

Women's Attitudes Toward Participation in Community Development: An Exploratory Study in the Wilaya of Ouargla

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Received : 22/06/2024 ; Accepted : 28/10/2024 ; Published : 29/11/2024

Abstract:

The current study aims to explore the nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development and the differences in these attitudes based on marital status (married/unmarried). The descriptive exploratory method was employed for this study, with a sample comprising 360 women. A scale measuring their attitudes toward participation in community development was administered after verifying its psychometric properties. Following data collection and statistical analysis using a one-sample t-test and an independent-samples t-test, the results indicated positive attitudes among women toward participation in community development. Additionally, statistically significant differences were found between married and unmarried women in their attitudes, favoring unmarried women.

Keywords: attitudes, participation, community development, women.

1. Study Topic:

The development process begins with human agency, as members of society are both the architects and ultimate beneficiaries of comprehensive development. They are concerned with all aspects affecting their livelihoods, lives, and well-being. Government development programs succeed when there is a framework for collective participation, spanning from the design and implementation phases to evaluation and adjustment stages.

Participation is considered a voluntary activity aimed at influencing the selection of public policies, based on a sense of social responsibility. This leads to contributions in various local development fields within the framework of values and principles upheld by organizations and groups that play a fundamental role in planning projects aimed at improving people's living standards. Such activities may be successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, and may last for varying durations, whether temporary or ongoing. (Hamdia Mohamed El-Demerdash, 2002, p. 50)

When examining women's participation in society, historically, women were primarily expected to fulfill physical roles as household caretakers. They were valued for their moral character, adherence to values and traditions, and, notably, their role in childbearing, particularly male offspring, which ensured their status and integration into their husband's family. Despite these traditional roles, some Algerian women have historically risen to positions typically dominated by men. Examples include the Kahina, who ruled Algeria, managing political and military affairs, and later, during the Islamic era, female scholars, jurists, and poets emerged, such as those in the Hammadid state. Women like "Ghazala Umm Shebib" and "Umm Matus" were prominent figures in scientific and literary circles during the Zayanid state, alongside the sister of Imam Abdul Wahhab al-Rustumi.

During the Ottoman period, women like "Aljiyahbint Bouaziz" achieved prominence by defeating the forces of the Bey of Constantine in 1724. Similarly, "Umm Hani," the leader of the Arab tribes in the southern desert, ruled the eastern Sahara for over half a century (1672–1724), leading campaigns against the Ottomans in Beylik of Constantine as revenge for her father's murder. Another notable figure was "Daikhabint Mohamed Ben Qana," who acted as an advisor alongside her husband due to her sound opinions and insightful guidance. (Jamila Khider, 2003, p. 95–96)

During the colonial era, Algerian women like "Lalla Fatma N'Soumer" famously resisted the occupiers, followed by other figures like "Lalla Khadija bint Belkacem" during the uprisings of El Mokrani. (Abdul Rahman Al-Wafi, 1997, p. 30)

The Algerian woman demonstrated her presence and participation in 1939 by organizing protests with thousands calling for land and freedom. Her political involvement began in 1939 with the Algerian

Communist Party (P.C.A), followed by the Algerian Women's Union (U.F.A) in 1943, which supported farmers in their fight for wage equality and protested against French oppression, playing a significant social role during the revolution. Similarly, the Association of Muslim Algerian Women (A.F.M.A) in 1947 sought to recruit as many women as possible to nationalist ideas.

The Association of Muslim Scholars (1931) also entrusted women with multiple responsibilities, such as disseminating its ideas within families, schools, and women's gatherings, delivering lessons, reading the newspaper *El-Bassa'ir*, and promoting political awareness and Islamic ethics. (Hikmat Abu Zaid, 1999, p. 165)

The women's struggle movement became intertwined with the national and nationalist movement, demonstrating awareness of their political role despite the colonial practices. Women participated in the struggle when martyrdom became a duty for every citizen, male and female. The National Liberation Front (FLN) ensured a significant percentage of women's participation while preserving Islamic traditions. The FLN initially engaged married women, followed by widows and divorcees, to join the resistance ranks. Later, the involvement of young women encouraged the FLN to overcome the reservations it had feared might arise among the conservative segments of the population (Hekmat Abu Zeid, 1999, pp. 166–167).

