



Humorous Digital Content and its Impact on the Formation of Social Values among Algerian Youth A Survey Study on a Sample of Communication Students at the University of Mostaganem

¹ Khedidja Mekri *, ² Fouzia Abbou

¹ Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida (Algeria),

Laboratory of Research Development in Social Human Sciences University of Saida

² Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem (Algeria),

Abstract: This study examines the impact of satirical digital content on the social values of Algerian youth through a field study conducted on a sample of students from the University of Mostaganem, the study was based on a general research problem that sought to identify the effect of satirical digital content on young people's social values. To achieve this objective, the descriptive survey method was adopted, and a questionnaire was used as the main research instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample consisting of 72 male and female students specializing in Information and Communication Sciences. The findings revealed that the majority of young people consider satirical digital content to be a double-edged sword; however, it tends more toward negative influence when it is exaggerated or lacks awareness and purpose. The study also demonstrated a growing awareness among participants regarding the importance of digital literacy and the ability to distinguish between satire and mere mockery that undermines social and moral values.

Keywords: Digital Environment, Satire, Satirical Video, Social Values, Social Reality, Values.

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INTRODUCTION

The production of satirical content is a well-established art with its own professional traditions, a skill that few truly master. It has recently flourished as a prominent media art, particularly within the new digital environment. In this new space, satire serves as a distinct form of expression that addresses various social, political, and cultural topics. Concurrently, this content embeds a diverse range of values, utilizing humorous and satirical techniques to convey critical messages and shed light on pressing, trending issues. Consequently, it has attracted a massive following, especially among youth, who represent the most active demographic utilizing social media platforms and accessing this environment.

Satire plays an influential and positive role, possessing a unique language for social critique. Rather than relying on direct exposition and literal reasoning, satire critiques through representation, allusion, metaphor, and metonymy, enabling individuals to view issues from alternative perspectives. It stands at the forefront of complex and challenging artistic methods. With the recent proliferation of social media platforms, satire has become one of the most potent tools of influence, driven by the continuous growth of satirical content as an accessible medium that delivers profound, multi-layered ideas in a clear manner (Safouri & al., 2025, p. 377).

Furthermore, satire is considered a purposeful media discourse used for catharsis, relief, and entertainment, particularly across social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. It serves as one of the strongest vehicles for constructive critique directed at various societal groups, functioning as coded messages decoded according to the recipient's cultural background (Safouri & al., 2025, p. 378).

This background prompted us to undertake this study to uncover the relationship linking satirical content, social values, and youth, through a survey conducted on a sample of communication students at the University of Mostaganem. It also explores how values are formed within the digital environment. This ongoing debate surrounding the nature of this relationship has led us to address the following core research problems:

Main Research Question

- What is the impact of satirical digital content on the formation of social values among students at the University of Mostaganem?

1. Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the University of Mostaganem students' exposure to satirical digital content in terms of intensity and preferred platforms?
2. What motives drive students to follow satirical digital content?
3. To what extent do University of Mostaganem students trust satirical digital content?
4. What is the impact of satirical digital content on the social values and behaviors of University of Mostaganem students?

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. The Digital Environment

Concepts such as digital reality, the virtual or digital world, and the invisible environment are all inherently linked to the "Digital Environment". It is the product of the convergence of modern communication media with the internet, alongside the interaction of individuals within this online sphere.

Therefore, our study defines the digital environment as an ecosystem where users can connect from any location and via any computer. Information and references within it are not inherently structured; rather, researchers must employ specific strategies and methods to retrieve the sources they seek. From this perspective, the digital environment is shaped by interacting communities across social media platforms (Ben Rached & Belhadj, 2002, p. 797).

Furthermore, the digital environment is defined as a virtual space reliant on websites, social networks, and software used to manage the activities of communication media and electronic device users—whether individuals or institutions across various fields. It aims to organize these activities, satisfy user needs, and guide them through cookies and activity logs (Daraji & Ben Youzian, 2024, p. 48).

The digital environment has evolved into a space that reflects social reality through users' representations of information reception and media content consumption. It enables users to participate through commenting, interaction, opinion expression, and content sharing via personal pages. As a result, the receiver has become an active participant and contributor to content production and the expansion of mass influence.

