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The ramifications of Digital Mediation for the Identity, Perception and Interpersonal Relationships of Algerian Youth in the 21st Century

تداعيات الوساطة الرقمية على الهوية والإدراك والعلاقات الشخصية للشباب الجزائري في القرن الحادي والعشرين

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ABSTRACT:

In the 21st century, digital mediation has become a defining feature of everyday life, influencing how individuals perceive themselves, others, and the world. This article explores how digital platforms and mediated communication reshape human selfhood, sensory perception, and interpersonal dynamics. Drawing from interdisciplinary literature and recent scholarship (2020–2025), this paper situates the discussion within established research traditions, with a particular focus on Algerian youths. It reveals three major transformations. First, digital spaces allow for curated self-presentations that affect identity construction and self-awareness. Second, continuous digital engagement modifies sensory perception and attention, creating fragmented modes of awareness. Third, interpersonal relationships are increasingly shaped by algorithmic mediation, confusing the lines between intimacy and performance. Through a theoretical and context-based lens, this study argues that digital mediation does not merely reflect human behaviour but actively co-produces new forms of subjectivity and sociality. The work concludes by advocating for culturally sensitive digital literacy initiatives and further cross-cultural research in underrepresented contexts.
Key words: Digital mediation, Selfhood perception, Interpersonal relations, Algerian youth identity, Social media

ملخص البحث

في القرن الحادي والعشرين، أصبحت الوساطة الرقمية سمة مميزة للحياة اليومية، تؤثر على كيفية إدراك الأفراد لأنفسهم وللآخرين وللعالم. تستكشف هذه المقالة كيف تعيد المنصات الرقمية والتواصل الوسيط تشكيل الهوية الإنسانية، والإدراك الحسي، والديناميات بين الأفراد. مستندة إلى الأدبيات متعددة التخصصات والدراسات التجريبية الحديثة (2020-2025)، مع تركيز خاص على الشباب الجزائري، تكشف الورقة البحثية عن ثلاث تحولات رئيسية. أولاً، تتيح المساحات الرقمية تقديم الذات بشكل منسق يؤثر على بناء الهوية والوعي الذاتي. ثانياً، يعدل الانخراط الرقمي المستمر الإدراك الحسي والانتباه، مما يخلق أنماطاً مجزأة من الوعي. ثالثاً، تتشكل العلاقات بين الأفراد بشكل متزايد من خلال الوساطة الخوارزمية، مما يطمس الحدود بين الحميمية والأداء. من خلال عدسة نظرية وسياقية، تجادل هذه الدراسة بأن الوساطة الرقمية لا تعكس ببساطة السلوك البشري، بل تشارك بنشاط في إنتاج أشكال جديدة من الذاتية والاجتماعية. تختتم المقالة بالدعوة إلى مبادرات محو الأمية الرقمية الحساسة ثقافياً وإلى مزيد من الأبحاث عبر الثقافات في السياقات غير الممثلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تشكيل الهوية: التواصل الوسيط: التكنولوجيا الرقمية: الوساطة الرقمية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the advent of digital technologies has significantly transformed the ways in which individuals engage with one another socially, perceive their surroundings, and construct their personal identities. Platforms such as social media and various online environments have redefined traditional notions of physical presence, familiarity in social relationships, and the limits of individual identity. Unlike in the past, when identity was primarily shaped by face-to-face interactions and local cultural contexts, the digital age presents a more incoherent, variable, and interconnected understanding of the self. Platforms like social media, the creation of digital interfaces, and algorithm-driven content all contribute to a setting where identity is increasingly mediated, constantly evolving, and often customized for public consumption. In Algeria, similarly to many other areas around the globe, young individuals are faced with the challenge of managing a complex reality where their online identities frequently reduce their face-to-face interactions. This situation raises significant questions regarding their ability to stay focused in a virtual environment filled with distractions, and the depth of emotional connections they can create with others. With the growing popularity of online engagement in our daily lives, the challenge of achieving a balance between virtual interactions and face-to-face social experiences is becoming more complicated. This significant shift has led to dynamic discussions about how it affects personal growth and the strength of community relationships. As more people turn to digital platforms for communication and socialization, it raises questions about how these online relationships have transformed the way we connect with others, provoking a need for strategies to foster meaningful in-person connections alongside our digital identities.

