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Changing Gender Roles in Dual-Earner Families: Motherhood,Work, and Care in Contemporary Algerian Society

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ABSTRACT:

Nowadays, traditional gender roles in the home and in the workplace have changed as dual- earner families have become more common. The distribution of caregiving and household duties is still unequal, despite a notable increase in women's participation in paid labours . This article examines how gender roles are renegotiated in dual-earnerAlgerian families, with particular attention to motherhood, work, and care. Drawing on sociological gender theories, nurture , and work–family balance, the paper investigates the contractions between professional perspectives and maternal responsibilities, as well as the persistence of gendered norms in everyday family practices. The results indicate that while gender roles are evolving in terms of ideology and aspirations, caregiving is still becoming more feminized paving the way to the emergence of new types of gender inequality.

KEYWORDS: gender roles ; dual-earner families ; motherhood ;care work ; work–family balance.

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تغير الأدوار الجندرية في الأسر ذات الدخل المزدوج :الأمومة والعمل والرعاية في المجتمع الجزائري المعاصر

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ملخص البحث

في الوقت الراهن، شهدت الأدوار التقليدية للجنسين -سواء داخل المنزل أو في مكان العمل- تحولاتٍ ملموسة، تزامناً مع تز ايد انتشار الأسر التي يعمل فيها كلا الزوجين. ورغم الارتفاع الملحوظ في مشاركة المرأة في القوى العاملة، لا يزال توزيع المهام المنزلية يتسم بعدم المساواة. تبحث هذه المقالة في كيفية إعادة التفاوض حول ديناميكيات النوع الاجتماعي داخل الأسر الجز ائرية التي يعمل فيها الزوجان، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تجربة الأمومة.وبالاستناد إلى النظريات السوسيولوجية للنوع الاجتماعي، والمقاربات التنظيمية، ومفهوم التوازن بين العمل والأسرة، تستكشف هذه الدراسة التناقضات الكامنة في أدوار الجنسين كما تتجلى في الممارسات اليومية. كما تسلط الضوء على حالة التوتر بين الالتزامات المهنية والمسؤوليات المرتبطة بالأمومة. ونتيجة لذلك، فعلى الرغم من حدوث تغير في الأيديولوجيات والتطلعات المتعلقة بالنوع الاجتماعي، إلا أن مهام الرعاية لا تزال ترتبط في الغالب بالمجال الأنثوي؛ وهي ديناميكية تمهد الطريق لظهور شكلٍ جديدٍ ومقيّدٍ من "غياب الخيار."

الكلمات المفتاحية: ديناميكيات النوع الاجتماعي؛ الأسر التي يعمل فيها الزوجان؛ الأمومة؛ العمل المنزلي؛ التوازن بين العمل والأسرة.

1. Introduction:

The increasing prevalence of dual-earner families, in which both partners participate in paid employment, represents a significant transformation in contemporary family structures. This development reflects broader socioeconomic and cultural changes, including women's expanding access to higher education, their growing participation in the labour market, and the gradual reconsideration of traditional gender roles. Although these transformations have contributed to women's increased economic independence and visibility in public life, they have not necessarily resulted in an equivalent redistribution of domestic responsibilities. Across many societies, unpaid household labour and caregiving remain disproportionately associated with women, creating an enduring tension between professional commitments and family expectations. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the persistence of what Hochschild and Machung (1990) conceptualised as the *second shift*, referring to the additional domestic and caregiving responsibilities undertaken by women after completing their paid working hours. Consequently, women's participation in the labour market has not always been accompanied by a corresponding transformation in the gendered organization of family life.

This contradiction raises important questions about the extent to which contemporary transformations in women's educational and professional trajectories translate into substantive changes in domestic power relations and the distribution of unpaid work. While dual-earner arrangements may suggest a movement towards greater gender equality, the practical organisation of everyday family responsibilities often reveals the persistence of deeply established cultural expectations. Women's professional participation may therefore coexist with disproportionate responsibility for childcare, household management, and emotional care, producing overlapping demands that affect their work–family experiences and opportunities for professional advancement. Understanding this relationship requires moving beyond the assumption that economic participation automatically leads to domestic equality and examining how gender roles are negotiated, reproduced, or challenged within the family.

