

Language Barriers and Gender Inequalities: Examining the Impact on Women's Access to Resources and Opportunities in Algerian Society

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ABSTRACT: *This paper delves into the intersection of language barriers and gender inequalities in Algerian society, focusing on their impact on women's access to resources and opportunities. Through a comprehensive analysis, it investigates how language-related limitations, such as restricted linguistic proficiency and unequal language educational policies, exacerbate existing gender disparities. By examining the socio-cultural context and historical factors shaping language dynamics in Algeria, the study aims to illuminate the multifaceted challenges faced by women in accessing education, employment, and social mobility. Additionally, it explores potential strategies and policy interventions to mitigate these inequalities and promote equitable opportunities for women within the linguistic landscape of Algeria.*

KEYWORDS: Language barriers, gender inequalities, women's access, Algerian society, resources and opportunities.

RÉSUMÉ : *Cet article explore l'intersection des barrières linguistiques et des inégalités de genre dans la société algérienne, en se concentrant sur leur impact sur l'accès des femmes aux ressources et aux opportunités. Grâce à une analyse complète, il étudie comment les limitations liées à la langue, telles qu'une maîtrise linguistique limitée et des politiques éducatives linguistiques inégales, exacerbent les disparités entre les sexes existants. En examinant le contexte socioculturel et les facteurs historiques qui façonnent la dynamique linguistique en Algérie, l'étude vise à mettre en lumière les défis multiformes auxquels sont confrontées les femmes pour accéder à l'éducation, à l'emploi et à la mobilité sociale. En outre, il explore les stratégies et interventions politiques potentielles*

pour atténuer ces inégalités et promouvoir des opportunités équitables pour les femmes au sein du paysage linguistique algérien.

MOTS-CLÉS: Barrières linguistiques, inégalités de genre, accès des femmes, société algérienne, ressources et opportunités

Introduction

Delving further to specify the situations, types of resources, and the opportunities available to Algerian women, it is expected that this study will offer added clarity and up-to-date information, and illustrate an overall picture of the access Algerian women currently have to various resources and opportunities compared to men or other women in different circumstances.

At the centre of the subjects of language, poverty, and lack of education, this research will scrutinize the correlating impact these factors have on the prevention of women achieving self-improvement and empowerment, in respect to the obtainment of information, and the access to resources and opportunities. Many at the continental level value Arabic and French as the "voices" of women collectively (Lemsine, 2012). This key statement outlines the importance and impact that language has on women, and how a miscue in language has the potential to limit information and resources to one party, such as the case with Algerian women. The research puts consideration to women like this who are needing information or resources from a male or different party, who have met on many occasions, claimed the information is hard to access or that they did not know it existed in the first place.

This study revolves around the experiences and encounters of Algerian women, their access to resources and opportunities within Algerian society, and the hindrances that limit their full potential. A major part of this research aims to take a look at the interaction and association of language as a barrier to the qualms and constraints of these women in regards to personal improvement and empowerment.

1.1. Background of the Study

This study is a feminist investigation of language use and gender inequality in Algerian society. The choice of Algerian society is based on the fact that Algeria is considered to be a moderate Muslim country, and it is also the second largest country in Africa, with a total population of 32,818,500 (CIA, 2008). It is true that Algeria has progressed in the area of education, and it has done so by trying to bring equality to its citizens through its bilingual education policy using both Arabic and Berber. The position of women in society today has vastly improved since the end of the civil conflict in 1999, although there are still struggles for women in effort to reach a better position in society. However, the reason why Algeria is an interesting case to look at is because of the cultural ideology that still exists today of male dominance and its priority over women in society. This ideology of a male-dominated society remains reflected within Algerian laws, and also within the great emphasis on preserving the purity of the Arabic language, resulting in the devaluing of women's use of the language.

After 1962, Algerian independence marked a turning point in the status of women. Independence for the country meant the departure from the colonial languages of French and Berber and putting emphasis on the use of Arabic. This was complemented by land reforms as well as nationalization of the country's oil. However, the changes in social policy further aimed at bringing cultural change also had adverse effects on women. A consequence of these social changes was that the position of women was moved down the list of priorities due to the revolutionary zeal to reform a national Algerian identity. This was followed by Islamisation and Arabisation of laws in attempts to bring change to social institutions that brought about political instability and terrorism. Today, the Algiers Charter which was created in 2006 serves as a rope tied to the political and social changes occurring in Algeria, and it is reinforcing the notion that any changes made to today's society must be based on cultural, ideological, and spiritual authenticity.

