Herodotus' Journal of the Human and Social Sciences	Volume:9 / N°: 4 (2025), p252-267.

Algerian Electoral Behavior and Hate Speech on Social Media: An Analytical Study of a Sample of User Comments Regarding the November 27, 2021 Local Elections in Algeria

السلوك الانتخابي الجزائري وخطاب الكراهية على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: دراسة تحليلية لعينة من تعليقات المستخدمين حول الانتخابات المحلية في الجزائر بتاريخ 27 نوفمبر 2021

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Orcid Number :

Accepted 16/07/2025 ...Received09/06/2025

- **Abstract:**

This paper aims to shed light on the nature of the prevailing discourse in the written content produced by users in response to their interactions — through the comment feature — with topics related to the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria. This is achieved by applying discourse analysis tools, which are considered the most appropriate for such studies. The paper also attempts to explore the relationship between Algerian electoral behavior and the nature of these discourses, and whether it is possible to classify them as hate speech, which often emerges during events of this kind.

Keywords: electoral behavior, user comments, hate speech.

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تسليط الضوء على طبيعة الخطاب السائد في المحتوى الكتابي الذي ينتجه المستخدمون استجابةً لتفاعلاتهم – عبر خاصية التعليقات – مع المواضيع المتعلقة بالانتخابات المحلية التي جرت في الجزائر بتاريخ 27 نوفمبر 2021. وقد تم تحقيق ذلك من خلال توظيف أدوات تحليل الخطاب، التي تُعد الأنسب لمثل هذا النوع من الدراسات. كما تسعى الورقة إلى استكشاف العلاقة بين السلوك الانتخابي الجزائري وطبيعة هذه الخطابات، وإمكانية تصنيفها ضمن خطاب الكراهية الذي غالبًا ما يبرز خلال مثل هذه الأحداث.

الكلمات المفتاحية :السلوك الانتخابي، تعليقات المستخدمين، خطاب الكراهية.

• The Problem and Significance of the Study.

In general, electronic media has provided unprecedented opportunities for its users to be present in real time within the digital world and to access instant news services, which have enhanced the

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audience's ability to keep up with events in a fast and continuous manner. It has also offered a broad space for expressing opinions on various issues and topics through interactive tools available on news websites and multiple digital platforms. The most prominent of these is the comment feature, where users can voice their opinions, interpretations, and expectations — something they are often unable to do through traditional media platforms.

Electoral events, in particular, constitute a lively arena where debates, criticisms, and discussions are renewed between candidates and citizens of diverse intellectual, political, social, and cultural orientations. As soon as electoral campaigns promoting candidates or lists begin, a different language emerges, carrying an increasingly intense discourse on social media. This discourse can sometimes be saturated with verbal and symbolic violence, reaching the point of bullying certain figures, questioning their national loyalty, or religiously excommunicating them. Consequently, this language may contain various forms of hate speech and rejection of the other.

Within this framework, the present study seeks to explore the nature of the prevailing discourse in the interactions of Algerian users regarding the topic of the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria. On one hand, it aims to investigate this discourse, and on the other hand, to examine the relationship between it and the concept of electoral behavior among individuals. Electoral behavior is an important indicator of the degree of political awareness within a given society, as it represents a form of political practice that enables voters to choose their representatives locally, legislatively, or presidentially. Voting is essentially an individual behavior that expresses a political act, ultimately materializing through the act of voting.

Despite the long-standing state of political alienation experienced by Algerian citizens, characterized by a collective withdrawal from public life and all forms of political participation, including voting — due to a loss of trust in the ability of existing institutions to lead the desired social and economic change, as well as doubts regarding the integrity and credibility of the entire electoral process — the recent November 27, 2021 local elections have witnessed some positive signs of revival. This was especially evident in the increased participation rates among youth and educated university elites.

