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Digital Burnout and Motivations for Temporary Disconnection from Social Media Platforms: A Survey Study on a Sample of Social Media Users in the City of Laghouat

الإنهاك الرقمي ودوافع الانفصال المؤقت عن منصات التواصل الاجتماعي: دراسة مسحية على عينة من مستخدمي مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي في مدينة الأغواط

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Summary:

This study aims to monitor the phenomenon of digital burnout resulting from the intensive use of social media platforms, and to identify the motivations for temporary disconnection as a psychological and behavioral coping mechanism, The significance of the research stems from shedding light on the negative aspects of digital citizenship within local Algerian environments. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach using the survey method, and an electronic questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of (200) social media users in the city of Laghouat.

The findings revealed high levels of cognitive and social digital burnout among the respondents due to "communication overload." Additionally, the results showed that the most prominent motivations for temporary disconnection are linked to the desire to restore psychological balance, protect privacy, and rebuild real-life social relationships within the conservative local community of the city of Laghouat, with statistically significant differences attributed to the variables of gender and age.

Keywords: Digital Burnout, Temporary Disconnection, Social Media Platforms, Laghouat City, Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) Model.

ملخص:

تستهدف هذه الدراسة رصد ظاهرة الإنهاك الرقمي الناتج عن الاستخدام الكثيف لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي، وتحديد دوافع الانفصال المؤقت كآلية تكيف نفسية وسلوكية. تنبع أهمية البحث من تسليط الضوء على الجوانب السلبية للمواطنة الرقمية في البيئات المحلية الجزائريّة. واعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي بأسلوب المسح، وتم تطبيق استبيان إلكتروني على عينة قصدية من مستخدمي منصات التواصل الاجتماعي في مدينة الأغواط قوامها (200) مفردة.

خلصت النتائج إلى وجود مستويات مرتفعة من الإنهاك الرقمي المعرفي والاجتماعي لدى المبحوثين بسبب "العبء الاتصالي الزائد"، كما أظهرت أن أبرز دوافع الانفصال المؤقت ترتبط بالرغبة في استعادة التوازن النفسي، وحماية الخصوصية، وإعادة بناء العلاقات الاجتماعية الواقعية في المجتمع المحلي المحافظ لمدينة الأغواط، مع وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية تعزى لمتغيري الجنس والعمر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنهاك الرقمي؛ الانفصال المؤقت؛ منصات التواصل الاجتماعي؛ مدينة الأغواط؛ نموذج الضغط–الإجهاد–المخرجات(SSO) .

Introduction:

The contemporary communication landscape's continuous, unrestricted flow of information has fostered an "Always-On" culture that exposes users to severe information overload and unrelenting social demands, culminating in digital burnout. In response to this cognitive and emotional strain, users increasingly adopt "self-disconnection" a voluntary, temporary withdrawal from virtual platforms designed to recover psychological equilibrium.

This dynamic is particularly pronounced in conservative local contexts, such as the city of Laghouat, Algeria, where individuals experience an implicit tension between global virtual integration and the preservation of traditional, real-life social and family cohesion. Focusing on a sample of social network users in Laghouat, this study explores the dimensions of digital burnout and examines the psychological, social, and contextual drivers behind temporary digital migration, utilizing contemporary theoretical and methodological frameworks of digital disengagement.

First: The Research Problem and Sub-Questions:

The "Always-On" social media landscape triggers digital burnout from information overload, prompting users to seek "self-disconnection" to restore balance. In Laghouat, Algeria, users navigate a conflict between virtual global integration and traditional real-world kinship, highlighting a critical gap in Arab and regional research on the darker impacts of digital technology. Based on the foregoing, we formulate the following research problem:

To what extent does digital burnout contribute to directing the motivations for temporary disconnection from social media platforms among users in the city of Laghouat?

Accordingly, the problem of the study crystallizes in the following main question:

1. What are the conceptual foundations and dimensions (cognitive, psychological, social) of digital burnout?
2. How does cognitive-behavioral theory explain the shift from digital burnout to voluntary disconnection (digital detox)?
3. What are the vital and psychological impacts of "doomscrolling" and FOMO on self-stability?
4. How does contemporary sociology view the impact of fluid virtual flow on social overload and compassion fatigue in conservative communities?
5. What are the levels of digital burnout in Laghouat, and how do its dimensions drive temporary disconnection?

Second: Significance of the Study:

1. Diagnostic Utility: Offers a diagnostic tool to measure tech-induced stress in Algerian digital mental health.

2. Sociological Database: Provides empirical data on digital overload versus traditional family ties in Laghouat.

3. Policy Formulation: Helps decision-makers design protective policies against digital alienation.

4. Educational Framework: Builds media literacy curricula to teach digital well-being and voluntary disconnection.

Third: Objectives of the Study:

1. To measure the multidimensional levels of digital burnout among platform users in the city of Laghouat.
2. To rank the motivations behind temporary disconnection (digital detox) based on user priority.

3. To determine the correlational relationship between the intensity of digital burnout and the tendency toward disengagement behavior.
4. To monitor individual differences in digital burnout and disconnection trends based on demographic variables.

Fourth: Previous Studies:

1. Tandon, Kaur, Dhir, & Mäntymäki (2020): Utilizing the Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model, this study determined that social and informational overload generates platform stress. Notably, social overload was identified as the strongest predictor of psychological burnout, directly triggering the intent to disconnect and use digital diet applications[1].

2. Zhang, Shen, & Zhao (2021): This study focused on cognitive digital burnout caused by algorithmic feeds (e.g., TikTok, Instagram). It demonstrated that continuous feed features decline academic and professional focus, forcing users to temporarily disconnect to regain mental agency[2].

3. Al-Kandari (2022): Focused on the Gulf region, this Arabic study revealed that online social obligations conflict with actual family duties, leading to digital burnout. This pressure drives users (particularly females) to temporary digital disappearance for psychological relief[3].