This article explores the extensive effects of digital mediation on three interconnected aspects of human experience: self-identity, perception, and interpersonal relationships. In our modern world, digital technologies, like social media, smartphones, virtual platforms, and AI interfaces, are essential to how individuals view themselves, understand reality, and connect with others. These tools do more than just enable communication; they actively shape it, affecting how people develop their identities, interpret their surroundings, and maintain social connections.

At the heart of this investigation are two main research questions: First, how do digital technologies transform our relationships with ourselves and with others? This involves examining how online profiles, digital self-representations, and mediated emotional expressions influence self-understanding and interpersonal communication. Second, how do these tools reshape perception and interaction in today's digital culture? The analysis considers how individuals engage with technology to construct their identities and how digital environments shape the lines between public and private spheres, as well as between virtual and physical presence. By highlighting both subtle and profound shifts, this study explores the broader implications of digital mediation for human experience in the 21st century.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that combines important views on remediation theory, media determinism, and dramaturgical-performance theory to highlight the active role of technology in shaping our sense of self, how we perceive the world, and how we interact with others. Instead of viewing digital mediation as a neutral backdrop, these frameworks emphasize that it plays a crucial role in shaping our lives in the modern world.

Bolter and Grusin's (1999) theory of remediation is a key component of this framework. It argues that new media does not exist in isolation but constantly reinvents and repurposes older forms, aiming to achieve both immediacy and hypermediacy. In the digital context, this concept helps us understand how people experience presence, representation, and authenticity in the online world.

McLuhan's (2003) media determinism is another element of this framework, highlighting that media are not just tools but powerful forces that reshape how we perceive the world, think, and organize ourselves socially. According to McLuhan, media shape human perception and interaction beyond their content; in digital contexts, this means that technological affordances fundamentally reshape time, space, identity, and social relations.

The third aspect draws on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model, expanded upon by Turkle's (2011) exploration of digital life. Goffman's view of social interactions as performances helps us understand how individuals manage their impressions across different contexts. Turkle expands this idea to the online world, arguing that digital environments amplify and fragment these performances, leading to multiple and often conflicting self-presentations.

Collectively, these views demonstrate how digital mediation changes the ways people see themselves, connect with others, and exist in technology-driven environments. Instead of viewing technology as a neutral background, this framework emphasizes its crucial role in shaping identity, meaning, and social interaction.

3. Review of Literature

Digital technology has transformed how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others. Nowadays, our identities are more influenced by online platforms than by traditional environments such as family or community. This review examines the impact of digital spaces on our sense of self, particularly in how we create and present our identities online. It draws on concepts from media, psychology, sociology, and communication studies, discussing themes like authenticity, visibility to others, and online performance. Additionally, it addresses the tension between personal agency and algorithmic influence, as well as how individuals navigate their online and offline lives, including what they choose to keep public or private.

3.1 Brief Context on Digital Transformation.

Digital transformation refers to the on-going integration of digital technologies into everyday life, fundamentally altering how individuals perceive themselves and relate to others (Miller et al. 2016, p.1). Brennen and Kreiss (2016) argue, digital transformation is "a deep and sustained change in how individuals and institutions operate and relate to one another" (p. 1). It is not limited to the adoption of tools but involves "a profound shift in how we construct and perform identity, especially in relation to mediated environments" (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 15). It involves the restructuring of practices, expectations, and relationships under the influence of digital platforms creating what Baym (2015) calls 'relational labour'. On a personal level, the digital transformation has changed the way identities are created and expressed. Social media platforms serve as sites for self-presentation, allowing users to constantly modify and refine their characters. In this vein Baym (2015) detects that these platforms promote a mode of communication that is "highly performative and iterative," resulting "in identity as a process rather than a fixed state" (p. 8). Van Dijck (2013) notes that this numerical shift highlighted globally through social media normalize a "culture of connectivity,"

where users are encouraged to constantly share and remain visible thus linking personal worth to digital presence (p. 12). Digital technologies have become part of the 'infrastructural condition' of modern life, where connectivity is implicit and digital mediation is rooted in how people act, interpret, and construct reality.

