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Health Awareness on the Risks of Alternative Medicine via Facebook : An Exploratory Study on a Sample of Followers of the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization's Page

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the contribution of the official Facebook page of the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection in informing and educating consumers about the health risks associated with alternative medicine, particularly its potential adverse effects on individuals with chronic illnesses. Adopting an exploratory approach, the research is based on a sample of Facebook users who follow the organization's page. The study also explores the organization's role in enhancing public awareness regarding the safe use of herbal remedies and dietary supplements, guiding consumers toward rational consumption practices, and fostering a culture of preventive health care. It also investigates how the organization's social media presence contributes to public discourse on food and medical safety, and how it aligns with the broader objective of ensuring consumer protection in the digital era.

Keywords: health awareness; food security; alternative medicine; Algerian Consumer Protection Organization; online engagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of communication technologies and the proliferation of new media tools have significantly transformed how institutions interact with the public. In recent years, digital platforms particularly social media have become essential channels for organizations, associations, and public bodies to present their roles, communicate their services, and engage with citizens and consumers. Among these platforms, Facebook stands out as a prominent space for civic and institutional dialogue in Algeria and beyond.

Amid this transformation, various organizations have turned to digital communication to reach broader audiences, inform the public, and promote awareness on a range of issues. One such organization is the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection, which has increasingly utilized Facebook as a strategic tool to inform and educate consumers especially in matters related to food safety and consumption behaviors.

In the context of growing public interest in alternative medicine, particularly the widespread use of herbal remedies and dietary supplements across Algerian society, the organization has taken on an important role in guiding and alerting consumers to the potential risks of such products. This is particularly relevant for individuals with chronic health conditions who may resort to herbal or non-prescribed treatments without sufficient medical guidance or awareness of possible side effects.

The increasing promotion of alternative medicine through both traditional and digital media often emphasizing the benefits of these products while downplaying or ignoring their risks has amplified the need for reliable sources of consumer health education. This is where the organization's role becomes critical : using new media tools to reach and inform the public about the rational use of alternative health products and the health consequences of unregulated consumption.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to address the following central research question :

To what extent does the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization contribute to raising consumer awareness about the potential health risks of alternative medicine through its official Facebook page?

To further explore this central question, the following sub-questions are proposed :

1. Does the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization actively promote health awareness among Algerian citizens through its Facebook page, particularly through awareness-oriented posts addressing the risks of alternative medicine?
2. What communication strategies and informational approaches does the organization employ to guide consumers through its Facebook content (e.g., warnings, educational messages, or preventive advice)?
3. To what extent does the organization contribute to ensuring safe consumption of alternative medicine products through its official page ?

1.1 Significance of the Study

This study holds importance on multiple levels, both in the fields of media communication and public health awareness :

a. Highlighting the educational and awareness-raising role of civil society organizations : The research emphasizes how organizations such as the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization contribute to guiding and informing consumers in managing their daily needs and making informed decisions. This reinforces the social responsibility of civil institutions in supporting consumer rights and public well-being.

b. Demonstrating the value of new media technologies in civic engagement : The study underscores how social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have become integral to both individual and community life. These platforms offer interactive spaces where citizens can voice concerns, receive guidance, and access timely information related to

consumer safety and health particularly in preventing fraud, misinformation, and deceptive practices concerning marketed products and services.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This research aims to achieve the following objectives :

- To determine whether the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization actively promotes public health awareness regarding alternative medicine through its official Facebook page.

- To examine whether the organization plays a guiding role in shaping consumers' choices and behaviors via its Facebook communication and content strategies.

- To assess the extent to which the organization's Facebook presence contributes to ensuring safe and informed consumption of alternative medicine products and supplements, and how it frames the concept of consumer safety within this domain.

2. Definition of Key Terms

In academic research, defining the core concepts of a study is essential for establishing clarity, scope, and analytical focus. Conceptual definitions help distinguish key terms from related ideas, while operational definitions clarify how those concepts are applied within the specific context of the research. As Wahid Tahi notes :

"A concept becomes clear when it is distinguished from others that share its features, and when it is rationally understood in light of its intended context and characteristics." (Tahi, 2009, p48.)

2.1 Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection

The Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection is an independent, non-profit civil society organization concerned with consumer affairs in Algeria. It was officially accredited on August 6, 2015. The organization aims to promote responsible consumption, protect consumers' material and moral rights, and encourage public participation in the development of a healthy and ethical consumption culture. (APOCE, 2025)

Main Objectives:

- Raising consumer awareness and education
- Defending consumer rights and interests
- Promoting the quality of goods and services
- Combating fraud, deception, and unsafe consumer environments

Key Functions:

- Providing guidance and reliable information to consumers
- Supporting consumer protection policies and local awareness strategies
- Contributing to the establishment of safe and sustainable consumer environments
- Encouraging rational consumption practices. (APOCE, 2025)

Operational Definition :

For the purpose of this study, the organization is defined as a civil society actor that engages in digital communication and consumer health advocacy via its official Facebook page. It serves as an information hub that promotes responsible consumption of herbal remedies and alternative treatments, particularly aiming to mitigate potential health risks associated with alternative medicine practices in Algeria.