4. Added Value of This Study:

a. Localization of Global Theoretical Models: It tests the applicability of the Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model within an Algerian demographic that simultaneously values traditional authenticity and rapid digitalization.

b. Deconstructing Platform Pressure and Values: Unlike Zhang's purely cognitive focus, this study investigates "social burnout" stemming from the friction between demanding global virtual networks and a conservative local community (Laghouat) requiring physical presence.

c. Providing Local Empirical Indicators: It transitions research away from imported theories by introducing localized statistical data and analytical tables specific to the Algerian citizen.

Fifth: Methodology:

This study utilizes a **descriptive-analytical approach** using the **survey method**. This is the most appropriate methodology to quantitatively and qualitatively describe, analyze, and explain digital burnout and disconnection behaviors among a representative sample of Laghouat's population.

Sixth: Methodological Procedures of the Empirical Study:

1. Study Population: Targets active social media users residing in Laghouat, defined statistically as an infinite population due to missing official user registries.

2. Sampling Method and Justification: Uses a non-probability, purposive sample of 200 socio-demographically balanced individuals, justified by: **a. Targeted Experience:** Ensuring respondents have sufficient platform exposure to evaluate psychological strain. **b. Lack of Sampling Frame:** Bypassing the lack of an official local user database. **c. Sociological Variance:** Including diverse subgroups (students, employees, unemployed) to capture varied environmental influences.

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[1] - Tandon, A., Kaur, P., Dhir, A., & Mäntymäki, M. Seeking relief from social media fatigue: A study on the antecedents and outcomes of social media discontinuance intentions, Information Technology & People, Vol. 34(4), 2020, P.P 1141-1165.

[2] - Zhang, S., Shen, Y., & Zhao, L. Algorithms and cognitive exhaustion: Investigating the continuous scrolling feature on TikTok and its impact on academic concentration and digital disconnection strategies, Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 124, 2021, 106927.

[3] - Yaqoub Yousuf Al-Kandari, Social Media Fatigue and its Impact on Family Relations and Psychological Comfort in Kuwaiti Society, Arab Journal for the Humanities, Kuwait University, Vol. 40(158), 2022, P.P 89-123.

3. Study Tools: Employs an online questionnaire, selected for: **a. Behavioral Alignment:** Accessing target users within their natural online environment. **b. Confidentiality and Objectivity:** Ensuring candid reporting of psychological burnout. **c. Logistical Efficiency:** Reducing data collection costs, time, and geographical limits.

4. Structure of the Tool's Axes: Structured into three core sections: **a. First Axis:** Collects demographic profiles and digital usage habits. **b. Second Axis (Adapted Digital Burnout Scale):** Measures cognitive, social, and psychological burnout via a 5-point Likert scale tailored to the Algerian context. **c. Third Axis (Temporary Disconnection Motivations Scale):** Evaluates psychological, social, and professional drivers of digital disengagement.

5. Method and Stages of Execution: Executed in four distinct phases: **a. Design and Face Validity:** Validated by faculty experts at Amar Telidji University. **b. Pilot Study and Reliability:** Pre-tested on 25 users, achieving high reliability (Cronbach's α=0.87). **c. Field Application:** Distributed via digital snowball sampling to secure 200 complete responses over three weeks.

d. Data Processing: Analyzed through SPSS using descriptive and inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA, multiple regression).

1. Conceptual Foundations and Structural Dimensions Defining the Phenomenon of Digital Burnout in Contemporary Psycho-Sociological Studies:

1.1 Conceptual Foundations of Digital Burnout:

Digital burnout stems from an immersive relationship with virtual spaces that restructures consciousness, subjecting the nervous system to continuous trauma due to the human inability to adapt to the infinite speeds of cyber environments. Conceptually, establishing this diagnostic framework differentiates digital burnout from conventional stress, defining it as an independent phenomenon unique to the "hyper-communication society" and driven by implicit technological imperatives.

1.1.1 Terminological and Academic Definition of the Concept:

The scientific definition of digital burnout is: a chronic vital, psychological, and cognitive impairment syndrome, empirically reflected through three main indicators: attention deficit and working memory impairment (the cognitive dimension), the growth of the fear of missing out and emotional decline (the psychological dimension), and tactical withdrawal from real-life relationships due to social overload (the social dimension)[4].

This syndrome transcends the boundaries of physical fatigue to reach a stage of structural depletion of psychological and cognitive energy, where the user finds themselves in a state of continuous inability to process the intensive digital inputs imposed by platforms. This terminological definition reflects the radical change in the nature of modern psychosomatic disorders, as digital burnout is classified as a direct product of technological alienation that separates the individual from their natural biological rhythm and subjects them to the laws of algorithms.

1.1.2 Conceptual Distinction Between Traditional and Digital Burnout:

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[4] - Meier, A., & Reinecke, L. Computer-mediated communication, social media, and mental health: A conceptual and empirical review, Media and Communication, Vol. 9(2), 2021, P.P 361-377.

The fundamental difference between traditional burnout and digital burnout lies in the geographical and temporal space of both phenomena. The former is governed by the physical work environment and has temporal and spatial boundaries that end with the conclusion of working hours, allowing the nervous system periods of time for recovery and restoring balance. Digital burnout, however, is characterized by "cross-domain permeability," where interactive screens eliminate any boundaries between the professional, personal, and family spaces, exploiting the permanent presence of smartphones[5].

This distinction can be tangibly observed through monitoring the "absence of recovery sanctuaries" for the user; digital tools pursue the individual into the finest details of their daily life and deprive them of the positive solitude necessary for self-restoration. This continuous forced connection leads to the erosion of the protective barriers of the human psyche, making digital burnout more dangerous and pervasive within the individual's emotional identity compared to traditional occupational burnout.

1.2 Structural Dimensions of Digital Burnout:

The structural dimensions of digital burnout constitute the analytical framework that allows for deconstructing the phenomenon into observable and measurable elements in the field. These are interrelated dimensions that influence each other in a circular and escalating manner. Understanding this structure requires a holistic view that does not isolate the individual from their technological context, but rather studies how cognitive pressure on the screen translates into emotional disturbance within the self, ultimately manifesting as a relational defect within the real-world community.