3.2. Digital Mediation of Self

The construction of selfhood in digitally mediated environments has become a central theme in contemporary media and communication studies. The 'digital self' is no longer a passive extension of the offline identity but an active site of negotiation, performance, and virtual visibility. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of self-presentation has seen renewed relevance in this context, as individuals present different "faces" to various audiences, mediated through algorithms and interfaces. The distinction between public and private, real and virtual, is becoming more multifaceted; leading to what Deuze (2012) calls "a life lived in media." In this context, identity and interpersonal dynamics are no longer grounded in stable social roles but emerge through digital participation, negotiation, and exposure. This transformation also redefines social relationships. Online intimacy, digital friendships, and globalized communities, now, operate within networked spaces. Marwick and boyd (2011) highlight how these platforms enforce "context collapse," where multiple social contexts combine into one digital audience, challenging traditional relational boundaries and communication norms.

Papacharissi (2015) introduces the concept of the "networked self," a composite, real-time performance of identity modulated by social platforms, audiences, and digital feedback. Moreover, Zhao and Kang (2022) contend that the algorithmic nature of platforms like TikTok and Instagram contributes to a "performative loop" where users increasingly design their identities in expectation of algorithmic visibility

3.3 The Digital Self-presentation

In light of the expanding influence of social media and algorithmic platforms, renewed scholarly attention has been focused, particularly, on the ways individuals construct and manage their identity in online environments. Researchers argue that digital self-presentation extends beyond simple self-reflection; it is increasingly understood as a performative, context-dependent, and strategically crafted act, shaped by platform dynamics, audience expectations, and algorithmic visibility (Abidin & Ots, 2020 ; Bucher & Helmond, 2021). According to Abidin and Ots (2020), digital self-presentation is "a form of identity labour performed for both imagined audiences and algorithmic visibility" (p.7). Social media environments, especially platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X, have encouraged a shift from authentic self-expression to curated profiles. As Bucher and Helmond (2021) explain, "Users are increasingly aware of how their content is ranked and displayed, leading them to adapt their self-presentation to fit algorithmic expectations" (p. 36).

The digital self, in this context, is not a simple projection of the user but a site of continuous modification and regulation. Young people and teenagers are a key group for exploring how digital identities are formed. In a recent ethnographic study, Ringrose et al. (2023) found that young people participate in small negotiations about how they are seen, always balancing their wish for recognition with their fear of being misunderstood (p. 54). This shows the delicate nature of digital identity, where ways of presenting oneself need to balance social expectations, platform standards, and peer

interactions. In terms of gendered experiences, empirical studies reveal that women often face amplified self-surveillance and aesthetic pressure. As Dobson and Kanai (2021) point out, "female users are disproportionately subject to regimes of visual perfection, where 'relatable' self-presentation still requires intensive aesthetic labour" (p. 89).

The post-pandemic digital environment intensified the ways in which individuals present themselves. Throughout and following the COVID-19 lockdowns, platforms emerged as the main spaces for both personal and professional interactions. According to Papacharissi (2022), "the pandemic has blurred public and private selves online, accelerating trends towards hybrid, multi-layered digital identities" (p. 141). This blending of online and offline life makes it harder to tell who the audience is, what counts as private or personal, and where to draw the line between different parts of our lives.

3.4. Perception and Cognitive Modulation

Digital platforms have become omnipresent environments that deeply influence how individuals perceive, process, and interpret information. Recent cognitive studies confirm these concerns. Montag and Diefenbach (2021) argue that "platform-based interaction reinforces surface-level processing, weakening deep cognitive engagement" (p. 5). Further, perception itself, how individuals interpret reality, is increasingly filtered through algorithmic intermediation. Bucher (2021) notes, "algorithms are not neutral tools; they frame how users perceive relevance, truth, and even emotional tone" (p. 73).

More recently, empirical research by Kross et al. (2023) found measurable correlations between increased digital mediation and reductions in metacognitive awareness, meaning individuals were less likely to reflect critically on their perceptions or emotional responses (p. 210). The study emphasizes the importance of platform design in either reinforcing or weakening users' capacities for self-monitoring. Slater and Sanchez-Vives (2021) maintain that immersive digital environments can produce altered states of perception that closely mimic physical reality, thereby challenging the distinction between simulation and actual experience (p. 44). Digital environments do not only influence how people express themselves but also how they perceive reality.

