

Gender and Impoliteness Strategies in Cyberbullying: The Case of Algerian Instagram Fashion Influencers

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Abstract—This study aims at investigating impoliteness strategies used in Instagram comments by the two genders. By using Culpeper's framework, the analysis is based on 100 comments (50 from male users and 50 from female users) directed at ten prominent Algerian female influencers who share fashion content that challenges cultural and religious values. The findings revealed that out of the five impoliteness strategies outlined in Culpeper's model, four were observed: positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/mock, and bald-on-record. Notably, withhold politeness—characterized by silence in response to others—was absent. The results showed that male users employed both positive and negative impoliteness strategies equally. They often used inappropriate identity markers to insult the influencers personally and to express disagreement with their fashion choices as part of their attacks. In contrast, female users predominantly utilized positive impoliteness, followed by negative impoliteness, also seeking to disagree with the influencers' fashion choices. Both positive and negative impoliteness strategies were aimed at damaging the influencers' face wants, which include their public image and personal identity. The results indicate that such online comments often transcend simple fashion critique, functioning as direct attacks on the influencers' perceived moral character and personal values within their socio-cultural context.

Index Terms—impoliteness strategies, cyberbullying, Algerian influencers, fashion, Instagram

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the widespread recognition that bullying and mockery are forms of impoliteness, such behaviors persist. This persistence suggests that impoliteness, which often undermines the dignity of others, continues to be a significant challenge to appropriate communication and can often lead to social conflict. Culpeper (2011) defines impoliteness as a negative reaction to specific behaviors within particular contexts, shaped by individuals' expectations, desires, and beliefs regarding social interactions (Culpeper, 2011, p. 23). A pertinent example is found in social media interactions, where individuals use various platforms to express opinions, share photos and videos, and exchange text messages, thereby helping bloggers and content creators drive traffic to their websites. Through engagement with different social media channels, individuals can raise awareness and disseminate information to a broad audience.

The rapid expansion of social media usage globally, including the Arab world in general, and Algeria in particular, underscores its increasing significance in daily life and reflects a broader societal embrace of technology. However, while social media fosters connections among individuals, it contributes at the same time to generating different forms of harmful behavior due to an increased reliance on online communication, such as cyberbullying. It occurs via digital devices on platforms such as social media, forums, chat rooms, and gaming environments, reaching a wider audience than traditional forms of bullying. It often involves sharing harmful, private, or negative content that can severely damage an individual's reputation, emotional well-being, and social relationships (Suciu, 2021). Although cyberbullying is considered similar to traditional bullying as they may occur simultaneously, the former is often perceived as more threatening due to the anonymity of perpetrators and the potential for unlimited dissemination of harmful content at the same time. Notably, most victims of cyberbullying also report experiences of traditional bullying (Armitage, 2021). Bullying, both online and offline, remains a major issue affecting many young people leading sometimes to tragic consequences, including suicide. Research has identified a range of correlates and consequences associated with specific types of cyberbullying, further emphasizing its complex and detrimental impact (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011). For instance, recent reported cases in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom have highlighted the severity of bullying, particularly on social media, where victims are subjected to persistent aggression (Abaido, 2020).

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become powerful tools for sharing content that influences users and facilitates engagement tailored to individual needs with Instagram standing out, with approximately 90 to 95 million pictures shared daily (Singh et al., 2021, p. 226). A pertinent example of such dynamic engagement is fashion, which represents a blend of expression, industry, and influence that has increasingly been

employed as a tool for personal branding, apparel and fashion industries has extensively utilized this framework to examine how innovations—such as modern designs, materials, and production techniques—are diffused, thereby offering guidance and inspiration to mass-market businesses and retailers (Snare & Sumner, 2016). Instagram, in particular, has profoundly reshaped the fashion industry by positioning itself as a primary platform for brands and influencers to showcase emerging trends and engage directly with consumers. According to a study conducted by Fashion United, 70% of fashion brands now leverage Instagram for product promotion, highlighting the platform's crucial role in contemporary marketing strategies (Gabriel, 2024).

As in other countries, social media platforms in Algeria—particularly Instagram—play a crucial role in expressing and negotiating socio-cultural interpretations. Marketers and brand owners are increasingly collaborating with influencers to promote products and reach broader audiences. Influencers, in this context, are individuals who exert significant influence on behaviors and shape perceptions and lifestyle preferences. This dynamic was notably discussed in a YouTube web talk show hosted by Algerian journalist Farah Yasmine, where prominent influencers reflected on their impact on the perspectives and lifestyles of young people. They noted that teenagers frequently emulate their speech and fashion choices and regard their opinions on social issues as highly persuasive (Belarbi, 2021, pp. 56–57).

Previous research has predominantly examined impoliteness across diverse domains globally, encompassing both Arab and non-Arab contexts. However, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning the investigation of online impoliteness within the Algerian context. This gap underscores the need for studies that explore the nuances of digital communication and social interaction in Algeria, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of impoliteness within this specific cultural milieu. The present study addresses this need by examining the impoliteness strategies employed by Algerian Instagram users, particularly in relation to cyberbullying directed at Algerian fashion influencers who share content on contemporary fashion trends. Specifically, the study aims to explore how Instagram users of both genders employ impoliteness strategies in their commentary on such influencers' posts. In particular, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What impoliteness strategies are employed in comments on fashion influencers' posts by both Algerian males and females?
2. What are the differences and similarities between Algerian male and female commentators in their use of impoliteness strategies?

