

Commodifying Digital Privacy and Reproducing Gendered Visibility on Social Media: An Exploratory Study of Algerian Youth in Relizane

تسليع الخصوصية الرقمية وإعادة تشكيل الظهور
الجنسدي في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي : دراسة
استطلاعية لدى الشباب الجزائري بولاية غليزان

Marchandisation de la vie privée numérique et recomposition
des visibilités genrées sur les réseaux socionumériques : étude
exploratoire auprès de jeunes Algériens à Relizane

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Date de réception	Publication numérique	Archivage ASJP
04/02/2026	19/05/2026	19/06/2026

Référence électronique

Amel Ameur, « Commodifying Digital Privacy and Reproducing Gendered Visibility on Social Media: An Exploratory Study of Algerian Youth in Relizane », Aleph [En ligne], Vol 13 (3) | 2026, mis en ligne le 19 mai 2026. URL : <https://aleph.edinum.org/17456>

Référence papier (archivage Asjp)

Amel Ameur, « Commodifying Digital Privacy and Reproducing Gendered Visibility on Social Media: An Exploratory Study of Algerian Youth in Relizane », Aleph, Vol 13 (3) | 2026, 343-363.

Abstract

This study examines how Algerian youth interpret women's visibility in digital spaces, digital privacy, and the commercial logic shaping social media platforms. Rather than treating women's digital practices as a direct reflection of social reality, it analyses them through the normative, symbolic, and cultural frameworks that structure their reception and evaluation. The research adopts a descriptive and exploratory design based on an online questionnaire administered to 80 young participants from the wilaya of Relizane, Algeria. It addresses perceptions of digital visibility, values, self-presentation, privacy, and the commodification of women's online content. The findings show that social media are perceived as powerful agents in reshaping women's public image, while such perceptions remain conditioned by moral regulation, gendered expectations, and local cultural norms. Digital privacy appears less as a fixed individual right than as a negotiable social boundary. Given its exploratory scope and purposive sample, the study does not claim statistical generalizability; rather, it highlights how youth perceptions contribute to the reproduction and reconfiguration of gendered visibility in contemporary Algerian digital culture.

Keywords

digital visibility, women, Algerian youth, digital privacy, social media

الملخص

تحلل هذه الدراسة كيفية تفسير الشباب الجزائري لظهور النساء في الفضاء الرقمي، ولمعنى الخصوصية الرقمية، وللمنطق التجاري الذي يحكم منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. ولا تنظر إلى الممارسات الرقمية النسوية بوصفها انعكاساً مباشراً للواقع الاجتماعي، بل بوصفها موضوعات تُستقبل وتُقيّم ضمن أطر معيارية ورمزية وثقافية. وتعتمد الدراسة على مقارنة وصفية استكشافية، أنجزت بواسطة استبيان إلكتروني وجّه إلى 80 شاباً من ولاية غليزان بالجزائر، وتناول الظهور الرقمي، والقيم، واستراتيجيات تقديم الذات، والخصوصية، والبعد التجاري للمحتوى النسوي. وتبين النتائج أن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تُدرك بوصفها فاعلاً مؤثراً في إعادة تشكيل الصورة العمومية للمرأة، غير أن هذا الإدراك يظل مشروطاً بالضبط الأخلاقي، وتوقعات النوع الاجتماعي، والمعايير الثقافية المحلية. كما تبدو الخصوصية الرقمية حدّاً اجتماعياً قابلاً للتفاوض أكثر من كونها حقاً فردياً

ثابتًا. وبحكم طابعها الاستطلاعي، لا تدّعي الدراسة التعميم الإحصائي، بل تسعى إلى إبراز دور تصورات الشباب في إعادة إنتاج الظهور الجندري داخل الثقافة الرقمية الجزائرية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الظهور الرقمي، المرأة، الشباب الجزائري، الخصوصية الرقمية، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

