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Original Article

Cyberpsychological Conditions of Digital Writing in Contemporary Iranian Contexts

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ABSTRACT: *Contemporary Iranian digital writing develops within an online environment shaped by censorship, surveillance, uneven access, and the uncertain visibility of platformed expression. While studies of Iranian writing have often foregrounded political resistance, this conceptual-analytical article examines how cyberpsychological pressures may also influence literary form. Bringing cyberpsychological research into conversation with scholarship on digital writing and Iranian internet governance, it considers anticipatory anxiety, impression management, self-censorship, perceived surveillance, and uncertainty about the persistence of online texts. These pressures offer a framework for interpreting fragmentation, ellipsis, metaphorical density, brevity, and unresolved endings not simply as evasive tactics but as aesthetic responses to unstable conditions of publication and circulation. Recent research on digital surveillance, algorithmic attention, and Iranian internet restriction helps clarify how writers may anticipate both human scrutiny and platform-mediated visibility. Two short, explicitly constructed examples illustrate how omission and coded metaphor can operate formally; they are not presented as quotations from actual Iranian users. The article argues that algorithmic mediation and platform volatility can shape not only what becomes visible but also the length, tone, ambiguity, and continuity of digital literary expression. It therefore shifts the discussion from protest alone to the psychological adaptation through which writers negotiate risk while retaining creative agency.*

KEYWORDS: *Cyberpsychology, Iranian Digital Writing, Self-Censorship, Algorithmic Mediation, Online Surveillance, Literary Form.*

1. INTRODUCTION: FROM CENSORSHIP TO DIGITAL CONSTRAINT

Iranian literary expression has developed through changing conditions of restriction, surveillance, and institutional control. Allegory, indirection, exile writing, and prison literature have provided ways to represent experiences that may be difficult to narrate directly. Digital platforms introduce a distinct set of conditions. Blogs, social media, online magazines, and messaging applications allow texts to circulate rapidly, but their circulation is shaped by access restrictions, content moderation, account vulnerability, surveillance, and the possibility that a post may be detached from its original context. The digital environment does not simply replace print censorship; it changes the timing, visibility, and perceived audience of expression.

The contemporary Iranian online environment is subject to substantial restrictions. Freedom House's 2025 report describes continued censorship, surveillance, content manipulation, and efforts to channel users toward domestic services where activity can be more readily monitored. Conduit likewise examines the political economy of Iran's digital authoritarianism, including filtering, shutdowns, and surveillance technologies. These accounts establish the wider infrastructural context; they do not, by themselves, demonstrate how individual literary texts are composed. That question requires attention to the writer's anticipated experience of online publication.

This article therefore distinguishes political constraint from its possible psychological and formal effects. A writer may consider not only whether a statement is prohibited but also whether it will be misunderstood, archived, reported, removed, or amplified to an unintended audience. Such anticipation may encourage indirectness, selective disclosure, brevity, and the withholding of narrative closure. The article's central argument is that algorithmic mediation and platform volatility can alter literary form by making visibility unpredictable and publication potentially temporary: writers may adapt the length, sequence, tone, and ambiguity of a text to an imagined environment of surveillance and uncertain circulation. This is a conceptual claim about possible formal pressures, not a claim that all Iranian digital writing shares one style.

2. ARTICLE TYPE AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This paper is a conceptual-analytical research article. It does not report interviews, a survey, or a systematically collected corpus of Iranian posts. Instead, it develops an interpretive framework by bringing established work on cyberpsychology and digital media into dialogue with recent research on algorithmic writing, online self-censorship, and Iran's digital environment. The analysis is organized around five connected concepts: perceived surveillance, anticipatory anxiety, impression

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management, self-censorship, and platform volatility. These concepts are then used to interpret formal features discussed in the paper, including fragmentation, ellipsis, metaphorical density, and open endings.

The method is a critical synthesis rather than a systematic review: the sources are selected for their conceptual relevance to the article's argument, and no claim is made that every available study has been exhaustively surveyed. The short examples included below are constructed analytical illustrations, not empirical data, translations of identified posts, or quotations from anonymous Iranian writers. This distinction is necessary because the article has not undertaken a documented collection and ethical analysis of online texts. A future empirical study could test the framework against a dated, transparently sampled corpus, with attention to consent, anonymization, language, platform, and the risks of reproducing sensitive material.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: CENSORSHIP, DIGITAL WRITING, AND CYBERPSYCHOLOGY

Scholarship on Iranian digital culture has examined the political possibilities and limitations of online communication. Rahimi's discussion of cyberdissent and the work of Sreberny and Khiabany on Iranian blogging remain useful for understanding the relationship between networked expression and political participation. Morozov's critique of technological optimism and Gillespie's analysis of platform moderation also caution against treating digital platforms as neutral channels. These earlier studies remain part of the conceptual foundation here; the present article extends their relevance by asking how anticipated scrutiny and unstable circulation may become formal pressures within writing.

