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GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON RESHAPING THE ALGERIAN CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Abstract

Globalization is most of the time described as a multidimensional process. It has recently impacted the economic, political, social, technological, environmental, and cultural aspects of each nation across the world. Globalization has led to unprecedented interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, cultures, and societies. The problem that arises is that globalization has increasingly started to pose an emerging threat on many local cultures across the world and the Algerian culture is not an exception. Accordingly, the current research contribution attempts to explore the impact of globalization on reshaping the Algerian local culture and altering its social identity. In this regards, it tries to address the following significant research questions: what are the manifestations of the impact of globalization on the Algerian culture? What measures can be undertaken to cope with globalization while preserving the Algerian cultural identity? Therefore, this research study is typically grounded on the adoption of ethnographic approach aligned with the collection of observational qualitative data. It is purposefully used to gain better understanding of the new emergent cultural practices of the Algerian society in the global era. As far as research findings are concerned, it has been found that the global culture and western behaviors have traced radical changes on every aspect of the Algerian culture including its language, religion, food, clothing, marriage, family, shopping, trade, music, and media. The research study ends up by offering some useful suggested measures that can be undertaken so that one can coexist in the global world while preserving his own cultural heritage.

Keywords: Culture; ethnography; globalization; heritage; identity

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the rapid advancement of modern technology combined with the far-reaching influence of globalization has created an unprecedented level of global connectivity than at any other time in history. This growing interconnectedness and interdependence have significantly reshaped how individuals and societies interact with one another across international boundaries, resulting in a noticeable breakdown of the traditional longstanding communication and cultural barriers. Nations around the globe, regardless of their geographical location or cultural heritage, are increasingly becoming more open, and

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interconnected to the global world including its global culture, and Algeria is no exception to this global trend.

In the context of Algeria, globalization has profoundly influenced it by transforming each key aspects of its traditional cultural landscape and altering essential elements of its social identity. The Algerian society has now grown more receptive to cultural trends and has shown more tolerance to diverse global practices, particularly those stemming from the Western culture. Accordingly, multiple western cultural manifestations have been recently emerged and have gradually become embedded within the Algerian cultural heritage. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic interplay between global forces and local traditions. Through the use of participant observation, this ethnographic study aims to investigate the impact of globalization on the Algerian culture and its social identity and evolving landscape.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture: A Conceptual Overview

Because of the complex nature of the term culture, its definitions vary widely. Therefore, a range of many possible definitions can be pointed out to. The most classical definition is given by Tayler (1871, p.1) who has been considered as the founder of cultural anthropology. He has defined culture as “a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Also, Schwartz (1992) cited in Spencer-oatey & Franklin (2012) has stated that culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves. In the same vein, Hofstede (2011) has also considered culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category from another” (p. 5). From his perspective, Kramsch (1998) has perceived it as “a common system of standards for perceiving believing, evaluating and acting” (p. 10). These standards are shared by individuals who identify themselves as members of a given society or social group.

According to the aforementioned definitions, it can be deduced that the term culture has been defined differently among different researchers and anthropologists but they most likely agree on the holistic perspective that culture is an anthropology based concept. It includes a sum of principles, beliefs, habits, behaviors, customs, social norms and attributes that a particular social group share in common. This would certainly lead to cultural diversity between people belonging to different societies.

Similarly, Damen (1987) has pointed out to six significant characteristics of culture:

- Culture is learned. It is not innate, the individual is not born with a specific culture or another but rather he absorbs it from his own society through social interactions.
- Cultures and cultural patterns change. The cultural practices are not static or fixed but they are flexible and change through time in response to some given factors or to meet the emerging demands of each society.

- Culture is a universal fact of human life. It is a universal aspect. That is to say each society has its unique culture.
- Cultures provide sets of unique and interrelated, selected blueprints for living and accompanying sets of values and beliefs to support these blueprints. In other words, each culture shapes the way people live and behave in the society through offering certain underlying guidelines, values, and traditions.
- Language and culture are closely related and interactive. They both have a mutual influence on each others.
- Culture functions as a filtering device between its bearers and the great range of stimuli presented by the environment.

