

Transformations and Their Impact on Values in Algerian Society

(Women's Values as a Model) – A Field Study –

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Abstract:

Values constitute one of the fundamental pillars upon which any society is built, as they reflect its authenticity and continuity. Among the most prominent prevailing values are those related to women within society, which express their status, social roles, and effective contribution to social development and cohesion.

This study adopted the descriptive-analytical method as well as the statistical method. It also relied on observation and questionnaire techniques, in addition to a purposive sampling approach. The findings indicate that the transformations and changes occurring within Algerian society have led to a decline and destabilization of values, as they have become subject to fragmentation and erosion due to the introduction of new and external value systems. These changes have primarily affected women, particularly through the transformation of their social roles and functions, notably their increased participation in the workforce in pursuit of social recognition and status.

Keywords: values, culture, social change, working women.

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1. Research Problem and Hypotheses :

Modernity is regarded as the outcome of numerous orientations, conceptions, and representations concerning the status of individuals within the social system, resulting from socio-cultural and socio-economic movements that have generated profound changes and transformations in the fundamental structures of society, including both its material and intellectual dimensions.

This transformation has extended to the level of comprehensive openness to the world, often without clear conditions or boundaries. Women constitute one of the principal variables in the process of change and transformation that has affected various human societies, given their role as a fundamental pillar of social structure. Feminist intellectual movements have contributed to disseminating new orientations, conceptions, and representations regarding women's status, enabling them to transcend their traditional position and the limitations of stereotypical roles historically constructed across different stages of human development, including spatial and social restrictions. Consequently, women have assumed active and leading roles in numerous fields that were previously monopolized by men.

On this basis, women have entered the public sphere and begun to compete with men across diverse domains and sectors, after their roles had long been confined to the domestic sphere, encompassing household responsibilities, childcare, spousal support, and the fulfillment of family needs.

From this perspective, women's values have experienced a degree of destabilization and disruption, particularly due to the challenges of reconciling familial responsibilities with professional obligations.

Accordingly, this field study seeks to examine the transformations that have affected women's values within Algerian society. It raises the following central research question:

To what extent have socio-cultural transformations contributed to influencing women's values in Algerian society?

Sub-questions:

Has the strategy based on destabilizing and undermining the value system contributed to the emergence of external values associated with women?

To what extent has women's participation in the workforce contributed to changes in their values within society?

Hypotheses:

The strategy based on destabilizing and undermining the value system has contributed to the emergence of external values associated with women.

Women's entry into the workforce has led to changes in their values within Algerian society.

2. Conceptual Definitions:

2.1 Values

Values are defined as generalized cognitive and affective orientations toward persons, meanings, objects, and forms of activity. They constitute the object of attitudes and represent an expression of human motivations, reflecting the elements that direct our desires and orientations. From this perspective, values are a social product that the individual learns and acquires, gradually internalized through the process of socialization. Through social interaction, the individual learns that certain motives and goals are preferred over others that is, they are evaluated as superior and more significant (Mukhtar, 1982, pp. 196–197).

Values are also understood as a set of judgments and normative expectations derived from a given society that affect individuals, functioning as a moral charter defined by what is considered desirable and undesirable (Mansouri & Fariha, 2025, p. 415).

Operational Definition:

Operationally, values are defined as the principles and normative frameworks acquired by the individual through society via the process of socialization, through the combined influence of all socialization institutions.

2.2 Culture

In sociological thought, culture refers to the aspects of human life that are acquired through learning rather than heredity. Members of society share cultural elements that enable cooperation and communication, and these elements constitute the context within which

individuals live. A society's culture comprises implicit, non-material aspects such as beliefs, opinions, and values that form its essential core, as well as tangible and visible aspects, such as objects and symbols (Giddens, 2005, p. 82).

Operational Definition:

Culture refers to the knowledge and beliefs that individuals acquire through their society, embodied in customs, traditions, values, norms, and related elements. These components signify the individual's belonging and identity within a given society.

