

# THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE FAMILIAL LINK BETWEEN TRADITION AND ASSUMPTION

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## Abstract:

The study aims to understand the changes in strategies that families employ to weave their network of relationships with others within what is known as the familial link. The objective is to identify the changes that have occurred in Algerian families from the traditional stage to the emergence of modern communication means, and to attempt to study and analyze those transformations that have affected Algerian families. The study relies on a descriptive analytical approach, in addition to presenting some previous studies related to the topic and commenting on them. Subsequently, the study moves from traditional Algerian families to modern ones, ending with families in the age of media and communication technologies.

**Keywords:** Family; Familial Relationships; Social Media; Traditional Pattern; Virtual Space.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The family is considered a social institution present in all societies, and it is also the basic social unit upon which the construction of society relies. Therefore, studying the family has become a necessity dictated by the circumstances of current societies, considering that the functions it performs are essential for society to maintain its balance and continuity. Moreover, it is among the most important institutions affected by change, as it has evolved over time from extended families to nuclear ones. This interest comes at a time when there is much talk about social ties and their relationship to the evolution of communication methods, especially familial relationships, or what is known as the familial link, as part of the social bond. The pattern of these relationships has changed in several aspects; for example, some of their roles, tasks, and functions have been abandoned. Healthy familial relationships and links need to be reproduced in order for children to acquire suitable behavioral characteristics to effectively interact with society. These links determine the paths of behavior among family members, leading to commitments, boundaries, and paths that affirm the nature of positive relationships within families.

Today's world is witnessing rapid changes in the field of communication and information technology, turning the world into a global village where information travels to all corners of the globe in a short time. These changes undoubtedly have a direct impact on individuals and the institutions that make up societies, including families. Families have adapted to these changes to benefit from the advantages they offer in all areas. Among these technologies are social media networks, which are electronic networks that allow each family member to create their own profile and then connect with others who share the same interests and hobbies through an electronic social system. Social media platforms have played a significant and

important role in bringing about significant changes in individual personality formation, enabling individuals to access information and express their opinions.

The individual is an integral part of the family entity, and the family, as a unit of society, is influenced by technological developments and modern means of communication. The family is not just considered the knot of relationships between generations; we also need to question its essence and the functions it still holds.

What we aim to do in this research is to attempt to understand the changes in the strategies that families rely on to weave their network of relationships with others, all within what is known as the familial link (Rachid, 2009, p. 237). Also, to understand the changes that have occurred in Algerian families from the traditional stage to the emergence of modern communication means and to attempt to study and analyze those transformations that have affected Algerian families. After representing the primary role of the family in solidifying cultural, economic, and moral heritage and working on building individual identity and establishing bonds and strengthening communication between family members and between generations (Qattoush, 2017, p. 52), we now witness family gatherings where dialogue and discussion are absent. What is known as social isolation for each family member due to the extensive use of communication methods through social media networks, leading to a departure from traditional patterns to the virtual space.

The topic of family has received significant attention in social studies, leading to numerous questions and problematic issues regarding family relationships and their connection to communication means. Among these questions related to the study, we find:

- What do we mean by familial links?
- What is the relationship between the family and modern communication means?
- How have modern communication means impacted Algerian families?
- What is the fate of Algerian families in light of the rapid evolution of these means?

### **1.1 Study Objectives**

- To define familial links in both the traditional and modern/contemporary stages.
- To understand the extent of the impact of modern communication means on familial links.
- To ascertain the nature of the relationship between family and communication.
- To explore the reality of Algerian families in the face of technological advancement.
- To identify the challenges faced by families due to modern communication technologies.
- To highlight the importance of modern communication means for Algerian families.

### **1.2 Study Significance**

Despite numerous studies approaching this topic from various angles, this study aims to provide a new and qualitative addition to the subject by understanding the transformations that have occurred in Algerian families during the traditional stage and after the emergence of modern communication means, as well as how Algerian families have adapted to these means.

