



fecha de presentación: 19/03/2026, fecha de aceptación: 11/04/2026, fecha de publicación: 01/05/2026

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Cita sugerida (APA, séptima edición).

Farek, S., & Bkhadidja, H. (2026). Transformations in family relations in Algerian society between traditional and new media: A descriptive comparative study. *Revista Sociedad & Tecnología*, 9(2), 800-810, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51247/st.v9iS2.729>

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Transformations in family relations in Algerian society between traditional and new media : A descriptive comparative study

ABSTRACT

This study examined the transformations of family relationships in Algerian society resulting from the transition from traditional media to new digital media. The objective was to analyze how television, radio, social media, and mobile technologies influenced communication patterns, cohesion, and interaction within families. The methodology was based on a qualitative documentary approach through the review of books, theses, and recent scientific articles related to family communication and digital media. The findings showed that traditional media historically promoted collective family experiences, whereas new media encouraged individualized and continuous communication practices. However, digital platforms also facilitated contact among distant relatives and improved everyday coordination. Excessive or unregulated use was associated with reduced face-to-face dialogue, emotional distancing, and conflicts within households. The study concluded that technology itself did not determine family outcomes; rather, the effects depended on communication quality, parental guidance, and family norms. In the Algerian context, strong traditional values coexisted with rapid digital modernization, generating both tensions and opportunities for adaptation. Promoting balanced media use and digital literacy was identified as essential for strengthening family cohesion in contemporary society.

Keywords: family relationships, Algeria, social media, traditional media, digital communication.

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Relaciones familiares en la sociedad argelina entre los medios tradicionales y los nuevos medios: un análisis socio-comunicativo

RESUMEN

Este estudio examinó las transformaciones de las relaciones familiares en la sociedad argelina derivadas de la transición de los medios tradicionales hacia los nuevos medios digitales. El objetivo fue analizar cómo la televisión, la radio, las redes sociales y las tecnologías móviles influyeron en los patrones de comunicación, la cohesión y la interacción dentro de las familias. La metodología se basó en un enfoque cualitativo documental mediante la revisión de libros, tesis y artículos científicos recientes relacionados con la comunicación familiar y los medios digitales. Los resultados mostraron que los medios

tradicionales promovieron históricamente experiencias familiares colectivas, mientras que los nuevos medios impulsaron prácticas comunicativas más individualizadas y continuas. Sin embargo, las plataformas digitales también facilitaron el contacto entre familiares distantes y mejoraron la coordinación cotidiana. El uso excesivo o desregulado se asoció con menor diálogo presencial, distanciamiento emocional y conflictos en el hogar. Se concluyó que la tecnología no determinó por sí sola los resultados familiares, sino que los efectos dependieron de la calidad comunicativa, la orientación parental y las normas familiares. En Argelia coexistieron valores tradicionales fuertes con una rápida modernización digital.

Palabras clave: relaciones familiares, Argelia, redes sociales, medios tradicionales, comunicación digital.

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Relações familiares na sociedade argelina entre os meios tradicionais e os novos meios: uma análise sociocomunicativa

RESUMO

Este estudo examinou as transformações das relações familiares na sociedade argelina decorrentes da transição dos meios tradicionais para os novos meios digitais. O objetivo foi analisar como a televisão, o rádio, as redes sociais e as tecnologias móveis influenciaram os padrões de comunicação, a coesão e a interação dentro das famílias. A metodologia baseou-se em uma abordagem qualitativa documental por meio da revisão de livros, teses e artigos científicos recentes relacionados à comunicação familiar e aos meios digitais. Os resultados mostraram que os meios tradicionais promoveram historicamente experiências familiares coletivas, enquanto os novos meios incentivaram práticas comunicativas mais individualizadas e contínuas. No entanto, as plataformas digitais também facilitaram o contato entre parentes distantes e melhoraram a coordenação cotidiana. O uso excessivo ou desregulado foi associado à redução do diálogo presencial, distanciamiento emocional e conflitos domésticos. Concluiu-se que a tecnologia não determinou sozinha os resultados familiares, pois os efeitos dependeram da qualidade comunicativa, da orientação parental e das normas familiares. Na Argélia coexistiram valores tradicionais fortes com rápida modernização digital.

