, FEPS includes two minor specializations: Public Administration and Social Science Computing that were introduced in the year 1990/91. Only graduate degrees are provided for minor specializations. FEPS aims to produce high-ranking graduates in its fields of study. It was the first social science faculty and second faculty at Cairo University to win Accreditation Certificate from National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education. The selection of FEPS as the case study is justified by the nature of its specializations which makes academic freedom issues more significant to explore and study. The study of political and economic systems in the Egyptian context contains more controversial issues compared to the study of natural sciences as it entails analysing and evaluating state policies, and hence increases probability of being susceptible to repression.

The suitable research design for studying human experiences, interpretations and perceptions is a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design matches both the researcher’s interpretivist theory of inquiry and selected study objectives. The researcher believes that reality is socially constructed by people and that understanding such reality is best attained through exploring people’s experiences, interpretations and language. Lin (1998) demonstrates that qualitative interpretivist research has the objectives of examining what general concepts mean in specific contexts and revealing the explicit and implicit cognitive frames people adopt for such concepts. This coincides with the researcher’s objective of exploring the cognitive frames, perceptions and meanings held by stakeholders regarding academic freedom.
B. Research methods

Within qualitative methods, in-depth semi-structured interviews were selected as the most suitable method for exploring stakeholders’ attitudes and experiences of academic freedom. Interviews are most suitable when subjective opinions of participants are the focus of the research. Interviews are an effective tool for exploring the stakeholders’ academic freedom experience through analyzing words and expressions selected by stakeholders to define, interpret and attach meaning to academic freedom. Moreover, individual face-to-face interviews help building the trust between participants and the researcher and minimize peer pressures. This is extremely important as academic freedom issues, especially regarding encroachments and transgressions are sensitive ones requiring a comfortable and safe environment for participants to express their views freely. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher had some pre-determined questions to guide the dialogue about participants’ perceptions and interpretations of academic freedom. However, such questions acted only as guidance for the researcher to focus and narrow participants’ responses along the academic freedom theme. Accordingly, the researcher was not restricted to certain wording or sequence to pose questions and in many instances participants leaded the interview into new directions. In order to be able to answer research questions, three main questions were asked to participants in the conducted interviews:

- How do you define and perceive student academic freedom?
- What are the sources of threat to student academic freedom in FEPS specifically and Egyptian Higher Education generally?
- What are the elements of an effective policy to protect student academic freedom?

Sampling was conducted theoretically rather than statistically. Hence, the study sample was a criterion and purposeful sample confined to students and faculty members who were interested
in academic freedom, had insights on opportunities and threats of academic freedom in FEPS, and were willing to share their personal understandings and experiences of academic freedom through the study. With regard to recruiting students, the researcher relied on two students as "gatekeepers" who recommended students that were interested in participating in the study. The researcher kept conducting interviews until reaching data saturation. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 students representing different specializations (Political science, economics, and statistics) and academic years. All of the 15 students were enrolled students at the time the study was conducted except four students who graduated from FEPS in 2015. The four graduate students were political science students. Of the 11 undergraduate students, seven students were at political science department, three students were at economics department, and one student was at statistics department. Concerning academic years, nine students were fourth year students, one student was a second year student, and one student was a third year student. It is evident that most students who participated in the interviews were political science and fourth-year students. In this context, it is important to point out that the study sample was not a representative but rather a purposive sample. Students who were interested in defending academic freedom were the target of the study as they would be able to give their insights and perceptions of policies for student academic freedom.

Concerning faculty members, since the researcher is a teaching assistant at FEPS, she had insider knowledge of faculty members who were interested in defending student academic freedom. Moreover, interviewed students recommended faculty members whom they believed were supporting student academic freedom. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 faculty and assistant staff members representing different academic specializations, academic ranks and ideological backgrounds. Eight participants were faculty members while two
participants were assistant staff members. Five members were affiliated to political science department; four members were affiliated to public administration department, and one member was affiliated to statistics department. As was the case with students’ sample, faculty members’ sample was a purposive and not representative one. Through observation and discussion, the researcher noticed that some faculty members were recognizing academic freedom as a right that was confined to faculty members and not students. Consequently, such faculty members were excluded from the sample and participant faculty members were those who believed in protecting student academic freedom. Conducting interviews and collecting data took three months from 3 January 2016 until 3 April 2016.

For all the 25 participants, the purpose of the study was explained clearly and confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study were stated. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to refer to participants during data collection, analysis and write up. When quoting a participant, only general information was disclosed. Any personal information that might make the participant identifiable were not disclosed and remained confidential. Most interviews were conducted in a safe and closed office, mainly inside FEPS, where no third party could interfere and breach the privacy of participants. Only the researcher had access to the transcripts and data collected during the interviews.

C. Considering alternative methods

While a positivist quantitative approach could be an alternative research design for studying students’ academic freedom, it does not suit the study’s objectives and questions. A positivist quantitative research design entails dealing with social phenomenon as an objective reality by employing numbers and calculations and following predetermined procedures. Lin (1998) argues
that positivist research aims to reach general propositions and causal relationships that can be generalized and tested against various contexts, times and spaces. On the contrary, the researcher aims to explore and deeply understand the unique experiences, attitudes and interpretations of stakeholders at FEPS regarding academic freedom rather than seeking general propositions on academic freedom. Moreover, positivist quantitative research excludes the interpretive and subjective dimensions of social phenomena under study. This contradicts the researcher’s objective of exploring and deeply describing the lived experiences of academic freedom as shared and interpreted by FEPS students and faculty members.

D. Researcher’s position and possible sources of subjectivity and biases

An important source of threat to reliability and validity of qualitative research is the researcher’s own influence and biases. The study is meant to reflect the essence of participants’ experiences as they exist and not as perceived by the researcher. However, qualitative studies acknowledge that absolute objectivity is unfeasible and that the researcher’s interpretation is part of the research process where the researcher makes sense of what is expressed by participants. Accordingly, the main challenge is to be aware of and specify the possible sources of the researcher’s influence, biases and personal interpretations instead of assuming absolute objectivity. In this context, it is important to discuss the researcher’s position and the ways where her own experiences might influence collection, interpretation and analysis of data.

The researcher’s position in the study has both privileged and non-privileged dimensions. The researcher studied Political Science at FEPS for four years and works now as teaching assistant at Public Administration department within the faculty. The privileged dimension of this position is that the researcher easily gained access to students and faculty members to collect data and
conduct interviews. In addition, being an “insider” and faculty member would minimize chances that faculty administration and members would take study results and findings offensively. In this context, the researcher’s position would add credibility and trustiness to the study findings in the eyes of faculty administration and members. On the other hand, the researcher’s position may have influenced interpretation and analysis of data. The researcher recalled her own experience of academic freedom both as student and teaching assistant at FEPS while listening to students’ responses during interviews. This may have affected the researcher’s observations and interpretations of students’ experiences of academic freedom. In addition, the researcher’s belief in the importance and centrality of academic freedom to the educational process inside universities may have been indirectly transmitted to students and affected their responses.
Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter Two aims to provide the study with an overview for the trends in the literature on academic freedom, to identify the features of the emerging and new trends, and to specify the gaps in the studies on academic freedom. Accordingly, the study will situate the research question within the context of the specified gaps. The study divides the literature on academic freedom into three categories: the theoretical perspective, the historical-legal perspective and the interpretive perspective focusing on faculty perceptions and interpretations of academic freedom. In the following section, the literature review proceeds with examining academic freedom policies in the Egyptian universities. Finally, it ends with presenting the most important international experiences regarding academic freedom policies.

I. Perspectives of literature on academic freedom

A. Theoretical perspective

The philosophical underpinnings and justifications for the concept of academic freedom constitute the essence of the theoretical writings on academic freedom. Since the emergence of the concept and until the present time various scholars (Dewey, 1902 (as cited by Fischer); Capen, 1948; Fuchs, 1963; Fischer, 1977; Davis, 1986; Ladenson, 1986; Metzger, 1993; Dworkin, 1996; Moodie, 1996; Shils, 1997; Finkin and Post, 2009; Nelson, 2010; Wilson, 2014) have presented diverse and contending conceptualizations of academic freedom. Wilson (2014) classified the theoretical understandings of academic freedom into three models: the gentleman scientist model (as adopted by John Dewey and Edward Shils), the professional model (Finkin and Post, Stanley Fish) and the liberty model (Cary Nelson). The gentleman scientist model views the proper conduct and scientific standards of faculty members as conditions for academic
freedom. In this context, Shils has defined academic freedom as a qualified right that protects only the academic work of faculty members and is enjoyed conditionally on compliance of faculty with obligations, rules and standards of the academic institution. Alternatively, the professional model relates the right to academic freedom to professional rules and standards. The proper conduct of faculty is replaced by professional rules defined collectively by the academic community. Finkin and Post (2009) has defined academic freedom as the freedom to follow the scholarly profession while adhering to the standards of that profession. Concerning the liberty model of academic freedom, individual rights are emphasized over the collective faculty rights. Political freedom of individuals is the core value and the discussion of controversial issues is encouraged and recommended. In the same manner, Searle (1971) differentiated between the general and special theories of academic freedom. The classical special theory of academic freedom justifies the right to academic freedom by the specific function of universities in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Faculty and student academic freedoms are not general human rights as freedom of expression but special rights that originate from the university particular institutional structures, functions and rules. University is designed for the benefit of society through the production and dissemination of knowledge. And since knowledge production is best attained by being subjected to tests of free inquiry, academic freedom of scholars and researchers has to be protected. On the other hand, the general theory of academic freedom views academic freedom as part of the general civil liberties in a democratic society. Professors and students shall enjoy the same rights of freedom of expression, inquiry, association and publication as enjoyed by citizens in a democratic and free society, except in situations where the fulfilment of the specific academic functions of university requires restrictions on such rights (Searle, 1971).
The overview of the theoretical studies on academic freedom suggests that while academic freedom is often presented as an absolute and universal concept, there is much disagreement between scholars on the understandings and interpretations of the concept.

### B. Historical-legal perspective

Since academic freedom is a legal subject, much of the literature has studied the concept from the legal perspective. Burgess (2013, p. 38) argued that most of the studies on academic freedom have taken the form of historical-legal research which involved a systematic explanation of precedent cases within the law. While having its origins in the German concepts of Lehrfreiheit and Lernfreiheit, most of the literature has concentrated on the historical evolution and legal status of academic freedom in the United States (Lee, 2015; Wilson, 2014; Hutchens and Sun, 2013; Jorgensen and Helms, 2008; Levinson, 2007; Margesson, 2008; Byrne, 2006; Fossey and Wood, 2004; Rabban, 1990; Murphy, 1963). The historical role of the AAUP (American Association of University Professors) in setting academic freedom rules, the constitutional right to academic freedom emerging from the interpretation of the First Amendment, and the analysis of case law and important court opinions were the focus of the historical-legal analysis.

Moreover, the relationship between academic freedom and tenure constituted one of the major issues in studying academic freedom with tenure seen as the institutional protection of academic freedom. Tenure is defined as the right of faculty members to permanent employment with protection against termination without appropriate grounds or due process (Fossey and Wood, 2004). The relationship between academic freedom and tenure is based on the assumption that the protection of academic freedom requires a system that guarantees employment security for faculty members. Being under the threat of dismissal and termination, faculty members would be discouraged to teach and publish unpopular or controversial opinions. Accordingly, protecting
academic tenure through the creation of specific procedural measures to be followed in cases of appointment terminations constitutes the procedural means for achieving the end of academic freedom (Murphy, 1963, p.24). Recent studies (Wilson, 2014; Gerber, 2010; Watkins, 2009) have raised the issue of the increase in part-time, contingent and non-tenured faculty as a result of the corporate restructuring of the university and its implications for academic freedom. Gerber (2010) has tracked the changes introduced in American colleges over the past thirty years. He has demonstrated that while in 1975 full-time faculty members constituted 70 percent of all faculty members and of whom 57 percent enjoyed academic tenure, by 2005 about 48 percent of faculty members became part-time employees and only 32 percent were tenured. Accordingly, contingent faculty members become “employees” rather than professionals who have the benefits of employment security and autonomy. Such lack of employment security and frequent part-time status would encourage them to engage in a process of self-censorship while teaching and researching (Gerber, 2010, p. 21).

The historical legal perspective suggests that academic freedom is a dynamic concept with constitutional and legal frameworks evolving over time and different groups and individuals seeking to control its meaning.
A new trend that focuses on the perceptions and interpretations of faculty members towards academic freedom has begun since the nineties. Keith (1996), in his study on faculty attitudes towards academic freedom, argued that few studies tackled the faculty members’ perceptions of academic freedom. In the same manner, Burgess (2013) made the point that most of the literature on academic freedom tackled the historical and legal dimensions with a limited number of empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative, exploring how individuals interpreted academic freedom within their own environments. Accordingly, some recent studies explored how faculty members perceived and made sense of academic freedom in addition to the factors affecting their satisfaction and attitudes towards academic freedom policies (Burgess, 2013; Locher, 2013; Swezey and Ross, 2011; Barger, 2010; West, 2008; Blanton, 2005; Hanson, 2003; Warner, 1999).

A number of studies have employed qualitative methods in exploring faculty members’ perceptions and experiences. In this regard, Burgess (2013) employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) in exploring how seminary faculty members perceived and made sense of academic freedom. In addition, Hanson (2003) examined tenured faculty members’ perceptions regarding academic freedom using qualitative phenomenological methodology. The same phenomenological methodology was used by Locher (2013) to investigate the perceptions of faculty of colour regarding academic freedom and social identity. On the other hand, some studies have explored academic freedom perceptions of academic freedom using quantitative methodology. Blanton (2005) employed the quantitative methodology of descriptive survey to measures the degree of faculty and administrator knowledge of academic freedom. Barger (2010) explored faculty experiences and satisfaction with academic freedom
policies and practices using a quantitative questionnaire. Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in exploring faculty perceptions of academic freedom was adopted by some researchers in a number of studies. Ghareeb (2010) combined both quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews to describe and analyze faculty members’ definition of academic freedom especially in relation to freedom to conduct and publish research. Also, Keith (1996) adopted a standardized approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data to explore academic freedom definitions, threats, and sources of protection as perceived by faculty members at private institutions. The most significant results concerning faculty attitudes were the differences between faculty members concerning the understanding of academic freedom in addition to the faculty’s reference to the elusiveness of the concept and the difficulty of providing a coherent definition. In addition to exploring faculty perceptions, few studies have tackled administrators’ and students’ understandings and interpretations of academic freedom (Blanton, 2005; Warner, 1999).

D. Gaps in academic freedom literature

While exploring the main trends (theoretical, historical, legal, and interpretive) in the literature on academic freedom, certain gaps can be identified as follows:

Despite the existence of some studies on faculty perceptions towards academic freedom, the theoretical and historical-legal studies still dominate the literature on academic freedom. Moreover, there is a dearth of academic studies on the students’ perceptions and interpretations of academic freedom. Wilson (2014, p. 261) has argued that students’ academic freedom is a contested concept that was understudied in the literature. Likewise, Margesson (2008, 178) has suggested that little attention has been paid to students’ academic rights in the United States.
compared to the faculty academic freedom. He demonstrated the need to conceptualize a student-centred academic freedom that empowers students. Macfarlane (2011) has argued for reframing student academic freedom from a capability perspective. Both Macfarlane and Margesson have criticized the traditional framing of students as vulnerable and susceptible to indoctrination by professors and as subjects whose rights are limited to protection against politicization of the curriculum.

