

# The Role of National Strategies in Promoting Social Security in Times of Crisis: The Case of Distance Learning in Algeria

## *El papel de las estrategias nacionales en el fortalecimiento de la seguridad social en tiempos de crisis: el caso de la educación a distancia en Argelia*

Halima Touati<sup>1</sup>, Redouane Touati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctor of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Department of Public Law, halima.touati@univ-bejaia.dz

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor –A- of Communication and Media Studies, Yahia Fares University of Medea, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Information and Communication Sciences and Library Science, touati.redouane@univ-medea.dz

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### Abstract

The development of the concept of security and the emergence of the human security paradigm, rather than the traditional state-centered approach, require greater attention to individuals as active and influential members of society. In this respect, human security puts people before states. Social security is the foundation of personal security. Accordingly, this study examines the role of national strategies in promoting social security during crises, using Algeria's distance learning as a case study. Adopting a qualitative case study based on documentary analysis and contextual observation, the paper explores how Algeria maintained educational continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic through digital learning across different levels. The analysis demonstrates that distance learning served as an important strategic mechanism for preserving access to education under exceptional circumstances, thereby contributing to social stability and institutional durability. The findings highlight that educational continuity must be integrated into national crisis-management strategies to strengthen social security and resilience during future emergencies.

**Keywords:** Social security, National strategies, Crisis management, Distance learning, Algeria.

### Resumen

La evolución del concepto de seguridad y la aparición del paradigma de la seguridad humana, frente al enfoque tradicional centrado en el Estado, exigen prestar mayor atención a las personas como miembros activos e influyentes de la sociedad. En este sentido, la seguridad humana sitúa a las personas por delante de los Estados. La seguridad social constituye la base de la seguridad personal. En consecuencia, este estudio examina el papel de las estrategias nacionales en el fortalecimiento de la seguridad social durante las crisis, tomando como estudio de caso la educación a distancia en Argelia. Mediante un estudio de caso cualitativo basado en el análisis documental y la observación contextual, el artículo explora cómo Argelia mantuvo la continuidad educativa durante la pandemia de COVID-19 mediante el aprendizaje digital en distintos niveles educativos. El análisis demuestra que la educación a distancia constituyó un importante mecanismo estratégico para preservar el acceso a la educación en circunstancias excepcionales, contribuyendo así a la estabilidad social y a la continuidad institucional. Los resultados destacan la necesidad de integrar la continuidad educativa en las estrategias nacionales de gestión de crisis para fortalecer la seguridad social y la resiliencia ante futuras emergencias.

**Palabras clave:** Seguridad social, estrategias nacionales, gestión de crisis, educación a distancia, Argelia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Periods of crisis, whether caused by pandemics, natural disasters, or other large-scale emergencies, pose significant challenges to governments by disrupting essential public services and threatening societal stability. In such circumstances, national strategies play a crucial role in safeguarding social security by ensuring the continuity of fundamental rights, including access to education. The COVID-19 pandemic represented one of the most significant global crises of the twenty-first century, profoundly affecting countries worldwide. Algeria, like many other nations, was confronted with unprecedented challenges as the rapid spread of the virus disrupted virtually every aspect of daily life. According to the COVID-19 Crisis Situation Analysis (CCSA), by the end of August 2020, more than 25 million confirmed cases had been

reported globally, with nearly 850,000 deaths attributed to the disease (Me & Fu, 2020).

Algeria did not remain passive in the face of the pandemic's rapid spread across the country. Although the situation unfolded swiftly and the nation was not fully prepared to confront such an unexpected crisis, the authorities responded with a series of measures aimed at containing the outbreak and mitigating its devastating consequences.

Accordingly, the Algerian authorities suspended various modes of transportation connecting the country's provinces. Given Algeria's vast geographical size and its extensive transport infrastructure, including local airports, railway stations, and bus and taxi terminals, this measure posed significant challenges, as such facilities are typically characterized by high levels of human congestion across all age groups. In parallel, the government suspended collective activities such as markets and prohibited public gatherings. The policy of social isolation was further reinforced through the closure of major sites of congregation, including mosques, schools, and universities. Notably, religious and educational institutions in Algeria, traditionally regarded as central spaces for social interaction and community cohesion, were compelled to cease operations, signaling a profound transformation in the country's social dynamics. Additionally, Algeria relied on multiple awareness-raising strategies, particularly media campaigns, which served as one of the most effective tools of social communication to inform and guide the public.