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. *Politeness and Impoliteness*

Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness has significantly influenced subsequent explorations of impoliteness by linguists including Culpeper (2005), Bousfield (1987), and Eelen (1999), who investigated situations in which the speaker seeks to damage the hearer's face, rather than mitigating face-threatening acts (Mohammed & Abbas, 2016, p. 2). For instance, Culpeper (2005) asserts that "impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (p. 38). Impoliteness, therefore, is not merely the absence of politeness but rather the deliberate use of communicative strategies intended to cause social disruption and offense. Bousfield (2008) defines it as behavior that "aggravates face concerns in context" (p. 3). This intentionality distinguishes impoliteness from rudeness, which may occur accidentally, although both are deemed "inappropriate and negatively marked" (Culpeper, 2008, p. 32). In other words, a face attack may be intended by the speaker but not perceived by the hearer, or vice-versa. While studies on linguistic impoliteness remain significantly fewer than those focusing on politeness (Mills, 2003, p. 121), their importance is growing in understanding conflict in communication.

Building upon Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, Culpeper (1996) developed a detailed model of impoliteness strategies. These include bald on record impoliteness, where the face-threatening act is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise manner in contexts where face concerns are not minimized. Positive impoliteness involves strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants, such as ignoring the other, excluding them from activities, showing disinterest or lack of sympathy, using inappropriate identity markers, employing obscure language, seeking disagreement, using taboo words, or name-calling. Negative impoliteness targets the addressee's negative face wants by means such as frightening, condescending, scolding, ridiculing, belittling, invading personal space, or explicitly associating the other with negative attributes. Sarcasm or mock politeness occurs when politeness strategies are employed insincerely, remaining mere surface realizations. Finally, withholding politeness refers to the deliberate omission of expected polite behaviour, such as failing to thank someone for a gift, which may be perceived as deliberate impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996, pp. 356–357).

B. *Impoliteness in Computer-Mediated Communication*

Numerous studies have examined impoliteness within the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which refers to interactions between individuals facilitated by computers and the internet, encompassing both oral and written forms. CMC enables two-way communication and serves as an affordable means to gather information, enhancing performance and productivity (Miller, 2012). Locher (2010) identified two types of CMC: synchronous and

asynchronous, based on by their adherence to traditional conversational structures. Synchronous communication allows for real-time interaction, closely resembling face-to-face conversations, whereas asynchronous communication involves delayed responses.

Hammod and Abdul-Rassul (2017) studied impoliteness strategies in English and Arabic Facebook comments, aiming to determine their occurrence and frequency. Their analysis revealed that impoliteness strategies were commonly employed in both language contexts. The study concluded that the type of page and the nature of the post content significantly influenced the manifestation of impoliteness, underlining the critical role of context. In a different vein, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) investigated the relationship between cyberbullying and suicidality among American middle school students. They found out that victims were nearly twice as likely (1.9 times) and perpetrators 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to students uninvolved in cyberbullying.

Research focusing on interactions with Instagram celebrities has similarly identified significant issues related to impoliteness and cyberbullying. Ningsih (2018) found that the most commonly employed strategies in comments on celebrities' accounts included negative impoliteness, with bald-on-record impoliteness and sarcasm used less frequently. Users predominantly utilized impolite language to express negative emotions and achieve shared communicative goals such as disagreement and mockery. Additionally, Indrawan (2018) examined cyberbullying on Instagram in a case involving the public figure Jennifer Dunn, who was targeted by a gossip account. An analysis of the comments revealed that negative impoliteness was the primary strategy used, indicating that cyberbullying often involves direct, aggressive attacks against victims.

Moreover, several studies have focused on influencers and digital culture within social media platforms. Belarbi (2021) explored the digital culture of youth in Algeria, particularly the influence of gender on content production on YouTube. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, he analyzed influencers' digital activities and patterns of audience engagement. The findings demonstrated significant gender-based differences: male influencers predominantly produced entertainment and political content, while female influencers tended to focus on lifestyle and domestic topics. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital cultures are shaped by gender and societal expectations, particularly within the Arab world.

The dynamic of online impoliteness is particularly salient in visually-driven domains like fashion, where personal expression is subjected to intense public scrutiny and judgment, making it a fertile ground for face-threatening acts. Fashion has been studied across multiple disciplines due to its significant role in reflecting identity, culture, and society. It is explored in art for its creative and aesthetic dimensions, in sociology for its connection to social trends and group dynamics, in psychology for its role in self-expression, and in linguistics as a medium of non-verbal communication. This multidisciplinary approach is exemplified by the work of Albuquerque (2023), who analyzes women's clothing in 1920s photographs through the lens of social semiotics, revealing how clothing conveys identity and communicates non-verbally within a historical framework. Similarly, Ikhlef and Awad (2023) examine digital fashion advertising on social media by analyzing H&M's Facebook posts from 2020 to 2022. Utilizing Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2020) Visual Grammar framework, their study illustrates how gender influences visual semiotic modes in advertisements, highlighting notable differences between male and female representations. However, in a study of *The Devil Wears Prada* movie (Rizqi & Afriana, 2025), researchers explored how impoliteness strategies reflect power dynamics in a high-pressure fashion workplace using Culpeper's (1996, 2005) framework. Analyzing character dialogues revealed that Miranda Priestly, the dominant figure, employs insults and sarcasm to assert her authority. The findings highlight impoliteness as a communicative tool that enhances character development and audience perception, underscoring the importance of pragmatics and discourse analysis in understanding media power relations.