Résumé

Cette étude analyse la manière dont les jeunes Algériens interprètent la visibilité des femmes dans l'espace numérique, la vie privée en ligne et la logique commerciale des plateformes socionumériques. Elle n'envisage pas les pratiques numériques féminines comme un simple reflet du réel social, mais comme des objets évalués à travers des cadres normatifs, symboliques et culturels. Fondée sur une enquête descriptive et exploratoire menée par questionnaire électronique auprès de 80 jeunes de la wilaya de Relizane, l'étude examine les perceptions relatives à la visibilité, aux valeurs, à la présentation de soi, à la privacy numérique et à la marchandisation des contenus féminins. Les résultats montrent que les réseaux sociaux sont perçus comme des acteurs majeurs de reconfiguration de l'image publique de la femme, tout en restant soumis à des logiques de contrôle moral, d'attentes genrées et de normes locales. La vie privée numérique apparaît ainsi comme une frontière sociale négociable plutôt que comme un droit individuel stabilisé. L'étude éclaire, sans prétention à la généralisation statistique, la manière dont les perceptions juvéniles participent à la reproduction et à la reconfiguration de la visibilité genrée dans la culture numérique algérienne contemporaine.

Mots-clés

visibilité numérique, femmes, jeunesse algérienne, vie privée numérique, réseaux sociaux.

Introduction

The expansion of platform-based communication has profoundly altered the relationship between intimacy, publicity, and social recognition. Social media do not simply offer new channels for interaction; they reorganize visibility itself. Profiles, images, comments, stories, and live streams make everyday life increasingly observable, archivable, and measurable through metrics of attention such as likes, shares, comments, and follower counts. In such environments, privacy is no longer reducible to withdrawal from the public sphere. It becomes a negotiated resource, continually redefined by the architectures of platforms and by the interpretive communities that evaluate what ought to remain private, what may legitimately be shown, and what can be transformed into socially profitable exposure.

This transformation acquires particular intensity when it concerns women's online visibility. Women's digital self-presentation is almost never read as a neutral act. It is filtered through historically sedimented expectations surrounding modesty, honor, beauty, respectability, and public legitimacy. In many contexts, the same act of posting a photograph, a video, or a personal update may be interpreted simultaneously as self-expression, social participation, strategic visibility, moral transgression, aspirational performance, or commercial positioning. What matters analytically, therefore, is not only what women post, but also how these practices are perceived, narrated, judged, and inserted into wider symbolic struggles over gender and public culture.

The Algerian context is particularly instructive in this respect. It combines rapid digital diffusion with dense moral, familial, and religious frameworks that continue to regulate public behavior, especially in matters touching women's embodiment and social image. Social media create a hybrid communicative space in which transnational visual repertoires, influencer cultures, and algorithmic models of visibility intersect with local norms, community expectations, and differentiated forms of gender socialization. The resulting tensions cannot be understood through moral denunciation or celebratory narratives alone. They require a framework attentive both to platform logics and to the social representations through which visibility is domesticated, resisted, or condemned.

This article therefore investigates how young people in Relizane interpret women's digital visibility and the commodification of privacy on social media. Its central claim is deliberately modest: the survey does not provide direct access to women's actual digital practices; rather, it documents the interpretive frameworks through which these practices are read by respondents. That distinction is essential. The study does not seek to establish what "Algerian women" are becoming, but to analyze how youth perceptions contribute to the social reproduction of gendered visibility, symbolic regulation, and moralized readings of online self-presentation.

1. Research problem, questions, and objectives

The research problem arises from a double transformation. First, digital platforms have weakened the stability of the traditional boundary between private and public by rewarding exposure, interaction, and continuous self-disclosure. Second, the visibility of women within these environments remains subject to asymmetrical cultural judgment. In other words, social media intensify opportunities for participation while simultaneously multiplying evaluative frameworks through which women's digital presence is monitored and interpreted. The resulting tension concerns less the existence of visibility than its meaning, legitimacy, and social cost.

From this perspective, the article addresses the following overarching question: how do young respondents in Relizane interpret the commodification of digital privacy in relation to women's online visibility, and how do these interpretations participate in the symbolic reproduction of gendered images on social media? The article does not treat privacy as a purely legal concept or women's online content as a transparent sociological fact. It instead explores the social meanings attached to self-exposure, the moral vocabularies mobilized to assess it, and the degree to which respondents identify a commercial logic in what circulates online.

1.1. Research sub-questions

To operationalize the central problem, the inquiry is organized around a set of sub-questions designed to distinguish the principal dimensions through which respondents interpret women's digital visibility. These questions do not fragment the object of study; rather, they make it possible to examine, in a coordinated manner, how online exposure, privacy, moral judgment, and platformized circulation are linked within the respondents' discourse.