We attempted, as much as possible, to identify the presence of electoral behavior by observing a set of indicators within the discourses of users interacting with this topic on social media. The most important of these indicators include: interest in the election topic, continuous follow-up of news and posts related to the electoral process, expressing opinions on its details, showing a desire to participate as candidates or in political work in general, and other points we sought to detect through our reading and monitoring of Algerian users' contributions regarding this subject.

In this context, observers recorded debates and discussions on social media platforms capable of fueling hate speech toward specific sub-identities for the purpose of securing electoral mobilization. Furthermore, there was an attempt to claim the practice of democracy and a

degenerate form of electoral behavior, stirring and inciting racist, sectarian, class-based, or regional sentiments to achieve electoral gains[1].

Accordingly, the main problem posed by this research paper revolves around the following question:Is there a relationship between the presence of indicators of electoral behavior among Algerian users and the production of hate speech on social media in the context of the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria?

To elaborate on this central question, the following sub-questions were raised:

- What are the most prominent themes in the discourse of Algerian users interacting with the topic of the recent local elections?
- Who are the key actors involved in the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria, as reflected in the discourses produced by users?
- What are the main argumentative techniques employed in the discourse produced on social media regarding the local elections in Algeria?
- What are the most notable contexts surrounding the discourse of users about the local elections in Algeria?
- What are the most frequently used words and expressions in the discourse produced by users regarding the studied topic, and do these reflect the presence or absence of hate speech?

1. Methodological Procedures of the Study

The present study employed the media discourse analysis tool, as it is one of the most suitable tools for comprehensively examining the nature of the prevailing discourse within the written content represented by the comments produced by Algerian users during the recent local elections period. Discourse analysis is considered an integrated methodology encompassing several analytical tools. It serves as a methodological approach for studying and analyzing messages in their various forms — whether written or spoken texts. Discourse analysis assumes that every part of a discourse contributes to presenting a certain aspect of the world or reality, reflecting specific ideas or expressing a particular kind of relationship between the parties involved in the discourse.

The researcher utilized tools associated with qualitative discourse analysis, based on the assumption that media discourse is a persuasive message aimed at instilling specific beliefs in readers, or even changing them[2].

Researchers can rely on one or more research tools to observe, analyze, and explore the cognitive foundations of various media discourses — whether in press discourse, radio and television discourse, or new media discourse via the internet.

Although there are numerous tools for media discourse analysis, in this study, we chose to apply the following tools:

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[1]Ben Yamina Yahia – Electoral Behavior of Youth in Algeria: Young People from the City of Oran as a Model – Master'sthesis in PoliticalSociology, University of Oran, Algeria, 2013–2014.
[2]Abu Mazeed Raja – Analysis of Media Discourse – Publishedscientificstudy, Faculty of Letters, Department of Journalism and Media, Gaza, March 2012, p. 20.

Thesis Analysis: This involves identifying the main themes or core ideas around which the topic of the local elections in Algeria revolved. These ideas were qualitatively recorded based on the comments exchanged during the study period, with the aim of understanding the ways in which Algerian individuals represented this topic.

Argumentation Paths Analysis: This refers to the set of arguments and evidence presented by the discourse producer to support and affirm their statements. These may take the form of historical, scientific, or statistical citations, among others.

Key Actors Analysis: This tool aims to identify the most prominent figures and actors related to the event being studied, as referenced by the commenters themselves. It also seeks to determine the roles attributed to these actors and their characteristics as expressed within the comments.

Context Analysis: In media studies, the term "context" is used in its societal sense. Here, context refers to the temporal period and the spatial domain, along with the social, political, and economic circumstances surrounding them, as well as the various conflicts, interests, social forces, their ideas, goals, roles, and tools. These factors and others collectively constitute the discourse environment.

Lexical and Phrase Analysis: This involves identifying the most important words and expressive phrases employed within the studied discourse.

2. Study Sample

Given the nature of the topic under study, we deliberately opted for a purposeful sample to achieve the scientific objective of this research — namely, to identify the nature of the discourse produced in the context of the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria and its relationship with hate speech.

