



Facebook as a Public Space for Discussing Political Issues in Algeria: Algerian Popular Movement as a Model.

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Abstract:

This research is conducted within a descriptive-analytical framework, scrutinizing the role of Facebook as a dynamic virtual public sphere in navigating and orchestrating discourse on diverse political matters, as well as in identifying the pivotal stakeholders involved. Uniquely, Facebook transcends traditional boundaries, embracing a myriad of social layers instead of catering exclusively to specific societal groups. A defining feature of this virtual arena is its emancipation from traditional media's 'gatekeeper', offering an unparalleled level of freedom.

This attribute was particularly evident during the Algerian popular movement, as activists exploited various expressive avenues through Facebook, both in support of and opposition to the movement. This platform not only amplified discussions on myriad pertinent issues but also served as a conduit for the movement's oscillation between virtual and tangible realities. This transformation saw demonstrators employing Facebook not only to interpret real-world scenarios but also to forecast forthcoming developments, a phenomenon that this study will explore in-depth.

Keywords: Facebook; Public Space; Political Issues; Algerian Popular Movement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The onset of the second millennium heralded a cascade of liberatory waves across the Arab world, colloquially termed as the "Arab Spring revolutions". These movements were predominantly spearheaded by youth coalitions in major urban centers, echoing chants for freedom, democratic reforms, and the ousting of authoritarian regimes. These uprisings transformed urban locales into pivotal arenas for public dissent and resistance against entrenched governance structures, or specific facets of their repressive administrative and security apparatuses.

The protests in Algeria from February 22, 2019, marked a departure from previous Arab Spring events, embodying a deep-seated societal impasse exacerbated by flawed urban development projects and policy mismanagement. The genesis of these protests can be traced back to political and institutional malpractices that commandeered urban governance, highlighting a significant breakdown within this framework.

This milieu catalyzed a public movement that transcended conventional political dialogues and executive mechanisms, compelling citizens to eschew traditional administrative and security channels in favor of direct action, thus redefining these urban spaces as sites of social dialogue and weakening the influence of politically driven urban institutions.

In this context, social media platforms, particularly Facebook, emerged as critical virtual public spaces devoid of traditional censorship or editorial barriers. This freedom empowered individuals to express their views democratically and interact without restraint, further facilitated by the platform's capability for rapid information dissemination globally.

Facebook's architecture not only fostered an informed and engaged audience but also galvanized the youth to initiate well-coordinated, civil, and peaceful protests. These demonstrations were often fueled by social media campaigns advocating for non-violence and the restoration of state institutions through fair and transparent electoral processes. This study aims to delve into the pivotal question: How has Facebook influenced the discourse and management of political issues, especially those encapsulated by the Algerian popular movement?



1. The Algerian Popular Movement:

2.1 Conceptualizing the Algerian Popular Movement:

The term "movement" in Arabic, originating from the root 'hrk', denotes general activity, contrasting starkly with stagnation. As delineated in the classical Arabic lexicon "Lisan al-Arab," movement is defined as the antithesis of stillness. (Bouarfa, 2019, p. 13)

From Abdelnour Ziyam's perspective, the "popular movement" describes a coalition of individuals who coalesce with the intent to instigate either complete or partial social and political transformations that challenge and potentially revise the entrenched values and political norms.

This movement transcends mere expression of societal discontent; it represents a deliberate endeavor by marginalized or underrepresented groups to secure definite political outcomes. Essentially, it embodies a collective state of dissatisfaction prevalent either within the broader society or specific subgroups, frequently leading these groups to articulate their grievances through protest actions.

These manifestations can range from peaceful approaches like strikes and sit-ins to more assertive interventions such as roadblocks or acts of arson, all aimed at articulating their demands and compelling governmental response. (Ziyam, 2013/2014, p. 12)

Concerning Fatima Saih's analysis, the movement is perceived as an inclusive endeavor spanning all societal layers, irrespective of individual affiliations. It aims for a significant qualitative overhaul in the structure of political governance and the social fabric. Each participating social segment engages in a collective, solidarity-driven process, striving to bring about this substantial transformation. (Sayeh, 2019, p. 12)

Furthermore, it refers to a range of political activities, both individual and collective, occurring within and outside a nation, regardless of whether these activities support or oppose the political system. (Zahra, 2019, p. 84)

Political movements can manifest as meetings, conferences, marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, protests, demands, gatherings, strikes, or similar events. Such movements are categorized as either "negative" or "positive." Negative movements do not serve the public interest as much as they aim to superficially beautify and are driven by agendas unrelated to the desired reforms.

