

## Research Article

## Gen Z and Gen Alpha Algerian Youth and Digital Colonisabilité: A Bennabian Reading in the Age of the Algorithm

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines how continuous exposure to global, mainly Western, digital content shapes the cultural identity and worldview of Algerian Generation Z and Generation Alpha. Drawing on Malek Bennabi's concept of colonisabilité, it introduces the notion of digital colonisabilité to describe the growing susceptibility of individuals to cultural and ideological influences transmitted through global digital platforms. Postcolonial insights from Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said are also applied to analyze identity formation, representation, and symbolic dependency in digital environments. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining questionnaires, focus group discussions, and participant observation involving 65 Generation Z students (aged 20–24) from Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University and 30 Generation Alpha pupils (aged 10–14) from schools in Oran. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data were examined thematically. Findings show that both groups demonstrate strong digital literacy and linguistic adaptability. However, Generation Z displays hybrid identity negotiation, whereas Generation Alpha shows early signs of cultural assimilation. The study highlights the need to promote critical digital literacy and cultural autonomy among Algerian youth to navigate globalization with awareness and confidence.*

**Keywords:** Algerian Youth; Cultural Identity; Digital Globalization; Digital Colonisabilité; Postcolonial Theory.

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## 1. Introduction

Digital technologies have profoundly transformed how individuals access information, communicate, and engage with culture (Alruthaya et al., 2021). For Generation Z and Generation Alpha, who are considered digital natives, online platforms such as social media function not only as tools of communication but also as dynamic arenas for identity construction and cultural negotiation. In these virtual spaces, young users encounter a continuous flow of global cultural content, much of which reflects Western values, aesthetics, and ideologies. This constant and algorithmically reinforced exposure provides unprecedented access to global perspectives while at the same time raising concerns about cultural autonomy, identity, and self-perception in non-Western societies.

In Algeria, this phenomenon must be understood in relation to the country's complex colonial legacy. Malek Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité* provides a critical framework for analyzing the internal cultural and intellectual vulnerabilities that make societies receptive to external domination. Bennabi (1949), in his seminal work *Les Conditions de la Renaissance*, argued that colonialism is not merely imposed from

outside but becomes possible when a society lacks the moral, intellectual, and cultural foundations necessary to resist foreign influence. Building upon this insight, the present study introduces the concept of *digital colonisabilité* to describe how similar vulnerabilities are emerging in the digital era, where cultural subordination occurs through data systems, algorithms, and mediated representations.

The importance of this concept is increasingly evident in a global environment dominated by platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and various streaming services. These platforms frequently promote homogenized content shaped by the logic of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and reinforced through algorithmic selection. They privilege specific narratives while marginalizing or silencing others, encouraging users to internalize dominant Western norms and values. This dynamic reflects the notion of *digital Orientalism*, which illustrates how digital infrastructures reproduce colonial hierarchies by portraying non-Western societies as exotic, inferior, or underdeveloped (Kraidy, 2017).

As Algerian youth actively engage with global digital content, they are not simply passive consumers but co-producers of meaning within structures that subtly reinforce Western cultural standards. This dual process generates a persistent tension. On one hand, young people experience empowerment through participation and self-expression in digital spaces. On the other hand, they may unconsciously internalize worldviews that diverge from their local and national identities. Such internalization takes place gradually and often without awareness, reshaping value systems and collective self-perception.

Despite ongoing national efforts to preserve Algerian identity through education and language policy, digital culture has become an equally powerful site of socialization. Reports indicate that more than 75% of Algerians aged 10 to 25 use social media daily, with TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube among the most accessed platforms (Kepios, 2023). Their linguistic preferences, fashion choices, and social aspirations increasingly mirror global, mainly Western, models of modernity. In a nation still grappling with the lingering effects of colonialism, these emerging forms of digital influence require serious academic attention. Accordingly, this study argues that *digital colonisabilité* represents an important and underexplored dimension of identity formation among Algerian youth.

