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The Impact of Information and Communication Technologies on National Identity : A Field Study of Internet Users in the City of Medaourouch – Souk Ahras
(Facebook and Twitter as Case Studies)

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Abstract

This field study aims to examine the extent to which information and communication technologies influence the national identity of individuals and society. It focuses especially on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, which are key features of the current digital era. The frequent and ongoing use of these communication technologies has a major impact on how identity is formed. These platforms present various types of content. They also allow information and culture to spread quickly among users. This has a clear effect on shaping identity. It influences how individuals integrate into society and how they adapt socially. Our study, therefore, investigates how these platforms influence people, with a focus on young users in particular.

Keywords: Social Media, National Identity, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Youth, Cultural Globalization, Social and Behavioral Impact

First: Theoretical Framework

Problem Statement

Organized societies now depend more on technology. This dependence covers many fields: social, economic, cultural, and political. As people and institutions need technology more, its development continues at a fast pace.

Modern electronic tools have made information and communication technologies more important than ever. As a result, many countries compete to keep up with global developments in this field. Having access to such technologies has become a form of power.

The ability of a society to adapt to technological change depends on its structure. At the same time, modern life has brought many changes. These changes have affected social values and systems of interaction worldwide. As a result, we now live in a very different world.

One major result of this shift is globalization. Globalization allows for communication and cooperation beyond borders. It weakens the lines between national, regional, and global identities. It removes the limits of time and place.

This process is supported by a technological revolution, the rise of global powers, and the collapse of the old bipolar world order. The dominance of the United States and the emergence of global pressure groups have also played a role. These forces have weakened the idea of national sovereignty.

As a result, the traditional role of the state is now in question. The ability of states to ensure social justice and improve living conditions has been challenged. Globalization has also affected national identity and the nature of political and social movements.

Media and communication tools now play a very important role. They help spread knowledge and ideas widely. They use powerful tools and accessible language. These tools shape public thinking and culture.

Global interest in media — in production, distribution, and consumption — shows how influential it is. Media has the power to direct and influence people's lives, both positively and negatively.

The Internet is now a key space for communication and social interaction. Users share values and experiences online. This can help form or reshape their identities. It can also weaken or destroy them.

In Algeria, the impact is strong. Online spaces offer opportunities for interaction — both in virtual communities and in real-life contexts. These interactions have a strong effect on identity.

Identity has become a key issue in every culture. It is now seen not only as a cultural question but as a deeper crisis. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, identity today is at a crossroads.

In this context, our study addresses the following main research question: How do social media platforms influence the formation and reshaping of national identity for individuals and society in light of global transformations?

Research Questions

- How do Algerian youth receive the cultural content shared on social media platforms?
- How do Algerian youth engage with the material shared through these platforms?
- How do Algerian youth view the influence of media on their own culture and the culture of their society?
- Do Algerian youth maintain their national identity in the face of foreign values promoted by the West?

Objectives of the Study

The key objectives we aim to achieve through this study include:

– To identify the major role played by modern information and communication technologies in the lives of individuals and society.
– To understand the extent to which social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) affect the formation of national identity.
– To raise awareness among youth about the importance of maintaining national identity and belonging, especially in the face of cultural globalization and its influence on Muslim Arab societies.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the importance of the topic itself. National identity has become a major issue in both the Arab world and globally.

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies has brought many changes. These include shifts in value systems, cultural structures, and social behaviors in Algerian society, especially among the youth.

The components of national and cultural identity in Algeria are now being challenged. They are caught between the country's historical legacy and the new values introduced by modern media and communication tools.

Conceptual Definitions

The Concept of Media and Communication

Media is not limited to providing information and knowledge. It is, rather, a process aimed at changing attitudes and motivating groups to act in specific ways to achieve desired goals.

In other words, media plays a role in shaping a vision of the future. It provides an image that can push individuals to act according to what they must do. It also has the power to influence and reshape the moral structure of society.

