

**Gendered, Discursive Practices of Algerian Female
Engineers in Male-Dominated Domain: A Look into Gender
and Female' Professional Identities**

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ملخص:

يركز البحث الحالي على اندماج المرأة العاملة الجزائرية في المجالات التي يهيمن عليها الذكور، كما يبحث في تفاصيل تعقيدات مكان العمل والهندسة على وجه الخصوص التي تشارك في بناء الهويات المهنية الخطابية للعاملات. حيث يعكس مكان العمل الطريقة التي يديم بها الجنس الأنشطة التي تفرضها "الخطابات المبنية على الجنس" المناسبة لكل ثقافة والمرتبطة بالتقاليد والأيديولوجيات الاجتماعية التي تخدم المجموعة المهيمنة من الرجال "بطرق ذكورية" والتي تم تجنيسها وبالتالي قبولها كقاعدة. كما يعتبر مكان العمل سياقاً قد يفسر سلوكيات الناس كأفراد اجتماعيين. وتحقيقاً لهذه الغاية، يسلط هذا العمل الضوء على رفع مستوى وعي المرأة في المجال المهني الذي يبدأ من خلال إعطاء الاعتبار لحياتهم الخاصة والحوافز التي تواجههم في أداء وظائفهم المهنية ومشاركة تجاربهم المعيشية واليومية مع بعضهم البعض بينما يكافحون من أجل الحصول على مكائنتهم الاجتماعية ومشاركتهم مشاكلهم نتيجة للاتفاقيات الاجتماعية والأعراف المؤسسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الجنسية، الخطاب، الهندسة، المجال الذي يهيمن عليه

الذكور، المهندسات.

Abstract : The present research focuses on women's integration into male-dominated fields, it looks at the details of the complexities of workplace and engineering in particular that co-construct the discursive professional identities of female workers. Workplace mirrors the way gender perpetuates activities which are imposed by the "gendered discourses" appropriate to each culture and associated with the social conventions and ideologies that serve the dominant group of men in "musculinist ways" which are naturalized and hence accepted as the norm. Workplace as a context may explain people's behaviour at work setting or even outside as social individuals. To this end, this work highlights women's consciousness raising in the professional domain starts by giving account to their own lives and the barriers that face them to become workers and share their lived and day to day experiences with each other while struggling to gain their social status and share their problems as a result of social conventions and institutional norms.

Key words: gendered identity, discourse, engineering workplace, male- dominated domain, female engineers

1. Introduction

Based on the premise that occupational sex segregations are assigned by social norms of placing men and women in society that raise a personal curiosity and desire about the entry of women in men's fields in a patriarchal society in which the employment of women is still a matter of debate on the Algerian floor due to the instilled social conventions which consider women as secondary to men throughout history. Besides, The effects of modernization in Algeria have been an inhibiting factor

to the advancement of women as they become more educated and pushed to enter the workforce. (Rohloff, 2011, 2012: 24). Despite the contemporary law changes which serves the needs of women in all aspects of life such as: divorce, work...favoured by media discourse, women are under the mercy of men who have the supreme position by virtue of patriarchal assumptions. Therefore, education and employment are among the indicators that reflect and perpetuate the division of occupations and career choice for both men and women. (See Moghadam, 1990). Gender division of labour refers to the assigned different kinds of work associated to men and women based on their gender roles and defined by particular gender and social patterns in their lived experiences to the extent that their performative roles are understood in terms of what society defines them as appropriate or not for both men and women. Gender differences and roles are transformed in the workplace culture by means of gendered discourses which are deemed appropriate for men and women where always one sex is dominant than the other through the process of "gendering", Mullany draws on Freed (1996) to say: "*This "symbolic" gendering can be perceived within the dominant overarching Perspective of gendered discourses, with social and cultural norms and expectations Dictating whether women or men are thought to be best suited to particular social roles, activities and overall practices*" (2007:42).