2.2 Alternative Medicine

Alternative medicine refers to any method of treatment that does not rely on conventional pharmaceutical drugs or modern biomedical practices. While the term has gained traction in Western societies in recent decades, alternative healing methods such as herbal medicine, cupping therapy (ḥijāmah), cauterization, and acupuncture have long been practiced in diverse global cultures, including Arab, Asian, and Western societies. (Kisling & Stiegmann, 2024, p10.)

One of the major concerns surrounding alternative medicine is the lack of rigorous clinical testing. Many methods have not undergone the same experimental scrutiny or regulatory standards as conventional medicine. As Dohaa Mahmoud-Bablili points out,

many techniques are passed down through generations without institutional or scientific validation, posing challenges to consumer safety. (Mahmoud-Bablili, 2007, p15.)

Based on the previous definitions we can list the common methods of alternative treatment as following ;

- Herbal therapy ;
- Nutritional therapy (e.g., honey, black seed, fiber, fruits, vegetables) ;
- Cupping therapy (ḥijāmah) ;
- Cauterization ;
- Hydrotherapy and heat therapy ;
- Therapeutic fasting.

Operational Definition :

In the context of this study, alternative medicine refers to the use of herbal products and dietary supplements by Algerian consumers as a form of self-treatment for various health issues. These practices, although popular, are often conducted without professional guidance or awareness of possible adverse effects, and are widely promoted through digital and social media channels.

2.3 Health Awareness

2.3.1 The concept of Health

The concept of health has long been central to human well-being, and definitions of health have evolved alongside advances in medical, psychological, and behavioral sciences. At its core, health is often viewed not merely as the absence of disease, but as a dynamic state of balance between the body, mind, and environment.

As Mahmoud Abdel-Mohey and Saleh Hassan explain,

"Health is fundamentally a state of relative balance among bodily functions, maintained through the body's ability to adapt positively to harmful external factors. This adaptation reflects the body's active engagement in preserving its equilibrium." (Abdel-Mohey & Hassan,

2003, p17.)

In educational and psychological literature, health is considered a holistic condition a state of harmony between physical, mental, and spiritual well-being that enables an individual to live productively and with vitality. According to Myers and Sweeney ;

"Health is the integration of body, mind, and spirit that empowers an individual to live life effectively." (Myers & Sweeney, 2004, p239.)

2.3.2 The concept of Health Awareness

Health awareness, as defined in the public health and communication fields, refers to the dissemination of health-related knowledge and the cultivation of responsible attitudes and behaviors among individuals and communities. Ben Zidan describe health awareness as :

"A citizen's comprehension of health facts and information, combined with a sense of responsibility toward their own health and that of others." (Ben-Zidan, 2017, p83)

From a behavioral and educational standpoint, Mohamed Shaaban Afnan defines health awareness as :

"The process of teaching people correct health habits and helping them to abandon harmful beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes, replacing them with sound health practices through conscious understanding and persuasive communication." (Afnan, 2016, p34)

From a communication science perspective, health awareness framed as a mass communication process, as in the following definition:

"It is an informational process aimed at encouraging individuals to adopt healthy lifestyles and behaviors in order to elevate public health and limit the spread of disease. This is achieved through the dissemination of accurate health knowledge and guidance on disease prevention, using a variety of media and communication tools." (Abbas, 2015, p20.)

Further *"Health awareness is the individual's understanding of their own condition and the surrounding health-related environment, which contributes to the formation of a mental orientation toward public health."* (El-Johary, 1992, p290.)

Operational Definition :

In the context of this study, health awareness refers specifically to the medical advice and preventive guidance disseminated through the Facebook page of the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization. This content includes posts in various formats ; text, infographics, and visual explanations designed to increase users' awareness of health risks. Special emphasis is placed on raising caution among consumers regarding the unregulated use of alternative medicine, including herbal remedies and dietary supplements, and encouraging informed and safe health practices.

3. Research Methodology

In scientific research, methodology refers to the structured and systematic plan through which a researcher organizes their investigative process. As Ahmed Mostafa Omar explains, *"A research methodology is a set of procedures that the researcher follows to study a specific problem."* (Omar, 2000, p167.)

To investigate the contribution of the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization's Facebook page to health awareness regarding alternative medicine, this study adopts the descriptive survey method.

According to Rahim Al-Azzawi, the survey method is defined as : *"An inquiry focused on a phenomenon as it exists in the present, with the aim of diagnosing its characteristics, uncovering its dimensions, and identifying relationships among its components or between it and other phenomena."* (Al-Azzawi, 2008, p97.)

