

The effect of kinship relationships on a woman's life in Algerian countryside

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Submission date: 27/07/2021 Acceptance date: 18 /01/2024 Published date : 31/01/2024

Abstract:

Rural woman witnesses a contradiction between two types of concepts and values, or rather a conflict between authenticity and contemporaneity. She finds herself between traditional values promoted by adult society on the one hand, and new modern concepts recognized by scientific and technological development on the other. Kinship relations in Algerian countryside are considered to be the driving force of life in all its social, economic, and educational forms etc., especially patriarchal authority. Here, women live under this social absolute, which affects their lives in direct ways and in all aspects. In this study, we aim to determine how kinship relationships affect women's lives. Through it, we tried to answer the following problem: how have kinship relationships affected the lives of rural Algerian women?

Keywords: kinship relationships, women, countryside

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Introduction:

Peaceful coexistence is a kind of removing barriers and differences, and giving new forms of participatory and consultative dialogue in current societies, reinforced more closely by coherent and effective social relations, first and foremost by kinship relationships. The latter, however, has had a significant impact on the positive and negative aspects of Algerian rural life between supporters and opponents, especially with regard to women in the first place. The latter is under the mercy of rural customs, traditions and presuppositions on the one hand, and social and media openness on the other hand, which has affected her life from all fields.

The importance of this study represents in the following:

- The importance of kinship relationships subject within the rural community.
- The need to study the subject of kinship in the countryside and find out its impact on women's lives
- The need to highlight the lives of rural women.
- The need to study this subject sociologically.

Our objectives in this study are:

- Highlighting the significances of kinship relationships.
- Working to find out the impact of kinship relationships on women's lives.
- Trying to highlight how kinship relationships affect women.

1. Problem of the study:

How have kinship relationships affected women's lives in the Algerian countryside?

2. Method:

This study is based on the descriptive approach, which allows us to describe and monitor kinship relationships in Algerian countryside and to highlight their impact on women's lives.

3. Study terms:

The terms of this study are: kinship relationships, countryside, and women.

3.1. Kinship relationships:

Radcliffe Brown defines kinship relationships in the introduction of his book "Kinship" as "... a social organization that enables individuals to live together and collaborate together to establish an organized social life. The system is part of the social network, manifested in the smallest social unit, the nuclear family. It should be noted that kinship in anthropology and sociology means not only family relationships and marriage, but also affinity relationships." (Natidja, p. 283)

It is also defined as: "A social model between two or more people, which represents the simplest unit of sociological analysis and involves meaningful communication and prior

knowledge of the behavior of the other person. A social relationship may be short-term and long-term, in the latter case it is called a long-term relationship.” (Zeyouch, 2014, p.7).

Procedural definition: Kinship relationships are a fabric of relationships and interactions that fall within the circle of the single family and include the relationships of affinity, as well as a system with its own laws, which are the customs and traditions inherited across generations.

3.2. Woman:

- A- Linguistic definition: the word “woman” means an adult female human being. The plural is women and has several synonyms including: lady, girl, wife, madam, miss, and senora (al-Alawi, 1996, p. 9)
- B- Terminological definition: Stoller believes that “Even a girl who is not biologically female grows up as a woman if she is treated as a woman by her family and no one questions her gender.” (Al-Saadawi, 1990, p. 198)
- C- It is society, via its institutions, that produces true women and men, such that they are given a specific upbringing of their own gender that the other does not receive.
- D- According to August Count, “nature has created the female race for the sake of birth preservation, which puts her in a lower position than a male, so women must be subject to men and their followers, because women, by virtue of their weaker composition, are mentally weaker and lower than men, and to compensate them for this, nature has given them the tenderness of feelings and emotions.” (Houso, 2008, p. 38)
- E- In other words, according to August Count, women are lower than men in status because they are weaker than men.

3.3. Countryside:

Linguistic definition: It is mentioned in the dictionary “Lissan Al-Arab”: the countryside is where the vegetables and water are. It is a land with fertile plants, and in the Hadith it was said “The countryside opens and people go out to it”. It is every land that has plants and palm trees. It was also said that it is the Arab’s land that approaches water. Arabs used to say that they are the people of the countryside and not the city. (Mandour, 1956, p. 263)

Terminological definition: It is defined as “these agricultural areas where the farmer lives and practices agriculture as a major profession in addition to other crafts such as grazing, animal husbandry, dairy products processing and some primitive rural industries such as pottery, mats and hand textiles... etc.” (Ghaith, 1968, p. 94)

Sundress defined the rural community as “that form of relationship between people and their responsibility in a local area where they live on scattered farms and in a village that is usually the center of their joint activity”. (Abdo, 1992, p. 251) We understand from this that rural society is not just a geographical area but a relationship that must be established and maintained, and then there is the geographical and psychological aspect of rural society as a term.