Recent work gives greater specificity to the psychological and infrastructural mechanisms at stake. Liu, Lee, and Yao's 2024 exploratory study examines how people respond to government, commercial, and interpersonal surveillance, providing a useful framework for distinguishing the sources of perceived monitoring. Talaifar and Lowery's review of digital environments identifies privacy, tracking, algorithmic prediction, memory, and behavioral reinforcement as factors that may constrain the self. These studies do not investigate Iranian literary form directly, but they help explain why a writer's imagined audience may include not only intended readers but also unknown observers and future viewers.

Research on platformed writing further connects technological systems to composition. Masters-Wheeler's 2024 article on algorithmic attention systems argues that platforms prioritize content according to its capacity to attract or sustain attention, shaping the conditions under which writing appears as content. Jerasa and Burriss's 2024 study of TikTok creators similarly considers how writers compose for, with, and against algorithmic systems. Parnell's work on "algo-design" describes how creators may adapt language and visual presentation to anticipated content moderation. These studies concern different platforms and communities; they are not direct evidence about Iranian online literature. Their value here is conceptual: they show that platform conventions can influence rhetorical choices before a text reaches its audience.

Recent scholarship on Persian digital poetics provides a foundation for examining online literary expression through collective authorship, visual-textual interaction and platform-based circulation. The present study extends this discussion by asking how the psychological conditions of digital participation may shape literary form, while distinguishing documented textual features from interpretations concerning surveillance, uncertainty and self-regulation.

Cyberpsychological research also helps distinguish several related processes. Anticipatory anxiety refers here to apprehension about possible consequences before publication or response. Impression management concerns the shaping of self-presentation for an audience, while self-censorship involves withholding or modifying expression because of anticipated consequences. Liu and colleagues' 2024 study of surveillance responses and the 2025 study by Kim and Zo on dataveillance awareness and selective disclosure provide recent ways to understand how perceived monitoring may affect sharing decisions. A 2025 study of online censorship endorsement among Iranian Telegram users adds locally relevant evidence about psychological and demographic factors shaping attitudes toward censorship. None of these studies proves that a particular literary device results from anxiety or surveillance; rather, they supply concepts through which such a relationship can be examined carefully.

Iran-specific evidence is essential to prevent cyberpsychology from becoming an abstract explanation detached from infrastructure. Freedom House's 2024 and 2025 country reports document restrictions on access and content, while Conduit's 2025 analysis situates filtering, shutdowns, and surveillance within the political economy of digital authoritarianism. The 2025 IRBlock measurement study by Tai and colleagues provides technical evidence of large-scale internet blocking in Iran. Together, these sources establish that online expression takes place under materially uneven conditions. The gap addressed by this article lies at the intersection of this infrastructural context, cyberpsychological concepts, and literary form: how might perceived risk and uncertain visibility become legible as brevity, omission, metaphor, or discontinuity?

4. DIGITAL WRITING AS A DISTINCT LITERARY PRACTICE

Digital writing differs from print writing not only in medium but also in the conditions under which it is produced and encountered. A post may be copied, detached from context, recirculated, reported, made difficult to find, or lost when an account or service becomes inaccessible. Platform ranking systems can also affect which writing reaches readers and how long

it remains visible. These conditions make the audience difficult to define: a text intended for a small circle may become publicly legible, while a carefully composed post may receive little attention.

The resulting uncertainty should not be mistaken for a uniform cause of literary brevity or indirectness. Short writing can arise from platform conventions, limited time, genre, audience preference, or deliberate experimentation. In a restrictive setting, however, these ordinary platform pressures may intersect with the perceived risk of surveillance or punishment. A cyberpsychological reading asks how writers imagine possible audiences and outcomes, and how those expectations might inform formal choices. The argument is probabilistic: platform conditions can encourage certain choices, but they do not determine every text or eliminate authorial agency.