Communication is the process or method through which ideas and information are transmitted among people within a specific social system. This system may vary in size and in the nature of its internal relationships. It can involve a simple dyadic relationship between two individuals, a small group, a national society, or even humanity as a whole.[3]

Communication is also defined as a social process through which information, opinions, and ideas are exchanged using meaningful symbols. This process occurs among individuals or groups within a society, and between different cultures, with the aim of achieving specific objectives.[4]

Conceptual Definitions (continued)

c. George Lundberg's Definition of Communication[5]. George Lundberg defines communication as interaction through signs and symbols. These symbols may take the form of gestures, images, language, or anything else that serves as a stimulus for behavior. In this sense, communication is a type of interaction that occurs through the use of symbols.[5]

d. The Concept of Technology. The development of communication and information technology has led to the emergence of new tools and applications in the field of media. Some scholars refer to this as "new media technology," which is primarily based on computer-connected systems. This type of technology has had a wide-ranging impact. It includes diverse areas and applications, such as the structuring of knowledge in general and the organization of institutions in particular[6].

Conceptual Definitions (continued)

e. The Use of the Term "Technology" in Arabic In Arabic, the word "technology" has become widely used and generally accepted. It is difficult to find a fully equivalent Arabic term. The word "taqniyah" has been recommended by the Arabic Language Academy, as it closely resembles the foreign term.

f. The Definition of Technology According to the Oxford Dictionary According to the Oxford Dictionary, the prefix "techno" refers to the method of performing a profession or what was formerly called a craft. The word "technology" refers to the science that studies these crafts.[7]

g. Fahmi Haidar's View on New ICTs Fahmi Haidar explains that new information and communication technologies (ICTs) include all forms of technology used to operate, transfer, and store information in electronic form. This includes computer technologies, communication tools, network systems, fax devices, and other equipment widely used in communication.[8]

These technologies make use of innovations in science and engineering. The label "new" is temporary, as in a few years, technologies such as the internet, information systems engineering, remote collaborative work, and electronic management tools like GroupWare will become routine[9].

h. Broader Definition of ICT is also defined as a combination of electronic computing devices and communication tools. This includes fiber optics, satellites, microfilm techniques, data cards, and all inventions and developments used for handling different types of information. These tools help collect, analyze, organize, document, store, and retrieve information as needed, using appropriate and available methods[10].

Key Feature of Modern ICT Based on the definitions above, the central feature of modern information and communication technology is the integration of computer technology with both wired and wireless communication systems, along with audiovisual tools. In other words, it combines text, sound, and image.

Conceptual Definitions (continued)

d. The Concept of Identity

The *Dictionary of Social Science Terms* generally defines identity as "the process through which an individual distinguishes themselves from others."[11]

Mohamed Amara states that identity refers to the core characteristics of a thing—its stable traits that renew themselves without undergoing change. These traits reveal and express the self without giving way to their opposites, as long as the self remains alive[12]

The *Robert French Dictionary* defines identity as the stable quality of the self. This definition includes two meanings that are further explained in the *Dictionary of Philosophical Concepts*. First, identity is the quality of sameness—either in the continuity one establishes with oneself or in the relationships one forms with various aspects of reality.[13]

In social psychology, identity is seen differently. According to *Erik Erikson*, a psychoanalyst, identity develops through the interaction between psychological mechanisms and social factors. A sense of identity results from the individual's unconscious tendency to connect their present with their past experiences. It also emerges from the need to feel integrated, unified, and belonging, through recognizing patterns of similarity with one's early childhood[14]

Alex Mucchielli defines identity as a combination of reference points—material and subjective elements—that allow for a specific definition of social action. Since it is made up of multiple components, identity is necessarily variable. However, it still retains a degree of stability. For example, a person is born, ages, and undergoes physical and behavioral changes, even shifts in personal taste. Despite these changes, the person remains the same individual, not someone else[15].

5. Conceptual Definitions (continued)

e. The Concept of Social Media Networks – Social media networks are defined as electronic platforms that allow individuals to present themselves and participate in social networks through which they form social relationships[16].

These networks are also described as a group of websites that emerged with the second generation of the web. They allow communication among individuals within a virtual community. Members are usually connected by shared interests or common affiliations such as a country, school, university, or workplace. Communication occurs through messages, profile browsing, updates, and shared content. They are effective tools for social interaction, whether among people known in real life or through virtual contexts[17].

f. The Facebook Platform – Facebook is considered one of the most significant social networking sites. It is not only a social forum but also a technological platform that enables individuals to do as they please with relative ease[18].