2.2. Satire

Satire is defined as a mode of expression in which an individual conveys the opposite of the intended meaning, as in saying "How generous you are" to a miserly person. It constitutes a form of verbal humour and figurative expression based on linguistic brevity and imagery, focusing on salient and provocative elements. Satire is also considered a form of mockery and irony employed for critical, corrective, and cautionary purposes. It is often directed at individuals, institutions, and habitual social behaviours with the

aim of eliminating negative traits. It is classified as a form of humour that requires intelligence and wit and is used by writers, philosophers, and politicians as a tool for critical engagement and opposition, often with a subtle emotional impact on the target (Muhyi al-Din, 2024, p. 113).

Abdel Fattah Awad defines satire as a critical discourse that conveys multiple layers of meaning to express an idea or signification that differs from the literal meaning of words. This may occur at the level of the word, sentence, or narrative structure, and it represents a literary phenomenon characterized by contradiction, stylistic lightness, and an awareness of structured disorder (Awad, 2001, pp. 113-114).

Shaker Abdel Hamid defines it as a form of literary and cultural discourse based on the critique of various vices and follies in human behaviour, thought, performance, and social relations within societies, institutions, and organizations. It also encompasses humour, irony, and ridicule directed at individuals and social actors (Shaker, 2003, pp. 51-52).

2.3. Values

Values are socially constructed standards through which individuals and societies evaluate phenomena as positive or negative. They may be personal or characterized by notions of good and bad. They represent a set of general principles and criteria shared by the majority of individuals and are acquired through socialization processes, manifesting in social practices (Omar, 2022, p. 822). Values are social standards internalized by individuals; they are not produced by but are acquired from their social environment.

The importance of values lies in their essential role at both the individual and societal levels, as they contribute to forming personality, defining its objectives within a framework of appropriate choices, and ensuring psychological and moral stability, while preventing contradiction and alienation (Abdel Majdjid, 2024, p. 149).

2.4. Social Values

It refers to the ideas, beliefs, and philosophy shared by individuals, which guide their behaviours toward achieving social harmony that reflects institutional efficiency in generating a fundamental value. This value contributes to mobilizing all energies at various levels and is considered the foundation of sustainable and continuous success (Khraibesh, 2014, p. 6).

These are perceptions and concepts that define what is socially desirable and influence the selection of human behavior, its means, and objectives. Their manifestations extend to individuals' attitudes, behavioral patterns, beliefs, standards, and symbols, while the general value system within society shapes relationships among individuals in a manner consistent with societal norms (Al-Harashseh, 2016, p. 41). Smelser defines values as desirable goals that guide human activity, or as general issues of legitimate ends that direct social action (Djalabi, 2003, p. 130).

2.5. Satirical Video

The satirical video is an artistic form that involves manipulating the scale of things—elongating, minimizing, exaggerating, or reducing them—according to artistic standards in order to present sharp criticism within a humorous context. It is also a media product that carries a communicative message with dramatic content aimed at criticizing political and social phenomena in a manner that evokes both laughter and discontent (Muhyi al-Din, 2024, p. 113).

2.6. Satirical Content on Social Media Platforms

Satirical content on digital platforms refers to an art or skill in generating ideas and various satirical and ironic productions that critique social realities experienced by individuals within society, and presenting them in creative visual, artistic or literary forms. These include films, short films, series, songs, satirical and comedic video clips, humorous and expressive images, Photoshop edits, and digital designs. All these forms are created and shared across web pages and social media platforms, where users interact with them, express opinions, and engage in deeper interpretation to understand their meanings and implications (Shabat & Yarjouj, 2024).

2.7. Social Reality

Social reality is a metaphysical existence. John Searle argues that the structure of social reality is complex and consists, so to speak, of invisible constructions whose existence is natural within an ontologically complex system combining simplicity and complexity (Searle, 2012, p. 38). Through Searle's theory of social reality, one can observe the role of the individual within their environment and how they interact emotionally and cognitively with the systems to which they are connected, which, in his view, fulfill their needs and reflect everyday reality.

Most conceptual approaches suggest that the social environment is a physical-structural environment that shapes reality through the influence exercised by individuals and society on the general structure of the social reality in which they live. This perspective also includes the ability of individuals and societies to define and shape values, beliefs, customs, and behaviours that constitute the digital environment (Qassem, 2024, p. 658).