As shown from the abovementioned review of literature, most of the studies have focused on academic freedom in the United States. Wilson (2014, p. 263) has argued that the study of the understandings, interpretations and policies of academic freedom in countries other than the United States has been neglected in the literature on academic freedom. Few studies have examined academic freedom in the developing countries generally and Arab ones specifically. While some recent studies have started to investigate the status of academic freedom in the Arab universities (Derbesh, 2014; Al Madi, 2013; Ghareeb, 2010; Romanowski and Nasser, 2010; Borhan, 2009; Ibrahim, 2008 (as cited by Al-Madi); Sakran, 2001), more studies are needed to deeply examine the legal, historical, and institutional dimensions of academic freedom in the Arab context. Moreover, the importance of studies on faculty and students’ perceptions of academic freedom in Arab universities is significant as perceptions, meanings and interpretations are central while considering concepts with western origins in different contexts.

This study is an attempt to fill the aforementioned gaps in literature on academic freedom by examining perceptions of student academic freedom in one of the Egyptian faculties. Examining perceptions of student academic freedom helps fulfil the gap in literature on perceptions and interpretations generally, and perceptions and interpretations of student academic freedom more specifically. Moreover, selecting an Egyptian faculty responds to the lack of literature on
academic freedom in developing countries and the Arab world. In addition to those general gaps in literature, the study responds to specific gaps relating to the dearth of academic studies on academic freedom policies in Egyptian Higher Education.
II. Academic freedom policies in Egyptian universities

A policy that protects academic freedom in universities consists of four levels: constitutional framework, national legislative frameworks, university and faculty internal regulations and rules, and on-ground practices.

The term “academic freedom” was not mentioned in any of the Egyptian constitutions starting from the 1923 constitution until the current 2014 constitution. However, different constitutions guaranteed freedom of thought and expression with varying degrees of protection and restrictions. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are closely interlinked as free speech is considered the basis of academic freedom. Moreover, academic freedom is a sort of freedom of speech that is an essential condition for the proper functioning of the university (Karran, 2007).

In this context, Article 65 of the 2014 constitution guarantees freedom of thought and opinion for all citizens along with the right to express their opinion through speech, writing, imagery, or any other means of expression and publication. Compared to the previous two constitutions (1971 and 2012 constitutions), Article 65 is considered an improvement on freedom of thought and expression. Article 47 of the 1971 constitution put limits on freedom of expression by confining it within the limits of law. This means that constitutional freedom of expression was restricted by the legal provisions interpreting it. In the 2012 constitution, while Article 45 guarantees freedom of thought and expression without legal limitations, Articles 31 and 44 put some restrictions on freedom of expression by prohibiting insulting or showing contempt toward any human being and all religious messengers.

In addition to freedom of expression, the 2014 constitution protects the independence of universities, guarantees the development of professional skills of faculty members, and ensures
freedom of scientific research. Article 21 stipulates that “the state shall guarantee the 
indipendence of universities and scientific and linguistic academies, and provide university 
education in accordance with international quality standards”. In addition, the state shall ensure 
the development of the academic competencies of faculty members and their assistants and care 
for their financial and moral rights according to Article 22. Article 23 provides a constitutional 
protection for freedom of scientific research.

Concerning legislative frameworks, Egyptian universities operate under the Law organizing 
universities Number 49 for the year 1972 with its amendments and its executive regulation 
issued with decree No. 809 for the year 1975. The Law does not protect neither faculty nor 
student academic freedoms. The Law only mentions the independence of universities through 
Article 1 which stipulates that “the state shall ensure the independence of universities in a way 
that links university education to society’s needs and production”. However, as argued by Sakran 
(2001), the Law provisions that determine the relationship between the state and university as 
well as the jurisdictions of university councils have undermined the principle of university 
independence. Many of the decisions and jurisdictions that should be mandated to university 
councils have been granted to the state through the Minister of Higher education and the 
appointed university rectors. In addition, the Law gave the president the right to appoint 
university rectors. Following the 25th of January revolution, the Law has been amended by the 
Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to give faculty members the right to elect 
university rectors and faculty deans. However, the introduced changes were reversed through a 
presidential decree in 2014 that posed amendments to articles 25 and 43 of Law 49. The new 
amendments stipulate that the president chooses university heads and faculty deans from three 
candidates presented by the Minister of Higher education. The candidates are selected by a
committee of senior professors and appointed by the Minister of Higher education following the approval of the Supreme Council of universities.

With regard to faculty internal rules and regulations, academic freedom rights of both faculty members and students were not guaranteed. In conclusion, the constitutional and legislative frameworks as well as faculty internal rules lacked a direct reference to either faculty or student academic freedom.

The last component of academic freedom policies refers to state on-ground practices, where legislative frameworks and written rules are translated into decisions and practices that directly affect members of the academic community. It is worth mentioning that reports issued by international and local non-governmental practices reflecting on-ground practices of academic freedom tended to include on-campus freedoms (freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression) and university autonomy issues within the realm of academic freedom. While the study differentiates between academic freedom, on-campus freedom and university autonomy, it is important to refer to the status of on-campus freedoms and university autonomy issues as they introduce us to the environment of academic freedom in Egypt.

In this context, we can differentiate between pre- and post-revolution periods. Prior to the 25th of January revolution, academic freedoms of both faculty members and students at the Egyptian universities have been systematically violated and repressed by different governmental tools as reported by the Human Rights Watch (2005). The state utilized police presence on campuses, repressive laws and regulations, and political appointments of university leaders to constrain academic freedoms. Police forces intervened in most of the aspects of university life creating a “climate of fear” on campuses. University guards as well as officers in civilian clothes
scrutinized class discussions, student activities, conferences and publications restricting academic freedoms. They used various tactics to control undesired voices including beating, detaining and intimidating students who crossed the government’s “red lines”. In addition, police forces violently dispersed student protests restricting their freedom of assembly and interfered in student union elections through threatening and intimidating candidates. Despite the issuance of an administrative court verdict stipulating the withdrawal of police forces from university campuses in 2008, police presence was maintained until the ouster of Mubarak in 2011 (Pratt, 2014). Repressive laws and political appointments of university leaders were also used by the government to constrain academic freedoms. The powers given to state-appointed deans under the University law of 1979 allowed them to monitor and control student activities. For example, the “good conduct” requirement stipulated by the Law for student union candidates was utilized by deans to exclude students with Islamist and leftist political inclinations (HRW, 2005).

According to the HRW report, state repression reached every aspect of the educational process inside universities including classroom discussions, research production, student activities and campus protests. The state restricted freedom of opinion and expression during classroom discussions through police and administration oversight. Professors and students interviewed in the report expressed their feeling of being monitored in classrooms and conferences by police forces and deans. Some professors reported cases where deans intervened in lectures and conferences to keep discussion on the acceptable track and maintain order. In addition, students were subjected to an extra level of scrutiny by professors. Students’ freedom to contradict professors’ opinions and question presented data was restricted, producing an educational process that was based on rote learning and recalling professor’s views. The second area of state interference was academic research where the state controlled production of research through
permit requirements. Research entailing large number of surveys and/or interviews had to secure approval by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) which often rejected research on controversial subjects. Student activities including student unions, clubs and other forms of expression were also controlled by security forces and administration. As mentioned before, deans excluded students with political inclinations from running for union elections. Some student candidates reported being intimidated by deans and police forces to withdraw from elections. In some cases, police forces detained candidates until the end of union elections. In addition, security forces monitored other forms of student expression as on-campus exhibitions and confiscated undesired posters and publications. Moreover, security forces restricted freedom of assembly on campus by violently dispersing a number of protests and detaining participants. For example, security forces used tear gas and live bullets to disperse student protests in Alexandria University in 2002 killing one student and wounding 118 others (HRW, 2005).

Following the eruption of the 25th of January revolution, demands were raised by students and faculty members to undertake reforms for fostering university independence and academic freedoms. Three main gains were achieved in this regard. The administrative court ruling stipulating the withdrawal of security forces from university campuses was implemented. In addition, student union elections were conducted freely and Egypt’s National Student Union was restored in 2011 after being prohibited for thirty years. And finally, elections were held in 2012 for positions of presidents and faculty deans who were previously appointed by the government (Abdrabou, 2014; Lindsey, 2012). The post-revolutionary period witnessed an increase in the margin of freedoms on university campuses. Freedoms of expression, assembly and expression of students and professors on campuses reached exceptional levels (Pratt, 2014). Faculty
members freely organized conferences and invited guests without interference from security forces. Students held protests against the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) rule on campuses and called for a general strike in February 2012 (Pratt, 2014).

The aforementioned reforms, however, were not institutionalized into new enabling laws for university regulation (Lindsey, 2012). As a result, reforms were reversed following the ouster of President Morsi in July 2013 and signs of shrinking on-campus freedoms were observed. While the following reported restrictions will be more related to on-campus and political freedoms than academic freedom in the narrower sense, they constitute a hostile environment to academic freedom of both faculty members and students. The academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15 witnessed violent dispersal of student protests by security forces resulting in cases of killings, injuries and arrests among students. The year 2013/14 was described by the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), concerned with documenting violations of academic freedoms and student rights, as the “worst academic year in the history of Egyptian universities in terms of university independence, academic freedoms and student rights”.

According to AFTE, 17 students were killed on public university campuses and/or in their surrounding areas in the academic year 2013/14. The majority of students were killed in Al-Azhar, Cairo and Ain Shams universities as a result of clashes between security forces and students where security forces used “excessive violence” including “lethal force” to disperse student protests, as reported by the Amnesty International (2014). During the same year, AFTE documented 892 cases of detained students and around 374 cases of expelled students. The escalating violence in universities was exploited by the government to give university administration the right to call police forces to enter campuses and disperse protests at the end of 2013. In addition, in February 2014, the government issued a law giving university presidents the
right to expel students who “practice acts of vandalism that obstruct the teaching process, target university facilities or exams, assault individuals or public or private property, incite violence among students, or contribute in any of the aforementioned actions” (Pratt, 2014). Violations of student rights and academic freedoms continued during the academic year 2014/15. According to AFTE, 3 students were killed during that year with one of them being killed by a member of the administrative security (Falcon) in universities. Moreover, university administrations arbitrarily used their disciplinary authority to penalize students for their political activities. The number of disciplinary sanctions documented by AFTE was 523 decisions during the year 2014/15. In the same context, a presidential decision with Law no 136 for the year 2014 was issued stipulating the referral of crimes committed inside public facilities, including universities, to the military courts. As a result, about 89 students were referred to the military courts as reported by AFTE. In addition, in June 2014, the law article for electing university leaders was re-amended giving the Egyptian president the right to appoint university presidents and deans from a list of three candidates. This meant that faculty members lost one of the significant gains they enjoyed in the aftermath of the revolution.

To conclude, while the period following the 25th of January revolution witnessed some on-ground reforms and gains regarding academic freedom and university independence, such reforms were reversed in light of political unrest, escalating violence on campuses and the governmental will to contain and restrict academic freedoms. The lack of a formal policy to protect academic freedom is one of the main reasons for such back off. A clear policy that protects academic freedom would lead to informed and consistent decision making process concerning academic freedom cases and thus enhance the overall functioning of the university.
This suggests the need for the current study which aims to inform the development of a sound student academic freedom policy through exploring the opinions of policy stakeholders.
III. International experiences on academic freedom policies

This section presents the most important international experiences regarding academic freedom policies. It mainly focuses on the European and American experiences in this regard as the origin and development of the concept of academic freedom were closely linked to those experiences.

On the regional level, the importance of academic freedom was recognized in European agreements and charters. For example, the European Universities Association’s 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum mentioned that freedom of research and training was the base of university education. In addition the European Union (EU) Charter of Fundamental Rights stipulated that “arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint. Academic freedom shall be respected” (Karran, 2009). On the national level, in two comparative studies for academic freedom conditions in the EU states, Karran (2007, 2009) showed that most of European countries embedded various degrees of protection for academic freedom in their constitutions and national legislations. Regarding constitutional protection, Karran (2007) differentiated between countries where academic freedom was explicitly protected in the constitution and others where academic freedom protection was derived from the constitutional right to freedom of speech. Constitutions of all of the 23 EU states included in the study (with the exception of the UK with no written constitution) guaranteed the right to freedom of speech. Moreover, academic freedom, including freedom of scientific research and the arts and of teaching, was explicitly protected in 13 EU states reflecting high level of protection. For example, the Spanish constitution guaranteed the right to academic freedom in Article 20 and recognized the autonomy of universities in Article 27. In 8 EU states, constitutional protection for academic freedom was ranked medium as freedom of speech was only stated and academic freedom was indirectly derived from the interpretation of the constitutional right to freedom of speech. In only two countries (UK,
Netherlands) where neither freedom of speech nor academic freedom was explicitly protected in the constitution, constitutional protection for academic freedom was deemed low.

Regarding legal protection, Karran (2007, 2009) demonstrated that all EU states included in the study had specific national legislation protecting academic freedom and/or university autonomy except Greece and Malta. However, countries differed in the level of comprehensiveness provided by the legislative frameworks. The more comprehensive and detailed the information provided by the law on academic freedom, the higher the degree of academic freedom protection it guaranteed. Based on this criterion, legal protection for academic freedom was ranked high in 11 countries, medium in six countries and low in six countries. For example, Czech Republic was among the countries where the higher education law ensured high degree of protection for academic freedom by covering detailed rights. Article 4 of the Czech Act on Higher Education Institutions No. 121/2004 recognized freedom of science, research, and arts, freedom of publishing and freedom of instruction. It also guaranteed the right to learning including free choice of study specialization and freedom of expression in class as well as the right of academic members to elect their representatives. On a different level, the Polish 2005 Higher Education Law provided medium degree of protection of academic freedom by including general and less detailed freedoms. Article 4 of such Law stipulated that institutions of higher education should be guided by principles of freedom of teaching, scientific research and artistic creation.

By examining the constitutional and legislative frameworks, Karran (2007, 2009) concluded that most of EU states included academic freedom in their constitutions and national legislations which reflected their recognition of the importance of academic freedom to education and society in general. He also observed that most of EU countries with the highest level of academic freedom protection were former USSR republics. This reinforced Thoren’s remark that countries
transforming from authoritarian to democratic rule were more likely to include academic freedoms in their new constitutions and laws.