- How do respondents evaluate women's sharing of privacy-related content on social media?
- Which moral, social, and religious dimensions are most frequently mobilized in these evaluations?
- How is digital privacy conceptualized: as an individual right, a negotiable boundary, or a transformed social norm?
- Which formats and domains of women's content are considered most visible or most representative?
- To what extent do respondents recognize the commercial, promotional, or influencer-related dimension of women's digital self-presentation?

Taken together, these sub-questions provide the empirical architecture of the study. They guide the questionnaire from a general concern with women's online visibility toward a more precise analysis of the evaluative vocabularies, symbolic boundaries, and commercialized forms of exposure through which that visibility is apprehended.

1.2. Research objectives

Methodologically, the study pursues five complementary objectives. These objectives are descriptive and interpretive rather than causal: they are intended to clarify the symbolic status of digital privacy, to map recurrent evaluative patterns in respondents' discourse, and to situate women's online visibility at the intersection of moral regulation, social representation, and platformized communication.

- to clarify the symbolic relationship between digital privacy, visibility, and gendered judgment in a contemporary Algerian context;
- to describe the perceptions of young respondents regarding women's online self-presentation and the social meanings attached to it;
- to identify the dominant moral and cultural vocabularies through which women's digital presence is evaluated;
- to analyze the extent to which respondents recognize platformized and commercial forms of exposure in women's social media content;
- to contribute to a more cautious and analytically grounded reading of women's digital visibility by treating respondents' judgments as social representations rather than as direct descriptions of women's behavior.

Considered together, these objectives ensure coherence between the problem statement, the theoretical framework, and the exploratory design adopted in this article. They also delimit the contribution of the study: not to pronounce directly on women's practices as such, but to analyze the social representations through which these practices are perceived, judged, and rendered meaningful.

2. Theoretical framework

The first pillar of the analysis is the attention economy. In platformized environments, attention functions as a scarce and highly valued resource (Wu, 2016). Content is not simply published; it is sorted, ranked, amplified, and rendered differentially visible through platform architectures that privilege engagement, immediacy, and circulation. This means that visibility is socially and technically produced. Users adapt their self-presentation to the affordances of the medium, while audiences learn to read visibility through the metrics offered to them. The significance of likes, comments, followers, and shares lies not only in their numerical value, but in the cultural hierarchies they help create. In such an ecology, visibility becomes a form of symbolic capital, even when it is not directly monetized.

The second pillar concerns the commodification of digital privacy. Contemporary platforms transform intimate traces, personal narratives, everyday routines, and bodily images into data-rich and publicly circulable materials. Privacy thus ceases to function solely as a protective enclosure; it becomes partially integrated into economies of visibility, influence, and potential monetization (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). This does not mean that every act of sharing is commercially motivated. It means, rather, that

social media are structured so that personal disclosure can acquire exchange value, reputational value, and audience value. A private moment may remain affectively meaningful for the person posting it while simultaneously operating as content within a broader system of attention capture.

A third pillar is provided by work on self-presentation, social representations, and symbolic power. Goffman's (1959) classic account of impression management remains productive for understanding how actors curate and stage identities before an audience. In digital settings, however, the audience is dispersed, persistent, and partly algorithmic (boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011). At the same time, respondents' readings of women's online presence are shaped by socially shared categories rather than by individual opinion alone. Here the theory of social representations is crucial: it allows us to examine how groups make sense of contested phenomena by anchoring them in familiar values, images, and moral distinctions (Jodelet, 2008; Moscovici, 1984). Finally, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power helps explain why certain visions of femininity, modesty, or legitimacy appear self-evident and are reproduced as if they were natural rather than historically constructed.

