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The implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria: - A sociological analysis of youth discourses in the wilaya of Tiaret-

تداعيات التنمر الإلكتروني على التماسك الاجتماعي في الجزائر: تحليل سوسيولوجي لخطابات عينة شبانية بولاية تيارت

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Abstract:

Cyberbullying is a global phenomenon that profoundly affects social life, particularly in countries undergoing digital transformation, such as Algeria. With the increasing use of social media and information technology, new forms of social violence have emerged, including cyberbullying, which primarily targets young people. This phenomenon not only impacts individuals but also extends to society as a whole, especially in terms of social cohesion. Cyberbullying, through its negative effects on personal relationships and by generating feelings of doubt and fear, poses a threat to social bonds and solidarity within Algerian society. This article aims to provide a sociological analysis of the implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria, highlighting social practices, community interactions, and their impact on social relationships within this specific context.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Social Cohesion, Algeria, Social Bonds, Youth Generation.

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The title of the Article: The implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria: A sociological analysis of youth discourses in the wilaya of Tiaret	Author 1: Rabah, Benali Author 2: Omar, Zehouani	Volume : 31 / Issue: 02 (27) / 2025	Pages : 395 – 411

An-Introduction:

Cyberbullying has become a global phenomenon that increasingly attracts the attention of sociologists due to its profound impact on social relationships and social cohesion. With the rise of social media and information technology, new forms of social violence have emerged, among which cyberbullying stands as one of the most alarming. As Manuel Castells highlighted in his theory of network societies, digital transformation inevitably brings about radical changes in social structures, fostering new forms of communication and interaction. If these are not adequately regulated and given their uncontrollable speed of diffusion they can undoubtedly lead to significant social deviance (**Castells (2001), pp 4-7**).

This transformation is observable worldwide, where the widespread adoption of digital technologies has often preceded the establishment of regulatory frameworks and public awareness regarding the associated social risks.

In Algeria, cyberbullying primarily affects young people, the group most central to digital life. According to Pierre Bourdieu's theories on social capital, interpersonal relationships represent vital resources for individuals and are essential for maintaining social cohesion (**Bourdieu, P (1980), p3**). However, cyberbullying undermines these relationships not only by instilling fear and mistrust but also by weakening the social networks that constitute the foundation of community solidarity.

Young victims of online harassment are often pushed into isolation, increasing their vulnerability and reducing their participation in social life.

The effects of this form of digital violence extend beyond individuals to society as a whole. Cyberbullying not only threatens people but also the fundamental structures of social organization. As Émile Durkheim emphasized in his work on social cohesion and the importance of collective norms for the proper functioning of society (**Durkheim (1893), p33**), the erosion of social bonds and the weakening of norms of solidarity and cooperation pose a serious threat to social cohesion in Algeria.

Furthermore, recent sociological research particularly that of Ulrich Beck on the "risk society" suggests that institutions' inability to effectively address new technological risks can generate a crisis of trust within society (**Beck (1992), p21**). In Algeria, this erosion of trust in institutions such as schools, families, and the justice

system contributes to the marginalization of young people who fall victim to cyberbullying, thereby threatening social stability itself.

This article thus seeks to provide an in-depth sociological analysis of the effects of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria. It aims to shed light on changing social practices, societal responses to this phenomenon, and the social deviations it produces. Through this approach, we seek to understand how cyberbullying as an emerging social phenomenon affects social dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the context of Algeria's ongoing digital transformation.

1- Research Problem and Hypotheses:

Cyberbullying is a modern form of psychological and social violence that increasingly affects a large number of young people in Algeria a country that, in recent years, has experienced a rapid digital transformation across educational and social domains. While this transformation has brought undeniable benefits in terms of connectivity and access to information, it has often occurred without sufficient preparation to address the social and psychological risks associated with intensive use of digital technologies.

The Wilaya of Tiaret was chosen as the empirical field for this study, given its high rate of social media use among young people, particularly in university towns such as Tiaret, Dahmouni, Mahdia, and Aïn Deheb. These towns offer a socially diverse environment that combines urban and semi-rural characteristics, making them a suitable context for studying a phenomenon with complex social and cultural dimensions such as cyberbullying.

