



If I Am Against it, Why Do I Seek it? Delving Into the Socio-Cultural Mediating Factors in the Relationship Between Social Media and Human Beauty Values



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Abstract

Drawing on the concept of "Human Beauty Values" (HBV) developed in Sunwoo and Yuri's study [1] this qualitative exploratory research investigates the impact of social media on women's Human Beauty Values (HBV). This study try to address the scarcity of Algerian studies on feminine beauty, and it aims to examine the mediating factors shaping the relationship between social media and women's HBV. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 female students residing in the "Bouchrit Lachkham" university residence in Laghouat. By employing a thematic analysis approach, six main themes emerged: the dualistic perception of beauty, self-development, critical reception of ideal beauty images, social environment, parental and religious influence, and social class. Focusing on the human body as a social entity, this study enriches the understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of beauty within the Algerian context and contributes to broader discussions on the societal implications of social media's portrayal of ideal beauty.

Keywords

Social Media;
Social Influence;
Ideal Beauty Images;
Beauty Standards;
Human Beauty Values.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الميديا الاجتماعية؛
التأثير الاجتماعي؛
صور الجمال المثالي؛
معايير الجمال؛
قيم الجمال الإنساني.

إن كنت معارضة لها، فلماذا أسعى إليها؟ دراسة حول العوامل السوسيو-ثقافية الوسيطة في العلاقة بين الميديا الاجتماعية وقيم الجمال الإنساني

ملخص

بالاعتماد على مفهوم "قيم الجمال الإنساني" (HBV) الذي تم تطويره في دراسة سونوو ويوري [1]، تُحاول هذه الدراسة الاستكشافية النوعية التعمق في العلاقة بين الميديا الاجتماعية وقيم الجمال الإنساني لدى النساء. يسعى هذا البحث في المساهمة لإثراء الدراسات الجزائرية حول الجمال الأنثوي، كما يهدف إلى استكشاف العوامل الوسيطة التي تشكل العلاقة بين الميديا الاجتماعية وقيم الجمال. بالاعتماد على المقابلات نصف الموجهة مع 12 طالبة مقيمة في الإقامة الجامعية "بوشريط لشخم" بالأغواط. ومن خلال تطبيق أسلوب التحليل الموضوعي، برزت ستة محاور رئيسية: التصور الثنائي للجمال، تطوير الذات، التلقي النقدي لصور الجمال المثالي، البيئة الاجتماعية، التأثير الأبوي والديني، والطبقة الاجتماعية. من خلال التركيز على الجسد البشري ككيان اجتماعي، يثري هذا البحث فهم الديناميكيات الاجتماعية والثقافية لقيم الجمال في السياق الجزائري، ويساهم في النقاشات الأوسع حول الآثار الاجتماعية لصور الجمال المثالي عبر مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي.

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Doi:

I- Introduction:

When Egyptian dentist and content creator Bassant Dinar was bullied for the shape of her nose and encouraged by a follower to undergo cosmetic surgery, she addressed the issue in a video, saying, “Since I was born, I had no problem with any part of my face, especially my nose, until I joined social media. [...] By the way, my nose is not big; people have just become accustomed to filters that make noses appear smaller, so when they see something natural, they think it is flawed”. This incident, like many others, highlights the significant influence of social media in shaping perceptions of feminine beauty and establishing beauty standards that affect how women engage with their own bodies and the bodies of others. Simultaneously, Dinar's response brings attention to the varying degrees of impact that social media beauty standards can have on different women.

Extensive research has shown the effects of social media on women's body image and mental health [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]. Additionally, several studies have explored the relationship between social media use and behavioral outcomes some of which pose long-term health risks [8] [9] [10] [11]. While these studies are invaluable, there remains a scarcity of research focusing on North African countries, despite some evidence that globalization and media have altered women's beauty values in this region [12] [13]. This gap is particularly evident in the North Africa, and even more so in Algeria.

Beauty standards are widely recognized as a cultural construct imposed by society. Research suggest that perceptions of attractiveness shape judgments and expectations people form about individuals. Some feminist theories argue that a woman's appearance functions as a social currency system that determines her value. Moreover, the increasing use of social media has broadened the cultural construction of beauty standards, exposing individuals to diverse array of ideals beyond their local context. This expansion has spurred growing interest in examining how social media affects women's perceptions of beauty. However, the underlying mechanisms of this influence remain largely underexplored.

