Journal of el hikma for philosophical studies
Issn : 2353-0499Eissn :2602-5264
Volume: 14/ N°: 03(2026), p:916-925

The Algerian Child in the Digital Age: Media Use, Socialization, and Behavioral Trends

الطفل الجزائري في العصر الرقمي:

الإستخدام الإعلامي، التنشئة الاجتماعية، والاتجاهات السلوكية

AHMID Louiza[1]
[1]University of Algiers 2 -Abu El Kacem SaadAllah ,Algeria,
Email: louiza.ahmid@univ-alger2.dz
Received: 27/05/2026 Accepted: 02/09/2026 Published:01/10/2026

Abstract:

The increasing exposure of Algerian children to digital media is reshaping their modes of socialization and behavioral patterns. Drawing on national and international surveys (2015–2025), this article examines the psychological and social effects of media content. Findings indicate that excessive and unregulated screen use fosters irritability, attention difficulties, anxiety, and reduced academic performance. Conversely, educational and supervised uses can enhance creativity, learning, and digital skills. The study highlights the crucial role of parental mediation, media education, and sociocultural context in preventing problematic practices. The central challenge lies in fostering a balanced digital culture, where media serve as tools for positive socialization and value transmission.
Keywords: Algerian child, digital media, socialization, behavior, psychological development

ملخص:

إنّ التعرّض المتزايد للأطفال الجزائريين لوسائل الإعلام الرقمية يعيد تشكيل أنماط تنشئتهم الاجتماعية وسلوكياتهم. بالاعتماد على دراسات وطنية ودولية (2015–2025)، يحلّل هذا المقال الآثار النفسية والاجتماعية للمضامين الإعلامية. وتُظهر النتائج أنّ الاستخدام المفرط وغير المنظّم للشاشات يعزّز التهيّج، واضطرابات الانتباه، والقلق، وتراجع الأداء المدرسي. في المقابل، يمكن أن تسهم الاستخدامات التعليمية والموجّهة في تنمية الإبداع، والتعلّم، والمهارات الرقمية. وتؤكّد الدراسة على الدور الحاسم للوساطة الوالدية، والتربية الإعلامية، والسياق الاجتماعي-الثقافي في الوقاية من الممارسات الإشكالية. ويتمثّل التحدّي المركزي في بناء ثقافة رقمية متوازنة، حيث تصبح الوسائط أدوات للتنشئة الإيجابية ونقل القيم.
كلمات مفتاحية: الطفل الجزائري، الإعلام الرقمي، التنشئة الاجتماعية، السلوكيات، النمو النفسي

***Corresponding author**: AHMID Louiza*

1. Introduction

For the past decade, Algerian society has undergone a profound digital transformation, marked by the widespread diffusion of smartphones, the expansion of social networks, and the generalization of audiovisual platforms. From their earliest years, children are now immersed in an omnipresent media environment, whether within the family, at school, or in recreational settings. This growing presence of screens is progressively reshaping modes of

communication, daily practices, and socialization processes, introducing new cultural and behavioral references.

Digital media today constitute a parallel agent of socialization alongside the family and school. They contribute to the transmission of norms, values, and behavioral models, influencing identity construction and children's social conduct. This influence is particularly significant given the child's developmental vulnerability, which heightens exposure to mechanisms of imitation and social learning.

In Algeria, several national and international surveys reveal a concerning increase in screen time among children and adolescents. The national survey conducted in 2025 by the Ministry of Health, involving more than one million middle-school students, showed that a significant proportion engage in what is considered "excessive" use of digital screens, with direct consequences for physical health, emotional regulation, and academic performance. These findings align with international research linking intensive screen use to attentional difficulties, irritability, and certain forms of behavioral dependency.

Within this context, scholars in developmental psychology, educational sciences, and neuroscience are increasingly examining the effects of digital media on children's behavioral patterns, learning processes, and mental health. Analyzing these impacts is essential to understanding how media content shapes socialization and influences the educational and psychosocial trajectories of younger generations.