These preventive measures and precautionary decisions required substantial effort, coordination, and time to implement, particularly as the pandemic evolved unpredictably. The rapid spread of the virus and the rising number of infections placed immense pressure on Algeria's health system and administrative institutions, which had to adapt swiftly to an unfamiliar crisis. The situation generated widespread anxiety among the population, amplified by the constant circulation of alarming news and the uncertainty surrounding the availability of effective treatment or vaccines. The pandemic's toll, both human and psychological, was unprecedented in modern Algerian history.

In light of the profound disruption caused by the closure of educational institutions, Algeria was compelled to adopt alternative mechanisms to ensure the continuity of learning without compromising public health or social stability. Consequently, the government introduced distance learning as a strategic response aimed at maintaining access to education while complying with preventive health measures. This shift marked a turning point in Algeria's educational landscape, revealing both the potential and the limitations of integrating digital learning into a system traditionally rooted in face-to-face instruction. Against this background, the present study examines the role of national strategies in promoting social security during times of crisis through the case of Algeria's implementation of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores how educational continuity contributed to preserving one of the fundamental dimensions of social security while identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with the country's transition toward digital learning.

## **2. Research Design and Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Coombs (2022) defines a case study as a form of methodology that enables investigators to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context and in a clearly bounded system. These studies may use multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, field notes, historical records, audiovisual materials and documents depending on the nature and goals of the research. The main source of evidence in this study was documents, which were analyzed using documentary analysis. A systematic analysis was performed on official reports, ministerial documents, government publications, institutional websites and relevant scholarly literature to explore the Algerian experience in applying distance learning as a national strategy to promote social security and ensuring educational continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interpretation of the documentary evidence was supported by contextual observations of the implementation of distance learning in Algerian educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Observation is an important source of evidence in case study research, as it helps the researcher to understand phenomena in their real-life context, which supplements the information obtained from other

sources (Yin, 2018). These contextual observations in the present study helped to better understand the practical aspects of the national strategy, such as digital accessibility, use of online learning platforms, and learner participation. Thus, they enriched the interpretation of the documentary findings.

The study did not include the collection of primary data through surveys, interviews or experiments, so it was not necessary to use any specific population or sampling procedures. Instead, the research was based on the Algerian national experience as a single case study. Documentary sources were selected purposively on the basis of their relevance, credibility and direct contribution to addressing the research objectives and themes under investigation.

### **3. A General Overview of Social Security**

#### **3.1 A Conceptual Framework for Social Security**

Following the end of the Cold War, there were numerous theoretical discussions centered on the importance of expanding the global security agenda. The Copenhagen School was the most responsive to this idea. The school aimed to broaden the concept of security, drawing on theorist Barry Buzan's book, "People States and fear: The National Security problem in international Relations" (Booth & Smith, 1995, pp. 176–177).

According to the Copenhagen School, social security is fundamentally linked to anxiety of challenges to communal identity, whether genuine or imagined. The threats to societal identity can range from censoring expression to interfering with society's ability to generate itself, including the dangers of using language, names, attire, or closing institutions of religion and education. The Copenhagen School refers to a set of societal threats, such as the dominant cultural and linguistic influence from a neighboring culture, which causes a change in the community's ways of life, and the attempt to assimilate groups into an integrated entity within the framework of a broader culture, which causes the societal group to fear the disintegration of its identity within the framework of identity expansion or narrowing (Kouachi, 2023, p. 58)

Moreover, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has referred to social security as identical with human security. It has been defined as defending people's freedoms, protecting them from emergency circumstances and dangers, fostering their strengths and goals, and developing political, sociological, environmental, economic, military, and cultural institutions that allow them to live in peace, dignity, and security. Social security entails instilling a sense of security, stability, and reassurance in society. Without security, society will deteriorate and eventually cease to exist (Mechaqba, 2020).

According to the preceding, social security refers to aspects of life that concern the modern person, such as living and economic sufficiency, life stability, the provision of basic services such as education, health, and safety, and access to personal well-being and social and material security to ensure his stability and lack of feeling of need. It is also regarded as a fundamental pillar of societal stability, development, and prosperity (Al-Mawajdeh & Al-Mashaqbeh, 2022, p. 676)

#### **3.2 The Dimensions of Social Security**

Some describe social security as human security in its various components; however this view is flawed because the concept of human security encompasses more than just social security. Even if the levels of social security overlap with human security, they are founded on the premise of necessity and need. Social security is one of the dimensions of human security. Social security, on the other hand, encompasses all of the actions that contribute to the creation of secure living conditions by achieving the dimensions that are used as indicators to assess social security in the country. The most significant of these dimensions are the following:

##### **3.2.1 Political Dimension**

Political security refers to the state's capacity to preserve its sovereignty, stability, and institutional integrity in the face of internal and external pressures. It encompasses the protection of the political system from threats that may undermine governance, disrupt public order, or erode citizens' trust in state institutions. Fundamentally, political security ensures that government authority is exercised within a legitimate and

transparent framework grounded in the rule of law. It involves safeguarding citizens and guaranteeing the fair application of justice, and promoting equality before the law.