This method is particularly suited to examining the perceptions, behaviors, and levels of awareness among a specific population regarding communication practices and media exposure.

3.1 Data Collection Tool

In line with the adopted methodological approach, data were gathered using a **questionnaire** (electronic survey form**)**, a tool widely recognized for its effectiveness in

measuring attitudes, opinions, and experiences across large samples.

The questionnaire is a structured tool for gathering data in which respondents independently provide answers to a predefined set of questions. As defined by Mohamed Azhar Saeed Sammak *"A questionnaire is typically a one-page or multi-page form completed by individuals targeted by the research. The wording of the questions must be precise to ensure clarity and avoid multiple interpretations, focusing solely on the meaning intended by the form designer."* (Sammak, 1996, p61.)

The electronic questionnaire used in this study was carefully designed to align with the research objectives and consisted of three main sections, each addressing a thematic axis derived from the study's research questions. The questionnaire combined open-ended and closed-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. It was distributed online to reach participants within the targeted research population.

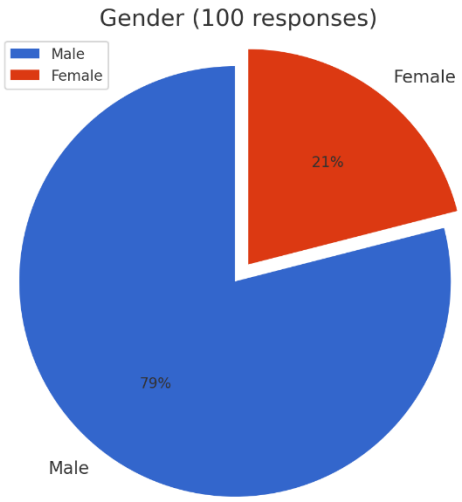
3.2 Research Population

The research population is defined as : *"A group of elements that share one or more characteristics, which distinguish them from other elements and make them the focus of investigation."* (Ben-Mersli, 2005, p182.)

For this study, the research population consists of followers of the official Facebook page of the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization. These are individuals who actively like, follow, or engage with the page, either through reactions, comments, or content sharing. They represent the core audience through which the organization's health awareness messages are disseminated, In this study we reached (100) respondents.

4. Presentation of Analytical Findings

Figure 1 : Gender Distribution of the Research Sample



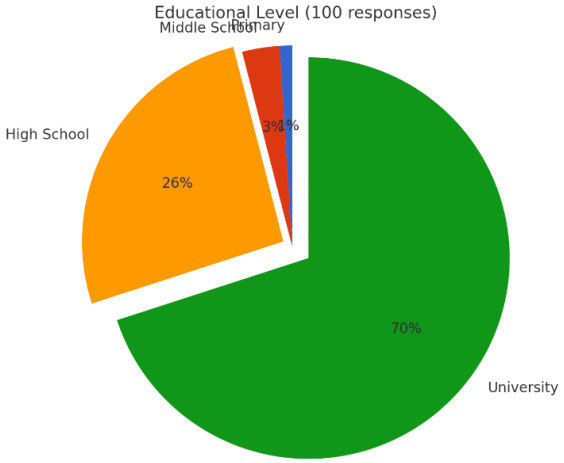
The first figure illustrates the gender variable among the respondents in the sample. Based on the quantitative analysis of the data, it is evident that the majority of followers of the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization's Facebook page who responded to the survey are male, representing 79% of the sample. In contrast, female respondents make up 21% of the sample.

This gender disparity may be attributed to the nature of the organization's communication focus and thematic priorities, which tend to align more closely with areas traditionally associated with male interests such as commerce, finance, business, and industry. These fields often attract higher male engagement due to their perceived relevance to economic activities and market trends. Additionally, men may demonstrate greater motivation to follow consumer protection platforms to stay informed about market developments, pricing, and product safety, particularly in sectors tied to financial decision-making and trade.

This finding underscores the importance of audience profiling in digital media outreach. Understanding the demographic characteristics of social media followers can help

civil society organizations tailor their messaging and engagement strategies more effectively, especially when seeking to reach underrepresented segments such as women in consumer protection discourse.

Figure 2 : Educational Level of Respondents



This Figure illustrates the distribution of respondents according to their educational attainment. The quantitative data reveals that the majority of participants (70%) hold a university-level education, followed by 26% with a secondary-level education, and a small minority of only 4% with an intermediate-level education. Notably, no respondents indicated having only a primary education.

