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	TITLE OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLE  Cyberbullying, Gendered Online Violence, and Sociocultural Power Dynamics on Algerian TikTok: A Qualitative Analysis of Harassment Against Public Figures
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Keywords	Cyberbullying; Gender-based online violence; Digital discourse; Social media harassment; TikTok; Algerian influencers; Online misogyny; Self-presentation; Patriarchal norms; Digital sociology.
Abstract Cyberbullying represents one of the most pervasive forms of digital violence, characterized by repeated acts of intimidation, threats, humiliation, and derogatory content transmitted through online platforms. Such behaviour has intensified globally with the rapid growth of social media usage, resulting in severe psychosocial consequences including anxiety, emotional trauma, and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicide. In Algeria, the rapid expansion of online engagement, particularly among youth, has amplified the visibility of influencers and public figures, subsequently exposing them to extensive online abuse. This study investigates cyberbullying practices on TikTok, one of the fastest-growing platforms in the country, by analyzing 200 comments posted on the official profiles of four renowned Algerian influencers: Hicham Cook, Mohamed Reghis, Mounia Benfeghoul, and Numidia Lezoul. Using a qualitative content-based approach, the study identifies key categories of cyberbullying including name-calling, mockery and humiliation, social exclusion and moral policing, religious reproach, and sexual harassment. Findings reveal visible gender asymmetry in online violence, where female influencers encounter intensely moralizing discourse and explicit sexualized bullying, while male influencers primarily face ridicule and identity-based insults. The study argues that cyberbullying is not solely the result of individual hostility but is embedded within broader sociocultural and patriarchal dynamics that regulate digital participation, female visibility, and symbolic power in Algerian online spaces. Ultimately, this research underscores the urgent need for institutional digital safety policies, platform-level moderation mechanisms, and public awareness programs to foster respectful online communication and protect vulnerable digital actors.	
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1. Introduction

Digital communication has fundamentally altered interpersonal interaction while simultaneously creating new pathways for harmful online behavior. While the internet global advent has been seen by many people as a liberator tool which promotes independent and creative exchange, online spaces are becoming hatred arenas,

where users are subject to regular attacks and humiliation. In many digital platforms, TikTok stands out as a main place where there are several forms of harassment. A careful look at the content of some influencers' official accounts' comments show how online hostility is particularly growing.

With approximately 23.95 million active social media users (Digital Algeria: Algeria report, 2023), Algeria has witnessed the same quick expansion of its digital sphere, with a concerning proportion of cyberbullying affecting both highly active users and those with a limited online activity. With its 1.94 billion worldwide users (Social media usage & growth statistics, 2025), TikTok's growing popularity has made many people, including young Algerian content creators, to achieve influencer status through the promotion of informative and innovative content. However, research shows that online visibility and self-presentation inflate exposure to harassment, attacks, and abuse, despite the positive contribution of these individuals to the digital space (Curlew, 2019; Henry & Powell, 2016; Kowalski et al., 2014).

In digital culture, offensive language directed at TikTok users is often trivialized, with comments promoting sexual violence and misogyny regarding women, and degradation with passive-aggressive messages and linguistic insults targeting males. Although men and women are both the target of online abuse, females suffer much more than males. Jane (2017) contributes critical theoretical insight through her analysis of gendered cyberhate, conceptualizing women's experiences of digital harassment as systematic attempts to maintain masculine dominance in digital spaces. Jane argues that "misogynistic online abuse functions as a form of digital discipline designed to restrict women's participation in public discourse" (Jane, 2017, p. 23).

In the same line, Todd (2017) argues that the disadvantages suffered by women in society carry over into online spaces where women are under-represented in virtual communities. In other words, "there is no disruption of the existing unequal societal gender system: on the contrary, it is reproduced online" (p. 2-3). As a lot of men do not accept the fact that women now are equal to them, they tend to blackmail, harass, and sometimes expose them on the internet (Todd, 2017). In this light, many scholars (Mantilla, 2015; Citron, 2014) position gender-based cyberbullying as a mechanism of social control over women's sexuality, reputation, and safety rather than isolated incidents of individual aggression.

Such attitudes reflect a larger social indifference to the safety and dignity of the individuals online, and also a possible social punishment for visibility and public self-presentation online (Duggan, 2017; Curlew, 2019; Henry & Powell, 2016). From societal structures to contemporary online interactions, cultural norms around anonymity, self-presentation, and the tensions between traditional values and digital visibility are heightened. The Algerian norms value anonymity and self-concealment; influencers who transgress these social rules are generally sanctioned through linguistic and non-linguistic attacks.

Based on the worldwide concern over the growing rate of cyberbullying worldwide and the immediate need to eliminate the issue, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to explore, reconstruct, and understand the cyberbullying mechanisms and practices. Intensive analysis of TikTok's culture is necessary to highlight the contradictions between the intended purpose of the platform and the real experiences of the users. Particular attention is paid to the linguistic strategies used to devalue the presence and the contribution of influencers like Hicham Cook, Numidia Lezoul, Mohammad Reghis, and Mounia Benefeghou. For this purpose, this article sets to answer two important research questions as follows:

QR 1: How does cyberbullying operate against the selected Algerian influencers?

QR 2: Does cyberbullying behaviour vary according to the influencers' profiles?

Collectively, the two questions' answers will certainly provide further insights into the presented issue and ultimately challenge the passive acceptance of cyber abuse. Advocating for a more accountable and inclusive digital public sphere can be strengthened with lights from extensive research on the topic.