3.5 Digital Interpersonal Relations

The evolution of digital technologies has altered interpersonal relations, reshaping how individuals initiate, maintain, and experience social connections. As Baym (2015) observes, "Interpersonal relationships are increasingly constituted in and through digital technologies, from texting to social media to video calls" (p. 12). This shift has erased all separate limits between digital and physical interactions. Furthermore, Lim (2020) notes, "Presence is no longer about physical co-location but about responsiveness across platforms, often measured in seconds" (p. 84).

In examining cross-cultural implications, Ahn and Park (2023) argue that though digital communication improves accessibility, it can also diminish emotional depth, particularly in cross-cultural exchanges where delicate contextual signals are essential (p. 56). From a psychological standpoint, Kuss and Griffiths (2021) assert that the gamification of interaction, particularly on apps like Instagram and TikTok, may reduce relationships to performative engagements, fostering social comparison rather than genuine reciprocity (p. 305).

In sum, the literature reveals that digital mediation has reconfigured the formation of identity, reshaped the structures of perception, and transformed the conditions of intimacy and social interaction, often amplifying both emancipatory potentials and embedded inequalities.

4. Digital Transformation in the Algerian Context: A Literature Review Analysis

In recent years, Algeria has witnessed a strong move towards digital transformation as part of its larger goals to modernize public administration, diversify the economy, and bridge the digital gap. As digital technologies become part of everyday life, affecting education, healthcare, commerce, and governance, Algeria's changing digital environment mirrors both global trends and local characteristics. This change is not just about technology; it is also deeply socio-cultural, altering how people interact, find information, and engage in social and economic activities. The Algerian government's strategic plans, like the National Digital Strategy and the encouragement of e-governance, highlight a dedication to building a digitally skilled and connected society. However, the execution of these initiatives, also, uncovers various challenges related to infrastructure, education, and policy within the Algerian context.

This section critically explores the trajectory, opportunities, and constraints of digital transformation in Algeria, with particular attention to its implications for identity, perception, and interpersonal relations.

4.1. Conceptual Foundations and National Strategy

Algeria is undergoing a digital transformation due to global modernization pressures and local needs for efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. An important example is the 2023 establishment of the *'Haute Autorité de la Numérisation'* (High Authority for Digitalization), charged with coordinating intersectoral digital policy (Presidential Decree n° 23-314, 2023). As part of its national development goals, Algeria launched multiple initiatives aimed at digitizing government services, enhancing internet infrastructure, and supporting the digital economy. According to *UNCTAD's Technology and Innovation Report* (2021), Algeria is "actively pursuing digital governance reforms and smart infrastructure planning, though disparities in implementation persist between urban and rural areas" (p. 76). The national strategy *'Algérie Numérique 2020'* has outlined a roadmap for e-government, e-education, and e-commerce.

One of the most prominent developments has been the digitization of public services. According to Gherib and Chouchane (2020), the "Digital Algeria" strategy aims to modernize public administration, expand broadband access, and encourage innovation-driven entrepreneurship" (p. 55).These services aim to reduce citizen-state contact, modernize procedures, and increase institutional transparency.

In education, the pandemic served as a chief motive for digital transition in education. Algerian universities had to switch to online learning methods even though they were not ready. However, this crisis led to significant considerations about the future digitalization of higher education, especially in terms of access and fairness.

Socially, the expansion of digital networks, especially mobile internet, has transformed communication practices. According to ARPCE (Autorité de Régulation de la Poste et des Communications Électroniques, 2024), mobile internet penetration exceeded 85%, with social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok becoming primary modes of interaction among Algerian youth.

This aligns with Bouzid's (2021) analysis that digital culture in Algeria is becoming more focused on youths, characterized by the use of online platforms for activism, negotiating identity, and building communities (p. 57). However, issues such as digital addiction, misinformation, and cyber bullying are increasingly reported, highlighting the need for digital literacy education (Zitouni, 2022, p. 142).

From a cultural standpoint, digital platforms have also reconfigured interpersonal dynamics and identity performance, particularly among Algerian youth navigating traditional norms and globalized media. As Cherif (2023) observes, "the digital realm offers young Algerians a paradoxical space of freedom and surveillance, where they can experiment with identity while remaining embedded in familial and social constraints" (p. 64). This duality drives broader tensions in Algerian society as it balances continuity with transformation.

