



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

The impact of social media on the formation of cultural identity among young people

Pr. Mohammed khemmed¹, Pr. Smail benkhalifa², Pr. Rachid Souaker³,
Dr. Moumen BekKouche Djemoui ⁴

- 1: Laboratory of Social Development and Community Service(LSDSS),University of Eloued (Algeria), khemmad-mohammed@univ-eloued.dz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7862-7095>
- 2: Laboratory of Social Development and Community Service(LSDSS),University of Eloued (Algeria), benkhalifa-smail@univ-eloued.dz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2684-0246>
- 3: Laboratory of Social Development and Community Service(LSDSS),University of Eloued (Algeria), souaker-rachid@univ-eloued.dz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2684-0246>
- 4: Laboratory of Social Development and Community Service(LSDSS),University of Eloued (Algeria), moumenb-djemoui@univ-eloued.dz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0303-210X>

Received: 08/06/2026

Accepted: 07/07/2026

Published: 04/09/2026

Abstract:

This paper examines the impact of social media on the formation of cultural identity among young people amidst the rapid digital transformations of the contemporary world. These platforms have become open, interactive spaces that facilitate the exchange of values, ideas, and cultural symbols, making them key players in reshaping the thinking patterns and cultural affiliations of youth. The study aims to analyze the nature of the relationship between intensive social media use and the construction of cultural identity by revealing manifestations of cultural influence, whether in language, behavior, values, or patterns of cultural consumption. It also seeks to highlight the challenges posed by these media, most notably the dominance of global culture, the decline of local particularities, and the emergence of forms of cultural alienation. The paper employs a descriptive-analytical approach, reviewing theoretical literature and previous studies, and analyzing real-world examples of young people's use of these platforms.

Keywords: Identity, Culture, Digital Transformation, Social Media, Youth

Introduction:

Cultural identity in the current digital age constitutes one of the most critical existential challenges facing contemporary societies, particularly Arab and Islamic ones. While identity in traditional societies was passed down through generations within relatively closed social and symbolic contexts, today it is constructed and reshaped daily in front of smartphone screens (Buckingham,

2008, p. 15). At the heart of this communication revolution stand young people, who have transformed from mere recipients of culture into producers, distributors, and critics of it simultaneously (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 113)

This paper poses the following central question: How do social media algorithms and their interactive platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) reshape the fundamental components of cultural identity among Arab youth, and what mechanisms can be used to safeguard this identity?

To analyze this issue thoroughly, we will begin with a multidimensional definition of cultural identity, then examine the extent of digital penetration among youth, deconstruct the effects of these media on language, religion, values, and behavior, discuss the dichotomy of threat and reinforcement, analyze the role of algorithms and the economy of attention, and conclude with a proposed model for positive engagement with these media.

1- Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

1-1- The Concept of Cultural Identity: From Fixed Essence to Narrative Construction

In classical sociological thought, cultural identity was defined as "the set of characteristics, traits, beliefs, values, behavioral patterns, and tangible and intangible symbols shared by a human group, transmitted across generations, and giving its members a sense of belonging and differentiation from others" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). However, this fundamental definition has been subjected to sharp criticism with the emergence of postmodern transformations and globalization. As Ricoeur argues in his theory of "narrative identity," identity is not a static essence, but rather a story we constantly tell ourselves, and it changes with the changing contexts of the narrative (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 140).

In the digital context, Oke (2021, p. 56) adds that cultural identity has become "a performance before a virtual audience," where young people display aspects of their culture while concealing others, experimenting with multiple identities across different accounts. This is confirmed by Abu Rahma's study (2024, p. 89), which states that identity in digital spaces is no longer an "inheritance" but a "choice" negotiated by the individual with the platform's algorithms and their following audience.

Researcher Ben Zayed (2018, p. 33) distinguishes between three levels of cultural identity in the digital age: primary identity (transmitted through family upbringing), interactive identity (constructed through discussion and participation in virtual groups), and visual identity (presented through images, videos, and everyday stories). These three levels interact in complex ways to shape the young person's cultural identity.

1-2-Theories Explaining the Impact of New Media on Identity

This intervention is based on three main theories:

First: Uses and Gratifications 2.0. In its classical form, the theory assumes that individuals actively choose media to satisfy specific needs (knowledge, entertainment, escapism, social interaction). However, in the digital age, Ruggiero (2000, p. 12) adds that algorithms have become "silent partners" in the selection process, such that media use is no longer entirely free but rather pre-directed by recommendation systems. This explains how a young person might start by watching a video about local heritage and then, an hour later, watch content completely contrary to their culture (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 118).