During the exploratory interviews, one respondent from the town of Mahdia explained the relevance of the topic as follows:

> **"** *In our town, most young people have Facebook and Instagram accounts, and cyberbullying has become almost normal. Many people get hurt, but they don't talk about it, fearing shame or social judgment.* **"**

As Manuel Castells pointed out in his analysis of network societies, the acceleration of digitalization can create social fractures if institutions and individuals are not prepared to manage the resulting cultural and relational transformations (**Castells (2001), pp 4-7**). This is precisely what is becoming evident in Algeria, where this transformation has heightened social vulnerability to new phenomena such as cyberbullying, particularly among youth the most active demographic on social media platforms.

The title of the Article: The implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria: A sociological analysis of youth discourses in the wilaya of Tiaret	Author 1: Rabah, Benali Author 2: Omar, Zehouani	Volume : 31 / Issue: 02 (27) / 2025	Pages : 395 – 411

Cyberbullying defined as the use of communication technologies to harass, intimidate, or humiliate an individual has serious repercussions on both individuals and society as a whole. It disrupts the traditional dynamics of social relations by eroding interpersonal trust, increasing social isolation, and weakening confidence in key institutions such as schools, families, and the justice system, which are often perceived as unable to address the phenomenon effectively.

One participant from Dahmouni highlighted this issue during the exploratory interviews, stating:

> **"***People on Facebook can destroy you with just one word, and there's no hhhhh institution to stand by you…. Schools and universities still don't understand how serious cyberbullying is….***"**

According to Pierre Bourdieu (**Bourdieu (1980), pp 2-3**), social capital represented by social networks and the resources they provide plays a vital role in maintaining social cohesion. Cyberbullying destroys this capital by fragmenting social relationships, reducing opportunities for positive interaction, and fostering an atmosphere of mutual distrust. Consequently, young victims of cyberbullying may withdraw from social and digital life, which affects not only their personal development but also the broader social fabric.

This dynamic can weaken the social norms of solidarity and mutual support, which Émile Durkheim (**Durkheim (1893), p 62**) considered essential for achieving social integration. Moreover, by allowing perpetrators to remain anonymous, cyberbullying reinforces the sense of impunity, further deepening public distrust in institutions.

Sociological studies by Ulrich Beck (**Beck (1992), p 21)** on the "risk society" have shown that institutions' inability to effectively manage new technological risks such as cyberbullying contributes to rising feelings of insecurity and mistrust within society.

Based on these considerations, the central research question of this article can be formulated as follows:

How does cyberbullying, as an emerging social phenomenon in a rapidly digitizing society, affect social cohesion in Algeria particularly in the Wilaya of Tiaret and its urban centers?

And how does this form of online violence contribute to weakening bonds of trust and solidarity among youth, while undermining the role of social and educational institutions in addressing the problem?

- Research Hypotheses:

- **First Hypothesis:**

Exposure to cyberbullying among Algerian youth particularly in the Wilaya of Tiaret is likely to lead to the weakening of social bonds and the reduction of social interaction networks, resulting in feelings of isolation and withdrawal among victims.

- **Second Hypothesis:**

The widespread prevalence of cyberbullying is expected to contribute to a loss of trust in educational and judicial institutions, due to their weak intervention or the absence of effective mechanisms to address the phenomenon and support victims.

- **Third Hypothesis:**

Social media platforms, through features such as anonymity and the rapid dissemination of content, are expected to exacerbate the phenomenon of cyberbullying among Algerian youth especially in the Wilaya of Tiaret thereby fostering a climate of digital aggression and eroding social trust.

2- Research significance:

The importance of this research lies in its examination of a contemporary and sensitive social phenomenon in Algerian society cyberbullying which has become one of the major challenges associated with the rapid digital transformation. While the Internet and social media platforms provide a space for expression and communication, they have simultaneously become fertile grounds for the spread of symbolic and verbal violence, posing a threat to social cohesion and collective values, especially among young people.

The significance of this study is reflected on several levels:

a-At the scientific level:

This research contributes to enriching the Algerian sociological field through a recent empirical study on the impact of digital transformation on social relations. It is grounded in major theoretical frameworks (Bourdieu, Durkheim, Castells, and Beck) and applied to the Algerian context. The study also sheds light on the emergence of new forms of social violence in the digital space and the resulting transformations in social capital and mutual trust.

b-At the social and field level:

This study gains particular importance by focusing on the Wilaya of Tiaret as a model of a diverse Algerian society that combines both urban and semi-rural

characteristics, showing varying degrees of engagement with technology and communication tools.