## 2. Study Concepts

### 2.1 Family

There are several definitions of the family, including:

According to "Agbreht and Nyukson," it is a social bond consisting of a husband and wife and their children, or without them, and the family may be larger when other individuals such as grandparents, grandchildren, and some relatives join them, provided they share a common living with the husband, wife, and children (Al-Azah, 2000, p. 20).

According to "Auguste Comte," it is the basic unit in the body of society and the starting point of its development (Nimr & Samara, 1990, p. 09).

Or it is a social unit composed of several individuals connected by various family relationships (blood, marriage, etc.) living in a known and defined house, interacting with each other to satisfy their common and personal needs (Al-Mansour, 2006, p. 210).

Functionally it is A group of individuals bound together by marital or blood ties, consisting of parents and children, with an interactive social connection and complementary roles within a society where its members are affected by communications that occur within or outside the rural family through various communication means, striving to maintain its existence and presence.

### 2.2 Familial Links

In general, familial links are the relationships that bind a group of individuals who are connected by kinship. It begins with the spouses and extends to include the children and relatives of both the husband and wife (Tawfiq, 1996, p. 10).

Alternatively, it is the positive effort for the family's well-being and the creation of an atmosphere of understanding and respect among

the spouses, children, and everyone's commitment to fulfilling their duties in light of the guidelines governing the family (El-Sayyed, 2009, p. 20).

Functionally, it is an ongoing mutual interaction among family members over an extended period, facilitated through communication and the exchange of rights and responsibilities.

### **2.3 Social Media Platforms**

Social media platforms are defined as networks that gather a group of individuals with similar interests, inclinations, and a desire to form friendships through the use of the internet.

Additionally, social media platforms can be defined as "a system of electronic networks that allows the user to create a personal profile and then connect it through an electronic social system with other members who share the same interests and hobbies" (Radi, 2003, p. 75).

Functionally, they are a group of websites on the internet that facilitate communication between individuals in a virtual environment. They also enable users to access the latest news and exchange messages and calls in an easy and flexible manner.

### **2.4 Traditional Pattern**

The traditional pattern encompasses everything that humans experienced according to the requirements of life in rural areas, including field work and agriculture using traditional methods (Al-Saad, 2019, p. 15).

### **2.5 Virtual Space**

This concept carries various meanings. In William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, where this term first appeared, it meant a vast network of information connected by wires or directly linked to users' neural devices. It also signifies an alternate world made up of vast

amounts of information coming from companies, governments, and individuals, which the user accesses not by looking at a computer screen but through direct electrical connection (Nasr, 2015, p. 10).

Or it refers to virtual reality (VR), a computer-generated environment or series of events presented in three-dimensional space or a sequence of events that allows the user, using a dedicated electronic device, to see it on a display screen and interact with it in a way that appears real (Omar, 2008, pp. 1692-1693).

Functionally, it refers to those electronic platforms individuals resort to for interaction and communication, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others.

### **3. Theoretical Perspectives Interpreting the Study:**

#### **3.1 Theory of the Strong Impact of Communication Media**

This theory is one of the oldest theories that attempted to present and explain the issue of the mass media's influence on individuals. It prevailed in the early 1920s and 1930s, and was called the "bullet" theory (Khader, 2005, p. 38).

Advocates of this theory believe that mass communication media have strong, direct, and immediate influence on individuals. They have the ability to change attitudes, opinions, and inclinations in line with the policies of the media owner or users. Proponents of this theory base their beliefs on some psychological and social assumptions derived from the prevailing psychology and sociology of that time. For example, in the social field, it was believed that individuals in mass societies are psychologically and socially isolated creatures with no strong bonds connecting them. Therefore, they are easy prey without anyone to protect them from the media. Thus, this theory introduced different concepts to the study topic from various perspectives and contributes to the analysis related to interpreting the results.