In this regard, Fatima Zahra Saai observed that there was reluctance to involve women in organizations due to fears of their active participation in the revolution, rather than a symbolic role, and the perception that women might defend their own prerogatives and demand a share in governance (Jamila Khedir, 2001, p. 104). However, it appears that this reluctance stemmed from confining women to a limited scope and patriarchal ideologies that treated them as weak beings rather than individuals with natural characteristics beyond gender. Despite their struggle to secure their rights, women's contribution to community development remained modest. Radhia Toulbi stated, "The beginning of the change in the social status of women is fundamentally tied to the phases of the liberation revolution" (Radia Toulbi, 1984, p. 12). At that time, the aim was not so much social change as it was liberation from colonialism and the preservation of national identity. Through the revolution, Algerian women managed to change their social status by acquiring an increasingly significant role within the revolutionary movement (Jamila Khedir, 2001, p. 161).

However, following independence and the end of the revolution, women reverted to their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers, suggesting that their liberation during the revolution was only temporary (Zineb El Awaj, 1990, p. 30). Nonetheless, a major change occurred in women's personalities, attitudes, and participation as they joined schools, secondary institutions, universities, vocational centers, and economic establishments. This exposure to the external world and their partnership with men in economic and cultural spheres led to social and professional relationships, breaking the gender barriers that had previously existed and altering society's perception of modern women (Abdelrahman El Wafi, 1997, p. 36).

Despite the social changes in Arab and Algerian societies, including the decline of traditional values and conservative attitudes toward women and their rights, perspectives emphasizing women's biological roles and traditional attributes of weakness, dependency, and submissiveness remain dominant. This is evidenced by the fact that 60% of women in the Arab world are illiterate (Mohamed Fawzi Abdel Maqoud, 2004, p. 98), with 40.33% in Algeria (Rachid Boudees, 2004, p. 34). Consequently, discussions regarding women's roles and participation in society raise numerous questions.

Several theories explain variations in individuals' levels of participation in community development. For instance, social exchange theory posits that individuals are continuously engaged in an exchange of benefits with the social systems they inhabit. They give and receive in exchange for things they value. The more individuals perceive and are convinced of the benefits they will gain from their participation, the more likely they are to engage in activities that yield greater rewards for them.

On the other hand, social role theory focuses on the social expectations tied to an individual's status and social position within societal structures. Consequently, some individuals face strong social pressure to take on active roles and participate effectively in local activities and issues. Individuals with higher social status are expected to be more engaged than their counterparts who lack such characteristics, as their behavior aligns with these expectations (Hekmat Abu Zeid, 1982, p. 311).

Abraham Maslow outlined a hierarchy of human needs. Concerning participation motives, these include the desire to gain popularity among citizens, earn respect and appreciation, enjoy working with others, attain political, economic, or social positions, work for the public good, collaborate with friends, achieve material benefits, and fulfill a self-driven motivation to participate, along with the availability of material and moral incentives for engagement (Adly Ali, 2000, p. 312).

Among the explanations for differences in individuals' degrees of participation is the variation in their ability to utilize personal and external resources according to the structure of power and influence in society. Participation is essentially the result of a rational decision-making process in which individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their involvement.

Talcott Parsons suggests that individuals aim to achieve personal goals in contexts where alternative means are available to accomplish these objectives, including those related to community development. However, this participation is influenced by factors such as age, gender, beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Socialization plays a significant role in shaping developmental awareness, which, in turn, influences participation in community development. Considering Jean Piaget's interest in cognitive development, the development of individual capacities is strongly linked to awareness and the ability of individuals to act within political, economic, or social domains. Erik Erikson emphasizes the organizational principle through which individuals maintain their self-concept, highlighting the role of parents and the surrounding environment in personality development. Consequently, the environment affects whether an individual becomes a social, economic, or political participant. Additionally, individuals learn social behaviors through imitation, starting with family members and elders. Thus, imitating adults in the realm of community development facilitates women's entry into this field (Adly Ali, 2000, pp. 314–315).

Furthermore, our society has undergone periods of economic, social, and political transformation. These transitions have been accompanied, to some extent, by fundamental changes in individuals' psychological attitudes, particularly Algerians' perspectives on social issues, including women's roles and their participation in community development. This allows us to hypothesize that the rigid distinctions in social roles and statuses could undergo significant change due to the increasing convergence of tasks and activities performed by both genders. In this scenario, women are more likely to develop new attitudes regarding their position in society. These attitudes are shaped by numerous cultural considerations, social norms, and behavioral values that exert direct or indirect pressure on socialization processes and the stereotyping of social roles.