On the other hand, positive movements aim for reform as a broad popular goal. The mechanisms of political movements involve mobilization, awareness-raising, direct communication with people, information dissemination, exchange of viewpoints, and managing public discussion with transparency, integrity, and objectivity. (Radi, 2014, p. 16)



Additionally, these are defined as organized efforts undertaken by a group of citizens to change current conditions, policies, or structures to better reflect the high philosophical values embraced by the movement. (El-Bayoumi, 2024)

2.2 Elements of Protest Movements:

Scholarly consensus around the definition of protest movements highlights several core elements essential for any activity to be recognized as such:

- A. **Causality:** Each social movement is intrinsically linked to its social context, emerging as a collective response to a perceived societal crisis.
- B. **Tendency to Cluster:** The movement's nucleus is the social group, which provides a sense of belonging, solidarity, and distinct identity amid a broader societal dissatisfaction.
- C. **Change as a Foundational Requirement:** Inherently challenging the status quo, the movement gravitates towards change, which may vary in its nature and scope, whether peaceful or confrontational, partial or sweeping.
- D. **Organization:** Effective movements exhibit a level of organization that fosters self-awareness and a distinct identity within their socio-political landscape. (Saud & Mahourbasha, 2016, p. 13)
- E. **Continuity:** The persistent nature of action is a defining characteristic that conceptually solidifies an activity as part of a social movement. Alain Touraine stresses the importance of principles such as identity, opposition, and totalizing directionality in this context. (Saud & Mahourbasha, 2016, p. 96)

As we delve into the Hirak phenomenon in Algeria, we encounter a unique and differentiated model compared to other Arab Spring protests. The genesis of the general popular movement on February 22, 2019, was catalyzed by the announcement of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's intent to seek a fifth term, a development that plunged the nation into profound political and constitutional dilemmas. (Bouarfa, 2019, p. 15)

This announcement and subsequent internal power struggles within the ruling factions undermined the political process, which had previously relied on electoral legitimacy. This culminated in the ignition of a significant crisis within Algerian society, underscored by a public demand for authentic democratic processes and a peaceful transition of power. (Sabitli, 2019, p. 6)

As the movement progressed, initially unstructured, it gradually adopted a formalized representation, symbolizing a unified front of individuals from diverse social, political, and cultural backgrounds. (Doudi, 2020, p. 836) Their collective resolve was manifested through



various forms of protest -strikes, demonstrations, social media campaigns, and public gatherings- all contributing to a powerful exposé of the political regime. This exposure ultimately led to the cancellation of the fifth term extension and precipitated President Bouteflika's resignation.

The military, previously marginalized, reasserted its influence, navigating the post-resignation power dynamics. Despite speculations of a covert state role in facilitating the massive demonstrations via social media, the overwhelming public turnout on February 22 was not merely a result of rational calculation but an impassioned response that mobilized millions across Algerian cities, united in their rejection of the status quo and the continuation of the former regime. (Islam, 2020, p. 4)

2.3 Causes of Protest Movements:

The protest movements that have surged across the Arab region, particularly in Algeria, manifest as reactions to a confluence of stifling socio-political and economic conditions, signaling deep-seated systemic congestion, deadlock, and deterioration. These movements are not merely spontaneous outbursts but are deeply rooted in several pervasive and chronic issues:

- A. **Political Closure:** The political landscape in Algeria has often resembled a tightening noose, constraining both individual and collective freedoms. This repressive environment has fostered a culture of widespread nepotism and arbitrariness, with social injustices being systematically perpetrated by those in power. Such conditions have not only stifled democratic engagement but have also cemented the regime's control by sidelining dissent and discouraging open political discourse.
- B. **Economic and Political Deterioration:** Economic challenges have intensified under the guise of economic liberalization, further complicating the socio-political landscape. The deterioration in these conditions has precipitated fundamental challenges that have exacerbated the public's discontent and spurred calls for substantial systemic reform.
- C. **Social Exclusion and Cultural Overconsumption:** The prevailing regime has strategically promoted a specific cultural narrative designed to keep marginalized groups alienated from the political decision-making process. This tactic, coupled with a conspicuous absence of social mediation between the political apparatus and the populace, has deepened the chasm of exclusion. The proposal of a fifth presidential term acted not as the sole catalyst but as the tipping point for accumulated grievances, where years of political despotism and a deteriorating presidency finally ignited widespread public fury. (Ziyam, 2013/2014, p. 12) Algerians found themselves grappling with dual tyrannies: one veiled by civilian trappings, and another more overtly militaristic, both perpetuating the legacy of the Bouteflika era characterized by looting, exclusion, marginalization, and



severe infringements on national security such as gagging, arrests, and harassment. (Bouarfa, 2019, p. 17)