Analyzing the phenomenon in cities such as *Tiaret, Dahmouni, Ain dheb, Mahdia*, allows for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural differences in how cyberbullying is perceived and how it affects social cohesion.

One university professor from Tiaret highlighted this aspect during a discussion, saying:

> "*The digital transformation in our province happened very quickly, without awareness or training. Today's youth live between two worlds: one real and the other virtual ... but the latter has become more dangerous because it affects the former….*"

c-At the institutional and policy level:

The research provides insights that may assist policymakers and educational and judicial institutions in developing digital awareness programs targeting young people, promoting a culture of safe and responsible Internet use, and creating effective mechanisms to support victims and deter perpetrators.

d-At the human and educational level:

This study aims to give voice to victims and to understand their psychological and social experiences, thereby contributing to building a more conscious and compassionate society. As one of the female participants from the city of Mahdia stated during an exploratory interview:

> **"***We don't just need laws mmm we need someone to listen to us and believe us, because cyberbullying hurts in silence***."**

In summary, the importance of this research lies in the fact that it does not merely describe the phenomenon of cyberbullying but seeks to analyze it sociologically within the Algerian context, while attempting to understand its repercussions on trust, solidarity, and social relationships in a society undergoing profound digital and cultural transformations.

4- Research Methodology:

To explore this issue and test the proposed hypotheses, the study adopts a qualitative research approach, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and experiences of individuals directly involved with cyberbullying in Algeria.

The main method used in this research is **semi-structured interviews**, conducted with eight (08) young participants, aged between 19 and 30 years, who have

experienced cyberbullying. These interviews provide insight into how victims and social actors perceive the impact of cyberbullying on social relationships, as well as the responses of institutions (such as schools, families, and the justice system).

The sample includes young people from different municipalities within the Wilaya of Tiaret, and four cities were randomly selected *Tiaret, Mahdia, Dahmouni, and Ain Deheb* to reflect the region's geographical and social diversity. The participants include both victims of cyberbullying and individuals who have witnessed online bullying incidents in their social environment.

Selection criteria focused on young people with significant experience using social media, whether in educational, university, or professional settings.

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, with the goal of identifying the main categories and recurring themes related to the consequences of cyberbullying, particularly concerning social relationships, trust in others, and the role of institutions in addressing the issue.

5-Research Findings

The results are divided into four main themes, as follows:

1.The Fragmentation of Social Bonds and the Feeling of Isolation:

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has devastating effects on social relationships, particularly among young people, who are the most vulnerable group due to their intensive use of social media platforms. The findings of this study revealed a clear disintegration of social ties and a sense of isolation among victims, as a direct consequence of experiencing cyberbullying.

Interviews showed that most victims of cyberbullying feel excluded and isolated from their social circles. One respondent from Tiaret (male, 22 years old) stated:

> **"***I used to participate daily in friends' groups on Facebook hhhhhh but after they started mocking me in the comments hhh I stopped talking or posting anything….I started feeling alone even in real life hhhh***."**

This social withdrawal often stems from a fear of further online attacks, a feeling exacerbated by the anonymity of perpetrators, which makes these attacks even more insidious. Victims tend to reduce or avoid the use of social networks as a form of self-protection, but this defensive mechanism carries negative social consequences. One female participant from Mahdia (19 years old) explained:

> "*After they spread a rumor about me on Instagram, I closed my account and stopped*

*talking to my friends like before hhhh Even when I see them at university, I feel embarrassed hhhh and don't know what to say.***"**

Although social networks can be a source of bullying, they are also vital spaces for social interaction among youth. By limiting or avoiding these interactions, victims cut off a major channel for communication and integration, which reinforces their sense of isolation. Moreover, this withdrawal is not limited to online interactions but often extends to family relationships and friendships. Some participants reported a deterioration in their personal relationships, noting that cyberbullying creates a climate of suspicion that affects even offline interactions.

A participant from Dahmouni (male, 24 years old) said:

" *I stopped trusting even my friend hhhh; I feel that maybe one of them was behind the bullying. Even with my family hhhhh I became very quiet.***"**

As Erving Goffman noted in his work on the management of social identity (**Goffman (1959), pp12–15**), individuals strive to maintain their "social image" by adjusting their behavior according to perceived threats to their social standing. Cyberbullying, by exposing victims to public ridicule or judgment, pushes them to withdraw from the social scene, thereby increasing their social stigmatization and isolation.