Through monitoring these dimensions, psycho-sociological studies seek to draw an anatomical map of digital pathology, enabling the researcher to precisely identify risk areas and explain the compensatory behaviors resorted to by users. These dimensions are not merely theoretical classifications, but rather living channels through which digital burnout flows to reshape daily human behavior in its entirety and details.

1.2.1 The Cognitive and Perceptual Dimension:

This dimension is linked to mental processing mechanisms and expresses the state of "cognitive blockage" that afflicts the human mind when colliding with big and high-speed data. The working memory, given its limited capacity, is subjected to a continuous informational bombardment that breaches its capacity for absorption, leading to paralysis in the ability for temporary storage and critical analysis, and shifting the prefrontal cortex from producing conscious thoughts to merely moxious, automated reactions.

This dimension manifests in daily behavioral outcomes through the decline of sustained concentration levels and the appearance of the "attention residue" syndrome resulting from rapid switching between windows and contents (such as short videos)[6] , In this state, the user turns into a passive consumer who loses the ability to make simple daily decisions and suffers from a chronic state of mental distraction that hinders any deep intellectual activity outside the scope of the screen.

1.2.2 The Psychological and Emotional Dimension:

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[5] - Vanden Abeele, M. M. Digital well-being as a dynamic construct, Communication Theory, Vol. 31(4), 2021, P.P 932-955.

[6]- Leroy, S. Why is it so hard to do my work? The challenge of attention residue when switching between tasks, Organization Science, Vol. 20(2), 2009, P.P 168-181.

This dimension affects the emotional structure of the user and measures the degree of internal erosion and emotional stability resulting from interaction with virtual environments trapped in comparisons. Platforms are architecturally engineered to showcase idealized and curated versions of others' lives, plunging the individual into the trap of upward, unequal social comparison, draining their satisfaction with themselves and their real life, and generating feelings of inferiority and acute emotional alienation[7].

This dimension manifests in the field work through monitoring the levels of "silent digital depression," the continuous feeling of failure, and the constant necessity to falsify virtual identity to satisfy followers. The user lives under continuous psychological pressure to maintain an acceptable digital image, creating a sharp rift between their real self and virtual self, which ultimately translates into chronic anxiety and episodes of emotional distress with no realistically justified source.

1.2.3 The Social and Relational Dimension:

This dimension expresses the structural changes that occur within an individual's network of relationships, where deep organic ties are replaced by vast, superficial virtual networks that consume the individual's human energy. The culture of platforms imposes unwritten behavioral rules and obligations requiring permanent presence and interaction with hundreds of "virtual friends," creating a hyper-social overload that exceeds the natural carrying capacity of human relationships[8].

This relational deterioration can be measured by the rates of the user's gradual withdrawal from real-life family and kinship activities, and the appearance of "social isolation within the same house." As a result of this dimension, the individual transforms from an active member of their local community into merely a dry communication node within a virtual network, weakening actual social cohesion and increasing the severity of sociological alienation within their real environment.

2. Explanation of the Behavioral and Cognitive Theoretical Approach to the Mechanisms of Digital Burnout Transforming into a Behavioral Motivation for Adopting Voluntary Disconnection Strategies (Digital Detox):

2.1 The Behavioral Theoretical Approach:

The behavioral approach posits that screen interactions are governed by operant conditioning, where users respond to digital rewards and punishments. When platform stimuli transition from sources of pleasure into sources of pain and cognitive fatigue, biological coping mechanisms naturally drive users to alter their behavior and reduce engagement[9].

This approach explains the "abrupt behavioral rupture" with platforms, demonstrating how entrenched digital habits collapse under physical and psychological fatigue. From a behavioral

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[7]- Krasnova, H., Wenninger, H., Widjaja, T., & Buxmann, P. Envy on Facebook: A hidden threat to users' life satisfaction?, Wirtschaftsinformatik, Vol. 92, 2013, P.P 87-101.

[8] - Maier, C., Laumer, S., Weinert, C., & Weitzel, T. The changing role of IT users: An empirical investigation of social overload as an antecedent of IT-misuse, Journal of Information Technology, Vol. 30(1), 2015, P.P 53-67.

[9] - Hou, Y., Xiong, D., Jiang, T., Song, L., & Wang, Q. Social media addiction: Its impact, mediation, and intervention, Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, Vol. 13(1), Article 4, 2019, p. 5.

perspective, voluntary disconnection is a rational response to a changing stimulus environment, where avoiding screens becomes a new conditioned behavior to escape harm and regain comfort.

2.1.1 Mechanism of Satiation and Aversion:

Platforms rely on variable reinforcement schedules to keep the user in a state of constant anticipation for rewards (such as likes and notifications). However, according to the laws of behavior, hyper-exposure and continuous exposure to the same reinforcers bring the brain to a state of "over-satiation," where alerts lose their luster and pleasure-inducing effect, transforming gradually in the user's consciousness into sources of annoyance and continuous nervous pressure—a phenomenon known in behavioral psychology as the transformation of a stimulus into an "aversive stimulus"[10].

This mechanism translates behaviorally into the form of flight or voluntary avoidance, where turning off the phone or deleting applications becomes the only behavior capable of stopping the flow of psychological and physical pain resulting from the aversive stimulus. The decision for a digital detox transforms here from a mere recreational desire into an instinctive defensive response generated by the nervous system to sever connection with the source of stress and restore lost physiological balance.

2.1.2 Behavioral Extinction as a Protective Mechanism:

Behavioral extinction occurs when expected rewards cease to satisfy the psychological desires of the user, leading to a gradual decline in the strength of the addictive behavior until it fades away. The digitally exhausted user reaches a behavioral conviction that the effort exerted in browsing and interacting is not met with a real emotional or cognitive return, but rather with depletion and a continuous headache, which weakens the urge to open applications and enters the behavior into a phase of extinction[11].

In this context, digital disconnection is activated as a "negative reinforcement" mechanism. Negative reinforcement in psychology means strengthening a behavior (the disconnection behavior) by removing the painful stimulus (platforms and their notifications). Digital detox becomes a conscious protective mechanism, where the brain learns that the act of "distancing and disengaging" is followed by an immediate gain of calmness, comfort, and the elimination of pressures, consolidating the disconnection strategy as a recurrent behavioral option whenever burnout indicators rise.