Within this composite framework, women's online visibility may be approached as a site of symbolic struggle. It can be read as a space of agency, aspiration, and self-fashioning; as a terrain of intensified surveillance and moral regulation; or as a platform-compatible mode of aesthetic and commercial self-branding (Abidin, 2018; Banet-Weiser, 2018; Gill, 2007; Marwick, 2015). These readings are not mutually exclusive. The analytical task is precisely to understand how they coexist in respondents' judgments and how they contribute to the reproduction of gendered visibility in local digital culture.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive exploratory design. Its purpose is not to test causal hypotheses or to produce statistically generalizable claims about all Algerian youth. It seeks, more modestly, to map a set of perceptions, value judgments, and interpretive tendencies regarding women's online visibility and digital privacy in a clearly delimited context. The empirical field is the wilaya of Relizane, and the target population consists of young people who are active, or at least familiar, with social media environments.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire. The instrument combined socio-demographic items with closed-ended questions on perceived impact, normative evaluation, conceptions of privacy, observed or preferred content formats, symbolic domains of content, and awareness of commercialized visibility. The online mode was chosen for two complementary reasons: first, because the object of inquiry is itself embedded in digital culture; second, because digitally mediated access is particularly suitable for reaching young respondents accustomed to platform-based communication.

The sample is a non-probability convenience sample of 80 respondents. This choice follows the exploratory logic of the research. The resulting data should therefore be interpreted as situated rather than representative. Participation was voluntary, the questionnaire was administered anonymously, and no personally identifying information was required. For ethical reasons, the study focuses on respondents' perceptions and does not attempt to identify or evaluate specific women's online profiles.

The analysis remains descriptive. Frequencies and percentages are used to identify dominant orientations and recurrent evaluative patterns. Cross-reading of results is nevertheless informed by the theoretical framework outlined above. This means that the discussion does not take respondents' statements at face value as transparent descriptions of women's behavior; instead, it interprets them as socially situated judgments that reveal how digital visibility is morally framed, culturally classified, and symbolically regulated. Methodologically, this is a crucial distinction. The study documents representations of women's digital presence, not women's digital presence in itself.

Two limitations should be stated explicitly. First, the convenience sample does not allow statistical generalization. Second, the questionnaire captures stabilized answers to predefined options; it cannot fully reconstruct the nuance, ambivalence, or contextual negotiation that might emerge in interviews or ethnographic observation. These limitations do not invalidate the study; they define its scope. The article's contribution lies in showing how an apparently descriptive survey can illuminate the moral and symbolic grammars through which women's online visibility is publicly interpreted.

4. Findings

The presentation of the findings is organized into three analytical clusters. The first establishes the sample structure and the respondents' primary perceptual tendencies; the second examines the normative framings through which women's visibility and digital privacy are judged; the third addresses the formats, meanings, and market logics associated with online self-presentation. This grouping is intended to move beyond a serial reading of tables and to foreground the internal coherence of the evaluative patterns identified in the survey.

4.1. Sample structure and primary perceptual tendencies

4.1.1. Sample profile

The sample profile is relatively balanced by gender, moderately concentrated in the 24–29 age bracket, and tilted toward respondents with secondary and university education. This composition is analytically useful for at least two reasons. First, it places the study among cohorts most exposed to platformized communication and digital repertoires of self-presentation. Second, it means

that the results reflect judgments produced within a relatively connected population rather than among digitally distant observers. The sample does not claim representativeness, but it is sufficiently diverse to register different registers of evaluation within the same local context.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by gender (n = 80)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	43	53.8
Female	37	46.3
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by age group (n = 80)

Age group (years)	Frequency	Percentage
18–23	22	27.5
24–29	35	43.8
30–35	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by educational level (n = 80)

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	4	5.0
Middle	15	18.8
Secondary	24	30.0
University	37	46.3
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.1.2. Perceived impact of social media on the image of Algerian women

A large majority of respondents (85.0%) consider social media to have a significant impact on the image of Algerian women. This finding should not be read as proof of an objective transformation directly caused by platforms. It instead indicates that women’s online visibility has become a socially salient issue. In other words, respondents perceive women’s digital presence as consequential. That perception alone is sociologically important: it shows that social media are now treated as a powerful arena where femininity, reputation, and public image are negotiated. The small minority who deny such an impact suggest that platform influence is neither absolute nor interpreted uniformly.

Table 4. Respondents who perceive social media as affecting the image of Algerian women (n = 80)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	68	85.0
No	12	15.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.1.3. Gendered differences in attitudes toward women's social media use

Attitudes diverge sharply by gender. Female respondents are predominantly supportive of women's use of social media (73.0%), whereas male respondents are mostly opposed (65.1%). The result should not be reduced to a simplistic opposition between "conservative men" and "progressive women." What it reveals, more precisely, is a differentiated social experience of platform visibility. For many female respondents, social media appear to enlarge the space of expression and agency. For many male respondents, the same visibility is evaluated through stronger expectations of boundary maintenance, respectability, and normative control. The digital sphere therefore emerges as a contested site where gendered socialization continues to structure interpretations of legitimacy.