Another critical driver of the popular movement has been the state's unconventional financing policy. The stark decline in oil prices since 2014 severely impacted the Algerian economy, precipitating a rapid depletion of the nation's budgetary reserves. Faced with the dilemma of foreign borrowing or unconventional financing, the government opted for the latter, authorizing the central bank to inject liquidity by printing money, ostensibly capped at \$11 billion annually over five years.

However, by 2017, this figure had escalated to \$20 billion. Such fiscal policies have had dire consequences, including soaring inflation, escalating prices, and a significant depreciation of the dinar, losing 48% of its value against the dollar since 2014, thereby hastening a collapse in purchasing power.

On the social front, these economic strains have been pivotal in fuelling discontent among the populace, expressed through daily protests across various sectors, spontaneous riots, road blockages, and the burning of tires, predominantly linked to demands for social justice, which Algerians often refer to as "hogra." (Sayeh, 2019, p. 34)

Statistics reveal that approximately 12,000 protests occur annually, driven by demands for better housing, employment opportunities, wage increases, and improvements in utilities like water, electricity, and gas supply, as well as calls for the regularization of employment conditions. Moreover, the surge in illegal migration attempts across the Mediterranean by Algerian youth underscores the depth of the social crises propelling Algerians to collectively rise up on February 22, 2019. (Islam, 2020, p. 6)

2.4 Characteristics of the Popular Movement in Algeria:

Since its emergence, the popular movement in Algeria has exhibited distinct characteristics that set it apart from other socio-political movements across the Arab region since 2011. These features reflect the unique historical, social, and political context of Algeria:

- **Peacefulness of Popular Marches:** A hallmark of the Algerian movement has been its steadfast commitment to peace. An insightful examination of Algeria's historical contexts, such as the October 1988 uprisings, the dark period of terrorism in 1992, and the Arab Spring movements of 2011 (Sayeh, 2019, p. 35), underscores a collective learning from past experiences about the futility of violence in achieving lasting change. The movement's peaceful demeanor signifies a mature societal attitude and a sophisticated citizenship culture within the Algerian populace. Demonstrators have consistently emphasized this



non-violent stance by engaging in symbolic acts like presenting flowers to police and security personnel, not as a mere gesture, but as a profound declaration that their mobilization was not for chaos but for systemic change and opposition to the outdated regime.

- **Precision and Organization:** Each march since the inception of the movement on February 22 has been characterized by meticulous planning and organization. This includes the strategic selection of gathering spots and precise timing, ensuring that the movement's actions are cohesive and impactful.
- **Mobilization Through Social Media:** Digital platforms, particularly Facebook, have played an instrumental role in disseminating the movement's ideologies, enhancing citizen awareness, and mobilizing the masses. These platforms have also provided crucial guidelines on maintaining peace during protests, such as avoiding confrontations with security forces and eschewing violence. The digital age has thus opened expansive avenues for dialogue and transformed personal convictions into collective actions. Mark Lynch, a noted political science and international relations professor at George Washington University, has observed that one of the significant shifts accompanying the Arab movements has been this transformation of the Arab public sphere, where advances in communication technology have drastically curtailed regimes' ability to control or manipulate information flows. (Boujefjout, 2015, p. 176)
- **Unification of Slogans and Demands:** The Algerian movement has been marked by a consistent unity in the slogans and demands raised by demonstrators. These calls have not been superficial or fragmented but are united in their demands for deep-seated governmental and socio-economic reforms.
- **Element of National Unity:** The movement has fostered an inclusive national identity, devoid of any divisive or inflammatory rhetoric. It has effectively bridged various societal divisions, enhancing solidarity among different factions and strengthening the bond between the military and civilians, showcasing a cohesive front in the pursuit of national objectives.
- **Social Composition:** The demographic makeup of the movement is all-encompassing, spanning from the youth to the elderly. The prominent participation of the youth, many of whom did not experience the terrorism era firsthand, highlights their awareness and rejection of another form of oppression -bureaucratic terrorism- which they perceive as a degradation of the nation's political and economic landscapes. (Sayeh, 2019, p. 36)
- The popular movement is open to all political, social, and cultural components of society.