3. Methods and Tools

3.1. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey method due to its suitability for the nature of the topic. It aims to describe and analyze the phenomenon of the spread of satirical digital content and to reveal its impact on the formation of social values among Algerian youth, through data collected from a sample of communication and media students at the University of Mostaganem.

3.2. Research Population

The study population consists of media and communication students at the University of Mostaganem, as they represent a young group actively using social media platforms and highly exposed to satirical digital content.

3.3. Research Instrument

The data collection tool was an online questionnaire designed in accordance with the objectives of the study. It included the following sections:

- **Section 1:** Respondents' demographic characteristics
- **Section 2:** Patterns and habits of using satirical digital content
- **Section 3:** Motivations for exposure to satirical digital content
- **Section 4:** Perceived credibility of satirical digital content
- **Section 5:** The impact of satirical digital content on respondents' behaviour

3.4. Sample

A purposive available sample was selected from students of Media and Communication Sciences at the University of Mostaganem. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via social media platforms, and the number of respondents reached 72.

4. Field Aspect of the Study

Table 1. Distribution of Sample by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	64	88.9%
Male	08	11.1%
Total	72	100%

The table shows the distribution of the sample according to gender, where females represented 64 respondents, accounting for 88.9%, while males represented 8 respondents, accounting for 11.1%. These findings indicate that females constituted the dominant category within the sample compared to males.

Table 2. Distribution of the Sample by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20 years	06	8.3%
20–24 years	49	68.1%
24–28 years	04	5.6%
28–32 years	03	4.2%
32 years and above	10	13.9%
Total	72	100%

The table indicates that the age group ranging from 20 to 24 years represented the largest category, with 49 respondents accounting for 68.1%, followed by the category of 32 years and above, with 10 respondents representing 13.9%. The category of less than 20 years included 6 respondents representing 8.3%, whereas the 24–28 age group included 4 respondents representing 5.6%, and the 28–32 age group included 3 respondents representing 4.2%. These results demonstrate the dominance of the 20–24 age group within the studied sample.

Table 3. Distribution of the Sample by Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor	53	73.6%
Master	19	26.4%
Total	72	100%

The table shows that undergraduate students represented 53 respondents, accounting for 73.6%, while Master’s students represented 19 respondents, accounting for 26.4%. This indicates that most of the sample belonged to the undergraduate level.

Track Two: Patterns of Digital Content Use

Table 4. Distribution of Sample by the Nature of Social Media Use

Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Always	66	91.7%
Sometimes	06	8.3%
Rarely	00	0%
Total	72	100%

The findings indicate that 66 respondents (91.7%) stated that they always use social media platforms, whereas 6 respondents (8.3%) reported using them occasionally. No respondents selected the “rarely” category. These results reflect the widespread and intensive use of social media among the sample, indicating that such platforms have become an essential part of their daily lives for communication, entertainment, and information acquisition.

1. Table 5. Distribution of the Sample by Daily Duration of Social Media Use

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one hour	04	5.6%
1-3 hours	25	34.7%
3-5 hours	18	25%
More than 5 hours	25	34.7%
Total	72	100%

The results reveal that 25 respondents (34.7%) use social media for one to three hours daily, which is the same percentage recorded for those who use it for more than five hours. In contrast, only 4 respondents (5.6%) reported using it for less than one hour daily. These findings indicate a high level of engagement and dependence on social media platforms among the respondents.

Table 6. Distribution of the Sample by Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	35	48.6%
Instagram	09	12.5%
TikTok	22	30.6%
YouTube	02	2.2%
Snapchat	02	2.8%
Hi TV	01	1.4%
All of them	01	1.4%
Total	72	100%

Facebook ranked first with 35 users representing 48.6%, followed by TikTok with 22 users representing 30.6%, and Instagram with 9 users representing 12.5%. YouTube and Snapchat recorded low percentages of 2.2% and 2.8%, respectively, while Hi TV and the option “all of them” each recorded 1.4%. These findings demonstrate the dominance of Facebook and TikTok among the respondents.