Table 5. Gender differences in attitudes toward women's use of social media (n = 80)

Gender	Supportive	Neutral	Opposed	Total
Male	6 (14.0%)	9 (20.9%)	28 (65.1%)	43
Female	27 (73.0%)	4 (10.8%)	6 (16.2%)	37
Total	33 (41.3%)	13 (16.3%)	34 (42.5%)	80

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.2. Normative framings of privacy and women's visibility

4.2.1. Normative dimensions and value interpretations

When respondents were asked which dimension of women's social media use they considered most affected, ethical considerations came first (41.3%), followed closely by social considerations (40.0%), while explicitly religious concerns ranked lower (18.8%). This pattern is revealing. It suggests that evaluation is not reducible to formal religious prohibition alone. Much of the concern is carried by broader languages of morality, decorum, reputation, and social appropriateness. The digital public sphere is thus framed less as a purely legal or technical environment than as an arena where women's behavior is continuously interpreted through moralized expectations of conduct.

Table 6. Dominant evaluative dimensions associated with women’s social media use (n = 80)

Dimension	Frequency	Percentage
Religious	15	18.8
Ethical	33	41.3
Social	32	40.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

The responses regarding value transformation reinforce this reading. The largest share of participants (42.5%) associate women’s exposure of privacy online with “breaking taboos and liberation from customs and traditions.” The remaining responses distribute across modesty (25.0%), reserve (20.0%), and respect (12.5%). These categories should not be treated as neutral indicators. They are normative signifiers. What the table reveals is not an objective decline of values, but a field of symbolic classification through which women’s visibility is interpreted. The association of exposure with “liberation” and “taboo-breaking” indicates both anxiety and recognition: anxiety concerning boundary shifts, and recognition that digital space is enabling forms of self-presentation not fully governed by older conventions.

Table 7. Value transformations associated with the exposure of digital privacy (n = 80)

Value category	Frequency	Percentage
Modesty	20	25.0
Respect	10	12.5
Reserve	16	20.0
Breaking taboos and liberation from customs and traditions	34	42.5
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.2.2. Digital privacy as a negotiated social boundary

Respondents’ conceptions of digital privacy are similarly nuanced. The dominant view (43.8%) defines privacy as a social boundary that should remain regulated even online. Yet other respondents describe it as an individual sphere subject to personal choice (21.3%), as a concept reshaped by social media (20.0%), or as

evidence that the public/private divide is increasingly blurred (15.0%). The coexistence of these positions is central to the study. It shows that privacy is no longer imagined as a self-evident category. Rather, it is being renegotiated between individualist, collectivist, and platform-shaped interpretations. This hybridity is one of the clearest signs of the ongoing redefinition of intimacy in digital culture.

Table 8. Respondents' conceptions of digital privacy (n = 80)

Perception of digital privacy	Frequency	Percentage
A personal domain subject to individual choice	17	21.3
A social boundary that should be regulated even online	35	43.8
A concept transformed by social media	16	20.0
Blurring of public/private distinctions in digital environments	12	15.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.3. Forms, meanings, and market logics of online self-presentation

4.3.1. Formats and domains of women's self-presentation online

Visual and audiovisual formats dominate respondents' representations of women's online self-presentation. Live streaming ranks first (30.0%), followed by recorded videos (22.5%), photos (21.3%), posts (16.3%), and comments (10.0%). The hierarchy is meaningful. It reflects the strong cultural association between exposure and visual immediacy. More interactive and image-based formats are more readily perceived as "showing oneself," and are therefore more likely to be morally or symbolically charged. This does not mean that textual practices are unimportant, but it does indicate that the social reading of women's visibility is deeply tied to the visual affordances of platforms.

