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ARTICLE**Transformations of Values in Algerian Society in Light of the New Media: A Critical Study****Idiou Leila**

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Abstract

This paper begins with the problematic emergence of some values alien to Algerian society and their relationship to new media. It explores a critical perspective encompassing a set of concepts, such as social values, new media, and Algerian society, based on previous studies and contextual evidence, given that the subject falls within the category of descriptive studies. Understanding how individuals in Algerian society view values and their determinants requires a number of readings and analysis of several aspects and outcomes. Understanding this also requires us to consider our communication technologies in general and their impact, to pave the way for a context within which we study the extent of a sound understanding of values and their impact on their use.

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Introduction:

Addressing the issue of values in Algerian society refers to multiple contexts, foremost among them the social aspect characterized by its various institutions, as well as the cultural, political, and economic dimensions. This is because values represent the cohesive fabric that frames both speech and action through the different forms of communicative behavior. Respect, humility, acknowledgment and appreciation of others, responsibility, and honesty—all these are values upon which social relationships in all their forms must be based and through which they are sustained.

Hence, this is a context that does not pertain to values alone, but extends to what is related to them in terms of socialization processes tied to various institutions and phenomena. All of these are contributing factors either in the effectiveness and presence of values or in their inefficiency and decline. This calls for moving away from stereotypical approaches to the study of values, and not being content with raising merely theoretical questions—such as definitions of values and their sources—which fail to consider the reality wherein many of the social features have changed, numerous concepts have been displaced from their essence, and new meanings have been added. In

addition, the economic and political changes have extended into the social dimension (Shalloush Noura, 2018, p. 117).

On this basis, we shall address the topic of values in Algerian society according to the following methodological structure, based on three levels:

1. The extent of sound understanding and proper characterization of values in our society.
2. The sociological and media contexts of the value system in Algerian society.
3. Selected phenomena and behaviors, and the extent of their relation to values, based on several relevant studies.

1. Problem Statement of the Study

There is no doubt that researchers in the fields of media and society confirm that contemporary Arab societies are currently undergoing a wave of social transformations due to the impact of new media. These changes have caused the societal value system to veer towards instability and disorder, leading to a situation where society lacks a single, well-defined reference framework of values that can serve as fixed principles guiding the behavior of its members. The traditional value system—almost absent—has collided with new incoming values exported to us from other societies and cultures across the globe.

This is what we attempt to highlight in this study by exploring the transformations in the value system of Algerian society in the context of what is known as new social media and its networks. Accordingly, this paper aims to clarify the concept of new media and its implications for the social value system within Algerian society from a critical perspective. It seeks to answer the central research question and the subsidiary questions derived from it.

The **main research question** can be formulated as follows:

What is the nature of the transformations that have affected the value system in Algerian society in light of the expansion of new media?

From this central question, the following **sub-questions** emerge:

- What is the nature of the impact of new media on the value system in Algerian society?
- What are the most prominent social values that new media contributes to producing?
- What are the most negative values that new media introduces within Algerian society?

2. Type of Study

The present study falls under the category of descriptive studies, which aim to describe new media in its various forms and examine its relationship to the emergence of certain negative values that have affected the value system. The purpose is to identify and analyze this relationship through empirical evidence drawn from real-life observations.

3. Importance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the seriousness of the issue it tackles—namely, the outputs of new media and their repercussions on the value system within Algerian society. It also seeks to present the most important social values that have been affected by the widespread dissemination of new media platforms.

4. Key Concepts of the Study: Theoretical Background

4.1. The Concept of Values and Their Importance

The term **value** in the social sciences may refer to any object, need, orientation, or desire. The term is commonly used when an interactive relationship appears between needs, orientations, and desires on the one hand, and objects on the other. In sociology and anthropology, it typically refers to shared cultural standards used to assess objects, moral attitudes, spatial or cognitive orientations, with a prevailing belief among those who share these standards that they are truthful and should be relied upon for judgment (Atif Ghaith, 2006, p. 469).