2. Theoretical Framework: TikTok and Cyberbullying

Launched globally in August 2018 by merging Musically with the Chinese application ByteDance Douyin, TikTok rapidly gained interest among youngsters who enjoyed short-form video contents that were highly personalized. Contrary to the other platforms like Facebook and Tweeter, which primarily rely on follower networks and chronological feeds, TikTok distinguished itself by offering individualized content streams based on its

sophisticated machine learning algorithm that examines users' viewing duration, content preferences, user behaviour, and interaction rates.

The platform rapid ascension to over a billion active users worldwide offers its users unprecedented opportunities for visualized content, enabling social discourse, political expression, and identity construction. However, these same properties are accompanied with degrading and pernicious behaviors, including cyberbullying as a growing and amplified viral practice. Concerns over this issue made many scholars delve into this mechanism by providing several conceptual frameworks to capture its defining characteristics and expressions.

Langos (2012) defined cyberbullying as "intentional and overt acts of aggression toward another person online that involve an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim and demonstrate repetitive and persistent patterns of behavior" (p. 289). In other words, the definition emphasizes the explicit inclusion of the three main elements that support cyberbullying, namely intentionality, power imbalance, and repetition. The idea of power imbalance is also reported by Kowalski et al. (2014) who presented cyberbullying as "aggressive behavior that is intentionally and repeatedly carried out in an electronic context (e.g., email, blogs, instant messages, text messages) against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p. 1073). This shows how the targets find themselves caught in a virtual world unable to effectively respond or escape harassment and abuse. The stress on digital contexts acknowledges the various platforms and technologies through which such behaviour manifests.

The notion of intention and repetition, previously stated by Langos (2012), is also supported by Hinduja and Patchin (2015) who defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 11). This conceptual representation is sustained by most researchers, including Takunaga (2010) who described cyberbullying as "any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278). Ultimately, the reflected ideology includes both individual and group oppression in this case by showcasing the impact of violent campaigns on harm production and perpetuation.

Together, the provided insights into online violence emphasize the intricate nature of the issue. Cultural background and social power dynamics are invoked to defend the abuse. More significantly, the patterns found changed the focus from the original understanding of cyberbullying as an individual occurrence to a more intricate concept that includes the upholding of social hierarchy based on racial, gender, and social status, among other features.

2.1. Taxonomic Classification and Reasons for Cyber Violence

Numerous studies in the field of social media were prompted by the observed growth of cyberbullying. There have been reports attempts to pinpoint the most defining behavioral patterns, underlying mechanisms, and effects. In order to provide the best explanation of the problem, taxonomies and models have been developed. D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) investigated the different forms of online abuse in professional settings. According to the study, cyberbullying can be expressed in many different ways, such as exclusion from the workplace, reputation harm, and professional sabotage.

The results also demonstrated how the main characteristics of online violence, intentional harm, power imbalance, and repetition variate depending on the context. An additional categorization of cyberbullying is offered by Van Hee et al. (2018) who developed a more extended framework. The latter includes elements such as threat or blackmailing, insults, curses, defamation, and sexual talk. Defense behaviour is reported in cases where bystanders and victims themselves try to resist and counter abuse, and encouragement of the harasser, where third parties reinforce the bully's actions (Van Hee et al., 2018).

The next framework originates from criminology, with main theories of Routine Activity Approach (RAA) and the General Theory of Crime (GTC). RAA supports the view that deviant acts happen when three elements meet, namely a motivated offender, a suitable target, and lack or absence of efficient guardianship (Cohen & Felson, 1979). When applied to cyberbullying, this supposes that cyber violence occurs more likely in unsupervised and uncountable online environments. Likewise, GTC emphasizes the importance of individuals traits, namely low-self-control, which make certain users more inclined to impulsive, abusive online behaviors when occasions arise (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The third model, ARIVA, is developed by Ziems, Vigfusson, and Morstatter (2020) to include five dimensions, namely aggression, repetition, intentionality, visibility, and imbalance. These dimensions not only reinforce

previous scholars' assumptions on cyberbullying, but also allow machine detection through a systematic way to label and assess online harassment. Expanding upon this model, Lapidot-Leffer and Barak's (2015) *Online Disinhibition Effect* approach offers a purely psychological perspective. According to this model, anonymity, invisibility, and lack of instant social consequences in virtual spheres can potentially reduce inhibition and induce benign disinhibition, such as increased self-disclosure, or toxic disinhibition, exhorting hostility, threats, and abusive language and behaviour. According to Lapidot-Leffer and Barak (2015), lack of eye contact, the interaction between anonymity and invisibility, and the interaction between lack of eye contact and invisibility are revealed significant on the inducement of first-person words.

Overall, the categorization of cyberbullying provides insightful data on the ways the issue starts, evolves, and maintained. By exploring the different causes, psychological reasons, and types, a more comprehensive understanding is reached on the personal and cultural factors that enable it, the dimensions by which it can be systematically categorized, and the digital online conditions that amplify it.

2.2. Literature Review

With cyberbullying alarming rapid growth, the issue fueled a significant number of studies, with researchers analyzing its prevalence, forms, and psychological impacts. The following review of literature offers a synthesis of key studies on cyberbullying on social media in general and cyberbullying of influencers in particular. It starts by over-viewing the Western studies, on the one side, and the Algeria ones, on the other, to capture the major trends, theoretical frameworks, and gaps in existing research.

2.2.1. Cyberbullying on the Social Media in Western Countries

As previously stated, cyberbullying has attracted a number of scholars, among them Hosseinmardi et al. (2015). In their seminal work on bullying on Instagram in the United States of America, the authors examined media sessions from public Instagram profiles to assess aggression frequency and reasons underpinning the behavior. Using a labeling study approach via the CrowdFlower platform, the results showed that cyberbullying is mainly influenced by factors such as social network dynamics, linguistic patterns, profanity use, and image content use.