The variation in women's susceptibility to social media's influence suggests the presence of mediating factors that explain why some women are more affected than others. While some studies have identified variables that shape women's beauty values [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19], there is still a limited number of detailed investigations into the relationship between social media and women's beauty values. This study aims to delve in this relationship, providing insights into the mediating factors that account for the varied levels and types of influence among women.

The study builds upon the concept of human beauty values (HBV), as developed by Sunwoo and Kim in their study “Why Do Women Want to Be Beautiful?” [1]. They define HBV as

Value pursued through a focus on human beauty and a subjective belief related to a desirable or desired end-state of a beautiful body. It is also applied to modes of behaviors that control body conditions, which, in turn, guide the selection or evaluation of behaviors, people, or events involved in determining human beauty [1, p. 03].

Given the scarcity of scientific literature on feminine beauty within the Algerian context, this qualitative exploratory study was designed to identify key research areas while allowing flexibility to explore aspects that might otherwise be overlooked but crucial to the study.

The study's objectives are as follows:

O1- Define the concept of human beauty values within the Algerian context.

O2- Understand how women perceive the feminine beauty ideals presented through social media.

O3- Identify the socio-cultural mediating factors that influence the relationship between social media and women's HBV.

II- Methodology:

II- 1 Participants:

This study was conducted on 12 female students in the Bouchrit Lachkham university residence in the state of Laghouat, selected through purposive sampling. To ensure a sample aligned with the study's goals, a small questionnaire was distributed to 50 female residents. The questionnaire included statements regarding the content that participants follow on social media platforms related to feminine beauty, alongside statements concerning the behaviors they engage in to maintain their beauty.

Table 01 : Participants' demographic informations

No	Age	Marital Status	University Major	No	Age	Marital Status	University Major
P01	25	single	medicine	P07	27	single	political science
P02	18	single	pharmacy	P08	25	single	physics
P03	18	single	medicine	P09	19	single	architecture
P04	24	single	Spanish	P10	23	single	architecture
P05	22	single	Spanish	P11	19	single	e-commerce
P06	21	single	biology	P12	19	engaged	Electronic

II– 2 Study procedures:

II– 2. 1 Data collection tool:

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the data collection instrument. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection tool used to ask participants questions to gather information. This method is characterized by its flexibility in questioning, which is why it is typically used in exploratory studies within humanities and social sciences [20].

The interview guide included key questions aligned with the study's objectives; however, additional questions emerged during the dialogues.

Table 02 : Interview Guide

Questions of the interview
1. What is your definition of feminine beauty? 2. On what basis do you judge whether other women are beautiful or not? 3. What is your opinion of the feminine beauty presented on social media? 4. Do you believe social media promotes diversity in beauty or encourages more uniform beauty standards? 5. Can you name a celebrity or influencer you consider exceptionally beautiful; and please explain on what basis you made your choice? 6. Some women try to display various forms of feminine beauty. Why do you think others still strive to conform to social media's beauty standards? 7. Do you think social media is a primary source for your understanding of feminine beauty? If you rely on other sources, could you please explain? 8. Some women are aware of the fakeness of ideal beauty portrayed on social media, yet they still strive to attain it. Why do you think this is? 9. How do you feel about your beauty? 10. Have you ever compared your appearance to that of a woman on social media? 11. Do you have any additional comments?

Interviews were conducted individually, in pairs, or in a group based on the interviewees' preferences, as some of them expressed discomfort when responding in the presence of others. All interviews were audio recorded with participants' consent. Given that the language used in the responses was the dialectal Algerian Arabic, manual transcription was performed to ensure accuracy.

II– 2. 2 Analytical approach:

Due to its suitability for addressing participants' opinions, experiences, and values [21]; thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data in this study. Thematic analysis (TA) refers to a qualitative research approach used for analyzing qualitative data sets, such as interviews or transcripts. This method is based on generating themes or patterns from keywords found in the transcripts. These patterns or themes are then subsequently interpreted to uncover their underlying significance [22].

For the coding process, a hybrid-coding approach was utilized, integrating both inductive and deductive methods to achieve results that are more comprehensive. This approach allowed for the incorporation of existing themes from the theoretical framework while at the same time developing new themes that are specific to the context of this study.