4.1.1. Values in Linguistic Terms

The term “*value*” in Arabic refers to the worth or price of something. The word also denotes that which is excellent or possesses distinguished worth. In contemporary Arabic usage, the term commonly indicates religious, moral, and social virtues upon which the life of human society is built (Emil Yaacoub, 2004, p. 314).

Value: the worth or estimation of an object; the price of a commodity; plural: *values*. Expressions such as “so-and-so has no value” indicate a lack of stability or constancy in conduct. A *valuable matter*

means it is proper or righteous; a *valuable book* means it is of substance; a *valuable nation* means it is upright and balanced (Dana Ahmed, Karima, 2021, p. 120).

4.1.2. The Concept of Values in Terminology

Social values essentially constitute one of the foundational pillars of a society's culture. There can be no society without an organized system of values guiding the behavior of its members and achieving internal unity of thought. In this regard, many definitions have been proposed by sociologists and anthropologists.

Milton Rokeach defines values as:

"Enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state."

This definition invites us to consider values as benchmarks upon which individuals base their choices, judgments, and preferences—choosing among alternatives and determining which goals or behaviors are desirable or undesirable.

Tawfiq Al-Samalouti defines values as:

"The desirable traits that guide social behavior, based on the assumption that behavior and relationships are governed by the value system or behavioral guidelines" (Nabil Al-Samalouti, 1981, p. 83).

Another important definition is offered by Kluckhohn, who sees value as:

"A clearly or implicitly held concept, shared by an individual or group, that defines what is desirable, allowing for selection among various behavioral strategies, means, and ends." Parsons, in his book *The Social System*, defines value as: "An element within a shared symbolic system that serves as a standard or level of selection among available options for orientation in a situation."

Thus, values here are seen as general and fundamental standards shared by members of a society, contributing to cohesion and organizing individual activities (Atif Ghaith, 2006, p. 469).

Social values are the rules individuals and society adhere to in regulating behavior. They also guide individuals toward ideal behavioral patterns and form the general ethical framework. In other words, they represent society's ideal vision of itself (Dhamer Abdul Rahman, 2018, p. 207).

Accordingly, values are not simply things deemed desirable; rather, they involve a conception of what *ought* to be desirable. They are concerned not with what is, but with what *should be*, socially and culturally. Values serve as behavioral guides, enabling choice and preference among instrumental or ultimate alternatives in different social contexts. They participate in all forms of social interaction and are the guarantees of continued interaction among members of society because they provide a set of expectations through which individuals understand and regulate their behavior.

4.1.3. Values and Related Concepts

Due to their complexity and interrelatedness, values often intersect with several other concepts, including:

A. Social Customs:

Customs are behaviors imposed or expected by society, repeated by individuals, often in a binding manner. They differ from values in the following ways:

- Customs arise from individual interaction, whereas values often derive from religion or other foundational sources such as society itself.
- Customs are generally less important than values, as they pertain to secondary matters, while values are connected to ultimate goals.
- Customs are not necessarily motivating; they may align with or contradict values.

B. Norms (Standards):

A norm is a rule or standard for conduct. Two perspectives exist regarding the relationship between values and norms (Idda Farida, 2020, p. 145):

- The first view sees a difference in terms of generality and specificity. Values involve general societal preferences, while norms reflect specific behavioral obligations. Thus, values define societal preferences, and norms define social obligations.

- The second view posits that values and norms are essentially the same, with values encompassing norms.

4.1.4. Characteristics and Functions of Values

From the previous discussions, values can be said to possess the following characteristics:

- They are selective by nature.
- They serve as standards for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable behavior.
- They act as mechanisms for personal, social, and organizational control.
- They shape individual attitudes toward different issues.
- They reflect the ideas, principles, and concepts that individuals accept and internalize.
- They justify and guide individuals' actions toward others.
- They assist in selecting compatible social companions.

Scholars also define several psychological, social, and cognitive functions for values, including:

- Providing a reference for judging individual behavior.
- Serving as motivation for individual and group action.
- Enabling individuals to identify and pursue goals.
- Helping individuals anticipate others' reactions and expectations.
- Encouraging a sense of responsibility and fostering satisfaction.
- Giving individuals a sense of right and wrong.
- Promoting moral similarity among community members through social obligation.
- Linking different elements of culture, giving coherence to its parts.
- Helping identify the specific social problems of each society (Abdul Razzaq Mohsen, 2021, pp. 148–149).