Absolutely, engineering identity has gained much interest in science, technology studies as well as sociolinguistics that examine the discursive construction of engineering identities as a scope of research (Paretti & McNair, 2012). Engineering has been loaded with discourses of gender and power relations that

respond to social norms about the notions of being an engineer. Engineering profession, among other professions, is an area of enquiry where gender and professional identity interrelate together. Basically, female engineers' experience highlights the relevance of the salience of both gender and professional identities in the course of females' underrepresentation (**Jorgenson, 2002**). Here again, we can say that engineering is a context for the intersection between institutional and discursive identities. Particularly, the scope of the present doctoral research revolves principally around exploring the experience of Algerian female engineers and the impact of the culture of this domain on the construction of their social identities embedded with the challenges they endure to cope with their male counterparts focusing on how discourse produces women's identities that is to say how these identities are discursively gendered in a historically gendering male-dominated culture. Hence, Engineering represents only one scope which reflects the silencing of female workers, among others, who experience pain and difficulties to do their work and to be a member of the majority group that define engineering to be the product of men's natural drive for being the norm which left women to challenge in order to survive in their workplace. Doubtless, the pain behind female's experiences can be conducive to do this research. It is through this thesis that female engineers who are stereotyped without receiving any support, it is through it, females challenge and voice their actual underrepresentation that change to a great extent of their actual lived experiences through being motivated despite the lack of motivated environment i.e. the workplace. Sincerely, any attempt to describe the world is made via language (**Elderly 2001**), our primary aim is to examine how these discourses of

gendered workplace construct females identities. By insisting on the possibility sharing their lived professional experiences we aimed at seeking how engineering as a workplace culture is discursively gendered as well as how female engineering identities are discursively constructed.

Surely, for the purpose of fulfilling the objective of the present research, the research methodology is carefully chosen along with adequate methods so as to approach the research problem. Basically, data collection methodology combines different methods to arrive at valuable answers to the research questions based on participants' observation which provides an important aspect of setting of investigation. Like any other methodological tools, questionnaire is a method widely used to provide quantitative data that is acknowledge by many researchers from different linguistic disciplines. Questionnaire is based on what questions to emphasize in order to provide as many fruitful data to enrich the research findings. Without any doubt, the research about exploring female engineers' discursive identities requires interviews as a crucial research method to provide a clear image about the truth of the lived experiences of female engineers themselves who focus on both descriptive and narrative aspects of their lived world of engineering that report how things appear from the speaker's lens. The research setting was the Algerian Company of Sonatrach; the study relies on the contribution of Algerian female engineering in attempting to explore the reality of female engineers in light with the present constraints in the domain.

2. Gendered, Discursive Practices of females' professional identities

Researchers in discourse analysis studies paid attention to the particular ways the multiple and dynamic ways discourse contributes to construct gender identities as well as professional identities at workplace in relation to gender as a crucial element in identity construction.

Jane Sunderland (2004) is well-known of combining the term “gendered discourse” to highlight how “discourse is gendered” by relating it to the social practices; a context where the gender behaviors take place. Accordingly, these gendered discourses regulate men and women gendered practices. Again, in her fruitful book: *Gendered Discourses*, Sunderland (2004) confirms that gender difference in discourse “*is a significant “lens” for the way people view reality, difference being for most people what gender is all about*” (Mullany, 2007:35). She argues that the naturalized gendered discourses highlight the clear cut difference between men’s and women’s speech which provide the basis of how patriarchy is established in society (Sunderland, 2004).

Many researchers view gender as something which is part and partial of our lives that, it is always relevant in our speech as Cameron (2001:170) points out “*whatever else we do with words when we speak we are always telling our listeners something about ourselves*”. In his indexing theory, Ochs (1992) declares that our speech styles of both men and women index gender a place where stereotypes and ideological conventions are at work. Ochs’s theory clearly determines the relation between language and gender which should entail a “tacit understanding” of ‘norms, preferences and expectations regarding distribution of this work vis-à-vis particular social identities of speakers, referents and