These issues acquire particular significance in contemporary Algerian society, where women's educational attainment and participation in paid employment have expanded alongside the continuing influence of traditional family structures, kinship relations, and socially established expectations concerning motherhood and gender responsibilities. The Algerian family constitutes an important social space in which broader processes of modernization interact with inherited cultural practices and religious interpretations. Although younger and more educated couples, particularly in urban

settings, may increasingly express support for gender equality and shared family responsibilities, their stated attitudes do not necessarily correspond to their everyday practices. The gap between egalitarian beliefs and domestic arrangements therefore represents a central issue for understanding changing gender relations in Algeria. Furthermore, extended-family living arrangements, intergenerational expectations, and religious and cultural norms may influence how couples organise childcare, negotiate household responsibilities, and define the respective roles of mothers and fathers.

Against this background, the present study investigates how gender roles are negotiated within dual-earner families in contemporary Algerian society, with particular attention to the relationship between motherhood, paid employment, and unpaid caregiving. It examines the extent to which traditional social expectations, cultural and religious beliefs, and extended-family arrangements sustain or challenge gender-based divisions of domestic labour. Particular consideration is given to working mothers' experiences of balancing professional and family responsibilities, as well as the ways in which fathers participate in childcare and household activities. The study also explores whether younger and more educated couples translate their expressed commitment to gender equality into more equitable domestic practices, or whether traditional patterns continue to shape the everyday distribution of family responsibilities despite changing attitudes.

More specifically, the research seeks to determine whether women in Algerian dual- earner households continue to perform a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and caregiving work despite their participation in paid employment. It also examines whether traditional cultural and religious expectations contribute to the persistence of gendered divisions of labour and whether working mothers experience greater work–family conflict than fathers because of the socially reinforced expectation that they remain primarily responsible for childrearing. In addition, the study investigates the possible discrepancy between egalitarian attitudes and actual household practices among younger, more educated couples, particularly in urban contexts. Beyond the domestic sphere, it considers whether the continued feminisation of caregiving generates indirect professional disadvantages for women, potentially affecting their career progression, access to promotion, and opportunities for occupational development.

The significance of this investigation lies in its contribution to understanding the complex relationship between women's changing socioeconomic positions and the persistence of gender inequalities within Algerian family life. By examining the interaction between paid employment, motherhood, domestic responsibilities, and wider sociocultural expectations, the study seeks to provide empirical insights into the changing

organisation of dual-earner households in Algeria. It also contributes to broader discussions on gender equality by questioning whether women's increasing economic participation is accompanied by a genuine redistribution of unpaid labour or whether it instead produces additional responsibilities without fundamentally transforming established domestic arrangements. From a practical perspective, understanding these dynamics may inform discussions on family policy, workplace support, childcare provision, and initiatives aimed at promoting a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

Despite the growing international literature on dual-earner households, the specific experiences of Algerian families remain comparatively underexplored, particularly regarding the intersection of women's professional participation, motherhood, extended-family relations, and the cultural organisation of domestic labour. Research situated within the Algerian context is therefore necessary to avoid generalising findings derived from Western family structures and to account for the distinctive sociocultural conditions shaping gender relations in North African societies. By addressing this gap, the present study contributes to empirical research in gender studies, family sociology, and the sociology of work, while offering a context-sensitive understanding of how Algerian couples negotiate the competing expectations of professional participation, family commitment, and gender equality. Ultimately, it argues for examining gender transformation not only through women's access to education and employment but also through the everyday redistribution of domestic work, childcare, and caregiving responsibilities within the family.

2. Literature Review

The literature on the division of labour by sex among women/men shows repeatedly that paid work alone has not resulted in equality within the home. Hochschild's (1989) notion of the second shift is still influential, noting that working women still cover most unpaid domestic and caring labour when paid work stops. This disparity has been found to be maintained even within dual-income families.