While some studies, such as Albuquerque (2023) and Ikhlef and Awad (2023), focus on the semiotics of fashion, others have begun to explore the discursive practices surrounding it. Research has begun to explore the delicate "face-work" that influencers perform in this context. For instance, Kováčová (2022), in a study on self-praise among British fashion influencers, demonstrated that influencers are highly aware that boasting can be face-threatening to their audience. Consequently, they employ a variety of mitigation and positive politeness strategies to soften their self-praise and protect their public image. While such work illuminates how influencers strategically attempt to preserve their face, the present study investigates the inverse: how audience members use impoliteness to actively attack it when fashion choices are perceived to transgress socio-cultural norms.

Despite the clear link, the scholarly focus on impoliteness within the specific context of fashion remains scarcer than the broader body of research on impoliteness directed at celebrities, highlighting a gap this paper aims to address. Moreover, two key areas remain underexplored: first, the influence of gender on the use of impoliteness strategies in discussions of fashion topics on social media; and second, the application of these impoliteness strategies within the context of Algerian influencers' Instagram accounts. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the impoliteness strategies employed by Algerian commentators in response to female influencers' fashion-related content on Instagram. Specifically, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of the impoliteness strategies employed by male versus female commentators to determine how gender influences the selection and frequency of specific face-attacking strategies in response to fashion-related content, thereby clarifying the dynamics of cyberbullying within the Algerian digital context.

III. METHODS

The sample for this study consists of ten clothing fashion Instagram posts randomly selected from the Instagram accounts of ten Algerian female influencers. The posts were publicly shared in different points of time ranging from July 2022 to August 2024. One hundred comments on these posts (fifty by male users and fifty by female users) have been collected for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of impoliteness. The posts under investigation were documented through screenshots, which included selected comments written in Algerian Arabic then were translated into English. Table 1 presents the selected Algerian influencers along with their related biographies, the publication dates, and the content of the posts.

TABLE 1
SELECTED INFLUENCERS AND POSTS

Influencers	Short Biographies	Post Date	The Posts Content
<i>Amira Riaa</i>	A 30-year-old fashion influencer with over 6M followers with an established online presence and reputation as a fashionista and journalist.	30 Aug 2023	Amira showcased an outfit featuring a white t-shirt, fitted blue denim skirt, black Birkenstock sandals, a white cardigan, and a beige handbag, encouraging her followers to emulate her style.
<i>Manel Hadli</i>	A 32-year-old singer known for wedding performances and a rising fashion influencer with 4.7M followers. Manel Hadli won the best TV show award for "Fawazir Nall with Manel".	22 Jul 2023	Manel wearing a striking golden and black dress at the ceremony of TV show awards. She showcases traditional Algerian attire through her diverse wardrobe choices on social media.
<i>Bouchra Ben Ayache</i>	A 25-year-old influencer with 1.5M followers, she has become an iconic figure in fashion, starting her career in modeling in recent years.	25 Jan 2023	Bouchra shared a collection of bridal dresses on Instagram, seeking feedback from her followers to influence their perceptions of the designs.
<i>Chahinez Caroline</i>	Known as JoridChaz, a 33-year-old influencer and YouTuber who she shares her daily life and lifestyle tips. Since 2018, she has gained 1.3M followers.	13 Aug 2024	She shared a video of a wedding dress to inspire her followers to replicate her style and embrace the trend.
<i>Ines Abdelli</i>	A 20-year-old popular actress, comedian, and social media influencer with 5.8M followers, she creates content on fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and education-related videos.	18 Aug 2023	She showcased a collection of evening dresses in a video aimed at inspiring her followers to consider these elegant gowns for formal occasions.
<i>Yasmine Saouda</i>	A 35-year-old prominent journalist and beauty, fashion, and lifestyle influencer with 1.3M followers.	18 Sep 2022	She uploaded a video sharing her outfit for the day out with her husband, wearing a pink jumpsuit.
<i>Maya Redjil</i>	A 28-year-old social media influencer popular among the younger generation, boasting 3.8M followers, she shares entertaining videos and topics on fashion and modern living, originally gaining fame on Facebook.	19 Dec 2023	She shared stunning photos on Instagram showcasing a striking blue wedding dress called Karako, adorned with Algerian gems.
<i>Nourhane Zghid</i>	A 20-year-old actress and social media influencer with around 3.2M followers.	18 Apr 2023	She shared photos showcasing an attire in a women's white tuxedo suit with feathered sleeves and baggy trousers.
<i>Yasmine Ammari</i>	A 33-year-old fashion and lifestyle influencer with around 1.6M followers, known as jass_dz. She began her online journey in 2017 with a beauty account, jass beauty.	8 Aug 2023	She posted a photo in a long pink dress resembling Barbie, expressing her admiration with the phrase "I'm Barbie Girl."
<i>Ouahida Guerroudj</i>	A 28-year-old influencer who won Miss North Africa in 2021 and has 1.1M followers. She shares fashion and beauty of Algerian heritage festivals.	27 Jul 2022	She shared photos showing her stunning dress with green feather detailing at the hem. The bold colors and embellishments highlight her unique style and flair.

Quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to analyze selected posts. Utilizing Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2016) framework for impoliteness, which is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The study focuses on examining the impoliteness strategies used in the comments of the influencers' followers from both genders. To achieve this, the analysis of the selected comments will be conducted in two phases. First, a quantitative analysis will provide frequencies and percentages of the various impoliteness strategies, presented in a table format. Second, a qualitative analysis will categorize the strategies identified in the comments. This twofold approach will help highlight the main similarities and differences in the use of impoliteness strategies across the two genders.

IV. RESULTS

The analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved a general classification of all comments on the selected posts to gauge overall audience sentiment. Comments were categorized as 'positive' if they expressed approval, admiration, or support, often characterized by compliments (e.g., "beautiful," "elegant") or positive emojis (e.g., ❤️, 😊, 🔥). Conversely, comments were categorized as 'negative' if they contained explicit criticism, disapproval, insults, or negative emojis (e.g., 😞, 🗑️), indicating a hostile or critical stance towards the influencer or their attire. This initial classification provided the context for the second phase.

The second phase focused specifically on analyzing impoliteness within the negative comments. For this, 100 impolite comments were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis, comprising 50 from male commentators and 50 from female commentators to ensure a balanced gender comparison. Ten comments were drawn from the post of each of the

ten influencers to ensure representation across the sample. Table 2 presents the quantitative breakdown of the initial audience sentiment from the first phase of analysis.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCIES OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POSTS

Influencers	Engagement Rates		Comments	Positive		Negative	
	Profile	Target Post		N	%	N	%
<i>Amira Riaa</i>	0.75	6.22	4199	3223	76.76	976	23.24
<i>Manel Hadli</i>	0.58	2.03	447	26	5.82	421	94.18
<i>Bouchra Ben Ayache</i>	1.97	2.17	534	178	33.33	356	66.67
<i>Chahinez Caroline</i>	2.10	1.45	289	105	36.33	184	63.67
<i>Ines Abdelli</i>	0.27	1.98	396	343	86.62	53	13.38
<i>Yasmine Saouda</i>	0.30	3.39	1178	291	24.70	887	75.30
<i>Maya Redjil</i>	1.26	4.84	1240	1156	93.23	84	6.77
<i>Nourhane Zghid</i>	2.23	2.54	568	525	92.43	43	7.57
<i>Yasmine Amari</i>	2.18	2.79	609	424	69.62	185	30.38
<i>Ouahida Guerroudj</i>	2.90	0.73	213	187	87.79	26	12.21

The data reveals a striking variation in audience reactions towards different Algerian female fashion influencers fashion posts. There is a dramatic contrast between the type of comments on posts by influencers like *Maya Redjil* and *Nourhane Zghid*, who enjoy overwhelmingly positive feedback (over 92% positive comments), and that on those like *Manel Hadli* and *Yasmine Saouda*, who receive predominantly negative reactions (94% and 75%, respectively). This wide difference indicates a strong polarization of audience reactions, rather than a prevalence of neutral or mixed feedback, at least within the binary classification used. Interestingly, the type of comments does not appear to directly correlate with the follower engagement level with the influencers. For example, *Amira Riaa*, *Maya Redjil*, and *Yasmine Saouda*, whose posts received the highest numbers of comments, experienced vastly different positive-to-negative ratios.

Table 3 presents the frequency and distribution of the four impoliteness strategies identified in the comments, broken down by the gender of the commentators. A Chi-Square test for independence was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant association between gender and the choice of impoliteness strategy. The analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the commentator's gender and the type of impoliteness strategy used ($p = .012769$). This indicates that the observed differences in strategy selection between male and female users are unlikely to be due to random chance and represent a meaningful pattern in the data.

TABLE 3
SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN MALE AND FEMALE COMMENTS

Impoliteness Strategy	Male Comments		Female Comments		Significance <i>Chi-square</i>
	N	%	N	%	
Positive Impoliteness	17	34	27	54	2.27
Negative Impoliteness	17	34	12	24	0.86
Bald on Record	8	16	3	6	2.27
Sarcasm	8	16	8	16	-

The significance is .012769 ($p < .05$)

The primary driver of this significance is the contrasting use of positive impoliteness and bald-on-record impoliteness. As the table shows, female commentators demonstrated a marked preference for positive impoliteness, which constituted over half of their impolite comments (54%). In contrast, male users employed this strategy far less frequently (34%). Conversely, male commentators were considerably more likely to use bald-on-record impoliteness (16%) compared to female commentators, for whom this direct, unmitigated strategy was the least common choice (6%). While the use of negative impoliteness was also more frequent among males (34%) than females (24%), the difference was less pronounced. Interestingly, sarcasm was used with equal frequency by both genders (16%), suggesting it is a gender-neutral strategy in this context. Thus, the statistical significance confirms that gender is a key factor influencing how impoliteness is expressed in this dataset. Females predominantly favor face attacks on social image (positive impoliteness), whereas males utilize a broader range of strategies, including more direct and aggressive forms (bald-on-record and negative impoliteness).