Algeria's case is particularly significant within the North African context because of its distinct historical and sociolinguistic background. While Morocco and Tunisia have experienced an increasing influence from English and Spanish alongside Arabic and French, Algeria's linguistic landscape remains deeply marked by its colonial history with France and its continuous effort to balance Arab and Amazigh cultural identities. This multilingual tension now converges with the rapid expansion of English-language digital content, particularly on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. As globalized digital trends intersect with unresolved colonial legacies, Algerian youth may experience this influence not only as cultural enrichment but also as an extension of symbolic dependency (Taibi, 2023).

Given this multifaceted background, the present research examines how Algerian youth navigate digital environments and how global digital narratives, especially Western ones, shape their cultural identity, worldview, and linguistic behavior. The main research question can be stated as follows: *To what extent does global digital content influence the cultural self-perception of Algerian Generation Z and Generation Alpha, and can these influences be interpreted as manifestations of digital colonisabilité within a postcolonial context?*

It is hypothesized that continuous exposure to global, predominantly Western, digital content reshapes the cultural identities, thought patterns, and emotional orientations of Algerian youth. This engagement, which is often immersive and uncritical,

may foster a cognitive and affective inclination toward external models of modernity. From this perspective, *digital colonisabilité* can be viewed as a renewed form of cultural conditioning in which algorithmic mediation replaces direct political control.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing field of postcolonial digital studies by situating the experiences of Algerian youth within wider global debates about identity, technology, and power. It aims to bridge Bennabi's philosophical ideas with contemporary digital realities, showing how algorithmic culture continues to reproduce subtle hierarchies of influence and belonging in the post-postcolonial era.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Digital Shift and Algerian Youth

In recent years, Algeria has experienced a significant transformation in how its youth interact with the world, largely driven by the rapid spread of smartphones, expanded internet access, and the increasing dominance of social media platforms (Rabah, 2022). TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram have become central spaces through which Generation Z and the emerging Generation Alpha explore, imitate, and participate in global trends. Language has played a crucial role in this digital immersion, with English increasingly functioning as a preferred medium of expression and a key reference for global culture. This linguistic shift reveals a broader reorientation of cultural affiliations, where many young Algerians are drawn toward content that reflects Western lifestyles, humor, and values.

These trends raise critical questions for a country still negotiating the complex legacies of colonialism. The growing preference for English and Western modes of self-expression in digital spaces may lead to a form of cultural and linguistic displacement. Arabic and Tamazight, although officially recognized and deeply rooted in Algerian identity, are losing prominence in online interactions, where English often signifies prestige, modernity, and social capital. This phenomenon should not be viewed simply as a linguistic preference, but rather as a symptom of broader cultural change that challenges the protection of Algeria's linguistic and cultural heritage.

Considering Algeria's continuing engagement with its colonial past, these changes have far-reaching implications. To understand this transformation, it is necessary to revisit Malek Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité*, which provides a valuable framework for analyzing the internal cultural vulnerabilities that make postcolonial societies susceptible to external influences.

### 2.2 Reading Malek Bennabi in the Age of the Algorithm

Malek Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité* remains highly relevant to understanding Algeria's contemporary digital condition. In *Les Conditions de la Renaissance* (1949), Bennabi conceptualized colonization not merely as a political or economic process, but as a condition rooted in a society's internal decline in creativity, critical thinking, and cultural confidence. He emphasized that colonization becomes possible when a society lacks the moral and intellectual strength to resist external domination. According to Bennabi, "It was not the weapons of the colonizer that brought him victory, but the state of colonisability of the colonized." This perspective shifts the focus from external imposition to internal readiness for domination.

Bennabi's analysis suggests that cultural dependency emerges when societies fail to generate original thought and instead adopt foreign models uncritically. In today's digital context, this vulnerability manifests in the unexamined consumption of Western digital content by Algerian youth. Western values, aesthetics, and linguistic norms are

frequently replicated in local digital productions, while indigenous narratives, aesthetics, and knowledge systems remain underrepresented. Digital modernity, often celebrated for its inclusive and democratizing potential, can inadvertently reproduce colonial hierarchies when algorithms and global platforms privilege dominant voices and marginalize local expression.