2.3 Social Change

Social change is defined as any alteration occurring in the social structure whether in the whole or in part, or in its form or social systems such that individuals come to perform social roles different from those they performed during a previous period (Abdelhadi, 2009, p. 169). It is also understood as any transformation taking place within societies over a specific period of time that affects their structural composition, class system, social institutions, or prevailing values and norms. Such change may be material, or it may target the transformation of people's orientations, values, customs, and behaviors (Al-Sa'at, 2000, p. 23).

Operational Definition:

Social change refers to any transformation occurring within society, implying a transition from one state to another. Women's participation in the workforce constitutes an example of social change.

3. Methodological Foundations of the Study

3.1 Research Methods Employed

3.1.1 The Descriptive-Analytical Method

The nature of the research topic necessitated the use of the descriptive-analytical method, which aims to collect facts and data about a particular phenomenon or situation while attempting to interpret these facts in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

It is defined as a method through which the researcher obtains accurate information that depicts social reality and contributes to the analysis of social phenomena (Bouhouche & Al-Dhabyat, 2001, p. 135).

This method was adopted because it enables the researcher to describe the phenomenon under investigation and to interpret and analyze it from a sociological perspective.

3.1.2 The Statistical Method

The statistical method relies on quantitative and statistical techniques for description, presentation, inference, and the derivation of results (Al-Issawi & Al-Issawi, 1996/1997, p. 21).

This method was employed in the present study as it allows for the collection of data, its conversion into numerical form, and its organization into tables in order to establish relationships between the study variables, followed by sociological analysis.

3.2 Research Techniques

3.2.1 Observation

In scientific research, observation is defined as the careful viewing and monitoring of a specific behavior or phenomenon, accompanied by systematic recording of observations, and the use of appropriate research tools suited to the nature of the behavior or phenomenon in order to achieve optimal results and obtain accurate information (Qandilji, 1999, p. 172).

Observation was utilized by monitoring the behaviors of the individuals to whom the questionnaire was distributed, particularly their responses and reactions to the study topic.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of a set of written questions prepared with the aim of obtaining information or opinions from respondents concerning a particular phenomenon or situation (Olayan & Ghneim, 2000, p. 81).

The questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection tool due to the relatively accessible size of the study sample, making it the most appropriate technique for this research.

3.3 Study Sample

The sample selected for this study is a purposive (intentional) sample, which differs from random sampling methods that rely on chance selection. Instead, purposive sampling provides insight into a specific group of individuals from whom information is deliberately obtained.

This type of sample is used when the research population is not precisely defined, and no accurate sampling frame exists from which to randomly select participants. In such cases, the researcher selects units that best serve the objectives of the study (Zerouani, 2002, p. 198).

Accordingly, a sample of 78 respondents (male and female) from the general public was selected to explore their perceptions regarding socio-cultural transformations and their impact on women's values in Algerian society.

4. (Theoretical Framework) Factors Contributing to the Transformation of Values Associated with Women

Several factors have contributed to the transformation of values associated with women. Among the most significant are the following:

4.1 Education

Education is considered one of the most influential factors that has enabled women to move beyond the traditional value system, thereby opening new horizons distinct from those experienced in the past. It constitutes a central mechanism in the process of social change.

Women's education was not merely intended to secure their emancipation; rather, it functioned as a tool for transforming negative mentalities and attitudes among women, thus facilitating their integration into social life. Education at all levels—particularly higher education—has generated a heightened awareness among women, highlighting their individuality and social status, which had previously been marginalized or denied (Majbabri, 2010, p. 57).

4.2 Women entering the workforce:

The social and technological transformations that have occurred across societies have had significant repercussions on family life. The increasing participation of wives and mothers in paid employment outside the home has produced multiple transformations at the familial level.

The mother is no longer perceived solely as a spouse seeking to secure her status within the family through the birth of numerous children—particularly male children. Instead, she now strengthens her social standing both within and beyond the family through engagement in external employment, which occupies a substantial portion of her time and consequently reduces the time available for childrearing and caregiving. As a result, women increasingly seek to regulate or even limit childbirth through the use of various family planning methods.