The *Dictionary of Media and Communications* defines Facebook as a social media platform launched in 2004. Initially intended for university students, faculty, and staff, it later expanded to include the general public[19].

g. The Twitter Platform – Twitter is a social media network used by millions around the world. It allows users to stay connected with friends and colleagues through personal computers and mobile phones.

The Twitter interface supports the publication of short messages, limited to 140 characters. These messages are visible to all platform users. A user may follow public figures and receive notifications when new content is posted.

Twitter functions as a real-time information network. It is supported by users across the globe and allows them to share and explore what is happening at the moment. The platform's main question, "What's happening?", allows responses to reach millions instantly[20].

Media and Arab Cultural Identity

The topic of Arab cultural identity and belonging is one of the most serious challenges facing the contemporary Arab society. The intellectual and behavioral orientations of its members suffer under it. In the age of globalization and the massive cultural openness to other nations, many problems have arisen. These pressures push individuals toward issues of civilizational and national belonging. They also lead to changing identity as expressed through language, religion, and culture in general. Among the most striking of these challenges is the influence of foreign culture, especially the culture of "Westernization." This tends to be founded on the hatred of Arabs and Islam. It also involves contempt, wrongful accusations, assigning acts of violence and terrorism to them, and the spread of corruption and hate culture.

Cultural identity—in all its elements—also falls under the invasion brought by media and communication tools. Identity's components include mental, emotional, and affective traits, and the behavioural patterns widely shared among many members of society. These traits distinguish them from other peoples and communities. The social factor is a key one. It guides the nation. It forms the real ground for values and habits. It shapes all social relations. It also builds a sense of duty toward society. And it fosters a spirit of belonging. However, media and communication technologies have opened a gap. Foreign cultures try to enter into personal values and beliefs. This produces new behaviour models that depart from the society's reality. Thus, media content becomes a kind of threat to social cohesion[25].

Like other identities, Arab identity is subject to renewal and change. This happens in its components. Change may occur at the level of general elements of culture shared by most Arabs. Or it may take place in the particularities pertaining to certain groups. Also there are alternatives imported from other societies. These the Arab society may accept. If so, they join the general or special features. Or the society rejects them. They may surface then fade away[26].

Arab identity expresses the set of traits and features that the Arab community holds onto. These traits distinguish it from other societies. This identity has deep roots. It emerged over ages from a sequence of historic accumulations. Thus, it is not of today alone. Arabs share many foundational elements. These include language, customs, traditions, and geographical proximity. These commonalities fostered a shared sense of belonging. They helped form a cohesive community.

Western civilization has increasingly threatened Arab identity. Its features now target the individual and the community. Under globalization, media and communication technologies like the Internet and social networks are used to implement certain policies. These aim to control and regulate the behavior of individuals and societies in subtle but forceful ways. These policies influence culture and the feeling of nationalism heavily. They

also draw people into adopting Western frames and values. This process complements Western cultural dominance and control[27].

A direct effect of mass media and communication is promoting the idea of knowledge consumption. People are encouraged to be receptive rather than creative. Media often carries negative or destructive values. It poses risks of cultural invasion. This threatens the cultural specificities of the Arab society. Media aspires to a global culture that covers all aspects of human activity.

Western states hold near-monopoly over media and communication technologies. This gives them the power and control. Arab countries often lack the resources needed to produce knowledge, not just receive it. This puts them in a weak position. It forces a form of dependency, even if it is not willingly accepted.

Media and communication tools also aim at controlling perception. They seek to subject minds, to impair reasoning. They attempt to shape values, direct imagination, standardize tastes, and mold behavior. Consequently, individuals may become submissive and less capable of intellectual production. Societies can then suffer from social ailments born of intellectual stagnation[28].

Media content and communication weaken Arab nationalism by alienation, hybridization, and imposing a single system of values. These systems spark intense emotions and attempts to instill violence and terrorism. They also bring economic pressure on countries that resist cultural invasion. Moreover, such content infiltrates or suppresses national models in economy, politics, science, knowledge, and social integration. It aims to marginalize national identity. It frames cultural identity and heritage as obstacles to the spread of global mindsets and consumer culture. Arab cultural identity has become threatened by both quantitative and qualitative programmed pressures of globalization. Globalization aims to expand and dominate using media and communication technologies. It encounters Arab cultural specificities and identities which it sees as barriers. Hence it works to eliminate them. It spreads global culture, consumption culture, and creates a false sense of globalism, humanity, and peace.