By adopting a literature review method on the topic of cyberbullying via social media among youth and adults, Giumetti and Kowalski's (2022) reviewed findings from several sources, including youth and adults, to identify operative predictor variables such as time spent on social media, individual personality traits (low empathy and moral disengagement), and posting practices. The results showed that cyberbullying victims suffer from mental distress issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts, and this includes youngsters who showed increased absenteeism and lower academic performance. To overcome these issues, the scholars urged the need for more rigid intervention strategies by employing cyberbullying detection instruments, the incorporation of responsible online programs at school, and the promotion of digital citizenship instruction.

Extended research also covered cyberbullying against influencers in studies conducted by Valenzuela-Garcia (2023), Ab Rashid et al. (2024), Gadavanji and Saengprang (2021), and Abidin (2019). In an attempt to account for the importance of culture on cyber abuse construction, Gadavanji and Saengprang's (2021) examined abusive comments directed towards two female public figures, one British and the other is Korean. By focusing on direct vs. indirect speech act forms of language and their use across culture, the findings revealed that Seo-Yeon, the Korean influencer was subjected to indirect language harassment assuming the reserved nature of the Korean culture. Conversely, Olivia, the British influencer, experienced more direct speech act harassment, reflecting the impact of a more western direct approach when interacting with people.

In parallel, Valenzuela-García et al. (2023) looked into the nature, impact, and reactions to cyber victimization among Spanish Instagram influencers. A two-step research which combined a self-report online victimization survey including 76 influencers and a virtual ethnography through a thematic content review of 260 social media influencers' accounts. The results showed that over 70% of the influencers are exposed to some form of online harassment and abusive critics from their followers. The primary form of harassment directed at the influencers involved the use of insults and derogatory, humiliating, and repeated comments, which are often experienced on a daily or weekly basis.

Extending the scope of this argument, Ab Rachid et al. (2024) documented the lived experiences of 10 anonymized Malaysian social media influencers who had been victims of cyber violence across Instagram, Facebook, Tweeter, and YouTube platforms. By using a qualitative, transcendental phenomenological method, the

scholars used semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, supported by Transactional model of Stress and Coping to identify the influencers' main problems, and the coping strategies used to protect themselves from digital harm. The study reported influencers' emotional distress, reputation damage, and high tendency to social withdrawal. Also, three main adaptive strategies were spotted, namely: 1) problem-focused coping, including reporting and moderation, 2) emotion-focused coping such as reframing and seeking social support, and 3) cyber coping, including managing platform features and privacy settings' management. A need for platform-level support, mental health resources, and community education to mitigate the impact of online abuse have been expressed by the victims.

In the same line, Abidi's (2019) examined Singaporean influencers' digital posts, complemented by ethnographic observations on their social media management and followers. The study also incorporated the analysis of the Singaporeans' reactions and judgment towards influencers' behaviors at different stages. Despite the noted aggressive language and behaviour online, the study showed how influencers may take advantage of cyberbullying narratives to gain controversy and support, and fuel the followers' interactions, using jokes, harassment, and disrespect. According to Abidi (2019), influencers should not be equated to the ordinary online users, given their conditioned capacity to cope with negativity and social aggressiveness. Moreover, influencers, in some cases "appropriate such abuse to promote their brand, revenge, or reposition themselves as victims, rival, and bully, depending on the context" (Abidi, p. 199).

Overall, due to their high visibility, self-presentation, and self-branding, influencers form a clearly defined risk group that goes beyond factors like status, race, and gender. Also, cross-cultural analyses demonstrated the inconsistent nature of online abuse, which varies by culture from direct to indirect forms of language. Ultimately, all of the studies' findings point to the necessity of more strict online regulations, with proactive detection tools and policies.

2.2.2. Cyberbullying in the Algerian Social Media

Reflecting global trends in online interaction, Algeria is not exempt from this issue. Given its integration into global online networks, cyberbullying is present on YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and many other platforms, where the users in general and the influencers in particular, face the same challenges. In an attempt to disclose cyberbullying in the Algerian context, emerging studies have begun to examine the phenomenon and the local dimensions of online violence to better understand the mechanisms and suggest solutions.

Building upon this perspective, Abainia (2022) examined cyberbullying behaviour of 200 Facebook users across different geographic regions of Algeria. The study aimed to identify the writing styles and objectives of abusers and support the development of automated abuse detection systems by identifying verbal/linguistic behavioral markers of online abuse, including hate speech, profanity, and code-switching between Algerian dialects and foreign languages. The findings showed that bullies frequently target political content by exhibiting shared behaviors such as selfies' posting, politically-charged content and material, and expressing negative feelings. The results also underlined the complexity of moderating Algerian digital spaces due to informal language use and multilingual communication that make the distinction from common language use and cyber abuse quite challenging.

Benaoun et al., (2025) explored the manifestations, causes, and tendencies of bullying against women on the virtual community by adopting a descriptive methodology. An online survey was used to collect data among eighty seven (87) female users of Facebook social media. The results demonstrated abusive behaviors, including privacy invasion, opposition, falsehoods, and cursing. Based on these findings, the study suggested broadcasting programs in the media of all kinds as a preventive measure to alert Algerian women to the dangers of cyberbullying and cybercrime.