Following Culpeper's (2005) impoliteness framework, eight instances of impoliteness are selected to be qualitatively treated. For each impoliteness strategy, one example from a female commentator and one from a male commentator are examined to illustrate how they function to attack the influencers' face. Table 4 demonstrates the selected comments numbered from C#1 to C#8 with their translations.

First, the most frequently observed strategy is positive impoliteness (44%), targets the addressee's positive face—their desire to be liked, approved of, and considered part of a social group. This was typically realized through direct criticism and negative assessments that deny the influencer social approval.










Female Comment (C#1): "The worst outfit I saw in my life."

This comment is a direct and intensified attack on the influencer's taste and competence. By using the superlative "worst," the commentator denies any merit in the influencer's fashion choice, thereby refusing to satisfy her positive face want for approval. It positions the influencer as a failure within her professional domain.

Male Comment (C#2): "No nice dressing."

While more concise, this comment functions similarly. It is a blunt, dismissive rejection of the influencer's presentation. The utterance provides no constructive feedback but simply negates the positive attribute ("nice") the influencer would seek, directly damaging her positive face by withholding any form of admiration.

TABLE 4
SELECTED COMMENTS WITH TRANSLATION

Strategy	Gender		Comments
Positive Impoliteness	Female	C#1	 kube.koba 35 sem اسوء اوتفتيت شفتو في حياتي <i>Aswa' outfit shftū fi hyātī</i> <i>The worst outfit I saw in my life</i>
	Male	C#2	 abdou4116abdou 74w لبسة مشي شبة <i>Labssah Mashī Shabbah</i> <i>No nice dressing</i>
Negative Impoliteness	Female	C#3	 dania.mar1 82w شيفونات نمسح بيهم مايصلحوش <i>Shīfūnāt Namsah Bīhūm Ma Yasalhūsh</i> <i>Just like chiffons, use them like towels in vain</i>
	Male	C#4	 mohamed_boukaraa 34 sem كي تكون فارغ شغل وتبدأ تقلب فالخردة اللي عندك فلخزانة <i>Kī Tkūn Faragh Shghul W Tabdā Tqallab Fal-khurdah Ili 'andak Fal-khaznah</i> <i>When you're bored, and start trying on your scrap clothes in the closet</i>
Sarcasm	Female	C#5	 aya.louna.1029 4w  بليفة كيما تاع شيخي <i>Blighah Kimā nta' shīkhī</i> <i>Slippers like my father-in-law's</i>
	Male	C#6	 abdou_ch586 2w هيا شابة بصح تقول حيط نتاع صوناطراك <i>Hiā Shabba Bassah Tqūl Hīt Nta' Sūnātrāk</i> <i>She is pretty but it looks like SONATRACH's wall</i>
Bald-on-record impoliteness	Female	C#7	 b_khadija_b 37 sem ما نلبسوهش اصلا بسك هذا لبس ماشي محترم و غير لائق أي وحده تحترم نفسها ما تخرجش من دارهم بالمنظر هذا <i>Mā nlbsūsh Aslan puisque (a french word which means because) Hadhā Lbs Māshī Muhtaram Wa Ghayr Lāiq, Ay Wahdah Tahtaram Nafsha Ma Tukhrajsh Min Darhum Bil Mandhar Hadha</i> <i>I will never wear it at all because it's not respectful and inappropriate. Any self-respecting woman wouldn't go out of their house looking like that.</i>
	Male	C#8	 ahmedmerouchi 105w ما تعرف تلبس ما تعرف تمشي منيش عارف واش هو دورها هنا <i>Mā Ta'raf Talbas Mā Ta'raf Tamshī Manish 'araf Wash Howa Dawrha Hnā</i> <i>She neither knows how to dress nor how to walk; I don't understand what she is doing here</i>

Second, the negative impoliteness strategy damages the addressee's negative face—their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. It was often realized through condescension, scorn, and ridicule, which belittle the influencer's choices and actions.

Female Comment (C#3): "Just like chiffons, use them like towels in vain."

This comment on a bridal dress collection uses scorn to attack the influencer's negative face. By comparing the dresses to useless "towels," the commentator ridicules the value of the items and the influencer's effort. This condescending act imposes on the influencer's freedom to present her work without being mocked.

Male Comment (C#4): "When you're bored, and start trying on your scrap clothes in the closet."

Here, the commentator reframes the influencer's public work as a trivial private activity ("when you're bored"). By labeling her clothes as "scrap," he belittles her professional choices. This condescending interpretation invades her autonomy by dismissing her content creation as meaningless, thereby damaging her negative face.

Third, sarcasm was employed equally by both genders (16%). This indirect strategy uses polite or neutral language on the surface to convey an impolite, offensive meaning, often revealed through context or ironic comparisons.

Female Comment (C#5): "Slippers like my father-in-law's (laughter emojis)."