Moreover, it is closely tied to the preservation of democratic principles, such as political participation, accountability, and freedom of expression, which collectively serve as indicators of a stable and secure political environment. In this sense, political security is not merely the absence of conflict or instability, but rather the sustained ability of the state to balance authority with liberty, ensuring that power is exercised responsibly while protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

### **3.2.2 Social Dimension**

The social dimension of security is Realized through the establishment and reinforcement of institutional community structures that safeguard social cohesion and stability. It encompasses both formal and informal national institutions that contribute to fostering a collective sense of belonging and solidarity among citizens. These institutions, ranging from state agencies and educational systems to traditional community frameworks, play a crucial role in maintaining social order and promoting mutual trust. In parallel, civil society organizations act as vital intermediaries between the state and the public, encouraging civic engagement, volunteerism, and participatory development. They also work to strengthen family cohesion, enhance social welfare, and cultivate values of cooperation and responsibility within the community. Altogether, these elements form the foundation of social security, ensuring that individuals feel integrated, supported, and empowered within a stable and balanced social environment.

### **3.2.3 Health Dimension**

Health security encompasses the establishment of a comprehensive infrastructure that ensures the protection and promotion of both physical and mental well-being. It involves the availability and accessibility of adequate healthcare facilities, medical equipment, essential medicines, and vaccines necessary for disease prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Beyond the mere provision of resources, health security also requires the development of efficient health systems capable of responding swiftly to emergencies, epidemics, and other public health threats. It emphasizes the importance of preventive care, health education, and public awareness campaigns aimed at fostering a culture of hygiene, resilience, and collective responsibility. Moreover, the inclusion of mental health services within the broader framework of health security reflects a holistic approach to human well-being, recognizing that societal stability and sustainable development are closely tied to a healthy population, both in body and mind.

### **3.2.4 Intellectual Dimension**

The moral or intellectual dimension Involves respecting religious beliefs, promoting freedom of thought and creativity, preserving customs and cultural differences, and creating a shared national culture. This helps people feel reassured about their unique culture and intellectual system, as well as fortifying thought through social institutions to prevent disorder. The issue is whether at the preventive or therapeutic level, and it strengthens the mind of the individual and society (Al-Masoudi, 2021).

### **3.2.5 Food Security**

Food is regarded a crucial necessity and a basic need for people, as they cannot exist without it. When food supplies are accessible in any civilization in sufficient numbers and can be obtained easily, social life stabilizes, and with it, society moves toward growth. As a result, food security entails ensuring that individuals have access to basic food and are self-sufficient. There are others who define teleological security as having three pillars: abundance, stability, and the ability to achieve them (Elements of Social Security, n.d.)

## **3.3 The Components of Social Security**

Social security is realized through the coordinated efforts of both state institutions and civil society organizations, encompassing key structures such as the family, the judiciary, the educational system, healthcare institutions, and the economic sector. Together, these entities work to ensure the protection, stability, and well-being of citizens across all levels of society. The overarching objective is to create a

cohesive social environment that guarantees safety, justice, and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of social or economic background. Achieving social security also entails reducing crime rates, strengthening social solidarity, and promoting fairness in the distribution of resources and services. In this sense, social security goes beyond material protection; it represents a holistic framework aimed at fostering trust between citizens and institutions, reinforcing social cohesion, and ensuring a dignified life within a secure and equitable society.

### **3.3.1 The Family**

The family is regarded as the first cell to receive innate moral systems and the beginning of the formation of the individual's personality and the refinement of his talents, given that all scientific and psychological studies conclude that the human personality is formed from the first basic principles on which the individual is raised. According to social literature, the family has traditionally performed religious, moral, and educational duties. It is responsible for establishing moral systems and behavioral regulations for individuals, detailing its rulings, clarifying its techniques, safeguarding it, and drawing moral standards by distinguishing between good and evil. The family performs activities and functions in several areas of education, social, and economic development. The family's position as a fundamental foundation of society and a natural environment for maturation has received special attention. Human beings are included in the Universal Declaration of the United Nations, which was issued on January 11, 1969 (Hawawsa, 2018, p. 139).