Given that women's participation in social, economic, and political activities has become inseparable from processes of modernization and urbanization, their role in public life is now viewed as an integral component of societal development (Mohamed, 1987, pp. 162–163).

5. Presentation of Tables and Their Sociological Analysis:

Table No. 01: Represents the Respondents' Attitudes Toward Inherited Values by Gender

Gender Inherited values	Males		Females		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%
High	08	24%	03	07%	11	14%
Somewhat	19	58%	11	24%	30	38%
Not suitable	06	18%	31	69%	37	48%
Total	33	100%	45	100%	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 01, which represents respondents' attitudes toward inherited values by gender, that the highest percentage, estimated at 48%, indicated that inherited values are not suitable. This was followed by 38% who responded "somewhat," and finally 14% who indicated that they are suitable to a large extent.

What can be inferred from this table is the presence of a lack of acceptance and limited responsiveness to inherited values related to women among female respondents. This suggests a rejection of these values, which, in their view, constitute an obstacle to the realization of their ambitions and future goals. They perceive these values as outdated and surpassed by time. In contrast, male respondents tend to perceive these inherited values as largely appropriate and acceptable. This may indicate the persistence of male-dominant perspectives and a gender-based value system within society (regardless of its effectiveness). From their standpoint, it is important that men remain the most influential actors in society, while women continue to occupy a subordinate position under male authority.

Table No. 02: Illustrates the Impact of Inherited Values on the Status of Women in Algerian Society According to the Respondents' Opinions.

Inherited values Women's status	Effects		Somewhat		No effect		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Prestigious	06	67%	03	11%	01	02%	10	13%
Medium	03	%33	19	68%	10	24%	32	41%
Low	00	%00	06	21%	30	74%	36	46%
Total	09	100%	28	100%	41	100%	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 02, which illustrates the impact of inherited values on the status of women in Algerian society according to respondents' opinions, that the highest percentage, 46%, indicated that women's status is low. This is followed by 41% who considered it medium, and finally 13% who rated it as prestigious.

The position of female respondents regarding inherited values in determining women's status in society is clear and unequivocal in all cases. They reject these values because, as noted in the previous table, they perceive them as obstacles to achieving their goals and ambitions. Women view these values as placing them in a lower rank than men, and even below male children. In their view, these values constitute a significant barrier to attaining a prestigious position in society and entering fields that were historically reserved exclusively for men.

This aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of male dominance, which explains men's domination over women, emphasizing that women are always subordinate to male authority. This dominance is not a result of biological nature but of social and cultural construction, making the theory applicable to a conservative society such as Algerian society.

Table No. 03: Shows the Degree of Influence of New Values on the Status of Women.

Effect of new values Women's status	Effects		Somewhat		No effect		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Prestigious	32	74%	08	30%	02	25%	42	54%
Medium	10	23%	13	48%	01	13%	24	31%
Low	01	03%	06	22%	05	62%	12	15%
Total	43	100%	27	100%	08	100%	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 03, which shows the degree of influence of new values on the status of women, that the highest percentage, 54%, indicated that women's status is prestigious. This is followed by 31% who considered it medium, and finally 15% who viewed it as low.

It cannot be overlooked that new values play a significant role in transforming women's status, whether positively or negatively. According to the respondents, women have found in these new values an opportunity to enter multiple fields that, as noted in the previous table, were historically reserved for men.

Thanks to these new values, many social functions and structures have changed, allowing women to occupy prestigious positions in society (regardless of the positive or negative aspects). Importantly, women whose roles were previously confined to the household focused on narrow responsibilities such as caring for children, the husband, and siblings have now moved into a broader social sphere. This sphere is characterized by numerous social, cultural, and economic dynamics, free from the former constraints and rules that were previously imposed on them. Consequently, women have gained greater opportunities for social, cultural, and economic advancement.

Table No. 04: Represents the Destabilization of the Value System and Its Relationship to the Emergence of External Values Associated with Women.