Research on cyberbullying against influencers is at its embryonic stage in Algeria, with particularly rare studies in the field. The exceptionally few works are students' PhD published articles or unpublished dissertations. Only two works have been found in this context, namely the one of Ramdane et al., (2024) and Achouche and Mahfouf (2024). Ramdane et al. (2024) examined the vlogs of two influencers: Youcef Bardahm and Si FaTeH to examine cyberbullying manifestation through the content created by the influencers. Recurrent patterns were spotted to include derogatory humor, name-calling, privacy transgression, targeting physical appearance, and personal life. The findings also highlighted the patriarchal role embodied by the cyberbullies, particularly towards women.

In parallel, Achouche and Mahfouf (2024) investigated online abuse against Algerian influential public figures on TikTok. A mixed-method was adopted involving thirty two (32) male and female students and using semi-

structured interviews and comments` analysis. The corpus of comments revealed cyberbullying categories, including direct insult, mocking language, animal-naming, sexual talk, and body shaming. Also, the revealed reasons for cyberbullying integrated key elements such as jealousy, religious beliefs, improper content, and entertainment purposes, among other drives.

Collectively, while the reviewed literature shows how studies on cyberbullying in different parts of the world exist, they tend to focus on general social media use, youth behavior, or psychological impacts - not specifically on influencers or TikTok. Additionally, the scarcity of Algeria-specific cyberbullying research represents an additional research gap. In fact, despite the few Algerian researchers` efforts to advance the issue`s understanding, the topic remains fragmented in scope and depth. In this case, further research are needed to bridge these gaps and develop a more tailored and efficient interventions to prevent growing online abuse and account for the sociocultural realities of digital creators locally and globally.

3. Method

This study contributes to the efforts to disclose cyberbullying practices on TikTok platform in Algeria. It examines the nature of abusive comments on selected public figures, namely Hicham Cook, Mohamed Reghis, Numidia Lezoul, and Mounia Benfeghou. The qualitative content analysis method proved to be suitable for this research, which focuses on the linguistic and non-linguistic features of the abuse to comprehend the meanings underlying the texts. The study examines two hundred (200) comments, (50 comments for each influencer), selected randomly from the four selected figures` official pages on TikTok. Inductive coding is used by examining the raw comments and building categories upward. This technique is embedded in the Grounded theory approach which consists of building categories directly from the data without predetermined frameworks, allowing new types of cyberbullying to emerge from the analysis. The categories are intent-based, focusing on the bullies` apparent motivation, perceived purpose, or goal that drives the abuser`s actions.

The selection of the influencers` sample is purposive in nature by including four leading figures, chosen for holding a substantial number of followers. Hicham Cook with 1.6 million followers by 2025, is a chef presenting culinary content featuring traditional Algerian recipes and street food. Numidia Lezoul with her 3 million followers is a singer, actress, TV show presenter who also serves as a brand marketer and Kabyle culture promoter. Popular on TikTok, Mohamed Reghis (416, 000 followers) brings an artistic dimension as an actor and model, focusing on fashion and introspective content. Lastly, Mounia Benfeghou (167,000 followers) who is an actress, TV show presenter, and lifestyle content creator features a sophisticated lifestyle, showcasing her fashion brand and cosmopolitan experiences in luxury destinations like Dubai and Paris. Together, these four figures represent the dynamic range of Algerian digital content creators on TikTok, each creating unique niches that reflect aspects of modern Algerian identity.

The corpus targeted offensive comments from different followers who mostly interact by using pseudonyms or fake identities. This made the identification of the bullies impossible and, to some extent, reinforced the arguments in favor of the anonymity and unaccountability of the digital spaces. Besides, while the influencers` sample and corpus size are small, this study provides exploratory value as one of the few studies to gather data on cyberbullying among TikTok influencers. The data derived from the corpus can also provide enriched and relevant information on the phenomenon and offer insights into online violence on the TikTok platform in the Algerian context.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

As previously stated, this study intends to answer two main research questions. While the first deals with the categories of cyberbullying linguistic types, the second considers the variation of these categories across the influencers themselves. This section of data presentation and analysis is organized accordingly: it begins by presenting and examining the data with examples to address the first research question, then proceeds to cross-tabulate the data to investigate the prevalence and variation of categories across the selected influencers to answer the second research question. The data is presented in tables containing the category label, explanation, and examples from the data-set.

Influencer 1. Hicham Cook

Category	Description	Examples from Data-set
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Name-Calling	Directly addressing the target with derogatory nouns, nicknames, or pejoratives.	“... homme d'affaires ☹” nazimo@16
Mockery	Ridiculing the target through irony, sarcasm, or exaggerated laughter.	ندخل بزواج كليات نخرج بوحد Superdid22
Social Exclusion	Suggesting the target should leave or is unwelcome.	تروح تخدم عندو نتا تخلصو hakimdaf
Delegitimization	Dismissing the target's credibility, achievements, or identity.	زعم ... عاقل من جهة البيرو kimoukim
Collective Amplification	Multiple users reinforcing each other's insults to intensify harm.	Several comments with same laughter sequence aimed at one person.

Table 1. Linguistic categories of Cyberbullying (Hicham Cook)

The table under examination offers some examples showing not only the verbal strategies used but also the underlying power dynamics and social functions deployed to discipline the influencers. The comments combine dialectal Algerian Arabic with French and Romanized Arabic, reflecting the linguistic context in which Algerians communicate. Code-switching is frequent in a diglossic and multilingual country like Algeria. Yet, in cyberbullying context, code-switching functions as a mechanism for both intimacy and exclusion. In fact, name-calling is performed in a code-switching mode to serve as an immediate identity devaluation. Labelling sarcastically the influencer with titles such as *Businessman* (...homme d'affaires...), shifts the phrase from its conventional prestigious connotation, to a degraded and ridiculed status by supporting the abuse with laughter emojis to amplify the aggression.