4.2. Defining the Concept of Media and Its Functions

4.2.1. Media in Linguistic Terms

The term "media" in Arabic linguistically means "publicizing, announcing, and informing about something." Media is derived from the Arabic verb *a'lama* (to inform), whose past tense is *a'lama*, present *yu'limu*, and the verbal noun is *i'lām*. It means "to provide someone with knowledge or to inform them of something." The triliteral root *'alima* refers to "knowing" or "being informed" (Mamdouh Al-Jundi, 2016, p. 13).

Media is defined as:

"Providing people with accurate news, correct information, and verified facts that help them form sound opinions about an event or a problem, with the resulting opinion reflecting, objectively, the mentality, attitudes, and tendencies of the audience. This implies that the sole purpose of media is enlightenment through data, facts, figures, and statistics" (Youssef Kafi, 2018, p. 15).

4.2.2. Media in Terminology

In our contemporary time, the concept of media has gone far beyond the mere provision of quick news. It has become an independent scientific discipline, with various definitions and conceptualizations. Some of these include:

Media is:

"The process of disseminating and presenting accurate information, verified facts, truthful news, precise topics, concrete events, logical ideas, and sound opinions to the public, while citing sources, in service of the public good" (In'ām Ayyoub, 2018, p. 150).

4.2.3. Functions of Media in Relation to Institutions and Society

Media institutions can achieve their intended goals through performing a variety of functions (In'ām Ayyoub, 2018, pp. 158–159), categorized as follows:

A. Functions Related to Target Audiences

- Informing specific audiences about the institution and its products or services in simple and clear language to gain their support. This includes communicating the institution's mission and objectives to the public.
- Educating the audience on the institution's policies and any changes or modifications therein, and persuading them to accept these changes.
- Assisting the audience in forming sound opinions about the institution.
- Ensuring the accuracy and completeness of all news published about the audience.

B. Functions Related to the Organization as a Whole

- Providing the organization with updates about developments in public opinion.
- Protecting the organization from attacks stemming from false or misleading news.
- Ensuring that the organization's objectives, purposes, and activities receive adequate attention from various audience segments.

C. Functions Related to Society at Large

- Informing the public about major issues and how to prevent them.
- Presenting diverse media programs.
- Providing individuals with up-to-date facts as they occur.
- Reinforcing citizens' sense of belonging to the state and its serving institutions.
- Addressing any changes that affect the structure of society.

4.3. New Media: Definition and Terminology

It is widely acknowledged that the media reality, known today as the "era of electronic media"—manifested in satellite television and the Internet—necessitates setting rules and frameworks to guide how young people, adolescents, and children engage with its content. This form of media has come to be known as “digital media”, as a means to safeguard the ethical and moral structures of Arab societies.

Numerous terms have been used to refer to digital media since the emergence of social media around 2004. Among these terms are: *new media*, *interactive media*, *multimedia media*, *networked media*, *cybermedia*, and fundamentally, *digital media*, which encompasses all digital communication and information technologies used through social networking sites via electronic devices (multimedia), whether connected or not connected to the Internet.

Several definitions of digital media have been proposed. One of the most accurate definitions states that it is:

"Media that utilizes all available communication tools to reach audiences wherever they are and in the manner they prefer" (Fadel Al-Badrani, 2018, p. 16).

The Condensed Net Glossary defines “new media” as:

“Digital media devices in general, or the online journalism industry; the term occasionally includes traditional media, and is used not pejoratively, but to describe newer forms of traditional systems such as print, television, radio, and cinema” (Abbas Mustafa Sadiq, 2008, p. 32).

The High-Tech Dictionary defines it as:

“A term used to describe forms of electronic communication made possible by computers, as opposed to traditional media which include print newspapers and magazines, television, and radio—to some extent—and other static means” (Yassine Qarnani, 2017, p. 16).

Belkhiri defines it as:

“Media content characterized by its personal nature, exchanged between two parties—sender and receiver—through a social medium or network, allowing full freedom for the sender to craft the message and for the receiver to interact with it.”