Later feminist scholars widened this construction to include care as an ideological domain that included not only physical tasks but also 'mental and emotional labour'. Daminger (2019), contends that women carry an inequitable burden as they are disproportionately engaged in the cognitive work of planning and organizing social life. This invisible work perpetuates gender inequality even when couples believe they have an equal partnership.

The transition to parenthood is known as a key area where gendered inequalities are reproduced. Longitudinal research demonstrates that before becoming parents, couples spend an equitable amount of time on unpaid work but after the birth of a child mothers' contributions increase substantially and fathers' rise only marginally (Baxter et al., 2015). Cook et al. (2022) also view that childbearing reinforced traditional gender roles and the feminisation of nurter duties.

A number of theoretical interpretations have been proposed for this phenomenon. According to the recent hypothesis, couples have less conflict when both partners work a similar number of paid hours and perform equal amounts of unpaid work, but according to relative resources theory, higher-earning individuals may negotiate themselves out of domestic chores (Bittman et al., 2003). Empirical evidence however suggests that these economic rationalizations are not enough. Gender ideology and the normative environment both play a significant role in how couples frame perceptions of fairness and responsibility (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Workplace structures also contribute to gender divisions. Ideal worker norms, overwork and limited access to flexibility are a burden disproportionally carried by mothers who are more likely than fathers to adjust their employment behavior in response to care needs (Blair-Loy, 2003). Fathers' caregiving is limited by organizational cultures that inhibit fathers from participating in care.

The effects of disproportionate care burden are more than just about time utilization. The evidence is clear that women's disproportionate unpaid labour has negative consequences including increased levels of stress, emotional exhaustion and work–family conflict (Offer & Schneider, 2011). While there is growing rhetorical support for gender equality, practices remain which uphold connections of commonality, implication and exclusion - leading to the conclusion that ideological change has outstripped structural and cultural shift.

2.1.An Overview of Traditional Gender Roles in Algeria from the Perspective of Research

Algeria's patriarchal social structure, modified under the influence of political, religious, cultural, and historical factors, forms the bedrock of traditional gender roles. The relationships within the family are also rooted deeply within traditional gender roles, and this reality continues in the current era although women from Algeria had demonstrated a

degree of advancement in education and work.

2.1.1Patriarchy and Gender Family Structure

Algerian society has been based on a patriarchic family system wherein all authority rests with men. According to Lazreg (1994), the difference between the two sexes within Algerian society has its roots both in its colonial past and in the nation-building ideology developed since independence, wherein women's place has been "symbolically related to cultural authenticity and moral order. Women have been.the guardians of tradition and national identity" (Lazreg, 1994, p. 9).

Similarly, Joseph (1996) explains how kinship systems prevalent in many Arab cultures, with a system of male dominance in defining family honor, serve to enhance patriarchal authority, as well as female subordination, through "patriarchal connectivity." The concept maintains that women in these communities/subcultultures maintain a connection with family roles by means of refurbishing

2.1.2. The Domestic Role of Women and the Importance of Motherhood

In Algerian society, the role of the mother is significant. Women are expected to prioritize marriage, having children, and the home. According to Mernissi (1987), women in societies dominated by Muslims always portray themselves as maintaining the moral order and the unity of the family. There is a significant link between being feminine and fulfilling the role of a caretaker, as analyzed by Mernissi, although the work is not specific to Algeria. In order to grasp these phenomenon, Bourdieu's (1977) concept of symbolic power has proven very helpful. Gender roles are enforced not only through well-defined statutes, but even through deeply embedded practices. Later, Bourdieu (2001) would argue that socialization makes masculinity dominate gender relations, making gender inequality "self-evident" (p. 9).

Algerian women are still found to be doing the majority of the household work, even if they are employed. This may be seen as consistent with "the second shift," as described by Hochschild and Machung (1989). In fact, these writers found that "wives do the majority of housework and child care, even when they work full time" (Hochschild & Machung, 1989, p.3).

2.1.3.Division of Public and Private Spheres

Algerian traditional gender roles have a distinct dichotomy with respect to the public and private realms. The private sphere, or home and caring, has typically been ascribed to women, whereas the public sphere, or work, politics, and caring economically, has typically been ascribed to men.