addressees' governed by linguistic norms which can be sometimes non-exclusive i.e. they can be used by both men and women as well as other linguistic norms which are assigned either for men or women which are governed by social expectations about masculinity or femininity that influence our language preference and determines individual's social identity. Sunderland (2004) states that gender indexes define language use for men and women, she (2004:14) posits: *"While one use of gender indicates particular grammatical properties of a language, the use of gender within which we are concerned here concerns humans and entails any differences between women and men being socially or culturally learned, mediated or constructed"*. The indexing approach affects our choice and usefulness of speech and interactions based upon gender distinction which are crucially linked with ideological beliefs and thus expectations of femininity and masculinity are constructed whereas speakers who violate the expected linguistic style according to his gender will be negatively treated and being perceived as deviant from the expected norms (Mullany, 2007: 32-34). Ochs's (1992) theorization confirms the view that gender is omnipresent in everyday life from our early lives. Later, Holmes(2005:57) evaluates gender as "background framing construct" which influence people's unconsciousness of deciding what is thought to be "appropriate" and what is not in the workplace for instance (Mullany 2007:32). To add, the indexicality model reflects language use in relation to gender which underpins identity perception in the social structure. As gender moves to be relevant in user's speech styles through "indexes", Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Holmes (2000a) identify typical and appropriate "feminine" and "masculine"

interactional styles that reflect ideological and stereotypical notions about masculinity and femininity produced through subtle ways in the managerial workplace context. Gender norms are, thus, one dimension that people take into consideration either consciously/ or unconsciously to display “appropriate ways of talking” or what Holmes (2006:05) elaborates “appropriately gendered ways of talking” that is tied to social expectations and social meaning that are transmitted throughout the course of “language in context” that convey gender meaning about femininity or masculinity of particular ways of talking or particular discursive strategies. Thus, Holmes explains that our ways of talking index gender which are associated with particular ways of interactions, behaviour, activities, roles which are “culturally coded as gendered” (Holmes,2006: 06) that vary in relation to social contexts which contribute to “*the construction of their normative and unmarked gender identity; strategies which instantiate and reinforce ‘the gender order’*. These form the discursive resources from which such individuals construct or interactionally accomplish the kind of gender identity they want to convey” (Holmes, 2006: 06-7). Such strategies are interpreted in specific social contexts within specific communities of practice of the professional settings where individuals’ interactions are “gendered” as a part of “doing gender”, people use “normatively gendered ways of talking ‘using’ unconscious choices which index gender identity” and professional identity which indicates their belonging to specific workplace whereby indulge in particular normative ways of femininity and masculinity, Holmes (2006:09) adds: “*If gender is omni-relevant, then familiarity with what is unmarked in relation to doing gender identity is a necessary basis for engagement in any social interaction,*

including talk at work. Identifying norms of interaction, including gender norms, is thus an important starting point in interpreting the social meanings encoded in workplace talk, and especially in identifying the significance of strategically marked vs. unmarked usage in signalling gender identity”.

Through Foucault’s lens to power analysis, feminists take step forward to resist gender stereotypes and roles surrounding by the differences between feminine and masculine discourses that provide a clear cut differences between masculinity and femininity which are defined in opposition to each other as a result of a hegemonic patriarchal social structure. This view clearly highlights women’s oppression by naturalized means of patriarchy; a critical term in gender and feminist studies. Drawing on the before-mentioned Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemony, which focuses on the role power plays through means of discourse by gaining a social consent, Walsh (2001:17) argues that “Musculinist Hegemony” establishes the basis for dominant discourses to take place, it is “*embedded in impersonal discursive practice and institutional structures commonly associated with men*”. This view works in conjunction with Foucault's theorization of the concept of “orders of discourse” which is conceptualized in terms of social conventions and norms that influence the production of discourse, since those norms are produced in a patriarchal structure they are purely “Musculinist” (Walsh, 2001; Foucault, 1978). So, “Musculinist Discourse” produces the discourse related to gender differences i.e. the production of masculine discourse as well as feminine one that are categorized as socially distinct from each other. Moreover, discourse is intrinsically linked with power and ideology in the

way it structures individual actions and activities in Foucault's theorization. Feminist scholars take advantage to uncover those ideological practices embodied within discourse to raise the issue of resistance to dominant ideologies that construct speakers' social identities (Mullany, 2007).