2. Table 7. Distribution of the Sample by Extent of Following Satirical Content Creators or Pages

Follow-up	Frequency	Percentage
Always	01	1.4%
Sometimes	41	56.9%
Rarely	10	13.9%
Never	20	27.8%
Total	72	100%

The category “occasionally” ranked first with 41 respondents representing 56.9%, followed by “never” with 20 respondents representing 27.8%, and “rarely” with 10 respondents representing 13.9%. Only one respondent (1.4%) reported always following satirical content. These findings indicate that most respondents follow satirical content irregularly.

3. **Table 8. Distribution of the Sample by Preferred Types of Satirical Content among Respondents**

Content Type	Frequency	Percentage
Social	27	37.5%
Political	05	6.5%
Cultural	12	16.7%
Entertainment	25	34.7%
Critical	03	4.2%
Total	72	100%

Social content ranked first with 27 respondents representing 37.5%, followed by entertainment content with 25 respondents representing 34.7%, and cultural content with 12 respondents representing 16.7%. Political content accounted for 6.5%, while critical content ranked last with 4.2%. These findings reflect respondents' preference for social and entertainment-oriented satirical content.

4. **Table 9. Distribution of the Sample by Respondents' Motivations for Exposure to Satirical Content**

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Entertainment	25	34.7%
Stress relief	12	16.7%
Reflects social reality	14	19.4%
Criticizes daily problems	05	6.9%
Simplifies events	11	15.3%
Closer to my interests	05	6.9%
Total	72	100%

Entertainment constituted the primary motive for following satirical content, with 25 respondents representing 34.7%. This was followed by the motive that satirical content reflects social reality (19.4%), helps reduce stress (16.7%), and simplifies the understanding of events (15.3%). The findings highlight the entertainment and social functions of satirical content.

Table 10. Distribution of the Sample by Respondents' Perceptions of the Credibility of Satirical Content

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Reflects reality	17	23.6%
I believe the content	31	43.1%
I verify information	17	23.6%
Some content exaggerates reality	18	25%
I distinguish satire from reality	02	2.8%

Total	72	100%
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The statement “I believe what is presented in satirical content” ranked first with 31 respondents representing 43.1%, indicating a relatively high level of trust in such content. Meanwhile, 17 respondents stated that satirical content reflects reality, whereas the same percentage reported verifying information before believing it. Additionally, 25% believed that some satirical content exaggerates or distorts reality. These findings reveal the strong influence of satirical content on shaping perceptions.

Table 11. Distribution of the Sample by Impact of Satirical Content on Respondents’ Social Values

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Influences my thinking	06	8.3%
Changes some social values	05	6.9%
Makes me more critical	06	8.3%
Reduces respect for traditions	06	8.3%
Encourages freedom of expression	06	8.3%
Spreads negative ideas	23	31.9%
Promotes sarcasm in daily life	02	2.8%
Helps understand social problems	18	25%
Total	72	100%

The statement “It may spread negative or mocking ideas about others” ranked first with 23 respondents representing 31.9%, followed by “It helps me understand societal problems” with 18 respondents representing 25%. Other effects included influencing ways of thinking, encouraging criticism of society, reducing respect for certain traditional values, and promoting freedom of expression. These findings indicate that satirical content exerts both positive and negative influences on respondents’ social values and behaviours.

Table 12. Distribution of the Sample by Behavioral Impact

Behavioral Impact Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I encourage others to discuss social issues	39	54.2%
I share satirical content with others	17	23.6%
It affects my opinions on social issues	11	15.3%
It affects the way I speak with people	3	4.2%
I imitate some content I watch	2	2.8%
Total	72	100%

The table illustrates the behavioural impact of satirical digital content on the respondents. The statement “It encourages me to discuss social issues with others” ranked first with 39 responses (54.2%). It is followed by “I share satirical content with others” with 17 responses (23.6%), and “It affects my opinions regarding

social issues” with 11 responses (15.3%). The statement “It affects the way I speak with people” recorded the lowest frequency with 3 responses (4.2%).

These results indicate that satirical digital content has a clear influence on individuals’ social interaction, particularly by encouraging discussion and the exchange of opinions on social issues, as reflected in the high percentage of the first category. The relatively high rate of content sharing also reflects its wide dissemination and ease of circulation among users. In contrast, the low percentage of imitation and direct behavioral influence suggests that most respondents engage with this content primarily as a tool for discussion and interaction rather than as a behavioral model for imitation.