Initially, we conducted a preliminary review of prevailing comments on the topic within some Algerian news platforms and the pages of certain candidates. However, it was noted that most of these comments were incidental, superficial, and lacked any substantial propositions related to the electoral orientation of the Algerian individual.

Accordingly, the study focused on one particular page distinguished by the extensive interaction of users with its posts — the official page of the Independent National Authority for Elections Oversight. We monitored the posts on this page with the highest levels of interaction in two phases: the first coinciding with the electoral campaign period, and the second during the actual voting process.

As a result, the study sample consisted of one hundred (100) comments extracted from ten different posts, which were purposefully selected due to their prominent orientations and explicit discourse regarding the electoral process of the November 27, 2021 local elections in Algeria.

It is worth noting that the structural formats of these comments varied — ranging from single-sentence remarks consisting of two or three words, to brief texts, and sometimes longer texts extending over one or two paragraphs or more.

- **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

1. The Concept of Hate Speech

Many scholars have attempted to define the concept of hate speech by referring it to the legal definition of a hate crime, which is described as:"an insult or assault against a victim on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, physical disability, or identity, through various traditional and modern means such as the use of modern communication technologies and social media platforms — whether by publishing recorded audio or video clips, or through offensive speeches or writings expressing bias against a specific group due to their geographical, religious, ideological, economic, social, political, or cultural background." From this definition, it follows that many forms of expression which disseminate, incite, promote, justify, or reinforce a sense of inferiority, superiority, prejudice, discrimination, intolerance, and rejection of others for exclusionary reasons, constitute hate speech [1]

There is no universally adopted, globally accepted definition that sets precise boundaries for what constitutes hate speech. However, it can be generally defined — based on prevailing interpretations — as:"any type of speech or discourse involving attack, incitement against, denigration, or humiliation of an individual or group of individuals because one, some, or all of them possess a distinctive human characteristic such as race, religion, gender, disability, political opinion, or social class."

Hate speech typically involves the diminution or denial of rights to a specific person or group. It often functions as a tool for inciting and mobilizing emotions in a particular direction, becoming provocative and inflammatory — fostering behaviors, cultures, and convictions based on discrimination, racism, and the denial of rights. The danger of hate speech especially arises when it is supported by media platforms or fertile communication environments that promote and increase its dissemination [2]

Given the imprecise definition of the term from both legal and sociological perspectives, many tend to adopt the definition provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which refers to hate speech as:"expressions that advocate incitement to harm — especially discrimination, hostility, or violence — against a specific social or demographic group, such as vulnerable groups and minorities. This may include, but is not limited to, speech supporting, threatening, or encouraging violent acts."

Hate speech stands in contradiction to the values of tolerance and the foundations of coexistence that human communities require. Therefore, international humanitarian legislations have endeavored to prohibit hate speech in order to preserve equality among individuals, as stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:"Any advocacy of national, racial, or

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[1]El-Khawaga Dina – The Second Report on CommunityActivism in the ArabRegion 2019: ConfiscatedSpaces and Squares in Revolt – Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut, Beirut, July 2020, p. 26.
[2]Herdo Center for Digital Expression Support – Hate Speech… Fuel for Anger: A Look atFundamental Concepts in the International Context – Cairo, 2016, p. 6.

religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law" [1]

2. Mechanisms of Hate Speech

Hate speech operates through several mechanisms to establish its methodology, through which it dominates the minds of its audience — both individuals and groups. It seeks, via these means, to undermine the values of tolerance and affection, which represent an essential antidote to its propositions.

Foremost among these mechanisms is the evocation of historical legacies and the attribution of sanctity to them. This not only results in reviving historical narratives but also in the proliferation of fatwas (religious rulings) that deepen societal division and fragmentation — to the extent that these fatwas contradict, discredit, and even declare one another heretical.