It moves from awareness toward mis-perception. It transcends geographic borders and local cultures. The present challenge to Arab identity is the openness that has formed deep relations among civilizations on one hand, and on the other hand, weakness, gaps, and paralysis in defensive positions. The issue is no longer a dialogue among cultures. It is the destruction of local and national civilizations and their reduction by the dominant global civilization. Also, the challenge involves a full reversal of values, conditions, customs, and ideas. These are stripped of their former vigor.

Thus, media and communication technologies represent a crossroad. They interconnect with a set of essential concepts that have evolved since their origins. They have formed, up to today, the core of Western thought. The values circulating now serve to reduce human identity. They narrow limits and confine individuals within a global system whose logic turns them into deviations of nature. Image of the Arab-affiliated human being becomes lost in contradictions and disturbed feelings about belonging. It becomes twisted. People are torn between whether they belong to a backward world, or whether they are blamed for rising violence due to moral drift and extremism[29].

Cultural Globalization and Islam

Identity has played two key roles in the contemporary Islamic context. It has been a force of liberation on one hand, and a unifying element on the other. In both roles, it remains far from the marginality to which it had been pushed. This is especially evident in light of the dominance of communication technologies. These technologies promote a globalized culture known for reduction and penetration. This culture seeks to normalize domination and enforce civilizational dependency. It upholds values such as individualism, the fragmentation of social ties, selfishness, and disengagement from any collective responsibility.

This culture does not offer a vision for the future. Instead, it relies on a media system that shapes consumer preferences. It influences how people see humanity, society, and history. It does so by stripping consciousness, undermining cultural identity, and subduing the human spirit. In essence, it disables the rational mind[30]

Islamic civilizational heritage forms the core of Islamic culture. This culture distinguishes itself from other human cultures. What enhances the significance of Islam is that it is not limited to rituals. Islam is also a religion of social conduct, transactions, and ethical relationships. Thus, it offers a complete intellectual and practical framework.

From this foundation emerges a cultural system based on laws, regulations, and moral, social, economic, and political norms. These aim to organize both spiritual and material life. They do so through a divine framework that remains valid across all times and places. Therefore, Islamic identity cannot be fully understood without connecting the culture of the society to Islam. It is also essential to recognize the defining features of this identity, as they shape the behavior of its adherents[31]. Contemporary challenges driven by media and communication technologies have exceeded all limits. The danger lies in the fact that religion has become a direct target. This is due to the deep contradiction between the ideology of globalization and the principles of Islam. The use of technology without full awareness of its content has enabled the spread of secularism, both in belief and in politics. This is done under the banners of democracy and freedom of expression. However, the true and practical goal is not justice or individual participation in society. The aim is to block the Islamic message from expanding into other areas of life.

Western influence has affected everything that Islam honors and protects. This includes the family, women, language, religious symbols, rituals, and human relationships in society. The focus has shifted toward limiting Islam's role by associating it with terrorism. This idea has been planted deeply in people's minds. It is done through shaping behavior using strategies that reinforce illusion. As a result, the Muslim individual is left with two reactions: either surrendering to Western culture or feeling anger and rejection toward their own identity. Both reactions lead to weakened decision-making across various aspects of life [32]. The infiltration of Western thought into Islamic society is not new. It dates back to the failure of Christian powers to control the region. This has led to the continuation of missionary campaigns under the cover of globalization. These efforts exploit negative aspects and systems in order to fragment the Islamic world. This is done either by promoting war against terrorism or by devaluing Islamic ethics and values, linking them to backwardness, regression, or even barbarism.

What has strengthened these efforts is the deep understanding that the West has of the Islamic world and Arab societies. Western actors have studied Muslim thoughts, emotions,

and inclinations. They gained trust by promoting the concept of human rights. This trust has been used to expand influence. Education has become a central focus. It is seen as a strategic entry point. This has increased control and allowed the spread of Christian Western thought. In some cases, interference now extends to curricula and academic content.