### **3.3.2 The Institutions**

The presence of social upbringing institutions such as schools, religious establishments, and educational organizations, plays a crucial role in preventing crime and curbing deviant behavior. These institutions serve as the primary frameworks through which values, norms, and principles of good citizenship are transmitted across generations. Complementing their role are other vital institutions, including the media, correctional and rehabilitation centers, and security services, all of which contribute to the reinforcement of social order and moral guidance. The active involvement of the state through these institutions is characterized by seriousness, rigor, and discipline, reflecting a deliberate commitment to safeguarding social stability. When these mechanisms function harmoniously, they collectively create an environment conducive to peace, accountability, and mutual respect. The state's concrete efforts in this regard are numerous and multifaceted, encompassing initiatives such as:

#### **-The Health Care**

A well-functioning healthcare system is fundamental to societal safety and stability. Hospitals and private clinics play a vital role in safeguarding public well-being by addressing a wide range of health-related needs. Healthcare provision is regarded as an essential consideration in all circumstances, as it is directly linked to the preservation of human life. Given the sensitive preventive and curative roles these institutions may fulfill, state investment in equipping and supporting them with adequate medical resources, infrastructure, and pharmaceuticals is considered a key measure for ensuring societal security and resilience (Barajel, 2023, p. 71).

#### **-Prison, Re-education, and Rehabilitation Efforts**

Prisons, re-education, and rehabilitation institutes aim to reform deviants, re-educate them, and rehabilitate them for social life. This includes sanctions and other measures. In addition to punishing the guilty, penal facilities provide professional and social rehabilitation. These institutions help to enhance social security by reforming. Without the criminal repeating his crime, it offers him with the tools and capabilities to stay away from the realm of deviance and crime (Al-Awji, 2015).

Hence, social security is linked to the extent to which state institutions are capable of confronting challenges to social security, as evidenced by a collection of indicators that indicate a country's social security situation. For example, public agencies can help reduce and battle crime by enforcing public order and spreading the rule of law. Judicial and executive experience is a positive indication of gaining social security. By analogy, other indicators emerge indicating the ability of state institutions to meet all societal,

economic, health, political, cultural, and intellectual needs, causing individuals to feel reassured by the work of these institutions, such as hospitals, economic, educational, and cultural institutions, and so on.

### **-Educational Work**

Public and private educational institutions serve as fundamental pillars in ensuring social security and stability by providing individuals with access to knowledge, skills, and values that enable them to function effectively within society. Education is not merely a process of intellectual development; it is the foundation upon which individuals are shaped into socially responsible and well-adjusted citizens. Through structured learning experiences, schools cultivate moral awareness, discipline, and civic responsibility, allowing individuals to coexist harmoniously and contribute positively to community life.

Moreover, education plays a preventive role in reducing crime and deviant behavior by fostering a sense of belonging, purpose, and ethical orientation among learners. It equips students with the cognitive and emotional tools necessary to resist negative influences and engage constructively in social life. Therefore, schools, universities, and the educational curriculum at large are widely recognized as some of the most essential pillars of social cohesion and stability, as they nurture both intellectual and moral development, the dual foundations of a safe and secure society (Barajel, 2023, p. 71).

In this context, and in pursuit of strengthening social security through education, Algeria sought to expand and adapt its educational system by introducing and implementing distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak that swept across the world in early 2019. Faced with unprecedented disruptions to traditional classroom instruction, the country recognized education as not only a means of intellectual development but also a vital mechanism for maintaining social stability and continuity in times of crisis. By using digital and distance learning modalities, the Algerian authorities wanted to ensure that the educational process continued without interruption, thus reducing the psychological, social and developmental repercussions of isolation and institutions closures.

This strategic shift marked the first serious attempt to integrate modern technological tools into Algeria's educational infrastructure, reflecting a broader awareness of the need to align national education with global digital transformation trends. While the transition was not without challenges such as limited technological resources, unequal access to internet connectivity, and insufficient institutional readiness, it nonetheless represented an important milestone in rethinking the relationship between education and social resilience. The following section delves deeper into this experience, examining its implications, achievements, and the obstacles that continue to shape Algeria's approach to distance learning in the post-pandemic era.