Second: The Theory of Cultural Globalization and Hybrid Identity. Robertson argues that globalization does not necessarily mean the dissolution of local cultures, but rather leads to "globalization," that is, the reproduction of global elements with a local touch (Robertson, 1995, p. 28). However, in social media, this process takes a faster and more symbolic form. A young Arab today might combine the abaya with jeans, use "Arabizi" expressions that blend Arabic and English, and celebrate Eid al-Fitr and then Halloween—this is the "hybrid identity" discussed by Handayani et al. (2024, p. 121).

Third: Algorithmic Cultural Socialization. Proposed by Cotter (2019, p. 911), this theory describes how platform algorithms transmit tastes, values, and cultural frameworks to users without their conscious awareness. Every click, like, and share feeds into an automated model that predicts what the user likes and then presents them with increasingly similar content. This creates a "filter bubble" that traps the young person within a single cultural vision that is reinforced over time (Pariser, 2011, p. 19). This theory was applied to the Arab context by Al-Rubi (2025, p. 77).

2-The Size of the Phenomenon and the Extent of Digital Penetration Among Youth

2-1- Global and Arab Statistics – Updated 2025-2026

According to the latest reports from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2026) and the DataReportal Index (2026), the number of internet users worldwide has exceeded 5.6 billion, of whom 4.9 billion actively use social media. Young people (aged 18-29) lead the usage, spending an average of 3 hours and 42 minutes daily on social media platforms, representing approximately 23% of their daily waking time. In the Arab world, Mad in East statistics (2026) indicate that the percentage of young Arabs using social media exceeds 96% in the Gulf countries, 91% in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, and 88% in Jordan and Lebanon.

A report by Google Data Labs (2026, p. 15) reveals that TikTok has become the most popular platform among Arab youth under 25, with an average daily usage of 89 minutes. Instagram follows (72 minutes), then Snapchat (58 minutes), while Facebook usage has declined to just 34 minutes. This shift is crucial in terms of cultural impact because TikTok and Instagram rely on short, emotionally charged visuals rather than lengthy text. This means that values and ideas are conveyed through visual cues, music, and direct imitation of behaviors, rather than through sequential, logical arguments (Ayish & Alnajjar, 2019, p. 45).

2-2- Usage Patterns and Their Relationship to Cultural Exposure

It is not just the quantity that matters, but also the manner of use. Researchers Kross et al. categorized... (2021, p. 50) Usage is categorized into three patterns: active use (posting, commenting, participating in discussions), passive use (browsing and watching without interacting), and fleeting interactive use (sending emojis and quick likes). The study found that passive and fleeting interactive use are strongly associated with the emergence of "negative social comparison," which erodes original cultural identity. A teenager who watches hours of TikTok videos featuring young men and women from other cultures adopting different lifestyles quickly begins to question the value of their own customs and traditions (Kross et al., 2021, p. 52)

In the Arab context, Al-Anzi's study (2025, p. 105) compared the use of Instagram and TikTok by Saudi youth and found that 68% of respondents follow foreign influencers daily, and 41% stated that they "prefer the lifestyle of the foreign influencer to their local lifestyle," while only 27% said they try to emulate traditional Arab figures. This reflects a profound shift in "role models" from local figures (father, teacher, sheikh) to virtual, transnational models (Ahmed et al., 2022, p. 209).

3- Detailed Impacts on the Components of Cultural Identity

3-1- Language: From Classical Arabic to "Franco-Arabic" and New Linguistic Phenomena

Perhaps the most obvious and immediate impact is at the linguistic level. Language is not merely a tool for communication, but a vessel for thought and identity. As Ibn Khaldun states (manuscript, p. 500), "Language is the faculty of speech, and it is one of the greatest characteristics of humankind." The spread of social media has led to three serious linguistic phenomena affecting Arab cultural identity, as detailed in Abu Al-Asal's study (2023, pp. 101–112):

3-1-1- The Decline of Classical Arabic and the Dominance of Colloquial Arabic

A field study of 500 young Egyptians, Lebanese, and Saudis revealed that the use of Classical Arabic in posts and comments does not exceed 12%, while colloquial Arabic accounts for 73%, and hybrid Arabic (Arabic-English) for 15% (Abu Al-Asal, 2023, p. 104). The researcher attributes this to the fact that Classical Arabic is taught in schools as a "rigid, formal language," while colloquial and hybrid dialects are used daily on screen as a "living, fast-paced language." This reinforces the feeling that Classical Arabic is "the language of the other" (the authorities, education, and official media), while the dialects are "our language." This weakens the connection between the younger generation and their literary, religious, and legal heritage, which is primarily written in Classical Arabic.