Due to the weakness of educational systems in reinforcing Islamic and national identity, these systems have become vulnerable. This has led future generations to drift away from foundational principles under the appeal of globalization and modernity.

What has also encouraged Western expansion in Islamic and Arab societies is the weakening of belonging and the growing sense of alienation among individuals. The rise of nationalist ideas has created serious concerns in the West. These concerns center on the fear of Islamic and Arab unity. As a result, Western agendas actively seek to fragment Islamic unity and to ignite conflicts among local ethnic groups and nationalist movements within Muslim countries. These are among the greatest dangers threatening the contemporary Islamic world.

Separating religion from politics and state affairs poses a serious risk. It affects how individuals build their political awareness. This separation leads to isolation from religious teachings in everyday life. Religion becomes reduced to worship practices only. Media and communication tools have played a significant role in this process. They have promoted Western thought and tried to limit the growth of religion. This restriction applies both geographically and in practical terms. Islam, however, presents a complete system. Its rules and teachings apply to all dimensions of human life—both spiritual and worldly[33].

Media Technology and National Identity in Algeria

The last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the current century witnessed a major technological advancement in the field of media and communication. This development progressed rapidly and significantly, and it has had a noticeable impact on human life as a whole. It brought about swift and large-scale transformations in the cultural and social structures of societies. This was especially true in the absence of laws and social norms that regulate the pace of such changes, and where there were no real barriers to their widespread use.

As a result, new frameworks of social interaction, behaviors, and relationships emerged, deviating from the traditional patterns of social groups. These emerging forms of interaction may contribute to shaping or reshaping the features and indicators of national identity within societies, especially as they reflect a specific social model among members of the same community.

The social model within any society is flexible and open to transformation. It can adapt based on the experiences and developments achieved by individuals in that society. This stems from the idea that the history of any nation is constantly evolving and full of events and experiences. Consequently, the original identity also changes over time and gains new characteristics. Identity is seen as a series of ongoing processes that evolve across time. Yet, this does not negate the presence of certain cultural constants that are difficult to change and that continue to persist across generations[34].

In light of modern technology, internet addiction has become a widespread social phenomenon. It has many psychological, social, and physical effects on individuals who spend long hours online. This reflects the growing role of digital platforms, especially in embodying the concept of mediated communication and in building virtual social networks. These include platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and others.

Among these, *Facebook* ranks first due to its success in facilitating communication and maintaining personal relationships. In the case of Algeria, the platform *Socialbakers.com* reported that, at the beginning of 2012, the rate of Facebook access in Algeria increased by 8.20% compared to the total population. When measured against internet users specifically, this percentage rose to 60.32%.

The total number of Facebook users in Algeria at that time reached 2.835 million. The same source indicated that Algerian male users were significantly more than female users. Males accounted for 68% of users, while females represented 32%[35].

Regarding the use of Facebook by age group, the same source revealed that the highest rate of use was among individuals aged 18 to 24. The percentages vary across other age categories. Today, Facebook is considered one of the most popular social networking platforms. This is especially due to the continuous development of its services, which attracts more users every day.

As for the platform Twitter, it is a social network used by millions of people around the world. It helps them stay connected with friends and colleagues through computers and mobile phones. Twitter's interface allows users to post short messages, with a maximum of 140 characters. These messages can be read by other users on the platform. A user may also choose to follow certain public figures. In such cases, the platform notifies the user whenever those figures post new updates.

Twitter functions as a real-time information network supported by users worldwide. It enables people to share and explore what is happening at any given moment. On its homepage, the platform poses the question: "What's happening now?" The responses are instantly distributed to millions across the globe.

Twitter is among the new social media technologies that allow for the publication of information online. This includes both official and unofficial sources. It is recognized as a microblogging platform, especially known for organizing and spreading information during major events. Over time, Twitter has become part of broader media systems. It enables users to receive information flows from various media outlets.

According to statistics published by Twitter on the occasion of its fifth anniversary, the platform had over 106 million users. The number of users increases by around 300,000 new subscribers every day.

Although the platform limits posts to 140 characters, users send more than 55 million tweets per day, which equals about 460 tweets per minute. User activity on Twitter tends to peak on Thursdays and Fridays. The same statistics indicate that 20% of users post 10 tweets or more per day, while 41% have never posted a single tweet since opening their account.