## **4. Distance Learning in Algeria During COVID-19: A National Strategy for Achieving Social Security**

### **4.1 Defining Distance Learning and Its Key Characteristics**

Distance learning is education; the Possible purposes of distance learning are drawn from those of education (Traxler, 2018). It is not a recent phenomenon; rather, distance learning has a long and evolving history that spans more than a century. Its origins can be traced back to correspondence education in Europe during the late nineteenth century, when printed instructional materials were mailed to learners who studied independently and submitted their assignments through postal services. This early model of distance education emerged as a response to the growing demand for flexible learning opportunities among individuals who were unable to attend traditional classrooms due to geographical, professional, or personal constraints.

For decades, correspondence courses remained the dominant form of remote education, serving as a foundation for future developments in non-traditional learning. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the landscape of distance education began to change significantly with the advent of new communication technologies. Instructional radio and educational television emerged as innovative tools that expanded the reach of education to broader audiences, allowing lessons to transcend the physical boundaries of schools and universities. These early experiments with broadcast media marked a turning point, demonstrating that technology could effectively serve as a bridge between teachers and learners separated by distance.

As Imel notes, these transformations laid the groundwork for the technologically mediated education systems that would later evolve into today's digital and online learning environments (Imel, 1998).

The definition of distance learning has evolved alongside technological advancements. Videotaped lectures have been used in university and professional courses for the past two decades (Moore & Lockee, 1998). Audiotapes and mail-in lessons have long been used in correspondence courses to teach subjects such as foreign languages (Teaster & Blieszner, 1999). The Internet and compressed video have revolutionized distant learning, allowing it to take place in real time. Live video training is the most popular and rapidly expanding delivery option in the United States (Ostendorf, 1997).

Distance learning has been described as a process of creating and providing access to learning when the source of knowledge and the learners are separated by time, distance, or both (Honeyman & Miller, 1993). It refers to techniques that aim to increase access to education and training by liberating learners from time and location constraints. It provides flexible learning options for both individual and group learners. This is the fastest expanding segment of education. The emergence of internet-based technologies, notably the World Wide Web, has highlighted the potential impact of distant learning on all aspects of education (Bušelić, 2012).

Accordingly, the twentieth century witnessed the development and advancement of technology that were unimaginable a century before. The acceptance of these technologies has resulted in a new method of offering education and training. Distance learning and its supporting technologies must be carefully planned. This approach consists of four fundamental steps: conducting a needs assessment, defining instructional goals and developing instructional materials, providing training and practice for instructors and facilitators, and implementing the program (Bušelić, 2012).

There are four qualities that characterize distant learning. First, distant learning is, by definition, conducted through institutions; it is not self-study or a non academic learning setting. Second, geographical separation is inherent in distance learning, and time can also divide students and professors. Third, interactive telecommunications connects students within a learning group and with the teacher. Finally, distance education, like any other kind of education, creates a learning group, also known as a learning community, made up of students, a teacher, and instructional resources books, audio, video, and graphic displays that allow students to access instructional content. Social networking on the Internet promotes the concept of community building (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024).

As previously stated, digital technologies demolish or reduce the distances that separate people and communities from educational opportunities, thereby serving as a major delivery mechanism for distance learning; however, these distances can also be socioeconomic, cultural, cognitive, and physiological (Traxler, 2018).

#### **4.2 Algeria's Experience with Distance Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Distance learning at Algerian university institutions began in 2006. According to Belhani Ahmed, Chairman of the National Committee for Distance Education and a representative of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, distance learning in Algerian university institutions began with some training efforts spearheaded by the ministry. The goal was to assist in the implementation of remote lessons through a plan that would provide universities with the means to launch distance learning. However, from 2006 to 2016, those initiatives were modest (Hadj Mohamed, 2024).

In the aftermath of the Corona pandemic, which afflicted the country as well as the entire world, Algeria intensified efforts to digitize the sectors of education, higher education, and scientific research as part of the implementation and generalization of digitization.

In this context, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research requested that university instructors continue and complete the program remotely. Professors were required to deliver lectures and lessons via the university's website or any other mechanism that enabled lessons to be transmitted to students, such as email, social media, and particularly the Moodle platform, even if most professors and students were not familiar with it.

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is “Open Source”, allowing developers to customize the system to meet specific needs. It seamlessly integrates with several web-based resources, like Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, and J Clcik, enabling developers to be more creative and versatile. Moodle's design is based on socio-constructivist pedagogy. The purpose is to create tools that promote inquiry and discovery in online learning. Additionally, it aims to foster collaborative interaction among students, either alone or alongside traditional classroom learning (Devi, Lakshmi, & Aparna, 2020).