Overall, Algeria's digital transformation is continuing, but it has started to change how people see themselves, their social connections, and how they interact with institutions. For this transition to be successful, it will need more than just technology improvements; it will also need changes in policies, education for citizens, and designs that include everyone to make sure the digital change does not create more inequalities

4.2. Algerian Youth, Social Media, and the Digital Self

For the youth in Algeria, who make up over half of the population, social media serves as a key area for trying out identities, expressing creativity, and building communities. The concept of the *"digital self"* among Algerian youth is deeply intertwined with the affordances of social media platforms, socio-political structures, and cultural constraints. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are utilized not only for entertainment but also to investigate mixed identities, participate in active discussions, and navigate the sense of belonging between local and global cultures. Bouzid (2021) reveals how youth often manage contradictory cultural expectations by constructing multiple digital personas. One of the study sample participant stated: "I show one version of me on Instagram, but on Facebook, I'm someone else—more serious, more 'respectable' for family." El Houari (2020) similarly notes that Algerian women selectively present themselves online to balance visibility and modesty, suggesting a complex digital negotiation of autonomy within patriarchal constraints. This digital pluralism mirrors global findings but is shaped by regional moral codes and gender dynamics.

Rabah (2022) explored how internet use in Algeria enables both connection and fragmentation. For instance, while youth use memes and satire to critique, they also encounter content that reinforces patriarchal norms or fuels disinformation. This tension makes the digital self a constantly negotiated construct. Female users, especially, adopt complex strategies of visibility, often using pseudonyms, filtered photos, or curated personas to protect privacy while remaining socially relevant. Benarab (2024) investigated self-construction via Instagram among 15- to 25-year-olds. The research concluded that the Algerian youth had a strong tendency towards the idealisation of their self-image on social media platforms, accompanied by "a constant pressure to optimize and curate one's digital identity to align with the standards of beauty, success, and popularity valorised by these environments" (p. 220).

Tlidjani & Chami (2025) write that TikTok content creators are "driven by a desire for fame and curiosity about the platform… however TikTok significantly influences users' behaviour and values, leading to notable shifts that often diverge from traditional societal norms" (p. 98–99).

Latreche (2024) argues that new digital media brought either a cultural revolution or "a social value gap," asserting that while social media opens horizons for migration, learning, and personality development, it also creates "a functional and communicative imbalance between youth and society" (p. 4). Such practices echo Baym's (2015) observation of online identity as "strategically curated," but filtered, in the Algerian context, through cultural notions of '*hurma'* (sanctity) and '*nif'* (honour).

In sum, young people in Algeria explore digital spaces as complex landscapes for self-expression, adherence, and monitoring. Their online identities are not static but rather fluid performances influenced by social and political contexts, gender expectations, and technological opportunities. Social media act as both a reflection and a disguise, showing aspirations, hiding limitations, and influencing the changing connection between individuals and society.

4.3. Conceptual Classification of Algerian Studies: Identity Mediation in Algerian Digital Spaces

Recent Algerian scholarship has increasingly explored the dynamic relationship between youth, social media, and the construction of digital identity. Online platforms have emerged as key spaces where young individuals negotiate and express their identities, shaped by interconnecting cultural, social, and technological influences. This section offers a conceptual classification of key studies that examine identity mediation in digital contexts, organized around four central themes: digital identity, self-negotiation, digital alienation, and identity performance. Each thematic axis is grounded in both empirical findings and theoretical models, particularly, Goffman (1959)'s dramaturgical approach, Foucault (1982)'s notion of subjectivation, and Castells'(1996) theory of networked identity. Together, these frameworks provide a robust lens for analyzing the evolving nature of selfhood, cultural tensions, and expressive practices in Algerian digital spaces. This conceptual mapping lays the foundation for the subsequent analytical discussion and strengthens the coherence of the article's theoretical orientation.

