

**ПСИХИЧНОТО БЛАГОПОЛУЧИЕ НА ЧОВЕКА –
ФАКТОРИ НА ВЛИЯНИЕ**
ПСИХИЧНОТО БЛАГОПОЛУЧИЕ В ДЕТСКА И ЮНОШЕСКА ВЪЗРАСТ

ПСИХОЛОГИЧНИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ

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**ПРОМЕНИ В СЕМЕЙНИТЕ РОЛИ В СТРАНИТЕ
ОТ БЛИЗКИЯ ИЗТОК И СЕВЕРНА АФРИКА:
ПЕРЦЕПЦИИ НА МЛАДИ ОБРАЗОВАНИ ХОРА**

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Резюме. Семейството в района на Близкия изток и Северна Африка се променя през последните десетилетия в резултат на културни, икономически, политически и социални процеси. Целта на това изследване е да се проучат промените в семейните роли в региона. За целта Въпросникът за семейните роли (Georgas et al. 2006) е попълнен от 100 лица от осем държави от същия регион с предимно висше образование, на възраст между 20 и 40 години. Те оценяват семейните роли на своите майки и бащи и собствените си представи за ролята на съпругата и съпруга в своето (бъдещо) семейство. Сравненията между изпълнението на семейните роли в двете поколения (баща- съпруг и майка-съпруга) разкрива значителни поколенчески различия. Най-големите промени между поколенията са в експресивната роля на мъжа и в неговата роля в грижата за децата. По-младото поколение очаква мъжът да осигурява по-голяма емоционална подкрепа на жената и децата си, както и да бъде по-активен в опазване на семейните отношения. В допълнение, в съответствие с нашите резултати, мъжете се очаква да бъдат включени много повече в практиките по отглеждане на децата.

Ключови думи: Близкият Изток и Северна Африка; арабското семейство; семейни роли; промяна между поколенията.

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**INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGES IN FAMILY ROLES
IN MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA COUNTRIES:
PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG EDUCATED ARAB PEOPLE**

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Abstract. *Families in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have been changing in recent decades due to cultural, economic, political and social processes. The aim of this research is to study the changes in the family roles in the region. Family Roles Questionnaire (Georgas et al., 2006) was filled out by 100 individuals from 8 MENA countries, with university education, aged 20-40 years. They evaluated their mothers and fathers roles and their own representation of the role of husband and wife in their (future) family. A comparison within the pairs of father–husband and mother–wife roles revealed significant intergenerational differences. The biggest intergenerational changes are in the expressive role of the man and in his childcare role. The younger generation expects men to provide more emotional support to their wives and children, and to be more active in preserving family relations. In addition, according to our results, men are expected to be involved a lot more in the child rearing practices.*

Keywords: MENA countries; Arab family; family roles; intergenerational change.

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Contribution:

Lilyana Angelova – Introduction, Theoretical background, Data processing and graphics, Results & Discussion, Conclusions, References

Irina Zinovieva – Abstract, Theoretical background, Methodology, Results & Discussion, Conclusions

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INTRODUCTION

Families in the Middle East and North Africa have been changing in recent decades due to cultural, economic, political and social changes in their respective countries. Urbanization, economic development, development of state services, political changes, spread of education and employment of women, have been important influencing factors. The same applies to the spread of the modern values such as individualism through the globalization. In addition, through the development of Internet, the television, communication technologies and international transport, individuals from the MENA region have been exposed to different family types, values, roles and relationships (Hopkins, 2001). Therefore, the family and family change in MENA need special attention. Although there are some well-done sociological and anthropological studies, very little has been written on the families in MENA from a psychological viewpoint (Gregg, 2005: 7).

The aim of present research is to study the family roles in the Middle East and North Africa as well as the changes in these roles which have happened in the last decades. We will present the results of the sociological and psychological studies that have been done previously and carry out a MENA-wide study in order to shed light on tendencies at a regional level.

The present research is part of a bigger study. In it, we look at the family from the perspective of the Ecocultural Framework (Berry, 1976, 1979), which considers the family as an institution which is adapted to the ecological, cultural and sociopolitical environment in which it exists and in turn provides the main context for the ontogenetic development from infancy to adulthood (Georgas et al., 2006). According to this framework ecological and sociopolitical features of society influence the structure and functions of families, family roles, interactions with family networks, as well as psychological variables such as family values, self-construal and emotional bonds (Georgas et al., 2006).

In addition, we deploy the Model of Family Change (Kagitcibasi, 1990, 1996a, 2007),

which explains family change from a cross-cultural psychological perspective and in relationship with the ecocultural context. Kagitcibasi's (2007) theory of family change describes the development of and the changes in families at multiple levels. In this theory Kagitcibasi makes a distinction between two forms of interdependence within the family: material and emotional (or psychological) interdependence. Kagitcibasi identifies three ideal-typical family models based on the two forms of interdependence: family model of independence, characterized by less emphasized material as well as emotional interdependencies among family members, family model of (total) interdependence, characterized by strong material as well as emotional interdependencies, family model of emotional (or psychological) interdependence where emotional interdependencies remain important while material interdependencies (and traditional hierarchies) weaken as a result of modernization processes in interdependent family cultures. This model has been developed to explain the change of both Western and non-Western families.