1.2. Research Objectives

The first and most crucial objective of this study is to closely look at the complex relationship between language discrepancy and gender unfairness and to determine in which way each influences the opportunities and access to resources available to women in Algerian society. By identifying the specific areas in which language barriers intersect with gender discrimination, it could become possible to propose satellite programs that would aim at helping women to overcome both restrictions. Research will be done to determine whether women are at a further disadvantage when language barriers are crossed on the one hand, or the other way, and to classify specific ways in which each barrier is affecting their access to resources. This will involve extensive data collection from both primary and secondary sources.

Secondly, the findings of this research will be used to inform policymakers and those involved in women's empowerment programs in Algeria about the true depth of the obstacles facing women and to suggest ways in which future programs can be tailored to simultaneously overcome gender discrimination and language barriers. Knowledge from this study should prove useful in refocusing and redirecting efforts to improve women's status in Algeria and work towards the Millennium Development Goals. A final objective is to inform behaviour and attitudes of Algerians at the grassroots level by providing concrete evidence of the relationship between language and gender inequalities and by demonstrating the importance of changing attitudes about the roles and status of women in Algeria. This may involve dissemination of the research findings in various written and oral forms, and could potentially influence the direction of the recent changes to the Family Code in Algeria.

1.3. Significance of the Study

In our proposal, the significance of this study is to raise awareness of the situation of Algerian women today. We aim to bring the attention of the readers, their papers, and the Algerian government to the seriousness of the gender discrimination prevalent in Algerian society. By exploring the language barriers and gender inequalities suffered by Algerian women, we

hope to provide a deeper understanding of the issues that prevent women from being involved in and advancing through education as a means to access resources and opportunities. Most importantly, we seek to make known the voices and experiences of Algerian women, which are vital in understanding the extent and depth of the problem. We will provide an overview of the challenges experienced by students and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. We hope this will be useful to the Algerian government in developing policies and programs in support of gender equality and women's advancement. Additionally, we aim to open up opportunities for international networking and collaboration on issues related to gender, education, language, and development. We are advocates of positive social change and are committed to working in partnership with Algerian people and the international community. Our research has the potential to benefit Algerian women students and educators in practical ways. Finally, our research may be useful in the academic and professional development of our team and for students of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) where we are based.

2. Language Barriers in Algerian Society

With the shift in focus from war to development, more attention has been paid to the effects of language barriers on the empowerment of women in less developed countries. This study chooses to investigate this problem as it affects Algeria, and its implications on the access of resources and opportunities for Algerian women. In the Algerian context, the combination of colonization and a reverse Arabization process has resulted in widespread multilingualism, with standard Arabic, French, and numerous dialects, including a significant Berber-speaking population. French is widely considered the language of power and modernity and a necessary tool for social mobility and access to information, while the Arabization policy has only been successful in making the language more ubiquitous without increasing its utility in practical terms.

Dialect speakers are often more comfortable in either dialect or French, while often having only a passive understanding of the other official language. French and Arabic speakers faced the same dilemma with similar

results. This has led to a situation in which very few Algerians are truly bilingual, and a significant portion of them are functionally illiterate in one of the official languages. This has stalled the entry of much of the population into the contemporary sector of the national economy, where an increasing amount of jobs require proficiency in French and/or a high level of education in the language. For women, the situation is far direr. French-educated women have found themselves to be both underemployed and underpaid, while the education of dialect-speaking women has actually regressed along with the social status of their communities, with some even losing the opportunity to educate their children in their own language. (Bouabdellaoui, 2022)

2.1. Language Diversity in Algeria

The official language of Algeria is Arabic, which is spoken by the majority of the population. At the same time, the Amazigh language (earlier referred to as Berber) has recently been recognized as a national language alongside Arabic and will be a mandatory course in the Algerian school system. This has been seen as a progressive move as it is a symbol of recognition of the Amazigh culture. However, the fact that the language is a mandatory course indicates that the status of the Amazigh language in Algeria has often been viewed as one of second class.