Among the key studies addressing psychological attitudes toward women's participation in community development is Lahcen Bouabdallah's research, which examined changes in Algerian individuals' attitudes toward women's roles and status in society. The study aimed to evaluate the extent of genuine change in Algerian mindsets regarding women, considering the evolution of women's legal status and their exposure to learning and work experiences. The findings revealed that men's attitudes showed minimal change compared to women's attitudes toward social roles, influenced by education and workforce participation. Additionally, changes in attitudes toward women's social roles varied by age and educational level (Lahcen Bouabdallah, 1995, p. 156).

The study results indicate that changes in moral and cultural values require a longer time compared to social and economic transformations. This is evident as some segments of society, especially men, remain committed to their privileged roles, despite women's adoption of more progressive attitudes toward social roles.

Another study by Rashad Abdelaziz Mousa explored the impact of certain demographic variables on attitudes toward women's social roles in Egyptian society. The study found that younger and older women were more inclined toward non-traditional roles than middle-aged women. University students were more supportive of non-traditional social roles than employed women, and single women displayed more liberal attitudes toward social roles compared to married women. The study also found no significant difference in attitudes toward women's social roles based on whether they had children (Rashad Abdelaziz Mousa, n.d., p. 423).

In a study by Amti Khadija focused on whether young women lean toward conservatism, 80% of respondents denied the statement that the home is the natural place for women. Additionally, 90% supported women's participation in the workforce, 90% believed women should be represented in parliament alongside men, and 82% believed women could hold ministerial positions (Aisha Belarbi, 1993, p. 41).

Accordingly, international and national organizations in many countries are focusing on the issue of women's participation and encouraging their involvement in steering society and fostering development. Despite the successes women have achieved in the contemporary world, many developmental sectors remain male-dominated.

From the above, it becomes evident that women's psychological makeup, including their attitudes, reflects their societal position and status, which still represent significant barriers to realizing their intellectual and creative potential and their ability to contribute to developmental activities and community engagement.

Therefore, the current study seeks to explore women's attitudes toward participation in community development in light of certain variables.

2. 2 Study Questions

- What is the nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development?
- Are there statistically significant differences in women's attitudes toward participation in community development based on marital status (married/unmarried)?

3. Study Hypotheses

- It is expected that the nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development will be positive.
- There are statistically significant differences in women's attitudes toward participation in community development based on marital status (married/unmarried).

4. Importance of the Study:

Women's attitudes toward participation in community development represent one of the psychological aspects of societal advancement. A modern state requires citizens, both men and women, who actively contribute to and show interest in public affairs. The presence of individuals in society who think about development and hold positive attitudes qualifies communities for progress, prosperity, and achievement. Conversely, negative attitudes can lead to stagnation. Human beings are both the means and the ultimate goal of community development.

There is no single path to the future; the possibilities are open. The nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development can lead society into a new phase, one that moves beyond previous conceptions. Individuals, regardless of their circumstances, have the power to enact change within their communities.

The results of studies on women's attitudes toward participation in development can influence the evaluation of roles and behavioral practices within society, particularly in relation to the political, economic, and social dimensions of development and their objectives. These results also reveal whether a shift from traditional to modern values—or what Lerner terms "psychological mobility"—is occurring.

Participation contributes to easing the burden on governmental efforts by fostering collaboration and shared responsibility.

5. Study Objectives:

Based on the previous introduction to the study problem, the objectives can be identified as follows:

- 5.1. To identify the nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development.
- 5.2. To determine the differences in women's attitudes toward participation in community development based on marital status (married/unmarried).

6. Study Scope:

6.1. Human Scope: The study included 360 women from the Wilaya of Ouargla.

6.2. Temporal Scope: The study was conducted during October and November 2022.

6.3. Spatial Scope: The study was geographically focused on the Wilaya of Ouargla.

7. Operational Concepts of the Study:

7.1. Attitude toward Participation in Community Development:

This refers to the set of knowledge, feelings, and behaviors—either positive or negative—that women exhibit regarding their involvement in issues and matters of community development at various local or national levels. Such participation encompasses economic, social, and political activities aimed at the continuous improvement of population welfare and the equitable distribution of the benefits resulting from development. This concept is measured using the items included in the scale of attitudes toward participation in community development.