This renewed form of dependency aligns with what Bennabi warned against: an internalized subordination that weakens cultural autonomy. To capture the psychological depth of this phenomenon, it is essential to incorporate insights from other postcolonial thinkers who examined how external domination becomes internalized within the consciousness of the colonized subject.

### **2.3 Postcolonial Perspectives on Digital Identity (Fanon, Said, and Spivak)**

The works of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak complement Bennabi's ideas by highlighting how power, representation, and identity interact within structures of domination. Together, their theories help explain how Algerian youth negotiate identity and belonging in a digital ecosystem shaped by global hierarchies.

Frantz Fanon's analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008) reveals how colonized individuals internalize the values and norms of the colonizer, often seeking validation through imitation. This process can be seen today in how Algerian youth construct digital identities that align with Western styles, language, and aesthetics. Online visibility and social approval, often measured through likes and followers, become new forms of social capital. Fanon's notion of alienation is relevant here, as digital behaviors reflect a subtle detachment from indigenous cultural roots and an aspiration to belong to a globalized, Western-oriented digital community.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) further illuminates the issue by explaining how representation functions as a form of control. Said demonstrated that the West historically constructed the East as inferior, exotic, and dependent, a framework that persists today in algorithmic and media structures. In the digital age, visibility is governed by algorithms that decide which content is amplified and which remains hidden (Tacheva & Ramasubramanian, 2023). Algerian content that adheres to Western aesthetics or languages is often promoted, while material that uses local dialects or challenges dominant narratives tends to be marginalized. This selective visibility reflects enduring power asymmetries that shape how Algerian culture is perceived globally (Noble, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Gayatri Spivak's question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), adds another critical dimension. Spivak cautions that giving marginalized voices access to platforms does not guarantee that they will be heard or understood on their own terms. Algerian youth who use indigenous languages such as Tamazight or Darja often find their expressions overlooked by global audiences unfamiliar with local contexts (Kerma, 2018). Moreover, algorithms tend to reward conformity to dominant trends, pushing creators to simplify or alter their cultural expressions for wider appeal. Even when subaltern voices gain attention, they may be exoticized or appropriated, which diminishes their agency (Darko, 2021). Spivak's argument helps explain why digital inclusion does not automatically translate into genuine empowerment, as structural inequalities remain embedded in digital systems.

Together, Fanon, Said, and Spivak provide an integrated postcolonial lens through which digital identity can be understood as both a site of agency and subjugation. Their perspectives highlight how Algerian youth navigate a space where self-expression is possible but always mediated by unequal global structures of visibility and legitimacy.

## 2.4 Synthesis of Theoretical and Contextual Foundations

The reviewed literature converges on the idea that Algerian youth identity formation in digital spaces is deeply shaped by historical and structural legacies of colonialism. The digital shift has transformed patterns of communication and language use, resulting in greater exposure to Western cultural codes. Bennabi's *colonisabilité* underscores internal vulnerabilities that make societies susceptible to external influence. Fanon adds a psychological dimension by explaining how dominance is internalized and reproduced through daily behavior. Said exposes how digital systems replicate representational hierarchies that marginalize local perspectives, while Spivak highlights the persistent limits of voice and agency in global communication networks.

These frameworks collectively support the study's central argument that *digital colonisabilité* operates as a new mode of cultural dependency in postcolonial societies. This synthesis establishes the theoretical foundation for examining how Algerian youth internalize, negotiate, or resist global influences in digital contexts. The next section outlines the methodological approach used to investigate these dynamics empirically, focusing on the experiences, behaviors, and linguistic practices of Generation Z and Generation Alpha within Algeria's evolving digital landscape.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Research Design and Participants

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach with a qualitative emphasis to explore how sustained exposure to global digital media, primarily Western or American, may reshape the cultural identity of Algerian youth and contribute to what is termed *digital colonisabilité*. The combination of structured and reflective data collection tools allows the research to identify patterns of cultural influence, linguistic shift, and self-perception that characterize youth engagement with digital culture.