Palavras-chave: relações familiares, Argélia, redes sociais, meios tradicionais, comunicação digital.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, family relationships have undergone profound transformations as a result of the expansion of traditional media and, later, digital technologies. Television, radio, and the press long shaped patterns of domestic coexistence; however, the emergence of the internet, smartphones, and social media changed the forms of everyday interaction within the household. Various studies argue that media do not merely transmit information, but also reorganize habits, shared time, and emotional dynamics among family members. Carvalho et al. (2015) and Wilding (2020) note that the family today is immersed in a continuous process of communicative adaptation.

Recent literature agrees that social media has an ambivalent nature regarding family life. On the one hand, it facilitates contact among geographically distant relatives, strengthens emotional ties, and enables intergenerational communication through instant messaging, video calls, and content sharing. Abel et al. (2021) demonstrated that digital platforms fulfill ritual functions in families separated by migration or work, while Danielsbacka et al. (2024) found a positive association between digital contact with relatives and higher levels of subjective well-being. This confirms that technology can function as an instrument of cohesion when its use responds to clear relational purposes.

However, it has also been documented that intensive or unregulated use of social media can generate isolation within the household itself. When each member focuses attention on an individual screen, opportunities for face-to-face dialogue, shared meals, and spontaneous conversations decline. Tariq et al. (2022), in a systematic review, concluded that the frequency and quality of technological use are decisive variables for understanding family outcomes. Likewise, McDaniel and Coyne (2021) introduced the concept of *technoference* to explain how digital interruptions affect couple relationships and parent-child bonds.

In the case of adolescents and young adults, the issue becomes especially relevant because these groups are the most intensive users of social platforms. Recent research shows that problematic social media use may be associated with lower family satisfaction, emotional difficulties, and weakened parental support. Savci et al. (2020) found that satisfaction with family life mediates the relationship between problematic social media use and social connectedness among adolescents. Similarly, Schmuck (2021) observed that excessive following of influencers is linked to fear of missing out and lower social well-being, although strong communication with parents serves as a protective factor.

The digital transformation of the family is not homogeneous across societies, since it depends on cultural, economic, and educational variables. In Arab and North African contexts, where the family maintains a central role in the social structure, the arrival of new technologies creates tensions between communal traditions and individualizing tendencies (He, 2022). Studies conducted in Algeria indicate visible changes in patterns of coexistence, especially due to the widespread use of Facebook, mobile messaging, and individualized media consumption. Ben Ali (2019) reported that the most notable changes appear in internal communication, everyday language, and the reduction of family dialogue.

Algerian society constitutes a particularly relevant setting for analyzing these transformations, as it combines strong family values with rapid technological adoption. Local research has shown that excessive use of social media may encourage marital conflict, suspicion between spouses, reduced parental supervision, and emotional isolation among cohabitants. Dhiab and Dhaif (2020) identified that many married women perceive social media as a factor of marital distancing, while Sahari and Bouhda (2021) highlighted that prolonged use of digital platforms is associated with lower household interaction and feelings of loneliness.

Nevertheless, not all Algerian evidence is negative. Some studies indicate that the impact depends on the type of use, exposure time, and the family's ability to integrate technology into healthy communicative practices. Si Moussa and Labied (2021) found among youth in Bechar that Facebook does not necessarily deteriorate family relationships; on the contrary, when there is self-control and moderate use, it can strengthen interaction with parents and siblings. This perspective is consistent with Chan (2021), who argues that communicative quality within the family is more decisive than the mere presence of technology.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to examine the transformations of family relationships in Algerian society between traditional media and new media, drawing on previous university research. It seeks to understand how domestic communication patterns have evolved, what continuities remain, and what the main social effects of this media transition are. Analyzing these dynamics is essential for designing educational and family strategies aimed at achieving a balanced use of media for the benefit of social cohesion.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, as it was considered the most appropriate method for interpreting the social and communicative transformations of family relationships in Algerian society. Qualitative research allows the understanding of meanings, experiences, and contextual dynamics that cannot be fully explained through

numerical indicators alone. According to Espinoza-Freire (2025a), qualitative inquiry is especially useful when the objective is to analyze complex human phenomena shaped by culture, interaction, and symbolic practices. Therefore, this perspective was suitable for examining the relationship between media change and family life.