Additionally, Moran (2001, p. 24) has identified culture as interplay between five dimensions as it is depicted in figure 1 namely: communities (race, gender, religion, etc.), products (e.g. tools, food, clothes), perspectives (values, beliefs), practices (e.g. verbal and non-verbal language, actions and interactions, taboos), and persons (individuals).

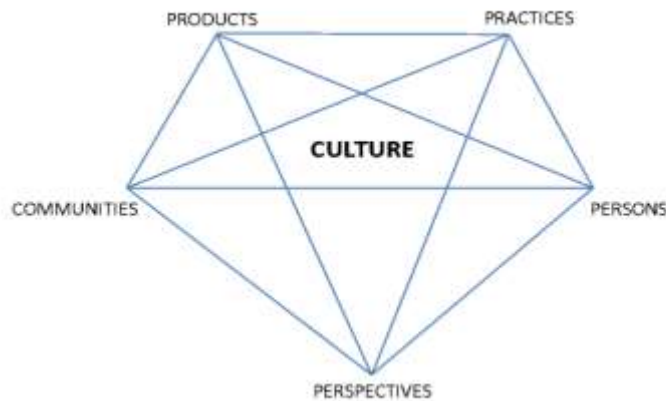


Figure 1: The Five Dimensions of Culture (Source: Moran, 2001, p. 24)

Aside from the previous definitions, other anthropologist researchers have tried to use categorizations to define the term culture. Accordingly, Lee (2009: 78) has dealt with the concept of culture in terms of two basic dichotomies; big ‘C’ culture and little ‘c’ culture. The former is related to broad themes as art, literature, and architecture; while, the latter encompasses mental attitudes or assumptions.

Likewise, the concept of the cultural iceberg was coined by Hall in 1976. It is considered as a helpful metaphorical representation to highlight that one’s culture is like an iceberg. It is made up of two major layers (As shown in Figure 2). The external portion that is visible on the surface such as clothing, language, literature, music; while, the internal component that lies hidden beneath covers values, beliefs, and assumptions.



Figure 2: The Cultural Iceberg (Source: Hall, 1976)

2.2 Globalization: A Conceptual Overview

Regarding its etymology, the term “globalization” was first coined by Levitt in 1983. Due to its multidimensional nature, it is still not easy to find one agreed universal definition of the term in the existing literature. Accordingly, in their definition of globalization as “the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across borders”, Holm and Sorensen (1995) have emphasized that it is a multifaceted phenomenon that has been rooted in various economic, political, and sociocultural disciplines. Thus, it can be defined from different perspectives.

For Albrow and King (1990), globalization can be viewed as “all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society”. Besides, in his suggested definition, Al-Rodhan (2006) has provided a comprehensive overview of the term by claiming that “Globalization is a process that encompasses the causes, courses, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities”. From his point of view, Hudson (2002) has described globalization as “a process in which geographic distance becomes less a factor in the establishment and sustenance of border crossing, long distance economic, political and socio-cultural relations” (p.101). Similarly, Larsson (2001) has argued that globalization is “the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter, things moving closer. It pertains to the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, to mutual benefit, with somebody on the other side of the world”. Another scholarly definition of globalization is provided by Manfred Steger (2009) has considered it as “a variety of accelerating economic, political, cultural, ideological and environmental processes that are rapidly altering our experience of the world.”

Out of all disciplines and perspectives, the cultural side will be the focus of interest of the current research inquiry. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to end up the discussion without

highlighting the conceptual overview of the term “cultural globalization” which refers to “the emergence of a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the planet” (Castells, 2009, p. 117). As far as culture and globalization are concerned, Tomlinson (1996) has acknowledged that the interrelationship between both terms is intertwined. From his standpoint “The relationship between the two is not unilinear. Both of them influence each other. Globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; culture practices lie in the heart of globalization” (p. 22-35). This confirms his advocacy that there is a strong correlation between the both. Both are complementary and supplementary to each other.

3. Research Methodology

This research inquiry seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the manifestations of the impact of globalization on the Algerian culture?
- What measures can be undertaken to cope with globalization while preserving the Algerian cultural identity?