The mixed-methods design was chosen to ensure both breadth and depth of understanding. Quantitative data obtained through structured questionnaires provided measurable patterns of digital media use and language preferences. Qualitative data derived from digital diaries, focus groups, and participant observations offered deeper insights into processes of identity negotiation and cultural influence. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during the analysis stage to achieve triangulation and enhance the overall validity of results.

The study involved two groups of participants located in Mostaganem and Oran. The first group consisted of 65 Generation Z university students (aged 20–24) enrolled in Master's programs in English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem. These students grew up in a highly digitalized environment and represent a population that navigates between local linguistic traditions and global English-speaking cultures. The second group comprised 30 Generation Alpha pupils (aged 10–14) enrolled in primary and middle schools in Oran. This group represents a younger generation exposed to English both in formal education and through informal digital environments such as games, YouTube, and social media.

Sampling followed a purposive strategy to ensure diversity in digital engagement while maintaining linguistic homogeneity within each group. Three schools in Oran were selected with the cooperation of school administrators, representing both public and private sectors. Parental consent was obtained for all minors, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. This participant design allowed

comparative exploration of how digital exposure influences language, behavior, and identity across different age cohorts.

### **3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected through four complementary instruments: questionnaires, digital content diaries, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The use of multiple instruments enabled methodological triangulation and enriched the interpretation of findings.

Questionnaires were distributed to all 95 participants to collect information on their preferred digital platforms (for example, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and gaming applications), language choices in online interaction, and perceptions of how online content shapes their thinking, preferences, and lifestyles. The instrument was piloted with ten respondents to ensure clarity and age appropriateness. Quantitative responses were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages to identify dominant patterns of media consumption and linguistic preference.

Digital content diaries were completed by a subsample of 20 participants (10 university students and 10 middle school pupils). Each participant maintained a diary for one week, recording the type of content accessed, the language used, the source of the content (local, regional, or international), and personal reflections on the material. This technique promoted self-awareness and allowed the researcher to capture daily digital behaviors. Qualitative data from the diaries were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model. Codes were developed inductively around identity, cultural orientation, and linguistic behavior. Inter-rater reliability was established through double coding of a subset of diaries, achieving a 90% agreement rate.

Focus group discussions were conducted separately for each age group, involving 4 to 6 participants per group. University students discussed how digital media influences their thinking, cultural identity, and negotiation between Algerian and Western values. Younger participants engaged in more interactive discussions using visual prompts such as screenshots of games or social media content to express their preferences and perceptions. All sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes. Member checking was conducted after transcription to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of participants' statements.

Participant observation was carried out in both educational contexts. At the university level, classroom interactions were observed to capture language choice, peer communication, and references to online content. In the school setting, observations occurred during informal moments such as breaks to identify how exposure to online media influenced gestures, speech, and attitudes. Following Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), these field observations were documented through detailed and interpretive fieldnotes that emphasized not only what participants did but also how meanings were constructed in context. This reflective approach facilitated the interpretation of subtle cultural and behavioral patterns not easily captured through structured tools.

The combination of these methods provided a rich and multidimensional understanding of how global digital content interacts with local identity processes. Triangulation across instruments strengthened the credibility of findings by confirming consistency between self-reported behaviors, observed practices, and thematic interpretations. Quantitative data offered measurable indicators, while qualitative evidence contextualized the lived experiences of Algerian youth in digital environments.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. Quantitative data from questionnaires were processed through descriptive statistical procedures to summarize trends in media usage and linguistic choice. Qualitative data from diaries, discussions, and observations

were coded and analyzed inductively to identify recurrent patterns related to digital influence, cultural adaptation, and identity reconstruction. Themes that emerged across sources were cross validated to ensure reliability and interpretive coherence.

## 4. Result

This section presents and interprets the main findings of the study based on the triangulated data obtained from questionnaires, digital content diaries, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. The results reveal three interrelated themes that describe how Algerian youth negotiate cultural identity and self-perception in the digital era: (1) the Westernization of daily habits and aspirations, (2) the role of English in identity repositioning, and (3) the emergence of digital cosmopolitanism as a form of imagined global belonging.