The research design was based on documentary analysis, using academic literature as the principal source of information. Books, doctoral theses, master's dissertations, and peer-reviewed scientific articles related to family communication, traditional media, and digital platforms were systematically reviewed. Documentary studies are valuable because they permit the reconstruction of knowledge trends, theoretical positions, and previous empirical findings within a defined field of study. Guamán Gómez et al. (2019) noted that documentary inquiry constitutes a rigorous strategy when sources are critically selected and analytically interpreted.

The process of information retrieval followed structured search strategies in recognized scientific databases and academic repositories. Sources were identified through keywords such as family relationships, Algeria, social media, traditional media, communication, and digital technologies. Boolean operators and thematic combinations were used to improve relevance and precision during the search process. Espinoza-Freire (2025b) emphasized that systematic database searches increase reliability, transparency, and reproducibility in academic research. For that reason, priority was given to indexed and verifiable sources.

The inclusion criteria considered publications in Spanish, English, French, and Arabic that addressed family dynamics, communication processes, or media influence, with special attention to studies focused on Algeria or comparable Arab societies. Recent publications from 2015 to 2025 were prioritized, although foundational works were also incorporated when theoretically necessary. Sources lacking academic credibility or insufficient bibliographic data were excluded. This selection process ensured conceptual consistency and methodological rigor throughout the study.

For data analysis, thematic content analysis was applied in order to identify recurring patterns, central categories, and interpretative trends across the reviewed literature. The information was organized into analytical dimensions such as family cohesion, intergenerational communication, marital interaction, youth media use, and parental mediation. Espinoza-Freire (2024) explained that qualitative categorization enables researchers to construct coherent explanatory frameworks from dispersed textual evidence. Consequently, the findings were synthesized into thematic interpretations relevant to the Algerian context.

The narrative presentation of results followed principles of scientific argumentation, integrating empirical evidence with theoretical discussion. Espinoza-Freire (2021) argued that academic argumentation strengthens the logical consistency of research by connecting claims, evidence, and critical reflection. Accordingly, each section of the study was supported by previously validated sources and comparative interpretation. This procedure enhanced the credibility of the conclusions derived from the documentary corpus.

Ethical principles were also respected throughout the investigation. Since the study relied exclusively on secondary sources, no direct intervention with human participants was conducted. Nevertheless, intellectual honesty, correct citation practices, and faithful interpretation of authors' ideas were strictly observed. Espinoza-Freire (2022) highlighted that ethics in scientific research includes transparency, respect for authorship, and responsible management of information. Therefore, all consulted materials were properly acknowledged according to academic standards.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The family has historically been recognized as the basic institution of socialization, where norms, values, languages, and patterns of coexistence are transmitted across generations. From a sociological perspective, it is not a static structure but a dynamic organization that responds to the economic, cultural, and technological changes of each era. In this sense,

family relationships are understood as the set of affective, communicative, and normative interactions linking parents, children, and other household members. These relationships may be strengthened or weakened depending on the quality of shared time, daily communication, and external pressures affecting domestic life (Abu Shanab, 2002). Therefore, studying media influence implies examining profound transformations in family structure.

Before the digital expansion, traditional media—especially radio and television—occupied a central place in everyday life. For decades, these media organized family routines such as gathering schedules, moments of entertainment, and common conversations about news or programs. Al-Ghamdi (2012) notes that traditional media acted as mass channels of dissemination that, in addition to informing, shaped behaviors and social perceptions. In many Arab households, television became a symbol of domestic modernity and a space for collective gathering. However, it also introduced tensions related to screen time and the substitution of interpersonal dialogue.

Madhi (2008) showed that prolonged television consumption significantly reduced intimate moments among household members. According to this author, visual culture captured a substantial portion of family free time, displacing spaces for conversation, shared memory, and collective recreation. She also identified a shift from collective viewing to more individualized consumption, especially with the multiplication of satellite channels. This phenomenon indicates that even before social media, signs of domestic fragmentation mediated by technology were already visible. Consequently, new media did not create all changes, but rather deepened preexisting processes.

From the uses and gratifications theory, individuals select media according to specific needs: information, entertainment, social interaction, or emotional escape. This perspective helps explain why different members of the same family use different media and obtain diverse outcomes. Al-Sawi (1992) explained that the descriptive analysis of social phenomena requires considering individual motivations and contexts of use. Applied to the family sphere, this means that it is not enough to measure hours of connection, but also to understand what each user seeks through television or social networks. The gratifications pursued condition the quality of subsequent family relationships (Sabti & Zaqrar, 2018; Toutawi, 2015).