- The expansion of academic and media initiatives supporting the movement through scientific seminars held within universities, press meetings, and the issuance of statements that contribute to enlightening and supporting public opinion in political and constitutional culture.
- The popular movement in Algeria adheres to the principles of democracy, preserves the nation's constants and national unity, and refuses to engage under any political banner, continuing the challenge without infringing on public and private property.
- The popular movement in Algeria has exposed the falsity of claims by Western powers, particularly France, regarding the protection of rights and freedoms and the practice of democracy, demonstrating that they rely on a flawed democracy that disregards principles and human values. (Araissia & Kazou, 2020, p. 1522)

Thus, the foundational rules of the movement were established, primarily its peaceful nature, which has been imperative since the very beginning. We find all members of the society advocating for peace and diligently maintaining it to avoid any slip-ups, knowing well that the regime is strong in terms of security, even if it is politically weak and lacks both political and societal legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is prepared for any surprises and can resort to security legitimacy as an alternative if it finds itself cornered.

Therefore, everyone insists on maintaining peace, fully aware that any deviation could lead to dire consequences that might return us to square one or worse. This is because the main gain in the early weeks of the movement was the psychological leap and the emergence from a state of helplessness. (Bakis, 2019, p. 63)

2. Social Networks as a Custodian and Framework for the Algerian Popular Movement:

3.1 Social Networks:

According to Sadek Hammami, the concept of social networks is controversial due to the intermingling of opinions and directions in its study. It reflects, on the one hand, the technological development that has occurred in the use of technology, applied to everything that can be used by individuals and groups on the web. This concept might also imply social media, considered as "media content characterized by a personal nature and transmitted between two parties, one a sender and the other a receiver, via a social network/medium, with freedom for the sender to message and for the receiver to respond."



These networks also indicate "new ways of communication in the digital environment that allow smaller groups of people the possibility to meet, gather online, and exchange benefits and information, providing an environment that allows individuals and groups to amplify the voices of their communities to the entire world." (Al-Hammami, 2021, p. 22)

Noureddine Ben Ghanem defines social networking sites as "a system of electronic networks that allow a subscriber to create a personal site and then connect it through an electronic social system with other members who have the same interests and hobbies." (Ben Ghanessa, 2012, p. 15)

Others define social networking sites as electronic sites that allow individuals to create a personal page where they present an overview of their personality to a broad or specified audience according to a certain system that lists a group of users with whom they share connections, with the possibility of accessing their pages and available information, noting that the nature and naming of these links vary and diversify from one site to another. (The Free Dictionary by Farlex, n.d)

In conclusion, there is a near-consensus that social networking sites signify a diversity in forms, technology, and characteristics brought by modern means compared to traditional ones, especially regarding elevating individuality and customization, resulting from a primary feature: interactivity.

If mass media and broad-spectrum media were thus the hallmark of twentieth-century media, then personal and individual media represent the new century's media, producing a revolutionary change in the inherited communication model, allowing the ordinary individual to deliver their message to whomever they want, whenever they want, in a wide-ranging manner rather than top-down as per the traditional communication model. Moreover, these sites adopt virtual reality applications, achieving features of individuality and customization, surpassing the concept of the nation-state.

3.2 Virtual Communities:

Virtual communities are socio-cultural groups emerging from the network, involving a number of individuals in public conversations, sufficiently established for a network of human relationships woven in the digital space. (Radi, 2003, p. 23)

Virtual communities on the internet can be defined as a high level of social amalgamation in the digital environment, embodying a digital electronic space that accommodates an endless number of human ideas, transmitting, distributing, and storing them. (Noumar, 2012, p. 44)



Erikson sees the virtual community as a term referring to computer-based conversations and dialogues. He emphasizes that regardless of the type of dialogue, it is fundamentally built on interactivity among multiple connected users. In 1996, a group of researchers agreed on the key characteristics common to virtual communities, which include:

- _ The common purpose among the members.
- _ Shared emotions.
- _ Access to and availability of shared resources, with policies and regulations defining access to these resources.
- _ Availability of information and provision of support and services among members.
- _ A common framework for social traditions, language, and followed protocols.
- _ Evidence that members have different roles.
- _ The members' reputation and their social, professional, intellectual, and cultural status.
- _ Awareness of membership boundaries and group identity.
- _ The principal criteria for participation in the concerned community.
- _ The community's history and its existence over a period of time.
- _ Notable events and rituals practiced by the members. (Marcotte, 2003, p. 3)

