

UDC: 8.; 81.; 811.111.

LBC: 74.268.0; 81.1; 81.2 Ing.

MJ № 376

 10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420

THE SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PRESERVING HISTORICAL MEMORY IN ALGERIA

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Abstract. In all societies and across all eras, the media has been regarded as a crucial mechanism and institution of socialization, tasked with enhancing societal awareness in various fields, particularly concerning the nation's history and its historical memory. This article aims to highlight the role played by the media in preserving historical memory and strengthening collective awareness of the past in Algeria, through documenting events and constructing national narratives that reflect identity and reinforce belonging. Furthermore, this scholarly article seeks to provide a forward-looking vision on how to harness media in Algeria, in all its forms, within a comprehensive media

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To cite this article: Dahmar, N., Lameche, A., Moumene, R., Bendida, B., & Khalfallah, K. [2025]. THE SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PRESERVING HISTORICAL MEMORY IN ALGERIA. *"Metafizika" journal*, 8(7), pp.404-420.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420>

Article history:

Received: 19.05.2025

Accepted: 14.07.2025

Published: 03.11.2025



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strategy to raise awareness among generations about the nation's history, its glorious achievements, and the themes of national memory in both the short and long term. The Algerian people take pride in their great heroism, immense sacrifices, and long struggle against French colonialism, a struggle that lasted for many years and was inscribed in golden letters. During this period, martyrs and freedom fighters gave everything they had for Algeria, its freedom, and the expulsion of the French colonizer- a goal that was ultimately achieved with the country's independence and the restoration of its sovereignty.

Keywords: Media, Algerian media, historical awareness, national memory

УДК: 8.; 81.; 811.111.

ББК: 74.268.0; 81.1; 81.2 Ing.

МЖ № 376

 10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420

СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ РОЛИ СМИ В СОХРАНЕНИИ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ПАМЯТИ В АЛЖИРЕ

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Абстракт. Во все времена и во всех обществах средства массовой информации рассматриваются как важнейший механизм и институт социализации, призванный способствовать формированию общественного сознания в различных сферах, особенно в отношении истории нации и её исторической памяти. Цель данной статьи- осветить роль СМИ в сохранении исторической памяти и укреплении коллективного осознания прошлого в Алжире посредством документирования событий и формирования национальных нарративов, отражающих идентичность и укрепляющих чувство принадлежности.

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Цитировать статью: Дахмар, Н., Ламеш, А., Мумэн, Р., Бендида, Б., & Халфалла, К. [2025]. СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ РОЛИ СМИ В СОХРАНЕНИИ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ПАМЯТИ В АЛЖИРЕ. *Журнал «Metafizika»*, 8(7), с.404-420.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420>

История статьи:

Статья поступила в редакцию: 19.05.2025

Отправлена на доработку: 14.07.2025

Принята для печати: 03.11.2025



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Кроме того, статья предлагает перспективное видение использования всех форм СМИ в Алжире в рамках комплексной медиа-стратегии, направленной на повышение осведомлённости новых поколений об истории страны, её героических подвигах и темах национальной памяти как в краткосрочной, так и в долгосрочной перспективе. Народ Алжира по праву гордится своим героизмом, огромными жертвами и длительной борьбой против французского колониализма, продолжавшейся многие годы и вписанной золотыми буквами в историю. В этот период мученики и борцы за свободу отдали всё ради независимости Алжира и восстановления его суверенитета.

Ключевые слова: СМИ, алжирские СМИ, историческое сознание, национальная память

UOT: 8.; 81.; 811.111.

KBT: 74.268.0; 81.1; 81.2 Ing.