III- Results and discussion:

III- 1 The dualistic perception of beauty:

The perception of beauty varies from one culture to another; it depends on the cultural and social structure that controls our interactions [23] [24]. In her study, Anderson [24, pp. 603-605] examines attractiveness as a relationship phenomenon, as our interest in beauty and its effects on human relationships depends on the socio-cultural settings (voluntaristic-independent or embedded-interdependent relationships).

In voluntaristic-independent relationships, interaction with others is a personal choice that is completely removed from the social context; in this case, physical attractiveness is considered the primary factor that draws humans towards others and encourage them to interact.

Conversely, in embedded-interdependent relationships, interactions are a result of the surrounding environment including culture, values, and social norms. Therefore, these relationships tend to prioritize other factors than appearance, such as common interests, similar social backgrounds, geographical proximity, etc.

The concept of beauty in this study can be explained in terms of this perspective. The participants had a **dual perception of beauty**; they distinguished between internal and external beauty. Attributes like kindness, morals, purity of the soul, and good treatments were frequently used to describe beauty from within, as well as strength of character and confidence. The participants not only acknowledged the existence of two types of beauty but also preferred inner beauty. They emphasized that no matter how physically attractive a girl may be, lacking virtuous inner qualities diminishes her overall attractiveness. As participant (12) put it, *"Personally, a woman's beauty is not related to her appearance, because everything that God has created is beautiful. A woman's beauty is related to her morals, her good heart, and her good traits."*

Based on all the above, it is reasonable to assume that this dual understanding of beauty emerges from the Islamic cultural background of Algerian society. First, Islam strongly affirms that all God's creation is beautiful; God says in holy Quran "we have certainly created man in the best of stature" (95:4). Second, the meaning of the word 'Jamīl' (جميل) or beauty mostly refers in Quran to abstract or spiritual concepts, for example, 'beautiful patience', 'beautiful forgiveness' and so forth [25].

This moral perception of beauty is confirmed in prophetic Sunnah, where God's messenger says, "Verily Allah (God) does not look to your faces and your wealth but He looks to your hearts and your deeds." Another Hadith says, "... There is no superiority of a white person over a black person or of black person over a white person, except on the basis of personal piety and righteousness" [26].

The Islamic perspective of beauty is clearly reflected in the Algerian culture, especially in traditional proverbs that are ubiquitously used, such as 'beauty does not build a home', 'beauty fades but wisdom grows', and 'if someone surpasses you in beauty, surpass him in kindness'.

Concerning external beauty, participants in our study did not mention specific standards; they believed that physical attractiveness is not limited to standardize and fixed facial features or body shapes, but it differs from one woman to another. However, **self-development** emerges as a basic women's beauty standard. Participant 01 stated, *"Every woman is beautiful on her own way, but personal care is conditional, a woman must take care of herself."*

Sunwoo and Yuri mention Self-development as one of the four dimensions of HBV, which refers to the continuous efforts made to enhance appearance [1, p. 10]. Which means that woman's good appearance is a sign of her efforts towards her body, as expressed by P09, *"When you see a beautiful woman, you will think she has a self-care routine, it is clear she takes care of herself."*

While the interviewees in this study mentioned body care routines, physical exercise, makeup, and clothing styles, they particularly emphasized personal hygiene as a foundational standard of feminine beauty. Accordingly, the

current research adopts the definition of self-development but places a stronger emphasis on personal hygiene as a central component. Interviewee 08 expressed, *“personally, beauty is the cleanliness of the soul and the cleanliness of the body.”* Similarly, P03 commented, *“if I see a woman with brushed teeth, clean nails, I would consider her beautiful, and she would fit my beauty standards.”* This perspective strongly confirms the influence of Islam on women’s perceptions of external beauty. In Islam, cleanliness is considered ‘half of faith’ [27] and is emphasized as a prerequisite for religious practices such as prayer and fasting.

These results align with the study of Saadia Abid [28, pp. 406-407], where the Muslim Pakistani participants preferred “internal-moral” to “external-physical” beauty, emphasizing cleanliness of the soul and neat outlook. According to Abid, religion serves as a significant reference point to her results.

In the same context, we found that participants’ concept of beauty is reflected in their preferences for social media content that displays images of women’s beauty. As women prefer influencers or celebrities based on their natural appearance or at least those who do not exaggerate in digital and physical enhancements, as P03 gave an example, *“There is this woman named Asala; her beauty is almost natural, and she rarely appears with makeup. Even on special occasions, she uses light makeup.”* On the other hand, subscribers base their preferences on the inner beauty of the influencer or celebrity, which is manifested in spontaneity, charismatic personality, and distinctive presence.