The aim behind this research is to explore the effects of globalization and the global culture on the different aspects of the local Algerian culture namely: language, religion, food, clothing, marriage, family, shopping, trade, music, and media.

Methodologically speaking, this research article employs a qualitative method through its reliance on ethnographic approach and participant observation. This methodological choice has been purposefully selected to uncover the behaviors, language practices, sociocultural values that have been recently emerged in Algerian society due to the direct influence of the globalization movement. Most frequently, ethnography adopts participant observation as its main tool for data collection process, where the researcher is already a member of a social group and can easily observe their daily practices, activities, routines, and lifestyles (McCarty, 2015).

Qualitative research is broadly defined as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 17).

The main characteristics of the qualitative research design are:

- The natural setting is the direct source of the data.
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
- The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds hypothesis rather than testing them.
- The researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.
- Qualitative research uses a narrative language which is highly descriptive and very detailed.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the observation based data of this ethnographic study taking the Algerian society as a case study. It has revealed that the aspects of the Algerian culture being affected by globalization include the following:

4.1 Language

It has been widely recognized that language is a significant aspect of a particular culture. The language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture (Brown, 1994; Menaoui, 2019). In its turn, culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the way we speak language. Brown (1994) has profoundly advocated that claim by quoting that “A language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language, the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p.165). That is to say culture and language are interconnected, inseparable entities and globalization has facilitated the chances for various languages and cultures to come in contact.

In addition to the use of the Arabic language in Algeria, **French** has been introduced in the colonial period and is still used until today in addition to the **English** language (lingua-franca in times of globalization). Hence, many Algerians **code-mix** and **code-switch** between their native language, French, and English. In their article, Salhi and Kabache (2024) have argued that widespread use of English in the globalized era can greatly impact people’s social identity and in other cases can even lead to the marginalization of their own languages and cultures. Accordingly, one can easily observe that many words of French and English origin have been recently used for so often in the Algerian society’s everyday conversations such as (**rendez-vous, solde, surprise, cadeau**); (**Hi, Bye, miss you, love you, sorry, weekend**).

Ghodwa 3andi **rendez vous** 3and tbib.

Tomorrow I have an appointment with the doctor.

3andi lik **surprise** rah ta3jbak.

I have a surprise for you, you will like it.

Bye, natlaqaw el **weekend** el jay.

Bye, we will meet next weekend.

There is also the widespread adoption of **private Schools** for teaching foreign languages and **Intensive Language Learning Centers (CEIL)** as the result of the growing tendency of children as well as adults to learn and master foreign languages. The other aspect of globalization in relation to language includes emergence of the use of **Arabizi** on social media platforms. Arabizi refers to the use of Arabic text that is written using Latin alphabets.

e.g.: 3andak wakt natlakaw fi weekend?

Do you have time to meet in this weekend?

4.2 Religion

In essence, religion is at the forefront of the globalization. It is noteworthy to pinpoint that globalization can affect religion in two ways as it has been highlighted by Smart (1998). On the one hand, globalization has facilitated the creation of cultural and religious diversity. While on the other hand, it has negatively resulted in the new challenge of confronting certain opposing western religious beliefs and practices. As it has been claimed by Ottuh (2021) “In the context of globalization, all religions are increasingly under pressure to see themselves as universal in principle, whether historically they have been or not. These religions thus become ways of seeing humanity as a single community” (p. 472).

While globalization offers several benefits including technological innovations, economic prospects, and enriched cultural exchanges. However, it also poses certain threat and presents increasing challenges particularly against the long-standing traditional values and religious beliefs. In the context of Algeria, among the key notable issues is the growing presence of anti-Islamic behaviours and practices such as **drugs and alcohol addiction, suicide, crimes, bullying**, which stand in opposition to the the nation's predominant religious and cultural framework.



Among the emerging challenges is the increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse. In Islam, the consumption of intoxicating substances is strictly prohibited, as they are considered to be detrimental to both physical well-being and spiritual integrity. Yet, greater exposure to global media, and the adoption of more liberal lifestyles have contributed to easier access to these substances than ever before.