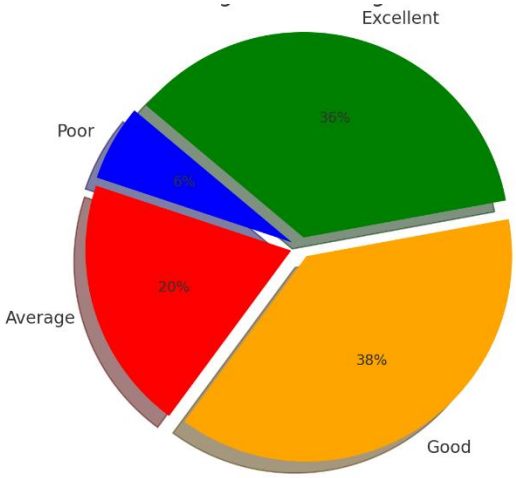
These results indicate that the audience engaging with the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization's Facebook page is predominantly composed of individuals with higher educational qualifications. This finding can be attributed to several factors. First, individuals with a university education often display greater interest in informational and public service content available on digital platforms, particularly Facebook. They tend to engage with content that aligns with their cognitive interests and intellectual orientation.

Second, the content published by the organization is typically informative, socially relevant, and oriented toward public discourse, covering topics related to health, economics,

market regulation, and scientific awareness. Such content naturally appeals to audiences with the capacity to understand, critically evaluate, and engage with complex information attributes more commonly found among those with advanced education.

Consequently, the prevalence of university-educated followers reflects the organization's positioning as a knowledge-driven digital communicator, whose content strategy appeals to a more informed and analytically capable demographic. The low presence of respondents with only intermediate or lower educational levels suggests a potential gap in accessibility or relevance that could be addressed through diversified communication strategies to reach broader segments of the population.

Figure 3 : Respondents' Perceptions of the Consumer Protection Organization's Contribution to Health Awareness



This Figure presents respondents' evaluations of the extent to which the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization contributes to promoting health awareness among its followers on Facebook. According to the survey data, 38% of participants rated the organization's contribution as "Good," followed closely by 36% who assessed it as "Excellent." Meanwhile, 20% perceived the contribution to be of a "Moderate" level, and only 6% evaluated it as "Poor."

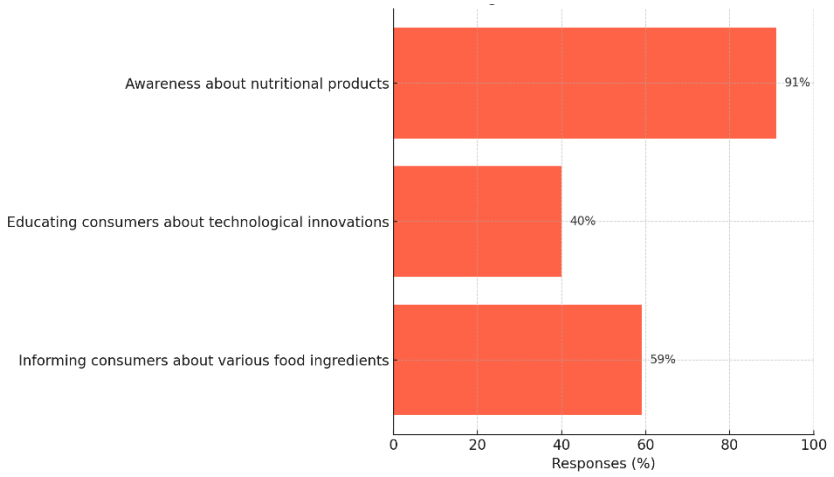
These findings suggest that the majority of respondents hold a favorable perception

of the organization's health communication efforts, particularly in relation to consumer awareness about food safety, dietary practices, and pharmaceutical products. The relatively high ratings of "good" and "excellent" reflect the perceived value of the content disseminated by the organization's Facebook page, especially in addressing ongoing and evolving food-related issues that are of continuous public concern.

The results also highlight that the organization's consistent engagement with themes such as product quality, expiration dates, potential health risks, and responsible consumption contributes positively to its credibility and trust among digital audiences. In this context, the organization's digital communication strategy characterized by regular, targeted, and relevant health messaging is likely a key factor in the positive evaluations offered by respondents.

Thus, it can be concluded that the organization is seen as proactive and effective in fulfilling its public health awareness role via Facebook, reinforcing its legitimacy as a trusted source of consumer health guidance in Algeria's digital media landscape.