Besides the self-development dimension, the results of the beauty concept (which we discussed in this section of the article) can be compared with Sunwoo and Yuri’s results [1, pp. 09-12]. In their article, ‘Why do women want to be beautiful?’ They mention four dimensions of HBV: superiority, self-development, individuality, and authenticity. Considering that HBV is a cultural concept effected by sociocultural contexts, the dimensions of human beauty values could be differently ordered depending on cultural characteristics.

First, authenticity emerges as a fundamental value in our study. Sunwoo and Yuri indicate that the definition of authenticity depends on the study’s aims [1, p. 12], while they define it as genuineness, trustworthiness, and being real. The present study includes kindness of heart, good manners, respectful treatment, and purity of soul. Second, individuality appears in the participants’ conviction of diversity in shape and appearance. Finally, although it is not certain if motivation to attract others and captivate attention can be considered within the value of superiority; however, superiority appears in its competitive sense in a number of direct statements, as participant 02 said, *“almost all girls, each one of us wants to be the best of them, I mean comparison definitely exists.”* Participant 03 agreed, *“Often, when you meet someone stranger or there is tension between you, the first thing you do when you meet is make comparisons, especially for us girls, you look from head to toe and compare. When do you feel relieved? When you find yourself on the same level as her or slightly better. But when you find yourself less than her, your confidence starts to shake, and you feel stressed.”*

More analytical and statistical studies are needed to determine the intensity of human beauty values as well as the hierarchy of HBV dimensions in the Algerian culture.

III- 2 Women's critical reception to ideal beauty images on social media:

Most images displayed on social media platforms are known to be fake and quixotic. These images establish unrealistic beauty standards. Exposure to these ideal norms leads to number of physical and mental problems [2] [29] [3] [30] [31].

In comparison between traditional media versus social media impact, S.Mills and her colleagues [29, p. 152] argue that traditional media audience were more rational in receiving edited images of models and celebrities. However, since social media publish images of ideal beauty, of not only celebrities and models but also friends and peers in ‘average’ framework, this might reduce the critical thinking.

Compared to our results, this proposition can be confirmed by the answers of some participants as P02 noted, *“when a celebrity posts her pictures on websites, it is true that there are edits but we are unable to see those edits, we only see the picture and start comparing ourselves to it”.* Nevertheless, based on the answers of the majority of the interviewees, it is reasonable to assume that receiving images through social media platforms can happen in a critical manner too. P05 commented, *‘social media tries to show us that beauty is having perfect skin, perfect body and perfect hair, but all of this is not real. Everyone on social media is a normal person just like us, they have pimples, they have normal bodies edited with Photoshop, this means that social media is the last thing we can say it reflects true beauty.’*

This means that social media ideal beauty is perceived as fake, exaggerated, and unrealistic. P04 shared an example of an influencer who lives in the same area as her, *‘for example there is this influencer ‘Hanou Beauty’ from Ain-Oussera, we all know what her face looks like, when you meet her face-to-face and when you see her on social media, you would never say she is the same person’.* The critical reception also appears when it comes to being exposed to photos of friends and peers as P05 said, *“Even our friends exaggerate, of course she will look beautiful when she uses filter or take her pictures with an iPhone”.*

III- 2. 1 Women's social roles:

In a different context but related to the above, Pierre Bourdieu argues that social class plays a role in how individuals determine and format relationships with their bodies [32]. His perspective is not based solely on status standpoint but also in terms of gender-based role division. As women's social roles –whether they are working in paid or unpaid jobs (wife, mother...) they build an instrumental relationship with their bodies that is compatible with their roles and responsibilities. “Accordingly, members of the working classes generally develop bodies characterized by the demands of immediate life and form temporary liberation from these demands” [32, p. 175].

From this point of view, it is important to think that a woman's social roles do not only affect her relationship with her body, but also how she receives the images of ideal beauty through social media. In other words, critical reception does not exist only at analyzing ideal beauty and distinguishing between natural and artificial beauty, but also emerges in considering the social roles of both the user and the influencer/celebrity when being exposed to their images. An interesting opinion shared by P01 said, “*My goal in life and her goal (talking about the influencer/celebrity) are different, I have my studies, I have to travel home, I have to help my family, I have to work hard, when I start thinking this way, I feel okay.*” Similar statement from P11, “*a woman cannot be a woman all the time, she has responsibilities at home, she has responsibilities outside, she sacrifices a little of that [...].*”

To this extent of the study, an important question arises: if women are aware of unrealistic beauty images they are exposed to on social media, they prefer natural beauty and prioritize inner beauty over external, why do they still strive to achieve social media beauty standards?