Concerning the American experience, the constitutional protection for academic freedom was indirectly derived from the interpretation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While academic freedom was not mentioned in the text of the First Amendment stating that “Congress shall make no law…abridging the freedom of speech”, American courts including the Supreme Court have referred to the First Amendment rights in protecting and enforcing academic freedoms (Levinson, 2007). The evolution of academic freedom as a constitutional right has begun during the McCarthy era through a series of cases where the Supreme Court codified and recognized academic freedom. Cases revolved around a number of statutes issued by the government to ensure the loyalty of teachers during the cold war era (Jorgenson and Helms, 2008). In Adler v. Board of Education case, the Supreme Court was considering the constitutionality of a section of the New York Civil Service Law calling for the expel of teachers and public employees who were affiliated to subversive groups (Levinson, 2007). Under the Law, teachers who called for the violent ouster of government or belonged to groups with such aim would be expelled from the public school system. Also, teachers and public employees were compelled to take an oath mentioning their non-affiliation to subversive groups in order to secure their posts. While the Supreme Court finally supported the Law, the case witnessed the first recognition of academic freedom as a constitutional right through the opinion held by Justice Douglas (Murphy, 1963). Justice Douglas asserted that procedures stated in the Law violated academic freedom as teachers working in such an environment of fear would refrain from any association that stimulated controversial ideas. This would support standardized opinions and contradict with the First Amendment right to freedom of speech and its goal of reaching truth
through diverse opinions (Murphy, 1963). In a similar manner, subsequent opinions by the Supreme Court have recognized and mentioned the right to academic freedom. However, debates and uncertainty still exist concerning the extent to which academic freedom has a clear and explicit constitutional protection. This was described by Hutchens and Sun (2013) as “the tenuous legal status of First Amendment Protection for individual academic freedom”. Such legal debate has been strengthened since the issuance of the 2006 Supreme Court decision, Garcetti v. Ceballos. The Court decision stipulated that the First Amendment protection did not apply to speeches made by public employees as part of their official job duties. This triggered the discussion on whether this decision would apply to professors and subsequently eliminate their constitutional right to academic freedom or not (Hutchens and Sun, 2013). Moreover, the First Amendment rights apply only to employees in public institutions. Consequently, faculty members and students in private universities have no constitutional right to academic freedom and derive their academic freedom rights from university internal policies, regulations and contracts (Jorgenson and Helms, 2008).

In addition to constitutional and legal protection for academic freedom, Franke (2011) mentioned three sources on academic freedom in the U.S.: national policy recommendations, accreditation standards and campus policies. National policy recommendations have been issued by national academic organizations, the most important among them is the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Since its foundation in 1915, the AAUP has issued various policy statements defending both faculty and student academic freedom in American higher education. The AAUP 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure granted faculty members three basic rights: freedom of faculty to conduct research and publish their results, freedom to teach and discuss their subject in the classroom, and freedom to express their
opinions outside university without being subjected to institutional censorship or discipline. The 1940 statement was adopted by more than 200 higher education associations in the U.S. Finkin (1972) argued that the adoption of the AAUP Statement on academic freedom was prevalent among American universities so that ‘it constituted a professional “common” or customary law of academic freedom and tenure’ (Karran, 2009). Courts considering academic freedom cases often referred to AAUP statements in their verdicts (Levinson, 2007). In 1967, the AAUP issued a “Joint Statement on Rights and freedoms of students” which expanded academic freedom to students. The statement granted students freedom of access to higher education, freedom of expression inside the classroom, and protection against improper academic evaluation and improper disclosure of personal information. It also stipulated that students should enjoy freedom of association, freedom of inquiry and expression on campus, the right to participate in institutional government, and freedom of publication.

According to Franke (2011), accreditation standards are considered one of the important sources on academic freedom in the U.S. Accreditation entities assess the performance of higher education institutions and provide accreditation based on a number of standards. The existence of a sound policy for protection of academic freedom is one of the standards and requirements used by accreditation entities in this regard.

The last source on academic freedom is campus policies (Franke, 2011). Universities, colleges and higher education institutions often set their own policies for academic freedom and declare such policies in faculty and student handbooks, contracts, websites, faculty collective bargaining agreements, and internal regulations and bylaws. A policy for academic freedom identifies both academic freedom rights and responsibilities and specifies a number of internal procedures through which faculty members and students could address their complaints regarding academic
freedom violations. In addition to written formal policies, customs and traditions inside universities and faculties lay out academic freedom rights (Franke, 2011).

By reviewing the published student academic freedom policies on the websites of a number of American universities and colleges, the following observations could be concluded. Higher education institutions often referred to AAUP statements and/or used their language while articulating their academic freedom policies. Under the title “academic policies”, which is part of the Swarthmore College Bulletin¹, Swarthmore College has asserted its adherence to the basic pillars of academic freedom as defined by the AAUP statements. While stating student academic freedoms, California University² used the AAUP language regarding student freedom of expression in class including the right to “take reasoned exception to the data offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled”. In the same manner, Brigham Young University³, being a religious institution, mentioned the AAUP reference to the unique condition of academic freedom in religious institutions at the beginning of its declared academic freedom policy.

Another important observation was that higher education institutions combined academic freedom rights and responsibilities as well as faculty and student freedoms while stating their academic freedom policies. Under the title “academic freedom in the classroom”, Columbia University⁴ gave both faculty members and students the right to freedom of speech in the

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¹ Swarthmore College Bulletin can be retrieved from http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-handbook/academic-policies#academic_freedom
² California University policy on academic freedom can be retrieved from http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-010.pdf
³ Brigham Young University policy on academic freedom can be retrieved from https://policy.byu.edu/view/index.php?p=9
⁴ Academic freedom policies at Columbia University can be retrieved from
classroom. It also asserted that both faculty and student freedoms were not absolute and had to be balanced against each other. For example, speech by professors in the classroom is free as long as it is “germane to the subject matter” and does not include indoctrinating or proselytizing students. Students’ right to freedom of expression is not absolute and associated with responsibilities as well. For example, California University restricted student freedom of expression by not transgressing the rights of other students when exercising their freedom and by their responsibility to learn the content of the course where they were enrolled.

The comprehensiveness and existence of detailed rights and freedoms were observed in some of the published academic freedom policies for students. In a “statement on the academic freedom of students”, DePauw faculty\(^5\) guaranteed its students the freedom to learn by providing the suitable circumstances in the classroom and campus. This included freedom of expression in the classroom, protection against unfair grading, protection against improper disclosure of student personal information, freedom from discrimination, freedom of association, freedom of student publication and right to participate in institutional government. Detailed rights and procedures were stated under each of the preceding freedoms. In addition, some published policies determined certain procedures through which students could raise their grievances and complaints regarding academic freedom violations. For example, the Swarthmore College Bulletin in its section on “Academic freedom and responsibility” noted that students could resolve their grievances by addressing professors who were engaged on the first level, raising them to the chair of the department on the second level, and finally resorting to the provost.

\(^5\) Statement on the academic freedom of students at DePauw faculty can be retrieved from http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/academic/policies/statement/
Chapter Three: Data analysis and discussion

Chapter Three tackles data analysis and discussion. Data collected from the interviews were organized around main themes and sub-themes. The main themes (Definition of student academic freedom, sources of threat to student academic freedom, suggested solutions and policies) were correspondent with the three main questions asked to participants:

How do you define and perceive student academic freedom?

What are the sources of threat to student academic freedom in FEPS specifically and Egyptian Higher Education generally?

What are the elements of an effective policy to protect student academic freedom?

Figure 1: “Data main themes”

I. Definition of student academic freedom

When asked about the definition of student academic freedom, interviewed students and faculty members provided different definitions and perceptions of the concept and its components. However, responses demonstrated some areas of convergence that allowed the emergence of three elements as the main variables comprising the concept of student academic freedom. Before going into how participants defined the concept, an important remark has to be stated in
this regard. The identification of common themes does not mean that participants were able to
provide a clear and unanimously agreed upon definition for student academic freedom. All
participants, including students and faculty members, were expecting the researcher to provide a
definition for student academic freedom. And while knowing the subject of the research and its
objectives before the interview, responses showed high degrees of spontaneity and uncertainty.
Respondents used various expressions to demonstrate such uncertainty as “I am not sure if this is
the right definition…” and “I do not know if what I am going to say is what you mean by the
concept of student academic freedom…” Moreover, the three identified elements of student
academic freedom (freedom of research, freedom of expression inside classroom, freedom to
choose specialization and courses) were not mentioned simultaneously by all participants. For
example, a number of participants defined student academic freedom in terms of freedom of
research only while others emphasized freedom of expression inside classroom. While most
participants differentiated between student and on-campus freedoms, few participants included
some elements of on-campus freedoms, such as freedom of association and student activities,
into their definition of student academic freedom.

The absence of a common, clear and precise view for student academic freedom among
participants is consistent with previous literature in referring to the nebulousness of the concept
of academic freedom and disagreement among different scholars and international organizations
on a specific definition. As elaborated by Bligh (1982), cited in Burgess (2013), “everyone
seems to agree that academic freedom should be defended, but there is little agreement or clarity
about what it is. Unless we know what it is and can justify it, we will neither defend it
convincingly nor exercise it responsibly”. In addition, differences in opinion among students and
faculty members belonging to the same institution, FEPS, can be attributed to lack of a formal
policy, whether on the level of Higher Education policies or faculty’s internal regulations, that defines the parameters of academic freedom and specifies its limits. Consequently, providing a definition for student academic freedom became susceptible to personal judgments of students and faculty members.
A. Elements of student academic freedom

i. Freedom of research

Both students and faculty members referred to the ability to choose the topics of researches and graduation projects without external restrictions and censorship as one of the main elements constituting student academic freedom.

Mona, a political science student in her second year, defined student academic freedom as:

*The concept of academic freedom refers to my right as a student to choose the topic of my research. This is especially important in our faculty where I am going to graduate as a ‘researcher’ so I have to enjoy the freedom to choose the topic as well as the methodology of my research.*

In the same context, Mai, a political science student in her fourth year, associated the right to conduct research freely with the main mission of university as an educational institution by saying:

*My definition to student academic freedom is that because university is supposedly an educational institution in the first place, scientific and academic production conducted by university researchers, whether professors or students, should be free from censorship...There should not be any kind of censorship on what we learn or research.*

According to the participants, freedom of research comprised not only the free choice of the research topic but also the free access to information as well.

Omar, a political science graduate, explained freedom of research as:

*Freedom of scientific research is defined as the right to conduct research on any topic as long as it is based on scientific standards regardless of any political or specifically security considerations...it also includes free access to information...it is a very difficult*
mission in Egypt whether for students, researchers, or professors to reach information on any topic.

In the same regard, Dr. Dina, an associate political science professor, defined freedom of research as:

*Students shall enjoy the chance to select among different topics whether for their graduation projects or researches required in their courses...they shall also enjoy the freedom to choose their research methodology...in addition they shall enjoy free access to information and data.*

Dr. Dina then reflected on the absence of information in the Egyptian context by saying:

*An important part of academic freedom is related to the idea that there is no information...no information because there is no access to electronic databases...or no information because the data on which I would like to conduct my research is not available or accessible in the first place.*

Consequently, freedom to conduct research without restrictions and censorship was perceived by participants as one of the main elements of student academic freedom. This encompassed freedom to choose research topics, research methodologies and free access to information.
ii.  Freedom of expression and discussion inside the classroom

In addition to freedom of research, participants referred to freedom of expression and discussion inside the classroom as an important component of student academic freedom.

Mostafa, a fourth-year political science student, explained:

*Once I heard the concept from you what came to my mind is the ability of the student to exercise complete freedom in choosing researches as well as complete freedom in discussions...nowadays there are certain topics that we cannot discuss freely. This is against student academic freedom.*

Freedom of expression was also emphasized by faculty members while defining student academic freedom. Dr. Samah, an assistant professor at public administration department, mentioned, “Part of student academic freedom refers to freedom of the student in expressing his scientific views inside classrooms…and because of the nature of our faculty even the political views are part of the curriculum in a way or another.”

While reflecting on freedom of expression and discussion, participants made reference to the responsibility of faculty members in providing a safe environment for students to express their views freely.

Sara, an assistant lecturer at public administration department, explained:

*Consolidating student academic freedom is one of the main responsibilities of the faculty member towards students ...the essence of such freedom is to guarantee the freedom of student to express his views regardless of any ethnic, gender or political affiliations...the only condition is that such views should be in the context of the course curriculum and topics and in accordance with the general frame governing our behaviors inside the university.*
Dr. Amira, an assistant professor at statistics department, defined academic freedom as:

*In my opinion, academic freedom denotes the right of the professor to express his views without restrictions ... and for students, academic freedom refers to the responsibility of the professor to protect students and create an incubator and supportive environment where students can express their opinions freely.*

Freedom of expression and discussion inside classroom was emphasized by various definitions of student academic freedom, as revealed in the conceptual framework section. For example, The AAUP’s “Joint Statement on Rights and freedoms of students” asserted that students had the right to free expression in the classroom, to take reasoned exception to the data presented, and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion.

**iii. Freedom to choose specialization and courses**

While freedom of research and freedom of expression inside the classroom were the most frequent elements in the participants’ responses, freedom to choose specialization and courses was mentioned by some participants as one of the components of student academic freedom.

Ahmad, a political science student in his fourth year, explained:

*Student academic freedom includes freedom of the student to choose the courses he is going to study and the professor with whom he will study... it also includes student involvement in the educational process... a student should have a say in selecting the course content and the readings he will study.*

In the same regard, Dr. Samah explained:

*The first component of student academic freedom is freedom to choose specialization... This includes selecting the university and faculty where the student is going to study as well as selecting the internal specialization inside the faculty... Inside each specialization freedom to choose courses will be restricted by the number of elective courses offered by the department.*
Accordingly, student academic freedom included increasing the number of the elective courses offered by each department while ensuring high levels of diversity among those courses.

Dr. Dina stated: *I believe the first component of student academic freedom is related to freedom to choose courses...this requires that the number of courses offered would reflect a wide spectrum so that students would truly exercise their freedom to choose based on their interests and priorities.*

The three defining elements mentioned by participants are consistent with definitions provided by previous literature and international organizations. Previous literature defined student academic freedom in terms of freedom of students within higher education institutions to pursue and transmit knowledge through research, study, discussion, production, writing and publishing in a hostile-free environment without interference or being subjected to punishment. For example, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defined academic freedom as “freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing”.
B. Linking student to faculty academic freedom

When asked to define student academic freedom, participants whether students or faculty members made reference to faculty academic freedom. They emphasized that academic freedoms of students and faculty members should be interlinked and closely connected.

Omar, a political science graduate, mentioned:

> My perception of the concept of academic freedom includes freedom of students and faculty members in dealing with the academic materials so that the process would be based on scientific standards. Only restrictions related to meeting academic standards shall be imposed regardless of any other considerations whether political, social or religious.

In the same context, Khaled, an economics student in his fourth year, defined academic freedom as:

> There is academic freedom for faculty members and academic freedom for students. Faculty members should have complete freedom in teaching the curriculum they believe suitable for students as well as freedom to conduct and publish research in accordance with academic standards. Students shall also enjoy the right to select the materials they wish to study in addition to the right to conduct research freely without imposing certain results or recommendations.

Some participants went further and dealt with student and faculty academic freedom as one concept.

Salma , an assistant lecturer at political science department, explained:

> I will not differentiate between students and faculty members...Whether for students or faculty members, academic freedom means the ability to write in whatever topics one wishes to research and analyze. Academic freedom is guaranteed for whoever engaged in the process of conducting research whether student or faculty member.
While defining student academic freedom, participants argued that there was no room for speaking about student academic freedom without tackling and ensuring academic freedom for faculty members.

Ibrahim, a political science student in his fourth year, explained:

*The word academic freedom denotes open spaces whether for students or faculty members. This includes freedom to conduct research, freedom to select the methods that would provide the researcher with information and freedom to reach results freely without any censorship whether on results or the research process itself.*

Ibrahim believed that speaking about academic freedom for students made no sense for him in light of the absence of academic freedom for faculty members.