There is also a small Algerian community that speaks the French language in everyday life or within the family, often a remnant of the colonial period. The ongoing position and presence of the French population has been the butt of a number of jokes and light-hearted satire, as it is often seen as a language of privilege and wishful thinking for the future, as opposed to actuality. French is still present as a second language in education and government and is accessible to the upper and middle classes. The various languages have led to a situation in Algeria where there is not so much a language barrier, but a barrier of language quality, state, and status.

There is also an issue of inter-Arabic dialect comprehension which has been noted to cause issues in social and professional situations between individuals from different areas of the country. While no study has been done on the ethnic and class breakdown of individual understanding of the Arabic

and Amazigh languages, anecdotal evidence reveals differences of language use and proficiency can form cultural, economic, and social barriers. (Bouherar & Ghafsi, 2021) (Bendellah & Chergui, 2022)

2.2. Implications of Language Barriers

Healthcare is also an area where language barriers have had pronounced effects on Algeria's female population. French is the primary language of medical and pharmaceutical education, and thus many of the most qualified doctors and medical professionals do not speak Arabic or Berber (some of whom consider it beneath them to do so). This presents very dangerous situations in a country where former President A. Bouteflika has noted a "catastrophic" state of healthcare. There have been many instances of mistranslation between patients and doctors, leading to improper diagnoses and medications. A recent study in pediatric cancer patients showed that all instances of medical errors in Algeria were due to communication problems, with one error leading to the death of a patient. On top of this, traditional healers are still commonly sought out due to their abilities to speak local languages and their cheaper cost, both direct results of a marginalized population's lack of access to healthcare. (Kerarma, 2022)

The French language, imposed upon the country by colonizers, is the medium for education, business, and politics. This has several implications for women. Men have generally had more access to French language education, meaning that women are excluded from a world of job opportunities. At present, fewer than 20% of Algerian women are literate in French (compared with about 70% of men), thus the majority of job opportunities are automatically closed to them (Laaredj-Campbell, 2023).

The focus on French has also marginalized Berber speakers, whose poverty rate is double that of Arab Algerians. French-educated men will generally have less desire to marry a woman from a rural village, as her inability to speak French will in turn limit the opportunities of any children they may have. This will lead to increased endogamy within Algeria's class structure. As Berber culture is traditionally agrarian, many Berber women have been pushed into the role of farming to obtain subsistence. When a

Berber woman is farming to support her family, it is likely that her children will not learn the language of the school system and thus will be further marginalized from mainstream Algerian society. (Zeroukhi, 2023)

2.3. Access to Education and Healthcare

Algerian students face an abrupt and compulsory switchover from instruction in Arabic to instruction in French upon entering secondary school. In a study conducted in 2005, Amara found that many Algerian students lack a strong command of the French language and that this often culminates in secondary failure and dropout (Benrabah, 2007). This is particularly pertinent for the children of Berber or Arab-Berber families who reside in the predominantly Arabophone regions of the country. In the same study, Amara notes that many of these students are not fully literate in their mother tongue and therefore struggle with understanding either Arabic or French. Such students are placed in a linguistically marginalized position and in the case of girls, who already face a number of sociocultural obstacles to their education, this can be the deciding factor in their discontinuation of schooling.

Access to Education and Healthcare The ability to speak and understand the language of instruction is a fundamental element in acquiring an education. Unfortunately for many Algerian women, language barriers serve to perpetuate the gender gap in education. Algerian classrooms, especially in rural areas, are heavily gendered with the proportion of female students decreasing in relation to primary/secondary level distinctions. This is due to a number of factors, one of the most influential being that of parental attitudes toward education. The absence of legal enforcement and any significant punitive measures have rendered the gender bias in education largely unchallenged, particularly for girls. Moreover, the widespread poverty in Algeria has resulted in a marked increase in the number of children per family, and subsequently a decrease in educational resources per child. In this environment, girls are often under pressure to take on the role of 'little mother' or aid their older mothers in domestic duties, thus missing out on vital school time. Language barriers can be a decisive factor in dissuading girls from pursuing an education. (Abdullah, 2024)

Algerian society is comprised of a vast and diverse linguistic landscape. More than a decade of civil conflict has resulted in a treacherous socio-political terrain and a potential language barrier for aid organization workers. Due to the violent history leading up to and during the conflict, aid workers often face suspicion and resentment from Algerians who have long been wary of outsiders. These feelings are compounded when workers are seen as representatives of former colonial powers. Moreover, the conflict has brought about a general decline in societal values and trust, which can adversely affect women's understanding of and involvement in programs aimed at gender equality. This chapter will illustrate the effects of language barriers in Algerian society, focusing specifically on the androcentric nature of the Kabyle language, and how these barriers can impact women's access to education and healthcare; two areas fundamental to active participation in public life and the attainment of basic rights.