MJ № 376

 10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420

ƏLCƏZAİRDƏ TARİXİ YADDAŞIN QORUNUB SAXLANILMASINDA KİV-İN ROLUNUN SOSİOLOJİ MEYARI

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Abstrakt. Bütün cəmiyyətlərdə və bütün dövrlərdə media sosiallaşmanın mühüm mexanizmi və institutu kimi qəbul edilir. O, cəmiyyətin müxtəlif sahələrdə, xüsusilə də xalqın tarixi və tarixi yaddaşı ilə bağlı maariflənməsinin artırılmasında əvəzsiz rol oynayır. Bu məqalənin məqsədi Əlcəzairdə medianın tarixi yaddaşın qorunması, keçmişə dair kollektiv şüurun gücləndirilməsi, hadisələrin sənədləşdirilməsi və milli kimliyi əks etdirən narrativlərin qurulmasındakı rolunu vurğulamaqdır. Eyni zamanda, tədqiqat Əlcəzairdə medianın bütün formalarından istifadə etməklə, qısamüddətli və uzunmüddətli perspektivdə milli tarix, qəhrəmanlıq ənənələri və milli yaddaş mövzuları

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Məqaləyə istinad: Dahmar, N., Lameçə, Ə., Muməne, R., Bendida, B., & Qalfallah, Q. [2025]. ƏLCƏZAİRDƏ TARİXİ YADDAŞIN QORUNUB SAXLANILMASINDA KİV-İN ROLUNUN SOSİOLOJİ MEYARI. *"Metafizika" jurnalı*, 8(7), səh.404-420.

<https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i7.404-420>

Məqalənin tarixçəsi:

Məqalə redaksiyaya daxil olmuşdur: 19.05.2025

Təkrar işlənməyə göndərilmişdir: 14.07.2025

Çapa qəbul edilmişdir: 03.11.2025



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barədə nəsilərin maarifləndirilməsini təmin edən kompleks media strategiyasının hazırlanmasına yönəlmiş baxış təqdim edir. Əlcəzair xalqı öz qəhrəmanlıq tarixindən, fransız müstəmləkəçiliyinə qarşı uzun illər davam edən mübarizəsindən və azadlıq uğrunda şəhid və mücahidlərin göstərdiyi böyük fədakarlıqlardan haqlı olaraq qürur duyur. Bu mübarizə nəticəsində ölkə azadlığını və suverenliyini bərpa etmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Media, Əlcəzair mediası, tarixi şüur, milli yaddaş

1.Introduction

The Algerian people take pride in their great heroism, immense sacrifices, and long struggle against French colonialism, a struggle that lasted for many years and was inscribed in golden letters. During this period, martyrs and freedom fighters gave everything they had for Algeria, its freedom, and the expulsion of the French colonizer- a goal that was ultimately achieved with the country's independence and the restoration of its sovereignty.

These heroic deeds and historical glories constitute essential components of the national memory, which must be preserved and transmitted to the post-independence generation as well as to future generations.

The media, with its various forms, represents a strategic sector and a vital sphere for raising awareness and connecting generations by fostering continuity and social communication across time.

In Algeria, the significance of this role grows even further due to the weight of the national history and the values of resistance and liberation it embodies, which form the foundation of collective identity. From this emerges the central research question: What role do the media in Algeria play in preserving historical memory and shaping the historical consciousness of Algerian society?

To address this article, we adopt a theoretical approach based on analyzing the role of media in safeguarding national memory through two perspectives: the media dimension, which focuses on the role of media in relation to historical memory, and the social dimension, which explains how media contributes to reinforcing collective awareness regarding issues of historical memory and national identity.

2.The Concept of Media in the Context of the Historical Function

The term *media* refers to the existence of a medium, that is, the tool used in the process of communicating information [Hamam Mohamed Ali, The Problematic of the Concept of Media and Means, <https://portal.arid.my/ar-LY/Posts>, accessed 11/04/2024, 23:09]. It also refers to the means employed to communicate with the target audience in order to transmit news and accurate information based on objective facts without distortion, thereby informing public opinion about issues of concern to society as a whole [Hassan Nairat, The Role of Media in Preserving Palestinian Heritage and Identity, <https://staff.najah.edu/ar/publications/9242/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 00:23].