He explained:

*The issue is not only my academic freedom as a student but even as a faculty member who is conducting postgraduate researches there are certain topics that are forbidden in the faculty.... Freedom is not available for faculty members themselves in order to go beyond and search for freedom of students.*

The same argument was emphasized by Dr. Samah by saying:

*Academic freedom of students should not be separated from academic freedom of faculty members... Student academic freedoms cannot exist without protecting the academic freedom of the faculty member who is the essence of the educational process itself. If restrictions are imposed upon the faculty member and his academic freedom in selecting research topics and presenting ideas, especially in FEPS in the specific situation of our country, is restrained, it is difficult to speak about student academic freedom.*

It is evident from the abovementioned quotes that participants’ perception and conceptualization of student academic freedom are not separated from faculty academic freedom. This is consistent with definitions of academic freedom proposed by previous literature and international organizations. In such definitions, academic freedom entailed freedoms of all members of academic community including faculty members and students.
C. Differentiation between student academic freedom and on-campus freedoms

As stated before, participants mentioned freedom of research, freedom of discussion inside classroom and freedom to choose specialization and courses as the three main elements constituting student academic freedom. However, while sharing their experiences participants raised issues of student freedoms on campuses including freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression through conferences, publications and various student activities. This urged the researcher to ask participants whether they considered the aforementioned freedoms part of student academic freedoms or not.

Few participants included some elements of on-campus freedoms, such as freedom of association and student activities, into their definition of student academic freedom. However, the majority of participants, including both students and faculty members, differentiated between student academic freedom and on-campus/university freedoms. They expressed their preference to separate and differentiate between the two concepts and believed that a conflation between such concepts would complicate efforts to face violations of academic freedom.

Mai explained her distinction between the two concepts by saying:

*Because of the word ‘academic’ what came to my mind is related to freedom of students to conduct research. However, there is another concept called university freedoms. There is a distinction between academic freedom and general university freedoms which include student activities on campuses.*

In the same way, Yehia, a political science graduate, argued:

*There is always a conflation between the concept of academic freedom and the concepts of university autonomy and student rights. Academic freedoms are related to researches, academic courses and freedom of students and faculty members to conduct research while university autonomy and student rights focus on general rights on campuses and*
the autonomy of the university in taking its decisions and managing its resources especially financial resources.

In the same context, Dr. Samah expressed her support of the narrow definition of academic freedom that restricts it to freedoms related to research and teaching inside the classroom while excluding student activities on campuses.

She mentioned: *If such freedoms are described as “academic”, I am inclined towards the narrower definition. This is different from student freedoms in general or freedom of student activities. There are different activities in universities including academic, learning, extracurricular, sport, cultural and social activities. I cannot classify a social activity as an academic one...Consequently, teaching and learning activities as well as those related to scientific research are associated with academic freedoms while community service activities are not.*

Likewise, Sara explained academic freedom by saying:

*Because I labeled it “academic” so I gave it a distinctive characteristic compared to the general freedom of expression. We have to differentiate between academic freedom and student general freedom of expression through demonstrating for example. Student freedom to demonstrate belongs to student general freedoms and not academic freedoms. Freedom of association, assembly and demonstration are public and not academic freedoms.*

Despite the theoretical differentiation between the concepts of academic freedom and on-campus freedoms, participants believed that both concepts were interrelated and affected each other on the level of on-ground practices. Moreover, they argued that the level of student academic freedom existing in a certain university depended on the level of on-campus freedoms in such university.

Mai explained:

*Both academic freedoms and university freedoms are interrelated. If one type of freedoms is protected, the other one will be protected consequently and as long as one is restricted, the other one will be restricted too. Both freedoms are mainly dependent upon the general system of the university which in turn depends on the general system of the state.*
Mai then substantiated her argument by showing how similar restrictions were imposed upon both academic and on-campus freedoms in the Egyptian context.

She mentioned:

*For example, in the current period it is unacceptable for a student in our faculty to present a research examining whether what happened on 30 of June was a revolution or coup d’état. At the same time, it is unacceptable for students to hold demonstrations on the same issue.*

Likewise, Mona mentioned:

*Student strikes and demonstrations are part of public freedoms in university while academic freedoms are those inside each faculty. If public freedoms inside universities are protected, there will be a positive impact on academic freedoms and vice versa. I believe that the two concepts are closely interrelated. Academic freedoms depend upon public freedoms.*

In the same manner, Aisha, a political science graduate, argued that the absence of any of those freedoms necessarily indicated the absence of the other one:

*If I do not enjoy freedom of expression and activities on university campus how come I will be able to exercise academic freedom? What I am not allowed to say on campus, I will not be allowed to write on in a research. Both freedoms are intersecting in the area of freedom of thought and expression.*

The differentiation between student academic freedom and on-campus freedoms while recognizing linkages is congruent with a theoretical trend that narrowly defined the concept of academic freedom and restricted it to freedoms and rights directly related to the educational process. As mentioned previously, while discussing the study’s conceptual framework, the definitions provided by the first annual Global Colloquium of University Presidents in 2005 and the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) represented this trend.
D. Defining academic freedom as a series of “NOTS”

In their attempt to provide a definition for student academic freedom, students tended to recall violations and transgressions of academic freedom in the Egyptian context. In such a case, their definition of academic freedom came in the form of the absence of such violations. Student academic freedom was conceptualized as a series of “NOTS” where different levels of authority shall not interfere in or constrain some inviolable domains of student freedom.

Louay, a political science graduate, defined student academic freedom as:

For me the concept of academic freedom especially in the case of social sciences means that nothing is forbidden to discuss. For example, nowadays in Egypt it is forbidden to discuss civil military relations in a way or another. I think a thesis discussing such topic was banned last year...even if there is no law clearly banning conducting research in civil military relations, any researcher in our faculty will think many times before studying this issue because there is a general climate of fear and apprehension.

The absence of fear and censorship was also mentioned by Mahmoud, an economics student in his third year, as defining elements of student academic freedom.

He explained:

My definition for student academic freedom is freedom of research and freedom to express your opinion in an objective manner in your research. This is especially important for students in our faculty because they are in a direct confrontation with the ruling authority. Academic freedom also includes freedom of access to information without fear and without being intimidated. Sometimes if you approach a certain topic, you are directly or indirectly exposing yourself to investigation by state securities. May be it is not an official investigation but they will keep an eye on you.

Likewise, Aisha defined student academic freedom as:

My definition for academic freedom is that student has the right to publish any research on whatever topic he seeks. For example, it is against such freedom to ban a student from conducting a research on the military institution because of national security claims.
While the aforementioned students referred to restrictions emerging from state policies and authorities, other students mentioned constraints imposed by the professors themselves. In this context, Farah, a political science student in her fourth year, shared her experience of facing restraints imposed by professors while defining the concept of academic freedom.

She explained:

*I did not hear about the concept of student academic freedom before, but what came to my mind when you mentioned it are situations where I was in the process of choosing a topic for my research and the professor tried to influence me to change my initial topic. Sometimes there were topics in which I was not interested and I found myself forced to research them because of the professor.*

In a similar manner, Amany defined student academic freedom as:

*Whenever I heard the concept of student academic freedom from you, what came to my mind were the researches that we were not able to conduct in faculty because of the views of our supervising professors. Professors argued that there were no enough references for our chosen topics or that such topics could not be the subject of an academic study.*

To conclude, participant students defined student academic freedom as indicating a situation that was opposite and contrary to what they were facing. In this way, their conceptualization of student academic freedoms reflected negative freedoms understood in the absence of certain obstacles and constraints imposed by different levels of authority.
II. Sources of threat to student academic freedom

The abovementioned themes responded to the first question related to how students and faculty members at FEPS perceive, define and make sense of student academic freedom. The second question investigates student academic freedom on the level of on-ground practices by exploring sources of threat to student academic freedom inside FEPS as perceived by participants. When asked about sources of threat to student academic freedom, participants directly and indirectly referred to a wide variety of threats that are classified by the researcher into internal and external threats. Internal threats stem from sources inside FEPS while external and indirect threats stem from sources outside FEPS.

![Figure 2: “Sources of threat to student academic freedom”](image)

1. According to the professor
2. Imbalance power relationship between students and professors
3. Pedagogy and political indoctrination
4. Lack of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches
5. Climate of fear
6. Absence of university autonomy
7. Restrictions on data collection
8. Academic freedom as a luxury
9. Imposed red-lines and self-censorship
A. Internal threats

i. According to the professor

While discussing sources of threat to student academic freedom, participant students mentioned that some professors were representing the main source of threat to their academic freedom.

Aisha mentioned:

_The first source of threat to our academic freedom is the professor because the professor is the one with whom we have direct contact all the time. So, if the professor has prior political ideas or believe in a certain ideology and he sets such ideology as a standard for evaluating students so this will be a major threat to our academic freedom._

Likewise, Omar explained how professors would represent threat to student academic freedom by saying “Throughout my four years at faculty, there were students seeking to conduct research in certain topics whether in research seminars or graduation projects and their supervising professors rejected those topics”.

He then gave examples for professors rejecting students’ proposed topics based on political reasons,

_For example, one student sought to conduct a research on Ultras groups and another one chose the 6th of April movement. Professors rejected both topics. Professors said those groups were thugs and students should not make researches about them because of security concerns. The topics based on scientific rules and evaluation shall be accepted but they were rejected in a clear political framework._

Furthermore, students argued that the level of academic freedom available for them whether in conducting research or expression inside classroom differed from one professor to another. Such fluctuating degrees of academic freedom that varied according to the professor were perceived by students as major threat and impediment to their practice of academic freedom.
Amany explained how freedom of discussion inside classroom differed from one professor to another by saying:

*Everything depends on whether the professor allows or not. There are professors who say to us ‘we do not want to be engaged in debates and discussing different opinions. We are here for academic purposes only so everyone should preserve his opinion for himself’. On the other hand there are professors who welcome open discussions and different opinions in their lectures.*

Likewise, Aisha argued:

*Academic freedom differs according to the professor. There are professors who allow us to discuss and disagree with them. They teach us how to present our different opinions through debates where every group of students represent and defend certain opinion. On the other hand, if we disagree with or oppose other professors they can use their authority of grading to deduct from our grades or ban us from attending their lectures. For those professors, you have to recall their opinion whether in research or class discussion.*

Mostafa, justified the different levels of student academic freedom by the absence of a specific system or set of rules determining and protecting such freedom which made it dependent upon the professor. He argued “Academic freedom depends on the professor. Unfortunately inside classroom academic freedom depends on the professor himself and not on the existence of a certain system or set of rules.” He then continued his talk by giving examples for professors who used such unchecked authority to restrict student academic freedom:

*For example in a certain course I decided to make my research on the role of the Egyptian army in foiling the 25th of January popular movement. However, my professor rejected my idea and he said this research would cause problems…On the other hand there are professors who give us freedom in choosing our research topics and cooperate with us even if their personal opinion was against ours because they deal with the issue in an academic manner. We respect those professors but unfortunately they do not represent the majority.*
For freedom of discussion inside classroom, Mostafa reported:

_For example, in one of the lectures a certain professor was talking about Nazism so one of the students linked what the professor said about Hitler with what is happening in Egypt now. As a result, the professor got very angry and asked students who were recording the lecture to delete their recordings._

The idea that student academic freedom differed from one professor to another was also mentioned by some interviewed faculty members. Dr. Samah argued that the younger generation of faculty members was more accepting of student academic freedoms compared to the older generation. She mentioned “Student academic freedom differs because faculty members differ based on their orientations and their way of teaching. I expect that the probability of being flexible and accepting student freedom is higher for the younger generation compared to the older one”. She then explained differences between old and young generations by exposure to new methods of teaching through traveling abroad and studying in foreign universities.

In the same manner, Dr. Salwa, an associate professor at political science department, reported that student academic freedom inside FEPS lacked certain institutional rules and left to each professor.

She explained:

_There is nothing institutional. No departmental meeting to discuss ways to protect student academic freedom. What exist are personal initiatives and stands. There are professors who believe that students are granted too much freedom that needs to be limited through more supervision and censorship. Other professors believe that students need more academic freedom and thus they try to give students greater freedoms in the courses they teach or activities they supervise._

Both students and faculty members agreed that student academic freedom was dependent upon the professor. However, while students mentioned such idea as one of the major threats to their academic freedom, faculty members tended to present it without giving any value judgments.
Such discrepancy in the perception of the same phenomenon between participant students and faculty members reflected how students and faculty members had different degrees of recognizing and making sense of threats to student academic freedom. Despite the fact that participant faculty members were interested in protecting student academic freedom, participant students had higher sense of considering student academic freedom as a problem that required policy solutions. In other words, students’ recognition of violations and threats to academic freedom was much stronger than that of faculty members.
ii. Imbalanced power relationship between students and professors

One of the threats to student academic freedom as mentioned by students was the imbalanced power relationship between students and professors. Students believed that professors had unchecked authority that allowed them to violate and constrain student academic freedoms. Students argued that professors would not be held accountable if they failed to perform their responsibilities and duties towards students including protecting their academic freedoms.

Mai mentioned:

_Many times we had problems with a certain professor and we complained to the faculty administration but nothing happened. Why? Because there is no authority above the professor. Faculty administration has authority above students and employees but not above professors. Faculty administration can neither penalize nor reward professors._

She then explained the reasons she reached such conclusion by saying:

_Throughout my four years at faculty, we raised complaints about certain professors because of their grades or bad quality of teaching and we were expecting that at least such professors would not teach the course again but they used to teach the same course to subsequent classes without any response to our complaint._

In the same manner, Louay argued that while both students and professors faced restrictions on their academic freedom, students were exposed to an additional level stemming from the unchecked authority of professors in evaluating and grading students.

He explained: _The most difficult moments I faced while I was in the student union were those when students came to me and claimed that a certain professor gave them grades that they did not deserve. At such moments I was unable to do anything to such complaints because according to the Law organizing universities student grievances are only to check that exam grades were added accurately. Students are not allowed to see their exam papers or to object the way they were evaluated. This reflects how the balance between professors and students is not objective._
It is worth mentioning that the issue of student grievances about their evaluation and grades as well as their complaints about faculty members may not be directly related to student academic freedom even as defined and perceived by participant students themselves. However, students believed that professors’ authority over student grades and their inability to raise grievances overlapped with violations of student academic freedom. They argued that professors used such authority to prevent students from expressing their opinions in exams, class discussions, and researches. As they perceived, professors’ unchecked authority may intersect with student academic freedom if a professor decides to deduct grades from a student because of his different political, social or cultural views. Consequently, students will refrain from freely expressing their opinions in future classroom discussions and presented researches, engage in a process of self-censorship, and hence be deprived of their right to academic freedom.

On the other hand, the absence of institutional censorship upon faculty members could be perceived as a guarantee for protecting and ensuring faculty academic freedoms in teaching, designing curricula and setting criteria for evaluating and grading students. It is important to achieve a balance between student and faculty academic freedoms. This could explain why professors’ authority was not mentioned by any of the interviewed faculty members as threatening student academic freedom. For faculty members, such authority and discretionary powers constituted guarantee for maintaining and securing their academic freedoms. Discrepancy in opinions between participant students and faculty members will be more evident while discussing policy solutions and suggestions. Participant faculty members perceived student suggestions to limit and check professors’ authorities as invalid and posing threats to their own academic freedoms.
Despite differences, both participant students and faculty members agreed that the ineffectiveness of evaluation of professors conducted by students constituted one of the threats to student academic freedom. While sharing their feeling of the professors’ unchecked authority, students gave the evaluation they undertook each semester for professors as an example of such authority. They argued that while the logic behind such evaluation should be to measure the degree of student satisfaction towards professors, evaluation ended up as a cosmetic and token procedure. Students reported that many times they wrote negative evaluation for certain professors and they were surprised that professors continued to teach the same course for subsequent classes without any change in teaching methods and curricula. As they perceived, student evaluation of professors was a routine measure to fulfill quality assurance requirements on paper. They distrusted such process of evaluation because they believed nothing was done with their feedback in the absence of measures to hold professors accountable.