2.2 The Cognitive Theoretical Approach:

The cognitive approach views humans as an active structure for information processing, where they are not affected by external stimuli automatically, but rather based on the way they perceive, interpret, and evaluate these stimuli. This perspective focuses on internal mental processes such as thinking, evaluation, and problem-solving, explaining digital disconnection as a rational decision resulting from the user's awareness of the cognitive defect they suffer from, and their desire to reorganize their cognitive schemas and protect their mental faculties from collapse[12].

The cognitive perspective provides tools to understand "reflective vigilance" within the user, studying how the individual analyzes the magnitude of temporal and intellectual losses resulting from excessive use. This framework allows us to understand digital detox as a meta-strategy for

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[10] - Skinner, B. F., Science and human behavior, Macmillan, 1953, p. 191.
[11] - Hou, Xiong, Jiang, Song, & Wang, The same reference, p. 6.
[12] - Neisser, U., Cognitive psychology, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967, p. 4.

self-management aimed at reclaiming control over attention and rebuilding the mental space away from continuous algorithmic noise.

2.2.1 Lazarus's Cognitive Appraisal Theory:

This theory states that confronting any psychological stress passes through two stages of mental appraisal that determine the nature of the response. In the primary appraisal, the user suddenly realizes that endless digital consumption is no longer mere entertainment, but has turned into a real threat targeting their physical health, psychological stability, and professional or academic future, generating an internal motivation for change[13].

In the secondary appraisal, the user inventories their available skills and resources to control this threat; here, "voluntary disconnection" emerges as a conscious, problem-focused coping strategy. This appraisal is reflected in taking strict executive steps (such as scheduling hours to turn off the phone or announcing a temporary absence) aimed at protecting consciousness and reclaiming intellectual control over the course of real life.

2.2.2 Cognitive Dissonance Model:

This model is based on the hypothesis that humans experience a state of acute psychological discomfort when a conflict arises between their beliefs and existential values and their actual behaviors. The user suffers from "cognitive dissonance" when they realize for instance that the values of academic success, or maintaining live family ties, clash glaringly with their actual behavior represented by wasting long hours in subconscious scrolling behind screens[14].

To resolve this dissonance and restore internal consistency and psychological comfort, the user finds themselves with two options: either changing their values or changing their behavior. Here, the decision for temporary disconnection comes as a responsible corrective step to end the dissonance. In this context, digital detox represents a rational mechanism for rearranging priorities, where the user sacrifices temporary virtual pleasure in order to maintain self-respect and achieve real goals firmly established within their cognitive and value structure.

3. The Nature of the Vital and Psychological Repercussions of the "Doomscrolling Syndrome" and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on the User's Self-Stability:

3.1 Repercussions of the Doomscrolling Syndrome:

The infinite scroll feature is a deliberate technological mechanism designed to eliminate natural perceptual stopping cues, locking consciousness in an uninterrupted cognitive flow. By erasing temporal and spatial boundaries, it forces the brain to process a continuous data stream without rest, eroding voluntary attention and trapping the user in a cycle of compulsive consumption.

Behaviorally, this mechanism strips users of intellectual sovereignty and executive control, transforming browsing into an automated reflex. By distorting time perception and creating a gap between actual and perceived usage, infinite scroll diminishes daily life quality and fosters chronic physical and psychological impairment.

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[13] - Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S., Stress, appraisal, and coping, Springer Publishing Company, 1984, p. 31.
[14] - Festinger, L., A theory of cognitive dissonance, Stanford University Press, 1957, p. 3.

3.1.1 Vital and Biological Repercussions:

Prolonged screen exposure negatively impacts physiological health through circadian disruption and musculoskeletal strain. Chronobiologically, short-wave blue light targets retinal receptors, signaling daytime to the suprachiasmatic nucleus and suppressing melatonin secretion. This hormonal disruption causes acute insomnia and compromises deep and REM sleep vital phases for memory consolidation and neuro-cellular repair resulting in chronic fatigue and mental sluggishness[15].

Physically, continuous viewing reduces the spontaneous blink rate by up to half, accelerating tear film evaporation and causing corneal dryness and digital eye strain. Concurrently, downward head angles induce "Text Neck" syndrome, multiplying mechanical loads on the cervical spine and surrounding musculature. This posture manifests clinically as tension headaches and chronic spinal muscle spasms, degrading overall physical well-being[16].

3.1.2 Psychological and Cognitive Repercussions:

The cognitive impact of fast-paced digital media manifests primarily through the erosion of attentional capacity and the loss of intellectual agency. Rapid transitions between short videos and posts alter neural pathways by conditioning the brain to seek immediate dopamine rewards. This neural adaptation impairs sustained focus and lowers tolerance for cognitive boredom, making complex tasks such as reading or prolonged research difficult to maintain[17].

Simultaneously, algorithm-driven media consumption diminishes voluntary control over awareness and time management, inducing compulsive browsing behaviors. This inability to regulate engagement triggers significant psychological distress characterized by guilt, regret, and frustration over unfulfilled goals which ultimately contributes to alienated behavior and heightened anxiety.

3.2 Repercussions of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is an acute psychological phenomenon characterized by the obsessive dread of social exclusion or missing documented experiences. Constant connectivity fosters the belief that social worth depends on remaining continuously informed, transforming smartphones into psychological shackles that sustain perpetual arousal.

This anxiety undermines emotional stability by tying mood to uncontrollable external factors, such as notifications and engagement metrics. Consequently, users experience extreme psychological fragility, fluctuating between brief euphoria from digital validation and acute distress during disengagement or lack of online reinforcement.

3.2.1 Vital and Biological Repercussions - Hypervigilance and Arousal of the Nervous System:

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) keeps the sympathetic nervous system in a state of permanent alertness to anticipate notifications. This chronic stimulation of the HPA axis leads to a

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[15] - Chang, A. M., Aeschbach, D., Duffy, J. F., & Czeisler, C. A. Evening use of light-emitting eReaders negatively affects sleep, circadian timing, and next-morning alertness, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol. 112(4), 2015, P 367.