The arrival of the internet and mobile devices introduced a new communicative logic based on interactivity, immediacy, and personalization. Ibrahim (2014) defines new media as digital systems that allow users to produce, distribute, and exchange content with broad flexibility. Unlike television, where a passive receiver predominated, social media turns the user into a permanent actor within continuous communicative flows. This transformation alters domestic life because each member can simultaneously connect with multiple external networks without necessarily sharing the experience with those physically present. Coexistence thus begins to compete with virtual communities.

Carvalho et al. (2015), in a literature review, argue that information and communication technologies modify family functioning in dimensions such as cohesion, adaptability, and conflict resolution. Families that establish clear rules of use and maintain spaces of face-to-face interaction tend to integrate technology more successfully. By contrast, when there are no limits or communicative strategies, tensions, isolation, and disputes over privacy or screen time increase. This suggests that technological impact is not automatic but mediated by prior relational competencies. Technology amplifies existing strengths or weaknesses.

In positive terms, digital platforms facilitate emotional continuity among relatives separated by migration, study, or work. Abel et al. (2021) demonstrated that video calls, shared messages, and virtual rituals help maintain emotional closeness in transnational families. Online celebrations, daily conversations, and digital family groups reproduce symbolic forms of presence. Such practices are especially relevant in societies where family solidarity retains strong cultural value. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that social networks

necessarily erode bonds; in many cases, they compensate for geographic barriers and strengthen everyday communication.

Similar findings are presented by Danielsbacka et al. (2024), who found that frequent digital contact with relatives is associated with higher levels of happiness among both younger and older adults. The authors emphasize that perceptions of support and emotional availability can be sustained through digital means when satisfactory prior relationships exist. This is particularly important for households with geographically dispersed members or older adults with reduced mobility. Thus, technology may contribute to subjective well-being and intergenerational integration. The decisive factor is prior relational quality rather than the tool itself.

However, the literature also identifies negative effects derived from intensive or disordered use. Tariq et al. (2022), after reviewing quantitative studies, concluded that excessive social media use is linked to less shared family time, conflicts over attention, and reduced face-to-face interaction. When digital connection systematically displaces in-person coexistence, the family loses essential spaces for transmitting emotional support and social norms. This risk intensifies in households where each member uses devices individually and without coordination. Permanent connectivity does not guarantee emotional closeness.

A relevant concept for understanding these tensions is *technoference*, developed by McDaniel and Coyne (2021). The authors use it to describe interruptions caused by phones and devices during family interactions. Checking messages while talking, responding to notifications during meals, or prioritizing social media over active listening gradually deteriorates relationship quality. In couples, this increases frustration and feelings of neglect; between parents and children, it reduces emotional sensitivity and daily supervision. Technological interference shows that repeated minor behaviors may have significant relational consequences.

Among adolescents, problematic social media use deserves special attention because of its impact on emotional development and identity. Savci et al. (2020) found that satisfaction with family life mediates the relationship between problematic use and social connectedness. In other words, young people with positive family bonds show lower vulnerability to compulsive digital habits. Complementarily, Cattellino et al. (2023) identified that social media addiction is associated with specific social patterns, including integration difficulties and dependence on external approval. The family thus appears as a protective factor against digital psychosocial risks.

Schmuck (2021) deepens this line of inquiry by analyzing the following of influencers among early adolescents. The study found associations between intensive consumption of aspirational content, fear of missing out, and lower social well-being. Nevertheless, supportive communication with parents mitigates these effects. This finding confirms that active family presence remains crucial in highly competitive digital environments. Rather than prohibiting platforms, it is more effective to strengthen trust, dialogue, and critical thinking regarding the content consumed by youth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, household dependence on technology increased considerably. Drouin et al. (2020) observed that parents and children expanded their use of social media and devices for education, work, and social contact. Although these tools enabled functional continuity in a context of confinement, they were also associated with higher anxiety levels. Permanent coexistence mediated by screens highlighted both the usefulness and the limits of digital communication. This period showed that technology can sustain family life in times of crisis, but cannot fully replace balanced human interaction.