This article therefore aims to analyze the effects of media content on the socialization and behaviors of Algerian children, drawing on major surveys and studies conducted between 2015 and 2025. The objective is to highlight both the risks associated with excessive and unregulated exposure, and the opportunities offered by educational and supervised digital practices, in order to propose avenues for fostering a balanced and constructive digital culture.

2. Research Problem

This digital transformation, characterized by the early and prolonged exposure of children to screens, raises a central question for research in developmental psychology and educational sciences: *How does the increasing exposure of Algerian children to digital media content influence their processes of socialization and behavioral patterns?*

To what extent can family and educational mediation regulate the effects of growing digitalization on children while promoting constructive uses?

This problem statement connects three major dimensions:

- Psychological risks and academic learning challenges associated with excessive screen use.
- Educational and cultural opportunities offered by supervised content.
- The role of contextual factors (family, school, culture).

3. Methodology

This research adopts an analytical and documentary approach aimed at examining the impact of digital media content on the socialization and behavioral patterns of Algerian children. It relies on the systematic use of several complementary sources:

- National surveys conducted in Algeria between 2015 and 2025, particularly those of the Ministry of Health on digital practices in school settings.
- Institutional reports and official data concerning the diffusion of smartphones and the evolution of digital practices.
- International meta-analyses addressing the effects of screen time on cognitive and socio-emotional development.
- Academic studies from developmental psychology, educational sciences, and media studies.

The data mobilized include:

- The national survey of the Algerian Ministry of Health (2025) on "the harms of digital screens in school settings."
- Research by *Guellai et al. (2022)* on early screen exposure.
- Studies by *Madigan et al. (2020)* on developmental effects of screen time.
- Analyses by *Kardefelt-Winther (2021)* on digital practices and child well-being.
- Recent investigations on smartphone use among Algerian secondary school students **(**Cherif, 2025).

The methodological objective is to provide an integrative reading of Algerian children's media practices by articulating local survey results with international research contributions. This approach highlights the psychological, cognitive, and social consequences of exposure to digital media, while taking into account Algeria's specific sociocultural context.

4. Results

4.1. Increase in Media Exposure among Algerian Children

Over the past decade, Algerian society has undergone a rapid digital transformation, marked by the widespread diffusion of communication technologies and digital media within families. Children and adolescents are among the most exposed groups, due to the growing accessibility of smartphones, tablets, computers, and digital platforms. Screens now occupy a central place in daily routines, both in leisure activities and in educational and relational practices.

Recent surveys confirm a significant increase in screen time. The national survey conducted by the Ministry of Health (2025) on the harms of digital screens in school settings revealed that 32% of middle-school students spend more than three hours per day on screens, and 40% obtain their first smartphone between ages 11 and 13 (Rouabah &

Bousmaha, 2025). This early exposure reflects the increasingly premature integration of digital technologies into young people's lives.

Several factors explain this evolution:

a. **Democratization of smartphones**, now accessible to a large number of households, including rural areas.
b. **Improved Internet access and mobile networks**, enabling continuous consumption.
c. **Expansion of social media platforms** (TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook), which attract youth with short, interactive, and emotionally stimulating content.
d. **Popularity of video and streaming platforms**, often used without parental supervision.
e. **Generalization of digital tools** within families and the educational system, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

This evolution raises several concerns: screens occupy a central role in leisure, often at the expense of physical activity, traditional games, reading, and family interactions. Researchers observe a decline in direct social activities and a modification of daily rhythms (sleep, school habits, family communication).

Thus, the increase in media exposure among Algerian children constitutes a major social reality, requiring in-depth reflection on educational practices, parental mediation, and preventive policies related to digital use.

4.2 Effects of Media on Behavioral Patterns

The growing exposure of Algerian children to digital media raises major concerns in developmental psychology and educational sciences. Recent research shows that intensive and unregulated screen use directly affects emotional regulation, impulsive behaviors, attention, and academic performance.

Modern digital platforms rely on algorithmic systems designed to sustain attention through immediate rewards (notifications, short and stimulating content). For children, whose executive functions and self-regulation capacities are still developing, this constant stimulation can generate behavioral and emotional imbalances.