In order to understand how gender perception persists in relation to ideology and stereotypes, Mills (1995) provides a better explanation of how "ideologies of gender as a social construct" works in light with social structure which gives birth to the existence of gender inequalities conveyed in language, "*ideologies of gender are not solely oppressive, they are not simply imposed on women by men. Women and men construct their own sense of self within the limits of these discursive frame-works, and build their pleasures and emotional development, often in conscious resistance to, as well as in compliance with these constraints.*" (Mills, 1995:02)

To illustrate, in the workplace culture, women's position is threatened i.e. many women workers receive the "double bind"; a concept articulated by Robin Lakoff (1990) to shed light on women's situation in the workplace where they find themselves in a hard position; if they follow the expected feminine behavior or speech they will receive negative treatment in turns as being inadequate for the job whereas women who adopt masculine characteristics will face pressure, will be stigmatized and receive negative evaluation. Lakoff (1990) argues that women workers face "no win-situation" and women's natural place is being outside the profession i.e. in the domestic sphere, she (1990:206) claims a woman "*can be a good woman*

but a bad executive or professional; or vice versa. To do both is impossible.”

3. Engineering Workplace Culture: Men’s Space and In/visible Women

Faulkner (2006) states that engineering workplace culture is marked with gender inclusive dynamics through the process of “doing gender” by means of “doing the job”. Besides, the practices involved within workplace culture serve more men than women that is perceived as “men’s space” who feel a sense of belonging to such culture. Beyond, the practices deeply involve the “in/visibility paradox” as coined by Faulkner (2006) that women experience routinely in their engineering workplace culture. Engineering as men’s space is experienced through routine practices which show men’s fraternity with each other reinforce women’s absence through using dominant linguistic items such as the generic “he” and the term “men” referring to both men and women which dictates the masculine culture of engineering which render women invisible who have to work hard than men so as to achieve “the same level of easy acceptance with new associates that men achieve” (2006:11). Nevertheless, the masculine culture of engineering is reflected through offensive specific “non-work topics of conversations”, tolerated offensive humour, sex talk and “dirty talk” which put even other men and women uncomfortable while any challenges or oppositions to face these practices risk them to lose “membership of the community” as well as the sense of belonging. Moreover, the workplace culture as a context for interaction is characterized by more range of masculinities than femininities who in turn experience pressure to show or to hide their femininity which

correspond to the in/visibility paradox i.e. women are invisible as women/feminine but invisible as engineers who must re/establish their identities constantly with others and have to work hard to achieve membership. Precisely, women are visible (feminine) and invisible (professional status) at the same time and to become visible; they have to work hard twice, to be visible is to adapt characteristics in order to fit in the majority culture which is the masculine one and dominantly men's space while facing pressure not to behave in ways perceived masculine "not to lose their femininity". Accordingly, Faulkner suggests through her findings and observation that men engineers describe women colleagues in terms of their physical appearance which reflect their perception of the female engineer as only visible in terms of her appearance rather than her professionalism. Latter, Faulkner's work (2007) identifies engineering as a site where there is complex gender and professional tensions in relation to the available masculinities of engineering, the technical/ social dualism and gender in/authenticity about what constitutes "real engineer" while actual women's position is questioned in light with the conventional gendering of engineering which continues to reproduce women's identity in terms of social skills while the technical and technological abilities are associated men's identities that profoundly operate in the dynamics of engineering which captures the normative pressure and reflect the complex gender dynamics that constitute engineers' troubled identities which need to explore men and the masculinities of engineering by which women come to establish a sense of belonging /or not belonging to engineering as a community of practice where the "normative pressure" that persist around men as the norm and women's position as unusual which is fragile which reminds us

about gender in/authenticity. Engineering, hence, is a gendering workplace that women experience gender inauthenticity and (in)visibility in contrast to men who are safe because they hold the normative position which is taken-for-granted and already normal which is produced and reproduced traditionally. This sheds light on engineering as a trivial “gender work”, “*since gender is intricately interwoven with engineering, as it is with any other social institution, gender and engineering are co-produced or co-constructed*” (Faulkner, 2007:334).