FAMILY ROLES AND FUNCTIONS IN MENA

The family is at the center of social organization in all three Arab patterns of living: bedouin, rural, and urban. The family constitutes the dominant social institution through which persons and groups inherit their religious, social class, and cultural identities. The traditional Arab family has been described as extended, patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, endogamous, and occasionally polygamous (Barakat, 1985).

Traditionally men are expected to provide financially for their families and to protect them, thus ensuring their survival in sometimes difficult circumstances. On the other hand, women are supposed to bear and raise children, run the household, provide emotional support and preserve family relations, thus ensuring family cohesion. Finally, children are to honor and respect their parents and grow up to fulfill adult roles (which include marriage).

THE FATHER

The undisputed head of the traditional Arab family is the father. He is treated with respect and deference, and even the grown-up and married sons submit to his authority. The wife joins his kinship group and the children take his surname (Barakat, 1985: 31).

The father bears all economic responsibility for his wife and family. In everyday life, he is in fact off-stage, spending most of his time outside the house. Although cultural norms assign family power to the father, it is the wife who actually exercises power over the children (Mohsen, 1985: 58-59). She is in effect entrusted with raising and disciplining them, though she may often use the father as a scare or threat. Both sons and daughters are consequently much closer to the mother than to their father.

The father traditionally maintained his hold over authority and responsibility mainly because he owned family property and provided the family's livelihood. However, recent changes in family structures: the employment of women, children seeking education and work in the cities have contributed to the democratization of husband-wife and father-children relationships. Increasingly, fathers are tending to relinquish their grip over family life and to share authority and responsibility with other family members. Yet the family remains hierarchical in structure (Barakat, 1985: 32)

THE MOTHER

The Arab world is composed of divergent and discordant islands as far as women's issues are concerned. These islands are shaped by class, region, traditions, religion, and education.

Traditional Islam envisages man's and woman's role as complementary, not as competing. In effect, men and women lived in two different social worlds – the former exercising complete authority within the larger society, the latter affirming her position through marriage and bearing children (Nelson, 1974). The ideal man was characterized as provider, protector, and patriarch; the ideal woman as dependent, chaste, and fertile. Patriarchal culture defines the social value of women in rela-

tion to children (Hatem, 1987: 293). Women are judged socially by whether or not they bear children, especially sons. Divorce and polygamy are socially acceptable in situations when a woman is unable to bear children. In addition, mothers are heavily engaged in the care of children. They can even play the role of a mediator between the children and their father (Barakat, 1985).

However, anthropological and historical studies of Arab women reveal that they can and have played powerful roles within the family by arranging marriages, managing familial property, controlling the use and spread of important information affecting a household's status and reputation, and allocating the distribution of goods and resources in households (Singerman, 1994; Petry, 1991; Davis, 1983; Altorki, 1977). Despite norms of seclusion, Arab women maintain often large networks extending well into the community (Joseph, 1983). Joseph's research (1978) suggests also that Muslim women may do much of the work of maintaining ties with kin and family friends since men do not have the free time to constantly entertain guests or to go visiting.

In addition, two new opportunities and experiences have modified the status and power base of women. Education and travel have undoubtedly contributed most to the change in women's position within the families studied in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia (Altorki, 1977: 284). Through increased level of education, Arab women have also gained access to the modern workforce. The public sector generally offers the most trouble-free and respected employment for Arab women (Sabbagh, 1996: 49). The degree to which women have been integrated into the workforce and circulate freely in public varies among the Arab countries. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, educated women have been active at all levels of society. In the Arabian Gulf states, fewer women have jobs outside the home (Nydell, 2012: 35).

However, little has changed with regard to the basic perception of family roles as involving household responsibilities for women and economic support functions for men. Working

or not, the woman remains solely responsible for the household (Rugh, 1985: 288). Much of the difficulty stems from men's reluctance to accept women's new roles (Mohsen, 1985: 71). As men struggled to maintain their dignity and the control over the family, they watched with resentment their wives and daughters leaving the home and entering the outside world. Women simultaneously shoulder a double responsibility both at home and in the workplace. Women's work outside the home constitutes a second burden that women must accomplish in addition to women's work within the home (Sabbagh, 1996: 59). Anton Rahmen's survey of 119 Syrian women working in the public sector is reported by Hijab (Hijab, 1988: 73). The study showed that 45 percent of married women and 42 percent of single women said they found the double work load (at home and on the job) exhausting. An overwhelming majority (81 percent of married and 88 percent of single women) said that male members of the family did not help with household chores. For 84 percent there were some personality changes: they felt self-confident as working women, and they were proud of doing work equal to that of men (Hijab, 1988: 73).