4.2.1 Irritability and Impulsivity Algerian surveys reveal an increase in irritability and impulsive reactions among children heavily exposed to screens (Rouabah & Bousmaha, 2025). Fast-paced and interactive content strongly engages brain reward mechanisms, fostering:

- Low tolerance to frustration;
- Agitation and hyperactivity;
- Excessive emotional reactions;
- Irritability when digital activities are interrupted;
- Psychological dependence on screens.

Some children use screens as their primary tool for emotional regulation, limiting the acquisition of autonomous strategies for managing emotions. International studies (Sanders et al., 2025) confirm that excessive exposure is associated with anxiety, impulsivity, and behavioral disorders. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) sheds light on these phenomena: children imitate behaviors observed in media content, particularly violent or aggressive ones, increasing the risk of behavioral reproduction.

4.2.2 Attention and Academic Difficulties

Prolonged screen exposure also affects cognitive abilities and school performance. The Algerian national survey (Rouabah & Bousmaha, 2025) shows that excessive smartphone use contributes to declining academic achievement due to:

- Reduced time devoted to homework and reading;
- Disrupted sleep rhythms;
- Cognitive fatigue linked to information overload;
- Digital multitasking;
- Decreased sustained attention.

Children exposed to fragmented content develop attentional habits characterized by dispersion and constant search for stimulation. Sleep disorders, exacerbated by blue light from screens, worsen daytime fatigue and cognitive decline.

International findings (Madigan et al., 2020) confirm that high screen time is associated with weaker performance in communication, language, and problem-solving. However, researchers emphasize that effects are not uniform: interactive educational content can foster learning when integrated into a structured pedagogical framework.

Behavioral and attentional difficulties linked to digital media depend not only on exposure time but also on content type, family habits, and the level of educational regulation. Media can be aggravating factors when they replace real social interactions, but they can also become tools for learning and creativity when used in a supervised and reflective context.

4.3 Media and Socialization Processes

Digital media today occupy a central place in the socialization processes of children and adolescents. Traditionally, the family, school, and peer groups were the primary agents of transmitting norms, values, and behaviors. However, with the development of digital technologies and social networks, media have become major actors in shaping the social and identity representations of younger generations.

In Algeria, the growing use of smartphones, video platforms, and social networks has profoundly altered communication modes and cultural practices among children and adolescents. Digital platforms provide diverse content that directly influences behaviors, preferences, attitudes, and social aspirations. Young users are daily exposed to globalized

cultural models conveyed through digital media, contributing to the gradual transformation of traditional social references.

Digital media particularly influence:

- Clothing styles;
- Social behaviors;
- Consumption habits;
- Representations of success;
- Relational norms;
- Communication modes
- Body image and self-representation.

Social networks facilitate the rapid diffusion of cultural and behavioral trends that become significant references among adolescents. Content produced by influencers, celebrities, or creators often exerts strong influence on consumption behaviors, lifestyles, and identity representations. For some Algerian adolescents, digital influencers are gradually becoming more influential figures of identification than certain traditional educational authorities. Young people sometimes attribute greater credibility to content shared on TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube than to family or school discourses. This situation transforms classical mechanisms of socialization by introducing new forms of social learning based on media imitation.

According to Bandura's social learning theory (1977), children acquire much of their behavior through observation and imitation of models present in their environment. Digital media now provide a multitude of behavioral models to which children are exposed daily. When these models valorize excessive consumption, symbolic violence, hyper-emphasis on physical appearance, or impulsive behaviors, they may negatively influence certain social conduct.

Moreover, social networks sometimes foster mechanisms of social comparison that can affect adolescents' self-esteem and psychological well-being. Young people may experience significant pressure related to image, digital popularity, or the need for social validation through "likes" and comments. Twenge and Campbell (2018) highlight that intensive social media use is associated, for some adolescents, with increased symptoms of anxiety, psychological distress, and feelings of social isolation.

Nevertheless, the effects of digital media are not exclusively negative. Several studies show that media can also serve as tools promoting:

- Cultural openness;
- Access to information;
- Digital learning;
- Development of technological skills;

- Certain forms of creativity;
- Communication and remote collaboration.