Figure 4 : How the Consumer Protection Organization Contributes to Consumer Awareness via Facebook



This Figure illustrates respondents' perceptions of the main areas in which the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization contributes to consumer awareness through its

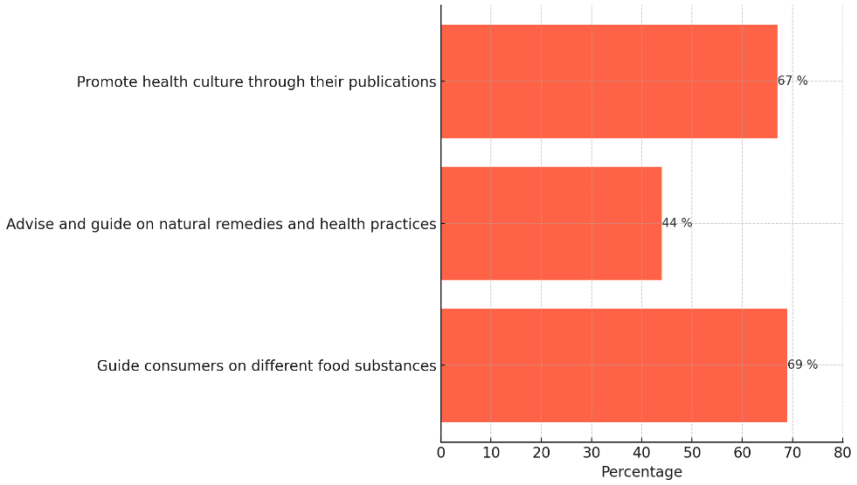
official Facebook page. The analysis reveals that the highest percentage of responses (48%) identified awareness related to food products as the primary area of contribution. This was followed by 31.1% of respondents who pointed to awareness regarding pharmaceutical and medical products, while 21.1% selected technological product awareness as the area of focus. The data indicate that the majority of respondents view the organization's communication on food-related topics as its most significant contribution. This finding reflects the increased consumer demand for reliable information about everyday food products, particularly regarding product quality, safety, and expiration. This demand is amplified in light of widespread concerns over counterfeit products, deceptive labeling, and the sale of expired or unsafe foods, which pose serious health risks to consumers.

Moreover, the relatively high percentage of respondents highlighting the organization's awareness efforts concerning medical products, pharmaceuticals, and health supplements is notable. This may be attributed to the growing use of alternative medicine and dietary supplements in Algeria, which has increased public interest in understanding the authenticity and safety of such products. As these markets are often poorly regulated, the organization's informational role becomes crucial in helping consumers make safe, informed choices.

Although technological product awareness received the lowest share of responses, it still reflects a segment of interest, particularly as digital devices and tech-based consumption practices expand. However, it is evident that the organization's core perceived strength lies in its focus on health-related content, especially in sectors directly affecting consumer well-being.

In conclusion, the data support the assertion that the organization's Facebook page functions as a critical communication channel for raising public awareness around food and health safety, reaffirming its role as a trustworthy actor in the Algerian digital media ecosystem.

Figure 5 : Framing Approaches Adopted by the Consumer Protection Organization in Its Health Awareness Campaigns



This Figure presents the various framing strategies and thematic priorities employed by the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization in its digital communication efforts through its official Facebook page. According to respondents, the most prominent frame is the promotion of responsible consumption of food products, which was selected by 69% of participants. This is followed by the organization's efforts to cultivate and elevate public health literacy, enabling followers to independently assess what is beneficial or harmful to their health. The least selected frame, although still relevant, was the promotion of adherence to safety guidelines in the use of medicinal herbs.

These findings reflect the organization's emphasis on consumer education regarding dietary choices, particularly in a context where food fraud, product adulteration, and health-related misinformation are of growing concern. By focusing on rational consumption, the organization reinforces its mission of helping consumers make informed and safe decisions in their daily lives.

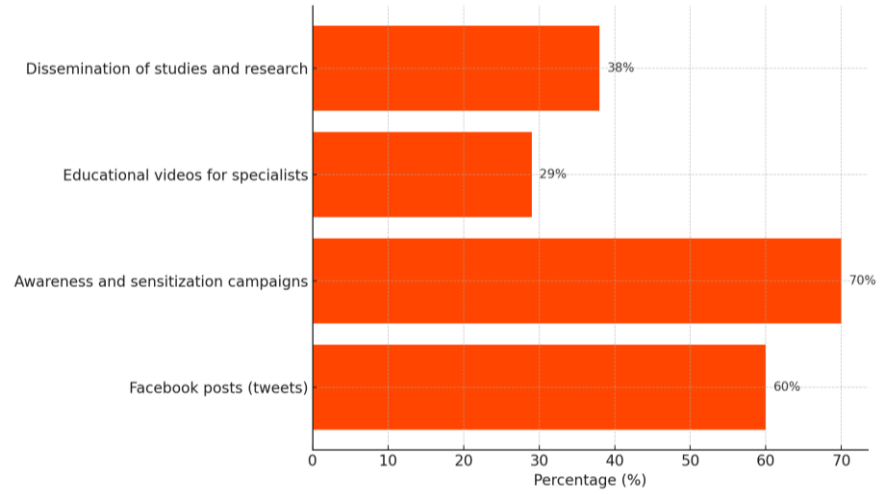
The second most prominent theme enhancing health culture and self-awareness highlights the organization's role in fostering a more empowered and health-conscious

public. This educational approach goes beyond mere information delivery and aims to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors through continuous learning and critical awareness.