Kandiyoti (1988) also introduced the term "patriarchal bargain" to describe this process of explanation, which is how women plan under patriarchal constraints. In many

North African societies, women may submit to patriarchal authority at home in exchange for respectability. Women, according to Kandiyoti (1988), often manage to carve their own small domain of influence at home despite patriarchal authority.
The internalization of value for motherhood and family reputation is alive and well, and this is why even educated and working Algerian women still tend to take on most of the domestic work.

2.1.4.Gender Norms, Religion, and Culture

Islamic values also put great emphasis on the co-existence of men and women in supporting roles, especially when issues of caring and financial responsibility are concerned. Experts warn against the confusion of the concepts of religion and patriarchy. Charrad (2001) writes that political and political and family systems often lead to legal and social injustices more than religion.

Furthermore, according to Moghadam (2003), “the process of modernization and women’s educational achievements in the Middle East and North Africa have created a contradiction between expanding female capabilities and persistent patriarchal social relations” (p. 3). This seems to be true in Algeria, where women increasingly access universities and public sector employment, but domestic labor is still feminized.

2.1.5.Persistent inequality and social change

However, since Algeria gained independence, women's education has been used as a route for development. In fact, women comprise a significant portion of college graduates. However, on average, their participation rates in the workforce are much lower than those of their male counterparts, and they are overrepresented in feminized industries such as public administration and education.Such a reality is a manifestation of the existence of "gender regimes," according to Connell (2005), in which equality is not followed by inequality through institutional structure.

According to Connell (2005), the embodied reality of gender exists firstly within the realm of the family, then the state, and finally the labor market.
Algeria is, therefore, undergoing a kind of ideological shift without a completely structural shift. While there is increasing support for equality between the genders, inequality is still reinforced through the common social practices of everyday household behavior.

3.Methodology

3.1.Research Design and Participants

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design to investigate the distribution of paid and unpaid work within dual-earner families in contemporary Algerian society. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches made it possible to identify broader patterns in the allocation of household and caregiving responsibilities while gaining a deeper understanding of working mothers' experiences, perceptions, and work–family challenges.

The quantitative component involved 60 dual-earner heterosexual couples (120 participants) residing in 14 Algerian wilayas: Oran, Mostaganem, Relizane, El Oued, Annaba, Souk Ahras, Béchar, Blida, Béjaïa, Tlemcen, Tipaza, Saïda, Boumerdès, and Tamanrasset. To ensure their relevance to the research objectives, participants were required to have at least one child below the age of 12, and both partners had to be engaged in paid employment for a minimum of ten hours per week. Participants were recruited through online parenting communities and social media forums. From the participating families, 20 mothers were subsequently selected for semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore their experiences of balancing professional responsibilities, motherhood, and domestic labour.

3.2.Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected through two complementary instruments: an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered to the participating couples and gathered information across four main dimensions: sociodemographic characteristics, the distribution of household and childcare responsibilities, attitudes towards gender roles, and experiences of work–family conflict. Particular attention was given to identifying patterns of domestic labour allocation and participants' perceptions of fairness and shared responsibility.

The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with 20 mothers drawn from the questionnaire sample. Conducted through video-conferencing platforms, the interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes each. The interview questions focused on participants' experiences of combining paid employment with motherhood, their involvement in household management and childcare, their perceptions of gender expectations, and the influence of cultural, familial, and social norms on the organisation of domestic responsibilities. The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that the main research themes were consistently addressed.

3.3.Data Analysis

The quantitative questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns in the distribution of household and caregiving responsibilities, participants' attitudes towards gender roles, and their perceptions of fairness within dual- earner households. The analysis also examined reported experiences of work–family conflict among working mothers and their partners.