- ***Digital Identity Construction***

A significant portion of Algerian research underscores the multiplicity and hybridity of digital identities among youth. Zahhaf (2024) conducted a mixed-methods investigation entitled *"The Role of Social Media in Shaping Young Algerians' Linguistic and Cultural Identity*", focusing on first-year master's EFL students at Djilali Liabès University in Sidi Bel Abbès. The study employed both electronic questionnaires and focus-group observations, engaging 30 participants. The investigator found that social media platforms serve a dual function in linguistic and cultural expression. While some students reported difficulties in preserving linguistic accuracy and cultural authenticity, others embraced the plurality and hybridity facilitated by digital exposure. Notably, code-switching and hybrid identity formation emerged as key patterns among participants. The study recommended fostering digital literacy through identity-awareness workshops, promoting culturally grounded language use online, and encouraging balanced multilingual expression to preserve identity coherence. Similarly, Farg and Ben Aoun (2023) examined how Algerian university students constructed virtual identities on platforms like Facebook. Their findings highlighted the strategic use of pseudonyms and selective self-presentation, allowing youth to navigate sociocultural constraints while experimenting with identity. This aligns with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory, where social media acts as a stage for managing impressions. It also reflects Foucault's (1982) concept of

subjectivation, as users internalize norms and reshape them digitally, and Castells' (1996) notion of fragmented, networked identity shaped by global digital flows. The authors recommended enhancing digital literacy to promote informed, safe, and culturally aware self-representation online.

- ***Self-Negotiation and Identity Conflict***

The concept of self-negotiation surfaces prominently in studies examining how youth mediate competing identity scripts online. This theme of internal tension is echoed in the literary analysis by Jaa and Ben Tayba (2024), who examined the novel '*Al-Tarhan'* as a site of identity struggle. Their study revealed how fictional characters embodied the psychological and cultural fragmentation experienced by many Algerians caught between tradition and globalization. The researchers argued that this fragmentation is not merely personal but emblematic of a broader societal crisis, where Algerians must constantly negotiate between inherited cultural frameworks and emerging global identities. The authors suggested that such literary representations serve as mirrors to Algeria's postcolonial condition, where identity is not fixed but fluid, contested, and perpetually in negotiation.

Additionally, Noari (2023) examined how Algerian university students used digital storytelling to construct and explore their identities across linguistic and academic contexts. Through narratives in Tamazight, Arabic, and French, students negotiated shifting subject positions, reflecting Algeria's complex postcolonial language dynamics. The study, conducted with 100 EFL students at Batna 2 University, showed that digital storytelling fosters self-reflection and identity reconciliation. The researcher advocated for promoting multilingual expression and integrating reflective practices into digital pedagogy.

- ***Digital Alienation and Psychological Tension***

While digital platforms offer freedom of expression, they also foster alienation, fragmentation, and psychological tension, themes critically explored in Algerian research. Dekhil and Sarnou (2022) examined how Instagram shapes the digital identities of Algerian teenagers in their article *"Investigating the Impact of Instagram Application on Algerian Individuals' Self-Identifications."* Utilizing a mixed-methods approach combining an online questionnaire with digital observation, the study sampled 161 teenage Instagram users. Results showed that 57.8% of participants perceived alignment between their online and offline selves, while 42.2% reported a significant disconnection. Additionally, 61% described a *"dual-identity"* phenomenon, pointing to internal struggles and identity fragmentation, what some scholars term *"digital schizophrenia."* The researchers emphasized the need for youth support initiatives focused on managing online self-presentation, improving digital mental health awareness, and strengthening digital resilience among adolescents. Messahel and Guediri (2024), in their study *"The Role of Social Media in Spreading Intellectual Extremism Among Algerian Youth"*, conducted fieldwork in 'El Oued' using e-questionnaires distributed through Facebook groups. Their findings suggested that unregulated content exposure and limited critical literacy not only threatens identity cohesion but also destabilizes moral and national affiliation. The study noted the absence of regulatory frameworks capable of restraining such immoderate content effectively. As a response, the authors called for the development of digital awareness campaigns focused on intellectual security and critical media literacy to prevent from feelings of disconnection between one's digital self and embodied self; often leading to identity confusion.