Ahmad explained:

*We undertake evaluation for professors but we are sure that nothing is done with such evaluation. We even do not know if our sayings in the evaluation reach the professor we evaluate or not. We fill the evaluation form and we, as well as the professors, know that nothing will result from such evaluation.*

Likewise, participant faculty members reported the same phenomenon.

Dr. Dina explained:

*I understand the concern of students regarding the evaluation they conduct for professors. If students wrote in the evaluation form that a certain professor presented outdate materials, or did not attend lectures regularly or mistreated students and nothing happened one time after the other then they would lose trust in the process of evaluation.*

In addition to mistrust in the consequences of students’ evaluation of professors, some participants referred to an important point regarding the relationship between evaluation of
professors and student academic freedom. They noted that protecting student academic freedom was not from the criteria stated in the evaluation form of professors. The evaluation form measured issues as to what extent the professor attended lectures regularly, used new techniques in teaching and presented updated curricula. The extent to which professors respect student freedoms in selecting their research topics and provide a healthy environment for student freedom of expression inside classroom is not proposed and measured in the evaluation form.

Also, when surveying student opinions about exams, the evaluation form asks whether the exam reflects the materials and content studied throughout the course. It does not ask whether the exam style allows students to freely express their views and opinions.

Dr. Samah argued:

*Students’ evaluations of professors do not touch student academic freedom. Evaluation questions tackle for example whether the professor uses new methods in communicating information. As a professor I could use new technological methods but in a way that does not serve student freedoms.*

She added “Evaluations do not test student academic freedom. No questions to test if the professor accepts all opinions, whether students enjoy freedom in choosing their researches or whether they have the chance to express their opinions and views freely”.
iii.  Pedagogy and political indoctrination

One of the threats to student academic freedom as mentioned by both students and faculty members was the nature of pedagogical methods adopted by some professors. The dependence on rote learning, lack of participatory approaches, and dealing with students as passive agents who have to be inculcated with information constitute pedagogical threats to student academic freedom. Because the philosophy behind prevalent pedagogies is considering the professor as the main source of knowledge while students are inactive receivers, students felt their freedoms to learn, research and express their opinions were restricted and threatened. In this context, students were expected to recall professors’ views and inputs whether in class discussions, conducted researches or exams. Khaled argued that the pedagogical practices in the faculty were based upon what he named “spoon feeding” education where professors used to fill students with the knowledge and values they perceived necessary while viewing students as empty vessels incapable of independent thinking. Consequently, professors’ distrust in the capabilities of students was used to restrict their freedom to conduct researches freely.

Khaled shared his experience with one of the professors at the economics department:

In our graduation project our professor told us a phrase that deeply depressed me. She said ‘Do not expect that you will make a real contribution in your graduation project. You are just collecting and organizing data in a research that you will submit at the end of the year’.

He then reported that the professor urged students to use quantitative methodologies only and to choose topics that were over-studied in order to easily find references. As a result of such restrictions, he was unable to conduct a research in his chosen topic.
In the same context, Dr. Esraa, a public administration lecturer, argued that some professors were not accepting students to criticize their ideas as they considered students inactive receivers of information. She reported “There is a culture that the professor is above the student and that the student is a mere receiver and passive agent and consequently the professor is not welcoming any criticism from students”. Likewise, Dr. Amira pointed out that restrictions on student freedom to express their opinions were not only associated with political indoctrination but also with the pedagogical methods of teaching based on inculcating students with the professor’s interpretations and explanation of information even apolitical and technical ones. In this context, students are not allowed to challenge or disagree with what their professors propose and explain.

She explained:

There are professors who suppress students even in specializations that are not related to politics. They do not allow students to disagree with them so students remain silent in their lectures. I believe that a lecture where all students are silent is an unsuccessful lecture. It is not a real lecture but rather, as described by Charles Dickens, empty bottles that are being filled with liquid without any ability to take action.

In addition, Dr. Amira added that restrictions were not limited to class discussions only but went further to expressing opinions in exams as well.

She mentioned: Exams are also one of the suppression tools used by some professors. In exams, students are not allowed to write except what the professor explained. They should write what the professor dictated in the lecture literally or what was stated in the book or lecture slides... If you say to students to recite the received information in exams then you are completely eliminating student academic freedom.

This can be contrasted with elements of student academic freedom as defined by the AAUP which comprise freedom of student expression inside the classroom including the right to oppose the professors’ opinions, to express rational objection to the data presented, and to keep judgment about matters of opinion.
Moreover, political indoctrination was mentioned by students and faculty members as one of the distinct features of adopted pedagogies. As reported, some professors used to proselytize their own political views inside classroom attempting to propagate conformity and combat dissent. This began from selecting list of readings that reflected professors’ own ideologies, passing through suppressing different opinions inside classroom and conducted researches, and ended with exam styles that were based on recitation of professors’ views and ideas. In this context, Ibrahim argued that some professors tried to impose their own political views on students in the name of patriotic sentiments. For them, patriotic sentiments were related to perpetuation of national interest as defined by the state and ruling authorities.

He pointed out:

*There are professors who support the ruling system or they are part of that system… Such professors believe that their patriotic role necessitates that they shall shape students in their same pattern…They do not separate between their personal and political views and science. They consider themselves one of the tools of the state in the process of disciplining students, which is a patriotic mission.*

Likewise, Mostafa shared his experience with one of the professors who imposed her political views regarding Egyptian foreign policy on students and thus restricted his freedom to express his own argument in the assigned research.

He argued:

*In a certain course that is related to foreign policy analysis I sought to analyze the Egyptian-Saudi alliance in the Yemeni war. The professor stated clearly in the lecture that she supported the Egyptian stand and viewed it as a great position that would be historically memorized…My main thesis was that Egypt entered the Yemeni war because of a game of interests and it had nothing to do with historical achievements. I was advised from many persons including teaching assistants not to present my research in that way as the professor would reject it.*
He then added that the professor would not reject his research based on academic reasons but because of differences in political views.

Moreover, participant faculty members expressed their opposition to political indoctrination conducted by some professors. They believed that the mission of the professor had never been to indoctrinate students with certain ideologies or political views. Instead, professors were meant to expose students to as much views as possible while helping them to articulate their own arguments based on informed evidence.

Dr. Samah represented this view by saying:

_We have to present all views and orientations with objectivity including pros and cons of each orientation. As a faculty member or student, I have the right to possess my own orientations and choices but I should never impose such choices upon students and students as well should never impose their on their peers or professors._

She then added that freedom to express one’s views was occasionally used to justify imposition of such views on others, “Unfortunately freedom is misunderstood by some faculty members and students to impose a single opinion. To articulate and express a certain view is considered freedom but to impose such view on others is against freedom”.

In spite of recognizing political indoctrination and suppression of student opinions, participant faculty members referred to instances where professors’ rejection of student opinions was justifiable. They argued that in many instances professors had a problem with students’ political views not because such views opposed professors’ own ideologies and views but because students failed to substantiate their views with relevant arguments.
Dr. Dina noted:

_Sometimes the problem is not that students said a different political opinion but that they failed to develop arguments to support such opinion. This gives the professor a chance to justify his rejection or even to deduct from the student’s grades which is justifiable in this case. The issue is not that the student expressed a different political opinion but that he based such opinion on personal impressions._

While the previous argument may have some valid reasoning, it is the responsibility of professors to expose students to the wide range of analytical and critical thinking skills that would enable and empower students to articulate informed and reasoned views.

The relationship between pedagogy, political indoctrination and student academic freedom was addressed and confirmed in previous literature tackling student academic freedom. Much of the literature argued that protecting students against political indoctrination inside classroom constituted one of the conditions for maintaining student academic freedom. Freedom of students to learn was equated with freedom from indoctrination (Pavel, 2005 as cited in Macfarlane, 2011). In this context, the 1915 AAUP statement on academic freedom asserted that students had to be protected against political indoctrination especially undergraduate students who might lack the necessary knowledge for articulating and defending their own views. The 1915 statement stipulated “The teacher ought also to be especially on his guard against taking unfair advantage of the student’s immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher’s own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters in question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness of judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own”. The issue of political indoctrination has been the focus of scholars and associations defending student academic freedom in the American universities. They argued that the American universities had liberal bias and called for more “balance” inside classroom in discussing controversial topics. Macfarlane (2011) suggested that the overwhelming interest in
protecting students against political indoctrination reflected a conceptualization of student academic freedoms as negative rights. As negative rights indicate absence of threats, barriers and constraints, protecting student academic freedoms would be necessary only if they got threatened by professors’ proselytizing their own views. Instead, Macfarlane called for re-conceptualization of student academic freedoms as positive rights that required active protection policies. At the heart of such reframing was adopting liberal and critical pedagogies that would develop student capabilities as critical and independent thinkers. For Macfarlane (2011), liberal pedagogies would empower, rather than domesticate, students through exposure to a wide variety of ideas and skills enabling them to articulate their own arguments. Likewise, Giroux (2006) argued that critical pedagogy was one of the prerequisites of protecting student academic freedom. Critical pedagogy stemmed from the essential function of university as a sphere for questioning, production and dissemination of knowledge. It emphasized the conversion of students from passive recipients to active agents who would not only reflect on but rather produce and transform knowledge. This included providing students with analytical and critical skills that would enable them to be self-reflective about the knowledge they are exposed to inside classroom. Consequently, the product of critical pedagogy would be empowered, self-reflective, independent and critical citizens (Giroux, 2006).
iv. Disciplinary borders/ lack of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches

Lack of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches were reported by some participants to threaten student academic freedoms especially while choosing their research topics. Professors used to refuse students’ proposed researches in the name of crossing their disciplinary borders. Emphasizing that student researches should reflect their main specialization would deprive students from creating new ideas through adopting interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches. Interdisciplinary approaches would enable students to tackle their topics through integrating theoretical frameworks and methodologies from more than one academic discipline, and hence increase chances for outstanding and creative contribution. Anas shared his experience as a fourth-year student at statistics department who sought to use a multi-disciplinary approach in one of his researches but unfortunately faced opposition from his professors.

He reported:

*I sought to conduct my research in political economy by employing statistical tools. Professors at my department (statistics) said that this could not be accepted as they did not have an idea about such kind of topics…They also said that I was in a statistics department so I was obliged to make my research in statistics.*

In the same context, Dr Salwa argued that social sciences were one unit and that political science, her own specialization, should not be addressed in isolation of other disciplines of social sciences. She then added that faculty members at the political science department used to oppose interdisciplinary approaches while determining courses and setting curricula for the sake of traditional and outdated approaches.
She explained:

_There is a traditional view that is prevalent among the majority of faculty members in determining courses, setting curricula, and selecting pedagogies ... The idea of interdisciplinary approaches and interaction among the social sciences is not adopted in the way we desire at all. The department views political science in the traditional way. So, when I try to suggest new vision related to linking culture with political science for example there is not sufficient support among faculty members._

In this framework, lack of acceptance to interdisciplinary approaches would constrain and limit chances for students while selecting their own research topics and hence undermine their academic freedom.
B. External threats

In addition to the aforementioned internal threats, participants referred to a number of threats that emerged from outside the boundaries of the institution. Such external threats are related to higher education policies as set by government, university policies, the relationship between state and university, the nature of the political system and the level of freedoms and rights available for citizens in the wider society.

i. Climate of fear

Despite students’ reference to restrictions imposed by professors and pedagogical methods, they argued that the general climate of freedoms and rights in society and assaults on such freedoms by the ruling political system constituted a determining factor of the degree of academic freedoms available for them inside the faculty. What is happening inside universities and faculties cannot be separated from the general climate and spaces of freedom allowed in the public sphere. Such climate affects the level of student rights and freedoms on university campuses including freedoms of association, assembly and expression which in turn affects the level of student academic freedoms existing inside classrooms. Consequently, students believed that even if professors and faculty administrations sought to secure and maintain student academic freedoms, their efforts would not be successful without real changes in the general climate of freedoms and civic rights. In this context, they argued that continuous assaults on civic freedoms and rights by the ruling political system created a climate of fear that urged both professors and students to censor themselves and eschew dissent.
Louay argued:

*There is another problem related to the overall atmosphere prevailing in the country. It is an atmosphere of fear and hysteria. Even if the professor is respecting student academic freedoms the overall atmosphere of fear will urge students to be afraid of approaching certain topics as in the example I gave before concerning civil-military relations.*

What Louay was trying to report meant that there were other forces above and beyond the professor that interfered in eliminating student academic freedom to express their opinions and conduct researches. Similarly, participant faculty members reported that the situation of freedoms and rights in society affected university freedoms. Dr. Laila, a political science assistant professor, argued: “Freedom of thought and expression inside universities is dependent upon the situation of those freedoms in society. The university cannot be separated from society. If the society enjoys freedom of thought and expression, university will enjoy them too”.

While explaining the impact of the overall atmosphere of freedoms on student academic freedoms, students differentiated between two periods: pre- and post-30 of June protests. The 2015 graduates who were interviewed in this research witnessed two academic years (2011/2012 and 2012/2013) before the eruption of 30 of June protests and two academic years (2013/2014 and 2014/2015) after 30 of June protests and ouster of President Morsi in the 3rd of July, 2013. In addition, participant fourth year students witnessed one academic year before 30 of June protests and three years after them. Both groups of students shared their experiences by comparing between the status of freedoms and rights in the public sphere in the two periods and how it affected student academic freedoms. They argued that because the public sphere was open right after the 25th of January revolution and subsequent ruling authorities could not contain the resurrection of civil society, students enjoyed exceptional degrees of freedoms both on campuses and inside classrooms. On the contrary, after the ouster of Morsi in the 3rd of July, ruling
authorities launched a crackdown on civil society and public sphere in the name of “war on terrorism” which undermined student academic freedoms and rights.

In this context, Mai explained the difference between the two periods by saying:

_When I was in my first year at faculty in 2012, it has been a year since the eruption of the revolution but there was activism on campus and students were not afraid. At that time, people were not afraid at all and were expressing their opinions freely. I remember that in lectures we were discussing issues with our professors freely. On the contrary, from the beginning of the academic year 2013/2014, in most of lectures, professors said one phrase that they unanimously agreed upon: ‘We do not want talks in politics’. _

She then commented on such phrase with an ironical laugh saying “We are in Faculty of Economic and Political Science and we will not talk in politics. The overall atmosphere affects us because if people feel fear all the time nobody will dare to do anything”. Likewise, Omar explained the difference in the level of student academic freedoms before and after 30 of June with differences in the overall atmosphere of freedoms.