According to Twitter, in March 2011 alone, users sent an average of around 140 million tweets per day. By June 2011, the daily average had increased to 200 million tweets[36].

Internet and social media use has increased among Algerians, especially among youth. This demographic is now significantly exposed to Western cultural influence, particularly due to the weak regulation of online content. Although Algeria's overall internet usage remains modest compared to other Arab and Western countries, its effects are clearly visible. These effects directly impact both individual and social lifestyles.

Daily interaction with information and communication technologies—especially among young people—has led to profound social changes. This includes the emergence of a new kind of socialization that develops through interactive spaces. In these spaces, individuals acquire new social traits, which can reconstruct their identities. This also creates openness to behaviors that were once socially unacceptable [37]. The ongoing and varied engagement of Algerian users with social networking platforms contributes to the creation of interactive environments. These environments carry cultural and social meanings that participate in the construction and reconstruction of identity. As a result, individuals often become passive consumers rather than active participants. They become more susceptible to influence and transformation, while having less influence within their local social environments. Consequently, the individual begins to assert an independent identity.

Algeria has undergone broad and deep transformations across various sectors. These shifts have triggered multiple social and psychological challenges affecting both individuals and communities. The Algerian citizen is currently experiencing a period of significant change in ethical, cultural, and social values. These developments have played a key role in shaping individual and collective orientations.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand the nature of these transformations. The role of information and communication technologies in driving this change cannot be overlooked. In facing these modern challenges, it is important to adapt to change in a conscious and positive manner. This will allow the Algerian identity—rooted in Islamic and Arab values—to be expressed logically and clearly.

At the same time, the reduced role of governments and international or regional organizations in regulating the media and communication environment has become a barrier to affirming national identity. It is essential to establish legal frameworks that manage the free flow of information through planning, regulation, restriction, and censorship where necessary. Such measures aim to raise awareness and foster a healthy adaptation to technology—not to grant it full control. The goal is to prevent these tools from eroding Islamic and national identity, and instead use them to promote Islamic culture and intercultural dialogue [38].

All of this can only be achieved by changing the dominant mental images rooted in our historical heritage and human thinking. This requires liberation from intellectual, ideological, political, religious, and social constraints. It also demands overcoming the psychological barriers that have shaped human history and contributed to spreading negative images of humanity—such as racism, extremism, fanaticism, and corruption.

In contrast, democratic values, human rights, equality, justice, and public freedoms must be promoted. Tolerance, love, understanding, and rational dialogue must be encouraged. The principle of brotherhood and shared humanity should take priority. This principle must

outweigh and surpass all other ideological frameworks. It should be embedded in cultural awareness and the culture of citizenship, both at the individual and global levels.

National identity is defined by a set of core components. These elements are essential and serve to distinguish one individual or group from others. The first of these is **language**, which is a central pillar in any society. It gives each community a unique character through its symbols, images, forms, and meanings.

The second component is religion, which forms the backbone of any society. This applies regardless of the society's foundations, values, or principles. Religion also determines the degree of commitment expected from both the individual and the community.

The third component is culture, which reflects the soul of the society. It shapes how the community is perceived by others. Culture includes traditions, customs, behaviors, rules, and values.

Despite this, multiple identities—whether local or national—can coexist within a single society. A person may hold a variety of possible identities. This is especially true since every individual belongs to a certain community and feels connected to it. At the same time, the individual belongs to a specific religion and is subject to a particular legal system. This legal framework governs their actions and determines their rights and responsibilities. Through this multi-level belonging, identity is formed and expressed[39].

Secondly: Fieldwork Component of the Study

Study Scope

Temporal Scope This study was conducted from the end of February to the end of March. During this period, all phases of the fieldwork were completed.

Geographical Scope The study was carried out in the municipality of Medaourouch, which has a population of 50,000 inhabitants. The area spans 25 hectares. It is located 45 kilometers from the capital of the province, Souk Ahras, and is considered the third largest city in the province. Medaourouch has 1,000 home internet connections, in addition to two legally operating internet cafés. There are also several other cafés offering internet services without official authorization.