Badawi et al. (2024) contributed to this line of inquiry with their research entitled *"Awareness of Algerian Youth about the Risks of Social Media on Intellectual Security*", Surveying 36 Algerian youth aged 18–40 via Facebook, the researchers found a relatively high level of awareness regarding the intellectual threats of social media. Interestingly, while slight gender differences were observed in awareness levels, men reported greater psychological resilience and digital confidence. Based on these findings, the study recommended expanding intellectual risk-awareness initiatives and incorporating psychological coping strategies into youth digital programs, especially through curriculum-based interventions that address identity and media security concerns

- ***Intersectionality of Gender, Performative Identity, and Mediated Selfhood***

Algerian studies reveal that youth digital self-presentation is deeply shaped by intersecting identity markers such as gender, social class, and nationality. Beklouf (2025), examining Facebook usage among Algerian youth, observes that "gender, class, and religious affiliations significantly influence how Algerian youth curate their digital presence, oscillating between cultural conformity and personal expression" (p. 131). This intersectional lens is further supported by Felfoul, et al (2023), who demonstrated that female students at the University of Béjaïa managed their online visibility with acute awareness of social scrutiny and cultural expectations. Their findings showed that youth often used digital platforms to balance tradition and modernity, particularly in contexts where patriarchal norms shape both offline and online identities.

The performative dimension of digital identity and gendered self-representation within Algerian digital spaces has been significantly explored by Rahmouni (2024) in her critical study of female vloggers:*"Algerian Women's Vlogs: A Critical Analysis"*, The researcher examined 100 videos created by 20 Algerian women vloggers on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, using Goffman's (1999)'s impression-management theory as a framework. The study revealed that digital self-presentation among these women predominantly centred on aesthetic branding and physical appearance, often at the expense of moral or educational substance. The vlogs reflected a highly visual form of selfhood, one that privileges visibility and marketability over critical or intellectual engagement. Rahmouni recommended enhancing media literacy with a focus on identity representation, and supporting alternative, women-led digital content that aligns personal branding with ethical and intellectual values.

In their study entitled *'New Locations, New Identities: Towards an Anthropology of the Feminine Virtual Identity Within the Cyberspace'*, Ben Amara and Bouamama (2023) explored the construction of feminine virtual identity among Algerian women through an anthropological perspective. Drawing on cyber feminist theory and cultural studies of technology, the study introduced the concept of techno-symbolic identity, emphasizing how digital tools, such as avatars, filters, and hashtags, serve as expressive mediums for complex, layered identities. The study highlighted how digital platforms function as both liberating and contested spaces, where visibility, agency, and self-definition are continuously negotiated. Ultimately, the researchers advocated for greater recognition of digital identity work as a form of cultural production and call for inclusive digital literacy initiatives that address gendered experiences in North African societies.

The collective findings of these studies indicate that digital identity in Algeria is multifaceted and fluid rather than static. It is shaped by a variety of factors, including local sociolinguistic norms and the broader influences of global aesthetic and discursive trends. This dynamic nature of digital

identity suggests that it is constantly changing and adapting over time. Understanding this complexity is central, as it highlights the significant role that platform features, peer interactions, and cultural expectations play in the formation of identity. Such insights can inform our broader comprehension of identity in the digital age, particularly, in diverse cultural contexts like Algeria.

5. Discussion

This section examines the implications of digital mediation on Algerian youth's self-perception, identity performance, and socio-cultural engagement. Drawing on the empirical findings synthesized in the previous part, it connects central themes, including digital identity construction, performativity, alienation, and gendered expression, with foundational theoretical perspectives. Through this lens, the discussion critically interrogates how Algerian youth navigate identity negotiation within social media spaces, highlighting the culturally rooted and technologically mediated nature of these processes.

The reviewed Algerian research collectively highlights that digital identity among Algerian youth is a dynamic, multi-layered, and context-sensitive construct, shaped by a confluence of linguistic plurality, social norms, and platform logics. The research reviewed (e.g., Zahhaf, 2024; Farg & Ben Aoun, 2023) highlights that Algerian youth display hybrid, multilingual, and adaptable digital identities. This corresponds with Castells' (1996) idea of the network society, where identities are not fixed to stable national or cultural references but are influenced by global digital interactions. The intentional use of code-switching, pseudonyms, and curated profiles indicates a developing performative identity, where users actively shape and reshape their personas in response to specific platform features and socio-political influences. Goffman's dramaturgical model (1959) provides a useful theoretical framework here: social media act as the front stage where Algerian youth perform roles designed for different audiences, while managing backstage identities filled with uncertainty and contradiction.