He mentioned:

_Before 30 of June, there was a difference in the overall atmosphere in the whole country and this was reflected on universities. The atmosphere was completely open. In other words, the ability to restrict such atmosphere was neither available for subsequent ruling authorities from the SCAF until Muslim Brothers nor for university and faculty administrations with their different administrative levels. The situation of freedoms was beyond the capabilities of any authority to constrain and limit. _

In other words, Omar was reporting that the growing openness in the public sphere in the aftermath of the 25th of January revolution undermined the ability of different authorities to restrict student freedoms. However, the curve of student freedoms started to decline after the 30 of June with changes in the political and security conditions.
He reported:

_The difficult political and security conditions in the aftermath of 30 of June affected student academic freedoms. Restrictions did not necessarily emerge from professors’ stands but rather from a general feeling of fear. For example, a student might seek to conduct a research on a certain topic and the professor refuses because he is afraid of consequences or a student avoids a certain topic because he will not be able to reach information through surveys or because the topic might cause problems with the security and university administration._

The reference to the difference between pre- and post 30 of June periods regarding academic freedoms was confirmed by previous literature. Pratt (2014) reported that Egyptian universities witnessed exceptional levels of academic freedoms in the aftermath of the 25th of January revolution. Students enjoyed freedoms of expression, assembly and association on university campuses in light of the openness in the public sphere resulting from the revolution. Likewise, Abd Rabou (2014) and Lindsey (2012) mentioned the withdrawal of security forces from university campuses, the upheld of free student union elections in the absence of security intrusion, and amending the mechanism for selecting university administrative positions from appointment to elections as three gains for university autonomy and academic freedoms resulting from the revolution. However, such gains were reversed after the 30 of June protests with the state crackdown on universities and declining levels of public freedoms in the context of the declared war against terrorism (Pratt, 2014; Abd Rabou, 2014, Lindsey, 2012). While literature focused on retreats in university independence and student freedoms on campuses after the 30 of June, participant students and faculty members went further by explaining how such retreats restricted and threatened student academic freedoms inside classroom. As reported, students censored themselves and avoided opposition in light of the overall atmosphere of fear created in the country.
ii. Absence of university autonomy

Participant students and faculty members argued that absence of university autonomy constituted one of the major threats to academic freedoms for both faculty and student academic freedoms. The relationship between university autonomy and academic freedoms was emphasized in previous literature. Some scholars even went further and used both concepts interchangeably as describing the same phenomenon. The more prevalent trend, however, is differentiating between the two concepts while recognizing strong correlations and links. In this way, university autonomy and academic freedoms were viewed as supporting and reinforcing each other. While academic freedoms used to describe freedoms and rights related to members of the academic community as individuals, university autonomy referred to rights and freedoms of the university as an institution. University autonomy reflects the independence and control of the university over managing its internal affairs without interference from outside forces whether state or non-state actors. Shils defined university autonomy as “the freedom of the university as a corporate body from interference by the state or by a church or by the power of any other corporate body, private or public, or by any individual such as regular, a politician, government official, ecclesiastical official, publicist, or businessman. It is the freedom for members of the university, acting in a representative capacity and not as individuals, to make decisions about the affairs of the university” (Shils as cited in Borhan, 2009, p. 27). In this context, university autonomy was deemed one of the important conditions for maintaining and protecting academic freedoms of the academic community. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCRs) while explaining the right to education and academic freedoms held that “the enjoyment of academic freedom requires the autonomy of institutions of higher education”. Likewise, Tight pointed out that in cases where university autonomy is absent, the probability of the existence of academic
freedoms will be lower compared to universities maintaining levels of autonomy and independence (Tight as cited in Borhan, 2009). The same argument was made by Moodie (1996) who suggested that if university lacked autonomy from state or church or other external forces, threats to academic freedoms will massively increase.

The relationship between university autonomy and academic freedom was directly and indirectly mentioned by interviewed students and faculty members. They explained diminishing degrees of student academic freedoms by absence of university autonomy.

Dr. Esraa pointed out:

*The issue is greater than the university. There is a problem in freedom of expression because restrictions stem from above. There is a hierarchy for the system where those at the top determine what should and should not be said inside universities.*

Aisha believed that university autonomy and academic freedom were two interlinked concepts and that lack of university autonomy represented a real threat to student academic freedom. She gave the way university administrative positions was chosen as an example for state infringement on university autonomy which, she believed, constrained available freedoms for students.

Aisha explained:

*The last amendments in the Law organizing universities are not acceptable. They gave the president the right to appoint faculty deans. Thus, if the president has certain thoughts and beliefs, he will impose such thoughts upon appointed deans and consequently academic freedoms inside faculties will be affected.*

In this way she was referring to the 2014 re-amendment of the law for electing university leaders giving the Egyptian president the right to appoint university presidents and deans from a list of three candidates.
She then explained how lack of university autonomy restricted academic freedoms by saying:

*Our dean respects student academic freedoms until pressure is exerted on him/her from above. By above I mean the university rector. Who exerts pressure upon the university rector? The State. As I said the President will select the university rector from three candidates and the university rector will appoint faculty deans. Through this chain, the authority that is ruling right now indirectly determines what topics to be discussed and what to be forbidden inside universities.*

Security interference in universities was mentioned by students as one of the features of lack of university autonomy which directly affected and repressed student academic freedoms. Anas believed that the university was not free in providing and maintaining academic freedoms as security agencies and higher authorities were interfering in universities and determining the appropriate ceilings for such freedoms.

He explained:

*The general orientation of the country imposes on the university and faculty the ceiling for the student academic freedoms they can allow. Security agencies or sovereign authorities control universities. It is in the interest of universities and faculties to expand freedoms and give the greatest amount of freedoms for researchers to innovate and create.*

In addition, he explained how the role of security affected students while choosing their research topics by saying “The role of security repression is among the things that will force you as a student to think more than once before choosing your research topic”. Likewise, Mahmoud explained his retreat from working on a topic related to the role of the military institution in the Egyptian economy.
He reported:

*If I continued in such topic, I would not have been able to access information. In addition, there is the security dimension. If the system is not allowing the parliament to ratify the army’s budget so this means that if I conducted a research on that topic it would have been a disaster.*

In addition, Mahmoud expressed his feeling of being watched inside faculty by arguing that there were either students, professors or security members who reported on what was happening inside classroom. He mentioned “There are ‘birds’. They are either students or professors or security members. They are not obvious as they were during Mubarak era but they exist. Everything reaches security agencies through such birds.” In addition to informal surveillance, Khaled mentioned formal ways of security control “No event or conference is held without approval by faculty security. Faculty security coordinates with university security and university security coordinates with state security”.

The presence of security forces on Egyptian university campuses as one of the threats to academic freedom was reported in previous literature. The on-campus police forces were one of the clear signs of lack of university autonomy during Mubarak era. According to the HRW report (2005), security forces interfered in student union elections by intimidating candidates, entered campuses to violently disperse student protests, and watched class discussions to prevent professors and students from crossing the system’s red-lines. Professors and students interviewed in the report mentioned security existence on campuses as one of the main threats to academic freedom in higher education. Following the 25th of January revolution, the 2010 court verdict ruling the withdrawal of security forces from university campuses was implemented. However, Lindsey (2012) argued that despite the apparent withdrawal of security forces from university campuses, security forces still maintained observatory and monitoring activities inside campuses.
She claimed that students were still feeling being observed by police officers who were dressed in civilian clothing. This is congruent with what participant students perceived and reported in this research concerning the continuous interference of security forces in university affairs.
iii. Restrictions on data collection

One of the external threats mentioned by participant students and faculty members were restrictions on data collection and lack of free access to information. They argued that restrictions on student freedoms to conduct researches freely were not limited to selecting research topics but also research methodologies and data collection methods. In this context, collecting primary data through interviews and surveys was reported to be faced with a number of bureaucratic as well as political and security restrictions which constrained student academic freedom. Anas believed that restrictions on collecting primary data were one of the major impediments to his freedom in conducting research. He reported that professors urged him to work on secondary data while conducting statistical analysis in order to avoid security disapproval on questionnaires.

He explained:

Because I am in statistics department I sought to design a questionnaire and distribute it to students on campus. However, my professor said that it was forbidden to conduct questionnaires because of university security and that I would rather work on ready-made data by the CAPMAS.

Anas pointed out that being limited to work on data collected by the CAPMAS meant he would be forced to change his research topic if the required data was not available in CAPMAS. In this way, his research topics were determined by the type and nature of CAPMAS data.

He reported:

Your research should be related to the available data in CAPMAS or any site on the internet. This was one of the problems I faced when I decided to conduct a research on the relationship between depression and suicide. There was no data available in CAPMAS on such topic. In this case, you as a researcher will be forced to change your research field as well as research methods.
Similarly, Omar argued that even if faculty administration and professors were ensuring student freedoms in conducting research, external restrictions on collecting primary data would restrain the spectrum of permissible research topics.

He explained:

*For example if a student sought to conduct a research on ISIS and the professor approved and welcomed the topic but he wanted to distribute a survey in streets on such topic, what would happen in this case? The situation would be very bad because we are in an atmosphere where academic freedoms and research rights overlap with political and security dimensions. We have seen in the last period how many researchers were exposed to problems because of their research work. Some problems reached the level of being killed as what happened with the Italian researcher Regeni.*

Omar was referring here to the brutal murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian doctoral student at Cambridge University who came to Egypt to conduct a research on the development of independent trade unions. Regeni was conducting interviews with labor leaders of independent trade unions as part of pursuing his research at the American University in Cairo. He disappeared on 25 January 2016 and his dead body was found on the 2nd of February in the suburbs of Cairo. According to the Italian ambassador to Cairo, there were signs of brutal torture on Regeni’s body (European Parliament, 2016). While Egyptian investigations in the case have not ended yet, various academic institutions considered the accident as a major infringement on academic freedoms. In this context, University and College Union (UCU) in the UK described Regeni’s murder as “example of the growing danger posed by the current political climate in Egypt to all those engaged in academic work” (UCU, 2016). Regeni’s murder was also mentioned by Dr. Manal, a political science lecturer, while describing restrictions on fieldwork research in Egypt as one of the major threats to student academic freedoms.
She explained:

_The political climate is very important for student academic freedoms because in my point of view it does not only affect the views being proposed in researches but the research methods themselves. This is apparent in the case of the Italian researcher Regeni... When I heard about the case I discussed with my colleagues and professors what I should do if one of my post-graduate students or undergraduate students decided to conduct fieldwork research or interviews. You are conducting research in a political climate where the cost of fieldwork research is very high._

In this way, Dr. Manal was describing how avoiding fieldwork research constituted a restriction to student academic freedom.

In addition to restrictions on fieldwork research, access to data and information available in governmental institutions was constrained, as reported by participants. Omar argued that lack of transparency and free access to information impeded student academic freedoms.

Similarly, Anas explained:

_Routine and bureaucracy in research work is boring. If I want to easily access information, I have to resort to the internet. Otherwise if I want to have access to files and papers from ministries for example it would be difficult. They may say this is confidential information or ask for my CV and may send it to state security._

Restrictions on data collection and fieldwork research were considered among the impediments to academic freedoms in Egyptian universities since Mubarak era. The 2005 HRW report on academic freedoms pointed out that the state restricted academic research through imposing permit requirements for researchers conducting large number of surveys or interviews. In this case, researchers have to secure permits from CAPMAS before starting their fieldwork. As reported, such requirements were used by the government to prevent research in controversial areas and political issues. In addition to censorship, permits used to be granted to researchers after a long period of time constituting bureaucratic barriers to freedom of research.
iv. *Academic freedom as a luxury*

One of the threats to student academic freedom as perceived by participant students and faculty members was considering academic freedom as a luxurious demand in the context of more serious problems that were facing university education. Louay argued that academic freedom issues inside classroom were not the first priority of the previous student union in FEPS. Rather, student unions were focusing on university autonomy, security crackdown on campuses and multiple cases of student murders, detentions and arbitrary dismissals.

Louay pointed out:

*In the previous two years (2013/2014 and 2014/2015), academic freedoms were not the first issue we could discuss. The issues of university autonomy, security encroachments, administrative rights of students and arbitrary dismissals were the dominant issues because of the nature of the stage. At that time we were lacking the minimum level of rights; we did not have a secure university and we witnessed the murder of seven students on Cairo university campus in the academic year 2013-2014.*

He then added “At that time academic freedom was considered as a luxury”. Similarly, the same idea was confirmed by Khaled by demonstrating that student unions were overwhelmed with reacting to successive infringements on university autonomy which gave them no chance to concentrate on issues of student academic freedoms inside classroom.

He explained:

*There were issues that drew our attention and forced us to react. So, instead of following a plan for reform we were a reaction for issues that were imposed on the scene. There was no time for the student union to raise awareness on issues of academic freedom. We were more interested in university autonomy because there were student who died on campuses.*
While students expressed why academic freedom was not their first priority in the previous period, Dr. Samah argued that the issue of academic freedom will not be on the agenda of policy makers in the near future.

She explained:

*Academic freedom is not among the priorities of policy makers as well as professors because of more serious burdens and tasks. Sometimes the professor is not able to teach the minimum level of the academic subject itself because of different considerations. In this case, it is difficult to tackle issues of freedom while there is no academic content. You are focusing on how to provide students with the necessary amount of knowledge and skills to enter the labor market. This is why academic freedom with all its policies will be considered luxury.*

Thus, participants believed that academic freedom was a luxurious demand in light of more pressing issues on the policy agenda of Egyptian Higher Education. Such argument will be elaborated more while discussing participants’ low expectations regarding the adoption of policies to protect student academic freedom in the near future.
v.  **Imposed red-lines and self-censorship**

One of the external threats to student academic freedoms as perceived by students was the ruling system’s constants and imposed red-lines. Such red-lines shall not be crossed whether in class discussions or conducted researches. Ironically, political talks were mentioned by some students as one of the red-lines imposed by university administration after 30 of June 2013. Mai explained “From the beginning of the academic year 2013/2014, in most of lectures, professors said one phrase that they unanimously agreed upon: ‘We do not want talks in politics’”. She then commented on such phrase with an ironical laugh saying “We are in Faculty of Economic and Political Science and we will not talk in politics.”

Likewise, Farah argued that there were orders from the university rector to ban political talks on campuses.

She reported:

> Professors claim that banning of political talks is based upon instructions from above. At one time a certain professor told a student in her lecture that talks in politics were forbidden. Students laughed when they heard such phrase so she told them ‘I am not kidding. We received instructions from the university rector to avoid political discussions’.

When asked about the red-lines they were not allowed to bypass, participant students argued that the imposed red-lines were determined by the ruling authorities. Any issue that the ruling authorities considered one of the constants upon which the regime and its legitimacy were based falls within the red-lines.
Mai explained:

*I believe that the current political regime has a certain orientation and specific constants. And since such political regime controls all the state and consequently the university and faculty, the red-lines that we, as students, cannot bypass are those constants. Those constants are clear to everyone. It is clear what you should and should not say.*

She then gave examples for such constants by saying:

*An example for such constants is the issue of terrorism and who is considered terrorist. Can you at this time conduct a research on the 6th of April movement as a national movement? No, because the regime considers the movement as a terrorist group. And surely, you cannot conduct a research on Muslim Brothers as a national movement.*

Likewise, Mona argued that the state determined what topics students could discuss and what topics were forbidden.

She explained:

*There are many threats to academic freedom. The first is on the level of the state. The state imposes certain restrictions and determines what we shall discuss and what are forbidden topics. For example, the state recognizes 30 June as the great popular revolution so it blocks everything related to the 25th of January revolution while welcoming anything glorifying 30 of June.*

She added that restrictions reached any criticism to practices of the ruling regime by saying “We cannot as students present criticism to practices of the current authorities…For example if I sought to conduct a research on the dispersal of Rabaa sit-in, I would have been imprisoned, me and my professor as well.”