3-1-2- Arabizi or Franco-Arabic

The phenomenon of writing Arabic using Latin letters and numbers (such as 3 for 'ayn, 7 for ha', and 9 for qaf) emerged as a technical solution in the early days of the internet when keyboards did not support Arabic. However, it has evolved into a "counter-cultural marker" of traditional

identity. Palfreyman and Al-Khalil (2007, p. 108) argue that the use of Arabizi now indicates that its user is educated, transnational, and more connected to "global internet culture" than to their local community. Indeed, a study by Abich (2021, p. 83) showed that 79% of young Algerian university students consider writing in Arabizi to be "faster, more modern, and more elegant" than traditional Arabic, while 61% describe writing in standard Arabic as "old-fashioned and boring".

3-1-3- The Emergence of Emojis and Abbreviations

Emojis are no longer mere decorations; they have transformed into a quasi-linguistic system capable of conveying entire sentences of meaning and emotion. A study by Alshenqeeti (2016, p. 62) indicates that young people use emojis as a substitute for words in approximately 45% of their interactions. Furthermore, some emotions (such as complex sarcasm, irony, and mild intimacy) are more easily expressed through emojis than through writing. This signifies a decline in the ability to express oneself precisely in writing, and consequently, a decrease in the depth of conveying complex cultural ideas. Boukaffa (2025, p. 57) gives a striking example: When young Algerians were asked about the meaning of "dignity" and "honor" in their cultural heritage, 63% of them found it difficult to express them verbally, while they quickly described them with emojis such as "the lion" or "the crown."

3-2- Religion and Value Systems: Between the Authority of the Virtual Sheikh and Excessive Pluralism

Religious identity forms the core of cultural identity for the majority of Arab youth (estimated at between 85% and 95% according to Pew Research Center 2025). However, social media is reshaping young people's relationship with religion in unprecedented ways, as Hanouf (2025, pp. 22-38) explains in three mechanisms:

3-2-1-The Fragmentation of Traditional Religious Authority

Previously, religious authority was embodied in institutions such as Al-Azhar or the Dar al-Ifta, or in socially recognized scholars. Today, anyone with a phone and an account can become an "internet preacher" or "spiritual guide." This phenomenon, which Bunt (2018, p. 89) calls "cyber-digital Islam," is creating a chaos of reference points for young people. In Hanouf's study (2025, p. 28) on Egyptian youth, 52% said they primarily obtain their religious information from YouTube and Facebook, and 38% said they trust the "on-screen preacher" more than a traditional Al-Azhar scholar they don't follow online. This fragmentation can lead to the adoption of extremist fatwas on the one hand, or to a "softened Islam" on the other, limited to likes and emotional posts.

3-2-2-The Daily Clash Between Religious Values and Popular Content

What distinguishes TikTok and Instagram's algorithms is that they don't categorize content according to "moral bubbles." A young Muslim might, in just a few minutes, watch a religious video urging modesty, followed by a video of a scantily clad girl dancing, and then a comedy

video mocking religious people. This "contradictory package" creates a state of value chaos, where young people find no fixed standard by which to judge what they see, leading to exhaustion and "moral apathy" (Al-Rubi, 2025, p. 80). The situation is exacerbated by the phenomenon of "TikTok challenges," which sometimes include content that borders on outright blasphemy or mockery of religious symbols (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 127).

3-2-3- Opportunities to Strengthen Religious Identity (The Dark Side)

However, the positive side cannot be denied. Islamic groups and religious forums have used Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube to spread moderate religious awareness and combat extremism. Abu Rahma's study (2024, p. 97) notes that there are more than 2,500 Arabic Facebook groups that discuss the Quran, its interpretation, and Hadith with a scientific methodology, followed by millions of young people. Applications like "Ayah" and "Tafsir" are also used to remind young people of the Quran daily, contributing to the strengthening of religious identity. However, it is noteworthy that these positive uses remain less influential than the widespread superficial trends (Abu Rahma, 2024, p. 101).