3. Gender Inequalities in Algerian Society

Algerian gender roles are formulated within an Arab-Islamic cultural framework characterized by a strong sense of public versus private spheres and rooted in colonial experience. The best description of the male breadwinner/female homemaker model comes from a report of a rural Algerian community in the early 1970s: "Arab-Muslim society regards the family as the basic unit. The family is male-centred and every member has a clearly defined position. The woman is subordinate, with authority over her children but not her husband" (Pugh, 1980). This statement is echoed by a recent study of Algerian professional women, who when asked to compare male colleagues with the possibility of working overseas answered that it would be more acceptable for a man to leave his family and women were only able to attain equal status in saying that "now to change mentalities and the patriarchal system". Recall here the value placed upon education and the ability to access a better life; such changes would have an arduous task in a society where half of the population is effectively locked into the public/private duality. (Kelalech, 2023)

Every bit as important as identifying the challenges women face in accessing resources and opportunities is an understanding of how underlying

gender inequalities manifest themselves and perpetuate the status quo. In this vein, Pugh extensively explores the uneven position of women in Algerian society, often treating gender as a variable interacting with other socio-economic characteristics. While little specific attention is paid to how exactly the situation for women has changed as Algeria has developed, many continuities with the past can be seen in contemporary dynamics. Perhaps most important in the cross-cutting character of this essay is the extent to which language barriers exacerbate gender disparities and serve to further disempower women.

3.1. Gender Roles and Expectations

While it is clear that rural and urban, rich and poor women experience these expectations in different ways, the similarity lies in the fact that they act as a hindrance to women's participation in areas outside the private sphere. Urban women generally have smaller families to care for and are in a better position to afford domestic help, thereby allowing them more time to venture into income-generating activities. However, the prevailing attitude is that this is only a minor deviation from the prescribed roles and these women often face ridicule for 'neglecting' their families. The assumption that women are essentially taking 'time off' from their real duties means that even the more liberal-minded members of society do not fully accept the idea of women in roles other than those associated with their gender. This has an impact on government policy regarding women, which will be further discussed in the section on political participation. (Hima2020)

Coming from a society that is deeply influenced by the Islamic code leads to marked differences in the roles that men and women are expected to play. This is not unique to Algeria, but the impact is often more severe due to the lack of provisions for women in the political and economic spheres. The image of the ideal Algerian woman takes care of the home, raises the children, and defers to her husband in all major decisions. Women are seen as the keepers of society's honour and are thus expected to behave modestly and morally. This creates a paradox in that women carry a heavy burden of responsibility for maintaining the moral and cultural values of society yet have little influence at the political or economic levels.

3. Gender Inequalities in Algerian Society

Gender roles and societal expectations regarding gender roles are deeply ingrained in our culture. These roles dictate the behaviors and responsibilities that are typically assigned to individuals based on their gender. Men are often expected to be strong, assertive, and the primary providers for their families. They are encouraged to take on leadership positions and exhibit qualities such as competitiveness and toughness. Women, on the other hand, are typically expected to be nurturing, caring, and responsible for domestic duties. They are often encouraged to focus on their appearance and adhere to certain beauty standards.

These expectations can have a significant impact on individuals and how they perceive themselves and others. For example, men who do not fit into the traditionally masculine roles may face ridicule or feel pressure to conform. Similarly, women who do not conform to societal expectations may be subjected to scrutiny or criticized for being too assertive or independent. Furthermore, these gender roles can also limit opportunities and hinder progress towards gender equality. When individuals are confined to certain roles, it can restrict their ability to pursue their interests and aspirations. For example, women may face barriers when pursuing careers in male-dominated fields, while men may feel discouraged from pursuing caregiving roles. Recognizing and challenging these gender roles and expectations is crucial for creating a more inclusive and equal society. By promoting gender equality and accepting individuals for who they are, regardless of gender, we can break free from the constraints of these roles and allow everyone to reach their full potential. (Abdullah, 2024) (Mechali & Mahmoudi, 2021)