In addition, civil-military relations in Egypt and questioning the economic and political roles of the Egyptian military institution were perceived as one of the red-lines that should not be bypassed. In this context, Dr. Manal shared her experience with students in her class who were reluctant to discuss Egyptian civil-military relations. She mentioned “While I was discussing
civil-military relations which is an important topic I was expecting that students would express their opinions…However, students were reluctant to participate in discussion and I felt they were afraid of freely discussing such topic.” Similarly, Louay argued that civil-military relations were one of the topics that students would avoid because they heard that a thesis tackling that issue was banned last year.

One of the consequences of the created climate of fear and perceived red-lines is the engagement of students in a process of self-censorship and dissent avoidance. So even if restrictions and imposed red-lines mentioned by students were exaggerated, students' feeling in itself is a sign of diminishing levels of student academic freedom. In this context, Mai reported that she refrained from choosing controversial topics that might bypass the regime’s constants while determining the topic of her graduation project even though she was not sure that such topics would cause her problems.

She explained:

While I was choosing a topic for my graduation project there were topics that did not come to my mind… We are not sure if certain topics will cause problems, but because there is a probability I choose to refrain from such topics.

Likewise, Ibrahim justified the phenomenon of self-censorship exercised by students by a fantasy in their minds that the state was monitoring universities while in reality the state was incapable of reaching and observing all spheres inside universities.

He explained:

There are many spaces where the authority could not reach and control inside the educational institutions including universities and faculties. They do not exercise censorship on every issue or event. We imagine such censorship so we even refrain from using the allowed spaces of freedom.
Ibrahim then argued that the state created the general climate of fear that would force students to self-censor themselves and thus allowing the state to save the resources it might have employed in direct censorship.

He added:

_The state depends on deluding citizens into thinking they were being monitored by the state all the time. As a result citizens will act as if the state is monitoring them while in reality it is not. This reflects the idea of ‘Discipline’ proposed by Foucault._

In the same manner, Dr. Manal argued that because the red-lines imposed by the state were implicit and not clearly defined both professors and students used to exercise self-censorship whether in class discussions or conducted researches.

She noted:

_My problem is that I do not know the red-lines. No instructions were given to us concerning forbidden topics. However, you discover such forbidden topics when someone proposed them and catastrophic consequences happened. This is why I choose to avoid some topics so as to ensure safety._

She also justified such practices of self-censorship by the overall atmosphere of repressed freedoms prevalent in the country by saying “The overall atmosphere that restricts freedoms imposes on everyone a degree of self-censorship regarding what should and should not be said and what are the red-lines that should not be crossed based on previous cases whose results became obvious.”

The exercise of self-censorship, as reported by participants, is consistent with what Diekema called the “chilling effect”. Chilling effect was defined as “the subtle discouragement of the exercise of a recognized right” (Diekema as cited in Burgess, 2013, p. 20). This means that laws and formal policies might not put restrictions on academic freedoms but faculty members and
students choose to avoid controversial topics because they are afraid of possible negative repercussions. Diekema argued that a punishment that was exerted on one faculty member and violated his academic freedom was significant because of its domino effect on other faculty members. Faculty members who seek to avoid the destiny of their penalized colleague will self-censor themselves and refrain from discussing controversial issues.
III. Suggested policies and solutions

Participant students and faculty members proposed a number of solutions and policies to protect and maintain student academic freedoms. Suggested policies and solutions were directed to eliminate internal and external threats to academic freedom as perceived by participants. It is worth mentioning in this context that while participant students and faculty members agreed on the general outlines of suggested policies, discrepancies became obvious while discussing detailed mechanisms of enforcement. Such discrepancies stemmed from differences in framing the problem of student academic freedom in the first place and perceiving threats, specifically internal threats. Internal threats were more related to the direct relationship between students and faculty members which justified higher differences. As mentioned previously, students’ recognition of academic freedom as a problem, that required proactive policy solutions and interventions, was higher compared to participant faculty members. While students referred to professors’ unchecked authority as one of the major internal threats to their academic freedom, participant faculty members perceived such authority as stemming from their expertise and professional standards and a way to maintain their own academic freedom. Such differences in opinion will be more obvious while discussing suggested policies and solutions by both students and faculty members.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that participant students and faculty members expressed their low expectations regarding the adoption of any of the suggested policies and solutions in the near future. They argued that there was not enough faith in the issue of student academic freedom by the different stakeholders to exert the required pressure for formulating and implementing policies protecting academic freedoms. On the level of national policies and regulations, participant students believed that Ministry of Higher Education and university administrations
were not interested in and even opposing attempts to secure student academic freedoms.

Regarding faculty administration of FEPS, participants believed that while the administration might not be against student freedoms, they did not have the enough commitment. In other words, student academic freedom does not exist on the agenda of needed policies set by the faculty administration.

Mai expressed her lack of trust in the adoption of student academic freedom policies whether by faculty or university administration by saying:

_I think student academic freedom is not one of the main goals of our faculty administration. There are other issues in which they are interested. For university administration, absolutely they do not have the orientation to protect student academic freedom. University administration perceives students as source of threat; as students’ freedoms increase, anxiety on the part of university administration increases._

Likewise, faculty members in FEPS were perceived to either lack enough commitment or oppose protecting student academic freedoms. Dr. Amira argued that there were hostile attitudes against student academic freedom among some faculty members and that any policy required an embracing environment which was not available in that case. Similarly, participant students argued that many students were not aware of the concept of academic freedom and were more concerned about passing exams and achieving high grades. In this context, lack of enough commitment for student academic freedom among the different stakeholders (Ministry of Higher Education, university administrations, FEPS administration, faculty members and students) justified the need for working on the cultural aspect, raising awareness and building trust which was recommended by participant students and faculty members.
A. Providing clear legal protection for academic freedom

Participants argued that providing clear legal protection for student academic freedom was one of the necessary steps to protect and secure such freedom. They believed that the absence of a legal protection for student academic freedom made it vulnerable to the different beliefs and practices of faculty members. This was previously described by participants as varying levels of student academic freedom that differed according to the professor. In this context, legal protection would set standard levels for student academic freedom regardless of the personal beliefs of faculty members. This would enforce student academic freedom, minimize discretionary powers given to faculty members and undermine infringements on academic freedom by the different levels of authority. Mona argued that there should be a solution to student academic freedom that would go beyond the level of FEPS to higher education policies including enshrining student academic freedom in constitutional or legal frameworks.

She explained:

*There should be constitutional or legal protection for student academic freedom with detailed enforcement mechanisms. This is the way to deal with professors that do not allow for freedom of expression inside classroom as well as those who do not allow students to freely conduct their researches.*

In addition, participants argued that legal protection was only a starting point as enforcement of such legal frameworks on the level of on-ground practices would be the determining factor.

Omar explained:

*If there are laws or regulations preserving academic freedoms and rights, they will constitute a good step. However, the main factor depends on the idea of practice in reality. In other words, there should be a kind of oversight to ensure that such laws would be enforced properly and that nobody would circumvent them.*
Likewise, Dr. Salwa argued that laws required enforcement in reality and prompt responses to attempts of circumventing and breaking such laws.

She noted:

*There should be a statement in the Law of organizing universities protecting academic freedom. At the same time there should be a defense for such freedom in reality so that any source of infringement on it will be faced with a counter-movement. There is a possibility that a statement protecting academic freedom exists but in reality there is a silence regarding infringements. In such case, there will never be academic freedom whether for students or faculty members.*

While faculty members and students agreed on the necessity of a legal enshrinement of academic freedom, contradictory opinions appeared while discussing the content and enforcement mechanisms of such laws. The main point of disagreement was related to the procedures that should be undertaken whenever a faculty member violated and repressed student academic freedom. Students believed that there should be an entity or office responsible for student grievances concerning academic freedom violations and that disciplinary action should be taken against faculty members who infringed on student academic freedom. They argued that without punitive procedures to deter faculty members from repressing student academic freedoms, infringements on such freedoms would continue. In this context, Amany argued that there should be a mechanism for dealing with student grievances regarding unfair grading. She reported that the allowed grievance regarding exam grades was only to make sure that grades were summed correctly without giving the student the right to have a look on his/her paper. She suggested that grievances should deal with cases where the professor unfairly graded the student because of different views.
Amany explained:

*There should be an entity to which I can file a complaint if a professor gave me a poor grade and investigation has to be conducted. There should be an effective mechanism for student grievance. Now, the applied grievance is sham as what is allowed is to make sure that grades were summed correctly; may be my answers were correct but the professor disliked my opinions so he deducted from my grades.*

Similarly, Khaled argued that punishments had to be applied on faculty members who impeded student faculty members.

He explained:

*The law should stipulate punishment on whoever impedes student academic freedom. It’s nice to write on paper that student academic freedom should be respected but the main issue is when a professor prevents me from expressing my opinion what will be the procedure that shall be taken?*

Some faculty members agreed with what was proposed by students regarding establishing an entity or office to deal with student grievances regarding academic freedom violations.

Dr. Laila noted:

*There should be a legal statement that ensures student academic freedom…Also there should be a mechanism such as an entity or office on the level of faculties or university to deal with grievances related to cases such as if a student feels that a certain professor discriminates against him because of his opinions.*

However, many faculty members expressed their fear of the counter-effects of institutional mechanisms to deal with violations of student academic freedoms and imposing penalties on faculty members. Dr. Manal argued that in a polarized context like the Egyptian one especially after the revolution, such institutional mechanisms could be politicized and unfairly used against faculty members.
She explained:

_The idea of establishing an entity to which a student can file his grievance if he felt his grading was influenced by political factors is very difficult to implement. Here we must refer to our context; such issues could be politicized in our context. Sometimes the student dislikes the professor because such professor has a certain opinion so the student makes a preconceived judgment about the professor even before he enters classroom._

She then expressed her rejection of student grievances regarding unfair grading by saying:

_In such a polarized context where everything is being politicized and a certain group is being persecuted, you cannot confirm a student’s allegation that a professor gave him a poor grade because of a political orientation. Moreover, who can read the students’ answers and decide that evaluation is unfair? ; There is no model answer to compare with._

Likewise, Dr. Amira argued that in the context of lack of trust in the intentions behind any suggested policy, institutional mechanisms to penalize faculty members who violated student academic freedoms might be understood as a tool that would be used by the state to discriminate against dissident faculty members.

She explained:

_There is another problem related to lack of public trust prevalent in the country...If a new law states that a professor may be fired or deprived of promotion based on subsequent student complaints, the first thing come to my mind that there are certain professors who are politically against the ruling authority and the authority shall use the law to get rid of them through student complaints._

In other words, Dr. Dina argued that institutionalization of student academic freedom would replace what she called “professor’s tyranny” with “institutional tyranny”.


B. Faculty internal policies and rules

In addition to legal protection of student academic freedom on the level of Higher Education policies, participants recommended embedding student academic freedom in faculty internal policies and rules. A more detailed statement on professor’s responsibility towards protecting student academic freedom needs to be included in FEPS internal rules, as reported by participants. In this context, Sara argued that student academic freedom policies should start on the level of faculties and universities and develop as a bottom-up policy and not as a top-down policy imposed by the Ministry of Higher education. She believed that student academic freedom policies needed to be embedded in codes of conduct that originated from a community dialogue inside each faculty.

She reported:

*It is better for student academic freedom to be part of each faculty’s code of conduct which stems from a community dialogue inside that faculty... The code of conduct for faculty members will determine responsibilities of faculty members towards students which include enhancing student academic freedom as a core responsibility and prohibiting repression of any opinion or other discriminatory practices. Ministry of Higher Education shall determine the broad guidelines for policies while obliging faculties to conduct a dialogue towards student academic freedom policies.*

In addition, some participants recommended activating students’ evaluation of faculty members so that specific actions would be taken against faculty members who used to receive subsequent negative feedback. As mentioned previously, students reported that many times they wrote negative evaluation for certain professors and they were surprised that professors continued to teach the same course for subsequent classes without any change in teaching methods and curricula. Student evaluation of professors should exceed being a routine measure to fulfill quality assurance requirements on paper. Moreover, participants recommended that evaluation
forms should contain questions measuring the extent to which professors respected student academic freedoms including freedom of discussion inside classroom and freedom to conduct researches.

Omar explained:

*There should be a mechanism for holding faculty members accountable. For example, the students’ evaluation of faculty members that is conducted each semester and nothing is done with its results has to be effective. In addition, the extent to which faculty members respect student academic freedom should be an important part of evaluation. Such evaluation shall be taken into consideration.*

Moreover, some participants suggested that certain rules and standards should be imposed on faculty members regarding designing curricula, assigned readings and exams. While recognizing freedom of faculty members in teaching which included choosing the appropriate curricula, pedagogical methods and standards for evaluation, participants believed that academic departments should put certain guidelines to maintain quality assurance and make sure students were being exposed to as much diverse views as possible. Dr. Laila explained “There should be committees for academic review and quality assurance inside each department. Such committees would revise the material taught by professors and evaluate it based on the university standards regarding references that students should study.” She argued that such committees existed in some foreign universities as a kind of quality control. In the same manner, Sara argued that she checked other university experiences where committees existed to make sure that assigned readings were relevant and presented diverse views.

She reported:

*From the experiences of other universities, among responsibilities of faculty members is that he/she should not assign readings out of context. In addition, there should be a jury consisting of more than one faculty member to review the curriculum and to make sure
that readings maintain a degree of diversity and that irrelevant readings did not exist... This is why some respectful faculty members determine two lists of readings: required readings and recommended readings where more different views are presented.
C. The cultural aspect and raising awareness

As mentioned previously, participants expressed their low expectations regarding the adoption of formal polices, laws and regulations defending student academic freedom in the near future. They justified such stand by the lack of commitment of the different stakeholders to the issue of student academic freedom. Consequently, participants believed that working on the cultural aspect and raising awareness on the importance of student academic freedoms constituted one of the main prerequisites for the success of policies protecting academic freedoms. While working on the cultural aspect might be a long process that would take years, participants believed that issues of freedoms had to be tackled incrementally in order to ensure success and avoid setbacks. In this context, Louay argued that if a law protecting student academic freedom was developed while the culture of faculty members of denying students any rights or freedoms was maintained, student academic freedom would not be enacted in reality.

He explained:

Assume that a law that stipulates a more balanced relationship between professors and students was developed; you will still have a problem in the professors’ culture. The professor was socialized in a certain way that denies students any rights or freedoms...It is a crisis of culture and it is not an easy crisis that will be solved by a law.

Likewise, Sara believed that establishing a culture that respected student academic freedom would be a long process that required changing professors’ mindsets and pedagogical methods.

She explained:

The issue of student academic freedom needs persistent and on-going efforts that will bear fruit in the long-run. There should be continuous meetings and dialogues that urge professors to deal with students in a different way. This includes making students feel as empowered agents and not mere recipients.
In the same context, Dr. Salwa argued that a culture of defending student academic freedoms was necessary to ensure the successful enforcement of laws and policies. She explained that students needed to know their rights and freedoms in the first place in order to be able to act against any violation. Without the existence of student reaction against violations, laws protecting student academic freedoms will deem ineffective, she explained.