Human Scope The study targeted a sample of internet users, specifically youth and high school students. The sample included both males and females. The respondents were selected from users of Facebook and Twitter, according to the needs of the research. A total of 100 individuals were selected for the sample: 60 males and 40 females.

Type of Study This research falls under the category of exploratory studies. Such studies aim to help the researcher understand a specific problem. This type of research is usually conducted when the topic is new or has not yet been explored by other scholars. It is also used when the level of available information is limited or insufficient [40].

Methodology Used in the Study

The use and selection of a research method vary depending on the nature of the subject and the phenomena studied in the social sciences. The researcher needs a clear method to follow through all stages of the research. A method refers to a set of steps and procedures that the researcher applies to carry out the study and achieve its objectives[42]

Based on the topic of this study—the impact of information and communication technology on the national identity of the individual and society—we adopted the descriptive method. This method is used to analyze and interpret the nature of information and communication technologies and how young people use them through social networking platforms. It also helps explain their role in shaping and reshaping national identity.

The descriptive method involves collecting facts and observations in order to explain the phenomenon. These facts help build a realistic picture of the subject under study.[2] Through this approach, data are collected, organized, and analyzed to reach conclusions.

Data Collection Techniques

Observation involves closely watching the phenomenon in its natural context and under real conditions. This allows the researcher to monitor the behavior and interactions of the participants [43].

Data Collection Techniques

Observation According to Frey, observation is considered one of the most commonly used tools in communication studies. This is due to its ability to provide a large volume of data and information[44].

In this study, we used observation to monitor the behavior and interactions of young people on Facebook and Twitter. We examined their posts and the content they share, and we focused on how these elements influence their values, behaviors, and especially their national and cultural identity.

Interview An interview is defined as a verbal interaction that takes place in a face-to-face setting. In it, the interviewer seeks to uncover information, performance, or beliefs from one or more individuals to obtain objective data.[45]

It is also known as a method that involves direct verbal communication between the researcher and the respondent.[46] The interview is considered one of the key tools for data collection. Through it, the researcher can gather various facts related to the research topic. It holds a central role in sociological research.

Questionnaire The questionnaire is a tool consisting of a series of questions or statements. The respondent is asked to answer them in a format chosen by the researcher, depending on the research objectives[47].

A questionnaire holds little value unless it is constructed in accordance with the material, cultural, and social context of the study[48].

The questionnaire used in this research went through several stages. First, we reviewed relevant theoretical literature and previous studies, which helped in designing the questions.

The final version of the questionnaire was organized into four sections:

Section One: Basic demographic information such as gender, age, educational level, and place of residence.

Section Two: How young people use Facebook and Twitter, and the type of content they engage with. This section included 10 questions.

Section Three: The psychological and social impacts of these platforms on the construction of national identity among youth, and how that affects the culture and Islamic-Arab identity of society. This section included 14 questions.

The questionnaire was revised according to the research requirements and the interests of the participants, in order to achieve the desired results and research objectives. The final questionnaire contained a total of 32 questions.

Sample and Sampling Method In empirical social research, the sample represents a limited group drawn from a larger population. This group may consist of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of individuals, depending on the case. The purpose of the sample is to allow the researcher to make generalizable estimates about the original target population, taking into account its social and cultural characteristics[49].

Sampling Method

We adopted the simple random sampling technique, defined as: "A population model selected by a random process, from which data is collected, conclusions are drawn, and generalizations are developed about the larger research population. A random sample is usually representative of the community and reflects its data and characteristics. The method gives all population units an equal chance to be included in the sample under study."[50]

We selected 100 individuals from the research population. The sample included both males and females, particularly high school students who actively use Facebook and Twitter. All participants either had home internet access or were frequent users of internet cafés. The selected age range was between 16 and 35 years.

Study Results

A careful examination of the statistical analysis revealed several findings. These reflect the psychological, social, intellectual, cultural, and political realities of the participants in relation to the most widely used social media platforms: Facebook and Twitter. The most notable findings include:

Males use Facebook and Twitter more than females. This may be due to social customs and traditions. However, some view communication on these platforms as a sign of modernity and freedom.

Most participants spend more than three hours daily on these platforms. They use them multiple times a day, especially during the evening.