3.2. Economic Disparities

The jobs that Algerian women hold are gendered, with the majority of women working in the agricultural sector, followed by women in the services sector. This means that they receive the lowest wages and are often poorly treated or not paid at all. The fact that Algerian women work for approximately 10 hours per day, compared with 7 hours for men, yet still have the main responsibility for taking care of their household, is an indication of the significant amount

of unpaid work, or second shift, which women perform. In the wake of the World Bank's policy of downsizing public sectors in many developing countries, the implementation of structural adjustment programs in Algeria has meant that many of the existing rights and benefits for women in the workplace have been eroded. This is all hurting women's economic position and also on the quality of life for their families.

The historical gender division in Algeria has meant that women's access to the resources and opportunities needed to fully participate in the national development is extremely limited. This is due to the fact that women's participation has always been viewed as an addition to the male norm, as opposed to being a productive entity in its own right. The gender-specific nature of Arab-Muslim culture, the socialization process, and the devaluation of women's contribution and productivity all play a part in restricting women's full involvement in the development process. (Rouabah, 2022) (Belaidi)

3.3. Political Participation

Since women were granted the right to vote in Algeria in 1962, they have been significantly underrepresented in the political realm. The use of the Arabic language in the political sphere, and the later Arabization policy leads to the direct and indirect exclusion of Berber women from political processes. Although participation in the labour force has steadily increased, women's elegant stands at 14.7% in 1997, well below the percentage of those in the work force. These figures all prove lower political participation rates for women, regardless of the sector being Arab or Berber. (Rouabah, 2022)

In a 1995 study, of national and local government officials, 96% were Arab, and 87% could not speak even minimal Berber. Of these officials, 77% received their education after independence, and therefore fell under the Arabization policy. This demonstrates that the language barrier also affects the potential for women's later political participation. These statistics support the hypothesis that Arab women are less involved politically than men, and that the same is true for Berber women compared to Arab women. It has been argued that the inactivity of Algerian women in politics is due to their lack of interest or motivation to create change in their society. This finding is

inconsistent with the fact that Algerian women possess a strong history of political involvement during the struggle for national independence in the early 1960s. Over 13,000 women received combat medals for their involvement in the war effort, and others worked in various nationalist movements. This dichotomy can be explained by the difference between the perceived potential to create change during the struggle for independence, and the potential perceived in the current political climate. (Rouabah, 2022)

4. Intersectionality: Language and Gender

Administratively, the Algerian state, through education and the media, perpetuates the unfounded idea that the country is a homogenous Arab country, with French being the different language of the elite. The push toward Arabization has marginalized the Berber community and their language. In changing the constitution to make Modern Standard Arabic the sole official language of the state, the 1976 Language Act essentially eradicated the fundamental and universally spoken Algerian Arabic dialects and the Amazigh language. The Arabization has simultaneously imposed a linguistic form of social engineering, which has endeavoured to present Algeria with a new identity and separate it from its colonial history.

Algerian society, and therefore the academic community, are demarcated according to two main groups: The Arabic-speaking majority and the Berber-speaking minority. Arabic is the only language of several women in Algeria, and it is thought to be essential to a sense of their religion and identity as Berbers refer to themselves.

The intersection of language and gender is a focus of much current attention in the field, but the matter is far from being understood in its complexity and richness, especially in non-Western societies. Given the importance of the legacy of the Arab-British colonial regime and the present condition of Algerian multilingualism, understanding the relationship between language, culture, and gender is paramount for understanding the dynamics of women's status, roles, and identity.

4.1. Double Discrimination Faced by Women

Typically used to show the lack of power women have in Algeria. The more educated Algerian women become, the more reluctant they are to marrying or starting a family. This is due to the fact that Algerian spouses do not approve of wives who are educated, "arguing that education will lead to women demanding more freedom than husbands' families are willing to allow." This in turn creates a socially acceptable form of discrimination against educated females, leading to unfamiliarity with the language they're learning and less of a chance to practice. As a result, educated women tend to have a higher proficiency in French. However, with the fear of being seen as someone who has turned their back on traditional values, they will stick to speaking in the home.