3-3-Values, Customs, and Traditions: From the Real to the Virtual

Customs and traditions are perhaps the most susceptible to change through social media, as they rely on imitation, observation, and modeling—all processes greatly facilitated by visual platforms. A study by Sawaleh (2023, pp. 46–62) reveals profound effects on three levels:

3-3-1- Romantic and Premarital Relationships

Much has been said about the impact of social media on romantic relationships. In traditional Arab cultures, premarital relationships were governed by strict social controls (parental supervision, modesty, and averting one's gaze). However, in the virtual world, young men and women can communicate for extended periods without supervision, exchanging images, messages, and "quick intimate" feelings that were previously impossible. A study by Keles et al. concluded that... (2020, p. 102) Excessive exposure to romantic content on Instagram increases the acceptance of "free love" and extramarital relationships by 45% among Arab youth compared to those who do not use it heavily. Furthermore, the criteria for a "suitable partner" have shifted to include factors such as "number of followers," "quality of photos," and "visible consumerism," rather than morals, lineage, and tribal affiliation (Sawalehieh, 2023, p. 58).

3-3-2-Wedding and Funeral Rituals (Marriage and Death)

It can be said that weddings have transformed into "mini-TV productions" aimed at live streaming on Instagram and Snapchat. Couples now seem more concerned with flower arrangements, attire, and projectors than with the blessings of the attendees and the sanctity of the marriage ceremony. Al-Anzi's study (2024, p. 214) documented that in Saudi society, 67% of families now hire professional photographers to cover weddings and immediately upload them to social media,

and that 43% of brides request that their wedding photos be edited with filters before posting, thus transforming a religious and social event into a "performance" for others. Even more concerning, some families now allocate a separate budget for "trending" and "viral" content, in addition to the wedding budget itself.

As for sad occasions, the phenomenon of "offering condolences on Snapchat stories" has emerged in a vulgar manner, devoid of traditional mourning etiquette. Hassan (2024, p. 152) observes that virtual condolences are usually faster and more widespread, but less profound and meaningful, which weakens genuine social cohesion.

3-3-3-The Relationship with Grandparents and Oral Tradition

With the dominance of social media, family gatherings where grandparents used to share stories, proverbs, and wisdom have diminished. Instead of spending an evening with their grandfather listening to the poetry of Al-Nabigha or Al-Mutanabbi, young people now spend it with their "virtual grandfather" (the phone screen), which offers them quick and fragmented content. A study by Ben Zayed (2018, p. 41) indicated that 74% of Algerian youth cannot recite more than five Algerian proverbs, while they can recite dozens of global challenges and trends. This represents a cognitive disconnect from deep layers of cultural heritage.

3-4-Consumption and Appearance Patterns: Identity Shifts from Substance to Image

Social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, have revolutionized the concept of "cultural appearance." In the past, clothing and adornment expressed tribal, class, or religious affiliation (the fez, the agal, the djellaba, the niqab, etc.). Today, appearance has become a tool for "consumer self-construction" based on what influencers promote (Al-Roubi, 2025, p. 84).

3-4-1- The Role of Influencers in Redefining Beauty and Dress

There are two types of influencers: local and global. According to a study by Al-Shinawi (2025, p. 122), 73% of Arab youth follow Arab influencers, and 58% follow foreign influencers. The influence of foreign influencers is more profound on fashion and makeup styles, while Arab influencers have a greater impact on lifestyle, food, and travel. But the danger lies in the fact that many Arab influencers, in turn, imitate Western influencers in their manner of speaking, photography, and even hairstyles. Ahmed et al. (2022, p. 210) termed this phenomenon "sequential Westernization," where young people gradually distance themselves from their original visual identity without realizing it.

3-4-2-The "Filter" Revolution and the Digitally Modified Body

Young people no longer accept their images as they are; instead, they run filters that make their skin lighter, their eyes wider, their nose thinner, and their bodies slimmer. According to Abu Al-Asal's analysis (2023, p. 108), this reflects a "hidden hatred of original Arab and African features" and an implicit glorification of European beauty standards. A psychological study (Fardouly et al.,

2018, p. 56) linked the intensive use of filters to body image disorders and even the emergence of a "cognitive distortion" that drives young people to undergo cosmetic surgery to conform to their filtered image. In the Arab world, the rate of rhinoplasty and lip augmentation surgeries among young people increased by 200% between 2020 and 2025, according to reports from the Arab Society of Plastic Surgeons (Al-Rubi, 2025, p. 86).