The sense of impunity surrounding cyberbullying due to the anonymity of aggressors and the difficulty of tracing them further reinforces this situation. Impunity undermines social trust, which is the foundation of human relationships. As Georg Simmel observed in his study of social interaction (**Simmel (1908) pp15–18**), trust is an essential component of social bonds; without it, human relationships risk collapsing.

A participant from Ain Deheb (male, 21 years old) summarized this feeling succinctly:

" *There's no justice in the digital world hhhh the one who hurts you, you can't even know who he is. This made people stop trusting each other mmmm I think hhhh both online and in real life*.**"**

In this wilaya and in Algeria, this fragmentation is even more pronounced, given that digital platforms inherently facilitate anonymity, making social interactions more fragile and volatile. This atmosphere of suspicion, ambiguity, and uncertainty inevitably leads to a form of individualism in social relations, where each person seeks to protect themselves by distancing from others a process that contributes to the disintegration of social ties.

As a result, young victims often feel isolated not only from their immediate surroundings but from society as a whole, creating a vicious circle of loneliness and distrust that threatens social cohesion.

The title of the Article: The implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria: A sociological analysis of youth discourses in the wilaya of Tiaret	Author 1: Rabah, Benali Author 2: Omar, Zehouani	Volume : 31 / Issue: 02 (27) / 2025	Pages : 395 – 411

In short, the disintegration of social bonds and the sense of isolation among victims of cyberbullying, as revealed by this study, reflect the profound social impact of this phenomenon on the Algerian social fabric. Cyberbullying harms not only individuals but also weakens collective solidarity, making society more fragmented and less capable of confronting emerging social and technological challenges.

2-Loss of Trust in Institutions:

This study reveals that the majority of young people interviewed expressed a loss of trust toward key institutions such as schools and the justice system. This finding highlights a growing issue: many young people perceive that these institutions have failed to take effective measures to combat cyberbullying.

One respondent from Tiaret (male, **30** years old) explained:

> *"I went to the university administration to tell them about the threats I received on Facebook. They told me they couldn't do anything and to go to the police hhh When I went to the police hhhh they said I needed strong evidence mmm I felt like I was going in circles no one was standing by me."*

Young people expect schools and the judicial system to take proactive and responsive measures to protect victims of cyberbullying. However, the responses provided by these institutions are often perceived as insufficient or inappropriate. Consequently, victims feel abandoned, as if their suffering is not taken seriously.

A female respondent from Dahmouni (19 years old) expressed this frustration, saying:

> **"***After they shared my photos in a group, I went to ask for help from the principal, and she told me it wasn't their responsibility that we were adults and I should hhhhh handle it myself. I cried that day, and since then hhhhh, I stopped trusting any institution*.**"**

The absence of institutional deterrence and effective digital oversight leads victims to feelings of abandonment and helplessness. When they realize that the institutions meant to protect them do not meet their needs, many choose to withdraw from community activities and avoid reporting incidents, fearing either inaction or worsening of their situation.

A participant from Ain Deheb (male, **23** years old) stated:

> ***"****I don't like reporting anything that happens to me online because it's useless. I know many people who filed complaints hhhh and nothing changed hhhhh on the contrary people started talking about them even more****."***

This social withdrawal further weakens social cohesion. When victims of cyberbullying perceive a lack of solidarity from institutional structures, they tend to develop distrust not only toward these institutions but also toward society as a whole.

This situation creates a vicious cycle: the more victims withdraw, the fewer reports and testimonies institutions receive, making it even harder for them to act effectively and implement sustainable solutions.

A female participant from Mahdia (20 years old) summarized this sentiment:

> **"***I can't blame only the bullies; even the institutions made us feel alone hhhh When People hhh don't listen to you, you start feeling worthless.***"**

Therefore, the loss of trust among young people toward institutions in the face of cyberbullying emerges as a critical issue. To reverse this trend, schools and the judicial system must implement clear and effective policies to support victims. Rebuilding trust requires greater transparency, active listening, and the mobilization of resources to combat this phenomenon with the ultimate goal of restoring a sense of security and solidarity within society.

3-<u>The Rise of Digital Aggressiveness and the Erosion of Social Trust</u>:

The digital environment in Algeria, as in many other societies undergoing rapid technological transformation, has become a space where new forms of aggression emerge. Cyberbullying, by promoting anonymity and the viral spread of content, contributes to a growing climate of digital hostility and a decline in interpersonal trust.