An interesting possibility to be explored here is the difference in ideology between Algerian men and women on whether the mother should be teaching the child English or French. This is all considering that the educated woman has married. For single educated women, there are far fewer constraints. Their own proficiency in French may not translate into higher education for their offspring in English schools. However, for a single mother, this may be seen as the best way of escaping poverty. This also potentially allows for the learning of English to become a catalyst to a more prestigious job. For a single mother, it may be as simple as being a translator. For a better-educated woman already with a considerable income, it could lead to a complete change in career.

4.2. Impact on Women's Access to Resources

The most readily identified impact of women's unequal access to resources is the effect on their economic opportunities. In Algeria, economic activities, including the obtaining of waged work, access to credit and property rights, are predominantly conducted in Arabic, with French also being an important linguistic medium. Although the 1996 Algerian constitution promised the implementation of Arabic as the exclusive language of instruction, this has only been realized in small steps, and the last decade has seen a swing back to French across primary and secondary education. At tertiary level, there are

huge numbers of private institutions where the language of instruction is still French, explaining why only 31% of Algerian women are literate in Arabic, while much higher numbers are literate in French. This situation greatly disadvantages women, particularly those from low-income families and/or living in rural areas, who have less opportunity and lower levels of education in French. As the qualifications required for high-status or high-earning employment are beyond the reach of the majority of Algerian women, they are disproportionately reliant on the casual and service sector employment that has been described as the "informal sector," and it is estimated that nearly 90% of women fall into this category. This sector, as well as agriculture, tends to be conducted in Arabic, and Algerian women working in these fields may find that their children educated in French are the de facto translators between family and officialdom, highlighting the disempowering and exclusionary effects of the language divide.

4.3. Challenges for Women's Empowerment

An official study "Algerian women and the Francophonie" conducted by the Agence Inter-gouvernementale de la Francophonie revealed that Algerian women agreed that the status of women in Algeria was closely linked to the status of the French language in the country and that it was closely linked to the fate of Algeria itself. This comment reflects the link between the French language and colonialism, to the women and their marginalization and powerlessness. The same study also found that the desire to learn and master the French language was relatively weak for women, who would prefer an emphasis on teaching and learning in Arabic, which has created significant barriers to women seeking education and employment and overall advancement in society. The French language requirement particularly affects women in areas outside of the capital and larger cities, for work in public service, or those who have aspirations for political office. A recent example is the new requirement for medical school students to have a large knowledge of French. This has disadvantaged many women who wish to pursue a career in medicine.

Algeria has faced many challenges in its development due to historical, cultural, and linguistic factors. The national language is Arabic and

Amazigh (Berber languages), while French is often used in education, the media, and political affairs. Often, the knowledge of French can be associated with intelligence, credibility, and sophistication. In terms of language, Algerian women face several disadvantages. Algerian men and some families prefer to speak to them in French rather than Arabic, thus creating a language barrier for women who are primarily Arabic speakers. French is seen as a language of power and prestige, and men may actively learn French and discourage their wives or daughters from doing so in the hopes of maintaining a knowledge advantage for the purpose of control. This is significant as the acceptance of the language hierarchy may unconsciously suggest to the women that their own language and thus cultural identity is of lesser value. Women who can't speak French are therefore marginalized.

5. Government Policies and Initiatives

This shift marked the beginning of the women's movement in Algeria and brought much attention to issues of gender inequality. In 1985, the government created a program called the National Charter (which ended in 1989) seeking to modernize the family and empower women. The main goals of the program were to eliminate all laws and practices that perpetuate the inferior status of women, mobilize women to participate in the country's development, improve the status of women in the family and society, and eliminate illiteracy among women. Unfortunately, lack of funding and awareness of the program greatly affected the results. From 1985 to 1990, the Family Code went through attempts at reform in an effort to make it comply with the Charter, but conservative parties prevented any drastic changes from taking place. In 1993, the government implemented an economic restructuring program, which led to structural adjustment with international institutions and programs aimed at liberalizing and restructuring the economy. This had a large effect on the country's education and health sectors and the status of women who are the majority participants in the public sector. This program was also unsuccessful and worsened the economic conditions for many Algerians. Most recently, the government has created the National Plan of Action for Developing Women, which was implemented from 2002-2006, and follows with a second phase from 2006-2010. The first phase of the program was designed to assess the status of women and integrate gender

mainstreaming into policy, and the second phase is aimed at R&D efforts and long-term investment in human development. This is part of the government's attempts to participate in global millennium goals regarding poverty reduction and educating women. This program has faced much criticism and skepticism due to lack of awareness and absence of concrete results.