4. Rural family and its characteristics:

Anthropologists and sociologists have been interested in studying the family in general and the rural family in particular. They also tried to understand and compare the patterns of both rural and urban communities where anthropological interests were focused on examining

traditional and renewal coexistence in societies and studying the problem of culture. “The rural society has two constructions: physical and moral. The physical aspect consists of the form of architectural construction, the style of living, and the physical and human natural resources, but the moral aspect is the rural social organization, including social institutions, cultural organizations, values, and rural leadership.... etc.” (Gérard Clarke, p. 85)

Rural community has a range of features that distinguish it from other communities, namely, the strength of social cohesion, collective feeling, loyalty and clan belonging. This has made it more homogeneous and stable than urban society, and it is characterized by relative isolation and belonging to a single clan concerning the choice of housing areas, kinship marriage and lack of friction with the outside world. The economy of rural society depends on agriculture, which is the most important characteristic of this society; nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no other occupations and jobs practiced by rural people; rather, there are teachers, employees, traders and industrialists, as well as farmers.

The demographic aspect is represented in low population density and small population size due to several factors, the most important of which is rural-urban migration or the so-called rural displacement. Moreover, “social control in rural society is characterized by the informal type that includes customs, traditions and norms, and the standards of conduct in this society are passed from generation to generation.” (al-Ashram, 1976, p. 43)

Thus, a clear concept of the rural family can be presented “it is a unit or part of the rural community made up of a husband and wife, their married and unmarried children and grandchildren who live in one dwelling or adjacent dwellings in the countryside. Peasant activity is the dominant character as they are subject to rural culture.” (Baatoush, p. 183) Rural families differ from other types of families in many aspects, perhaps the most prominent of which is the size of the rural family, which is the number of people living together in one house and the capacity of this house. Extended family and kinship unity are one of the most important features of rural society in which “they express their solidarity in meeting the social needs of their members with regard to manifestations of economic solidarity or with regard to their submission to a certain authority that forces their members to submit to values and standards, or with regard to inheritance rights and the exploitation of wealth”. (Mohamed Abdo Mahjoub, 2006, p. 213)

Social life in the countryside also depends on the transmission of customs, traditions, ways of working, marriage, etc., because the rural family adheres to its old traditions, which have been inherited and have been formed by the so-called traditions’ intolerance. The latter is “intolerance of, and strong adherence to inherited customs and traditions, that is, they are an integral part of the life of society, even if they lead to wars and bloodshed.” (Al-Khatib, 2008, p. 90)

The kinship pattern of the rural family is based on rules defined by religion, where the descendance is for the father with recognizing the mother's kinship, and the marriage is often internally in the rural community, i.e., a kinship marriage. By presenting the characteristics of a rural family, we conclude that rural families try to maintain and sustain family balance within the framework of rural culture.

5- Kinship relationships in Algerian countryside:

The term kinship in Algerian society is of great importance in the family. Since ancient times, the Algerian family has paid great attention to the relationships of kinship, inheriting from ancestors the cultural heritages of customs, traditions and norms, considering them laws and regulations that no member of the kinship circle can deviate from them. Any act contrary to this law is considered a rebellion against the family, and may sometimes amount to actions to punish this rebellious individual. Over time, Algerian society has undergone transformations in all social, economic and political aspects.... The family was forced to gradually abandon the customs and traditions passed down by generations, especially the transformation of the family from the extended to the nuclear pattern, the displacement from the countryside to the cities, and the emergence of urban culture.

The urban Algerian family began to learn about other cultures or rather might adopt them and become their new habits, without forgetting the industrial factor that pushed women out to work to help men in domestic matters, and kinship relationships began to shrink. Despite this great openness in society and the changes that have taken place, the Algerian family has remained firmly committed to its heritage, especially in rural areas. "The Algerian family is undergoing profound changes as it tries to preserve the Patriarchy culture, which in turn is the subject of a permanent reinterpretation" (Al-Howari, 1999, p. 89) says Uday al-Howari. Thus, the rural family continues to provide great importance to the social link, and Uday al-Hawari also described kinship relationships in the countryside, saying "The kinship or village community includes the home circle that embraces the intimate circle and sexual reproduction on the one hand, and the community and clan that bring together the most distant members and sometimes some "foreign" individuals who become full individuals if they adopt a little new genealogical memory on the other. In doing so, the reference to blood is essential in determining the social link, which is the relationship diagnosed from one to the other, but this privileged relationship of the sectarian community loses its relevance in the urban society that contains tens of thousands of people." (al-Alawi, 1996, p. 89)

Kinship relationships in rural Algeria are characterized by a strong social bond among their members, i.e. the network of social relations established by individuals in the kinship circle is often linked to cultural belonging from customs and traditions that have been passed through generations, and it also gives this aspect great importance in building and adopting special laws from which the individual cannot deviate.