Table 9. Perceived dominant formats of women's self-presentation online (n = 80)

Format	Frequency	Percentage
Posts	13	16.3
Photos	17	21.3
Recorded videos	18	22.5
Live streaming	24	30.0
Comments	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

The symbolic domains most associated with women’s content are beauty and makeup (38.8%) and cooking (30.0%), followed by culture (17.5%) and art (13.8%). Here again, caution is needed. These figures do not demonstrate that women are confined to these domains; they show which domains respondents most readily associate with women’s visible online presence. The result is nevertheless revealing because it suggests a digital reconfiguration of familiar gender scripts. Domesticity and aesthetic labor are not disappearing; they are being translated into publicly circulable, visually attractive, and sometimes commercially valuable content. In this sense, platform visibility does not simply replace traditional roles; it can repackage them in novel formats.

Table 10. Symbolic domains most associated with women’s social media content (n = 80)

Domain	Frequency	Percentage
Cooking	24	30.0
Art	11	13.8
Beauty and makeup	31	38.8
Culture	14	17.5
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.3.2. Dominant representations and commercial awareness

When respondents were asked what image of Algerian women social media most strongly convey, the leading answer was “a woman advertising products and influencing others” (36.3%). This was followed by “a woman expressing her ideas and personality” (26.3%), “a woman seeking fame and followers” (22.5%), and “a woman engaged in social and cultural issues” (15.0%). The ordering is important. It indicates that the commercialized or quasi-commercial figure of the influencer now provides a major interpretive template through which women’s visibility is understood. Expressive individuality remains visible, but it no longer dominates the reading of digital presence. Platform capitalism shapes not only what circulates, but also the social categories through which that circulation is interpreted.

Table 11. Perceived representations of Algerian women on social media (n = 80).

Perceived representation	Frequency	Percentage
Woman advertising products and influencing others	29	36.3
Woman expressing her ideas and personality	21	26.3
Woman seeking fame and followers	18	22.5
Woman engaged in social and cultural issues	12	15.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

Finally, respondents demonstrate substantial awareness of the commercial dimension of women's content. Almost half (47.5%) clearly recognize content aimed at profit or fame, and a further 27.5% report partial recognition of this dimension. Only 15.0% interpret such content primarily as self-expression, while 10.0% report no awareness of a commercial aspect. These results strongly support the article's central argument. Youth respondents do not merely perceive women's digital visibility in moral terms; they also read it through the economic and reputational grammars of platform culture. The digital self is thus interpreted as potentially expressive, socially judged, and commercially valorized all at once.

Table 12. Awareness of the commercial nature of women's social media content (n = 80)

Awareness level	Frequency	Percentage
Clear recognition of content aimed at profit or fame	38	47.5
Partial recognition of the commercial dimension	22	27.5
Content seen primarily as self-expression	12	15.0
No awareness of a commercial aspect	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.3.3. Interpreting personality through digital traces

A majority of respondents (63.8%) state that personality cannot reliably be inferred from a woman's social media content, whereas 36.3% believe that it can. This split deserves attention because it qualifies the otherwise moralizing tendency of the data. Many respondents appear aware that online content is curated, selective, and strategically shaped. Such awareness introduces a degree of interpretive sophistication: not everything seen online is equated with an authentic self. Yet the persistence of a sizeable minority willing to read personality directly from digital traces shows how easily platform performances may still be reified as character evidence in public judgment.

Table 13. Can personality be inferred from women's social media content? (n = 80)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	29	36.3
No	51	63.8
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author's calculations based on the questionnaire data.

4.3.4. Grounds for rejection and moral regulation

The reasons advanced for rejecting women’s content also illuminate the social logic of judgment. The most frequently cited reason is the excessive disclosure of family privacy (28.8%), followed by breaking social taboos or adopting foreign practices (22.5%), decline in modesty and ethical values (20.0%), violating Islamic teachings (16.3%), and excessive entertainment or triviality (12.5%). Once again, the leading concern is not abstract technology but the management of boundaries. Family reputation, communal norms, and symbolic respectability organize the criticism more strongly than a direct rejection of social media themselves. Women’s online content becomes problematic when it is perceived to move intimacy out of its “proper” place and into public circulation.

Table 14. Main reasons for rejecting women’s social media content (n = 80)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Excessive disclosure of family privacy affecting social reputation	23	28.8
Breaking social taboos/adopting foreign cultural practices	18	22.5
Violating Islamic teachings and religious norms	13	16.3
Decline in modesty, reserve, and ethical values	16	20.0
Excessive entertainment/promotion of triviality	10	12.5
Total	80	100.0

Note. Author’s calculations based on the questionnaire data.