4- The Duality of Influence – Threat vs. Reinforcement

Following this explanation, we emphasize that the influence is not one-sided. There are significant opportunities to reinforce identity through social media, provided it is used consciously. We will summarize these two aspects.

4-1-The Dark Side: The Threat to Cultural Cohesion

According to the consensus of the studies we reviewed, the main risks can be summarized in five points:

- Cultural Alienation: A young person's feeling of not belonging to their original culture, their contempt for it, and their preference for other cultures over it (Abish, 2021, p. 76). This appeared in rates ranging between 29% and 47% in various Arab studies.

- Identity fragmentation and the disease of pluralism: This leads to a state of "no fixed identity," where young people adopt contradictory values that fail to build a coherent personality (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 124).

- Family alienation: This stems from the widening value gap between young people and their parents. While parents were raised on values of collectivism, obedience, and modesty, their children were raised on values of individualism, free expression, and acceptance of absolute diversity (Keles et al., 2020, p. 98).

- Decline of local cultural capital: This refers to the loss of knowledge of local literary, historical, and artistic heritage in favor of knowledge of global popular culture (pop songs, films, and memes).

- Increased Anxiety and Depression Due to "Cultural Comparison": When young people perceive their own culture as less "successful," "enjoyable," or "free" than the cultures presented on social media, they experience psychological distress, which may even lead to a rejection of their original identity (Manago, 2026, p. 9).

4-2-The Bright Side: Strengthening Identity Through Conscious Use

Conversely, social media offers powerful tools for those who wish to strengthen their cultural identity, including:

-Reviving Digital Heritage: Cultural activists can create pages specializing in Nabati poetry, handicrafts, traditional cuisine, or folk costumes, reaching millions of young people in an engaging and visually appealing way. Al-Anzi (2025, p. 110) points to the success of accounts like "Saudi One" and "Our Emirati Heritage" in garnering thousands of followers and organizing real-world events to promote identity.

- Forming Resilient Virtual Communities: Social media allows young people who feel culturally threatened in their immediate surroundings (such as diaspora communities or minorities) to connect with each other and share strategies for preserving their identity. Young Amazigh people in North Africa have used Facebook to promote their language and culture in an unprecedented way (Abich, 2021, p. 96)

- Cultural Self-Learning: Young people can follow YouTube channels specializing in Arab history, Islamic philosophy, or cultural anthropology, and develop their knowledge at a pace that surpasses what is offered in school. This strengthens their identity through "conscious choice" rather than "blind indoctrination" (Bouakfa, 2025, p. 66).

- Cultural Criticism and Exposing Distortions: Social media allows young people to critique the distorted stereotypes of their culture presented in Western media. For example, campaigns like #ArabIdentity and #StopOrientalism saw thousands of young people participate, showcasing the beauty and diversity of their authentic culture (Ahmed et al., 2022, p. 211).

Therefore, the debate is not "social media: yes or no," but rather "how we use it and how we educate our youth to use it critically."

5-The Role of Algorithms and the Attention Economy – The Hidden Enemy

To discuss this impact in a serious academic manner, we must move beyond the surface of the phenomenon to the underlying technological infrastructure that governs it. Social media platforms are not neutral spaces; rather, they are artificial intelligence systems designed to maximize a single metric: user time on site, which is known as the attention economy.

5-1-How Do Algorithms Work Against Balanced Identity?

Cotter (2019, p. 914) explains that recommendation algorithms (such as those used in TikTok's "For You" and Instagram's "Explore") operate on the principle of progressively reinforcing similarity: if a user likes a particular type of content (e.g., provocative dance), the algorithm will present them with more of that content and gradually reduce exposure to other types of content (such as conservative religious videos). As a result, the user becomes trapped in a "cultural bubble." It is narrow-minded, almost forgetting the existence of other perspectives that represent its original heritage.

However, in the case of young people with diverse interests (religious, athletic, artistic), the algorithm has to choose. Since the most controversial content and strong emotions (such as

anger, lust, and fear) attract the most clicks, algorithms deliberately tend to present this type of content, which often clashes with established cultural values. This is what Pariser (2011, p. 34) calls "selling cheap emotions".