The rural Algerian family plays an important functional role, upbringing their children from birth to respect others, love them and do good. It raises males on masculinity and responsibility while raising females on modesty and kindness. All relatives participate in this task due to the short distance between the residences of families belonging to the same kinship circle, in addition to giving great importance to their internal and external relationships. "Social relationships within rural families are fraternal relationships; the group erases all negative feelings and promotes a sense of intimacy and brotherhood." (Betfenocht, 1984, p. 37)

All these advantages and characteristics of kinship relationships in the Algerian countryside do not mean that they are devoid of all the negatives that exist in urban areas, hence, the authoritarian and conservative character may negatively affect the lives of young Algerians today. Dr. Samia Qatouch gave sociological dimensions to the interaction between

parents and children in youth, explaining the sociocultural dimension that “often affects the relationship between parents and children, especially in youth. The cultural frameworks of each parent and son/daughter vary, as well as the relationship between them is characterized by a kind of intergenerational conflict. Each generation sees each other as an independent party, showing a cultural gap between them that each generation tries to bridge with its own cultural concepts based on its general perception of things.” (Qatouch, 2017, p. 88)

Perhaps the most affected element of rural society is women. This notion cannot be generalized to all Algerian countryside, as the proximity of some rural areas to urban cities has a significant impact on the rural family system, but some rural areas with the kinship system in their families have a significant impact on the lives of Algerian rural women.

6. Impact of kinship relationships on rural women's lives:

Women in rural Algeria are an active element since ancient times, where they played many roles in addition to their role in raising and upbringing children, they helped men in the family economy by growing vegetables and fruits, raising livestock and making crockery to meet the needs of their families. Women also participated during the colonial period in the fight and struggle for the homeland. Rural women continue to play these roles to this day despite the transformations in Algerian society, and the Algerian family continues to revere the spirit of the community and the kinship circle, especially the rural family.

Kinship relationships have many effects on a woman's life as they define the framework of her relationships and cannot get out of them. Here, the kinship relationships determine the choice of life partner for the woman even if she refuses to do so, but she accepts due to kinship relationships compulsion. She is often forced to marry a relative, and here the symbolic violence that manifests in her inner pain is shaped by the conflicting feelings she suffers between her refusal to marry a relative and her falling under the influence of the kinship circle. The most prominent feature of this violence is her anxiety, tension and rejection of reality with her acquiescence to it.

The education of girls in rural areas is still limited to this day and may only be limited in the early years of primary education or the final year of secondary education, but they cannot attend university despite having the highest averages by virtue of distance and staying away from home. It is enough for a girl to know only to read and write. “For the majority of parents, a girl should know how to read the instructions contained in the medicine cans and understand the words of the TV -the standard Arabic in school - so that it is easy for her to adapt with the environment starting from the home circle. The idea that women should not place a burden on their husbands in running the house has therefore become acceptable to parents, preoccupied with their daughter's marital future.” (al-Alawi, 1996, p. 92)

The rural girl or woman is also associated with the family kinship circle, where the mother tries to imitate her sisters or her husband's relatives in marrying their daughters at an early age and stopping them from school for fear that her daughter will remain single and become a talk among relatives. The father, on the other hand, deals with the concept of honor or what is known as male honor, as he prevents his daughter from completing her university studies for fear of getting to know young men and bringing him shame in front of the members of the village who are of course related to them, and ends up marrying her cousin or a relative forcefully. If she refuses, she is assumed to be in a relationship with someone and

becomes a story in the mouths of her relatives. Furthermore, rumors abound about her and she may end up without marriage.

Nowadays in some rural areas, even if the family allows the girl to complete her university education, she cannot work after graduation, and the men of the rural family believe that they are the only ones involved in this activity (work). They fear the consequences of women going out to work, as men are most closely associated with the image of a respected and honorable person. However, in Mediterranean societies, and more than any other societies, the nature of respect and honor lies, among other things, in the ability to keep women in the domestic circle (wife, sisters, daughters...) under surveillance when it comes to relations with the outside, i.e. with men. “The reputation and respect enjoyed by men are social capital that generates profits for the owner, such as consideration and appreciation, which can fade away following the spread of some rumors about the wife or girl who have issued harmful behavior in the eyes of that person who adheres to the issue of his honor. So what distinguishes the patriarchal culture is the link between respect enjoyed by men and the behavior of women in the domestic circle. Women's work does not in itself affect the nature of respect, but it does contain threats to it.” (Al-Alawi, 1996, p. 93).

The mother's fear of the father and the kinship circle to which the family belongs made her contribute to the male domination of her daughter and continue to repeat the same words such as “What are people going to say”, “What if your brother hears that”, and “What if you father sees you”. All these words have made rural women afraid to be themselves and get paid work. The Algerian countryside helps reproduce male domination and spread The Culture of Patriarchy generation after generation.

This domination over the rural girl and her limited freedom in the kinship circle made her behave in such way to complete her shortage, namely, to acquire smartphones and build virtual relationships and friendships, thinking that by doing so will allow her to take a look at the outside life and the urban city. The girl is also trying to gain some freedom as “high school girls or students who distinguish between Islam and Patriarchy culture wear the hijab and use it to resist the restriction so that they are not locked up in the domestic field.” (al-Alawi, 1996, p. 81).

Conclusion:

Kinship relationships in Algerian society are characterized by a kind of control over all spheres of life in society, making individuals unable to break it. These kinship relationships control their choices and the way they are treated as the primary driver and active pattern in rural society, consisting of interconnected systems of relationships and interactions that shape life in general.

Through this study, we recommend the following:

- The need to deepen sociological studies on rural women.
- Work on analyzing all related topics.
- The need to include rural women as an actor in the development of society.

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