Gender is inauthentic for women following the symbolic gendered norm about the technical/social dualism which stand as mutually exclusive i.e. to be technical is not to be social and engineering in this way is a normatively technicist focus. Engineers as Faulkner claims have “troubled identities” because they experience normative pressure to persist as engineers which is significantly gendering, men celebrate “blue color” or “nuts and bolts” culture of engineering which traces the traditional association of engineering with masculinity. There is a strong focus on “mutuality” which is interwoven between the “nuts and bolts” and the “laws of physics” that are entailed within science and technology which construct and reflect a technicist engineering identity that is associated with the masculine code and in order to be more gender authentic for women, they have to move to technical skills as “real engineers”. Faulkner (2011) uses the term of gender in/authenticity to unpack the non-congruence of gender engineering identities for women and to capture the gender congruence and engineering identities for men i.e. engineering is perceived to be gender authentic option for men while it is gender inauthentic for women which are reinforced by

gender stereotypes and the conventional norms in society which reveal the in/exclusion within the technical social dualism that surrounds engineering which is a must in seeking membership that perpetuates the tradition of men's existence as normal.

3.1. Discursive Practice in Engineering

Joanna Wolfe (2012) interesting article: *Communication Styles in Engineering and Other Male-Dominated Fields* shows how gender-related differences between men and women prevail in interactional styles and norms in the course of their communication governed by "stereotypically masculine styles" by exhibiting communicative communication styles that are perceived as highly masculine that construct masculine identities in male-dominated engineering which in turn exclude women from participation and "create a double bind for female engineers who are perceived as unlikeable and difficult to work with if they engage in competitive communication and as insecure or incompetent if they do not" (2012: 01). As engineers, women always face conflicts from their male co-workers in focus teams because women quit participating in teams because they seem to be refused to speak or to voice their ideas, they are excluded to be recognized as member expertise which drives them to be excluded and even dropping out their professions. Wolfe finds that two main factors are behind women's exits in engineering- as an effect of men's dominance in engineering- which is evident in their communication styles. First, "self-promotional communication" discourages women and works in favour of men who display aggressive behaviour and confidence that assert their superiority over females in engineering team work, while women who confront to men are excluded and receive social sanctions.

Men use “self-promotional communication” while women use “self-deprate speech” and prefer not to talk about their conflicts or shortcomings and technical skills which is an “evidence for their insecurity and incompetence” by men. Yet “self-promotional communication styles” affect negatively both men and women in the sense that they “inhibit individuals from accessing their own shortcomings, learning from their mistakes, and asking others for help”. Second, “interruptions” as competitive communication style acts as an advantage which is related to “status in a group” and characterized as an act of superiority that stands for men who use intrusive interrutions while the ones interruted are supposed to be women who are positioned in lower status and made silent (2012: 12).

3.2. Troubled Engineering Identities

As it is claimed by Faulkner, engineering is a mixture between the technical and the social skills. Yet, engineering provides “*troubled engineering identities*” which are sustained with both gender and professional dynamics. There is an evidence between the mismatch between social and technical and the actual image of engineering that engineering reinforces people with technical skills which are associated with masculinities more than those with social skills and this makes masculinities privileged because men “fit in” with their masculine characteristics of the powerful expertise, the need to master technology which is “*strongly masculine coded*” and historically and culturally linked to men. Also, their playing down of the social draws on the gendering practices that indoctrinate the stereotypical images of the real engineer which act towards the conventional gender stereotypes of and about engineering. Based on this, engineer’s

professional identity are based on the “available masculinities of real engineer” while women engineers’ status remains at risk and “fragile” compared to men.