Changes Degree of disruption	Radical		Moderate		None		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Complete	40	77%	08	40%	00	00%	48	62%
Partial	11	21%	09	45%	02	33%	22	28%
Stable	01	02%	03	15%	04	67%	08	10%
Total	52	100%	20	100%	06	100%	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 04, which represents the destabilization of the value system and its relationship to the emergence of external values associated with women, that the highest percentage, 62%, indicated that the destabilization is complete, followed by 28% who considered it partial, and 10% who viewed it as stable.

Algerian society has become almost fully open, particularly in light of cultural, social, and economic transformations and globalization. This openness has allowed the introduction of

new and external values into society, affecting its value system, which is now experiencing continuous and persistent destabilization.

Given that women constitute a significant element of society, their status and presence have also undergone transformation, particularly regarding values specific to women. There is a widespread emergence of external values, such as equality, liberation, justice, and freedom of practice, which were previously restricted. This has generated a form of crisis and conflict between men and women over the division of social space and roles.

These developments have negatively impacted the societal value system, as these new external values have begun to dominate multiple domains, including cultural, social, and economic spheres.

Table No. 05: Illustrates the Effects of Women's Participation in the Workforce According to Respondents' Opinions.

Effects of women working	Frequency	Percentage
Failure to fulfill family roles	46	39%
Exposure to sexual harassment	28	24%
Decline in the role of values	43	37%
Total	117	100%

Note: The sample size is 78, but we found 117 responses due to multiple answers.

We observe from Table No. 05, which illustrates the effects of women's participation in the workforce according to respondents' opinions, that the highest percentage, 39%, indicated a failure to fulfill family roles. This is followed by 37% who cited a decline in values, and finally 24% who reported exposure to sexual harassment.

Women's entry into the workforce produces significant consequences and effects that can adversely impact both the individual and society. Among the most prominent of these effects is the inability to fully perform familial roles, which contributes to disruptions in the socialization of children, ultimately affecting their future development. This also leads to a decline in the influence of traditional values due to the destabilization caused by changes in women's domestic roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, women, due to social and biological vulnerabilities, may become easier targets for exploitation, including sexual harassment and related abuses.

Table No. 06: Illustrates Respondents' Attitudes Toward Women's Participation in the Workforce and Its Impact on Values.

We observe from Table No. 06, which illustrates respondents' attitudes toward

Women working Effect on values	In favor		Somewhat		Against		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Negative	05	26	15	%54	28	%90	48	%62
Positive	14	%74	13	%46	03	%10	30	%38
Total	19	%100	28	%100	31	%100	78	%100

women's participation in the workforce and its impact on values, that the highest percentage, 62%, indicated that the impact on values is negative, compared to 38% who considered it positive.

Women's entry into the workforce has a significant negative effect on their social life and on values in general. This is manifested through changes in their social roles and functions within both their family and social environment, as well as through their inability to fully perform their responsibilities. Additionally, women face numerous challenges and harassments, particularly sexual harassment in the workplace, due to their perceived vulnerability. These circumstances make them susceptible to professional problems and difficulties. This situation is largely influenced by the socio-cultural context of their position within a conservative society like Algeria, which, in turn, negatively affects societal values.

Table No. 07: Represents Respondents' Attitudes Toward Women's Participation in the Workforce and Their Ability to Face Challenges.

Women working Ability to face difficulties	In favor		Somewhat		Against		Total	
	R	%	R	%	R	%	R	%
Yes	16	84%	13	46%	03	10%	32	41%
No	03	16%	15	54%	28	90%	46	59%
Total	19	100%	28	100%	31	100%	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 07, which represents respondents' attitudes toward women's participation in the workforce and their ability to face challenges, that the highest percentage, 59%, indicated that women are unable to face problems, compared to 41% who stated that they can.

Due to their perceived vulnerability, social position, and the socio-cultural context in which they exist, women remain somewhat incapable of confronting the challenges and difficulties they may encounter in their professional environment. They may experience severe forms of violence, yet silence and concealment often prevail, motivated by fear of social stigma and the desire to preserve their social standing especially within a conservative society such as Algerian society.