5. Discussion

Taken together, the findings point to a patterned configuration of judgment rather than to a single moral stance. Respondents do not speak with one voice. They move between support, suspicion, recognition, anxiety, and selective acceptance. Yet beneath this diversity, several recurrent logics emerge. The first is the moralization of visibility. Women’s online presence is not approached as a neutral extension of ordinary sociability; it is treated as a charged domain in which privacy, reputation, and legitimacy remain at stake. The second is the social negotiation of privacy. Privacy is rarely imagined as an absolute right belonging to the individual alone. It is read as a relational boundary involving family, community, and symbolic honor. The third is the growing intelligibility of commercial exposure: respondents increasingly recognize that visibility can be pursued not only for expression, but also for influence, gain, and reputational accumulation.

These three logics correspond closely to the theoretical framework. From the standpoint of the attention economy, the prominence of visual formats, live streaming, beauty, and influencer-associated content is unsurprising. Platform architectures reward immediacy, recognizability, and repetition. What is notable, however, is that respondents themselves have partly internalized this logic as a

way of reading women's online presence. They identify the economic and reputational stakes of visibility, even when they reject them morally. In this sense, platform power operates not only through algorithms, but also through the cultural common sense it helps produce.

At the same time, the results should not be mistaken for direct statements about women's actual practices. They are first and foremost statements about the respondents' frameworks of perception. This distinction matters because it prevents a common analytical error: transforming judgments about women into truths about women. Many responses reveal less about what women objectively do online than about what observers find acceptable, threatening, admirable, or commercially legible. By treating these responses as social representations, the article recovers their true value: they map the symbolic order through which women's digital visibility is domesticated, criticized, or normalized.

The gender gap in attitudes is especially instructive. Women's stronger support for social media use suggests that platforms can be experienced as resources of voice, connection, and negotiated autonomy. Men's stronger opposition suggests that women's visibility continues to challenge inherited distributions of symbolic authority. This does not mean that women uniformly embrace exposure or that men uniformly reject it. It does mean that platformed visibility interacts with gendered socialization in ways that remain politically and culturally significant. Social media do not abolish social hierarchy; they reopen it under new technical conditions.

The findings also refine the notion of commodification. In this study, commodification does not refer only to explicit monetization. It names a broader condition in which images, routines, affects, and personal disclosures become available for circulation within attention markets. A woman's content may be perceived as commercialized even when no direct transaction occurs. This is why respondents so readily identify advertising, influence, fame-seeking, and strategic exposure. The digital self is not simply displayed; it becomes potentially convertible into visibility capital. That process is inseparable from platform capitalism, but it is also mediated by local norms that decide which forms of conversion appear legitimate and which appear scandalous.

Finally, the study underscores the need for methodological caution in research on gender and digital media. Surveys of perception can reveal dominant moral grammars, but they cannot settle questions about actual practice, intention, or lived experience. Future work would benefit from combining descriptive surveys with interviews, discourse analysis, or digital ethnography capable of capturing ambivalence, irony, strategic self-staging, and the everyday negotiations through which women themselves understand privacy and exposure. Such work would help move beyond the opposition between celebration and condemnation that too often structures debates about women online.

Conclusion

This article set out to examine how young people in Relizane perceive women's online visibility, digital privacy, and the expanding commercial logic of social media. Its main finding is that these perceptions are structured by a dense interplay between moral regulation, social representations, and platformized visibility. Respondents largely agree that social media matter for the public image of women, but they do not interpret this importance in a single way. For some, platforms open spaces of expression and agency; for others, they intensify exposure, symbolic vulnerability, and normative transgression. In both cases, digital privacy is no longer treated as a fixed individual right. It appears as a social boundary under negotiation, shaped by platform affordances, local norms, and the wider economy of attention.

By treating respondents' answers as social representations rather than as direct evidence about women's actual behavior, the article offers a more rigorous reading of a sensitive topic. What emerges is not a simple story of moral decline or digital emancipation, but a contested field in which gendered visibility is continuously classified, valued, and disputed. The exploratory design and convenience sample call for caution, yet they do not diminish the significance of the observed patterns. On the contrary, they make visible the symbolic work through which youth interpretations participate in reproducing the meanings of femininity, privacy, and legitimacy in contemporary Algerian digital culture.

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