### 3.2 Theory of Technological Determinism

Adherents of this theory are convinced that technology itself possesses the power to change the nature of social relationships and societal realities. Those who subscribe to this theory, known as "technological determinists" and optimistic about it, believe that technology holds the keys to human progress and see it as a pretext for its failure to achieve genuine communication in the real world, which humanity has been unable to achieve. They view it as a triumph of technology over the reality experienced by humanity, finding that individuals across the globe have failed to find a solution to maintaining constant connection, while technology, with all its power, intervenes to provide radical solutions that eliminate all the problems troubling them and work to bridge the distances between the farthest corners of the earth. This alone suffices for adherents of this theory. On the other hand, some who hold a pessimistic view see technology as nothing more than a tool for imposing dominance and control over weaker peoples, manipulating individuals' beliefs. It invades the personal lives of individuals and undermines their real social relationships in the real world ([Arab Organization for Administrative Development, 2013, p. 07](#)).

### 3.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory revolves around satisfying desires and meeting the latent needs within individuals, focusing on how people interact with media rather than discussing its effects on the audience. This means that the audience is not passive in accepting everything presented to them by the media but rather has specific goals they seek to achieve through exposure.

This theory is based on several assumptions related to how individuals use media and the gratifications they seek to achieve through this usage ([Al-Shami, 2002, p. 72](#)):

1. Members of the audience are active participants in the mass communication process, using media to achieve intended goals that meet their expectations.
2. The use of media reflects the needs perceived by audience members, influenced by individual differences.
3. Audience members choose the messages and content that satisfy their needs, and media compete with other sources of gratification in meeting these needs.
4. Audience members have the ability to identify their motives for exposure and the needs they seek to fulfill, thus choosing appropriate means to satisfy these needs.
5. Cultural norms prevailing in society can be inferred from the audience's use of media, not just from its content.

There are motivations that lead family members to embrace modern means of communication in order to satisfy cognitive or emotional needs that achieve psychological integration.

#### **4. Literary review**

##### **4.1 First Study**

In the study titled "Cultural Communication and Role Change in Saudi Families" conducted by researcher Abdul Ghani Abdullah Al-Humairi in 1991 within the Qudeid area of Mecca, the study aimed to offer insight into the evolving nature of families within the researched community. It sought to delineate significant shifts in family dynamics, structure, and size, while also examining the prevalent patterns of cultural communication within the community and its potential influence on familial characteristics and societal norms.

Employing descriptive, historical, and comparative methodologies, the study analyzed a stratified random sample of 145 individuals. Results indicated a noteworthy transformation towards

nuclear families of medium size, accompanied by shifts in the roles of women and children, indicative of progress in women's education and employment opportunities.

Moreover, the study highlighted a robust cultural exchange between the research community and external societies, facilitated by various mass media channels. Overall, the findings underscored substantial social and cultural changes across multiple dimensions, both material and non-material, within the research community.

## **4.2 Second Study**

In the study titled "The Impact of Internet Usage on Family Relationships among Saudi Families in Jeddah" conducted by researcher Ilham bint Farih bin Saeed Al-Owaidi in 2003 within Jeddah province, excluding its rural areas, the research aimed to investigate the influence of internet usage on familial relationships among Saudi families.

Utilizing a random sample comprising 200 families, the study revealed several key findings. Firstly, it observed a limited and modest impact of internet usage on family relationships within the study community. Secondly, approximately half of the respondents demonstrated a moderate level of organization in their internet usage, coupled with moderate levels of supervision. Thirdly, a substantial percentage of sample individuals perceived the internet as having significant religious and ethical implications for Saudi society.

Additionally, statistically significant differences were found between spouses' genders regarding the impact of internet usage on their relationship, as well as between the duration of husbands' internet usage and its effect on their relationship with their wives. Lastly, the study identified a notable inverse correlation between the duration of children's internet usage and its impact on parent-child relationships, as perceived by the parents.

### 4.3 Thierd Study

In the study titled "The Algerian Family: Evolution and Modern Characteristics," conducted by Algerian researcher Mustafa Boutefchiche, the focus was on the transformation of the Algerian family structure towards the nuclear model, propelled by various external factors encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions.