### 4.1 Westernization of Everyday Habits and Aspirations

Quantitative data indicate that 88% of respondents use English daily on digital platforms, while 72% reported that most of the content they consume online is produced in English. The most frequently accessed platforms were TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, all of which prioritize globally trending media shaped by Western aesthetics and values.

Qualitative data support these results. Entries from digital diaries and focus group discussions show that participants frequently follow American and European influencers, music artists, and fashion trends. English expressions such as *literally*, *vibes*, and *I'm dead* appeared frequently in their speech, often mixed with Arabic or French. This habitual code-switching represents not only linguistic flexibility but also symbolic identification with Western cultural norms.

One participant noted:

"I usually think in English when I write online. It feels more expressive and more modern than Arabic."

Such statements reveal that English carries symbolic prestige as a marker of sophistication and global awareness. Participants described local cultural references as "less modern" or "less appealing," indicating the presence of what Bennabi would consider a state of *cultural vulnerability*—an openness to external domination caused by a weakening of internal confidence and creativity.

This westernization is not limited to language but extends to consumption patterns and lifestyle aspirations. The data show a gradual normalization of Western beauty ideals, clothing styles, and humor among youth. This aligns with Zuboff's (2019) concept of *surveillance capitalism*, in which global digital platforms circulate homogenized cultural products that influence taste and desire. While this trend demonstrates increased global participation, it also reveals a subtle erosion of local distinctiveness.

The findings therefore suggest that digital culture fosters both empowerment and dependency: empowerment through access to global communities, and dependency through the internalization of Western symbols of success and desirability.

### 4.2 English and Identity Repositioning

The second theme concerns the central role of English in reshaping how Algerian youth perceive themselves and express their identity. Approximately 65% of participants agreed that English allows them to express themselves better than Arabic or French, and 58% associated the language with intelligence, modernity, and creativity.

In focus group discussions, participants described speaking English as an act of self-enhancement rather than mere communication. One university student reflected:

“When I speak English, I feel more confident and smarter. It helps me express ideas that I cannot easily say in Arabic.”

This perception illustrates how English functions as a symbolic resource and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), representing upward mobility, cosmopolitan identity, and global belonging. English proficiency is not only viewed as a skill but as an identity marker associated with open-mindedness and social prestige.

However, this shift also points to deeper cognitive and cultural implications. Participants’ diaries revealed that they use English for humor, creativity, and personal reflection, while Arabic and Tamazight are reserved for family interactions or local communication. This separation of linguistic domains suggests a growing emotional and symbolic hierarchy of languages.

Alatas’s (1974) concept of the *captive mind* helps interpret this pattern. Youth increasingly think and communicate through frameworks encoded in global English media, which carry the cultural assumptions of dominant societies. In Fanon’s (2008) terms, this reflects the process by which the colonized subject internalizes the values of the colonizer, viewing the adoption of foreign language and culture as the path to legitimacy and progress.

While mastery of English offers undeniable educational and professional benefits, the findings indicate that it may simultaneously reinforce *digital colonisabilité*, wherein global media not only transmit information but also shape local systems of meaning and aspiration. This linguistic repositioning transforms how young Algerians perceive their place in the world, situating modernity and creativity within an Anglophone framework.

#### 4.3 Algeria Reimagined: Digital Cosmopolitanism and Regional Comparisons

Survey results reveal a consistent quantitative pattern reflecting Algerian youth’s aspirations toward global belonging. Eighty-one percent of participants expressed a desire to live abroad, naming Canada (35%), the United States (28%), Spain (18%), and the United Kingdom (15%) as preferred destinations. Their motivations varied, ranging from personal freedom to access to better quality of life and broader opportunities.

Data from digital diaries and focus group discussions show that many participants experience a sense of alienation from their local environment. Several students stated sentiments such as “*We don’t feel understood*” or “*This country isn’t for us*.” These remarks illustrate how digital exposure shapes emotional detachment from the local context while reinforcing admiration for foreign societies.