Moreover, Moodle is essentially an open source e-learning platform. It is a Course Management System (CMS), which is a software package that enables educators to develop high-quality online courses. These e-learning systems are often known as Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) (Kameron, 2006). Moodle provides a wonderful platform for resources and communication capabilities. It was built by Martin Dougiamas, a computer scientist and educator who strongly thinks that a CMS should be created by an educator rather than an engineer (Devi et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that amid Algeria's Corona crisis, Moodle was recognized as the most used digital platform for instructors to complete their curricula. It helped to some extent to overcome the difficulty of teaching/learning in those dreadful conditions. In addition to Moodle, some professors preferred to work with Zoom. The latter became one of the most popular services of its kind, one of the most downloaded apps globally, and a household name. Teaching, and the student-teacher relationship, were substantially altered (Britannica, 2024). However, despite its importance, the Internet problem in some regions in Algeria hindered its success significantly, because these types of applications require excellent bandwidth, and it is difficult to gather students at the same time.

In the framework of continuing the digitization policy, all newly appointed Algerian professors receive training in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the teaching/learning process. The main goal of the training is to learn more about the Moodle platform and its use, so that the professors will be able to offer classes remotely.

It is a fine and important project, but once the training is completed, it will be going into oblivion. That is to say, its actual incarnation falls well short of expectations. However, things have begun to change, particularly in the last three years. Distance learning has become relevant to all horizontal and exploratory modules beginning with the academic year 2023/2024. Since digital platforms designated for distance learning are now equipped with lessons that allow students to continue their education even when they are not in school (Hadj Mohamed, 2024).

It should be noted that distance learning in Algeria faces a range of persistent challenges that have hindered its effective implementation. One of the most fundamental barriers is the absence of a well-established distance learning culture among both students and professors. In Algeria, the dominance of traditional face-to-face teaching remains evident. This mode of instruction is widely regarded as the cornerstone of education, grounded in the belief that learning is fundamentally a human experience shaped by direct, physical interaction. The classroom, in this sense, represents more than just a physical space; it is a communicative environment where teaching and learning unfold within a shared framework of time, space, and atmosphere. It enables a dynamic flow of dialogue and feedback, fostering contextualized learning through authentic communication in real-life situations (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010).

Within this environment, students develop both communicative and linguistic competencies, as interactions are embedded in real-life social contexts and mediated through culturally situated linguistic acts (Juanals & Noyer, 2007). Such a model underscores the strong cultural and pedagogical attachment to in-person education, while simultaneously highlighting the challenges faced in establishing a distance learning culture in Algerian higher education.

Despite the undeniable importance of traditional education, an exclusive reliance on it has hindered the development of distance learning in Algeria, leaving the system lagging behind global advancements in this domain. This limited engagement with digital modes of instruction has, in turn, prevented the

emergence of a robust digital education culture among both students and professors.

A lack of familiarity with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) continues to pose a significant challenge. Many professors, particularly those from older generations, have struggled to adapt to recent developments in information and communication technology, whether in using smart phones or navigating digital platforms. Students, on the other hand, despite largely belonging to Generation Z, tend to show greater engagement with social media networks and content-sharing communities than with educational platforms and digital learning resources.

Distance learning in Algeria only truly began during the COVID-19 crisis, serving more as an emergency response than a structured educational shift. Prior to the pandemic, little progress had been made in moving distance learning from a theoretical concept to a practical reality. In the post-COVID era, while there is genuine intent to develop distance learning, efforts remain unclear and insufficient. The current landscape is marked by fragmented, one-sided, and disorganized online resources, leading to low levels of resource utilization and limited learning effectiveness (Zermane & Aitouche, 2020, p. 161).

Access to technology represents another major obstacle. Contrary to assumptions that the younger generation of Algerian university students is universally equipped with digital devices, many still lack the necessary tools for online learning. Field experience has shown that numerous students, particularly those from rural or interior regions, face serious socio-economic hardships. A considerable number do not own smart phones, computers, or tablets, and many prefer to conceal this reality to avoid stigma or misunderstanding. Financial constraints further exacerbate these challenges, as many students cannot afford stable internet connections.

Algeria first acquired access to the Internet in 1994 through the CERIST, which was legally the country's sole ISP until 1998. On August 5, 1998, order no. 98-257 opened up Internet service provision to other providers, although private entry into the market was delayed. Today, the government has sponsored programs that allow consumers to access the Internet on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, eliminating the need for a monthly membership. Although most ISPs provide broadband, ADSL, or satellite plans, these services remain too expensive for many Algerians (Djoudi, 2007, p. 6).