Disguised humour is also performed with the use of *mockery*, as seen in the table. I enter *with two kidneys and I leave with one* (ندخل بزواج كليات نخرج بوحد), sustained by laughter emojis for reinforcement, is not there just for amusement but an invitation for the audience to join the the ridicule. This bounding strategy is common among abusers who often seek approval and adhesion to the act and maintain group cohesion against the target. Delegitimization, as another tactic, overlaps with mockery but functions on a broader level. While mockery aims at devaluating people through sarcasm and laughter, delegitimization targets the influencer's authority, credibility, or competence. This is used as a digital means to damage reputation and demean the target's culinary talent and abilities.

Instances of social exclusion were also documented in the data set, where language is employed to imply withdrawal from the group or conversation through imperatives. In the example provided in the table, *You work for him, you pay him* (تروح تخدم عندو نتا تخلصو) displays the accusative form of the sentence, implying inclusion of the other into the aggressive discourse. This exclusionary language is accidental as it acts as group identity maintenance from which the target is excluded for being visible and famous. One of the most damaging perspective of the data-set comments is collective amplification. Multiple users echo or intensifies, transform, and form a coordinated group assault to overdraw the psychological harm while diffusing individual accountability. The patterns of interaction imply that mutual approval and repetition normalize aggression.

In sum, these techniques should be seen as a mirror of the dynamics of digital groups, which are primarily fueled by the anonymity provided by the media. None of the bullies interact with his/her real name, and all the followers' profiles adopt fake or nicknames. In addition, covert aggression takes several forms of humour, playfulness, and entertainment that underscore high degrees of hostility and abuse, ones that are very difficult to dissociate in the interaction content of the threads.

Influencer 2. Mohamed Reghis

As it is the case with the overall remark made on Hicham Cook's linguistic characteristics, code-switching is present as well as the use of individual Arabic and French comments, which is obvious in a multilingual context like Algeria. In cyber setting, language is clearly weaponized to serve as a tension-moderator when cultural, linguistic, and religious identities are challenged. In Reghis' followers comments, similar and different categories arise, giving a richer scope to the study and the topic at the same time. In fact, name-calling is also found in the influencer's comments as demonstrated by the example on the table.

Category	Description	Examples from Data-set
Name-Calling	Directly addressing the target with derogatory nouns, nicknames, or pejoratives.	"Hawwww hawwww hawwww.... Couché fox 🐶🐶🐶" (lofititot2)
Direct attack	Direct aggressive use or communication style	Comments like واشبي ربك واشبي ربك اووو اووو (rahim abdo.09)
Religious reproach	Attempts to isolate or marginalize users by using religion	ثب إلى الله وكن رجلاً صالحاً يحبك الله وحبیب الناس فيك (zoubirsab)
Cultural Targeting	Attacking cultural practices or gender expression	هادي هيا حياة الناس المشهورين (Hanane)
Provocative Trolling	Deliberate attempts to provoke negative responses	"tu fais tout ce que tu veux, mais n'empêche tu restera KAVI jusqu'à la fin des temps" (Hamid16000)

Table 2. Linguistic categories of Cyberbullying (Mohamed Reghis)

Lofititot2's comment, *Haw haw haw... Lie down fox* (Hawwww hawwww awwww.... Couché fox) illustrates how users intentionally combine code-switching, onomatopoeia with French words, and emojis to produce a multilayered form of aggression. The use of laughing emojis softens their overtly offensive act by making it humorous and risible, which is intended to deflect the initial target of harm. Additionally, religious language is used as a background for rejection, social exclusion, and isolation. For instance, zoubirsab's comment: *repent to Allah and be a righteous man, so Allah will love you and you will be beloved among people* (ثب إلى الله وكن رجلاً صالحاً يحبك الله وحبیب الناس فيك) conveys a condescending manner that seems dismissal on the surface.

More direct attacks using aggressive language and communication style fall into the next important category. The comment by rahim abdo.09, *what's the matter with you?* or literally, *what's the matter with your God?*, an initially greeting expression which is perverted with the introduction of the word god, making it a curse with an insulting undertone (واشبي ربك واشبي ربك اووو اووو). This form of linguistic harassment operates by taking Arabic authentic communication and transforming it into a direct attack and insult aiming at hurting the target.

Likewise, the followers' multilingual competence is prevalent in mixing Arabic and French language to shape provocative trolls. As seen in Hamid16000's comment: *you can do whatever you want, but you'll still be KAVI forever* (tu fais tout ce que tu veux, mais n'empêche tu restera KAVI jusqu'à la fin des temps) where French and colloquial Arabic are mixed to deliver a provocative statement, suggesting the perceived authority of French, on the

one hand, and the Algerian spoken language, on the other. The use of the word **KAVI**, a derogatory term meaning uncivilized and little is used here to assign the influencer an inferior social category intended to offend the target.

Less offensive are examples of cultural targeting, an additional category which subtly features social and cultural values as the ones expressed in the comment presented in the table. Hanane`s comment: *This is famous people`s life* (هادي هيا حياة الناس المشهورين) is not merely a statement, but a foil for cultural superiority and value structures. For Hanane, and some other followers, cyberbullying is legitimized by accepting to expose one`s life and content to the public. In this line, lifestyle choices and social visibility are sanctioned, reflecting on the self-presentation norms and constraints.

Overall, the specific examples from Reghis followers` comments illustrate how cyberbullying adapts to multilingual, multicultural contexts, requiring equally sophisticated and culturally aware responses from platforms, educators, and communities.