The impact of media on the individual and society has become an undeniable reality, to the extent that some thinkers and politicians have exaggerated in describing its influence. Voltaire, for example, considered the press an unbreakable machine, capable of destroying an old world and building a new one. Similarly, a former Latin American president once expressed awe of this influence, stating that he did not fear the gates of hell opening before him, but

trembled at the scratch of an editor's pen [Redouane Chafou, A Critical Reading of Media's Approach to the History of the Liberation Revolution, <https://elhiwar.dz/contributions/101051/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 19:00]. This immense power of the media has made scientific research focus on its impact across several essential domains, most notably changing attitudes, cognitive transformation, value transformation through socialization, and behavior modification [Hala Ben Ali Bernat, Introduction to Media and Communication, https://fac.ksu.edu.sa/~files/mqdm_fy_llm_wlts, accessed 12/04/2024, 19:24].

In this context, media can be viewed in terms of its role in shaping historical consciousness, as one of the fundamental tools for preserving the collective memory of societies. This is achieved through documenting events, facts, and personalities, and reframing them within shared narratives that reflect national identity. Thus, media is not limited to transmitting news but also fulfills a historical function by archiving human experiences, making it an essential reference for understanding the past and contributing to the shaping of the present.

3.The Relationship Between Media and History

Philosophers consider philosophy the mother of sciences, while media scholars view media as a partner to all sciences. Media, through its different means, interacts with politics, art, literature, economics, medicine, and more. It either employs these sciences within a media framework or documents and records their developments. Hence, it has become impossible to separate media from other sciences- particularly from history, given that history encompasses a vast scope of human life, with each nation, village, and individual possessing a unique history [Nizwa Journal, The Relationship Between History and Media, <https://www.nizwa.com/>, accessed 11/04/2024, 23:37].

The relationship between media and history is characterized by an integrative connection, especially in the era of the media revolution, where media has become a direct tool for conveying events in sound, image, time, and place. This has given media the power and ability to shape public opinion and to influence the archiving of events historically. Modern media has thus become an indispensable documentary reference in historical writing [Nabil Odeh, An Intellectual Vision Between Media and History, <https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=526357>, accessed 11/04/2024, 23:43] Journalism in its various forms- print, audio, and visual- constitutes an important new documentary field for historians of the present era. However, its use requires awareness of the censorship imposed on it, since it is not entirely free, as well as a clear understanding of its political and ideological orientations. Reliance on newspaper texts alone does not guarantee credibility unless accompanied by quantitative content analysis using established methods that are central to the historian's methodology, as well as to neighboring or supporting sciences. This requires historians to be familiar

with methods of media analysis, particularly content analysis and image analysis, also known as semiotics [Abd al-Rahim al-Hasnawi, *Journalism and History: The Actor and the Witness*, <https://alummacenter.com/?p=2309>, accessed 12/04/2024, 08:17].

Moreover, many concepts arise from the intersection between journalism as a producer of news and history as a profession concerned with uncovering the truth of events across time through critical examination of records and sources. From this intersection emerge concepts such as instant history, the journalist-historian, the historian-journalist, and discursive history- all of which establish a mediating logic between the science of history and the craft of journalism within an ethical framework rooted in truth discourse [Al-Eqtisadiyah Newspaper, *Journalistic Writing and the Transformation of Collective Memory*, https://www.aleqt.com/2019/06/27/article_1625621, accessed 12/04/2024, 08:45].

The relationship between journalism and history has thus become a subject of interest across multiple fields of knowledge, given their shared concern with the past and the present. Journalistic writings constitute a daily record of societal dynamics and serve as a fundamental source of political, social, and cultural events. Conversely, journalistic archives, with their documents, have contributed to the historicization of numerous events and milestones. This has made journalism a partner in the historical process, bringing historians closer to media practices in their search for the roots of events. Many historians, since the advent of journalism, have participated in founding newspapers and developing reporting styles and standards [Ayad Ablah, *Journalism and History: Collective Memory from Common Sense to Scholarly Culture*, *Historical Horizons Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 2019, p.50].