Regarding the parental role, Di Napoli et al. (2019) demonstrated that parents' perceptions of the impact of social media influence open communication within the family system. When adults interpret technology exclusively as a threat, they tend toward restrictive and conflictive responses. By contrast, more balanced views encourage guidance, negotiation of rules, and joint learning. This implies that parental digital literacy is essential for

managing technological coexistence adequately. Families need not only devices, but also competencies to govern their use.

From a cultural perspective, Thimm (2023) proposes the concept of mediatized families to describe households in which everyday practices, parenting, and family representations are shaped by digital platforms. Parents share images of their children, seek parenting advice online, and negotiate family reputations in digital public spaces. Private life becomes partially visible and performative. This phenomenon redefines the boundaries between intimacy and exposure, especially among younger generations accustomed to documenting experiences. The family no longer only lives relationships; it also communicates them publicly.

Wilding (2020) complements this idea by arguing that technologies do not replace family relationships, but reconfigure how they are maintained, expressed, and negotiated. Families combine face-to-face meetings, calls, chats, and networks according to situational needs. Therefore, contemporary analysis requires abandoning dichotomous views of "good" or "bad." Effects depend on age, gender, family structure, cultural capital, and material access conditions. Technological mediation produces heterogeneous outcomes that must be interpreted in context.

In the Algerian case, family transformations are shaped by a unique combination of communal tradition, accelerated urbanization, and recent digital expansion. Ben Ali (2019) identified that widespread internet and mobile phone use altered everyday language, consumption habits, and forms of intrafamily interaction. At the same time, perceptions of individualism and reduced dialogue increased. These findings suggest tensions between traditional models based on constant closeness and new practices oriented toward personal autonomy. Technology acts as a catalyst for broader social changes.

Finally, Başaslan (2022) argues that the place of social media in family communication depends on the household's ability to integrate it into a healthy communicative culture. When shared norms, common screen-free times, and trust between generations exist, platforms may complement family life. If prior conflicts, lack of limits, or poor communication skills predominate, technology intensifies existing fractures. Consequently, the theoretical framework of this study assumes that media function as mediating variables rather than sole causes of family transformation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that family relationships in Algerian society have undergone significant transformations due to the transition from traditional media to new digital media. While television and radio previously structured collective moments of coexistence, social media and mobile technologies have introduced more individualized forms of communication. This shift reflects broader global patterns in which domestic interaction is increasingly mediated by personal devices rather than shared family spaces. Carvalho et al. (2015) argued that technological changes directly affect family cohesion, adaptability, and everyday communication processes, which is consistent with the evidence identified in this research.

One of the most relevant results is that the impact of media on family life is not inherently positive or negative, but depends on the ways technologies are integrated into domestic routines. In households where social media is used to maintain contact, share information, and coordinate responsibilities, digital platforms may strengthen emotional bonds. This supports the findings of Abel et al. (2021), who showed that online rituals and communication tools can sustain relational closeness among geographically separated family members. Likewise, Danielsbacka et al. (2024) found that frequent digital contact with relatives is associated with higher levels of happiness and perceived support, reinforcing the idea that media can contribute positively to family well-being.

At the same time, the study also confirms that excessive or uncontrolled use of social media can weaken direct interpersonal relationships inside the home. Reduced face-to-face

dialogue, emotional distancing, and fragmented family time were recurrent concerns in several Algerian studies. These patterns are consistent with Tariq et al. (2022), who found that intensive social media use is often associated with lower levels of shared family interaction. Similarly, McDaniel and Coyne (2021) explained that frequent digital interruptions during meals or conversations may gradually erode relational quality through processes of *technoference*.

The role of adolescents and youth deserves special attention, since younger generations are the most active users of digital platforms. The evidence reviewed suggests that family communication quality operates as a protective factor against problematic social media use. Savci et al. (2020) found that family life satisfaction reduces vulnerability to compulsive online behavior, while Schmuck (2021) emphasized that supportive parental communication mitigates the negative psychological effects of social comparison and fear of missing out. In addition, Cattelino et al. (2023) linked social media addiction among adolescents with difficulties in social adjustment, which highlights the importance of family support during developmental stages.