The qualitative interview data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns and underlying meanings in participants' accounts. Particular attention was given to themes relating to the gendered division of unpaid labour, childcare responsibilities, emotional labour, work–family tensions, and the influence of sociocultural expectations on family arrangements. The analysis involved familiarisation with the interview data, the identification of initial codes, the development of broader thematic categories, and the interpretation of recurring patterns in relation to the study's research questions.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a broader understanding of gender relations within Algerian dual-earner families. While the questionnaire offered an overview of household labour distribution and gender-role perceptions, the interviews provided contextual insights into how working mothers experience and negotiate these responsibilities in their everyday lives.

4.Results

4.1.Questionnaire Analysis

4.1.1.Women's Perceptions of Gender Roles in Family and Work Life

Table 1. The Perception of Gender Roles In Regard To Family and Work life**.**

	Agree	**Disagree**	**Don’t know**
a)A man’s job is to earn money	51%	49%	00%
b) a woman’s job is to look after the home	10%	86%	04%
c)Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income.	88%	08%	14%

Table 1 reveals a regular shift towards more egalitarian perceptions of gender roles among the female respondents. Regarding the traditional male-breadwinner model, opinions are almost equally divided, with 51% agreeing that earning money is a man's responsibility and 49% disagreeing. This suggests the continued coexistence of traditional and egalitarian views.

A stronger denial of traditional gender expectations emerges from the finding that 86% of respondents disagree that looking after the home is exclusively a woman's responsibility. Similarly, 88% support the principle that both partners should contribute to household income, indicating growing acceptance of shared economic responsibilities.
Overall, the findings suggest that women's attitudes towards family and work are becoming more egalitarian, although traditional expectations have not entirely disappeared. However, positive attitudes towards gender equality do not necessarily translate into an equal distribution of domestic labour and caregiving responsibilities, highlighting the potential gap between gender-role perceptions and everyday family practices.

4.1.2 The Best Way for Organising Family And Work Life.

Table 2.The Best Way for Organizing Family And Work Life.

What is the best way to organize family	
The mother does not work and the father works	07%
Both the mother and the father work	63%
The father works and the mother does not work	30%

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (63%) consider that the best way to organise family life is when both the mother and the father work. Only 7% prefer the traditional model in which the mother does not work while the father works, whereas 30% still support the model in which the father works and the mother does not. These results indicate a clear preference for dual-earner families and for women's participation in paid employment. However, the fact that nearly one-third of respondents still favour the male-breadwinner model suggests that traditional ideas about the father as the main provider have not completely disappeared

4.1.3 Household Activities Undertaken By Men and Women

Table 3. Household Activities Undertaken By Men and Women

Activities	Men	women	Both
a)Washing clothes	04%	60%	36%
b)Taking the children to school	34%	33%	33%
c)Cares for sick children	14%	56%	30%
d)Shops forhousehold needs	12%	08%	80%
e)Does the household cleaning	05%	75%	20%
f)Preparing breakfast	02%	97%	01%
g)Tidying the rooms	00%	100%	00%
h)Helping children with homework	35%	48%	17%
i)Prepares the meals	10%	83%	07%
j)Taking care of the baby	08%	70%	22%
k)Ironing clothes	33%	36%	31%
l)Buying household supplies	77%	11%	12%
m)Taking out the trash	100%	00%	00%
n)Paying the bills	43%	38%	19%

Table 3 reveals a strongly gendered division of household labour among the female respondents. Women report being mainly responsible for routine domestic and care tasks: 60% wash clothes, 75% do the household cleaning, 97% prepare breakfast, 100% tidy the rooms, 83% prepare meals, and 70% take care of the baby. They are also more involved than men in caring for sick children (56%) and helping children with homework (48%). By contrast, men are mainly associated with tasks perceived as physically demanding or outside the home, such as taking out the trash (100%), buying household supplies (77%), and shopping for household needs (80%). Although some activities, such as taking children to school, shopping, ironing, and paying bills, appear more shared, the overall pattern shows that women continue to carry most of the daily unpaid domestic and caregiving work.

4.1.4 The Perception Of Gender Roles In Regard To Family And Work Life.

Table 4. The Perception Of Gender Roles In Regard To Family And Work Life.