He also describes it as:

“New modes of communication in the digital environment that enable smaller groups of people to meet and gather online to share information and benefits. It is an environment that allows individuals and communities to voice their opinions and make themselves heard globally” (Belkhiri Radwan, 2014, p. 20).

According to Lester, new media is:

“A collection of communication technologies that emerged from the fusion of computers with traditional media forms—print, photography, sound, and video” (Abbas Sadiq, 2008, p. 31).

The Sheridan College of Technology offers an operational definition of new media as:

“Digital media types presented in an interactive digital form, based on the integration of text, images, video, and sound. Interactivity is its main distinguishing feature and the most important of its characteristics” (Belkhiri Radwan, 2014, p. 20).

In short, new or social media refers to the use of web applications and websites to create fast and effective communication links with the broadest possible audience base, representing diverse cultures (Ahmed Bassiouni, 2018, p. 298).

Despite all efforts to define the term precisely and distinguish it from other related or similar terms, some, like Jones, argue that:

“There is no conclusive or definitive answer to the question: What is new media?” Jones bases his view on the fact that new media is still in its formative stage.

4.3.1. Categories of New Media

Richard Davis and Diana Owen classify digital new media into three distinct types:

1. New Media with Old Technology:

This refers to a set of journalistic formats within traditional platforms such as radio, television, and print newspapers, including interactive radio, news magazines, and live news programs (Fadel Al-Badrani, 2018, p. 17).

2. New Media with New Technology:

This category includes all media tools associated with the Internet, such as social networking platforms, electronic newspapers, online news agencies, and multimedia. These tools empower individuals to express themselves freely, away from the oversight of authorities.

3. New Media with Hybrid Technology:

In this category, the distinction between old and new media dissolves, creating a state of integration and mutual benefit. This is exemplified by traditional media professionals relying on new technologies to accomplish their media tasks, while media institutions establish their own websites on the World Wide Web to interact with the public (Laith Youssef, 2023, p. 236).

4.3.2. Characteristics and Tools of New (Digital) Media

Digital media tools are diverse and continuously expanding, evolving in form, scope, and integration over time. These tools include:

- Interactive television channels,
- Digital terrestrial television,
- Internet television and video streaming,
- Electronic journalism,
- Discussion forums,
- Blogs,
- Personal, institutional, and commercial websites,
- Social networking sites,
- Digital radio,
- Virtual community networks,

- Interactive television broadcasting,
- Internet sites,
- Digital maps,
- Text and multimedia messaging groups, among others.

Digital media is distinguished by several key characteristics that give it a powerful presence among users:

First – Interactivity

Interactivity refers to the recipient's ability to respond to the message directed at them via modern communication tools. This marks a qualitative shift from traditional mass media, which typically transmit content in a one-way format—from a central source (such as a newspaper, TV channel, or radio station) to the audience.

The emergence of social media networks, video-sharing platforms like YouTube, and open-source encyclopedias like Wikipedia has offered audiences unprecedented freedom to engage in the media process. It has empowered ordinary individuals to deliver their messages whenever and however they want, using multi-directional communication channels.

Second – Freedom of Media Expression

Another significant characteristic of new media technologies is their unprecedented expansion of media freedom. The mere connection of an individual to the Internet enables them to become a publisher capable of broadcasting their message globally at negligible cost.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, news groups, and the widespread use of smartphones equipped with digital cameras have attracted massive audiences. These platforms allow people to discuss any topic imaginable with an unlimited number of users—freely and effortlessly—breaking all spatial and temporal barriers.

Third – Audience Fragmentation

As a result of the proliferation of modern communication tools and the abundance of information and media content, the audience of new media is no longer a large, homogeneous mass. Instead, it has become a collection of small, individualized units, with each person receiving different content through their preferred medium.

This diversification has significantly increased user options, leading to a fragmented audience whose time is divided among websites, social networks, smartphones, and electronic games. This fragmentation makes it difficult to control, manage, or even track the flow of information reaching the public—posing a serious challenge for social and cultural governance (Fadel Al-Badrani, 2018, pp. 13-15).