On another note, the distinction between journalists and historians in recording human events lies mainly in the timeframe each addresses. Historians often focus on past historical events, investigating them and tracing their diverse causes, while journalists are concerned with documenting current events or those that occurred in the recent past. Thus, historians' scope lies primarily in past human events and relies on sources that recorded them, whereas journalism deals with contemporary or near-past events [Saba Hussein Mouli, *Documenting Events Between History and Media*, *Journal of Human and Social Sciences Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2019, p.182].

Certain considerations must be respected in the relationship between media and history, particularly regarding the work of historians and journalists in documenting events and historical figures. Chief among these is avoiding narrow biases or allegiances that compromise objectivity, turning historical writing into a craft lacking a solid scientific foundation. Objectivity, understood as the non-intrusion of the self in assessing events, remains both a difficult and essential requirement, since human beings are inseparable from their ideas and beliefs. For this reason, it has become necessary today for media

professionals and journalists to uphold honesty and objectivity when addressing issues related to the history of the Algerian Revolution [Redouane Chafou, *ibid*].

4. Media and Its Social Responsibility in Raising Awareness of Historical Memory

The idea of the social responsibility of media lies in the ethical obligation between the media institution and society. This responsibility is reflected in a set of functions that media must fulfill in order to serve the public interest and meet the needs of individuals in various political, economic, social, and cultural domains [Ghada Mahmoud Abdelhamid, *The Social Responsibility of Traditional Media in Society*, <https://www.ahewar.org/debat>, accessed 11/04/2024, 10:00] The outcome of this is the creation of social awareness, which constitutes a cornerstone of the progress and development of any society, playing a central role in its stability and advancement [Majid Mohamed Al-Obairan, *Awareness and the Development of Society*, <https://www.alukah.net/culture/0/124560>, accessed 11/04/2024, 10:02] The role of media regarding materials linked to history appears in its ability to highlight and shed light on them through revisiting history and its documents, thereby contributing to the creation of a form of historical awareness. Media plays an essential role in shaping public opinion, especially as it reaches wider segments of the population, whereas interest in history often remains confined to elites. Hence, the responsibility of media lies in helping to foster historical awareness among all members of society. To achieve the goal of building historical consciousness within society, credibility remains a fundamental condition. Journalists must verify the authenticity of documents or historical materials, particularly given the abundance of fabricated content in digital media. Objectivity is equally important, as the pursuit of sensationalism may at times push journalists to emphasize certain aspects while neglecting or exaggerating others. This undermines the balance of historical material, distorts its purpose, or entrenches a false impression among the audience [Abdelhaq Sabri, *Foundations of Media Coverage of Leaked Historical Documents*, <https://ijnet.org/ar/story/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 00:38] Professor Fahd Al-Otaibi points out that all media outlets belonging to a state must be *national*. By national, he means that they should align with the state's policies and orientations. Any media outlet deviating from this alignment must be shut down due to the danger its continuity poses to both the nation and its citizens. This is the general rule governing the relationship between media and the homeland. However, there exists a higher level of distinction in which media evolves from being merely *national* to becoming *patriotic media*. The latter refers to media directed toward presenting the true image of the nation, its symbols, policies, achievements, and its people.

This presentation of the nation's image takes two forms, sharing the same goal but differing in their mechanisms. The first is a descriptive narrative form that introduces the nation to those unfamiliar with it, thereby instilling in them a true and positive image. The second is a critical form that deconstructs misleading media discourses and distorted images- whether intentional or not- and replaces them with truthful and fair representations. Thus, patriotic media plays a pivotal role in uncovering facts, raising awareness, educating, and enlightening people about significant national issues and current developments, while enhancing the country's image and policies domestically and internationally. Consequently, patriotic media transcends the traditional notion of media as merely a set of communication channels used for publishing news, advertisements, or statements [Fahd Al-Otaibi, National Media and Patriotic Media, <https://www.alriyadh.com/1848482>, accessed 12/04/2024, 19:42].