8. Study Procedures:

8.1. Methodology Used:

The study adopts a descriptive exploratory approach, heavily reliant on quantitative analyses. This approach goes beyond mere description by emphasizing comparisons between different groups based on key variables to diagnose and analyze the phenomenon (Miloud Safari et al., 2003, p. 213). It was chosen to study women's attitudes toward participation in community development.

8.2. Study Population and Sample:

The study population includes all women aged 18 to 40. The study sample was drawn from institutions of higher education, secondary schools, vocational training centers, cultural centers, healthcare institutions, and

economic establishments in the Wilaya of Ouargla. The sample selection followed a quota sampling method, with the total sample size reaching 360 women.

The following table illustrates the distribution of the study sample according to the variables of marital status and employment:

Table 01: Distribution of Study Sample by Marital Status and Employment

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
Marital Status	Married	31	8.61%
	Unmarried	329	
Total		360	100%

The table above shows that the number of married women is 31, representing 8.61% of the sample, while the number of unmarried women is 329, accounting for 91.38%. This demonstrates a clear disparity in the proportions of the sample based on marital status.

8.3 .Tool Used:

The study relied on a scale consisting of 24 items measuring women's attitudes toward participation in community development, with two response options. The validity and reliability of the scale were ensured using the following methods:

a. Reliability:

- Split-Half Reliability:

The reliability and internal consistency of the scale scores were verified using the split-half method.

The following table presents the results:

Table 02: Split-Half Reliability of the Scale

Statistical Indicators Variables	Number of Items	Correlation Coefficient (Unadjusted)	Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Guttman Coefficient
Women's Attitudes Toward Participation in Community Development	24	0.83	0.90	0.89

It is evident from Table 02 that the reliability coefficient of the tool equals 0.90, which is a high value. Thus, it can be concluded that the tool demonstrates a high level of reliability.

- **Cronbach's Alpha Reliability:**The reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha method, which was estimated at **0.85**.

b. Validity:

- **Internal Consistency Validity:**The internal consistency of the scale items was calculated by determining the correlation between each item and the total score of the scale, which serves as an indicator of construct validity. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to calculate the relationship between each item and the total score, as shown in the following table:

Table 03: Correlation Coefficients Between Items and the Total Scale Score

N	Correlation Coefficient	N	Correlation Coefficient	N	Correlation Coefficient	N	Correlation Coefficient	N	Correlation Coefficient	N	Correlation Coefficient
1	0.271	5	0.533**	9	0.576**	13	0.496**	17	0.559**	21	0.796**
2	0.269	6	0.442**	10	0.226	14	0.668**	18	0.354*	22	0.382*
3	0.417**	7	0.442**	11	0.113	15	0.600**	19	0.644**	23	0.590**
4	0.289	8	0.689**	12	0.325*	16	0.438**	20	0.354*	24	0.693**

*Statistical Significance at 0.01, Statistical Significance at 0.05

From Table 03, it is evident that most items are statistically significantly correlated with the total scale score at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. This indicates that these items belong to the scale, with the exception of items 01, 02, 10, and 11, which were retained for theoretical considerations.

8.4. Statistical Methods:

The following statistical tests were utilized: One-Sample t-Test , Independent Samples t-Test

9. Study Results:

9.1. Presentation and Interpretation of the First Hypothesis Results:

- **Hypothesis Statement:**

We expect that the nature of women's attitudes toward participation in community development will be positive.

To test this hypothesis, a One-Sample t-Test was utilized. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 04: Nature of Women's Attitudes Toward Participation in Community Development

Statistical Indicators Variables	Sample Size	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Standard Deviation	Theoretical Mean	t-Value	Statistical Significance (p)
Women's Attitudes Toward Participation in Community Development	360	359	12.76	5.19	12	2.79	0.006

From the table, it is evident that the mean score of the sample on the scale measuring women's attitudes toward participation in community development was 12.76, with a standard deviation of 5.19. The mean score is higher than the theoretical mean of 12. Using a one-sample t-test to assess the difference between means yielded a t-value of 2.79 with a significance level of 0.006, which is less than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that women's attitudes toward participation in community development are positive.