**Table 1.** Summary of Algerian Youth’s Attitudinal Orientation toward Local and Western Cultural Models:

| Category                             | % of respondents | Description                            |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Desire to live abroad                | 81%              | Mostly in Western nations              |
| Perceive Western culture as 'modern' | 76%              | Especially American values             |
| Feel disconnected from local culture | 64%              | Express alienation and dissatisfaction |
| Identify English as part of identity | 68%              | See it as self-defining                |

These findings reinforce Bennabi’s notion of *colonisabilité* and Fanon’s postcolonial insights into internalized dependency. Interestingly, 29% of students mentioned neighboring countries such as Tunisia and Morocco as “more open” or “more

connected,” despite never having visited them. This suggests that perceptions of regional advancement are constructed primarily through digital narratives rather than lived experience.

As one participant remarked:

“We wish Algeria could become more like Morocco or Tunisia. They seem to have more space for new ideas. Here, we always feel one step behind.”

Such statements reflect what Appadurai (1996) describes as *imagined cosmopolitanism*, where idealized notions of openness and progress are shaped by digital and regional representations circulating online. Digital media thus provide not only access to global cultures but also frameworks that redefine what is perceived as modern, advanced, or desirable.

To synthesize these tendencies, Table 2 summarizes the three overarching themes that emerged from the study, linking each to corresponding behavioral trends and quantitative evidence.

**Table 2.** Thematic Synthesis of Cultural and Linguistic Transformations among Algerian Youth.

| Theme                    | Main Trend                                        | Quantitative Support                                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Westernization of habits | Adoption of English idioms, media, and aesthetics | 88% daily English use; 72% consume English content                   |
| Identity repositioning   | English linked to empowerment and modernity       | 65% feel more expressive in English; 58% associate it with modernity |
| Digital cosmopolitanism  | Desire for migration and global belonging         | 81% wish to live abroad; 64% feel alienated locally                  |

The integration of quantitative data and thematic interpretation provides a clearer picture of how Algerian Generation Z learners of English engage with processes of digital westernization and identity formation. These patterns demonstrate that *digital colonisabilité* operates simultaneously at affective, behavioral, and symbolic levels. The following section discusses these dynamics more deeply through the theoretical lenses of Bennabi, Fanon, Said, and Spivak, showing how digital media sustain and reconfigure postcolonial hierarchies of influence.

## 5. Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section demonstrate that Algerian youth are undergoing a multidimensional transformation in their cultural orientations, linguistic choices, and self-perceptions within globalized digital environments. These transformations are not isolated social trends but reflect deeper epistemological processes that can be interpreted through postcolonial theoretical lenses (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Veracini & Weaver-Hightower, 2023). The patterns of Westernization, linguistic preference for English, and aspirations for global belonging identified in the data reveal an emergent condition of dependency that resonates with Malek Bennabi's notion of *colonisabilité* (Naylor, 2006).

In this sense, the discussion that follows aims to move beyond the descriptive account of digital behavior toward an interpretive framework that situates Algerian youth within a continuum of historical and symbolic subordination. Revisiting Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité* allows for a re-examination of how domination persists in non-

material forms, mediated through algorithms, digital language hierarchies, and global flows of representation (Ivey, 2022; Milan & Treré, 2020). By integrating insights from Fanon, Said, and Spivak, the analysis seeks to explain how digital environments reconfigure identity formation, creating new spaces of both vulnerability and agency (Hamdonah & Joseph, 2024; Shehadeh, 2023).

The findings of this study reaffirm the enduring relevance of Malek Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité* in explaining how cultural dependency continues to shape Algerian society. Bennabi (1949) argued that colonization emerges not only from external domination but also from an internal condition of intellectual stagnation and moral weakness that makes societies receptive to foreign influence. His reflections, which were originally developed within the context of mid-twentieth-century colonialism, anticipated what later scholars identified as new, symbolic forms of domination that persist beyond formal decolonization. In contemporary digital environments, this condition can be understood through what Couldry and Mejias (2019) term *data colonialism* and what Milan and Treré (2020) describe as *digital subalternity*. Both concepts point to how digital infrastructures and global communication networks reproduce hierarchies of visibility and knowledge that benefit dominant powers.