From the outcomes of this first mechanism emerges the second mechanism, which is the monopolization of collective memory. According to this mechanism, the memory of a particular group is selected and promoted to represent the national memory through an act of domination. This ultimately leads to intense conflicts and disputes driven by the sense among marginalized groups that their history has been suppressed.

This situation is then reflected in the third mechanism, which is the use of narrative and social discourse. Here, hate speech seeks to exploit the preceding mechanisms to demean, disparage, and ridicule others — making them feel inferior [2]

3.The Concept of Electoral Behavior

Electoral behavior constitutes a part of an individual's general political behavior, which refers to:"the totality of practical activities carried out by social actors connected to the idea of political participation — in other words, those that produce an effect on the collective governance process."

Among the most prominent definitions of electoral behavior are the following:"Electoral behavior is a sequence of consecutive actions directed toward a goal that ultimately culminates in voting for a particular political party or candidate."

"It is the set of decisions, attitudes, and modes of participation adopted by citizens toward political parties, candidates, and political issues during an electoral event."

"Electoral behavior refers to the process of voting and the various tendencies surrounding it, being a means of determining and maintaining public consensus in democratic societies."[3]

4. Factors Influencing Electoral Behavior

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[1]Fondation Mominoun Sans Frontières – AggressiveBehavior and Gender-BasedHatredbetween Social Justification and Media Passivity – March 2021, p. 7.
[2]Hamdou Mahmoud Azou – Hate Speech and the Threat to Coexistence in Iraq – Political and International Review, p. 642.
[3]Ben Yamina Yahia – Electoral Behavior of Youth in Algeria: Young People from the City of Oran as a Model – Master'sthesis in PoliticalSociology, University of Oran, Algeria, 2013–2014, p. 36.

An individual's electoral behavior is influenced by numerous factors and variables, including socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, residence, and population density. For instance, men's attitudes often differ from those of women, as does their respective voter turnout. Likewise, young people's preferences may diverge from those of the elderly, and the same applies to urban versus rural populations.

Additionally, there are socio-economic variables related to issues of employment, occupational affiliations, and wage levels, while socio-cultural variables focus on educational attainment, sectarian and ethnic affiliations, religious loyalties, and interactive social networks. Although voting is an individual act, it remains confined, framed, and guided by social variables and frameworks such as social roles, family influence, public opinion, social groups, political ideologies held by social committees, and an individual's social status.

One must also consider the role of the political environment and the impact of organizational factors related to the electoral environment. Furthermore, numerous studies have shown the influence of variables such as: ideologies, political predispositions, government actions, peer influence, election campaigns, political communication, media, economic conditions, and the nature of electoral stakes and promises[1].

5.The Impact of Hate Speech on the Electoral Environment

The issue of the spread of hate speech typically becomes more acute in the current electoral context. This is mainly due to the fact that social media platforms are often filled with posts aimed at deepening divisions and excluding others. In general, elections represent a stage where political views dominate, sometimes reaching the point of issuing inciting statements that ultimately infringe upon the democratic rights of others and their right to free expression.

The dissemination of hate speech in the electoral context takes several forms, including: the circulation of personal and misleading information about candidates on electoral lists, incitement of discord between religious groups and political parties, promotion of hate against women, and incitement to violence, discrimination, and hostility. Perhaps the harshest among these are those that aim to defame male and female candidates, in addition to spreading verbal violence and public insults.

For this reason, it is crucial to prohibit hate speech during the legally designated electoral campaigning period, and to criminalize any form of direct or indirect incitement to violence or discrimination against candidates, whether based on their personal or party affiliations. The harmful effects of such practices will not end with the counting of votes but will persist in the long term, threatening the principles of respect, acceptance of others, pluralism, and democratic governance[2].

- **Analytical Study**

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[1]Limam Salma & Bara Samir – Electoral Models: Toward a Field-BasedApproach for Analyzing Electoral Behavior in Algeria – Cahiers de Politique et de Droit, April 2011, pp. 195, 197.