These networks are seen as the new social structure of the information age, an era of the network society comprised of production, power, and experience. They play a role in constructing a virtual culture within the flows of globalization, thus transcending the concepts of time and space, having penetrated every network with the overwhelming act of the network society. (Rahouma, 2005, p. 03)

3.3 Virtual Social Relationships:

Virtual social relationships are articulated as connections and mutual influences between individuals and their communities, rooted in interactions, emotional exchanges, and social engagements within the complex tapestry of society. These relationships, whether yielding positive or negative outcomes, are fundamental to human experience. The dynamics of such interactions foster a range of social expectations, leading scholars to categorize these relationships into various specific types, which can be temporary or enduring, simple or complex. (Arab Science and Technology Foundation, nd)



The advent of the internet, with its myriad forums and chat rooms, represents not only a significant technological leap but also a mirror reflecting the emotional and psychological vacuums present in contemporary materialistic societies. This shift often indicates a decrease in familial oversight and a pivot from direct, transparent social engagements towards more clandestine and ostensibly safer interactions.

The anonymity afforded by virtual spaces empowers individuals to express aspects of their identities that they may suppress in physical settings due to fear of social judgment. Engaging with others who are oblivious to one's real-world identity or societal status ushers in a sense of unparalleled freedom and dismantles traditional barriers. (Fouad, 2010, p. 325)

The allure of social networks and the cultivation of virtual relationships increasingly dominate daily life, transforming from occasional leisure activities into central pillars around which other daily routines revolve.

3.4 The Algerian Popular Movement via Facebook:

In today's world, ensnared by the expansive reach of social media networks, these platforms transcend spatial and temporal limitations, facilitating direct interactions among individuals and groups without the oversight of traditional gatekeepers who might otherwise regulate access and control the flow and quality of information. On platforms like Facebook, the integration and expansion of virtual communities have significantly enhanced the ability to discuss various issues and freely exchange ideas, practices less common in traditional media formats. (Radi, 2014, p. 09)

Facebook's role in the Algerian Popular Movement exemplifies the transformative power of social media in challenging and exposing the deficiencies of authoritarian regimes. Through real-time, and sometimes direct, transmission of events, social media has amplified the movement's ability to broadcast its message globally, altering perceptions and eliciting immediate international support. This has reinforced the movement, applied pressure on authorities, and underscored the importance of citizen journalism in countering official narratives. (Doudi, 2020, p. 839)

Moreover, social networks, especially Facebook, have been instrumental in enlightening individuals and facilitating their engagement in participatory governance and civil society. These platforms have effectively bridged the gap between virtual and real identities, playing a critical and sometimes contentious role in the civil movements sweeping across the Arab region.

Throughout crises and rapid historical shifts, like those initiated in 2011, which saw the overhaul of long-entrenched governance structures, social media have not only covered events and analyzed stances but also actively facilitated mobilization, planning, and organization (Murtada, 2011, p. 01). They have helped defuse potentially volatile situations and have become



integral in the orchestration and sustainability of movements, significantly influencing public opinion and shaping the political landscape. (Radi, 2014, p. 24)

Siham Najjar delves into the complexities of online protest movements and cyber activism, framing these phenomena as inherently bipolar due to their ability to traverse the virtual realm and profoundly impact real-world social dynamics. This bipolarity, according to Najjar, is elucidated by several pivotal factors:

- _ The penetration of commitment online, particularly through digital networks, into the social reality.
- _ The ability of online digital networks to create connections among Internet users within groups of electronic activists.
- _ Keeping up with existing protest projects in the field, with transparency and clarity for the issues defended by social actors and their promotional discourse. (Marah, 2019, p. 59)

The Arab Spring and subsequent uprisings across the region have showcased the transformative power of new media applications, especially social networks. These platforms have facilitated extensive dialogue, mobilization, coordination, and preparation for various forms of civil disobedience, such as protests and sit-ins, without the risk of exposure to state-led harassment.

Furthermore, the role of these networks was not limited to this extent only; they were also able to create a state of solidarity and interaction among the peoples of these countries, through many supporting pages specifically established for this purpose. Social networks, especially Facebook, have become public spaces for discussion, information exchange, and sharing pictures taken via mobile phones. (Kadour, 2017, p. 109)

Since the February 2019 movement, Algeria has joined the ranks of Arab countries, thanks to virtual public spaces that have lit the candles of peoples towards the practice of freedom and democracy.

A group of researchers, including Lomax and others, conducted a study on the role of media in setting the priorities of policymakers, lobbying groups, leaders, and the public, as well as the influence of media in policymaking. The study was based on the idea that there is a causal relationship between a specific chronological sequence of events.