III- 3 The indirect impact of social media on women's HBV:

Berg and her colleagues [14] propose a tripartite model that explains the sources of influence on the development of body image and eating disorders; these sources are parents, peers, and media.

During the interviews, participants frequently discussed ‘the influence of others’ on human beauty values, often referencing society, relatives, friends, colleagues, and particularly the preferences and perceptions of the ‘opposite sex’ (husband, fiancé, colleagues) regarding feminine beauty. Based on these statements, the present research proposes that *social environment* plays a significant role in the relationship between social media and women's HBV. It assumes that social media's impact occurs indirectly: ideal beauty images on social media shape social environment's perceptions of female beauty, which in turn influence women's HBV. In this study, *the social environment* refers to the individuals with whom a woman habitually interacts; this concept primarily focuses on the opposite sex (men) and, to a lesser extent, relatives, friends, and peers.

In research conducted on male-dominated societies, the impact of the patriarchal system on prevailing female beauty standards has been identified [1] [33] [34] [28]. In their book ‘ways of seeing’, John Berger and his colleagues [35] explain the social existence of both men and women. According to them, men assert their presence through power (whether physical, financial, sexual, or social power), while the social existence of women is limited and related to men. Berger argues that a woman's sense of being is attached to how she appears to others, especially men.

“Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women, but the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object of vision: a sight.” [35, p. 47].

Many studies argue that the portrayal of feminine beauty in the media reinforces the objectification and sexualization of women, promoting stereotypes that focus solely on their external appearance while neglecting other values that shape their identity [36] [37] [38] [30] [39]. These images often align with the male perspective of women, rooted in sexual instinct. The media's emphasis on the idealized image of women's bodies and appearance reinforces societal stereotypes, which in turn affect women's HBV in three main aspects:

First, the social environment imposes beauty standards on women based on the idealized images individuals encounter on social media. Women strive to conform to these norms to avoid social pressure and to seek others' attention. P03 expressed, “*If her environment is obsessed with an influencer, seeing her as WOW, a woman will desire to reach that wow herself, she does not want to be less than anyone; she wants to be wow or a bit more than wow.*” This places women under social pressure to conform to these standards. When discussing the impact of social media, P01 expressed the singular aspect where she feels the negative influence *I mean let's not deceive ourselves, we -as women- care about how men perceive us. When I see a beautiful woman on social media, I think to myself, 'Oh my God, if this is what men constantly see, for example, a man with a weak personality, or who doesn't know that these images are not real, could I one day find myself in a situation where my husband compares me to one of those women?'*

Second, the social environment influenced by social media's emphasis on women's beauty; reinforces the stereotype that striving for beauty is a feminine trait reserved for women, and not men, thereby confining women within the limits of their physical appearance. P06 remarked, “*I see that society views beauty as a woman. Beauty according to society is a woman, and this woman must possess certain characteristics, he wants her to be like a doll.*”

Tania Hattab [40] concluded from her analytical study that this stereotype stems from the biological characteristics of women, which made attention focus on her body as a source of desire and pleasure. This can lead women to “sexual and ideological alienation” [41] where they adopt behavioral values and perspectives to existence that are consistent with the stereotypes imposed on them.

Finally, from a social constructionist perspective, social interactions between individuals reinforce our notions, values, and beliefs about beauty and appearance [42]. Accordingly, a woman’s interaction with others, especially the opposite sex at work, school, and university residence, etc., often involves discrimination based on her external appearance. In other words, the role of the social environment extends beyond merely determining beauty standards and pressuring women to focus on beauty; it also defines the importance of beauty within the broader hierarchy of values. P12 expressed, *“From what I see lately, everyone _whether men or people in general_ when they want to get married, they say to their mothers: ‘I want a tall woman, I want a woman with a beautiful body, or with tall hair’, does this mean that unattractive women cannot get married?”* Agreeing with P12’s statement, P11 commented, *«Overall appearance matters now, whether at work, in marriage, or anywhere else, perhaps you are sitting in a café and there is a beautiful girl there, you find everyone wants to talk to her, everyone respects her.”*