[16] - Hansraj, K. K. Assessment of stresses in the cervical spine caused by posture and position of the head, Surgical Technology International, Vol. 25, 2014, P.P 278-279.

[17] - Ward, A. F., Duke, K., Gneezy, A., & Bos, M. W. Brain drain: The mere presence of one's own smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity, Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, Vol. 2(2), 2017, p. 142.

continuous flow of adrenaline and cortisol, causing rapid heart rate, elevated arterial blood pressure, and general physical exhaustion.

Hypervigilance manifests biologically as psychological anticipation transforms into a chronic physiological response, where the brain interprets unmonitored digital updates as threats to social integration. This triggers the sympathetic nervous system into a persistent "fight-or-flight" state, preventing relaxation even during periods of rest[18].

This ongoing neural activation stimulates the HPA axis, flooding the body with excess cortisol and adrenaline. The resulting hormonal imbalance elevates blood pressure and heart rate while depleting glycogen stores, translating into physical burnout, respiratory discomfort, and long-term immune system impairment.

3.2.2 Psychological Repercussions on Self-Stability - Emotional Fragility and Mood Swings:

Emotional stability becomes tied to "narcissistic digital recognition" via "affective dependency on the algorithm," where users rely on instant social media feedback to validate self-worth. The lack of expected engagement is processed by the brain as social exclusion, activating pain pathways that trigger irritability, sudden anger, and acute mood swings during everyday interactions[19].

This dynamic degrades self-esteem by tethering personal value to fluctuating engagement metrics rather than tangible achievements. Without internal benchmarks, users suffer heightened attachment anxiety, chronic feelings of inferiority when comparing their lives to curated online images, and severe emotional instability.

4. Contemporary Sociology's Approach to the Impact of Fluid Virtual Flow in Causing Social Overload and Compassion Fatigue Within Local and Conservative Communities:

4.1 The Framework of Liquid Modernity and Fluid Virtual Flow:

The framework of liquid modernity serves as the primary intellectual reference for understanding contemporary networked communication, where fluid virtual spaces dissolve stable spatial, temporal, and cultural boundaries. This unrestricted flow loosens traditional social tissues by promoting transient, superficial digital relationships over deep, organic community ties.

Consequently, local communities struggle to maintain internal cohesion against a sweeping communicative current that standardizes human behavior. Ultimately, this structural shift subjects social interaction to the logic of digital consumption, fostering deep-seated value contradictions and structural conflicts within societies.

4.1.1 Infringement of Stable Social Structures:

Contemporary sociology (particularly the theses of Zygmunt Bauman) views the virtual space as a "liquid" environment that eliminates geographical distances and moral and temporal barriers.

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[18] - Tams, S., Ahuja, M., Thatcher, J., & Barki, H. Framing technostress in an age of omnipresent technology: Cyber-ostracism, social media overload, and physiology, MIS Quarterly, Vol. 42(1), 2018, p. 308.

[19] - Sherman, L. E., Payton, A. A., Hernandez, L. M., Greenfield, P. M., & Dapretto, M. The power of the “Like” in adolescence: Effects of peer influence on neural and behavioral responses to social media, Psychological Science, Vol. 27(7), 2016, P.P 1027-1035

This fluid flow of contents and relationships suddenly infringes upon the space of "local and conservative communities" which are structurally characterized by the solidity of their values, the limitation of their relational networks, and their strict surveillance radars, creating a structural clash between the "open network model" and the "local conservative model"[20].

This sociological infringement stems from the breakdown of the "moral and spatial boundaries" and informal social control that sustain conservative communities. Unregulated digital content introduces value systems that clash with local standards, disrupting traditional concepts of privacy, modesty, and social status, while forcing the collective conscience into a defensive posture.

This structural clash compels individuals to navigate a conflict between the "open network model" of globalized individualism and the "local model" of community compliance. Managing these contradictory digital and realistic identities exerts severe sociological pressure, fostering socio-cultural alienation and identity burnout.

4.2 Social Overload in Conservative Environments:

Social overload in conservative environments forms as a direct result of the unnatural expansion in the circle of human relationships due to digital technology, where platforms impose a model that merges primary (deep) and secondary (superficial) relationships in a single space. This numerical inflation transforms social relationships from being a source of security and integration into a time-consuming and psychologically exhausting communication commitment that exceeds the innate carrying capacity of the individual and places them in a state of permanent energy depletion.

In traditional societies, this burden carries more acute dimensions; given that relationships are not limited to transient browsing but are linked to a value system that obligates the individual to perform specific communicative and social duties. The necessity to balance this inflated virtual network with the actual requirements of the immediate family and kinship environment creates a type of role conflict and imbalance of priorities, establishing a permanent sense of shortcoming and social strain.

4.2.1 Role Conflict and Exceeding "Dunbar's Number":

Traditional local communities rely on direct, deep relationships, whereas digital platforms force a relational overload that exceeds biological and social limits. According to "Dunbar's Number," the human brain evolved to maintain meaningful ties with a maximum of approximately 150 people[21]. Platforms shatter this evolutionary threshold by introducing hundreds or thousands of virtual connections, This artificial expansion overwhelms cognitive capacities, turning social networks from sources of support into drivers of psychological stress..

This relational inflation triggers "acute role conflict" by undermining real-world community and family obligations. Users expend finite time and mental energy sustaining superficial virtual ties, causing them to neglect tangible kin and social duties. This gap between online engagement and physical responsibilities results in community critique and dual sociological burnout.

4.2.2 The Culture of Permanent Availability and the Imperative of Social Performance:

In conservative environments, traditional social "courtesies" have shifted into a "digitally imposed instantaneous performance obligation" mediated by screens such as immediate responses,

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[20] - Bauman, Z., Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds, Polity Press, 2003, p. 80.