Fourth – Immediacy and Updating

Among the most important features of new media is the speed with which communication occurs between the sender and receiver. This includes instant **access** to news, opinions, or information without needing to wait for scheduled broadcasts.

New media also provides the advantage of continuous content updates to keep pace with the real-time nature of the Internet. This allows for instant corrections and modifications in response to current developments (Wisam Radi, 2017, pp. 101-102).

5. Values and Social Change

Like all social phenomena, values are subject to transformation. This transformation can be attributed to two primary factors:

5.1. Changes in the Internal Structure of the Social System

The internal structure of any society is influenced by its culture and socio-economic condition. Since society is in a constant and ongoing state of change—and because values, like all social phenomena, are anchored in this process of evolution—changes in the value hierarchy of the society and its members are inevitable.

Such changes are often considered a positive phenomenon, as they reflect societal development and adaptation. Thus, social change necessarily leads to a transformation in the value system in order to align with new variables, thereby contributing to social unity and cohesion.

5.2. Pressures from External Forces

In addition to internal restructuring and social mobility, massive cultural and social transformations, especially those stemming from global openness and cultural diffusion, place additional pressure on existing value systems.

With the evolution of communication technologies and the globalization of knowledge, new social realities emerge—bringing with them values, ideas, and orientations imported from other societies. This influx of external influences can be described as “cultural pressure forces”, which seek to impose their values and cultural norms on other societies.

If such foreign forces succeed in establishing cultural hegemony over a given society, it may result in a loss of equilibrium and even a crisis of cultural identity (Dana Ahmed, Karima, 2021, pp. 122–123).

6. New Media and the Transformation of Values in Algerian Society

The discourse on values, their understanding, and the meanings individuals attach to them is unquestionably influenced by a wide range of external communication channels, primarily modern communication technologies. As emphasized by Professor Ahmed Ben Naaman, these technologies play a fundamental role in reshaping certain concepts, including values, by embedding them with meanings entirely different from those established by religion, reason, natural instinct, society, and sound social relationships.

In this context, Parsons asserts that although cultural values are relatively stable, their gradual and organized transformation occurs mainly due to scientific and technological factors, which represent a specific cultural and value-based dimension.

This transformation occurs within a technological context, one that carries with it a particular culture embedded in the medium itself. These two aspects cannot be separated in any way. This perspective—rooted in a technologically informed framework of our society—offers a comprehensive outlook on the degree of transformation affecting our value system.

The transformation extends to lifestyles and acquired habits, which, through repetition (as the saying goes, “what is repeated becomes established”), become part of the cultural fabric expressed through both speech and action. Technology use in all its forms, over time, instills new ways of thinking and perceiving reality, ultimately imprinting the user’s thoughts and even beliefs with the characteristics of the medium being used.

A study has shown that young people have adopted a lifestyle that reflects consumer culture, as measured by their agreement with certain statements. The statement, “Youth in our society prefer to have a slim body,” received the highest approval among the sample. This was followed by: “I notice that youth prefer fast food or sandwiches with soft drinks over home-cooked meals,” and then: “I feel that youth prefer using cosmetics because they make them look attractive” (Shalloush Noura, 2018, pp. 122–123).

These changes may appear trivial, but the repetitive mechanisms of media act over time to embed such behaviors into daily life, ultimately forming part of the cultural identity expressed through both word and deed.

In Algeria, statistics from various studies accompanied by findings have revealed that many concepts have been assigned new and parallel meanings, leading to what might be described as a “battle of concepts”, as the late Abdallah Cheriet referred to it.

According to the Mobile Telephony Market Observatory published by the Regulatory Authority for Post and Telecommunications (ARPT) in 2016, active mobile subscribers in Algeria reached 17,344,746 in 2016, compared to 14,087,440 in 2015—an increase of 23.12%. The total mobile subscriber base rose by 3.65 million in 2016, a growth rate of 8.41% compared to the previous year.

Among 47,041,321 total active subscribers:

- 20.362 million subscribed to GSM (43.28%),
- 25.215 million to 3G (53.60%),
- and 1.456 million to 4G networks (3.11%).