Table 13. Distribution of the Sample by the Nature of Satirical Content Impact

Nature of Impact	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	6	8.3%
Negative	6	8.3%
Dual impact	60	83.3%
Total	72	100%

The table depicts the nature of the impact of satirical digital content on the respondents. The “dual impact” category ranked first with 60 responses (83.3%), while both positive and negative impacts recorded equal values of 6 responses each (8.3%). These results indicate that the majority of respondents perceive satirical digital content as having both positive and negative effects simultaneously, as reflected in the high percentage of the dual-impact category.

On the one hand, this content contributes to entertainment, awareness, and discussion of social issues. On the other hand, it may promote negative ideas or reduce the importance of certain values. The low percentages of purely positive or negative perceptions suggest that respondents do not view satirical content in a one-dimensional way but rather recognize its complex and multifaceted nature.

Table 14. Distribution of the Sample by Opinion on the Regulation of Satirical Content

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	67	93.05%
No	5	6.94%
Total	72	100%

The table demonstrates respondents’ opinions regarding whether satirical content can be regulated or monitored. The majority answered “Yes” with 67 responses (93.05%), while 5 respondents (6.94%) answered “No.” These findings reflect a strong consensus among the respondents, as the high percentage of “Yes” indicates a shared position regarding the issue. In contrast, the low percentage of “No” highlights the limited number of respondents holding an opposing view, which reinforces the clarity of the overall tendency within the sample.

Open-ended Question Results

The findings of the open-ended question, "In your opinion, how does satirical digital content affect the social values of Algerian youth?", indicate that most respondents believe that satirical digital content has a dual impact on social values among Algerian youth, combining both positive and negative effects, with a clear predominance of negative perceptions in most responses.

Many participants reported that this type of content contributes to blind imitation, the spread of bullying and mockery, and the weakening of certain moral and social values. It also influences youth behaviour, thinking patterns, and social interactions within society. In addition, some respondents stated that it leads to time wastage and the trivialization of important issues due to excessive engagement in satire and entertainment.

In contrast, other respondents viewed satirical content as having positive effects, such as entertainment, stress relief, raising awareness of social issues in a simple manner, enhancing critical thinking, and encouraging discussion and freedom of expression. The responses also showed that the impact of such content depends largely on the level of audience awareness and the quality of the content consumed.

5. STUDY RESULTS

The study results reveal that the use of satirical content and social media is widespread among the respondents, particularly among both males and females, with females representing the largest proportion of the sample. The age group of 20 to 24 years was dominant, a group known for its high engagement with digital platforms and modern content.

The results also show that most respondents use social media frequently and for long durations daily, with Facebook and TikTok being the most commonly used platforms. This reflects the strong presence of these media in respondents' daily lives. In addition, social and entertainment content were the most followed categories, while political and critical content ranked lower.

The findings further indicate that the main motivation for following satirical content is entertainment and stress relief, in addition to its role in representing social reality and simplifying events. The study also reveals a relatively high level of trust in satirical content, as many respondents tend to believe what is presented, while verification and critical evaluation remain limited.

In terms of impact, the results show that satirical content influences individuals' thinking and opinions regarding social issues and encourages social interaction and discussion. However, a considerable number of respondents believe it may also contribute to the spread of negative ideas or the weakening of certain traditional and social values.

Overall, the study concludes that the impact of satirical content on social values is dual in nature, combining positive aspects such as awareness, entertainment, and freedom of expression, with negative aspects such as the spread of mockery and behavioral influence. This indicates that satirical digital content has become an influential factor in shaping thoughts and behaviours in the contemporary digital environment.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, satirical digital content has become one of the most widespread and influential forms of media among Algerian youth due to its ability to entertain and express social reality simply and engagingly. However, its impact is not limited to positive effects, as it may also extend to negative influences on values and behaviours, particularly in the context of limited digital awareness among some users. Therefore, strengthening digital awareness and promoting responsible content consumption is essential in order to benefit from its positive aspects while avoiding its negative effects on social values.

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