Interestingly, the use of herbal remedies and traditional treatments, while a pressing public health concern due to its popularity and potential misuse, received comparatively less emphasis according to respondents. This is concerning, particularly as the non-medical prescription and widespread sharing of herbal treatments among the public may lead to serious health risks. Such practices are often encouraged by unqualified individuals or influencers, and are shared without regard for individual differences in physiology or medical history.

The data thus suggest a need for the organization to reinforce its communication strategies around alternative medicine risks, especially considering the current rise in herbal-based treatments and their unregulated use. While food safety remains a legitimate and high-priority concern, a balanced and comprehensive awareness strategy that also addresses the risks of traditional and alternative medicine is critical for ensuring holistic consumer protection.

Figure 6 : Forms of Health Awareness Content Delivered by the Organization's Facebook Page



This Figure illustrates the various formats used by the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization in delivering health awareness content via its official Facebook page. According to respondents, the most prevalent form of communication is through awareness campaigns led by specialists, which was rated highest among the options. This indicates a strong preference for expert-led educational initiatives, perceived by the audience as more credible, persuasive, and impactful.

Following awareness campaigns, Facebook posts and social media updates (including short written advisories and visual alerts) ranked second in popularity. This reflects the platform's widespread use and accessibility, particularly among Algerian internet users. Given Facebook's dominance in the local digital ecosystem, concise and consistent messaging via posts and infographics serves as a practical and effective method of maintaining user engagement and delivering key health information.

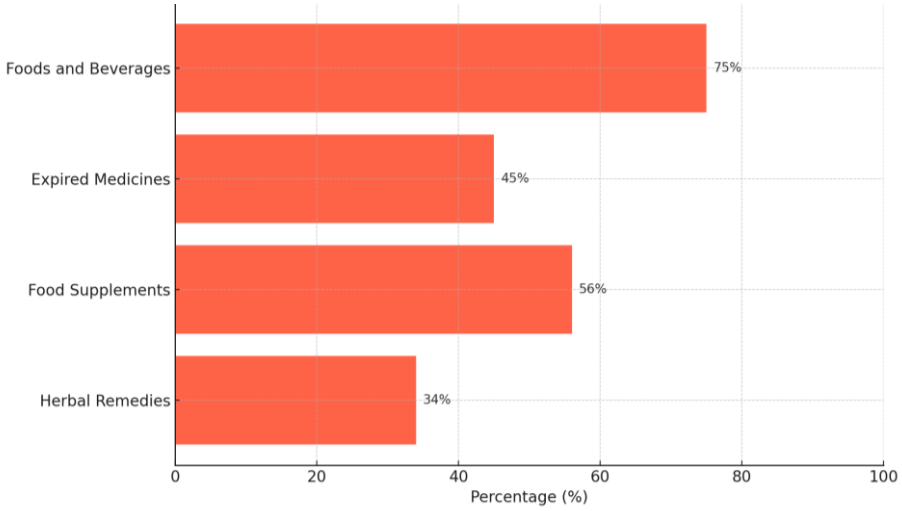
Explanatory videos, however, were ranked lowest, with only 29% of respondents identifying them as the most impactful format. This could be attributed to the technical and resource demands involved in producing video content, including filming, editing, and post-production processes. Despite their potential for visual storytelling and clarity, the relative scarcity of videos may be a consequence of the organization's limited production capacity or strategic prioritization of simpler formats.

Interestingly, scientific studies and research-based content ranked just above videos, with approximately 40% of respondents recognizing them as a source of information. While these materials offer depth, reliability, and empirical grounding, they may pose comprehension challenges for the general public, especially if written in technical or academic language. This suggests a gap between the scientific value of research content and its accessibility or relatability for average followers of the page.

In summary, the findings highlight the importance of balancing credibility and

accessibility in digital health communication. While expert-led campaigns generate the highest trust and impact, social media posts remain essential for their reach and immediacy. Meanwhile, the underutilization of video and scientific formats may represent opportunities for future development particularly if adapted to user-friendly, engaging, and culturally relevant formats.

Figure 7 : The Organization's Role in Health Risk Awareness Through Its Facebook Page



This Figurepresents respondents' perceptions of how the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization uses its official Facebook page to raise awareness about health risks. The data show that the organization primarily focuses on preventing the health consequences of unregulated and unsafe food and beverage consumption. This includes consistent messaging on respecting product expiration dates, understanding nutritional value, and identifying potential health risks associated with low-quality or expired goods.