Educational platforms, popularized scientific content, and interactive applications can contribute to children's cognitive and cultural development when used within a structured framework. Digital media also enable young people to access diverse educational resources and develop essential skills for contemporary societies.

Thus, digital media contribute to a complex and ambivalent process of socialization. Their influence largely depends on the type of content consumed, the child's level of psychological maturity, the family context, and the quality of educational guidance.

4.4 The Essential Role of the Family Context

Given the pervasive presence of digital media in children's daily lives, the family context emerges as a decisive factor in regulating usage and preventing the negative effects of screen exposure. Research in developmental psychology shows that the quality of parental mediation strongly influences the impact of media on children's behavior, emotions, and learning (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

In Algeria, several surveys highlight that many children use smartphones and social networks without sufficient supervision, particularly in families where parents have limited digital literacy or little time to accompany their children (Rouabah & Bousmaha, 2025). This situation leads to early exposure to inappropriate content and excessive use.

Parental mediation is considered an essential protective factor. Families that establish coherent educational rules significantly reduce the negative effects of screens. This mediation involves:

- Limiting screen time;
- Selecting age-appropriate content;
- Accompanying digital activities;
- Family discussions around media content;
- Encouraging social, cultural, and sports activities;
- Regulating smartphone use before sleep.

Children benefiting from balanced parental supervision generally develop a healthier relationship with digital technologies. Co-viewing and family discussions around content strengthen social interactions and contextualize media messages (Nathanson, 1999). Parents thus help children distinguish educational from problematic content, understand advertising strategies, and develop responsible digital behaviors.

Moreover, parents' own digital habits directly influence those of their children. Young people often reproduce technological practices observed in their family environment. When parents frequently use smartphones during family interactions, children tend to normalize these behaviors (Lauricella et al., 2015).

This reality highlights the need to raise awareness not only among children but also among parents regarding the psychological and educational challenges of digital use. Preventive programs must integrate the family as a central actor in media education and the development of a balanced digital culture. According to Kardefelt-Winther (2021), the negative effects of screen time decrease significantly when digital practices are framed by positive family relationships, appropriate supervision, and alternative activities that foster socio-emotional development.

Thus, the family context plays a fundamental role in transforming digital media into constructive educational tools rather than psychological or behavioral risk factors.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the multidimensional and ambivalent nature of digital media effects on child development. Screen use cannot be reduced to a strictly pathological or beneficial logic; rather, it must be understood within an interactional perspective where content quality, exposure duration, and usage context play decisive roles. On one hand, unsupervised screen use and prolonged digital engagement are associated with attentional, emotional, and academic difficulties, as well as disruptions in sleep and behavioral regulation (Christakis, 2019; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). On the other hand, digital practices oriented toward educational, interactive, and adult-mediated content can support cognitive development, creativity, and cultural openness in children (Rideout & Robb, 2020; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). This duality highlights the need to move beyond alarmist approaches toward a contextualized and developmental perspective on digital practices.

From a practical standpoint, strengthening media education from early childhood appears essential. Integrating digital literacy modules into school curricula would foster critical thinking, information management, and emotional regulation skills in relation to digital content (Buckingham, 2015). Parental mediation remains a central lever: establishing structured rules regarding screen time, content selection, device use before sleep, and co-viewing practices promotes more conscious and regulated media use (Nikken & Schols, 2015). Likewise, schools are called to play an active role by training teachers to detect problematic practices and to provide pedagogical support for digital tools. Promoting alternative activities such as sports, reading, or direct social interactions also remains crucial for balanced socio-emotional development.

At the policy and institutional level, the literature emphasizes the importance of public awareness campaigns on screen-related risks and the promotion of culturally adapted educational content. National prevention programs can contribute to establishing a responsible digital culture by involving families, schools, and community associations (OECD, 2019). Strengthening the regulation of child-oriented content, in collaboration with digital platforms, is also necessary to ensure a safe digital environment. Investment in the production of local educational content, in both national and foreign languages, represents a strategic priority to reduce dependence on globalized content and reinforce cultural anchoring.