The research was conducted in three Algerian urban cities: Annaba, Oran, and Algiers, chosen for their significant industrial presence and profound societal shifts, offering a fertile ground for observation. A sample of 121 individuals was selected based on diverse criteria such as nationality, family composition, social class, and occupation, using random or unintentional selection methods.

Employing observation, interviews, and questionnaires as tools, the study unveiled several noteworthy findings. It revealed a transition in economic behavior from self-sufficiency to clustered consumption and a reconfiguration of familial dynamics where fathers, although no longer the sole decision-makers, retained their esteemed advisory role within the family structure. The emergence of modern nuclear families, geographically distinct from extended family units, was also noted, along with increased autonomy among children in selecting life partners and residences, potentially diluting parent-child bonds. Furthermore, mothers assumed dual roles as caregivers and wage earners, contributing to family finances. The study highlighted a shift towards democratic child-rearing practices akin to *laissez-faire* principles, fostering the rise of economically independent sons and the enhanced societal status of daughters, whose opinions, particularly regarding marriage, gained significance within the familial framework.

#### **4.4 Fourth Study**

Study conducted by researcher Nouriman Noumar on "The Use of Social Networking Sites and Its Impact on Social Relationships."

This study examined the impact of using social networking sites, specifically Facebook, on family relationships in Algeria. It was conducted as part of a Master's degree in Media and Communication Sciences at Batna University during the academic year 2011/2012.

The study employed a survey method, with the questionnaire as the tool for data collection. The findings indicated that the majority of Facebook users prefer comments and chatting through the platform. Additionally, the study revealed that users spend a minimum of three hours daily browsing the site, which could lead to addiction. However, the study also highlighted some positive aspects of Facebook usage, such as using it for educational purposes.

#### **5. Commentary on Previous Studies**

Previous studies serve as the theoretical background for any researcher interested in studying a particular topic. They can crystallize the research idea in all its aspects and attempt to address some variables that were not explored in those studies. By reviewing and studying previous research, we find a disparity and lack of consistency in the results of each study regarding the changes that have occurred in family ties, starting from the traditional era to the modern era, and then to the stage of the development of media and communication technologies.

Many studies have overlooked the definition of traditional family life and the transition to the modern stage, including the roles and functions performed by each individual, both within and outside the family, and their orientation. This extends to the stage of technological development of communication tools and social networks. These means have influenced the structure and pattern of

Algerian families, leaving both positive and negative impacts that previous studies did not address. Additionally, there is variation in the social strata of Algerian families.

### **Family Ties in Algerian Society**

Family ties serve as the main determinant for the upbringing within Algerian families. Through various relationships, social interaction among family members occurs, facilitating the transmission of values and standards to children. These relationships include the relationship between parents, the relationship of the father with his children, the relationship of the mother with her children, and the relationship among siblings (Tabchouche, 2011, p. 187).

### **Family Relationships in Traditional Algerian Society**

In traditional Algerian families, the most notable aspect of family relationships is simplicity. The relationship between parents is characterized by mutual respect and modesty. The key distinguishing features include cohesion, mutual support, and contribution to the implementation and reinforcement of family values. There was little conflict between parents despite the father's strong authority. Regarding the mother's relationship with the children, it was marked by providing care, love, and affection, remaining close to them despite her many obligations. As for the father's relationship with the children, it varied, but generally, the father had a strong influence, guiding his son in his actions and behavior, ensuring his religious education and awareness, with the expectation that the son would show pride, loyalty, and obedience to the father's authority.

For the relationship between the father and daughter, great attention was given to preserving the family's honor, as the daughter represented this honor for the family. Thus, safeguarding the daughter's reputation and chastity was one of the parents' most important duties (Tabchouche, 2011, pp. 188-192).

These types of relationships evolved within a traditional society characterized by several traits. Algerian families in the traditional community typically consisted of two or more nuclear families, spanning multiple generations, all residing in a shared living unit. Furthermore, the most notable feature of traditional Algerian families was paternal authority, with the grandfather, father, or sometimes the brother serving as the head and center of power, with absolute and final authority.