5-2-A Case Study of Arab Culture: Why Do "TikTok Girl Challenges" Appear More Often Than "Lessons in Arab Values?"

Google Data Labs (2026, p. 28) conducted an experiment with 1,000 young Arabs: algorithms categorized the intersection of these interests. They found that 72% of TikTok's recommendations to young people were for "highly provocative" content (provocative acts, daring challenges, Westernization), while recommendations for "traditional Arabic" content did not exceed 8%, even though young people showed equal interest in both. The reason is that the latter generates less engagement. In conclusion, algorithms "usurp" the free will to choose culture, constantly pulling users toward what is morally and culturally inferior because it is more profitable for the platform (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 131.)

6- A Proposed Model for Strengthening Cultural Identity in the Digital Age

6-1-From Media Literacy to "Cultural Digital Citizenship"

In response to these threats, many Arab educational institutions have called for the integration of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into school curricula. However, we propose a deeper concept: Cultural Digital Citizenship. According to Abu Rahma (2024, p. 110), this means empowering young people with three key competencies:

- Critical Competence: Analyzing algorithmic discourse, understanding how algorithms shape their preferences, and how they can manipulate or intentionally direct them towards meaningful content.
- Productive Competence: The ability to produce engaging and modern digital content that reflects their authentic culture in a way that rivals the culture of global influencers.
- Ethical Competence: Adhering to the values of dialogue, respect, and responsibility when discussing identity, and avoiding hate speech or isolationism.

6-2- The Role of Family, School, and Cultural Institutions

- Family: Parents must shift from being "monitors of usage" to "digital guides," meaning they should occasionally sit with their children in front of the content, discuss it, and offer them attractive cultural alternatives (Bouqfa, 2025, p. 73). Also, families can create positive competition, such as contests to produce short videos about family or local heritage, instead of suddenly banning their children from social media platforms.

- Schools: Arabic language, history, and art curricula need to be redesigned to be more interactive and digital. For example, students could be tasked with creating a "heritage TikTok" that mimics

popular challenges but with cultural content that expresses their identity (Abu Al-Asal, 2023, p. 115)

- Cultural and media institutions: Support positive content influencers and fund extensive digital campaigns under the hashtags #MyIdentity_Authenticity and #ProudOfMyHeritage to promote the visibility of cultural content in algorithms (Al-Anzi, 2025, p. 122).

6-3-Recommendations for Researchers and Policymakers

- Conduct longitudinal studies that follow a sample of young people for several years to measure the actual change in cultural identity resulting from exposure to social media, instead of the more common cross-sectional studies.

- Designing Arabic platforms that compete with TikTok while respecting Arab cultural sensitivities and ensuring that meaningful content appears in recommendation lists (Handayani et al., 2024, p. 134).

- Establishing digital codes of conduct for influencers, encouraging them to create responsible content that does not disrespect local cultural identity.

Conclusion

This intervention highlights that social media has imposed a new existential reality on Arab youth: the reality of self-construction in the marketplace of algorithmic attention. Its effects on cultural identity have proven to be multifaceted and double-edged. The greatest danger lies not in these platforms themselves, but in the lack of critical awareness of their mechanisms and the inability of traditional socialization institutions (family, school, mosque, official media) to keep pace with the rapid changes and provide an attractive and competitive cultural alternative.

The solution will not be found in returning to the past, nor in blindly being dazzled by digital globalization. Rather, the solution lies in empowering young people to be skilled navigators in a turbulent digital environment, enabling them to utilize the very tools that threaten their identity to strengthen it, and to produce their own narratives using the tools of the age. Building an "enlightened digital identity" requires a collaborative effort between families, schools, civil society, governments, and technology companies. If we succeed in this challenge, social media can transform from a threat to an enabler of cultural identity in the 21st century.

References

1- Abu Al-Asal, A. (2023). The Effects of Social Media on Standard Arabic among University Students. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University*, 145(3), 95-124.