In the same context, it appears from the interviews that the influence of the social environment might be stronger than the influence of social media. Reflecting on personal experience, P10 said, *“I used to be insecure about my nose, I used to think my mouth is too small and my nose was too long, that was very upsetting, I even considered getting plastic surgery to fix it. Then some of my family members and relatives told me that, my nose actually suits my face. They said it so often that I eventually accepted it”*. This leads to the assumption that women are not affected by beauty standards on social media unless their social environment is influenced by them. P01 expressed her preference for natural beauty and that she is against artificial beauty she sees on her screens and then she said *“when they conducted studies on men, they found that men prefer women who do not wear makeup, they like natural beauty.”*

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the social environment is a significant variable in the relationship between social media and women’s HBV across various aspects. However, it cannot be confirmed that this effect occurs to the same degree for all women. This suggests that additional factors contribute to the intensity of social media’s impact, which will be explored in the subsequent sections.

III- 4 Societal and religious influence:

Experimental studies [43] [44] have shown that body appreciation plays a protective role against the influence of ideal beauty exposure in women. This means that women who appreciate their bodies are less likely to have their body image negatively influenced by media portrayals of ideal beauty.

Through answers and body language, all participants expressed their contentment and satisfaction with their external appearance. They also noted (directly and indirectly) their imperfections and body insecurities, which they seek to accept or treat if they are treatable. By delving into the discussion, we aimed to uncover the sources of this body appreciation and satisfaction that the participants feel toward their bodies. We believe that these same sources shape their perceptions of beauty and their opposition to social media beauty standards, which were previously discussed.

III- 4. 1 Parents:

Studies have demonstrated the impact of parents on their children's body image [14] [16] [17] [19] [45]. Goslin [45] particularly, expands on the influence of the mother on her daughter’s body image, wherein this influence is exerted through her self-compassion, participation in healthy behaviors, positive communication, awareness, and providing a strong supportive relationship. This might explain the focus of all participants in the current study on the mother’s primary role in the daughter’s HBV.

The role of the mother is evident in defining and clarifying human beauty values and their importance in women’s values scale, besides outlining the appropriate methods for pursuing them, in addition to developing the daughter’s self-confidence in her appearance and beauty, as P06 stated, *“The mother is the one who explains what beauty is to you. If she teaches you that beauty is the beauty of the soul, and the beauty of a smile, you will grow up following this principle. But if your mother teaches you that beauty is what others say about you, and that you must look a certain way, and you must stop eating this or not eat too much to avoid gaining weight, you will grow up believing that beauty is perfection, and if we add social media to the mix, you will be obsessed.”*

Story and her colleagues [46] investigated the indirect impact of the quality of the mother-child relationship and negative body image messages in the media on body esteem among young adult males and females. The results indicated that negative parental body image messages act as a mediating variable, amplifying this impact. This suggests that the mother’s role extends beyond influencing her daughter’s perception of HBV; she also acts as an intermediary in her daughter’s relationship with ideal beauty images encountered through social media. P03 expressed, *“When a mother continuously praises her daughter and boosts her self-confidence, that confidence will not easily be shaken. As she*

grows up, she will know how to choose her surroundings and who to follow on social media. She will be content with herself and will try to please herself before pleasing others."

III- 4. 2 Religion:

As previously discussed, Islamic religion plays a significant role in shaping women's perceptions of beauty; however, its influence extends beyond beauty perception. This study has revealed that Islam contributes to women's satisfaction with their beauty, considering the human body as a creation of God, thus emphasizing acceptance of God's creation. P12 expressed, *"When you understand that Allah (God) created each person and endowed them with their own unique beauty, you will not compare yourself to anyone on social media; it's something beyond your control."*

Additionally, behaviors seeking HBV are guided by Islamic principles regulating a Muslim's relationship with her body, prohibiting changes of natural human creation through cosmetic procedures except in necessary medical cases. Moreover, Islam forbids certain cosmetic practices that conflict with religious rituals, such as wearing wigs or artificial nails, which prevent proper ablution, thereby invalidating prayers, as P01 stated, *"The concept of makeup itself is against my beliefs. Despite its ease of removal, just the idea that prayer time, for example, would require me to remove makeup and reapply it, I can't."*

Similar results have been found in studies on religion and spirituality that are positively associated with positive body image [15] [18]. Results that are more similar have been identified in Angela Odoms-Young's study [47] on the Islamic religion. The researcher discovered that religion, particularly adherence to Islamic guidelines on dress and appearance; significantly influence the body image perceptions of African-American Sunni Muslim women. Her participants stressed the importance of prioritizing the spiritual self over the physical self.