[2]MajdoubahSaja – Palestinian Electoral Culture and Hate Speech – Published April 30, 2021; accessedNovember 20, 2021; available online: https://www.alhaq.org/ar/advocacy/18256.html.

1. Analysis of Propositions

The propositions will be presented sequentially, starting from the most frequently recurring one within the targeted comments for analysis to the least, as follows:

1.1 First Proposition: Questioning the National Independent Authority for Elections regarding all matters related to the conduct of the current electoral process,This proposition included repeated calls for the National Independent Authority for Elections to fully assume its role in supervising various aspects of the electoral process for the November 27, 2021 local elections. These calls emerged through several concerns, which can be categorized into two parts:

1.1.1 Concerning the election campaign period:A demand for "investigations into the employment of candidates' family members in the elections, treating them as private property, and marginalizing students...".

Raising concerns about the issue of posting candidates' and lists' advertisements outside the designated areas, with comments such as:"It is unfortunate to see posters of municipal and provincial council candidates displayed everywhere, even on traffic lights, although the law prohibits this, which has further disfigured the already degraded urban areas..."

A demand for holding those responsible for excluding youth lists accountable, particularly judges and independent committees in the provinces, accompanied by calls for "the independent authority's intervention to uncover the reasons for excluding some candidates...", and strong reactions like:"These are the worst elections… where honest people were excluded and denied the exercise of one of their political rights, namely candidacy, which is guaranteed by the constitution… this is why we are boycotting…"

Noting the continuation of the election campaign in certain districts despite the electoral silence.

Questioning the cancellation of the principle of parity between men and women in municipal councils.

Requesting clarification about the hiring process for electoral workers, whether from university students or through favoritism.

Asking for an explanation from the authority regarding its inability to implement its urgent instructions in its provincial offices.

1.1.2 Concerning the conduct of the electoral process: Reporting great confusion during the campaign due to the similarity of list numbers for municipal councils with those of provincial councils, as well as the removal of photos, which resulted in voter neglect, especially among illiterate citizens, and caused elderly voters to cast their votes incorrectly, leading to ballot cancellations.

"Elderly people deviated from the framework because they couldn't see, which leads to vote nullification."

Complaints about not receiving remuneration for working during the elections.

Questioning about instances of election fraud.

Inquiring about the possibility of reporting 'serious violations and huge amounts of money spent to buy votes and seats in these elections…'

1.2 Second Proposition: Suggestions Addressed to the Independent Authority to Ensure the Proper Conduct of the Current and Upcoming Elections and to Avoid Shortcomings**,** Through this proposition, we recorded a number of suggestions made by users to the Independent Authority for Elections, aiming to better manage future electoral processes and overcome the deficiencies and shortcomings observed during the current elections. Among these were:

Opening channels of interaction with the public "to let you know the reality of your provincial offices, which represent the worst image of elections in Algeria..."

The proposal to "revise the voting system by placing multiple lists in a single envelope instead of one list per envelope."

A demand for the intervention of the Head of the Authority "to ensure that election center staff are provided better working conditions in future occasions, as workers were absent and lunch meals were either lacking or insufficient in some centers..."

"The necessity to reconsider the appointment of provincial coordinators and qualified members of the provincial offices to better control and successfully manage all electoral events and deadlines..."

An appeal to the Head of the Independent National Authority to "open cooperation with civil society to help the authority in managing elections through effective oversight, ensuring transparency, and combating fraud."

A call for publishing schoolbooks rather than papers that are thrown away and whose choices are not respected…

1.3 Third Proposition: Support for the November 27, 2021 Local Elections

A positive attitude toward the recent local elections in Algeria appeared only modestly within the sample of comments analyzed. It was mentioned through glimpses of optimism regarding this national event, given its political and historical context. As one commentator put it:

"We must be positive… despite years of corruption in the parties… thank God, the situation has improved… there are criteria for selection granting opportunities to the youth, university graduates, and gender parity… without excluding other categories… things will get better with time… corruption cannot be eradicated all at once — it is the accumulation of years and everyone participated in it… thanks to the Independent Authority apparatus..."