5.1. Language Policies

French is an important language in Algeria; it is not only a tool for communication, but also a key to success in culture, economy, and politics. The French colonial authorities had introduced their language in Algeria to serve their administrative and ideological needs, and the language has since been associated with modernity and power. However, following the independence in 1962, the Algerian government adopted Arabization to eliminate all French linguistic and cultural influence.

By the 1990s, Arabization policies had increasing support from political leaders and have since had a serious negative impact on Algerian women. These women were educated in French and have found themselves at a disadvantage in terms of the use and proficiency of Arabic. Decrees and laws were issued to gradually decrease the use of French in schools and universities, and to increase the amount of subjects taught in Arabic, ultimately leading to the point where all math and science courses were taught in Arabic. These policies have become a source of frustration and anger for many Algerians, particularly females and parents who do not have faith in the Algerian educational system. It is evident that the Arabization policies in Algerian education have been unsuccessful, with the methods of implementation flawed and the results mostly negative. The cross into bilingualism has caused widespread confusion and a decrease in proficiency in both languages, and for many, the complete transfer to Arabic in certain subjects has greatly affected the quality of education and the future opportunities for students.

5.2. Gender Equality Laws

The 1989 constitution recognized Algeria as a democratic and free republic. It states the guarantee of fundamental political, economic, and civil rights. The constitution also specifically mentions gender equality: "All citizens are equal before the law without discrimination of any sort." This clause reaffirms the principles laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This constitutional provision was further strengthened in 1996 when the government ratified the latter convention without reservations. The ratification of the CEDAW is a critical step in affirming Algeria's commitment to eliminate discrimination against women. Yet it also serves as a reminder of the current existence of such discrimination in many aspects of Algerian life. In ratifying the CEDAW, the Algerian government pledged to take all necessary steps to eliminate discrimination against women, a pledge that has yet to be fulfilled in a host of areas. Even so, the ratification of the treaty requires the annual submission of a national report to the United Nations on treaties progress in implementation. While Algeria has yet to submit the report, to do so would bring the government to accountability on issues related to discrimination against women.

5.3. Implementation Challenges

The discourse surrounding gender inequality and sufficient employment of women in the workforce extends far into areas of policy and implementation strategies. While on the surface, the Algerian government and its policy-making bodies have made concerted efforts to include women in all areas of decision-making and to approach gender from a cross-cutting perspective, implementation of suitable initiatives is a complex task. Over the past three decades, the Algerian government has ratified and signed several international and regional agreements, which emphasize the importance of women's inclusion and non-discrimination, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Such agreements have led to the formulation of women-specific policies and a series of national plans, including the National Action

Plan for the Integration of Women in Development (NAP) and the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Improvement of the Conditions of Rural Women. In addition to these plans, gender has been mainstreamed into sectoral policies.

An example of this would be the National Employment Strategy defined by the Algerian Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, which highlighted the necessity of promoting equal opportunities and treatment in employment and occupation. Similarly, other consultations relating to the fight against unemployment and the reforms of the educational system have included gender as a principal theme. Despite such concrete efforts, there remain problems in the coordination of gender equality initiatives, both within specific ministries and across different sectors. Interviews with Dr. Bouzid of the DGSN and Louisa Ait Hamadouche, a consultant for the United Nations Development Program, suggested that a lack of knowledge surrounding gender issues and a general negative attitude towards gender as a cross-cutting issue has impeded on the effectiveness of policy implementation. This point was supported by an evaluation of the NAP, conducted by the Department for the Advancement of Women, which stated that the plan suffered from weakness at the level of execution. In the opinion of the DGSN, this stemmed from the fact that the work was left to women and men whose concern for gender was not real. Many do not consider these policies to be of importance, and as a result, do not follow them through.

6. Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers and Gender Inequalities

In some foreign language institutions, the medium of instruction perpetuates gender inequality. The Belgian school system teaches Algerian children in French or Arabic, depending on whether they enroll in a French or Arabic speaking school. As mentioned earlier, children learn better in their native language and the language they are taught in has an impact on that language's status and instruction in other subject areas. In a two-year study of Malaysian schools, the English medium schools had far less development of bilingualism and trilingualism than the Malay or Chinese schools which started English

instruction in upper primary grades. The secondary effects on academic achievement of the languages of wider communication can only be assessed through longitudinal studies, yet they are important to consider for the future of Algerian women and their children.