The initial statement is a seemingly neutral comparison. However, the string of "nauseated laughing face" emojis immediately exposes the sarcastic intent. The comparison is a form of mockery, implying the influencer's shoes are old-fashioned and distasteful. The insincere surface utterance serves as a vehicle for the underlying insult.

Male Comment (C#6): *"She is pretty but it looks like SONATRACH's wall."*

This comment uses the classic structure of mock politeness: a surface compliment ("She is pretty") followed by an undermining insult. The bizarre and unflattering comparison to the wall of an industrial company serves to ridicule the influencer's attire. The initial praise is insincere, functioning only to sharpen the sarcastic attack.

Fourth, the bald-on-record strategy involves direct, unambiguous, and unmitigated face-threatening acts. It was used more by male commentators and often involved explicit attacks on the influencer's values, competence, or character.

Female Comment (C#7): *"I will never wear it at all because it's not respectful and inappropriate. Any self-respecting woman wouldn't go out of their house looking like that."*

This comment moves beyond fashion critique to a direct, bald-on-record attack on the influencer's morality. By labeling the outfit "not respectful" and questioning the influencer's self-respect, the commentator performs an unmitigated assault on her character and values, completely disregarding her face wants.

Male Comment (C#8): *"She neither knows how to dress nor how to walk; I don't understand what she is doing here."*

This is a blunt and comprehensive denigration of the influencer's fundamental competence. The statements are direct, absolute, and leave no room for interpretation. The final clause questions her very right to be a public figure, constituting a powerful, unmitigated face attack that denies her legitimacy.

Across these strategies, two common themes emerge that directly address the study's aim of understanding reactions to fashion choices that challenge cultural values. First, the impoliteness is rarely confined to a simple aesthetic critique of the clothing itself. Instead, the comments consistently escalate from attacking the outfit to attacking the influencer's personal character, values, and social standing. For instance, critiques of an outfit as "not respectful" (C#7) or comparisons of the influencer to "scrap clothes" (C#4) function to police the boundaries of acceptable public behavior for women in the Algerian context. Second, a prevalent theme is the denial of the influencer's legitimacy and competence, as seen in comments questioning "what she is doing here" (C#8) or dismissing her work as a product of boredom. This thematic link between fashion choices and personal worth demonstrates that for these commentators, the influencers' posts are not merely about style; they are perceived as transgressions against social and religious norms, which in turn justifies direct, face-threatening attacks on their public identity and moral character.

V. DISCUSSION

The data analysis shows that comments on Algerian influencers' Instagram fashion posts are frequent sites of impolite interaction. Four key strategies were identified: positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm, and bald-on-record impoliteness, in line with the framework outlined by Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2016). The prevalence of positive impoliteness (44%) was the most notable trend overall. However, a Chi-Square analysis revealed that the distribution of these strategies was not random but was significantly associated with the commentator's gender (p -value = .012769). This key finding underscores the hostile communicative landscape influencers often face, where their public self-presentation is subjected to multifaceted and gender-inflected forms of face-damaging commentary targeting their choices, appearance, values, and skills.

The comparative analysis of impoliteness strategies between male and female commentators reveals both convergences and statistically significant divergences in their communicative behavior. While both genders employed all four strategies, the frequency and intensity of usage varied distinctly. Female commentators demonstrated a statistically significant higher reliance on positive impoliteness (54% vs. 34% for males), particularly through direct criticism to undermine influencers' social desirability. In contrast, male commentators exhibited a relatively balanced distribution between positive and negative impoliteness strategies. Additionally, the higher use of bald-on-record impoliteness among male commentators (16% vs. 6% for females) points to a greater propensity for overt, unmitigated attacks, a difference that contributed to the overall statistical significance of the findings. These results highlight how gendered communication styles, shaped by cultural and social expectations, directly influence the expression of impoliteness in digital environments.

These findings both confirm and expand upon previous research. For instance, the prevalence of negative impoliteness aligns with the work of Ningsih (2018) and Indrawan (2018), who also found it to be a primary strategy in cyberbullying on Instagram. However, this study reveals a more nuanced picture by highlighting positive impoliteness as the most dominant strategy, particularly among female commentators. This suggests that in the context of Algerian fashion, attacks on an influencer's social image and group belonging may be perceived as a more effective form of criticism than direct threats or ridicule. Nevertheless, notable similarities emerge in the use of sarcasm across both male and female comments, suggesting that mock politeness serves as a common strategy to veil direct criticism while maintaining a superficial layer of social decorum. This convergence reflects the broader norms of social media interactions, where sarcasm often functions as a socially acceptable means of expressing disapproval without engaging in overt aggression. The absence of withheld politeness strategies in the dataset further indicates that both male and female users tend to engage in explicit face-threatening acts when expressing dissatisfaction, rather than opting for subtler forms of non-cooperation. Overall, these findings suggest that while gender plays a role in shaping the choice and intensity of impoliteness strategies, the broader culture of online interaction—marked by reduced face-to-face accountability and amplified emotional expression—encourages the adoption of direct and conspicuous forms of impoliteness by both sexes.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the linguistic manifestations of cyberbullying impoliteness within user comments directed at prominent Algerian female influencers on Instagram. Specifically, it looked at identifying and systematically describing the specific impoliteness strategies utilized by social media commentators engaging in such hostile interactions, drawing upon Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2016) established framework of impoliteness strategies. The analysis yielded several key findings regarding the prevalence and nature of impoliteness strategies. Four of Culpeper's strategies were identified in the dataset: bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and sarcasm or mock politeness, employed by commentators of both genders. Distinct gender-based patterns were observed in strategy preference; male users most frequently deployed positive and negative impoliteness with different frequencies, while female users exhibited a predominant reliance on positive impoliteness, followed by negative impoliteness. Sarcasm and bald-on-record impoliteness represented the least utilized strategies.