	Agree	**Disagree**	**Don't know**
a)A man's job is to earn money	99%	01%	00%
b)a woman's job is to look after the home	13%	82%	05%
c)Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income.	88%	10%	02%

Table 4 shows that men's perceptions remain largely traditional regarding the provider role. Almost all male respondents (99%) agree that a man's job is to earn money, while only 1% disagree. However, men's views are more egalitarian concerning women's domestic role: 82% disagree that looking after the home is exclusively a woman's responsibility, and 88% agree that both partners should contribute to household income. This indicates that men accept women's economic participation and reject the idea that housework belongs only to women, yet they continue to strongly associate masculinity with being the family provider.

4.1.5 Household Activities Undertaken By Men and Women.

Table5. Household Activities Undertaken By Men and Women.

Activities	**Men**	**Women**	**Both**
Washing clothes	02%	82%	10%
Taking the children to school	22%	44%	34%
Cares for sick family Members	05%	92%	03%
Shops forhousehold Needs	55%	15%	30%

Does the household Cleaning	20%	74%	06%
Preparing breakfast	10%	90%	00%
Tidying the rooms	01%	99%	00%

Table 5 confirms the gendered division of domestic labour reported by the male respondents. Men identify women as mainly responsible for most care and routine household tasks, including caring for sick family members (92%), preparing breakfast (90%), preparing meals (90%), tidying rooms (99%), washing clothes (82%), household cleaning (74%), and taking care of the baby (77%). Men, meanwhile, report greater responsibility for buying household supplies (80%), taking out the trash (98%), and paying bills (77%). Although men report some involvement in childcare and housework, their participation remains limited and selective. Thus, both women's and men's responses point to the same conclusion: despite dual-earner family structures, women remain the primary providers of unpaid care and domestic work.

The questionnaire showed that there was a gendered division of labor. Even though all couples were dual earners, the majority of mothers reported being primarily responsible for daily childcare, compared to only few of fathers. Mothers also did most of the routine household chores.

The above questionnaires revealed a gendered division of labor. 86% disagreed with the idea that woman 's job islooking after the home and 88% of them agreed that both the men and women should share the household income.63% perceive that the best way to organize family life is when both man and woman are workers. Hence,despite the couples in the survey being dual-earner families, the majority of women felt they were the main caregivers at home for the children, compared with few of the men. Household chores also fell squarely in the hands of the women.

The views of men and women on this issue are very similar: it is not the case that men express substantially greater support for women work outside the home.

Actually,as far as behaviour is concerned 56% of women declared that they take care of sick children ,75% of them siad that they do the household cleaning,100% of them told that they tidy rooms,70% advocated that they are taking care of the children,83% reported that they prepare the meals .

Men,on the other hand support the stereotypes reporting that they are engaged with strength-based physical activities.For instance,98% taking out the trash ,80%buying the household supplies.

Given the changes in attitudes to gender roles and labour force participation,as was reported above, we might expect domestic labour to have also shifted away from.

These data, therefore, from the attitudinal sections shows that most of the couples who took part in this questionnaire were of the opinion that women's role exceeds doing the nurter activities . However, this is not necessarily the case, showing a contradiction between perception and practice.

4.2.Interview Findings

From the interviews, four main themes emerged: feminisation of care, occupational stereotypes and the gendered division of labour, work and family preferences within policy contexts, and contradictory emotions related to guilt and role exhaustion.

Regarding the *feminisation of care*, mothers described caregiving as something that "naturally" defaulted to them, particularly during crises, illness, or family emergencies. Even when fathers were present, mothers often remained responsible for anticipating children's needs, organising daily life, and providing emotional support. This suggests that care is socially constructed as women's responsibility rather than being shared equally according to availability or ability.

In relation to *occupational stereotypes and the gendered division of labour*, participants highlighted rigid expectations about suitable work for men and women. Men expressed preferences for fields such as engineering, construction, and mining, while women were more often associated with care, education, administration, or service work. These stereotypes not only restrict women's career opportunities but also limit fathers' involvement in childcare, since paid work is often perceived as incompatible with domestic responsibilities. Consequently, women continue to perform a larger share of unpaid domestic work even when both partners are employed, creating a "double burden" in which mothers combine professional duties with most childcare and household tasks.