And in another comment:"Good luck, God willing. We all trust you and those you deemed worthy of this mission, which requires every election supervisor to act as a judge..."

Additionally, there was one comment directly praising the role of the Independent Authority as an active state body in organizing these elections and ensuring their proper conduct. It referred to:

"The Independent Authority's affirmation that its doors are open to process all cases subject to law for participation in this historic event and contribution to state institution-building… and that all necessary preparations have been made and resources mobilized to ensure the success of the electoral process… in a framework of transparency, justice, integrity, and genuine credibility..."

2. Analysis of the Actors, Their Roles, and Characteristics

• **The Independent Authority for Elections Monitoring:**This body emerged as the main actor in the various discussions raised, as the study directly targeted the official page of this governmental institution. Accordingly, the Independent Authority appeared as a prominent actor in the majority of comments, which mostly expressed negative sentiment toward its practices during the local elections period. Among the key roles attributed to the Independent Authority as an actor in this context, we note the following:

"How can the Authority reject decisions of the Council of State concerning excluded candidates? Where is the credibility of state institutions? Is the Independent Authority the highest authority in the state, accusing and acquitting and having powers beyond the courts?"

"Is the Independent Authority blind to the violations that occurred in some municipalities?"

"The Independent Authority must take measures to restore lost credibility and apply them on the ground… credibility can only be rebuilt by condemning the guilty in public… abandoning outdated and mostly personal practices… the National Authority for Injustice, distortion, and double standards."

"The Authority's reputation is ruined by disregarding judicial rulings…"

The Independent Authority was born from the popular movement (Hirak); it belongs to the people and must remain under popular oversight to prevent it from turning into a feudal estate (Baylik)…

Arbitrary decisions have damaged the Authority's reputation.

The Authority acted solely in the name of the law… the Authority commands and forbids and has wronged many… constitutional rights were violated and infringed upon by the Authority without justification… complete chaos in polling centers while it remained idle… collusion of the Authority's representatives in fraud…

As for the main traits attributed to the Independent Authority by commentators, they were as follows:

A corrupt authority working by denunciation… a corrupt authority… where is the integrity of the Independent Authority… an authority exploited by moneyed interests… an occupying authority destroying the elections…

• **University Youth and the Educated Elite:**This group was considered one of the most important actors in the debate about the conduct of the local elections and the processes associated with candidacy submissions, administrative decisions, and judicial rulings on their cases. This category often spoke directly in the comments under titles like "We, the educated class…" and "We, the university youth…" Among the main roles attributed to them as actors:

Filing direct complaints in the name of "university students and graduates including doctors and engineers, demanding an investigation into all officials working in municipal and provincial election offices in the municipality of… and denouncing the hiring of illiterate people as polling station heads… as well as demanding a reinvestigation into the electoral process…"

Questioning the “excluded youth candidate lists that aspired to stand alongside the new Algeria.”

“The candidacy of the educated class to confront corruption… supporting the president’s course in developing the country.”

“What kind of elections are these while youth are dying at sea?”

“The people want change, but unfortunately, there is an entrenched class clinging to power… what fault is it of the citizen to pay the price of incompetence? The plundering of the people’s rights and livelihoods…”

• **The Candidates:**A clear tone of negative criticism emerged in user comments directed at the category of “candidates” for the local elections. It was asserted that “the real candidates were disqualified while those they wanted were kept… those who remained are enemies of the employees… we do not want them as candidates… those chosen by the people were excluded… we hope all the excluded are reinstated… the honorable were disqualified, and the wicked appointed… arbitrary decisions against the candidates… why allow the old mayors to run again? Why should mayors from the previous term run again? Some of their candidates are 70 years old… will change come from people who have held on for more than two terms in the municipalities… same scenario, same faces…”

Also criticized were “the local elected officials” who — according to commentators — through their practices “disfigured urban areas and never cared about the aesthetic appearance of the municipalities they succeeded in managing… how can these candidates, who now seek voters’ favor and claim in their campaign speeches they will improve the urban environment, commit such irresponsible acts?”