Regarding traditional systems, according to Pierre Bourdieu, the extended patriarchal family was under the responsibility and control of the family's head. The functions and duties of the family included three roles (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 33):

1. Economic function: Primarily related to the production unit, especially in rural areas.
2. Social function: Providing the individual with a life domain, whereby the family ensured education and security for the individual, while the individual demonstrated solidarity towards the family.
3. Moral function: Ensuring the preservation of familial and religious traditions through the socialization process.

The question remains about the continuity and perpetuation of these family functions in our modern and contemporary societies.

### **Family Relationships in Modern Algerian Society**

Significant social, economic, and technological changes have occurred in Algerian society, leading to transformations in family structures. The traditional family structure has evolved, with families becoming smaller and more nuclear in nature. Present-day Algerian families typically consist of a husband, wife, and their children. These families manage their affairs independently and seek autonomy.

Additionally, women's roles have changed, allowing them to take initiative and manage their personal lives while avoiding sharp conflicts with their families or surroundings (Butfnousht, 1984, p. 259).

Several factors, including education and employment opportunities, have contributed to these changes. Despite this, families strive to maintain familial balance alongside the diminishing authority of the father figure in modern Algerian households. Consequently, internal family dynamics have shifted, with men still holding the position of family head, albeit not with the same authority as in traditional extended families. The decision-making process between spouses has become prevalent in many Algerian households, indicating the extent of change that has affected male authority (Butfnousht, 1984, p. 13).

Regarding parent-child relationships, notable changes have occurred. These relationships are now characterized by relative freedom, equality, democracy, and understanding rather than fear and intimidation (Azzouz, 2001, p. 101).

In terms of sibling relationships, especially between brothers and sisters, some reservations persist, particularly during adolescence. Interactions between siblings often revolve around formalities, with avoidance of intimacy being common (Butfnousht, 1984, p. 275).

It's evident that modern Algerian families have transitioned from extended to nuclear structures, with family size diminishing over time (Qattoush, 2017, p. 31).

These changes have not only affected societal structures but have also penetrated family dynamics, altering the nature of relationships within individual families. Consequently, social responsibilities and familial duties for each family member have been negatively impacted.

## **Family Relationships in the Age of New Media and Communication Technologies.**

The current era has witnessed a rapid pace in the manufacturing and development of communication tools, especially in the field of information and communication technology. The communication revolution is manifested through the integration and convergence of the phenomenon of information explosion and the production of new and advanced tools and means, collectively referred to as information and communication technology.

These new technologies hold significant importance for individuals and communities due to the services they provide that facilitate daily life. There is no doubt that these technologies play a central role in the daily lives of individuals and their various connections, establishing a regular or semi-regular relationship with all aspects of their social life (family relationships, friendships, work, etc.). These technologies have become a social phenomenon, as stated by "Marshal McLuhan" ([Qattoush, 2017, p. 32](#)).

What is striking in social relationships in general, and family relationships in particular, is the use of new technologies in communication and interaction, whether among members of society or even within individual families. This has led to a reduction in direct personal communication and, in return, the creation of beloved and easy communication bridges in the virtual world with electronic individuals. Therefore, many perceive a remarkable paradox in the communication revolution, as it brings distant people closer while distancing those who are close ([Assafsafi, 2002, p. 58](#)).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Based on the new variables imposed by modern means of communication and in light of the new requirements imposed by the reality experienced by Algerian families, and the change that has

occurred from the traditional reality to the present day, several differences have emerged in the cultural and social structure, with the inevitability and necessity of keeping pace with the rapid and immense development of media and communication technologies. In this study, we attempted to highlight some of the social characteristics, features, and standards that have been transmitted from parents to children in their traditional and contemporary forms. Consequently, there is some variation in the impact of cultural, social, and moral change experienced by Arab societies, including Algerian society, especially in the era of technology and the age of media globalization. Additionally, families have relinquished their role in monitoring and selecting what their children watch, leading to the adoption of some new habits and Western behaviors that are far removed from our traditions and values.

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