Although internet access has become increasingly widespread in Algeria, many remote areas still suffer from limited coverage or frequent disruptions. This remains a major barrier to the success of distance learning, particularly for synchronous lectures that rely on real-time student participation and interaction.

Equally problematic is the lack of student motivation and readiness to engage in learning. Professors often express concern over students' frequent absences and lack of engagement in classes and lectures. This disengagement stems from various factors, the most significant being a widespread belief among students that their chances of securing employment after graduation are minimal. Such attitudes affect not only traditional in-person learning but also distance education. For instance, students show little willingness to participate in chat platforms and discussion forums, demonstrating reluctance to engage with course materials delivered through the Moodle platform.

The limited participation and feedback on Moodle significantly undermine the effectiveness of lessons. In such cases, the approach fails to ensure genuine "learning" or "assimilation"; rather, it merely facilitates the passive transfer of information from professor to student.

On the other hand, the Ministry of National Education faced a grave position during the Covid-19 pandemic. The decision to cease studies was made, but an alternate method to secure the continuation of studies proved difficult to discover. The lack of digital platforms made YouTube and other sites an immediate solution to alleviate the harm. As a result, the method of teaching and learning lacked well-planned lessons, did not ensure student participation, and made evaluation difficult (Zermane & Aitouche, 2020, p. 163).

It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of National Education launched the National Office for Distance Education and Training's digital platform for school support to help students complete the third trimester. It was a platform for students of final classes in primary, middle, and secondary schools who would pass

several national exams.

The platform included program-related lessons and tasks, as well as psychological and pedagogical advice from accompanying teachers. The National Office for Distance Education and Training's YouTube channels were also used to complete the third trimester program for all levels (primary, middle, and secondary education), which consisted of recorded videos of selected teachers delivering lessons in the classroom. Because the Internet may be slow or unavailable in many internal and isolated areas of the country, they have established a TV program called "Mafatif Al-Nnadjah," or "The Success' Keys," in collaboration with Algerian National Television. The session was taught in a studio that has been designed to resemble a classroom. The program was only for pupils in the last stages of their education. Knowing this, regional radio stations used the same strategy.

The goal was to ensure that the lessons were delivered to as many students as possible. It was a good initiative that might work, but it was only a band-aid approach that demonstrated that the Ministry of National Education was unprepared for such eventualities. There was no fundamental work or genuine interest in enhancing and developing teaching and learning strategies. As a result, distance learning replicated traditional learning. In addition, the Internet issue remained a major concern.

It should be pointed out that the Algerian experience in distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis has not only ensured the continuity of teaching-learning throughout the education and higher education sectors thus contributing to the preservation of social security, but also initiated a real digital transformation of these sectors. The crisis accelerated the adoption of digital technologies and forced educational institutions to modernize their administrative and academic services.

Higher education went on a platform-building spree. PROGRES, the Professor's Space, a portal for student complaints and suggestions, another for short-term internships, one for graduation theses, a master's registration system, the Student Space, the Five-Star Student Platform, and a Guidance Platform, they built all of it. National education wasn't far behind. Teachers and employees got their own space. Parents got theirs. There's a "My Appointment" service and an electronic payment system called EPAY. And that's not even the full list.

These platforms are doing real work now. They speed up paperwork, let people access services without standing in line, and improved quality. The COVID-19 rush forced everyone online, but what stuck is more than a crisis fix. Algeria's education system is tougher now. It can handle the next disruption without falling apart.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The documentary analysis reveals that Algeria's adoption of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic constituted more than a temporary educational response; it represented a national strategy aimed at preserving one of the fundamental dimensions of social security, namely the continuity of education. When the pandemic brought normal life to a halt, the Algerian government attempted to keep schools running while shielding public health. This shows that educational continuity is not just a goal for the education sector. During a crisis, it functions as part of a country's ability to endure.

The findings indicate that the Algerian authorities implemented several complementary measures to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning activities despite the closure of schools and universities. In higher education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research encouraged universities to move courses online, primarily through Moodle, while instructors also used email, Zoom, and social media. At the school level, the Ministry of National Education used several channels at once: YouTube, educational television programs, regional radio broadcasts, and the digital platform of the National Office for Distance Education and Training. This variety suggests that the priority was to keep students connected to learning material by whatever means were available, rather than insisting on a single approach.