Engineering identity is constrained with the gendered practices and the conventional stereotypes about the image of engineering which calls for the urgent need to recognize the diversities that exist amongst individuals in order to attract talented people to get the best valuable culture of engineering without any requests for limited characteristics or demands of social and technical realm which polarize the differences between men and women as essentially different.

4. Available discourses in engineering:

4.1. The discursive re/production of gender/ explicit orientation to gender:

Gender is evident both implicitly and explicitly through the course of conversation between engineers. Females are differentiated from males in the use of some stretches of talk such as males who are expected to be the norm while female engineers are thought to be an exception in engineering which is a site for the taken for granted institutional discourses and assumptions about employees that reinforce the requirements for “sameness” in which males as the norm expect people like them which contributes to result in females’ unequal treatment which force them to experience pressure about the tension of the requirement between “sameness” and “difference” which men explicitly refer to i.e. they index gender which discourage women from their proportion in engineering. This in turn highlights the gendering of engineering which requires the technical skills that involve the

differential construction between males and females professional identities.

65 percent of women engineers in this study justify their decision to do engineering as a career choice, it is because they enjoy it even though it demands to supply hard work more than men by spending more time because their presence in engineering is socially perceived as unusual i.e. engineering as a masculine domain force women to work hard not only to be successful and achieve their competence but also to negotiate their professional identities in order to fit in the engineering culture with the available masculinities. When asked about the characteristics of a good and successful engineer; one female participant argues:

“ Always men state that they are the best one who fit in engineering and who consider themselves as problem solvers while women are thought to be strangers. Sometimes when speaking about our professional competence we are kidded about... ”

Women’s awareness about the hierarchy between men and women which is evidently quoted in the above expert which signifies also stereotypical assumptions claimed by men of women’s incompetence about engineering.

4.1.1. The masculinity of engineering discourse vs. females’ Numerical minorities challenging the male norm

When asking female participants about the nature of engineering work all of them said that engineering is a difficult job to be engaged in and to persist due to the fact engineering is claimed to the traditional distribution of gender social roles that claim engineering to be a masculine domain which is a main

reason behind their numerical minorities whose presence is perceived to be unusual and unnatural unlike men who are to be the norm. a female participant confirms the above stated claim:

“...the masculine culture of engineering doesn’t need to be questioned because it is a male signed profession while women who come into it have to learn about the masculine culture and adopt masculine characteristics...”

When asking the participants about good professional and successful engineer, the majority of female participants compared their roles and characteristics to men; they consider men as the norm and draw on the hierarchical values between males and females engineering characteristics where male characteristics are preferable compared to those of females that is evident in females talk i.e. the masculinities of engineering have high hierarchical values that mobilize men’s characteristics and values as the natural norm . One female participant claims:

“ ...One cannot deny the fact that male engineers are active and ambitious and self-confident which is mainly due to the perception that their presence is something natural while female engineers reluctant and silent in mixed interactions but sure of their abilities as engineers...”

This hierarchy of characteristics between male and female characteristics is evident also in the following extract with another female participant:

“[mmmm] we prefer to talk about the problem and ask for help if needed while male engineers are silent most of the time don’t ask for help particularly when it comes to

technical matters because they claim that they excel in technology even when they talk they are rough and when asking for help you feel that they are hesitant”.

In the above discussion women categorize their characteristics in terms of differences displaying different working styles as if they are essentially different. The above extract demonstrates that women don't hesitate to consult help from others which is a sign of women's cooperative styles. In addition, they appear to value oral communication skills more than men do. Other female interviewees present male engineers in a negative sense among a set of male characteristics as “lacking patience” compared to female characteristics. They prefer instead to “work individually” , they tend to “be pretty about their achievements and projects”. Female engineers claim that females “ask for permission” while males don't do which is justified by their natural presence in their own space that push them to “assume leadership” over female engineers due to the privilege of their numerical dominance; one female engineer states:

“ engineering is historically over-numbered by men while women interact seldom because they are minority, and sometimes feel neglected, men find it easier to communicate with their peers because the setting is too dominated by males”.