On this basis, it can be concluded that most working women encounter various problems, but their capacity to confront these challenges is limited.

Table No. 08: Illustrates the Extent to Which Women Encounter Difficulties in Balancing Work and Home Responsibilities According to Respondents' Opinions.

Respondents' opinion	Frequency	Percentage
There are difficulties	44	56%
Somewhat	26	33%
No difficulties	08	11%
Total	78	100%

We observe from Table No. 08, which illustrates the extent to which women encounter difficulties in balancing work and home responsibilities according to respondents' opinions, that the highest percentage, 56%, indicated that women find it difficult to balance work and

home. This is followed by 33% who answered “somewhat,” and finally 11% who stated that they do not experience any difficulty.

According to the respondents, women face significant challenges in reconciling their dual roles as working professionals and household managers. The demands of their professional environment require full commitment to all occupational responsibilities, which limits their ability to perform social and familial roles effectively. Consequently, the quality of family socialization may decline, impacting the future development of children and, in turn, affecting the overall social structure within the family.

6. General Findings of the Study

From this field study, we concluded the following:

Inherited values: According to women, inherited values constitute an obstacle to achieving their ambitions and future goals, as they perceive these values as outdated and obsolete. In contrast, men generally view these values as appropriate and applicable. This indicates the persistence of male-dominated perspectives and gender-based discrimination within societal values, reflecting a view that men should remain the most effective actors in society while women remain subordinate.

Women’s status in society: Female respondents clearly reject inherited values in determining women’s status, as they see them as placing women in a lower rank than men, and even below male children. These values are perceived as a significant barrier preventing women from attaining prestigious positions or entering fields historically reserved for men.

Impact of new values: Thanks to new values, many social roles and structures within society have shifted, enabling women to occupy prestigious positions (regardless of the positive or negative nature of these changes). Women who were once confined to the household now operate in a broader social space, free from many previously imposed restrictions, which allows them to achieve greater social, cultural, and economic advancement.

Societal openness and value destabilization: Algerian society has become almost fully open, especially amid cultural, social, and economic transformations and globalization. This openness has allowed the entry of new and external values, which has disrupted the existing value system. As women constitute a key social element, their status and presence have also transformed, particularly regarding values specific to women. New values such as equality, liberation, justice, and freedom of practice have emerged, generating conflicts between men and women over roles, spaces, and performance.

Effects of women entering the workforce: Women’s participation in work has led to serious consequences for both themselves and society. Key effects include the inability to fully perform family roles, which disrupts children’s socialization and, in turn, affects the family’s social structure. Furthermore, women’s vulnerability may expose them to harassment, particularly sexual harassment, in the workplace.

Negative impact on social life and values: Women’s entry into the workforce has negatively affected their social life and societal values. Changes in roles and responsibilities within the family, combined with workplace challenges, contribute to professional difficulties and further destabilize social values.

Limited capacity to confront challenges: Due to social, cultural, and biological vulnerabilities, women remain somewhat incapable of confronting professional difficulties. Social stigma and the desire to preserve their social position, especially within a conservative society like Algeria, reinforce this limitation.

Difficulty balancing work and home responsibilities: Respondents indicate that women face significant challenges in reconciling their roles as workers and household managers. Work demands prevent them from fulfilling family responsibilities fully, weakening family socialization and impacting children’s future development, which in turn affects the social structure within the household.

Conclusion:

This study concludes that transformations in Algerian society have shifted women's roles from traditional responsibilities focused on the husband, children, and household duties to active participation in multiple sectors and fields. This shift has altered women's values and priorities, impacting the broader societal value system.

While women's workforce participation and economic independence contribute positively to societal development, the negative consequences such as familial and social tensions cannot be overlooked.

Overall, socio-cultural and economic changes in Algeria have destabilized various social values, including women's values. Entry into the workforce has challenged women's ability to balance professional and family responsibilities, resulting in diminished social and familial roles and a significant decline in their household status.

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