5.The Sociological Role of Algerian Media in Preserving Historical Memory

The writer Laurent Ryan views national memory as one of the forms of collective memory that contributes to group cohesion and is closely tied to society's actions and reactions to various events across different historical periods [Bouhania Goui, Media and the Preservation of Memory in Algeria in Support of National Defense, <https://algeriemaintenant.d>, accessed 11/04/2024, 00:10] In Algeria, the emergence of media defending the Revolution can be traced back to the press of the nationalist movement and the Association of Muslim Scholars. At the time, this was known as revolutionary media, which defended Algerian identity, the Islamic religion, and the national character [Mokhtar Jloul, The Role of National Media in the Liberation Revolution from Foundation to Practice (1954–1962), *Al-Ibar Journal of Historical and Archaeological Studies in North Africa*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Ibn Khaldoun University, Tiaret, June 2023, p.477].

6.The Role of Algerian Media in Producing and Preserving National Memory

Media at the time contributed to the production and orientation of national memory during the liberation period from 1954 to 1962, becoming an essential part of it, as it was employed to support the national liberation struggle [Hamad Ben Saou, The Unity of Professional Practice Reconciles the Audience with the Theme of National Memory, <https://www.annasronline.com/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 10:03]. During the colonial period, Algerian media focused on introducing the principles and objectives of political movements and conveying their demands.

Algerian newspapers at that time played a key role in developing and supporting the nationalist movement, recruiting some of the best writers to oppose colonialism, raise awareness, and mobilize the masses around the Revolution [Fouad Chikhi, Media Can Protect Memory from Attempts of Falsification, <https://www.annasronline.com/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 10:19]. During the Algerian Revolution,

several newspapers were established, such as *Al-Muqawama* and *Al-Mujahid*, in both Arabic and French. In the audiovisual field, a clandestine radio station was created, serving as an extension of the armed struggle on the ground [Khalil Kamal, The Necessity of Consulting Experts, <https://www.annasonline.com/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 10:24].

During this period, *Sawt al-Arab* radio in Cairo played a major role in mobilizing North Africa and the Arab world in support of the Algerian Revolution. Arab radio stations dedicated between 5 and 10 minutes daily to news coverage of the Revolution [Algeria Press Service, The Algerian Revolution and Media: A Topic Still in Need of Further Research, <https://www.aps.dz/ar/algerie>, accessed 12/04/2024, 10:32].

The goals of Algerian media during the Revolution included (Salami Isaidani, *The Strategy of Media and Communication in Supporting the Algerian Liberation Revolution: An Analytical Vision of Its Effects on Revolutionary Action from 1954 to 1962*, *Journal of Researcher in Human and Social Sciences*, University of El Oued, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2016, p. 2):

- Promoting the Revolution among the Algerian people, the French government, French public opinion, and global public opinion in order to win their support for its just cause.
- Responding to French media and to statements by French political and military leaders that sought to belittle the Revolution and instill doubt among Algerians about its legitimacy.

Researcher Jلول Mokhtari concluded in his study that Algerian media played a very significant role during the Revolution by reporting on its victories, mobilizing popular support, publicizing the Algerian cause in international forums, ensuring international backing, and countering the enemy's propaganda that sought to distort the struggle of the Algerian people by all means [Jلول Mokhtari, *ibid.*, pp.474–475].