4.2. Discourse of masculinity: offensive humour:

“Sometimes we find ourselves obliged to skip a conversation because male engineers frequently use rough talk and offensive humour such as sexist jokes and this

makes us feel uncomfortable by keeping silent or finding ways to deal with this ‘stupid matters’...”

The fact of men asserting themselves through rough talk ignoring female presence demonstrates that men are behaving freely in a culture they feel they belong to. This male strategy tends to exclude female engineers from participation in conversations where men show high frequency of self assurance. We can understand that women find themselves combating in male’s networks for the need of looking for a coping strategy either by “skipping the conversation” or “keeping silent” to deal with uncomfortable situation which is not the case for male engineers because they behave in a natural setting claimed to be theirs. Here, the participant constant use of “we” instead of “I” representing the all the female engineers indicate their account of the male norm as a dominant culture that seems to be unpleasant truth that female engineers experience particular difficulties to get involved in engineering workplace. The participant’s speech reflects another image of female’s exclusion from male’s working network where a greater tolerance of behaviour is prevailed and normalized. Worse of all, male’s offensive humour leads women to be unwelcome and unsafe at workplace.

4.3. Technology as a discourse of masculinity

Among the available discourse of masculinity is the discourse of/about technology being task focused while women tend to focus more on the communicative /social skills, they are caring about others as they approach their work, a female engineers posits : “ we are good at communication whereas for

men the most important thing in their work is technology, they are rough, task focused and get directly into the problem”.

Female engineers depict their practices with reference to communicative styles and coordination with others because they perceive them as an important aspect of fulfilling a job at engineering workplace; they negotiate work within the picture of communication as one female engineers said:

“We have to spend more time looking at the details of a technical work and more time on connecting and coordinating with others in order to gain support for our ideas, asking questions and find a solution to the problem”

Through describing their work practices, female engineers state that to accomplish a project in engineering one has to get through coordination and cooperation instead individual work in using the technical skills as males do. They hence argue that engineering work demands both communicative and technical abilities. In this sense, females appear to be patient and navigating the skill of working within constraints. In this sense, female engineers perceive a real engineer as both holding technical problem solving and supporting team work that is mainly a feminine attribute. They hence link their passion for engineering with both technical and communication skills yet this communication/ social skills appear to be invisible by male engineers since the engineering workplace is gendered which favors hegemonic masculinity and access technical skills (Fletcher,1999). Beyond, male engineers are associated with the characteristics and normative roles- associated with technology, productivity and creativity- which devalue female roles in

technology that shed light on gender imbalances that the culture of professional engineering forces technical skills that are related with male engineering.

5. Conclusion

The present article articulates the focus on the discursive de/reconstruction of Algerian female engineers' professional identities using social constructionist framework in the course of constructing their professional identities in interactional contexts in light with the complexities of engineering workplace culture throughout empirical evidence. The findings about gender and professional female identities are negotiated through their submission to the culture as well as adopting both masculine characteristics and norms and sometimes ways which paradoxically represent both females' difficulties and the tension between "sameness" to fit in the masculine domain and "difference" to highlight their femininities to represent themselves as professionally adequate for the job of engineering which is man's space who is thought to be best suited for this given type of work. Hence, engineering is discursively gendered. As minority group, female engineers articulate their awareness about the hierarchy of power relations that work through the course of engineering workplace. So, women are in a position to be subject to unequal treatment as professionals in light with the technical/ social dualism as well as (in) visibility paradox which highlight the complex work provided by females to reconstruct their professional identities which in turn brings to light the tension and the pressure they undergo of their passion conducted by their will in their persistence in engineering as a career choice and the normative male practices for female

exclusion. Briefly, Engineering is highly gendered that reflects to which extent females perceive engineering as typically naturalized male's domain. Most of them are discursively affected by the male norm and the culture of their jobs. The gendered engineering culture legitimizes male's presence and practices that becomes exclusive for them. Women's fear from exclusion forces them to make great efforts to gain acceptance and membership.

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