Furthermore, a qualitative distinction emerged in the application of positive impoliteness: female commentators often focused on expressing disagreement specifically with the influencers' fashion choices, whereas male commentators frequently combined such disagreement with the use of inappropriate identity markers, thereby attacking the influencers' personal character alongside their choices. A possible explanation for this gender divergence lies in differing socio-cultural communicative norms. Male commentators may adopt more overtly aggressive and confrontational strategies (bald-on-record, negative impoliteness) as a means of asserting authority, while female commentators might favor strategies like positive impoliteness that attack social standing and group harmony, a form of relational aggression that is often more prevalent in female-to-female conflict. Further research is needed to explore these gendered dynamics in the Algerian digital context.

Notably, the strategy of 'withhold politeness' – characterized by silence or the omission of expected politeness – was absent in the analyzed comments. This absence is considered the inherent objectives of cyberbullying, which prioritize overt abuse and insult delivery, rendering the passive nature of withholding politeness incongruent with the perpetrators' communicative goals. Overall, the prevalent deployment of positive and negative impoliteness underscores a consistent intention among aggressors to perform face-threatening acts targeting both the influencers' positive face (desire for social approval) and negative face (desire for autonomy). While these findings illuminate the specific linguistic tools of online hostility in this context, echoing the broader observation of drastically varied audience reception (from affirmation to hostility), limitations concerning detailed methodological and contextual data prevent a definitive causal analysis. Thus, this study serves as a crucial descriptive account, emphasizing the need for further nuanced research into the complex socio-linguistic and cultural dynamics underpinning online sentiment and cyberbullying directed at female influencers in Algeria. These public figures, having achieved visibility through their content, frequently disseminate material perceived by segments of the audience as challenging established religious values and cultural norms. This perceived transgression often provokes significant public criticism manifested as cyberbullying, particularly within the Algerian social media sphere.