Initially, the media focus on certain events, which then influences the perception and awareness of the relative importance of these issues among the audience. The hypothesis tested was that changes in issue priorities would affect policy making and decision-making. The main findings of the study were:



- Media coverage affected the general public's perception of the importance of the issue, elevating it to a high priority in their concerns, aligning with the general purpose of the agenda-setting theory.
- Media coverage influenced policymakers' awareness of the impact on the public regarding a specific issue, leading them to perceive a significant influence of media coverage on the issues raised among the public, although this influence was not found among the elites in parties and lobbying groups. (Al-Zubaidi, 2023, p. 3)

This applies to new media as well; social media platforms, especially Facebook, have played a significant role in raising awareness, educating, and discussing issues of concern to society.

In examining the case of the Algerian popular movement, it is evident that social media platforms served as the sole outlet relied upon by Algerians for expressing and discussing the movement. This is underscored by the regime's initial measures during the early weeks of the movement, which included internet blackouts or severe bandwidth reductions from Friday evening until the following Friday evening. These actions were aimed at preventing the use of Facebook and other social networks for mobilization and covering the progress of the movement. (Bakis, 2019, p. 120)

This virtual space has become a haven for discourses opposing the official narrative, allowing Algerian social actors to share their opinions and express their anger and rejection of the contentious, changeable situation. Initially limited to personal feelings of helplessness, these sentiments among online activists have evolved into a complex emotion of collective anger, serving as a form of commitment and mobilization for change. (Marah, 2019, p. 55)

Social media networks, especially Facebook, have become pivotal to the Algerian popular movement, evolving into a key reference for information dissemination, interpretation, discussion, and shaping public opinion through interactive exchanges among users. Nourdine Bakis articulates, "The beauty of this scenario is that due to the inadequacies of both public and independent media in covering the events accurately, Algerians have turned to Facebook. They opened accounts, joined groups, and made new connections, rapidly establishing Facebook as an indispensable tool during this delicate phase of the nation's history.

Missing a few hours online could mean being uninformed about significant developments." Moreover, social media has played an essential role in educating Algerians about the Friday marches by live-streaming them with audio and visuals through Facebook, thereby anchoring the popular movement within the virtual realm and steering it towards maintaining its peaceful approach. (Bakis, 2019, pp. 121-122)

This movement on social media is characterized by the palpable anger of citizens participating in discussions concerning the nation's social and political agendas and news. The



dynamics within these digital platforms are propelled by the pressure exerted by online responses through comments. As Arsène Séverin notes, "Generally, the reactions are confined to brief sentences that effectively express agreement or disagreement, and opinions that range from positive to negative." (Marah, 2019, p. 53)

In summary, media in democratic societies are recognized as potent voices that articulate the will of the people, reflecting their diverse concerns, issues, and aspirations. This role becomes particularly critical during crises. After the relaxation of media constraints in Algeria amid the popular movement, social media platforms, particularly Facebook, were instrumental in supporting the movement and broadcasting its demands, adhering to an ethos of impartial reporting of the actual circumstances. (Asmahan, 2021, p. 555)

Moreover, new media contribute significantly to the political decision-making process by stimulating, refining, and structuring inputs pertinent to democratic deliberations. They serve a dual purpose by transmitting the perspectives of the governed to the governors, and vice versa. The content delivered by the media acts as a crucial information source that aids in presenting decision-making alternatives, thereby enabling the media to communicate the public's stances to policymakers, enhancing the interaction between decision-makers and the populace. (Al-Zubaidi, 2023, p. 04)



3. CONCLUSION:

This study, grounded in a review of theoretical literature on the topic, concludes that social media, especially Facebook, has exposed significant disparities between traditional media's offerings and the public's growing demand for direct, technologically facilitated information access.

This platform has not only covered events with immediacy, providing live images and sounds from the heart of unfolding events, but it has also served as a crucible for discussing and processing complex and sensitive political issues within an open and accessible virtual public space.

Facebook's role in the Algerian popular movement, particularly evident from its activities on February 20, 2019, underscores its transformative impact. It has enabled a broad spectrum of users to actively engage in political discourse, allowing them to freely express their opinions and elevate their concerns from virtual discussions to tangible, actionable demands.

These discussions, once confined to the digital realm, have effectively translated into concrete actions and demands voiced openly in the streets, demonstrating the platform's capability to not just reflect but also activate and amplify the public's push for democratic change.



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