Similarly, suicide rates, despite being strongly condemned in Islam, have reportedly witnessed a noticeable increase in certain Algerian communities. Moreover, incidents of crime, and acts of violence have become more frequent and widespread. This rise can be largely attributed to several globalization-related factors as social isolation, economic struggles, the pressures of modern contemporary life, and gradual weakening in adherence to Islamic principles and values. All factors can in some cases unfortunately lead to devastating outcomes. Furthermore, bullying whether occurring in schools or through digital platforms violates the fundamental Islamic ideals of respect, empathy, and compassion. In essence, it can be said that the acceptance and normalization of bullying behavior and the increasing tolerance of such misconduct stands in direct opposition to the societal values that Islam seeks to promote.

As far as celebration is concerned, traditionally Algerians used to place strong emphasis on **religious celebrations** that best reflect their Islamic values and cultural identity. “**Eid al-Fitr**” and “**Eid al-Adha**” stand out as the most prominent among these occasions. They are celebrated not only for their religious significance but also as opportunities for strengthening more family gatherings and social ties within the community. However, in recent years, the way Algerians celebrate has witnessed a significant transformation being heavily influenced by the spread of Western culture. Consequently, this cultural shift has led to a growing number of Algerians, particularly young generations to engage in modern, non- religious festivals that do not stem from the Islamic bounds and the traditions of the local cultural heritage.

For instance, **the Valentine’s Day** being originated in the Western culture highlighting romantic love has become a widely celebrated event among the youth and couples in Algeria. They tend to wear red cloths, exchange high quality chocolates, gifts, red flowers, and affectionate messages to celebrate it. Likewise, **New Year’s celebration (Réveillon)** has also gained widespread popularity among the Algerian community in recent years. Most Algerians tend to progressively engage in parties and ceremonial practices that most likely resemble those being commonly observed in Western cultures. While some view these changes as a form of cultural openness and modernization, others express concern and worry that they could lead to the decline of Algerian traditional values and religious identity.

4.3 Food, Clothing, and Hairstyle

Traditionally, Algerian families relied mainly on cooking and enjoying homemade meals reflecting locally recipes passed down through old generations. These traditional dishes highlight the uniqueness of the cultural history of the Algerian cuisine. Nevertheless, with the spread of cultural globalization and its expansion, the eating habits and patterns in the Algerian culture have witnessed considerable shift. That is to say; nowadays, Most Algerians show high preference for **Western-style dishes**. Popular food such as “**Pizza, Tacos, Shawarma, and Hamburgers**” have become common choice that most frequently consumed outside home at **fast-food** restaurants. In this respect, while traditional meals have continued to hold a key role in the Algerian cuisine, international fast-food dishes have succeeded to gain more popularity and higher accessibility in the Algerian society resulting in the creation of a blend between local traditions with global trends.



Dress and clothing are regarded as an outstanding aspect in the representation of one’s social identity and the reflection of cultural heritage. One’s outfit can stand as a mode of self-expression and can tell stories about personal choices, social traditions, and cultural

backgrounds. Accordingly, Barnard (2002) has argued that clothing represents one's culture. A person's dress style is influenced by the culture and values inherited by community groups as well as family, environment, media, and fashion trends.

It is quite evident that fashion choices of today's Algerian youth is highly influenced by Western styles, representing a significant opposition to earlier times when traditional clothing such as "**Kashabiya, Djellaba, and Barnous**" were regularly worn in common daily life. Currently, these traditional clothes are mostly reserved for special occasions and cultural ceremonies rather than everyday use. Instead, young Algerians tend to favour popular fashion brands when it comes to choosing their clothing, bags, shoes, watches, perfumes, and other accessories. Brands such as "**Adidas, Lacoste, Nike, Dior, Chanel, and Gucci**" have become extremely popular and are considered as symbols of modern style and high status among the youth. Algerian younger generations seek to express their cultural identity through adopting trendy, branded products in their fashion styles.



In the same vein, most of today's Algerian males have increasingly started to adopt unconventional non-traditional hairstyles that differ from those being previously accepted in the Algerian culture. This new style is profoundly driven by the influence of the famous international football players like Neymar and Cristiano Ronaldo, whose hairstyles have become global fashion trends for their fans among teenagers.