Influencer 3: Mounia Benfeghou

Mounia Benfeghou`s data-set reinforces the patterns observed previously but adds further dimensions of moral, religious, and sexual dimensions to the cyberbullying practices. As seen with the previous data-sets, a mix of colloquial Arabic, French, and Romanized forms of language are used, with insults ranging from name-calling (animal and other forms) to mockery, and delegitimization, among others. Most comments are short, straightforward, and aggressively charged, intended to stimulate fierce interaction and hostile exchanges.

As it is the case with the previous cyberbullying strategies, name-calling is the most prevalent one, with terms such as *Ikelbaa* (female dog, or bitch) and (Shepherd, fem.); which implies loose woman or low status, both working as direct attacks. Amplified by emojis, the words are used to express hatred and invite the public to join in the offence. The animal metaphors connect to the cultural dimension associating dogs more particularly to dirtiness or moral default, intensifying the social stigma related to the target.

Category	Description	Examples from Data-set
Name-Calling	Directly addressing the target with derogatory nouns, nicknames, or pejoratives.	راعية rahimrahim0781 Ikelbaa 🐕 Mohamed Salim6576
Religious Reproach	Attempts to isolate or marginalize users by using religion	حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل free_like_a_birds
Mockery	Ridiculing the target through irony, sarcasm, or exaggerated laughter.	جبهة التحرير الوطني Mani Lyn Man
Delegitimization	Dismissing the target`s credibility, achievements, or identity.	أكبر وحدة في إفريقيا تباهل Nassimbelplatini Matahchmich Zianikadi Tbahlidli

		simou
Sexual Harassment	Insult using censored slur, commands Insult with sexual undertone	hatou les prix ya les p*** Aziz didi

Table 2. Linguistic categories of Cyberbullying (Mounia Benfeghoul)

Along overt insults, mockery is also present, where humour is employed to undermine the target. Sarcasm appears in many examples including the one on the table, “*National Liberation Front*” (جبهة التحرير الوطني), referring to the influencer’s forehead, and following political references which are reinforced with the laughter emojis. The political re-framing of a serious label into a source of derision by mocking the target’s physical appearance, offers ways to signal the bullies’ intention to associate the target with absurd and illegitimate. This notion of illegitimate is also enhanced through the use of delegitimization tactic, found in comments such as *Have you no shame? You disgraced yourself or competence*. In the cases of delegitimization, the bullies place the target in a more general scope by extending the personal insult to a broader social problem and a large-scale harm to intensify the public disapproval.

Religious reproach is also integrated by invoking God in many instances like the ones of *God is my witness, By God, there is no power or strength [but God’s]*, (حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل) which overtly appear worshipful but covertly insulting through moral judgments and indirect accusations. Contrary to the other strategies, religious formulas are significantly weighty in terms of religion and culture, placing the target’s behaviour not merely as socially unacceptable but as spiritually condemnable. In the online context, religious invocations are critical because they can never be identified as abuse if they are not contextualized.

The significant sexual harassment directed at the influencer is what stands out most in this data set. By using sexual terms and other forms of harassment, the commentators intensify verbal attacks, in contrast to bullying that is solely based on linguistic appearance. Code switching, which gives insults a harsher tone, maintains the aggression. Romanized Arabic and French are used together, as in the example: *Put the prices, you b**** (hatou les prix ya les p***), where Arabic is used for moral and social authority and French for stylistic punch. Since it targets Arabic and French speakers for greater harm and validation, this bilingual combination has a broader resonance.

Ultimately, these comments show once more how cyberbullying on TikTok is not limited to calling names; it also frequently incorporates moral judgment, social delegitimization, and cultural specific insult frameworks to inflict the most harm, on the one hand, and win over the audience’s support, on the other hand.

Influencer 4. Numidia Lezoul

Numidia Lezoul’s data-set reveals almost the same linguistic and discursive strategies used to carry out cyberbullying, combining mockery, name-calling, delegitimization, religious reproach, and sexual harassment. Similarly, the comments draw on both colloquial Algerian Arabic and French, often using animal or other metaphors, sarcastic religious blessings, cultural references to shape insults in ways that validate and legitimize aggression.

Name-calling remains the most dominant strategy, with expressions like *mahboula* (crazy woman), *kelba* (female dog, or bitch), and other metaphors referring to trash or animals. The dehumanizing aspect of these insults aims at attacking the target social dignity and prestige, through culturally embedded images that connote vulgarity and undervalue. Mockery is also used in several instances to make laughter after the target and invite the audience to a public agreed disgrace towards the target. In the comment *1.50 cm*, the commenter points at the influencer’s short height as a form of bullying, enhanced with the use of laughter emojis to accentuate the physical insult. The use of the emojis here is meant to signal to the others that the comment is intended to be humorous at the expense of the target’s emotional well-being.

Delegitimization also appears in explicit attacks on competence or moral insinuations. Comments like: *Ridicule doesn’t kill* or *You’re doing shady things*, devalue the target’s credibility and social reputation, reporting the influencer as foolish or morally compromised. The insinuations here are often presented in a vague manner to

avoid direct confrontation and likely instill doubt in the audience's mind out of unfounded statements. Examples of religious reproach are also reported in the data-set, reflecting invocations or sarcastic blessings. Statements such as *May God bring you healing* or *May God protect you*, are frequently used in the Algerian social context, but exacerbated here to address ironic and cutting comments to harm the target.