APPENDIX. ALGERIAN INFLUENCERS' FASHION POSTS

1. Amira Riaa's Instagram Post



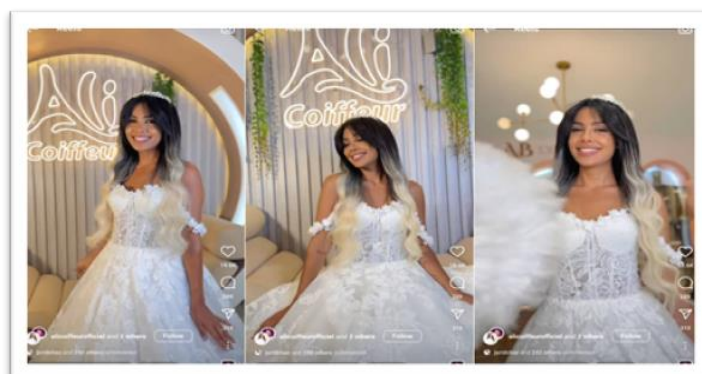
2. Manel Hadli's Instagram Post



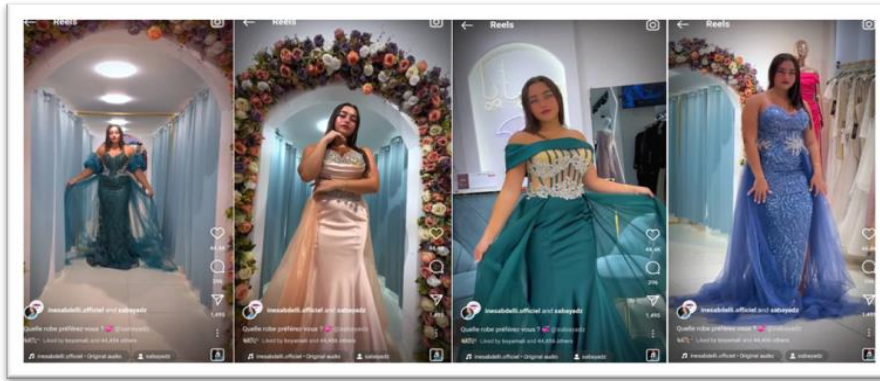
3. Bouchra Ben Ayache’s Instagram Post



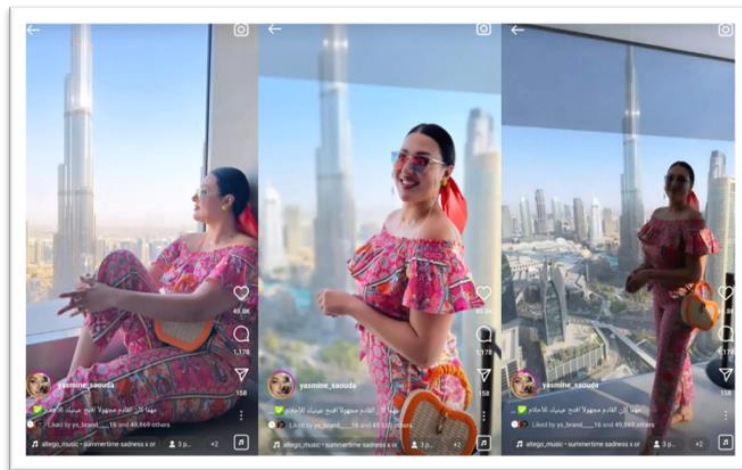
4. Chahinez Caroline’s Instagram Post



5. Ines Abdelli’s Instagram Post



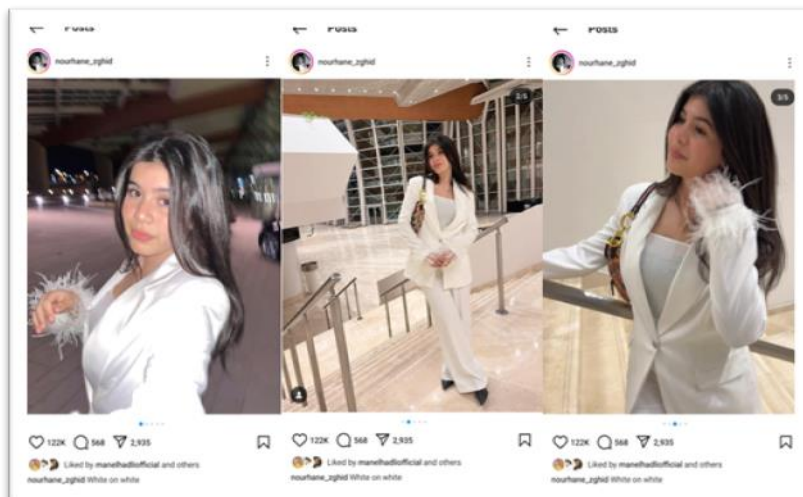
6. Yasmine Saouda's Instagram Post



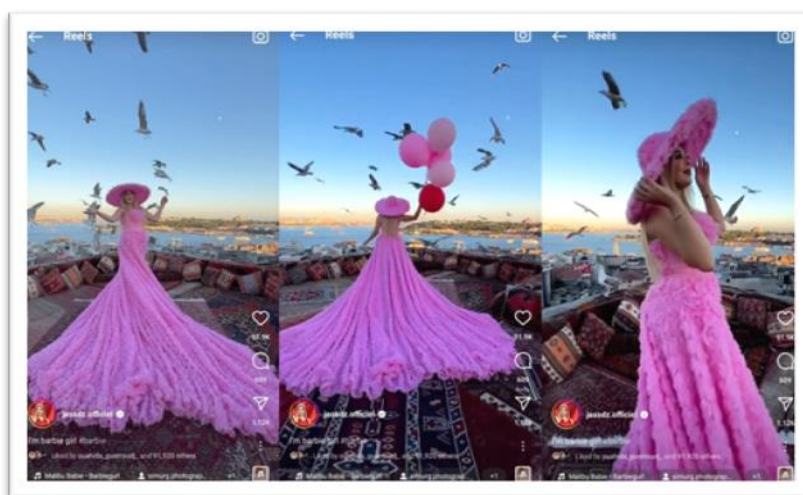
7. Maya Redjil's Instagram Post



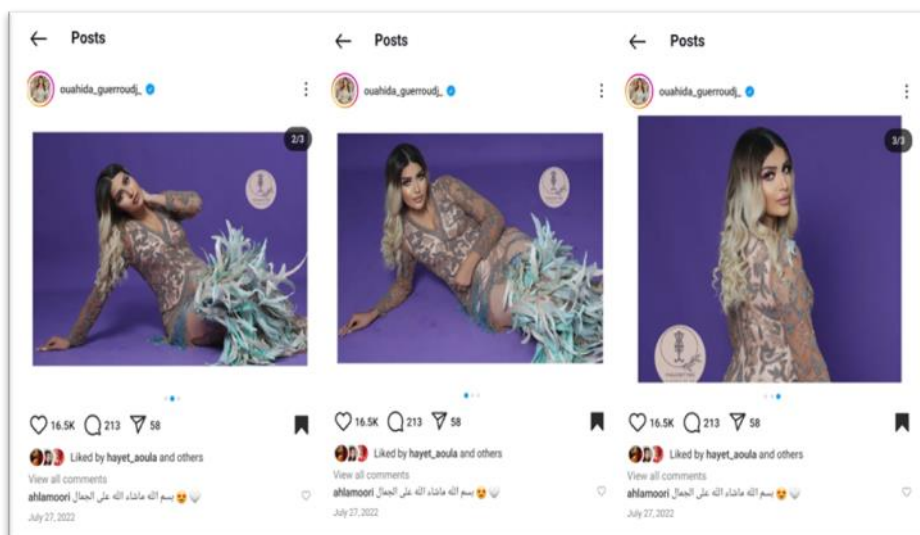
8. Nourhane Zghid's Instagram Post



9. Yasmine Amari’s Instagram Post



10. Ouahida Guerroudj’s Instagram Post



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