Finally, from a prospective perspective, the major challenge for contemporary societies particularly in the Algerian context lies in building a balanced and educational digital culture. Such a culture should transform digital media into tools of positive socialization, learning, and value transmission, rather than developmental risk factors. This vision calls for coherent coordination among family, school, and political institutions to foster collective regulation of digital practices and maximize their educational and social benefits.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of national and international surveys conducted between 2015 and 2025 demonstrates that Algerian children now evolve within a rapidly expanding digital ecosystem, characterized by early and widespread access to screens and intensified daily exposure. This dynamic, embedded in a global movement of digitalization, takes specific forms in Algeria due to inequalities of access, differentiated family practices, and the relative insufficiency of structured mechanisms for regulation and media education.

The results underscore the ambivalence of digital effects on child development. Intensive screen exposure and unstructured media practices are associated with emotional difficulties (irritability, regulatory disorders), cognitive challenges (fragmented attention, reduced concentration), and academic decline. In certain cases, problematic digital consumption may resemble forms of behavioral dependency. However, when supervised and oriented toward educational purposes, digital technologies constitute constructive resources that foster creativity, cultural openness, and the acquisition of cognitive and social skills.

Within this perspective, the family and school contexts play a central role. Active and dialogical parental mediation, together with the gradual integration of media education into school curricula, emerge as essential levers for transforming screens into tools of positive socialization and balanced development.

At the institutional level, the study highlights the need for a coherent and multidimensional national strategy. This should include:

a) Awareness campaigns targeting parents, teachers, and children
b) Mechanisms for regulating content accessible to minors
c) Promotion of locally produced digital educational resources adapted to the Algerian context

Ultimately, the central issue does not lie in opposing the positive and negative effects of technology, but in the capacity of educational, familial, and institutional actors to construct a balanced digital culture. Such a culture would maximize the educational and social benefits of digital tools while limiting their detrimental effects on children's psychological, cognitive, and social development.

7. Bibliography List :

– Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.

– Buckingham, D. (2015). *The media education manifesto*. Polity Press.

– Cherif, K. M. (2025). Temporal patterns and educational use of smartphones among Algerian secondary learners. *Educational Technology Quarterly, 2025*(3), 291–307.

– Christakis, D. A. (2019). The challenges of defining and studying "screen time". *JAMA Pediatrics, 173*(3), 299–300. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2018.5488.

– Guellai, B., Somogyi, E., Esseily, R., & Chopin, A. (2022). Early exposure to screens and its impact on language development. *Infant Behavior and Development, 66*, 101678. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2022.101678.

– Kardefelt-Winther, D. (2021). *How does the time children spend using digital technology impact their mental well-being, social relationships and physical activity?* UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

– Lauricella, A. R., Wartella, E., & Rideout, V. J. (2015). Young children's screen time: The complex role of parent and child factors. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 36*, 11–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2014.12.001.

– Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2008). Parental mediation of children's internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 52*(4), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150802437396.

– Madigan, S., Browne, D., Racine, N., Mori, C., & Tough, S. (2020). Association between screen time and children's performance on a developmental screening test. *JAMA Pediatrics, 174*(3), 250–257. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.4206.

– Nathanson, A. I. (1999). Identifying and explaining the relationship between parental mediation and children's aggression. *Communication Research, 26*(2), 124–143. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365099026002002.

– Nikken, P., & Schols, M. (2015). How and why parents guide the media use of young children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 24*(11), 3423–3435. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0144-4.

– OECD. (2019). *Digital education outlook 2019: Developing digital literacy skills*. OECD Publishing.

– Rideout, V., & Robb, M. B. (2020). *The Common Sense census: Media use by kids age zero to eight*. Common Sense Media.

– Rouabah, H., & Bousmaha, F. (2025). *Enquête nationale sur les méfaits des écrans numériques en milieu scolaire*. Ministère de la Santé, Algérie.

– Sanders, T., Parker, P., & O'Connor, M. (2025). Screen time and socioemotional outcomes in children: A longitudinal study. *Child Development, 96*(2), 455–472.

– Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study. *Preventive Medicine Reports, 12*, 271–283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2018.10.003.