The study found that many young people perceive social media as an increasingly toxic and aggressive space, where conflicts escalate quickly and moral boundaries become blurred. One respondent from Frenda (male, **25** years old) described this atmosphere, saying:

> **"***People on Facebook have no limits anymore; they insult and humiliate you hhhh just to make others laugh mmmm It's like they fear neither God nor the law***."**

This feeling of impunity is largely linked to the anonymity that online platforms allow. Users can create fake accounts and attack others without revealing their true identities, which fosters a sense of power and irresponsibility. Such conditions contribute to what sociologists describe as "digital disinhibition", where individuals express forms of aggression that they would never show in real life.

A young woman from Tiaret (22 years old) said:

> *"There are people on Instagram who say extremely hurtful thing hhhh, but when you meet them in real life, they act like they don't know you hhhh The virtual world has become lawless."*

According to Ulrich Beck's (**Beck (1992), pp. 21–23**) notion of the *risk society*, the digital age creates new, uncontrollable risks that institutions struggle to regulate. In the Algerian context, this lack of regulation amplifies the feeling of insecurity among young people, who perceive the internet not as a space of freedom but as a space of danger.

This digital aggressiveness also erodes social trust, which, as Georg Simmel (**Simmel (1908), p. 173)** argued, is one of the foundations of social life. When individuals constantly fear being mocked, exposed, or attacked online, they tend to withdraw from public interactions both online and offline.

A participant from Dahmouni (female, 21 years old) described this loss of confidence:

> **"***I can't talk about my life online anymore hhhh Every time I try to be myself, people find something to attack me for. Trust between people mmmm has become very weak*.**"**

The research also revealed a paradox: while social media was initially intended to strengthen social connections, it now often undermines solidarity by normalizing humiliation and public shaming. This new moral environment produces a culture of suspicion, where everyone fears becoming the next target.

From a sociological perspective, this situation reflects what Émile Durkheim (**Durkheim, 1893, p. 229)** described as anomie a weakening of collective norms that regulate social behavior. When social control mechanisms fail, aggression and deviance become normalized, threatening both individual well-being and social cohesion.

One participant from Mahdia (male, 20 years old) summed it up in simple yet powerful words:

> "*The internet has increasingly become a daunting and sometimes hostile environment, far from being the safe space for free expression it was once imagined to be…… online interactions, once celebrated for their openness are now often overshadowed by harassmen hhhh, cyberbullying, and the rapid spread of harmful content mmmm making individuals hesitant to share their thoughts and experiences freely..*"

In conclusion, the rise of digital aggressiveness and the erosion of social trust observed among Algerian youth are not isolated phenomena. They reflect deeper structural transformations in social relations brought about by digital technologies. Without effective regulation and renewed moral frameworks, the virtual sphere risks reproducing and amplifying the very inequalities, exclusions, and hostilities that weaken the social fabric offline.

4-The Role of Social Media in the Spread of Cyberbullying

The results of this study reveal that social media platforms play a crucial role in the spread of cyberbullying, serving as a fertile environment for this phenomenon. These platforms provide a favorable framework for the dissemination of negative and offensive content due to several key factors including the lack of strict regulation and the possibility of user anonymity they offer.

One respondent from Tiaret (male, 27 years old) explained:

> "*he problem with Facebook and Instagram is that anyone can easily create a fake account and insult others without fear of being identified or punished hhhhh This anonymity encourages aggressive behavior and verbal abuse hhhh When such accounts are reported, the platform often responds by claiming there is not enough evidence……mmm which gives the impression that this kind of behavior has become normalized and socially tolerated online*."

Despite efforts by some platforms to moderate content, the regulation of cyberbullying remains largely insufficient. Detection algorithms often fail to identify offensive or humiliating messages quickly or effectively. Moreover, reporting procedures are sometimes complicated or not easily accessible, which discourages victims from speaking out. As a result, many cases of cyberbullying go unnoticed or unpunished, reinforcing the perception that bullies can act without fear of consequences.

A young woman from Mahdia (20 years old) expressed this frustration, saying:

> ***"I** reported someone who posted something mocking me mmmm but nothing happened for over a week. On the contrary, the post spread even more. When I saw that, I decided hhhh never to report anything again."*

User anonymity represents another crucial factor in the dynamics of cyberbullying. Young victims indicate that this feature, offered by platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok, allows bullies to hide behind pseudonyms, giving them a sense of complete immunity.