With regard to *work, family preferences, and policy contexts*, comparative analyses across countries show that preferences for reduced working hours often reflect traditional gender models rather than purely individual choices. When mothers seek part-time work or flexibility, this may result from limited childcare provision, unequal household responsibilities, and social expectations that mothers should prioritise family life.

Supportive policies, such as affordable childcare, shared parental leave, and flexible working arrangements for both parents, can reduce these inequalities; however, where such support is absent, mothers are more likely to reduce their working hours, accept lower-paid jobs, or leave employment altogether.

Finally, concerning *contradictory emotions, guilt, and role exhaustion*, mothers reported experiencing pride, guilt, fear, sadness, grief, and repentance. They expressed pride in their professional and family achievements, but this was frequently accompanied by guilt when work reduced the time available for their children. The pressure to succeed simultaneously in professional and domestic spheres led to severe physical and mental exhaustion. These emotions were not simply personal feelings; they were shaped by societal, cultural, and structural pressures associated with the "perfect mother" myth, which expects mothers to be endlessly available, self-sacrificing, emotionally nurturing, and professionally successful at the same time. These experiences were intensified by unequal domestic responsibilities, as mothers carried both professional pressures and primary caregiving duties. Therefore, mothers' guilt and exhaustion should be understood as responses to gendered social expectations and unequal structures of care, rather than as individual failing.

5.Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the paradox of progress and persistence that characterises dual-earner families in contemporary Algerian society. Although women's increasing participation in paid employment reflects significant socioeconomic and cultural transformations, it does not necessarily translate into an equivalent redistribution of domestic responsibilities and caregiving tasks. The results suggest that traditional gender arrangements are being challenged at the level of attitudes and expectations, while their influence remains visible in the organisation of everyday family life. This contradiction illustrates the complexity of gender-role transformation, particularly in contexts where modern aspirations coexist with deeply rooted cultural and familial expectations.

One of the most significant issues emerging from the findings concerns the persistence of gendered care work. Women's participation in the labour market has

expanded their economic contribution and challenged the conventional male-breadwinner model. Nevertheless, paid employment does not automatically release women from their traditional domestic responsibilities. Instead, many working mothers continue to combine professional commitments with childcare, household management, and emotional care. This situation reflects Hochschild and Machung's (1990) concept of the *second shift*, whereby women undertake an additional workload at home after completing their paid employment. The persistence of this pattern suggests that changes in women's economic roles have not been accompanied by equally substantial transformations in the gendered organisation of unpaid labour. Consequently, the dual-earner arrangement may increase women's overall responsibilities without necessarily producing greater equality within the household.

Another important dimension concerns the relationship between gender-role attitudes and actual family practices. The questionnaire findings indicate growing support among women for more egalitarian arrangements, particularly regarding shared economic responsibilities and the rejection of the assumption that domestic work is exclusively a woman's responsibility. However, these attitudes should not be interpreted as direct evidence of an equal distribution of household labour. The distinction between what individuals believe and what they practise is particularly important in understanding contemporary Algerian families. Younger and more educated couples may express support for gender equality while continuing to reproduce conventional domestic arrangements through everyday practices. This discrepancy suggests that gender roles are not transformed through individual attitudes alone; rather, they are shaped by family socialisation, established expectations, intergenerational influences, and the broader sociocultural environment.

The influence of cultural and familial expectations further complicates the renegotiation of gender responsibilities. In the Algerian context, family relationships and kinship networks may play an important role in shaping decisions concerning childcare, household organisation, and parental involvement. Extended-family support can provide practical assistance to working mothers; however, it may also reinforce conventional expectations concerning motherhood and women's primary responsibility for nurturing. Similarly, cultural and religious interpretations may influence how men and women understand their respective family roles. It is therefore important to avoid treating tradition and modernity as mutually exclusive categories. Rather, contemporary Algerian households may negotiate both simultaneously, adapting certain aspects of family life while retaining others. Gender-role transformation should consequently be understood as

an ongoing process of negotiation rather than a complete transition from traditional to egalitarian family arrangements.