The positive attitudes of women toward participation in community development can be attributed to the following:

- **Education:** Most women in the sample are educated, which contributes to their openness to the external world and their social awareness. Women today live in an environment saturated with modern media and communication tools, coupled with increased social mobility and the ability to form social connections within and beyond the country. They are no longer confined to the thoughts and feelings of their immediate surroundings but are exposed to global developments, either directly or indirectly, influencing their habits, values, and attitudes.
- **Legal Status:** The evolution of women's legal status has played a significant role.
- **Awareness:** Women recognize that participation increases their social awareness.
- **Understanding Social Issues:** Women have realized that certain issues in society, especially those concerning women and children, are best addressed by women themselves.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Belief in their ability to contribute to building society, achieve self-fulfillment, attain social status, and secure positions within organizations, associations, or political parties. Participation actively contributes to the lives of individuals and communities, affirming one's membership in society and fostering societal development and progress.
- **Desire for Public Good:** A willingness to work for the common good, collaborate with others, gain popularity, or achieve material benefits.
- **Liberal Outlook:** A progressive perspective that allows women to be active individuals, free to make decisions, and perform multiple social roles.
- **Modern Personality:** Women today exhibit a dynamic, proactive, and open personality. They aspire to achieve progress for themselves and their communities, following the footsteps of those who preceded them in development. This includes the ability to empathize and see themselves in others' positions, a trait crucial for those seeking liberation from traditional constraints.

9.2. Presentation and Interpretation of the Second Hypothesis Results:

- **Hypothesis Statement:**

There are statistically significant differences in women's attitudes toward participation in community development based on marital status (married/unmarried).

To test this hypothesis, an Independent Samples t-Test was conducted. The results are presented as follows:

Table 05: Differences in Mean Scores of Women's Attitudes Toward Participation in Community Development Based on Marital Status

Variables	Statistical Indicators	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t-Value	Statistical Significance (p)
Married		31	10.09	5.68	358	3.02	0.003
Unmarried		329	13.01	5.08			

From Table 05, it is observed that the mean score for married women is 10.09 with a standard deviation of 5.68, while the mean score for unmarried women is 13.01 with a standard deviation of 5.08. The calculated t-value is 3.02, with a significance level of 0.003, indicating statistical significance. This confirms the existence of statistically significant differences in favor of unmarried women regarding attitudes toward participation in community development.

The differences between married and unmarried women, favoring unmarried women in attitudes toward participation in community development, can be explained by several factors. Unmarried women tend to have more free time and are granted greater opportunities by society to engage in activities compared to married women. Married women, on the other hand, often display less positive attitudes, reflecting conservative views that uphold traditional roles for married women. These roles prioritize being a wife and mother, which are seen as major factors limiting their ability to perform various roles in society. This perspective is reinforced by those around them, who often encourage women to focus on their duties as wives and homemakers rather than participate in community activities.

Additionally, the lack of sufficient free time prevents married women from engaging in community development activities. Married women may also perceive participation in community work as a potential threat to their private lives, potentially impacting their relationships with family members, including their spouses and children, as well as with friends and neighbors, and affecting their social and professional status. Moreover, some social and political organizations lack confidence in the effectiveness of married women's participation in community development. The organizational structure of some of these entities further restricts the involvement of married women in their programs and activities.

10. Conclusion:

The study results revealed that women's attitudes toward participation in community development are positive. It also found statistically significant differences between married and unmarried women in attitudes toward participation in community development, with unmarried women showing more favorable attitudes.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- Positive attitudes among women toward participation in community development suggest a high likelihood of their actual involvement.
- Support and promote programs, initiatives, and organizations that empower women's participation in community development, taking their marital status into account.
- Organize media campaigns and educational programs aimed at changing misconceptions, negative attitudes, and certain traditions regarding women's participation and developmental role in society.
- Adapt laws related to women and families to help remove barriers to women's participation in development.
- Develop training and advisory programs to assist women in engaging with their communities.
- Enhance curricula at all educational levels to foster skills, abilities, and awareness of the rights of participation, citizenship, and human rights.
- Activate the role of all societal institutions to eliminate discrimination, particularly economic discrimination, against women.
- Conduct research projects that address women's participation in development theoretically, methodologically, and critically.

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