5. FRAGMENTATION AND ELLIPSIS: WRITING UNDER ANTICIPATION

Fragmentation can allow a writer to present a feeling or image without developing it into a continuous public argument. Ellipsis can similarly leave an event, actor, or conclusion unstated. Read through anticipatory self-regulation, these devices may limit the amount of explicit information exposed while allowing readers to infer a wider context. They can also reflect the fragmented attention and rapid circulation associated with digital reading. The same formal device may therefore have multiple causes, and its meaning must be interpreted in context rather than automatically classified as a response to censorship.

The relationship between digital circulation and literary form can be examined through contemporary Persian-language digital poetry. Rezai's study of the collectively composed poem *Baraye*, which emerged from tweets shared during the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, demonstrates how individual expressions can acquire collective significance through their aggregation and circulation on social media (Rezai, "Performing Iran Online"). The brief phrase "for dancing in the street," for instance, condenses an everyday desire into a publicly circulating poetic expression. Its significance arises not only from its wording but also from its position within a larger collective composition. In a different context, Rezai's study of an Instagram account examines the interaction of Persian poetry, visual art and digital presentation. These examples establish that contemporary Iranian digital writing operates through forms of collective composition, visual-textual interaction and platform-dependent circulation. Read through a cyberpsychological framework, these formal conditions invite further investigation into how writers negotiate visibility, audience expectations and perceived risks. They do not, however, establish that fragmentation or indirectness necessarily originates in surveillance anxiety; that relationship requires evidence from individual texts and their production contexts.

Consider this constructed micro-post: "The lights went out again. We waited. No one asked why." Its short sentences and withheld explanation create a gap between event and interpretation. The example is invented for analysis and is not a quotation or translation of an actual Iranian post. Its ellipsis may prompt readers to supply a cause while allowing the writer to avoid naming one. The formal effect is not proof of self-censorship; it demonstrates how omission can simultaneously generate atmosphere, invite inference, and reduce explicitness.

Fragmentation may also enable a text to circulate in parts. A sequence of short lines can preserve a momentary impression without building a sustained argument that could be separated from its original context. This strategy may be aesthetic, practical, psychological, or some combination of these. The relevant point is that discontinuity should not be treated as evidence of stylistic deficiency. Under uncertain conditions of visibility, it can become a meaningful compositional resource.

6. INDIRECTION, METAPHORICAL DENSITY, AND CODED MEANING

Indirection has a long history in Persian literary traditions, and it would be misleading to attribute metaphorical writing solely to digital censorship. In online settings, however, metaphor can acquire additional pragmatic functions: it may permit multiple interpretations, communicate affect without explicit naming, or leave the writer some distance from a singular proposition. Impression management helps describe the balancing act between expressing a meaningful position and anticipating how different audiences might read it. The term does not imply that every metaphor is deliberately coded or that readers can reliably reconstruct a single hidden message.

A second constructed illustration reads: "The house has learned to speak in curtains; every window remembers the wind." This is an invented example, not a documented Iranian text. Its metaphor displaces direct reference onto domestic imagery. A reader might interpret the curtains and windows as images of privacy, memory, or constraint, but the example intentionally has no fixed political key. Its ambiguity demonstrates how metaphorical density can sustain affect while leaving interpretation open. Actual claims about coded language in Iranian digital writing would require a documented corpus, contextual evidence, and attention to how authors and readers understand the language.

The concept of "algo-design" discussed by Parnell is relevant because creators on platformed services may anticipate moderation and adjust wording or presentation accordingly. Yet platform moderation and state censorship are not identical. A platform's automated or commercial rules may intersect with state restrictions, but they operate through different institutions and incentives. Keeping these mechanisms distinct avoids reducing every indirect expression to a single cause.

7. SELF-REGULATION, PERCEIVED SURVEILLANCE, AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Self-regulation occurs when writers modify expression in anticipation of possible consequences rather than only after a direct intervention. The perceived audience may include friends, strangers, platform moderators, state authorities, or future readers who encounter a screenshot without the original context. The possibility of such audiences can encourage conditional phrasing, questions rather than assertions, or the omission of identifying detail. Liu, Lee, and Yao's 2024 study of surveillance contexts offers a useful vocabulary for examining these overlapping perceptions, while recent research on online self-censorship shows that awareness of data collection can influence disclosure decisions.

The distinction between actual surveillance and perceived surveillance matters. This article does not claim to know what any individual Iranian writer privately fears. Instead, it proposes that where surveillance and content restriction are publicly documented, perceived risk is a plausible condition that literary analysis should consider. It must be established through evidence rather than inferred from style alone. Hesitation, ambiguity, and emotional restraint can have many explanations; the cyberpsychological framework is strongest when used as a question to guide interpretation, not as a diagnosis of writers.