III- 5 Social class and beauty standards:

During the interviews, the relationship between financial level and the ability to pursue social media's beauty standards was highlighted. While some participants expressed their feelings of frustration when they could not afford the products showcased in female beauty content on social media, as P02 noted, *"celebrities showcase expensive products, and you find yourself unable to afford them, which affects you even more."* Other participants objected to the excessive spending required to meet these beauty standards; P11 expressed, *"They spend a lot of money, why! This is wasteful, wasteful on something unimportant, and it does not please God."*

In social reproduction theory and its connection to the body, Bourdieu argues that bodies are incomplete units; this means that biological attributes alone are insufficient to define them; instead, they are imprinted with the marks of social class through their interactions with social life [32].

Bourdieu identifies three main factors that explain why the body bears the marks of the social class to which it belongs: **social position**, class-based material circumstances, which can be measured by the extent to which an individual is removed from necessities. **Habitus**, it develops within the context of the individual's social position, where the individual's relationship with their bodies is significantly influenced by dominant social and cultural structures. **Taste**, which refers to lifestyle voluntary choices that individuals perceive as preferences, yet they are deeply rooted in material constraints [32, p. 172]. This implies that habitus and taste, along with their effects on the body, are linked to the social positions of individuals. If we consider that beauty and attractiveness are forms of symbolic capital according to Bourdieu [48, p. 297] then women's ability to keep up with dominant beauty standards encountered on social media is determined by their financial capacity, such as purchasing products, healthcare, and gym memberships. Consequently, the higher women's social position, the greater their ability to maintain symbolic capital.

To summarize the previous discussion, images of female beauty on social media shape the social environment's perceptions of female beauty and set standards for women; a woman's desire to attract attention, assert her presence, and avoid social exclusion motivates her to conform to the beauty standards she encounters on her screens, influencing her own human beauty values. This influence reinforces beauty standards on social media. However, women also have their own concept of beauty, emphasizing inner and natural beauty. In addition, they critically and consciously consume beauty images, recognizing the unrealistic and deceptive nature of these standards. Parents (especially mothers) and religion play a crucial role in shaping this concept and perception, as well as fostering body appreciation. Moreover, all of this occurs within the context of a woman's social class.

This conflict between societal expectations and individual beauty ideals leads to a process known as 'adaptation'. In her study "The Culture of the Female Body and the Reproduction of Social and Cultural Representations of Gender Hierarchy: A Field Study", Souad Al-Rifai [49 p. 350] discusses adaptation, which involves two key components: assimilation and accommodation. Women assimilate societal beauty standards and interpret them based on their prior experiences and knowledge, which are influenced by religion and parents according to this study. Simultaneously, they accommodate their beauty ideals to align with societal standards. This helps them achieve a

balance between their internal psychological reality (thoughts, feelings, and values) and the external objective reality (social control rules).

IV- Conclusion and future directions:

Several studies have examined the impact of social media portrayal of feminine beauty on women; however, the details behind this influence remain not fully uncovered, particularly in the Algerian context. Using the concept of 'Human Beauty Values' (HBV) this study aimed to identify the mediating factors in the relationship between social media and women's HBV.

Given the scarcity of Algerian research on feminine beauty, the current research sought to build a foundational understanding of feminine beauty among Algerian women. The findings revealed that participants preferred internal beauty over external and natural beauty over artificial. Additionally, the study indicated that participants are aware of the unrealistic and fake nature of ideal beauty promoted on social media; results also revealed that parents and religion are significant factors in shaping these perceptions.

Furthermore, this study suggests that social media exerts an indirect influence on women's HBV, with the social environment _primarily represented by the opposite sex_ being a pivotal variable in this relationship. Social media affects the social environment's perceptions of female beauty, establishing specific beauty standards that are then imposed on women. Consequently, women strive to meet these standards for various reasons, which in turn influence their human beauty values.

It is important to note that although common religious background plays a crucial role in defining the country's culture, geographical, historical, and social factors create regional subcultures that may yield different results. The sample in this study was limited to the south-central states of Algeria. Additionally, difficulties in recruiting a larger number of participants due to refusals were encountered. Future research should aim for a larger sample size and include participants from diverse age groups and regions.

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