Women reiterate that they can learn French if they have support in that area, especially at the lower ends of the educational system. Some have sent their children to private school in the hope of providing an environment more conducive to learning a second language, yet many have found that in doing so their native dialect and Arabic suffer as they are overtaken by French. Many of the children become interpreters for the mothers in dealing with the outside world. This role reversal can be empowering for the children, yet only perpetuates the dependency of the mother and her reliance on her children as a communication crutch.

6.1. Promoting Bilingual Education

The choice of languages in education is significant for women because it impacts their access to education and the types of opportunities that will be available to them in the long run. It has been found that education of minority and immigrant women in the language of the larger society often leads to negative acculturation and limits job opportunities. This is because women who are primarily housewives or employed in gender-segregated low-skilled occupations do not have opportunities to practice the language skills they learned and often revert back to their native language. In the case of Algerian women, the choice has been mainly bilingual education with Arabic being the language of instruction. However, the government has failed to provide the necessary teacher training or materials and has often used bilingual education as a façade to assimilate Berbers into the Arab-speaking population. As a result, women and children have faced difficulties and inconsistency in transition from their native language to Arabic and subsequently to French, which is necessary for entrance to higher education. This has been a key dropout point for many Algerian girls who are then steered towards Arabization programs and limited to job opportunities in the public sector. High illiteracy rates and dropout from school for women further exacerbate the cycle of gender inequalities and deprivation of resources.

The strategy for improved integration of native minority groups and equality in education is the practice of bilingual education. This method proposes transitional mother-tongue instruction alongside the official language as a means to maintain cultural identity while mastering skills in the larger society. In countries with a plurality of languages and cultures, such as Canada, India, and Israel, this method has been quite successful. However, in Algeria, where the impact of Arabization has been detrimental to the advancement of Algerian women and the Berber culture, this strategy is viewed as a threat to the promotion of Arabization and is thus a sensitive and controversial issue. This view is maintained by the fact that the primary victims of Arabization and the language policies in Algeria are Berber women. Though the Berber population has maintained much of its identity, language, and culture, Berber women are at a double disadvantage in a patriarchal society and are often deprived of education altogether. The male members of the family favour instruction of Arabic in order to further their own social status and career opportunities. As a result, Berber women have less access to literacy and formal schooling in Arabic or French.

Conclusion

It is widely recognised that education and training form key components to the empowerment of women worldwide, and enhancement of skills can provide a means to more equitable participation of women in society. In the Algerian context, since independence in 1962, there has been considerable effort to improve women's access to education, and significant gains have been made. The adult literacy rate for women is reported to have improved from approximately 10% at independence to around 60% at present (Taleb, 2023). Current levels of female youth literacy and enrolment in primary and secondary education are high, and approaching parity with men. This progress has been made possible by governmental commitment to education, the investment of a large portion of the national budget into the education sector, and the training of teachers. This is positive given that education has been, and remains one of the most powerful tools for effecting change in women's status, providing them with the ability to claim their rights and to realise their potential.

On this basis, it is especially important to consolidate these gains and to seek ways to capitalise on the investment in girls' education. An option for doing so may lie in the enhancing of quality and relevance of education for girls, which has the potential to act as a tool for their empowerment. Measures such as the reinforcement of teaching of specific skills and the provision of support for further education can ensure that girls are not only attending school, but are benefitting from their schooling and are able to move onto higher education or into the world of work with improved opportunities. This is vital, as the training and education of women has implications beyond the individual, and is associated with improvements to family health and nutrition, declines in fertility and better child health and education.

Language is a powerful tool for the preservation of traditions and cultures; however, it can also be used as a means of control and exclusion. As it has already been detailed, language is inextricably linked to power and domination, particularly the dominance of one gender over another. The language policies of the Algerian government since independence have resulted in the Arabisation of French-educated women, constraining their ability to fully participate in society.

One method of overcoming this limitation has been the promotion of bilingual education. This method is the first step in creating an environment in which women are able to feel confident and communicate effectively. However, it is not sufficient in addressing the inequality in that too often it is the men who benefit from bilingual education, subsequently becoming more proficient in French which is still considered the language of power and mobility in Algeria.

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