[21] - Dunbar, R. I. Neocortex size as a constraint on group size in primates, Journal of Human Evolution, Vol. 22(6), 1992, p. 471.

virtual congratulations, and condolences. Driven by smartphone technology and a "culture of permanent availability," digital platforms have effectively removed the "right to be absent." Consequently, delays or silence are often misconstrued as neglect, compelling individuals to maintain constant communicative alertness and reducing sincere relationships to rigid, transactional protocols lacking emotional depth[22].

This continuous demand functions as a form of "unpaid emotional and social labor" that drains psychological energy. As individuals attempt to manage virtual engagements alongside real-life familial and community roles, the boundary between private and public time dissolves. The resulting "hyper-social overload" leads to chronic burnout, leaving individuals with a persistent sense of shortcoming due to the structural impossibility of simultaneously fulfilling the demands of both fluid virtual and solid real worlds.

4.3 Compassion Fatigue and Value Alienation:

Compassion fatigue arises when continuous exposure to screen-mediated tragedies exhausts emotional reserves, triggering affective numbness as a psychological self-defense against actionable helplessness. Continuous emotional arousal without real avenues for relief leads to severe emotional depletion, prompting users to emotionally disconnect to shield their psychological apparatus.

In conservative societies rooted in organic solidarity, this digital desensitization creates a profound value shock that contradicts traditional moral duties and collective instincts. This conflict induces value alienation, transforming authentic social interactions into cold, mechanical practices that distance individuals from their community's core values.

4.3.1 Hyper-Emotional Arousal and Real-Action Deficit:

In conservative societies, traditional systems of "collective conscience" and localized organic empathy are increasingly disrupted by digital algorithms that drive the "globalization of tragedies." By continuously streaming vivid imagery of global wars, disasters, and suffering, these algorithms eliminate emotional distance and overstimulate the user's mirror neurons and limbic system. Because humans are biologically and socially equipped to address crises within their immediate geographical reach where tangible intervention is possible unfiltered global exposure forces users into a state of passive, helpless monitoring behind screens[23].

This dynamic creates a profound psycho-sociological conflict termed the "paralysis of real effectiveness," marked by a severe disconnect between heightened emotional arousal and an inability to take meaningful action. Lacking practical channels to offer aid, users experience gradual emotional exhaustion. Over time, this repeated behavioral deficit degrades the psychological capacity for empathy, culminating in "structural compassion burnout" that undermines the foundational collective conscience of the community.

4.3.2 Emotional Numbing and Affective Blunting as a Sociological Defense Mechanism:

To safeguard against total affective depletion and cumulative emotional burnout caused by continuous exposure to traumatic content, the user's psychological system activates "affective

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[22] - Vorderer, P., Krömer, N., & Schneider, F. M. Permanently online, permanently connected: Explorations into university students' use of smartphones, Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 63, 2016, P.P 694-703

[23] - Moeller, S. D., Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death, Routledge, 1999, p. 34.

numbing" as a defensive mechanism. Through this psychological desensitization, authentic human empathy degrades into an automated, superficial response such as deploying digital emojis or standardized comments a phenomenon identified as digital compassion fatigue. This defensive blunting converts genuine grief and solidarity into cold, mechanical online rituals[24].

This behavioral shift poses a significant threat to the structural integrity of conservative societies, which rely heavily on organic solidarity and active emotional presence. As digital numbing permeates real-life social interactions, individuals become increasingly desensitized not only to remote online suffering but also to the immediate hardships of their families and local communities. Ultimately, this seeping moral alienation fosters profound spiritual and social burnout, eroding traditional solidarity bonds and alienating the individual from their core cultural identity.

5. Analysis and Discussion of the Empirical Study Findings:

5.1 Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics of the Study Sample:

This initial axis aims to diagnose the structural traits of the social media platform users' sample in the city of Laghouat, which constitutes the nurturing environment for subsequent psychological and behavioral variables.

5.1.1 Distribution of Sample Members According to Demographic Variables and Daily Usage Rate:

Table No. (01): Demographic and Behavioral Distribution of the Study Sample Members (N=200)

Statistical Variable	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	92	46.0%
	Females	108	54.0%
Age (in years)	18 - 25 years	86	43.0%
	26 - 35 years	74	37.0%
	More than 35 years	40	20.0%
Educational Level	Secondary or below	34	17.0%
	Undergraduate (Bachelor/Master)	138	69.0%
	Postgraduate (PhD)	28	14.0%
Daily Usage Rate	Less than 3 hours	26	13.0%
	From 3 to less than 6 hours	94	47.0%
	6 hours and more	80	40.0%

Sociometric Interpretation and Analysis of Table No. (01):

1. **Gender Variable:** Females dominate at (54.0%) compared to males (46.0%). In conservative Laghouat, social media (like Instagram and Facebook) acts as an "alternative public space" and a platform for home-based "micro-e-commerce" (crafts, pastry, apparel), bypassing local physical mobility constraints.

2. **Age Variable:** The youth demographic (18–35 years) represents (80.0%) of the sample. This intense immersion is driven by a local geographic and cultural vacuum, where a lack of physical recreational facilities makes the virtual world the primary escape for local youth.

3. **Educational Level:** Higher education levels (undergraduates and postgraduates) comprise (83.0%) of the sample, reflecting the influence of Amar Telidji University. This academic

[24] - Carnagey, N. L., Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. The effect of video game violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 43(3), 2007, p. 492.

background equips respondents with the "self-awareness" and analytical tools needed to recognize and diagnose "digital strain."

4. **Daily Usage Rate:** A striking (87.0%) of respondents use platforms for more than 3 hours daily, with (40.0%) exceeding 6 hours. Driven by a high reliance on local information groups, this continuous exposure leads to a "psychological migration" from physical reality, fostering burnout in the absence of a "disconnection culture."

When projecting these data onto the environment of the city of Laghouat, we conclude that "digital strain" in this region is not a mere technological luxury, but rather the product of an interaction between:

1. A conservative social structure that pushes females toward virtual spaces as an alternative public sphere.
2. A local environment lacking recreational facilities, leaving youth with few alternatives but to spend excessive hours behind screens.
3. A promising university community (Amar Telidji University) possessing the intellectual awareness to recognize and study this digital fatigue.