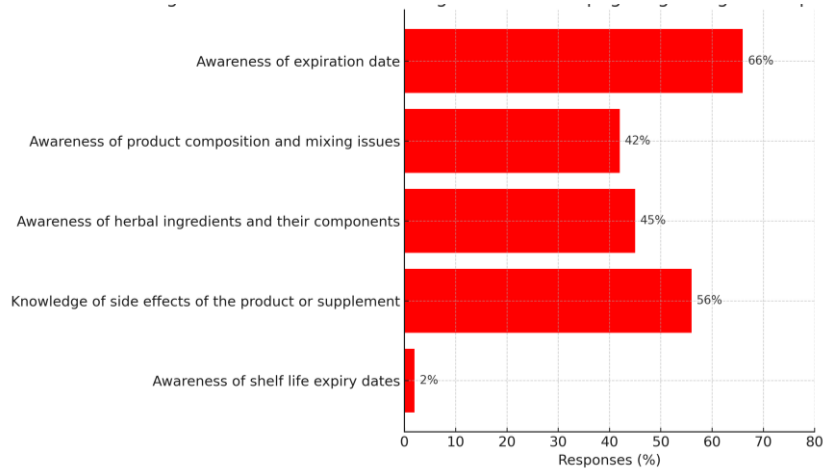
The organization's emphasis on this area reflects the widespread issue of food-related hazards in Algeria, ranging from misleading labeling to the sale of counterfeit or expired products. The prevalence of such practices, combined with insufficient consumer education in many regions, reinforces the importance of this focus within the organization's communication strategy.

Closely following this were the organization's health awareness efforts related to dietary supplements, which have become a growing concern in recent years. Respondents indicated increased organizational activity in this area likely in response to the aggressive commercial promotion of supplements on Algerian television channels. These advertising campaigns often exaggerate the benefits of such products, while downplaying or ignoring the potential health risks, all in pursuit of financial gain. This type of messaging conflicts with the principles of media ethics and human rights, which require transparent, socially responsible communication particularly when public health is at stake.

By contrast, awareness efforts targeting the misuse of medicinal herbs and counterfeit pharmaceuticals were rated lower by respondents. Despite the widespread use of herbal remedies and the availability of falsified medical products in Algeria's pharmaceutical markets, the organization appears to devote relatively less attention to these topics in its digital communication. This gap in coverage is noteworthy, especially given the increasing reliance on alternative medicine practices among Algerian consumers often without medical supervision or awareness of side effects.

In conclusion, while the organization's Facebook page plays a notable role in promoting food safety and responsible supplement use, there is a clear need to expand its awareness efforts to include herbal medicine and counterfeit drug risks. Addressing these issues with equal urgency would contribute to a more comprehensive public health communication strategy, reinforcing the organization's mandate to protect consumer well-being in all aspects of daily life.

Figure 8 : Key Medical Guidelines Promoted by the Organization for Consumer Health Protection and Awareness



This Figure highlights the primary areas of medical guidance offered by the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization through its Facebook page, particularly in relation to alternative medicine and the use of medicinal herbs. According to respondents, the organization places the greatest emphasis on advising consumers to check the expiration dates of herbal products prior to consumption. This is consistent with its broader communication strategy, which prioritizes safe and responsible consumption practices as part of its health protection mission.

However, the data also reveal a noticeable decline in emphasis on other critical aspects of health education namely, encouraging consumers to:

- Understand the potential side effects of medicinal herbs or dietary supplements.
- Review the composition and ingredients of herbal products in advance.
- Consult the leaflets and instructions provided with such products.

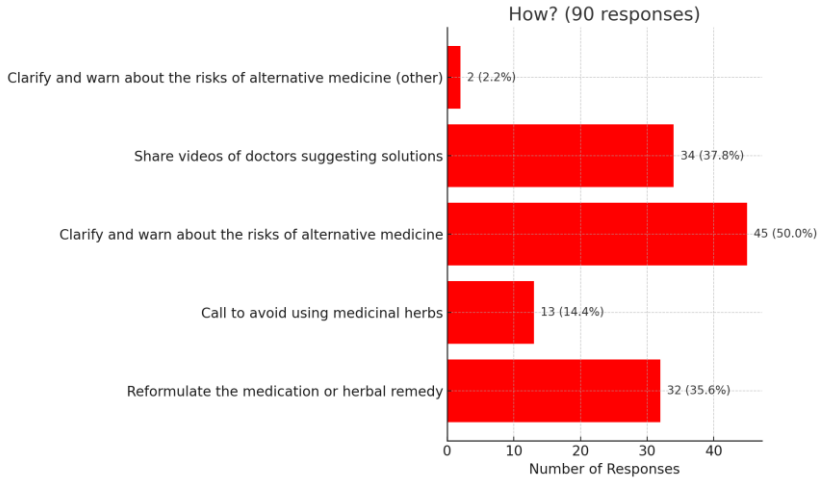
This declining trend is concerning, particularly given the increased marketing and media promotion of alternative medicine products across both traditional and digital platforms. As advertisements continue to present herbs and supplements in an overwhelmingly positive light often omitting safety information the lack of critical awareness

messaging can leave consumers vulnerable to misuse, self-medication, and health complications.