8. IMPERMANENCE, DELETION ANXIETY, AND PLATFORM VOLATILITY

Digital texts can feel both persistent and precarious. Posts may be archived or captured beyond the writer's control, yet they may also disappear through deletion, account loss, filtering, or service disruption. This double condition produces a tension between traceability and disappearance. "Deletion anxiety" is used in this article as a descriptive term for concern that a text may be removed or become inaccessible; it is not presented as a formal clinical diagnosis.

Platform volatility can shape composition through the expectation that a text may not remain available in its original form. Writers may favor short, self-contained units that can be copied or shared independently, or may leave a narrative open because a stable continuation cannot be assumed. Algorithmic ranking adds another uncertainty: a text may be unexpectedly amplified or remain unseen. Masters-Wheeler's account of algorithmic attention systems helps explain why visibility is not simply a matter of publication. The platform mediates attention, and that mediation can become part of the writer's imagined conditions of reception.

This does not mean that digital literature abandons permanence or coherence. Writers can preserve posts, compile online writing into books, or build sustained narratives across platforms. The argument is narrower: the awareness of potential deletion, recontextualization, and unpredictable circulation may influence the formal decisions available to writers. Ephemerality can therefore be both a technical condition and an imagined psychological horizon.

9. ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

The conceptual synthesis yields three related findings. First, perceived surveillance and uncertainty can be understood as conditions of composition, not merely as external events that occur after publication. Second, algorithmic mediation adds a separate layer of uncertainty because visibility is ranked, uneven, and potentially unpredictable; this can affect imagined audience, length, and textual self-containment. Third, fragmentation, ellipsis, and metaphorical density are best treated as interpretive possibilities rather than diagnostic evidence of fear or resistance. These findings emerge from the conceptual comparison of the selected scholarship; they are not statistical results or findings from an original corpus.

The illustrative micro-posts in Sections 5 and 6 demonstrate how omission and metaphor can create interpretive space. Because they are constructed examples, they show the analytical method only; they do not establish the prevalence of these features in Iranian online writing. An empirical follow-up would need to collect and contextualize actual texts before making claims about frequency, authorial intention, or audience interpretation.

10. DISCUSSION: DIGITAL WRITING BEYOND RESISTANCE

The concepts discussed above suggest a layered account of Iranian digital writing. State restrictions and internet infrastructure establish external conditions; platform design and algorithmic ranking mediate visibility; cyberpsychological processes such as anticipatory anxiety, impression management, and self-censorship describe possible responses; and literary form provides one place where these pressures may become perceptible. The layers interact, but they should not be collapsed into a simple causal chain. A fragmented text does not prove fear, and a metaphor does not automatically signify political resistance.

The framework also shifts attention from resistance as the only interpretive category. Some digital writing may be openly oppositional, while other writing may be personal, playful, lyrical, or apparently apolitical. Constraint can shape form even when the content does not make an explicit political claim, but this possibility needs to be demonstrated through close reading and contextual evidence. The cyberpsychological approach recognizes adaptation without romanticizing suffering and acknowledges creativity without treating writers as passive products of surveillance.

The article's contribution is thus methodological and conceptual. It places cyberpsychological concepts alongside contemporary research on platformed writing and Iran's digital restrictions to offer a vocabulary for analyzing formal choices under uncertain visibility. The constructed examples clarify the interpretive procedure but do not substitute for empirical material. Further research should compare actual, ethically sourced digital texts across genres and platforms, trace their circulation where possible, and avoid assuming that all writers experience or respond to restrictions in the same way.

11. CONCLUSION

Contemporary Iranian digital writing emerges within an interaction of political restriction, platform architecture, uncertain visibility, and psychological anticipation. This article has argued that fragmentation, ellipsis, metaphorical density, brevity, and unresolved endings can be examined as possible formal responses to these conditions without being reduced to evasive tactics or direct political protest. Recent cyberpsychological studies help explain how perceived surveillance and self-presentation may shape online disclosure, while research on algorithmic attention and Iranian internet governance clarifies the technological and political contexts in which writing circulates.

The central claim is not that psychological pressure determines literary form, but that algorithmic mediation and platform volatility belong among the conditions through which form is produced and received. This approach moves the discussion from the forbidden statement alone toward the quieter negotiations that may precede publication: what to say, how directly to say it, how much to reveal, and whether the text will remain visible. A corpus-based study is needed to test these propositions against actual writing. Until then, the framework offers a cautious way to understand digital literary form as a negotiation among expression, audience, risk, and creative agency.

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