Category	Description	Examples from Data-set
Name-Calling	Directly addressing the target with derogatory nouns, nicknames, or pejoratives.	شادي يتقلعش على بنان Sifddin mahboula Aby Adh
Delegitimization	Dismissing the target's credibility, achievements, or identity.	Le ridicule ne tue pas Barbara هادي لازماتها حمار الأحلام Brahim Amrous إراك ديرى شراكي Simpa 100
Religious Reproach	Attempts to isolate or marginalize users by using religion	يارب لطفك الرحمن الله بسم بالطيب Mounir Setif الشفاء بجيبك ربي Ali pro civil
Sexual Harassment	Insult using censored slur, commands Insult with sexual undertone	محرز يشوف في دي الكلية ويخلي تايلور 2pac nafaa Nick mouk qahba Didi16
Mockery	Ridiculing the target through irony, sarcasm, or exaggerated laughter.	1.50 اسم Abderraouf

Table 4: Coded Linguistic Types of Cyberbullying (Numidia Lezoul)

As previously stated, this strategy exploits the sociocultural holy dimension of religion to veil aggression and deny malicious intent. Sexual harassment is also featured directly and indirectly in the comments, either by suggesting a romantic or a sexual link between the target and a public figure in the comment..... , or very straightforward terms like *Fuck you bitch*. These remarks operate in a way to sexualize the target in a public setting to reduce her to a subject of gossip and humiliation.

Similar to the previous data-sets, this one underscores how cyberbullying manipulate overt and covert hostile behaviors to insult the target. Often layered with humour, cultural and religious references, sarcasm, mockery, and sexual terms and insinuations, all these are used to mask aggression and violence in a subtle way. The use of code-switching also inflated the hostility by shifting from a register to another, moderating formality, humour, and vulgarity.

Overall, the four influencers' data-sets show how cyberbullying is not a random collection of insults but a socially structured form of communication, including recurrent and identifiable aggressive patterns such as name-calling, mockery, delegitimization, religious reproach, and sexual harassment. By alternating multi-modal cues such as emojis, orthographic play, and a mix of languages, these strategies are put forward to create and maintain a hostile and unsafe environment for everyone who engages in a visible online activity.

Comparative Analysis of Cyberbullying Patterns Across the Four Algerian Influencers

Looking for more depth on the topic, this section seeks to answer the paper's second question on the so-far reported cyberbullying patterns' possible variation across the four Algerian influencers' data-sets. The data analysis reveals gender-specific, context-dependent variations as well as universal harassment pattern, which helped shed light on the intricate dynamics of digital violence in Algerian TikTok spaces.

Some cyberbullying patterns show notable consistency despite the slight variation across all four influencers' data-sets, indicating basic mechanisms of digital abuse. Name-calling seems to be the most common and direct type of attack, with influencers subjected to derogatory labels that try to distill their interesting identities into single negative

traits. The pattern's consistency, from the disparaging remarks about Hicham Cook's business to the gendered insults directed at Mounia Benfeghou and the physical attacks on Numidia Lezoul show how cyberbullying operates as a reductive strategy that aims to diminish and denigrate public figures.

Furthermore, the fact that mockery is present in every instance shows how important it is in Algerian digital harassment culture. Digital symbols magnify and generalize disrespect, as demonstrated by the overuse of laughing emojis in Mounia Benfeghou's and Mohamed Reghis's data-sets. While retaining cultural specificity in its application, this emoji-based mockery produces a visual representation of collective derision that cuts across language barriers. The growing number of emojis points to digital mockery in which repetition is used to gauge intensity.

Although it takes different forms depending on the target's public image, delegitimization is a sophisticated harassment technique used against all influencers. Mounia Benfeghou is accused of creating social chaos, and Hicham Cook's credibility is questioned. This pattern demonstrates how cyberbullying is adapted to target the main source of social capital, be it personal, cultural, or professional, that bullies believe each influencer possesses.

Interestingly enough, the comparison between the cyberbullying techniques shows variation by gender. Comments directed at the female influencers are more likely to contain explicit and frequent instances of sexual harassment, with demeaning sexualized remarks explicitly directed at Numidia Lezoul and Mounia Benfeghou. The intersection of sexual objectification with other harassment forms creates compound victimization that male influencers rarely experience.

Another particularly pernicious type of harassment that takes advantage of cultural values to justify attacks is the weaponization of religion against the female influencers. The comments made about Numidia Lezoul and Mounia Benfeghou show how religious language can be instrumental for social control and moral judgment. The gendered nature of moral and sexual policing in digital spaces is demonstrated by the fact that this pattern is either noticeably absent or less noticeable in harassment aimed at the male influencers.

Context-specific harassment adaptations are also revealed by the data comparison. Every influencer is subjected to abuse that is specific to their public persona and perceived weaknesses. As a business leader, Hicham Cook faces economic mockery and professional delegitimization that question his ability and achievements. The harassment attempts to undermine his credibility in business contexts while employing cultural mockery that positions entrepreneurial ambition as pretentious or illegitimate.

Despite being positioned as a cultural figure or social commentator, Mounia Benfeghou is the target of intensive mockery that aims to make fun of her involvement in public life. In addition to using gendered moral judgment that calls into question her right to engage in public life, the abuse specifically targets her activities and physical appearance. This two-pronged attack highlights how harassment of women in public discourse is intersectional. Similar to Mounia Benfeghou, Numidia Lezoul experiences physical appearance-based harassment along with cultural and social ridicule that aims to portray her as pretentious or socially inappropriate. Intimate knowledge of particular cultural contexts is demonstrated by the harassment use of localized cultural references, which imply that the harassment originated within her community rather than from cultural outsiders.

Mohamed Reghis's communication style and cultural expression are the targets of identity mockery and linguistic discrimination. The harassment shows how naturally occurring code-switching behavior can be turned into a source of derision, making multilingual practices vulnerable. Tensions surrounding genuine cultural expression in contemporary Algerian contexts are also revealed by this linguistic harassment.