4.4 Marriage and Family

Globalization has significantly played a major role in altering family structure, roles, and values across many societies, including Algeria as pointed out by Sahraoui (2024). Traditionally, marriage in the Algerian culture was primarily considered as a **family-centered issue**, with parents holding a dominant role when it has to do with the choice of the suitable spouse for their son or daughter. This practice was deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Algerian society, where both couples being involved have no influence over their parents' marital decisions. In other words, marriage was considered a **family issue** rather than a matter of a **personal choice**. However, in recent times and due to global influences, the notion of marriage in Algeria has evolved to a more individual-oriented decision. Today, both men and women are actively involved in the selection of their life partners. They are totally free to openly express their agreement or refusal. It is noteworthy to state that through time, the notion of the Algerian family has gone a significant transformation from **more to less patriarchal** family i.e. the total authority belongs to the eldest male members as grandfather or father.

Alongside this shift, new marital practices have recently emerged in the Algerian society. For example, **honeymoon trips**, which were once rare or not prioritized, have now become more common for couples to enjoy their private union after marriage. Likewise, **gender reveal parties**, the ones organized to announce the expected baby's gender to family and friends, have also gained more popularity. This reveals Algerians openness to recent global trends of modern celebrations. Additionally, the newly married couples today prefer to independently live in a **separate home** rather than with numerous family members as used to be before. All of these evolving changes demonstrate how globalization has redefined marriage concepts, family patterns, cultural values, and social dynamics in Algeria.



In earlier generations, family life was built on setting strong interpersonal relationships and maintaining constant contact between family members and relatives. For instance, Leisure time was typically spent in the company of family members and relatives, in which elders would share **storytelling as Juha tales, riddles, and humorous anecdotes** to entertain youngsters, foster emotional family bonds, and transmit cultural values through generations.

However with the growing influence of globalization and the advent of digital technology, the picture has been completely reversed. The digital lifestyle has gradually replaced the traditional. Today's youth are more likely to pass the whole portion of their free

time on digital devices and social networking sites like **Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok**, or on playing online games such as **PUBG**. The modern habits would result in reduced face-to-face communications and less social ties. Even in holy cultural and religious occasions like Eid (El'3id), Many now opt for **virtual** phone calls, text messages, or social media posts as an alternative to **face-to-face visits and in person gatherings**.



4.5 Shopping and Trade

Globalization has had a significant impact on the commercial landscape in Algeria, leading to the emergence of **online shopping** platforms such as **AliExpress and JUMIA** which have gained high interest from the part of Algerian consumers, especially the young generation. These platforms would offer their users to enjoy shopping experiences without even leaving home. In response to this shift in the Algerian trade and in order to facilitate the process and meet consumers' needs and expectations, various delivery companies have been recently emerged as **Yalidine Express, Kazi Tour, Nord West Express, and ZR Express**. Another prominent aspect of western cultural influence appears in in **the announcement of price reduction in Black Fridays** in many online and offline stores.

Globalization has not influenced Algerians shopping habits only but rather its impact has been extended to payment methods as well. Accordingly, the Cash, once being prevalent, now is no longer the only option of payment. It is possible today to conduct money **transactions using CCP (Compte Chèque Postal) transfers or BaridiMob mobile application**.

Another prominent reflection of globalization is that most people today have become convinced to sell commercial products due to their follow to social media global culture and because of the influencers marketing. The best example that can be given in that case is selling **Labubu Doll** with very high prices across the globe or in Algeria because it signifies 2025 trend and many social media influencers have bought it.