As a result, participants recommended that laws had to be paralleled with efforts of raising awareness and changing professors’ and students’ mindsets. Louay referred to the role of NGOs working on education issues in this domain. He pointed out that there were only two NGOs: Adala Center for Rights and Freedoms and Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) that were active in academic freedom issues in Egypt. While most NGOs focused on matters of quality of education, Ahmad believed that quality of education had to be linked to advocating for issues of academic freedom. He reported “Education issues should not be separated. The ultimate goal of academic freedom is to provide an adequate atmosphere that allows for the first mission of university which is education.” Likewise, Yehia recommended that since all students were interested in the issue of education quality, efforts to raise students’ awareness on academic freedom had to be linked to indisputable demands of enhancing education quality and increasing resources. In addition, he believed that student academic freedom had to be linked to faculty academic freedom as a one issue. In this context, he referred to the reluctance of faculty members and movements working on protecting faculty academic freedom such as the March 9 movement to tackle and defend student academic freedoms.

He explained:

Professors who work on issues of academic freedom and university independence were reluctant to support students in a common battle against university administration. When
we were in the student union, even if the union took the same stand of professors, every party was working on his own without any chance for partnership.

In other words, Yehia suggested that students and professors who were interested in the subject of academic freedom had to fight together as one party dealing with both student and faculty academic freedoms as one issue.

While discussing efforts to raise awareness of faculty members on academic freedom, some participants recommended that academic freedom should be a main component of training courses required by faculty members. Faculty members at public universities have to complete six training programs before each academic promotion as mandated by the Supreme Council of Universities. Such training courses are being offered by centers for faculty development inside each university. Training courses cover issues as international publishing for scientific researches, ethics of scientific research, creative thinking, and time-management. In this context, participants argued that courses tackling faculty and student academic freedom should be added to such training courses as mandatory ones.
D. Chances and opportunities for change

While mentioning suggested policies and solutions, participants referred to a number of opportunities that could be grabbed. They believed that on the level of FEPS good steps were taken upon which student academic freedom policies could be built. Some faculty members mentioned FEPS codes of ethics and codes of conduct for both students and faculty members as one of the important achievements in this domain. It is worth mentioning that the researcher managed to have access to the draft versions of such codes through one of the faculty members who participated in the study and were part of FEPS governance committee responsible for developing those codes. Until the time of this study there were no official declared versions for those codes. Despite the fact that neither faculty academic freedom nor student academic freedom was mentioned literally in the codes of ethics and conduct, some faculty members argued that the core values of academic freedom were embedded. They believed that the literal embedment of the concept of academic freedom was not an imperative need if the components and values upon which the concept was based were mentioned and maintained. In this context,

Dr. Manal explained:

There are some elements in the students’ code of conduct related to freedom of expression but without mentioning the concept of academic freedom. There is also an emphasis on values of diversity and non-exclusion of the other; diversity includes intellectual diversity and all types of diversity.

Likewise, Dr. Samah argued that while the codes of conduct did not mention the concept of academic freedom, they emphasized on many values that were supporting academic freedom.
She explained:

*Values such as impartiality, non-discrimination, fairness, equality and freedom of expression are enhancing academic freedom in the long run... For example values of fairness and equality include in their wide definition that while a professor is presenting ideas, he shall not be prejudiced towards a certain idea and shall present all ideas while giving students the freedom to choose... such values are serving academic freedom at the end; it is not necessary to state the concept of academic freedom in this case.*

By checking FEPS codes of ethics and codes of conduct, the researcher was able to determine the values that might be related to student academic freedom as described by some participants. FEPS codes of ethics include fairness and non-discrimination, intellectual freedom and respect of the other opinion, integrity and rejecting corruption, honesty and transparency, and responsibility and accountability. However, such values were stated as titles only without providing definitions. Concerning codes of conduct for faculty members, they include faculty codes of conduct towards students. Codes that can be indirectly related to academic freedom include encouraging discussion, dialogue, critical thinking and idea exchange, applying rules of fairness and transparency while evaluating students, avoiding discriminatory policies towards students for whatever reasons, and avoiding any act, word or guidance that is considered harassment to students. Regarding codes of conduct for students, there are two stated rights for students that can be related to academic freedom; one is stated as equality, non-discrimination and fairness of evaluation while the other is stated as the right to freedom of expression and student activities according to rules and regulations.

In addition, introducing the credit hours system in FEPS starting from the academic year 2015-2016 was perceived by some participants as one of the opportunities for enhancing student academic freedom. However, Dr. Samah was cautious in establishing such positive relationship
by referring to experiences of other governmental faculties which introduced the credit hours system a long time before FEPS.

She explained

*Part of the logic behind applying the credit hours system is based upon freedom. However, past experiences on the level of Cairo University were not able to make such link between the system and student freedom... The credit hours system introduces freedom of student to choose courses, the number of courses, the professor with whom he will study and the course time. Supposedly, this will gradually lead to freedom of expression inside classroom.*

On the level of higher education as a whole, one of the opportunities reported was related to the improvement in on-campus security and stability in the current academic year 2015-2016. This is compared to the previous academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 which witnessed clashes between security forces and protesting students leading to cases of murder, detention and arbitrary dismissal among students. The relative stability on campuses this year can allow for raising the issue of student academic freedom that was considered a kind of luxury in the context of more serious crises in the past two years.
Chapter Four: Conclusions and recommendations

I. Conclusions

It has been clear through both reviewing literature on academic freedom as well as analyzing data from interviews that there is no blueprint for successful student academic freedom policies. Starting from providing a definition for student academic freedom until designing enforcement mechanisms, varying opinions emerged in relation to different contexts. The study’s definition for student academic freedom is grounded in participants’ perceptions and interpretations of the concept. In this context, the study differentiates between concepts of student academic freedom, on-campus freedoms, and university autonomy while recognizing strong interrelations. Student academic freedom can be defined as freedom of students to learn without restrictions and censorship including freedom to choose specialization, freedom to conduct research, and freedom of expression inside classroom. The researcher believes that providing such definition makes student academic freedom distinct from general civil and political freedoms. This distinct status is necessary for efforts to design a sound policy for student academic freedom. Such policy will be directed to protect specific defining elements rather than just referring to student academic freedom as part of civil and political freedoms. This ensures higher level of protection that originates from the specific status of students as seekers and producers of knowledge. In this context, the study adopts Searle’s specific theory of academic freedom as opposed to the general theory of academic freedom. Specific theory of academic freedom justifies the right to academic freedom by the specific function of university in producing and disseminating knowledge. As a result, scholars in universities require a higher level of protection to their freedoms compared to ordinary citizens in a democratic society.
In addition, the study showed that student academic freedom was a multi-faceted and multi-level policy problem with overlapping factors and policy actors. Student academic freedom could not be addressed without protecting and maintaining faculty academic freedom. A successful academic freedom policy has to balance student against faculty academic freedom. While it is important to embed student academic freedom in faculty’s internal rules and policies, it will not be a guarantee for the protection of such freedom in light of the existence of continuous threats in the external environment. In the Egyptian context, academic freedom policies have to be combined with policies to ensure university autonomy, eliminate restrictions on data collection, and improve status of civil freedoms and rights in general. Moreover, academic freedom policies have to be merged with policies dealing with quality of education and improving pedagogical methods. To ensure success and even initiation of formal policies protecting student academic freedom, cultural awareness and advocacy campaigns have to be waged and directed towards different stakeholders including higher education policy makers, faculty members, and students. In other words, policies protecting student academic freedom in Egyptian higher education need to be tackled from a holistic approach that takes into account the peculiarities of the context, different policy levels and stakeholders involved, and direct and indirect sources of threat.

It is important in this context to note that more studies are needed to investigate and examine both student and academic freedom in the Egyptian context. Such studies shall overcome some of the limitations posed by the nature of the qualitative methodology adopted in this study. Since the sample used in this study was a purposive sample from one public faculty, results cannot be generalized to other Egyptian universities and faculties. Future studies shall tackle and compare student academic freedom in different faculties using quantitative surveys that will enable reaching generalizations. In this context, themes emerged from this study can be used as
variables and indicators in future quantitative surveys. Moreover, it is recommended that student academic freedom in natural science faculties be investigated as problems associated with academic freedom in those faculties may differ from their counterparts in social science faculties. Future studies shall also compare between student academic freedom in public and private universities in Egypt. In addition, examining academic freedom in Egypt in light of policy experiences of transitional societies on academic freedom is recommended in future research.
II. Recommendations

Since student academic freedom is a multi-faceted and multi-level policy problem, as previously mentioned, recommendations will include multiple levels and policy actors. Recommendations will be classified into four categories: Higher Education policies, FEPS internal policies and regulations, civil and political rights and freedoms, and raising awareness and advocacy.

Recommendations were derived from literature review and study interviews.

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Table 1: “Study recommendations”
A. Recommendations related to Higher Education policies

1- Legal framework

As revealed from international experiences and study interviews, providing a clear legal protection for student academic freedom constitutes one of the necessary steps to maintain and secure such freedom in Egyptian Higher Education. This requires embedding student academic freedom in the Law organizing universities Number 49 for the year 1972 under which Egyptian universities operate. Without legal protection that will guide, standardize and inform on-ground practices, student academic freedom will remain susceptible to infringement by various actors. In addition, it is recommended that such legal enshrinement provides protection for academic freedom of all members of academic community including faculty members and students. As stated earlier, both faculty and student academic freedoms are interrelated and have to be balanced against each other. Moreover, legal enshrinement has to provide a clear, detailed and precise definition for the elements of student academic freedom including: freedom of research, freedom of expression inside classroom, and freedom to choose specialization and courses. It is worth mentioning that the process of developing legal protection for student academic freedom has to be based on trust and conducted through a participatory approach that involves dialogues among all stakeholders. Such participatory approach is necessary especially in deciding upon providing student grievance procedures regarding academic freedom violations and penalizing professors who violate student academic freedom. As the study revealed, there were disagreement and lack of consensus among faculty members and students concerning institutional mechanisms to enforce legal
protection of student academic freedom. This necessitates the need for continuous efforts to build trust and consensus among the different stakeholders.

2- University autonomy

Since lack of university autonomy was perceived as one of the major threats to student academic freedom, it is recommended that universities shall maintain autonomy and independence from all state and non-state actors while governing its internal affairs. Despite the fact that university autonomy enjoys both constitutional and legal protection in Egypt, it is not enforced in reality. Security interference in university affairs through monitoring student activities and classroom discussions has to be ceased. In addition, it is recommended that Law organizing universities shall be amended to give faculty members the right to elect university rectors and faculty deans, as it was the case right after the 25th of January revolution.

3- On-campus freedoms

Universities have to ensure and protect student on-campus freedoms including freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression through the different student activities as students believed restrictions on such freedoms negatively affected their academic freedom.

4- Training courses for academic promotion

Faculty members at public universities have to complete six training programs before each academic promotion as mandated by the Supreme Council of Universities. The study recommends that academic freedom be a main component of mandatory training courses required by faculty members for each academic promotion.
B. Recommendations related to FEPS internal policies and regulations

1- Adoption of student academic freedom

It is recommended that FEPS shall embed student academic freedom in its internal policies and regulations in accordance with legal frameworks protecting academic freedom. In this context, FEPS should make use of the opportunity of developing codes of conduct and ethics for faculty members and students to provide a protection for both faculty and student academic freedoms. Such policies shall be more detailed than legal frameworks in defining elements of student academic freedom, stating associated rights and responsibilities, specifying cases that are recognized as assaults on student freedom, and providing internal procedures for student grievances regarding infringements on academic freedom. As recommended earlier, a participatory approach that involves faculty members, students and administrative leaders has to be adopted while developing such policies.

2- Activating evaluation of courses

Students’ evaluation of courses and faculty members should be activated so that specific actions would be taken to deal with and address subsequent negative feedback associated with certain professors. Efforts have to be exerted to retrieve students’ trust in the credibility and truthfulness of the process of evaluation. In addition, respect of student academic freedom should be one of the criteria upon which faculty members are evaluated. Evaluation forms should include questions measuring the degree of freedom faculty members allow for students while expressing their opinions inside classroom and selecting their research topics and methodologies.
3- **Departmental guidelines**

Academic departments should put certain guidelines regarding curricula, assigned readings and pedagogical methods to maintain quality assurance and make sure students were being exposed to as much diverse views as possible. However, this shall not restrict freedom of faculty members in teaching which includes choosing the appropriate curricula, pedagogical methods and standards for evaluation. In this regard, departmental guidelines constitute only general standards that aim to ensure students’ exposure to different views and hence protect them from political indoctrination. Moreover, academic departments should work on introducing interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches while determining courses and setting curricula.

C. **Recommendations related to raising awareness and advocacy**

1- **Role of NGOs**

It is recommended that non-governmental organizations working on academic freedoms and student rights such as Adala center for rights and freedoms and Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) shall organize workshops to raise awareness of students and faculty members on the concept of student academic freedom. In addition, such efforts shall be in collaboration with Egypt Student Union as well as the student unions in each faculty. Moreover, NGOs working on issues of quality of education need to merge academic freedoms into their horizons as education issues need to be addressed holistically.
2- **Role of student unions**

Student unions shall play a leading role in advocating for and defending student academic freedoms through waging awareness campaigns and organizing training workshops for students. They shall also encounter any source of infringement on student academic freedom and inform students of the procedures they should undertake in case of being exposed to violations. This is necessary for building a culture of defending academic freedom among all students with their broad range of political views.

3- **Role of faculty members**

Faculty members have to play a collective role in advocating for both faculty and student academic freedoms. In this regard, it is recommended that the March 9 movement for University Autonomy shall engage student academic freedom in their struggle for increasing university autonomy and academic freedom at Egyptian public universities.

D. **Recommendations related to civil and political rights and freedoms**

1- **Law on free access to information**

Since difficulties in accessing information undermined student academic freedom, as reported by participants, it is recommended that a law that ensures transparency and free access to information shall be enacted. Such law shall eliminate bureaucratic and prolonged administrative procedures required for accessing information held by public authorities. It is worth mentioning in this regard that the process of drafting a law on freedom of information has begun in the aftermath of the 25th of January revolution but none of the proposed drafts was enacted.
2- Elimination of CAPMAS permit requirements

The study recommends amending the presidential Decree No. 2915/1964 that stipulates the necessity of obtaining permit requirements from CAPMAS before conducting researches that include large number of interviews or surveys. Such requirements shall be removed and substituted with approval from independent entities inside each university. Approval from independent entities shall only be required to maintain and protect rights of human subjects involved in research without making judgments pertaining to the content of suggested researches.

3- Civil and political freedoms

The study revealed that student academic freedom was affected by the overall atmosphere of civil and political rights and freedoms in Egypt. In this context, it is recommended that the state shall remove restrictions imposed on citizens’ freedoms of expression, assembly and association, stop practices of attacking political opponents and dissidents, and consolidate rule of law and values of pluralism and diversity.
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Appendix

Interview questions

1- How do you define and perceive student academic freedom?

2- What are the main elements of student academic freedom?

3- What are the sources of threat to student academic freedom in FEPS specifically and Egyptian Higher Education generally?

4- Can you recall an occasion when student academic freedom was violated at your school?

5- In your opinion, does student academic freedom at Egyptian Universities represent a policy problem that requires policy solutions? And Why?

6- What are the elements of an effective policy to protect student academic freedom in Egyptian Higher Education?

7- At the level of FEPS, what actions should be taken by the administration to protect student academic freedom?