5.2 Measuring and Diagnosing Digital Burnout Levels (The Independent Variable):

In light of the Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model, we proceed to measure the dimensions of strain generated by platform pressures by calculating the arithmetic means and standard deviations for each dimension.

5.2.1 Ranking of the Prevailing Digital Burnout Dimensions Among Respondents:

Table No. (02): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Digital Burnout Dimensions (N=200)

Rank	Digital Burnout Dimension	Most Frequent Indicator Phrase	Mean (out of 5)	Standard Deviation	Degree of Burnout
1	Cognitive Burnout	I feel severe mental distraction and poor concentration due to the flood of notifications and short videos.	4.16	0.62	Very High
2	Social Burnout	I feel severe psychological stress as a result of the obligation to respond and perform immediate digital courtesies.	3.91	0.68	High
3	Emotional Burnout	I experience frustration and distress when comparing my life to the idealized images published by others.	3.58	0.76	Moderate to High
--	**General Scale Average**	**Digital Burnout as a Total Syndrome**	**3.88**	**0.69**	**High**

Psychological Analysis and Interpretation of Table No. (02):

The statistical analysis of digital burnout dimensions in Laghouat reveals a high overall syndrome level, with an arithmetic mean of 3.88. This indicates that social media platforms have transformed from communication tools into a significant psychological and cognitive burden for local users. Cognitive burnout ranked first, recording an arithmetic mean of 4.16, driven by mental distraction and fragmented attention from relentless notifications and algorithms, which heavily impacts academic and daily performance at Amar Telidji University.

Social burnout placed second, with an arithmetic mean of 3.91, stemming from obligations of immediate response and digital courtesies. In Laghouat's conservative, tightly knit society, virtual groups blur the lines between private and public life, enforcing digital empathy to avoid social misinterpretation. Emotional burnout ranked third, recording an arithmetic mean of 3.58, caused by relative deprivation and social comparison with idealised online lifestyles, generating subtle resentment among local youth.

In conclusion, digital burnout in Laghouat follows an escalating sequence: starting with cognitive overload, worsening through social pressures, and ending in emotional fatigue. These findings highlight an ongoing adaptation crisis among users navigating the tension between global digital demands and traditional local obligations.

5.3 Dissecting the Motivations for Temporary Disconnection from Platforms (The Dependent Variable):

We investigate here the adaptation mechanisms and behavioral outcomes adopted by users in the city of Laghouat to break the cycle of digital flow.

5.3.1 Priorities of Voluntary Digital Disconnection Motivations (Detox) for the Study Sample:

Table No. (03): Relative Importance of Motivations for Temporary Disconnection from Social Media Platforms (N = 200)

Rank	Nature of Motivations	Field Measurement Indicators	Arithmetic Mean	Percentage (%)	Overall Trend
1	Psychological and Health Motivations	The desire to reduce anxiety, restore inner peace, and treat sleep disorders and insomnia.	4.38	87.6\%	Strongly Agree
2	Local Social Motivations	Dedicating time to live family bonds, attending social gatherings (*Majalis* and *Lammat*), and escaping virtual social hypocrisy.	4.22	84.4\%	Strongly Agree
3	Professional and Academic Motivations	Attempting to increase productivity at work, and mental focus during university exams.	3.89	77.8\%	Agree

Sociological and Contextual Interpretation of Table No. (03):

The statistical data in Table No. 03 concerning motivations for voluntary digital disconnection in Laghouat reveal a protective tendency aligned with Reverse Uses and Gratifications theory. Psychological and health motivations ranked first, with an arithmetic mean of 4.38 and 87.6 percent agreement, highlighting disconnection as an instinctive self-healing strategy to reduce anxiety and restore inner peace under constant notification pressure.

Local social motivations ranked second, recording an arithmetic mean of 4.22 and 84.4 percent agreement, as respondents disengage from screens to prioritize family bonds, local gatherings, and authentic social capital. Professional and academic motivations followed in third place, with a mean of 3.89 and 77.8 percent agreement, demonstrating that the university-affiliated sample uses tactical disconnection to maintain productivity and focus at Amar Telidji University.

Ultimately, voluntary digital detox in Laghouat reflects mature organizational behavior rather than hostility toward technology. It functions as a tool of psychological and cultural resistance, balancing psychological well-being, traditional community ties, and academic demands against constant digital engagement.

5.4 Measuring Demographic Differences (The Mediating Variables):

This section reviews the testing of individual differences in the experience of burnout and the disconnection decision using parametric comparison tests (T-test and ANOVA).

5.4.1 Significance of Statistical Differences According to Gender, Age, and Educational Level:

Table No. (04): Results of Statistical Differences in Digital Burnout and Disconnection Motivations According to Demographic Variables:

Variable of Difference	Measured Dimension	Comparison Categories	Value of (T) or (F)	Significance Level (α)	Statistical Significance and Interpretation
Gender	Social and Emotional Burnout	Males Females	T\text{-value} = -2.84	0.006	**Statistically significant in favor of females:** Laghouat females suffer more from social burden and the stress of virtual surveillance.
Age	Temporary Disconnection Decision	18-25 years 26-35 years Older than 35	F\text{-value} = 4.12	0.014	**Statistically significant in favor of the youth category (18-25):** Youth are the most exhausted and the boldest in making radical detox decisions.
Educational Level	Digital Well-being Awareness	Secondary or below Undergraduate Postgraduate	F\text{-value} = 5.63	0.002	**Statistically significant in favor of postgraduate and undergraduate categories:** Higher education grants the user methodological tools to ration and control usage.

Methodological Analysis and Interpretation of Table No. (04):

The statistical results presented in Table No. 04 concerning the differences in digital burnout and disconnection motivations highlight fundamental variances shaped by the socio-spatial background of Laghouat. With reference to the gender variable, statistical analysis revealed higher social and emotional burnout among females. Sociologically, this stems from the dual pressures placed on women in Laghouat to reconcile traditional roles with an online presence under digital social surveillance. This emotional fatigue prompts them to adopt silent disconnection as a psychological defense mechanism.