Given that the colonial historical school disseminated its toxic narratives about the victories of the Algerian Revolution through media battles against the mujahideen- fabricating lies, beautifying France's colonial crimes, and sowing doubt about the history of the Revolution [Redouane Chafou, *ibid.*] raising awareness about memory has become a critical issue today, especially in light of changes affecting the value system of societies. Despite differences among researchers, one essential idea remains: without memory, history is lost. The collective memory of any nation is a reservoir of its history and culture. Ensuring broad societal security has thus become tied to the preservation of memory. Any nation aspiring to build its civilization must rely on history, as it represents accumulated human experiences necessary for living the present, shaping national identity, avoiding the repetition of past mistakes, and raising the morale of its people [Algerian Radio, The Role of Media in Preserving National Memory and Strengthening National Defense to Face Various Challenges, <https://my.radioalgerie.d>, accessed 14/04/2024, 12:15].

To reinforce the role of Algerian media in shaping collective awareness, the Algerian state launched in 2020 a television channel dedicated to Algerian history and heritage, aimed at transmitting it to future generations, preserving it, and strengthening the sense of belonging to the nation. This channel was named *Memory Channel*, the eighth channel launched by Algerian public television [Zineb Yaout, The Role of Algerian Media in Preserving National Identity: The Case of Memory TV, Journal of Studies, Faculty of Arts and Languages, Mohamed Tahri University, Béchar, Vol. 12, No. 1, May 2023, p.239].

Currently, Algerian media bears the responsibility of highlighting national memory and opening up to its themes by making them a central element of the cultural debate, especially in connection with present-day challenges and the outputs of historical knowledge [Mohamed Ben Saou, *ibid*].

Media also contributes to strengthening citizens' cultural and historical identity, enriching their scientific knowledge, and providing sound education. It fosters individuals' sense of national belonging, which contributes to national unity, overcoming divisions, and building well-grounded personalities imbued with their country's history [Abdelkader Cherif, Integrating Aspects of Memory into the Media System is Vital for Any Nation, <https://www.annasronline.com/index.php>, accessed 12/04/2024, 12:07].

The media must also defend the components of collective national memory and transmit them in a clear and dignified form, particularly the historical, cultural, and civilizational heritage of the country. This means defending national identity, which is threatened by distortion and erasure, and working to preserve and entrench it within society. To achieve this, media professionals must intensify their efforts, especially today, to document the testimonies of mujahideen, thereby creating a body of scientific material that historians can later use [Al-Massa Newspaper, Media as a Tool for Defending National Memory, <https://www.el-massa.com/dz>, accessed 12/04/2024, 12:35].

There are a set of principles that Algerian media must observe when addressing topics of history and national memory [Said Boudina, Media as a Fundamental Source in Writing and Understanding National History, <https://www.annasronline.com/>, accessed 12/04/2024, 09:45].

- Conveying, discussing, and presenting historical events without undermining Algeria's cultural and national symbols.
- Carefully selecting historical topics to be addressed.
- Hosting intellectuals and specialists when discussing historical issues.
- Ensuring objectivity and neutrality in transmitting knowledge and presenting historical works.
- Involving experts in all matters related to national memory and heritage, especially in cinematic works.

- Utilizing digital media to serve Algeria’s historical and cultural heritage, as these

7. Conclusion

This scientific article addressed a highly significant topic, as discussing the national memory of societies and peoples is essential in protecting them from cultural penetration and the erosion of their identities. The focus was placed on the role of the media in spreading awareness of national memory, through which we arrived at a set of conclusions:

- The media plays an important role in shaping social awareness today, given the increasing use of media by the public.
- The role of Algerian media in preserving national memory is an extension of the role it played during the revolution, namely defending and supporting the revolution and raising awareness of the crimes of French colonialism.
- The functions of the media regarding issues of national memory are centered on awareness, sensitization, reminding, and highlighting national memory among the Algerian people.
- Digital media is one of the key means for disseminating and protecting national memory.
- Media and communication professionals in Algeria must realize that addressing national memory should not only be tied to historical events and occasions but must be a continuous effort over time.

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