In the twenty-first century, domination operates less through territorial control and more through algorithmic systems that shape access, attention, and cultural visibility. Ossewaarde (2019) explains that digital transformation has introduced new technological metaphors that disguise persistent inequalities. Similarly, Thussu (2021) observes that global information flows remain highly asymmetrical, favoring content from Western cultural centers. Veracini and Weaver-Hightower (2023) also caution that "new media" often reinforce colonial dependencies under the illusion of openness and global participation. Within this context, Algerian youth now inhabit a digital ecosystem heavily saturated with Western language, content, and values. Algorithmic structures on global platforms tend to prioritize such material, which means that exposure to foreign epistemologies and aesthetics is constant. This dynamic represents a form of *digital colonisabilité*, where mental and cultural frameworks, rather than physical territories, become the principal sites of subordination. The admiration for Western lifestyles, the symbolic attachment to English, and the perception of Western modernity as a standard of progress observed in this study clearly illustrate the kind of dependency that Bennabi warned about.

Bennabi's notion of intellectual stagnation also remains remarkably relevant in this digital era. The data indicate that many young Algerians view innovation and progress as phenomena that come from abroad, while perceiving their own local traditions as static or less valuable. This epistemic imbalance reflects the erosion of critical awareness that Bennabi considered a precursor to dependency. Fuchs (2022) argues that digital capitalism strengthens this imbalance by normalizing Western models of creativity and success as global benchmarks. Couldry and Mejias (2019) further contend that such normalization occurs through everyday digital practices that create the illusion of empowerment while maintaining structural dependency. Yet, as Hamdonah and Joseph (2024) demonstrate in their study of Palestinian digital resistance, online environments can also foster creative agency by providing spaces where marginalized users reclaim their cultural narratives. Their findings show that digital platforms, despite their biases, can still enable alternative voices to emerge.

In this sense, Bennabi's call for intellectual renewal gains new significance in the digital age. Overcoming digital dependency does not require isolation from global media but rather a critical transformation in how people interact with it. Developing critical digital literacy, as proposed by Pangrazio, Godhe, and Ledesma (2020), can empower individuals to analyze online content critically and recognize the cultural assumptions

embedded within it. Spires (2019) likewise highlights that education should integrate digital literacy with social awareness to ensure that learners understand the ideological dimensions of digital participation. Shehadeh (2023) provides a related perspective through her concept of the “digital floating homeland,” which illustrates how digital spaces can cultivate belonging and collective identity without erasing local heritage. Building on these insights, this study suggests that Algerian youth can respond to global media not through rejection but through conscious engagement that emphasizes local perspectives and strengthens cultural confidence. Such an approach aligns with Bennabi’s vision of creative renewal through intellectual autonomy and self-awareness, offering a pathway for resisting cultural homogenization while remaining connected to the global sphere.

## 5.2 Digital Colonisabilité and the Reconfiguration of Youth Identity

The second major discussion concerns how digital *colonisabilité* reshapes identity formation among Algerian youth. As shown in recent research on transcultural and digital participation, identity in the global age has become a flexible and mediated construction that continuously evolves through interaction with digital networks that transcend national boundaries (Cubas, Al-Deen, & Mansouri, 2022). Within these interconnected environments, young people actively negotiate their sense of self by adopting, remixing, and reproducing the cultural norms that dominate their online spaces. Studies on digital self-presentation highlight how social media users perform belonging and recognition through participation in visual and linguistic trends that reflect broader global hierarchies (Brown, 2025).

This pattern echoes Fanon’s (1952/2008) concept of internalized colonial values, where the colonized subject seeks validation by conforming to dominant cultural standards. In the digital context, such conformity appears in the preference for Western-oriented aesthetics and language, particularly English. Recent sociolinguistic research notes that online English usage is often associated with prestige, confidence, and cosmopolitanism (Phyak, 2023; Vu & Do, 2021), suggesting that linguistic behavior is deeply intertwined with aspirations for global visibility.

English thus occupies a central position in this identity transformation. The present study found that most participants linked English proficiency with intelligence, modernity, and social advancement, reinforcing its role as a form of symbolic capital that indexes global belonging and social distinction (Demaj, 2022). Yet, as Tri (2021) and Phyak (2023) observe, this identification also reveals a subtle cognitive alignment in which Western discourse defines what counts as progressive or sophisticated. Fanon’s notion of alienation remains relevant here: the younger people equate success with Western cultural markers, the further they move away from their indigenous epistemic and cultural roots.