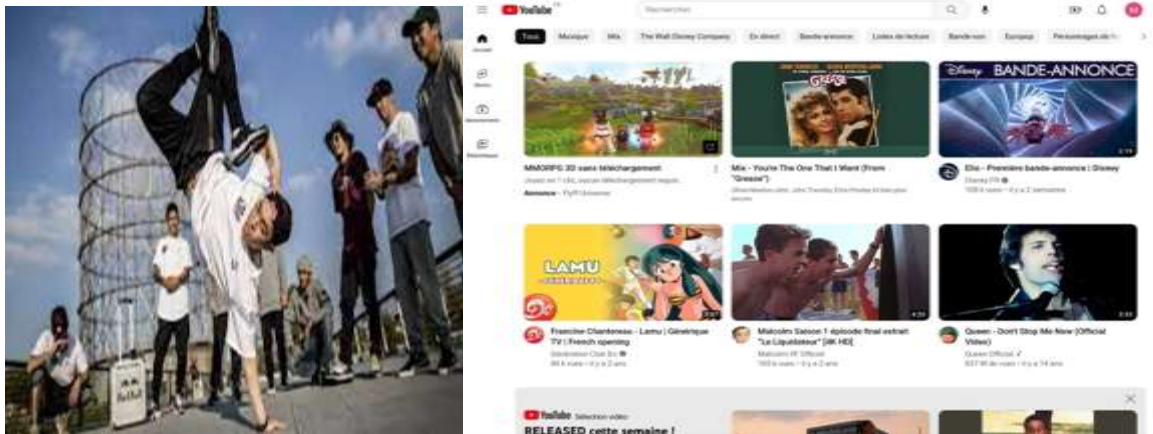
4.6 Music and Media

Music is a universal language that can break down geographical, political, and linguistic barriers. It has a valuable role in shaping culture and fostering the sense of community belonging. Being exposed to a musical genre of another culture helps people gain a profound insight into another way of life. In this sense, music is considered as a form of art revealing the history, civilization, customs and traditions beyond regional boundaries.

Algeria holds a wide ranging and culturally rich musical heritage. Among the classical Algerian musical genres include “**Rai, Shaabi, Arab-andalusian, Maluf**” that are firmly embedded in the country’s historical origins and social traditions. These traditional styles are not only considered as forms of enjoyment and entertainment but rather as ways of self-expression and representation of collective social identity.

Through time and due to digital expansions and global influences, the musical scene in Algeria has continued to evolve. As part of this evolution, **musical styles of western origin** such as **Hip Hop, Rap, Rock’n’Roll, and Pop** have started to gain more and more widespread attention, especially among the younger generations addressing common concerns and themes such as personal identity, youth frustration, social struggles, and pressures of contemporary modern life.

When shifting the focus to the media in the era of globalization, media consumption has witnessed a shift in usage as well. Traditional media forms such as the **radio** which has become less frequently used and **TV** has started to be less watched. Alternatively and in recent years, the vast majority of Algerians shifted their attention to the use of digital platforms, most notably **YouTube and Netflix**, as their favourite sources to watch their preferred movies, series, podcasts, and documentaries, enabling its consumers to access media at their own pace and according to their convenient timing framework.



5. Conclusion

Globalization is a powerful and ongoing process that has reshaped cultures and societies across the globe, making it impossible to completely stop or avoid its influence as it is the case in Algeria. As a thoughtful solution, Algerians have to maintain balance to coexist with cultural globalization while preserving one's own culture from disappearance. To achieve this goal, several key strategies and guidelines can be undertaken including the following:

- Increasing the cultural awareness of the young generation towards their local culture, customs and traditions. Different TV shows, YouTube channels, Instagram influencers can play a vital role in that process. This can help the new generations to develop a sense of pride and belonging to their local traditions and values, and grasp the gap between the past and the present.
- Reinforcing the Islamic identity and defending its religious principles.
- Promoting the use of the Arabic language as the official language of the country and all governmental documents has to be written in Arabic. As language is considered as a core element of cultural identity, maintaining Arabic as the language of administrative governmental and educational can help in enhancing national unity.
- Organizing and celebrating various cultural and religious festivals in all towns all over the country. They cannot be merely viewed as moments for joy and celebrations, but rather as essential manifestations that reinforce the sense of cultural uniqueness and collective identity.
- Participating in international events to present the Algerian culture for other cultures and presenting the Algerian traditional cloths, history, cuisine, art, and music in international exhibitions to raise a sense of appreciation towards it.
- Establishing various social associations and cultural organizations with the orientation dedicated to preserving the Algerian identity and cultural heritage especially among the youth and young generation.

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