A respondent from Aïn El Dheb (m**a**le, 19 years old) described it this way:

> "*There are anonymous pages dedicated to exposing people - they steal photos and make up stories. People see and believe them hhhh and the bully is never revealed hhhh This has made many young people afraid to share anything personal."*

A social media platform is also designed to encourage the rapid spread of information, which amplifies the viral nature of cyberbullying. When offensive or humiliating content is shared, it can reach a wide audience in a very short time, intensifying the emotional impact on the victim.

A participant from Dahmouni (female, **18** years old) recounted her experience:

The title of the Article: The implications of cyberbullying on social cohesion in Algeria: A sociological analysis of youth discourses in the wilaya of Tiaret	Author 1: Rabah, Benali Author 2: Omar, Zehouani	Volume : 31 / Issue: 02 (27) / 2025	Pages : 395 – 411

> "*In less than an hour, the video they made about me was seen by more than hhhh 2,000 people, even from outside mmmm the city hhh I felt deeply humiliated and couldn't leave the house for days*."

Young respondents reported that humiliating images or videos can become viral within hours, exposing them to widespread and lasting public humiliation. This leads to stigmatization and social isolation, reinforcing the psychological impact of cyberbullying.

Another respondent from Aïn El Dheb (male, 23 years old) summarized the situation:

> "*People don't help; on the contrary, when they see a mocking or scandalous post, they share it and laugh hhh Bullying has become fashionable on social media, and the victims are the ones who pay the price*."

This situation creates a vicious circle, combining anonymity and rapid dissemination. The more offensive content is shared, the more bullying becomes a normalized behavior on these platforms. As a result, young people both witnesses and victims may come to believe that cyberbullying is a common, unchangeable practice, discouraging them from reporting or seeking help.

Therefore, the role of social media in the spread of cyberbullying is both troubling and complex. To address this issue, platforms must adopt stricter regulatory measures and strengthen reporting tools. Moreover, digital awareness programs in schools and universities could play a vital role in educating young people about the dangers of cyberbullying and promoting responsible online behavior.

By fostering a safer digital environment, it will be possible to mitigate the impact of this phenomenon and encourage a culture of respect and solidarity within the digital space.

6- Discussion of Results:

The results of this study confirm the main hypotheses and highlight the direct and moral impact of cyberbullying on the disruption of social relations in Algeria, through the weakening of solidarity ties between individuals and the creation of a climate of mistrust.

Indeed, cyberbullying undermines social solidarity, particularly by disturbing daily interactions and generating an atmosphere of distrust within communities as this study has shown. As Zygmunt Bauman observed in his work on *liquid modernity*, social relationships in modern societies have become more transient and fragile, especially in digital environments where ambiguity and lack of structure are

prevalent (**Bauman (2000), pp11–15**). In Algeria, cyberbullying exacerbates this fragility by weakening personal relationships and making social exchanges increasingly unstable.

The lack of adequate institutional responses further reinforces this situation, contributing to a loss of trust in the social fabric. Young people feel disconnected not only from others but also from society and its support mechanisms, which threatens social cohesion as a whole.

This situation leads to a gradual disintegration of the solidarity bonds that sustain the cohesion of communities. According to Pierre Bourdieu, social relationships constitute a fundamental form of social *capital* which strengthens individuals' capacity to interact positively and maintain social unity (**Bourdieu (1980), pp. 2–3**). However, cyberbullying acts as a factor of disintegration of this capital by dividing groups and making interactions between individuals more cautious and less trusting.

This deterioration of social relationships is particularly evident among young people, who are the main victims of cyberbullying in Algeria and who increasingly experience isolation from the rest of their community.

The absence of effective institutional responses also accelerates this process of social fragmentation. In his analysis of the *risk society*, Ulrich Beck emphasized that institutions' inability to respond to new technological risks such as cyberbullying leads to a crisis of trust within the population ((**Beck (1992), p21**).

Young people often turn to police, legal, or social institutions for assistance, yet these institutions frequently lack the tools or frameworks necessary to deal with this form of violence. This results in a loss of institutional legitimacy and a growing gap between youth, the social fabric, and traditional support systems.

This feeling of isolation among young people also echoes Robert Putnam's analysis of the decline of social capital. The erosion of trust within communities leads to the increased marginalization of individuals, especially those already in vulnerable positions (**Putnam (2000), p 28**).