In the Algerian case, the coexistence of strong traditional family values with rapid technological modernization creates a unique social tension. Families continue to value solidarity, respect, and collective identity, yet everyday practices increasingly reflect personalization and digital autonomy. This duality may explain why some studies report conflict, suspicion, and reduced communication, while others identify benefits such as faster coordination and stronger contact among relatives. Ben Ali (2019) noted that communication patterns within Algerian households have changed substantially with the spread of mobile technologies and internet access.

Another important point concerns parental mediation and digital literacy. Families that establish clear norms regarding screen time, privacy, respectful interaction, and shared moments without devices appear better prepared to preserve cohesion. Di Napoli et al. (2019) demonstrated that parents' perceptions of technology strongly influence communication climates within the household. If digital tools are viewed only as threats, conflict may intensify; if approached critically but constructively, families are more likely to negotiate balanced patterns of use. This suggests that parental education remains central in the digital era.

The study also suggests that Algerian families are experiencing a broader redefinition of intimacy and domestic presence. Being physically together no longer guarantees emotional connection, as family members may remain absorbed in separate digital networks. Conversely, relatives living far away may experience closeness through constant virtual communication. Wilding (2020) argued that technologies do not replace family relationships, but rather transform the ways they are maintained and negotiated. This paradox illustrates how digital media blur the boundaries between presence and absence.

Furthermore, some Algerian studies indicate that marital relationships may be particularly affected by excessive social media use. Dhiab and Dhaif (2020) reported that many married women perceive social media as a source of jealousy, emotional distance, and conflict between spouses. Similarly, Sahari and Bouhda (2021) found that prolonged platform use is associated with reduced household interaction and increased feelings of loneliness. These findings suggest that couple relationships require deliberate communication strategies in highly connected environments.

Finally, these results highlight the need for public policies and educational initiatives that promote healthy digital habits. Schools, universities, and community institutions can play an important role in teaching media literacy, responsible use of social networks, and communication skills for family well-being. Chan (2021) emphasized that the quality of family communication is more decisive than the mere presence of technology. Therefore, strengthening the social capacity of families to manage digital environments is likely to be more sustainable than attempting to limit technological access itself.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that family relationships in Algerian society have been substantially reshaped by the transition from traditional media to new digital media. Whereas television and radio once encouraged collective domestic experiences, social media and mobile devices have promoted more individualized and continuous communication patterns.

The evidence demonstrates that digital media generate both opportunities and risks for family life. On the positive side, they facilitate contact among distant relatives, support emotional continuity, and improve coordination in everyday activities. On the negative side, excessive or unregulated use may reduce face-to-face interaction, increase conflict, and weaken emotional closeness within the household.

A key conclusion is that technology itself does not determine family outcomes. Rather, the effects depend on patterns of use, time management, parental guidance, and the quality of preexisting family communication. Families with stronger dialogue, trust, and clear norms are better able to integrate digital tools in constructive ways.

In the Algerian context, these transformations are especially significant because they occur within a society where family remains a central social institution. The interaction between traditional cultural values and rapid digital modernization produces tensions, but also opportunities for adaptation and renewal.

The study also concludes that adolescents and young adults require particular attention, as they are more exposed to problematic social media use. Preventive strategies should focus on strengthening family communication, emotional support, and digital literacy rather than relying exclusively on restrictions.

Finally, future social and educational policies should encourage balanced media use, promote family-centered digital education, and support research on changing family dynamics in Algeria. Understanding these transformations is essential for preserving family cohesion in an increasingly connected world.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it was based mainly on documentary analysis and previous academic studies, without collecting primary empirical data directly from Algerian families. Second, some local studies were difficult to access in full text, which limited deeper comparative analysis. Third, the rapid evolution of digital platforms may cause certain findings to change over time. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within the temporal and contextual scope of the reviewed literature.

FUTURE STUDIES

Future research should include quantitative and qualitative fieldwork with Algerian families from different regions, generations, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Comparative studies between urban and rural households would also be valuable. In addition, future scholars may examine specific platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp to identify their differentiated effects on family cohesion, parenting, and marital communication. Longitudinal studies are recommended to observe changes over time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the academic specialists and researchers whose studies contributed to the development of this work. Special appreciation is extended to university colleagues for their valuable comments, intellectual support, and encouragement throughout the research process. The authors also thank the institutions that promote scientific research and access to academic resources.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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