From the perspective of social security, these initiatives contributed to preserving social stability by ensuring that educational services remained available during a national emergency. Education is a basic social right and part of human security. Keeping schools accessible during a crisis softens the social impact

of long closures, limits educational inequality, and signals that the state can still deliver essential services. Distance learning gave the Algerian government a way to protect that right while also supporting public health measures to slow COVID-19.

Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals significant limitations that affected the effectiveness of this national strategy. The transition exposed structural weaknesses in the Algerian educational system, especially around digital readiness. The biggest problem was limited digital infrastructure in different parts of the country. Internet access has grown in recent years, but many rural and remote areas still have unstable connections, making live online classes difficult or impossible for many students. Unequal access to computers, smartphones, and reliable internet also meant that not all students could participate effectively in online education.

The findings further indicate that technological challenges were accompanied by pedagogical and cultural barriers. The shift to online instruction happened in an education system that still relied heavily on traditional face-to-face teaching. Many instructors had little experience with digital learning platforms, and students often showed low engagement with online learning. Distance learning often became a one-way delivery system rather than an interactive experience. Interaction, feedback, and collaborative learning were limited. This means that digital transformation requires more than technology. It also needs institutional readiness, digital literacy, and an educational culture that supports online learning.

Despite these shortcomings, the Algerian experience provides important lessons for future crisis management. First, educational continuity should be part of national preparedness plans, not just an emergency response created after a crisis hits. Second, investing in digital infrastructure is part of national resilience. It ensures that students in different regions and from different backgrounds can access education. Third, teachers and university instructors need ongoing training in digital pedagogy, not just technical skills. This would help schools respond more effectively to future emergencies.

Overall, the case of Algeria illustrates that distance learning can contribute significantly to promoting social security during periods of crisis when supported by coherent governmental policies, adequate technological infrastructure, and sustained institutional commitment. COVID-19 forced Algeria to adopt distance learning nationwide, but what the country learned applies beyond the pandemic. Educational continuity needs to be built into national planning so that essential services can keep running during future crises.

Although distance learning was introduced primarily as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, its implementation generated lasting changes within the Algerian educational system. The crisis sped up the adoption of digital tools, made institutions more aware of why educational continuity matters, and exposed the need for better digital infrastructure and teacher training. In-person classes resumed after the pandemic, but the experience showed that digital learning is not just a temporary fix. It is a useful addition to national education plans that can help keep schools running when future disruptions occur.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Achieving social stability and security during exceptional circumstances, such as natural disasters, health crises, and epidemics, remains a complex and multifaceted challenge. When crises hit, they damage public health, the economy, education, and institutions all at once. Governments need flexible plans that keep essential services running and protect citizens. This means making decisions early, redirecting resources where they are needed, and having backup systems ready.

This imperative became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Algeria, like many other nations, was compelled to respond swiftly to a rapidly evolving global crisis. The government introduced measures to contain the virus and reduce its social and economic effects. In education, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research turned to distance learning as an emergency measure. This was Algeria's first large-scale experience with online education; universities relied mainly on Moodle to keep instruction running. However, the transition exposed multiple technical, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges that highlighted the system's lack of preparedness for digital

transformation.

Accordingly, digital learning becomes a necessity in times of crisis; however, its large-scale development and implementation must also take into account the ways in which digital tools are embedded within socially meaningful contexts. Learning is relational, social, and contextual by nature. The mere availability of digital tools does not determine effectiveness; what matters is how these tools are used in actual social practices (Koole et al., 2024).

Despite these shortcomings, the experience represented a significant turning point in Algeria's educational landscape. The pandemic forced educators to rethink teaching methods, accelerated the adoption of digital tools, and opened a national conversation about the future of education. The initial rollout revealed institutional limitations and uneven digital access, but it also showed that Algeria's education system needed modernization to keep pace with global trends. Since the pandemic, policymakers have invested in expanding distance learning, improving digital literacy, and bringing technology into classrooms. The crisis began as a reactive measure, but it created a sustained commitment to educational innovation and national resilience. Digitization has also increased the use of English in Algerian education, which helps align instruction with international standards (Touati, 2024).

The Algerian experience demonstrates that effective national strategies should extend beyond emergency response to foster long-term educational resilience. Distance learning during COVID-19 offers lessons for preparing for future crises, whether public health emergencies or natural disasters. Distance learning should be treated as a strategic element of national policy, not just an emergency response, so that access to education is protected and societal resilience is strengthened when crises occur.

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#### Declaraciones

**Conflictos de interés:** La autora declara no tener conflictos de interés relacionados con este estudio.

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