Collectively, this comparative analysis shows that online abuse is a complex social control mechanism. Additionally, patterns of oppression related to gender demonstrate how certain digital behaviors magnify preexisting social inequalities by giving them new platforms for expression. The necessity for individual safety strategies that acknowledge how different people face different harassment risks depending on their gender, occupation, and public status is reflected in the optimization of abuse strategies to mark target-specific weaknesses.

5. Discussion

This study addressed the issue of cyberbullying by focusing on the most prevalent patterns and how they vary among four Algerian TikTok influencers. The data analysis revealed five categories: sexual harassment, delegitimization, religious reproach, name-calling, and mockery. These forms of abuse not only showed the intentional nature of aggression, but also socially and culturally based aggression aimed at minimizing damage. In some instances, the data confirms the prevalence of intentional repetitive harassment highlighted by Langos (2012), Kowalski et al. (2014), and Takunaga (2010), who sustain the systematic nature of cyberbullying and its collective amplification patterns reported across the four influencers.

The findings also echo Curlew (2019) and Henry and Powell's (2018) conceptualization of online violence as a punitive mechanism set by society against visible and salient self-presented individuals who challenge the social and cultural norms of anonymity and self-concealment, mainly among the culturally silenced women. In this perspective, the results challenge purely individualistic models by showing how online violence operates as a community mechanism which transgresses cultural and social boundaries and traditional gender norms to discipline the visible ones online and socially control them. The instrumentation of religion is also displayed as a direct/indirect artefact, supporting the collective campaign against the influencers. Moreover, Lapidot-Lefler and Barak's (2015) dishinibition effect resonates with the findings as the combination of anonymity and unaccountability appears to encourage harassers to weaponize sacred and respectful cultural elements and turn them into pervasive and harmful tools. In practice, this is accomplished by employing a subtle blend of French, Romanized Arabic, and colloquial Arabic to accomplish a variety of tasks, including group association, manipulation, and cultural authenticity signaling. Abania's (2022) findings are echoed here regarding the difficulty of managing multilingual users' intentions in online settings and the use of code-mixing to sustain and reinforce aggression.

The findings also demonstrated gender-based discrimination in the digital sphere with regard to the second research question on variations in online bullying among the selected influencers. Specifically, female influencers are systematically subjected to a variety of oppressive practices that target their moral authority, sexual freedom, and right to public participation through sexual harassment and religious discourse. In this ultimate case, the manipulation of religion and gender standards illustrate how traditional patriarchal organization persists online to domesticate and control the users.

In this way, the documented sexual attacks against Mounia Benfeghoul and Numidia Lazoul resonate with Todd's (2017) and Jane's (1917) conceptions of perpetuating violence as a refreshed old story that places similar misogynist control mechanisms on social media. Nevertheless, the Algerian context introduces further complexity through the intersection of religious authority and gender politics to generate mixed forms of oppression. While male influencers are professionally delegitimized and culturally ridiculed, they do not experience the same degree of moral policing or questioning of their right to public visibility that defines the oppression of female influencers.

The identified categories of name-calling, mockery, delegitimization, religious reproach, and sexual harassment also pointed to the fact that online abuse is a worldwide problem. It would seem that cyber violence serves as a control mechanism for appropriate public participation. According to the collective nature of aggression, public commitment that is acceptable to a wider range of target groups is protected and encouraged online through the use of social norms surrounding public behavioral ideals. In this special case, effective interventions must not only address individual harassment, but also the broader discourse spaces where online violence is perpetuated, activated, and legitimized against public figures.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated cyberbullying patterns among four selected Algeria TikTok influencers. The results showed that digital aggression in this context operates less as random individual abuse and more as a sophisticated system of social policing, manifested through five categories: name-calling, social exclusion, mockery, religious reproach, and sexual harassment. The results included the use of linguistic strategies that emphasize psychological harm through stylistic aspects of the language, including a subtle combination of code-switching between French, Romanized Arabic, and colloquial Algerian Arabic.

Emojis and other para-linguistic elements were employed to both accentuate the aggressive intention, and give the attack a humorous tone. By doing so, the bullies deliberately invite the audience to join the aggressive campaign against the target. The use of the linguistic elements and the para-linguistic ones are quite instructive in this context; they reveal how harassers use language as a weapon to cause harm and indicate their in-group membership.

The study also revealed that harassment patterns differ by gender. Contrary to their male counterparts, female influencers were subjected to attacks that specifically targeted their reputation, sexual autonomy, moral authority, and legitimacy as public figures. Religion and sex were particularly used as weapons against women. This practice illustrates how sociocultural values are re-imagined to convey exclusion and consolidate traditional patriarchal structures and roles. Although cultural values and religious beliefs are highly considered and respected in the Algerian environment, contextual manipulation perverts them into tools of harassment and abuse.

Based on the findings discussed above, the study highlights the need for more documented methods that require moderation systems that consider the subtleties of online abusive language. As previously demonstrated, the majority of comments were veiled and malevolently constructed through religious or humorous language, with very few direct attacks. Current mechanisms for reporting cyberbullying are still inadequate for establishing inclusive and safe online environments. Ultimately, comprehensive intervention must encompass profound sociocultural transformation through digital education at both Algerian and international levels.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design, grounded in critical digital discourse analysis. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 200 public comments from TikTok posts belonging to four popular Algerian influencers. The comments were analyzed using qualitative content analysis involving open coding, thematic grouping, and cross-case comparative analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Only publicly available comments were analyzed. Usernames and identifiable information were not recorded. The study followed digital ethics guidelines to protect individuals from harm and ensure data confidentiality.

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