Among the most prominent labels attributed to them:Candidates and their dogs… elections for thieves and opportunists…

3. Analysis of the Proof Paths

Through analyzing users’ discourses about the local elections, it becomes clear that a considerable number of citations, arguments, and proofs were presented by users to confirm the validity of their statements and support their various theses. These are summarized as follows:

Citing specific incidents in certain municipalities and districts, with detailed references particularly concerning specific issues such as: acceptance and exclusion of candidates’ files, existence of fraud in elections, the method of appointing delegates and election supervisors, and the method of employing workers in the elections....

Providing examples of specific individuals among election supervisors and representatives of the Independent Election Authority, mentioning names to emphasize particular practices and violations.

Citing photographs: for example, phone-captured images of certain persons demonstrating specific behaviors, or images of urgent communications sent by the Independent Election Authority.

Citing statistics (only once, such as: “there are municipalities with a huge electoral pool estimated at…”).

Providing scientific opinion such as: "the technological and scientific development reached by the Election Authority in managing elections… digitization of elections… possession of university-level cadres…"

4. Analysis of Words and Phrases

Using this tool, we tracked various words and phrases as they appeared in users' comments, given their importance in revealing the presence of inciting speech or speech directly related to hate speech. The findings are as follows:

• The term "fraud": This is the most frequently repeated term in users' discourse regarding the studied topic, expressing their perception of a lack of transparency and integrity in the conduct and results of the current elections. It appeared in various forms, such as:

"Combating fraud / fraud by collusion / rigged elections / a disaster of fraud in front of security and officials / reinvestigation of fraud / rigged elections / systematic fraud / collusion of authority representatives in fraud / fraudsters / fraud was carried out perfectly, bear your responsibility / authority of fraud / rigged and non-transparent elections…"

• The term "corrupt money": It ranks second in frequency within comments, for example:

"Money and vote-buying / corrupt money still strongly dominant / influence of corrupt money / corrupt money still taints the elections / buying votes and seats / buying votes and consciences / opening an investigation into corrupt money / corrupt money nested in authority / selection by corrupt money…"

• Terms related to the electoral process conduct:"Violations / where is credibility? / ensuring transparency / farce / lack of neutrality in some centers / arbitrariness / injustice / regionalism / a disaster by all measures lasting 5 years…"

• Most used expressive formulas:Users employed a range of phrases to describe the reality of the electoral process. Some focused on religious style, such as:"حسبنا الله و نعم الوكيل (God is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs) / injustice is darkness on the Day of Judgment… opponents meet there…"

These were among the most frequently appearing formulas in the studied discourses,Others used a more realistic style with expressions referring to the period of the Algerian popular movement (Hirak), such as:"Is this the new Algeria? / Corruption is eating the new Algeria / The gang still exists… no elections with gangs…"

In addition, other recurring expressions were noted, such as:"Throwing state laws and justice out the window / living the era of unmasking / this is appointment, not election / vile customs damaging the integrity and fairness of elections / exclusion of the honorable / remains a dream and change will not come / arbitrary decisions…"

5. Context Analysis

At the level of the studied discourse, two contexts emerged in the discussion and examination of the events:

5.1 The Legal Context of Elections

The legal context was clearly employed in users' discourses regarding the electoral campaign topic, represented by giving a legal dimension to various aspects raised during the virtual discussion on the subject. Examples include:

The demand directed to the head of the Independent Authority to review the election law and delete Article 184, which restricts political freedoms, as the only way to restore the credibility of elections... Article 184 must be applied...