A similar situation exists in terms of Internet usage and social media platforms, especially Facebook. The number of Internet users increased by 17% from January 2017, reaching 21 million by January 2018. The number of active social media users reached 3 million, and the total number of mobile-based social media users grew by 4%, or 2 million.

Thus, the total number of active social media users reached 21 million, approximately 50% of the population. Facebook ranked first with 21 million active monthly users.

Our reading of these statistics should not be superficial. Algeria's leading position in terms of active usage and digital penetration, as indicated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 2016, does not necessarily imply that we possess a culture of proper use aligned with our cultural and social context, nor does it mean that these technologies are serving citizens in ways that improve their lives.

In addition to assessing how technology is used in Algeria, we must also consider its impact on individuals in critical areas such as education, cybercrime, digital content, and the Algerian family as a whole (Shalloush Noura, 2018, p. 124).

These effects are deeply intertwined with the structure of society. The absence of clear social landmarks in the societal system—if we may use this expression—combined with the stimuli present in social networks, appeal primarily to basic instincts. These platforms often attract fragile personalities, suffering from emotional deprivation, who find in chatting and forming superficial friendships a substitute to meet their emotional needs.

This naturally leads to the automatic transformation of values such as respect, replacing them with notions of openness, intimacy, and unfiltered dialogue, where conversations cross boundaries of privacy and responsibility, as the content often goes beyond established moral limits.

It is worth noting that the proliferation of dramas, films, and cultural programs on television imposes a new form of social life that may differ significantly from traditional social patterns. These portrayals reflect the lifestyle of developed societies, which attained their status through work, productivity, and innovation.

However, young people in developing countries, particularly in Algeria, often imitate these lifestyles, embracing their external forms and abandoning authentic traditional values, while defending imported Western values as their own. Thus, Algerian youth begin to build their identity around foreign models. As Ibn Khaldun once observed:

“The vanquished is always enamored with imitating the victor—in his dress, emblem, creed, and all his customs and conditions” (Dhamer Abdul Rahman, 2018, p. 206).

In addition to these social effects, there are serious psychological and health-related implications. The widespread addiction to technology has led to the emergence of phobias such as “nomophobia”—the fear of being without a mobile phone.

Excessive technology use results in mental lethargy, reduces imaginative capacity, and conditions individuals to consume pre-made imaginative content, producing lazy minds that merely consume rather than create.

As a result, a new generation is emerging—youth who may exhibit high logical intelligence, but low social intelligence, leading to weakened social interaction and growing isolation.

Such profound cognitive effects—in terms of understanding, perception, analysis, and imagination—turn individuals into dull, passive consumers, with superficial perspectives and a tendency to trivialize significant matters. Concepts like respect become fear, responsibility becomes naivety, humility is seen as weakness, cooperation as a waste of time, diligence as stupidity, while lying is praised as cleverness, manipulation as intelligence, and flattery as tact.

This is what Dr. Abdallah Cheriet referred to in his book *“The Battle of Concepts”*, which critiques the dominant negative cultural patterns in Algerian society—not necessarily as a result of social networks alone, but of technology as a whole (Shalloush Noura, 2018, p. 124).

In this regard, Ahmed Ben Naaman observed that values such as:

- Strictness,
- Transparency,
- Realism,
- Detestation of pretentiousness,
- Adaptability,
- Initiative,
- Rejection of idleness,
- Self-respect,

- Religiosity, and
- Working in silence

—some of these values still persist, while others have become weakened or fragmented, including strictness, patience, human relations, initiative, and spirit of challenge. These values were deeply rooted in previous generations but are now under threat due to the influence of foreign cultural values transmitted through external media channels.

Conclusion:

It is entirely natural that the information and technological revolution, with all its mechanisms, exerts pressure on the system of social values. This process aims to standardize cultures, unify societal models according to Western norms, and establish control and hegemony over Arab identity.

This reality has surrounded Arab societies with numerous and diverse cultural models, placing them between two conflicting realities and at a crossroads, as they attempt to reconcile imported ideas with their own social and moral realities, which they are striving to preserve.

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