In the context of this study's sample, this phenomenon is particularly visible among young victims of cyberbullying, who feel alienated not only from others but also from society and its supportive systems. This gap poses a serious threat to overall social cohesion, as youth a key demographic for the vitality and future of the nation find themselves excluded from social interactions and disillusioned with the institutions that are supposed to protect them.

7-Research limitations and methodological challenges:

This study encountered a number of methodological and field-related limitations and difficulties, which affected, to varying degrees, the processes of data collection and analysis.

One of the most significant challenges stemmed from the very nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Cyberbullying is a hidden behavior that occurs within digital spaces that are difficult to trace or observe directly, especially given the use of fake accounts or pseudonyms by users. This made it particularly complex to identify perpetrators or verify specific incidents.

Another major difficulty was convincing some participants especially victims to speak openly about their experiences, due to fear of exposure or renewed bullying. This required strict adherence to principles of confidentiality and the protection of participants' personal identities throughout the research.

At the field level, the study encountered variations in digital literacy among young people in the cities of *Tiaret, Mahdia, Dahmouni* process*, and Aïn Deheb*. These differences influenced how participants understood and defined cyberbullying. Additionally, logistical difficulties were observed in reaching some participants in semi-rural areas, due to limited internet access or weak digital infrastructure in certain neighborhoods.

At the institutional level, there was a lack of official statistics and local studies on cyberbullying in Algeria, which compelled the researcher to rely primarily on qualitative interviews and field observations to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Despite these challenges, the study provided a valuable opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cyberbullying within the Algerian social context. It also highlighted the urgent need to develop preventive and educational policies aimed at protecting young people and promoting a culture of digital trust and responsibility.

-Conclusion:

Cyberbullying in Algeria has become a growing social concern, with consequences that extend far beyond the individual level to threaten social cohesion as a whole. By weakening interpersonal bonds, it contributes to the erosion of trust and solidarity the fundamental pillars of any functioning society. As Émile Durkheim argued, social cohesion in modern societies relies on *organic solidarity* ((**Durkheim (1893), p. 131**), where the division of labor fosters interdependence among

individuals. Cyberbullying, by generating mistrust and social isolation among victims, undermines these interconnections and jeopardizes collective harmony.

One of the most damaging effects of cyberbullying is the isolation of its victims. Young people, in particular, find themselves cut off from the social and community networks that are vital for their personal development and civic engagement. As Robert Putnam demonstrated, the erosion of *social capital* the capacity of individuals to build relationships based on trust and cooperation leads to a decline in overall social cohesion. In Algeria, this weakening of social ties is especially evident among young victims of cyberbullying, whose sense of belonging and civic participation have noticeably diminished, deepening their marginalization. Another critical factor is the loss of trust in institutions. Algerian institutions educational, judicial, and social play a central role in regulating behavior and protecting citizens. Yet their inability to respond effectively to cyberbullying has negatively impacted their legitimacy. As Max Weber emphasized, institutional legitimacy is essential to maintaining social order and authority (**Weber (1922), pp. 212–213**). In Algeria, the perception that public institutions are disengaged or ineffective in addressing online violence has further eroded this legitimacy, fueled young people's mistrust of these structures and weakened social cohesion.

In light of these findings, concrete measures must be implemented to counter the destructive effects of cyberbullying. Prevention should be strengthened, particularly through awareness campaigns aimed at educating young people about the risks of the digital environment and promoting responsible online behavior. As Anthony Giddens noted, modern societies must adapt to new risks arising from technological progress by developing public policies that respond to emerging social challenges (**Giddens (1990), p. 33**). In Algeria, this means enacting appropriate legislation to effectively regulate online conduct and protect individuals from harm.

Moreover, it is essential to improve support mechanisms for victims of cyberbullying. Establishing psychological support services and training professionals' teachers, social workers, and police officers to identify and assist victims can help mitigate the long-term consequences of this form of violence. Finally, rebuilding public trust in institutions requires proactive engagement from state authorities, who must demonstrate their commitment to punishing perpetrators and ensuring citizens' safety, including within digital spaces.

In conclusion, cyberbullying represents a profound social challenge for Algeria, particularly in its semi-rural interior regions. It threatens not only individual

victims but also the very structure of the social fabric. By focusing on prevention, victim support, and the restoration of institutional trust, Algeria can reduce the impact of cyberbullying and preserve the bonds of solidarity that sustain its social cohesion.

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