Facebook is used more frequently than Twitter. Participants mostly exchange messages and images. The most common activity is reading chats and posts.

Some users use their real names, while others prefer pseudonyms to hide their identity. This allows them to act freely and interact with the opposite gender without restrictions or oversight.

Some participants feel anxious and unsettled when Facebook is inaccessible, while others are unaffected by its absence.

Online interaction has major effects on both the individual and society. It affects social relationships and promotes the formation of virtual communities.

Social media has given rise to a new language, shaped by the internet. This language is widely used among youth and has become a distinguishing feature, along with fashion and hairstyles, which is viewed as a form of development.

According to participants, Facebook exposed Arab leaders, their corruption, and helped fuel the Arab Spring revolutions, which sought regime change in line with the people's will.

Social media offers space for free expression of opinions and discussions of social and political issues without fear or restriction.

Cultural influence from social media content is related to the level of awareness among users. This, in turn, is linked to their educational level. The higher the education, the greater the awareness.

Through shared conversations and images, social media presented an idealized image of Western societies. This has led many young people to admire and imitate Western lifestyles, and in some cases, desire to migrate in search of better opportunities.

Some respondents were influenced by Western perspectives on Islam, especially the association of jihad with terrorism. This confusion stems, as previously mentioned, from low awareness levels. However, most participants rejected all forms of offense against Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Arabs, and Muslims.

Recommendations and Suggestions

To ensure that media messages are purposeful and fulfill their intended roles, the following steps are recommended: It is necessary to involve specialists in media, education, psychology, sociology, law, and history. Their collaborative efforts can help produce positive media content. Disseminating such content through various communication channels can yield beneficial outcomes at the level of the individual, the family, and the wider community.

Media objectives must be clearly defined and divided by phase and timeframe. This ensures that the public perceives the media message as closely related to their lives, their children's well-being, and the security of the community and nation. These objectives should also align with those of other socialization institutions and be pursued concurrently.

Media content often presents controversial themes—such as rebellion against parents, lying, or theft—in a compelling way. However, core values should be presented with even greater appeal. This should be a central goal for media producers. Efforts must be directed toward mapping family and social values and promoting them. While rebellion is a feature of Western cultural narratives, in our context, justice is a fundamental value.

The portrayal of the family and its values in media content should be improved. This can be achieved through specialized programs, as well as through general programming and film production.

There is a need to develop a media and communication code of ethics that reflects contemporary realities. It should emphasize Arab cultural values in general and family values in particular. This code should guide the production, editing, and presentation of media content.

Experts and scholars should be appointed to monitor media content. Their role is to guide producers toward content that reinforces social and familial values. This involves eliminating messages that distort or undermine those values.

CONCLUSION

The global information revolution, driven by rapid advancements in communication technologies since the late 20th century, has enabled the unrestricted flow of ideas, images, and concepts. Individuals, especially children and youth, are constantly exposed to this influx without prior consent or oversight.

This transformation in the circulation of information has left communities vulnerable to external behavioral patterns and social values that are often disconnected from their cultural environment. This presents a growing challenge, especially for the younger generation.

The state must therefore take on a greater responsibility in preserving national and cultural identity. Without swift and coordinated responses in the form of laws, educational programs, and media policies that promote national belonging, future generations may lose the ability to distinguish between authentic values and harmful influences. It is essential that individuals remain confident in their identity, loyal to their homeland, and proud of their historical legacy.

Media oversight must focus on cultural content in foreign programs. This is especially important given the central role of these platforms in shaping social perceptions. Many Arab countries have begun to realize the scale of the threat posed by modern media to Islamic and Arab identity—a threat that is subtly advanced under the banner of technology.

This media content often serves the interests of external powers in the Arab region, exploiting the absence of awareness and the spread of cultural ignorance to reshape identities.

In response, the Arab and Islamic world must commit to defending its core values and reinforcing national belonging. It must also rely on social institutions to raise awareness about the underlying goals of cultural globalization. Societies should embrace the useful aspects of information and communication technologies, while rejecting imitation and trivial influences.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize that Western societies continue to uphold their own identities. In contrast, there are persistent efforts to push others to abandon theirs—voluntarily. This long-term strategy seeks to produce generations that are disempowered, easily led, and permanently dependent.

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