Edward Said’s (1978) analysis of *Orientalism* helps explain why these hierarchies persist in digital media. Platforms designed within Western cultural frameworks tend to prioritize content that fits global commercial trends. Local narratives that do not conform to these templates often remain invisible. The result is a digital environment that reproduces historical asymmetries of representation. Young Algerians therefore encounter the world through lenses that consistently privilege Western viewpoints, which gradually shape how they perceive both themselves and others.

Gayatri Spivak’s (1988) question, “Can the subaltern speak?”, remains relevant in this setting. Although digital platforms appear to democratize communication, the structural conditions of visibility still favor dominant voices. Even when Algerian youth create original content, it may be reframed or simplified to appeal to broader audiences, limiting its authenticity. The act of expression does not necessarily guarantee

recognition. This dynamic reflects a subtle but persistent form of silencing embedded within global digital infrastructures.

Taking together, these insights reveal that digital *colonisabilité* operates through both psychological and structural dimensions. Psychologically, it manifests in the internalization of Western norms as superior standards. Structurally, it is sustained by algorithms and market logics that amplify certain aesthetics and marginalize others. Identity formation under these conditions becomes performative, relying on imitation and adaptation to global expectations rather than on autonomous creativity.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate emerging forms of agency. Some participants reported efforts to reclaim cultural identity through content creation in local dialects, promotion of Amazigh traditions, or engagement with discussions about Algerian heritage. These practices represent initial steps toward what can be called *counter-colonisabilité*, a process of reclaiming voice and redefining authenticity in the digital space.

In conclusion, *digital colonisabilité* encapsulates both constraint and possibility. It constrains by embedding dependency within everyday media practices, yet it also offers opportunities for self-representation and creative participation. This paradox mirrors what Balogun and Aruoture (2024) describe as social media's double-edged role in globalization, where platforms simultaneously promote cultural diversity while accelerating cultural homogenization. The challenge for Algerian youth lies in transforming passive consumption into critical engagement, cultivating awareness that allows them to inhabit digital spaces as agents rather than subjects. Through reflective participation, they can contribute to a plural and self-confident digital culture that resonates with Bennabi's vision of intellectual liberation and cultural renewal.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined how sustained exposure to global digital content influences the cultural identity of Algerian Generation Z and Generation Alpha. The findings reveal that digital media engagement extends beyond entertainment; it reshapes how young people perceive language, modernity, and belonging. The pervasive preference for English and Western cultural norms among Algerian youth illustrates the emergence of *digital colonisabilité*, a new form of dependency operating through internalized admiration rather than overt domination.

Theoretically, the study extends Malek Bennabi's concept of *colonisabilité* to the digital era, showing how cultural vulnerability now manifests through algorithmic mediation and symbolic imitation. Practically, it underscores the urgent need for educational and policy interventions that promote critical digital literacy. English language education in Algeria should not merely enhance linguistic competence but also cultivate awareness of cultural representation and media ideologies. Teacher training programs should include strategies to build students' resilience against uncritical assimilation of foreign values, while policymakers and institutions can foster digital sovereignty by supporting local content creation and promoting multilingual online participation.

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The sample was limited to Oran and Mostaganem, which may not reflect the diversity of Algerian youth. Self-reported data could also be influenced by perception bias. Future research could employ longitudinal or multi-regional designs to capture evolving digital behaviors and identity formation across the country. Further inquiry into AI-driven recommendation systems

may also deepen understanding of how algorithmic personalization sustains *digital colonisabilité*.

In conclusion, *digital colonisabilité* is not an irreversible condition but a challenge that requires awareness, agency, and education. Recognizing the subtle mechanisms through which global media shape identity is the first step toward reclaiming cultural autonomy. By engaging critically with digital spaces, Algerian youth can transform these platforms from instruments of dependency into arenas of creative expression and cultural renewal.

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