Regarding the age variable, significant differences were identified in favor of the younger group between eighteen and twenty-five years old. While highly connected, the youth in Laghouat possess the behavioral capacity to make sudden digital detox decisions when cognitive overload peaks, whereas older groups prefer continuous and stable usage. Furthermore, analysis of the educational level variable indicated that university-educated individuals demonstrate greater digital well-being awareness. Pursuing higher education at Amar Telidji University equips users with

critical tools to recognize digital strain and regulate platform use, while less-educated groups remain more vulnerable to digital alienation.

Overall, these findings map out a complex psycho-sociological landscape in Laghouat. Gendered social expectations, youthful behavioral tendencies, and academic awareness collectively determine how digital burnout is experienced and managed within the community.

5.5 Regression Coefficients of Digital Burnout Dimensions on Temporary Disconnection Motivations:

Table No. (05): Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Predicting Temporary Disconnection Motivations (N = 200):

Independent Variables (Dimensions)	Regression Coefficient Beta (β)	Calculated (t) Value	Significance Level	Explanatory Power of the Regression Model
Excessive Social Burnout	0.44	5.12	0.000	**Adjusted Coefficient of Determination (R^2 = 0.641)** **Interpretation:** The digital burnout dimensions collectively explain 64.1\% of the variance occurring in taking the temporary disconnection decision among Laghouat users, while the remaining percentage is due to other factors not included in the model.
Intellectual Cognitive Burnout	0.31	3.86	0.001	
Affective Emotional Burnout	0.18	2.11	0.038	

Discussion and Advanced Theoretical Grounding of Table No. (05):

The multiple regression analysis shown in Table No. (05) provides conclusive empirical proof of the Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model's validity in Laghouat. The adjusted coefficient of determination reached R^2 = 0.641, confirming that digital burnout dimensions collectively explain 64.1\% of the variance in the temporary disconnection decision (digital detox), proving that burnout is the primary causal driving force behind breaking technological ties.

Social burnout positioned as the strongest independent predictor of temporary disconnection, with a substantial relative weight of \beta = 0.44 (t = 5.12, p = 0.000). Sociologically, this validates that when Laghouat's solidary cultural system collides with virtual "forced digital courtesies," the resulting social pressure threatens physical family duties, pushing the user to activate "voluntary algorithmic braking" to restore real-life social balance.

Cognitive burnout came in the second rank of predictive capability, with a regression coefficient of \beta = 0.31 (t = 3.86, p = 0.001). This psychological result indicates that severe attention distraction from continuous media consumption exhausts the user's cognitive apparatus, making temporary disconnection an urgent tactical mental necessity to restore concentration, especially within the university community.

Emotional burnout settled in the third and final rank, registering a regression coefficient of \beta = 0.18 (t = 2.11$, p = 0.038). Though lowest in causal weight, it remains an active predictor; accumulated frustration from unfair social comparisons with idealized digital images drives users to leave the virtual environment to safeguard mental health and assert self-satisfaction with their local reality.

Conclusion:

This study explored the socio-psychological and behavioral transformations governing the user's relationship with technology, focusing on the cognitive, social, and emotional repercussions

of hyperconnectivity. It analyzed "digital burnout" and its capacity to drive users toward voluntary protective strategies, specifically temporary disconnection ("digital detox"), within a sample of social media users in Laghouat.

Ultimately, digital burnout decisively guides and shapes the motivations for temporary disconnection in Laghouat. Validating the Stress-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model, empirical evidence shows that digital burnout dimensions possess a very high predictive capacity, explaining 64.1% of the variance in disengagement decisions. Voluntary disconnection acts as a functional defensive response and an "algorithmic braking" mechanism used by Laghouati users facing cognitive and social overload to regain mental control and fulfill family obligations within their conservative local environment.

Based on the statistical findings and regression analyses, we conclude the following:

1. Shift in Communicative Function: Platforms in Laghouat shifted from leisure tools to sources of socio-psychological pressure and drainage.

2. Rationality of Virtual Behavior: Digital detox is a conscious "algorithmic braking" mechanism to restore cognitive and psychological balance.

3. Power of Local Cultural Buffers: Conservative values and family bonds (*Majalis/Lammat*) act as social brakes against digital alienation.

4. Specificity of the Gendered Digital Burden: Females face a double burden due to local digital "social surveillance" and ongoing evaluation.

5. Flexibility of the Digital Youth Generation: Youth exhibit a paradox: despite high screen immersion, they show high willingness to execute sudden detox decisions.

6. Importance of Academic Awareness: Amar Telidji University equips users with critical awareness to self-diagnose burnout and build digital well-being.

7. Triumph of the Sociological over the Technical: Real-world duties colliding with virtual pressure trigger withdrawal, proving local values drive tech behavior.

Study Limitations and Difficulties:

1. Methodological Limitations (External Validity): The 200-respondent sample partially limits generalizing results across Laghouat Province.

2. Instrumental Limitations (Self-Assessment): Self-reported questionnaires risk social desirability bias and inaccurate usage estimates.

3. Spatial Limitations (Cultural Context): Results reflect an inland high-plains culture and may vary in coastal or tourist environments.

4. Temporal Limitations: Conducted in 2026, during peak dominance of short-form videos and addictive algorithms.

Study Recommendations and Suggestions:

1. Integrating Digital Well-being Courses into the University: Encourage Amar Telidji University to offer digital well-being and attention management workshops.

2. Activating Self-Braking Features in Applications: Promote built-in tools (e.g., Screen Time) to regulate usage and block notifications.

3. Directing Awareness Campaigns Toward Females: Design counseling programs for females to manage digital expectations and reply pressures.

4. Investing in Physical Public Spaces: Urge local authorities to build cultural and recreational clubs as screen alternatives for youth.

Horizons for Future Studies:

1**.** Conduct longitudinal studies to trace the long-term psychological effects of voluntary detox in Laghouat.

2. Establish comparative studies between inland cities (Laghouat) and coastal cities (Algiers/Oran) regarding burnout levels.

3. Expand research on FOMO and its connection to forced digital courtesies within extended families.

4. Adopt qualitative approaches (in-depth interviews, biographical analysis) to examine severe digital burnout.

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