Moreover, many consumers may be unaware of the importance of reviewing product leaflets or recognizing contraindications due to the absence of public health literacy campaigns addressing these practices. The organization's Facebook page, while commendable for raising general awareness about product expiration and safety, may need to adopt a more comprehensive and preventive communication strategy, particularly in relation to unregulated natural remedies.

In conclusion, while the current efforts to highlight the validity and safety of herbal products are important, the organization should consider expanding its educational content to include deeper engagement with side effects, dosage, interactions, and consumer rights. This would significantly strengthen its role as a guardian of health in the growing landscape of alternative medicine consumption in Algeria.

Figure 9 : Key Recommendations to Prevent the Harmful Use of Alternative Medicine



This Figure presents respondents' views on the most important health guidelines promoted by the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization to help the public avoid the risks associated with the misuse of alternative medicine. The data indicate a recent increase

in the organization's focus on raising awareness about the dangers of excessive and unregulated consumption of dietary supplements, as well as the improper and uninformed use of herbal remedies for self-treatment.

This shift in focus reflects the growing concern over health risks tied to alternative therapies, particularly in cases where consumers seek herbal alternatives for serious medical conditions that typically require pharmaceutical intervention or surgical procedures. As the survey results suggest, the lack of medical supervision and disregard for evidence-based treatment methods has led to a pattern of irrational consumption behaviors, which may result in long-term health consequences.

The organization's guidance is thus aimed at reversing a dangerous trend in Algerian society, where many citizens continue to overlook or ignore official health recommendations, often in favor of natural remedies marketed as safer or more "holistic." Despite their potential benefits, dietary supplements and medicinal herbs can pose serious health threats when used improperly, especially in the absence of professional consultation or awareness of side effects and contraindications.

Through its Facebook page, the organization has worked to educate the public about the limits and potential harms of alternative medicine, warning against the overhyped benefits often promoted in traditional and new media channels. It has also encouraged consumers to critically assess health claims and adopt a more balanced, evidence-informed approach to treatment especially when dealing with chronic or serious illnesses.

In conclusion, the analysis of Figure 9 supports the notion that the Consumer Protection Organization is becoming increasingly responsive to public health risks tied to alternative medicine. Its advisory role particularly in digital spaces must continue to emphasize preventive education, responsible consumption, and media literacy, ensuring that citizens are better equipped to navigate the often misleading landscape of health-related products and practices.

5. General Findings of the Study

At the end of this study, several key findings emerged that underscore the importance of coordinated efforts to safeguard public health and promote responsible consumption practices. These findings are summarized as follows :

- Despite limited medical knowledge and varying levels of formal education among the public, it is possible through collective efforts and consistent awareness campaigns to protect individuals from the potentially harmful consequences of improper use of dietary supplements and alternative medicine. This underscores the importance of accessible health communication tailored to diverse audiences.

- New media platforms and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have significantly expanded opportunities for public health and food safety education. Social media, particularly Facebook, has proven to be an effective channel for disseminating health-promoting content and raising awareness about safe consumption practices among broad segments of society.

- Non-profit civil society organizations, such as the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization, can play a pivotal role in protecting public health particularly when supported through adequate financial and institutional resources. With sufficient support, these organizations are well-positioned to act as bridges between expert health knowledge and everyday consumer practices, especially in the face of misleading or dangerous trends in health-related consumption.

These findings highlight the crucial interplay between media, civil society, and health education, and call for strengthening institutional frameworks and digital communication strategies to promote safe and informed consumer behavior in the Algerian context.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the Algerian Consumer Protection Organization, through its official Facebook page, plays a significant and evolving role in raising public awareness about the health risks associated with the use of alternative medicine, particularly herbal remedies and dietary supplements. The organization's communication strategy centered on educational campaigns, informative posts, and targeted messages has helped bridge the gap between expert health knowledge and public understanding in a digital media environment.

The findings revealed a strong consumer demand for accurate, accessible, and contextually relevant health information, especially in light of the widespread circulation of misleading advertisements and unverified health claims. Respondents acknowledged the organization's effectiveness in addressing issues such as product safety, expiration awareness, and the dangers of unsupervised herbal treatment. However, the study also uncovered areas where the organization's outreach could be expanded, particularly regarding the risks of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and the need for clearer communication around side effects and contraindications.

From a media and communication perspective, this research highlights the transformative potential of social media platforms like Facebook in facilitating public health discourse, especially when used by trusted civil society actors. It also underscores the importance of integrating media literacy, participatory engagement, and scientifically grounded content into digital health communication strategies.

Ultimately, this study affirms the role of civil society organizations as key communicators and mediators of public health knowledge, while calling for stronger institutional support and multi-stakeholder collaboration to enhance the reach, reliability, and impact of such efforts in Algeria and similar contexts.

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