Calls for applying the law in many instances such as: "Here we, the educated class, pass the elections and obtain results through the minutes, but the overall total completely contradicts the details, and the elected ballots were severely canceled because the existing law did not clarify…"

"In some provinces... association headquarters have become workstations for candidates, does the law not punish that?" … "Non-application of the law regarding the retention of a candidate excluded from past elections... double standards in exclusion and retention…"

The need to reconsider the oppressive and prohibitive laws… You must postpone these elections… Everything is illegal and unjust… Calls to enforce the law because we are building a new Algeria free of corruption.

Disrespect for judicial decisions is an insult to the Algerian state… Non-recognition of Algerian justice since after the court ruled to accept candidates' files, the wilaya authority accepted only some of them.

Laws dismissed the best candidates and left the worst…

Justice, represented by administrative courts, favored a few but not many always in the name of the law…

Placing polling station supervisors in "Al-Ma'rifa" is illegal… The provincial coordinator of the authority understands nothing of constitutional law…

"What is your interpretation of the decisions rejecting candidacy after judicial rulings by the Council of State accepted them… Is it possible that administrative judiciary annuls a judicial ruling?"

"The new election law was set to combat corrupt money, but during local elections, it turned out to have a legal loophole encouraging corrupt money through vote buying and overthrowing the majority-winning list."

.52 The Electoral Process Context

This context appeared through users' detailed discussion of the electoral process procedures, starting from the announcement of candidacy to the release of results, marked by many questions regarding all aspects of this process, such as:

"How can some elected officials go to elections and find their names missing from the list? Are these developments, technologies, and modernization?"

Readiness, transparency, and democracy in the capital, but areas of humiliation and injustice elsewhere… Until when?

Calling on the President of the Republic to protect the people's votes in various parts of the country by issuing a directive stating that the list winning the majority gains the mayoralty, because corrupt money dominated various coalitions… Local elections in our country see losers allied to topple winners… Where did the people's choice go?

The municipal delegate is not qualified to supervise these elections (Is a middle school diploma enough to organize dual elections?).

Additionally, attempts to propose alternatives and suggestions deemed appropriate include:

Necessity to open an investigation into the election register since some elected individuals went to voting centers and did not find their names…

Demands to open the annual revision before elections — what is the use of December? — and also open a second revision in October for electoral lists or register them electronically because most youth are unregistered…

Unfair reasons for excluding some candidates (such as candidacy in another party) and disregarding the president's decisions… honorable youth excluded… a list excluded due to mismatch between voter ID number and digital records… Electoral process influenced by regionalism and favoritism… money control over results even indirectly…

Demands to reconsider the Independent Election Commission… insult to the provincial delegations' respect for Council of State decisions.

- ## Results

A close examination of the discourse produced by Algerian users through our reading and analysis of a sample of comments concurrent with the local elections period on November 27, 2021, in Algeria — which were circulated via the official page of the National Independent Authority for Elections — led us to reach a set of general findings and conclusions as follows:

The produced discourse offered a precise diagnosis of the electoral process reality with its various circumstances and developments. The nature of the interactions posted on the page indicates prior knowledge of the electoral reality in Algeria, along with the accompanying diverse political, social, and legal contexts. This was evident from the range of theses addressing the topic from multiple angles, supported by evidence and citations. This is likely due to the presence of various indicators of electoral behavior among users.

This study primarily aimed to link the features of political behavior among individuals using social media platforms and its impact on the possibility of producing hate speech that incites division, provocation, hostility, racism, regionalism, or the entrenchment of clan and territorialism principles. Although such tensions frequently appear during national occasions like this, a detailed monitoring of the overall vocabulary, terms, and expressive formulations in users' discourses confirms that the use of the comment service as an interactive mechanism did not go beyond the

framework of directing criticism and accountability toward public authorities, represented by one of its institutions. The state itself endeavored, through this electoral event, to make this platform a means to avoid repeating scenarios of fraud, the spread of corrupt money, and to apply the principles of integrity and neutrality as far as possible, in an attempt to build state institutions and achieve the hoped-for change.

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