The findings also draw attention to the relationship between gender inequality and work–family conflict. The combination of paid employment and disproportionate domestic responsibilities may expose working mothers to competing demands on their time, energy, and professional commitments. Unlike their male partners, women may continue to experience stronger social expectations to prioritise children's needs and household well- being, even when both partners contribute financially to the family. Such expectations can generate unequal pressures within dual-earner households and potentially restrict women's opportunities for professional development. The persistence of this imbalance raises questions about the extent to which women's employment represents genuine empowerment when it is not accompanied by a corresponding redistribution of care responsibilities.

Beyond the household, the feminisation of caregiving may have broader implications for women's professional trajectories. When women remain primarily responsible for childcare and domestic management, their availability for additional professional responsibilities, career advancement, and further training may be constrained. This situation points to a potential indirect career penalty associated with motherhood and the unequal organisation of unpaid labour. Accordingly, gender inequality should not be examined exclusively through employment rates or access to economic opportunities; it should also be considered in relation to the domestic conditions that influence women's ability to sustain and develop their professional careers.

Structural and institutional arrangements constitute another important dimension of this discussion. The distribution of caregiving responsibilities is influenced not only by individual attitudes but also by the availability of social and workplace support. Access to affordable childcare, parental leave, and flexible working arrangements can facilitate the reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities. However, when such arrangements are insufficient or when caregiving support is predominantly directed towards mothers, existing inequalities may be reinforced. Promoting greater paternal involvement and recognising childcare as a shared responsibility are therefore essential to challenging the assumption that care work is inherently feminine. Institutional support should consequently be accompanied by broader cultural changes that encourage men's participation in everyday domestic and parental responsibilities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the transformation of gender roles in Algerian dual-earner families remains uneven and multidimensional. Women's increasing

educational attainment and participation in paid employment have contributed to challenging traditional family arrangements, yet the persistence of gendered domestic labour demonstrates that economic participation alone is insufficient to achieve substantive equality. The central issue is therefore not simply whether women work outside the home, but whether their changing economic position is accompanied by a meaningful redistribution of household responsibilities, childcare, and emotional labour.

The study contributes to the discussion of gender relations and family sociology by highlighting the coexistence of changing gender expectations and persistent domestic inequalities within the Algerian context. It also emphasises the importance of examining dual- earner families beyond the conventional distinction between traditional and modern household arrangements. Ultimately, achieving greater gender equality requires a transformation that extends beyond women's access to paid employment to include the recognition, redistribution, and shared responsibility of unpaid care work. Such a transformation depends on the interaction of individual attitudes, family practices, sociocultural expectations, and institutional support.

6.Conclusion

The present article has sought to highlight the dynamic yet constrained nature of gender roles in dual-earner households, particularly in relation to the interplay between motherhood, paid work, and caregiving. Despite increases in women’s engagement in paid work and a cultural shift toward more egalitarian values, the research evidence supports a sense of disconnection between aspiration and practice, particularly in relation to traditional gender roles in caregiving and domestic responsibility. Thus, a sense of equality within dual-earner households remains a partially achieved goal.

The analysis points out that the feminization of care is not just a question of individual choice, but is situated in broader structural, cultural, and institutional contexts. The norms of the workplace that favor unbroken career continuity, the lack of access to quality and affordable childcare, and the policy context that fails to support joint parenting responsibilities all work to maintain traditional gender divisions of labor. Even in households that express commitment to egalitarian principles, subtle mechanisms of gendered accountability and moral obligation to “good mothering” continue to influence everyday practices and decision- making. These patterns of inequality are contributing to new sources of inequality, such as emotional distress, work-family conflict, and career outcomes for women.

Ultimately, transformative change in gender roles in dual-earner families must involve more than attitude change at the household level. It must involve supportive social policies, organizational cultures that institutionalize caregiving for all genders, and cultural reconstructions of both work and care. By shifting the definition of care from a private, feminized responsibility to a collective social responsibility, societies can begin to realize the egalitarian promise of dual-earner family arrangements..

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