In contexts such as Algeria, marked by linguistic plurality, identity formation becomes a continuous process of negotiation. As seen in the works of Noari (2023) and Jaa & Ben Tayba (2024), Algerian youth deal with internal identity conflicts triggered by competing cultural scenarios between traditional values and globalized, digitized norms. These debates reflect Foucault's (1982) idea of subjectivation, where individuals internalize dominant discourses, resist them, or remix them within personal narratives. Digital storytelling, as practiced by Noari's participants, thus emerges as a digital form tool of confrontation, introspection, and reconciliation,.

Despite the fact that online environments have the potential to offer open platforms for identity self-presentation and expression, various studies (like Dekhil & Sarnou, 2022; Messahel & Guediri, 2024) point out the isolating effects of digital mediation. The splitting of identity into conflicting online and offline personas, which some participants refer to as a type of *"digital schizophrenia"*, shows the psychological costs associated with performative digital culture. The emotional impact, seen in feelings of confusion, anxiety, or moral disorientation, calls for a strong framework for digital mental health, media literacy, and identity coherence

Research conducted by Noari (2023) and Jaa & Ben Tayba (2024) argue that the process of identity construction is a continuous negotiation. It reveals that young Algerians experience internal conflicts regarding their identities, influenced by the tension between traditional values and modern,

globalized ideals. These identity negotiations reflect Foucault's (1982) idea of subjectivation, where individuals engage with, resist, or adapt to dominant cultural narratives in their lives.

The theme of gendered digital identity is vividly illustrated in the works of Beklouf (2025), Felfoul et al. (2023), and Rahmouni (2024). Algerian women in particular experience digital selfhood as a space of tension between empowerment and conformity, visibility and surveillance. The aesthetic branding and techno-symbolic expressions observed in women's vlogs and virtual self-presentations reveal how platforms function as both tools of self-fashioning and sites of sociocultural reproduction. This duality calls for a feminist media studies approach, recognizing digital identity construction as both a performance of agency and a reflection of broader structural constraints.

These themes create a detailed picture of Algerian digital youth: characterized by creativity and agency, yet also by fragmentation and uncertainty. The digital space is not neutral; it is influenced by historical backgrounds, language politics, gender norms, and psychological challenges. When situated within broader global theoretical frameworks, the experiences of Algerian youth reveal that digital identity is not static but continually constructed, contested, and redefined within Algeria's unique sociocultural context. This reality underscores the urgent need for culturally responsive digital education, one that fosters resilience, critical awareness, and ethical engagement in increasingly mediated environments.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored how digital mediation reconfigures identity, self-perception, and interpersonal relations among Algerian youth. It illustrated the complex processes through which Algerians construct, negotiate, and perform their identities in digital spaces. Drawing on a synthesis of recent Algerian scholarship and global theoretical frameworks, it becomes clear that the digital space functions as both a site of self-expression and a space of constraints. While social media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, linguistic hybridity, and cultural visibility, they also reproduce societal tensions, exposing youth to identity fragmentation, psychological tension, and sociocultural surveillance. The interplay between individual agency and structural forces such as gender norms and global media flows situates Algerian digital identity as a constantly evolving, contested landscape. As such, the study underscores the critical need for a culturally grounded digital education that equips youth not only with technical skills but with the ethical, emotional, and intellectual tools necessary to navigate mediated life.

This research contributes to a localized theory of digital identity in non-Western contexts. While global theories on digital selfhood offer valuable insights, this study underscores the importance of cultural specificity. Addressing the challenges of digital identity among Algerian youth requires a comprehensive response. Media education should include not only digital skills but also identity awareness, helping students navigate online selfhood. Gender-sensitive policies are vital to ensure safer, more inclusive spaces for female users. Civic engagement platforms must be strengthened to encourage meaningful youth participation in public discourse. Finally, mental health and digital well-being support is essential, particularly for younger users facing online alienation and self-esteem issues.

While this study provides a broad overview of the Algerian context, it is limited to published scholarly research and does not include direct fieldwork or ethnographic data. Future research could involve in-depth interviews, digital ethnography, or quantitative studies to assess the nuanced

experiences of diverse user groups, urban vs. rural, male vs. female, or university vs. non-university youth. Moreover, future studies could explore intersectional identity dynamics, including class, religious, and regional influences, to deepen understanding of the Algerian digital self in a global age. In sum, understanding these transformations requires a move beyond universal models and towards context-aware, culturally grounded frameworks that respect the specificity of Algerian experiences.

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