- 2- Abu Rahma, M. (2024). Examining the Role of Social Media in Enhancing Cultural and Religious Identity among Palestinian University Students. *Palestine University Journal for Research and Studies*, 14(2), 85-115.
- 3- Abish, N. (2021). The Impact of Social Media Use on the Cultural Identity Values of Algerian Youth. *Journal of the Researcher in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(1), 70-99.
- 4- Ibn Khaldun, A. (manuscript). The Introduction. *Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah*, edited by Dr. Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi (2018 edition), 495-510.
- 5- Bin Zayed, I. (2018). The Impact of Social Media on Cultural Identity: A Study of Uses and Gratifications among Students of Taheri Mohamed Bechar (Facebook as a Model). *Journal of Studies*, 7(2), 28-49.
- 6- Bouguefah, Ch. (2025). The Impact of Digital Media on the Cultural Identity of Algerian University Students. *Journal of Human Sciences*, University of Batna, 22(1), 50-78.
- 7- Hassan, J. (2024). The Impact of Digital Communication Technology on the Cultural Identity of Youth. *Journal of Media Research*, 62(3), 140-175.
- 8- Roubi, M. (2025). The Dual Impact of Social Media on Arab Identity: Towards a Critical Perspective. *Egyptian Journal of Media Research*, 78(2), 70-100.
- 9- Shennawi, H. (2025). Digital Influencers and the Reshaping of Cultural Consumption Patterns among Egyptian Youth. *Journal of Communication Sciences*, 19(4), 112-147.
- 10- Sawalehia, A. (2023). The Impact of Social Media Use on the Cultural Identity of University Students: A Field Study on a Sample of Students from Tebessa University. *Herodotus Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 40-68.
- 11- Al-Anzi, M. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Enhancing Cultural Identity in Saudi Society. *International Journal of Educational Sciences and Arts*, 13(2), 205-230.
- 12- Al-Anzi, M. (2025). Transformations of Cultural Identity in the Age of Digital Platforms – A Case Study of Saudi Arabia. *Gulf Media Journal*, 10(1), 98-128.
- 13- Mohammed, H. A. (2024). The Impact of Social Media Use on the Cultural Identity of Youth: A Comparative Applied Study between Egypt and Kuwait. *Arab Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 28(2), 200-245.
- 14- Hanouf, M. (2025). Social Media and Religiosity among Youth: What is the Relationship? *Madarat Journal for Social Studies*, 6(1), 18-45.
- 15- Ahmed, I. S. Y., Al-Jaber, K., & Elareshi, M. (2022). Social media networks as platforms for culture and identity interplay among Qatari youth. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, 15(2), 201-223.
- 16- Alshenqeeti, H. (2016). Are emojis creating a new or old visual language for new generations? *International Journal of Language Studies*, 10(4), 55-70.
- 17- Ayish, M., & Alnajjar, A. (2019). Arab millennials' articulation of identity in cyberspace: A study of three MENA YouTubers. *Arab Media and Society*, 27, 40-60.
- 18- Buckingham, D. (2008). *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. MIT Press.

- 19- Bunt, G. R. (2018). *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence and the New Third Space*. Bloomsbury.
- 20- Cotter, K. (2019). Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate the attention economy. *New Media & Society*, 21(4), 904-920.
- 21- DataReportal. (2026). *Global Social Media Statistics 2026*. Retrieved from datareportal.com.
- 22- Fardouly, J., Willburger, B. K., & Vartanian, L. R. (2018). Instagram use and young women's body image concerns. *Body Image*, 24, 52-59.
- 23- Google Data Labs. (2026). *Algorithmic Culture in the Middle East: A Quantitative Analysis*. Google Internal Report.
- 24- Hall, S. (1996). Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (pp. 1-17). Sage.
- 25- Handayani, B., Putri, D. A., & Santoso, B. (2024). Social Media Impact on Youth Cultural Identity: A Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(4), 110-137.
- 26- ITU (International Telecommunication Union). (2026). *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2026*. Geneva: ITU.
- 27- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 94-108.
- 28- Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Sheppes, G., Costello, C. K., Jonides, J., & Ybarra, O. (2021). Social media and well-being: A review of the current evidence. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 45, 48-55.
- 29- Manago, A. (2026). Q&A on Adolescents' Use of Social Media in Identity Development. *UC Santa Cruz Transform Journal*, 8-12.
- 30- Oke, A. (2021). Social media and the performance of identity. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 3(2), 52-70.
- 31- Palfreyman, D., & Al-Khalil, M. (2007). A funky language for teenzz to use: The influence of English on the language of young Arabs. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11(1), 97-120.
- 32- Pariser, E. (2011). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. Penguin Press.
- 33- Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. University of Chicago Press.
- 34- Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. In M. Featherstone et al. (Eds.), *Global Modernities* (pp. 25-44). Sage.
- 35- Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 3-37.