Therefore, although women have widened their horizon through the possibility to study and travel abroad as well as they have gained confidence and financial independence through their access to employment, there has been little change in their position and role in the family. They still owe respect and obedience to their husbands, they still bear the main responsibility for raising children and there has been little change regarding their domestic responsibilities. However, what is new, is their increased financial contribution to the family.

METHOD

INSTRUMENT

In our study we used the Family Roles Questionnaire developed by Georgas, Giotsa Mylonas and Bafiti on the basis of the family literature. This questionnaire was tested in a thirty-nation study (Georgas et al., 2006).

The authors selected twenty-two roles in the following areas: psychological environment and traditions, kinship relations, hierarchical power, housework, school, play, behavior and support of children, finances, babysitting, and helping parents with economic activities. They put those family roles into two large categories: expressive role and instrumental role, which consists of childcare and financial role.

By factor analysis the authors extracted three factors explaining 54.29 % of the variance for the family position: father. The first factor corresponded to the expressive role (emotional support to wife, children, grandparents, protection of the family, preserving family relations). The second factor described the financial role of the father (financial contribution of the father, management of household budget, giving pocket money to children). The third factor was the childcare role (taking children to school, doing housework, helping children with homework). While the expressive role is consistent with family literature, the instrumental role defined there was split into two independent components: financial role and childcare role. The equivalence of the first factor was fairly good, the equivalence of the other two provided less convincing results (Georgas and al., 2006: 129).

The factor analysis for the family position: mother yielded similar results. The authors extracted three factors explaining 41.1% of the variance. Thus, three family roles emerged: expressive role and financial and childcare role as independent components of the instrumental role. The factorial agreement was very good with a few exceptions.

The current study tested the applicability of the Family Roles Scale in a new context: with young individuals coming from different countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, we tried to verify if there were generational differences with regards to the perceptions for the roles of the woman and the man in the family.

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 100 individuals from 8 countries. Almost all of them are with university education and between the age of 20

and 40. At the time of the study, most of the participants were living outside their country of origin. The sample ranges from less than 15 individuals from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Tunis to 59 individuals from Syria. The characteristics of the sample: age, education and current residence are specific and do not permit generalization as to the rest of the population in their country of origin. The responses of those educated young people living predominantly abroad should tend to represent the leading edge of changes in terms of attitudes and values (Inglehart, 1997). That is why they were chosen as a sample in this study, which is interested not only in the current perceptions and expectations regarding family roles but also in the changes in family roles over a generation.

Aware of the dangers of making conclusions from this sample regarding the whole population of the MENA region, we discuss only the general emerging patterns and tendencies which evoke the necessity of conducting further and more country-focused studies.

PROCEDURE

The Family Roles Questionnaire was used as a basis and adapted to the specifics of the current study. Out of the nine family positions proposed in the original instrument, two have been retained: father and mother. They have been studied over two generations: one's parents' family (father and mother) and one's own family (husband and wife). For those two family positions three family roles were studied: expressive role and instrumental role divided into childcare and financial role. A six-point scale was employed: very much, much, enough, a little, very little, not at all.

The English language version of the questionnaire was translated into literary Arab language, which is understood by all people living in the MENA region. In cross-cultural research three types of translations are common: close translation, adaptation, and assembly. We used adaptation in order to make sure that we measure the same underlying construct as the English version of the instrument.

A Syrian Arab-speaking person translated the questionnaire from English into literary Arab language. The translation was checked by an Egyptian Arab-speaking person. Then, the consolidated Arab version of the questionnaire was translated by another Syrian Arab-speaking person back to English. Corrections were done and the final version was once again checked by the Egyptian Arab-speaking person. By involving three different persons from two different MENA countries in the translation, we tried to minimize the influence of the local Arab dialect on the translation of the questionnaire. This literary Arab version of the questionnaire was then filled by all respondents.

The questionnaire was published online using Google Survey and sent out as a link to respondents from different countries. The answers were collected online using the same tool.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the original Family Roles Scale, we have identified 12 subscales (table 1). All of them have good Cronbach's Alphas, which means high internal reliability.

Paired samples T-tests have been performed in order to compare the family roles for the two family positions (table 2) as well the family roles across generations (table 3).

According to our results (table 2), in Arab families, significant intergenerational differences were found in all family roles but the instrumental financial role for the man in the family (table 2). Although the woman is accepted to (or even expected) to contribute more financially to the family, the main breadwinner remains her husband. Notably, men are nowadays expected to be more involved in raising their children: by taking children to school, doing housework, helping children with homework. In fact, the difference in the group mean values for the two family positions of the younger generation's family is a lot smaller than the difference in the scores for the parents' family. This means that although women still have the main responsibility for taking care of children, men are expected to be involved a lot more.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE FAMILY ROLES SCALE – NAME OF THE SCALE, NUMBER OF ITEMS,
MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENT

Scale	Number of items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Expressive role mother	8	33.1412	6.69960	.833
Expressive role father	8	30.5732	7.70126	.825
Expressive role wife	8	33.8333	7.02947	.881
Expressive role husband	8	33.8442	7.07305	.885
Instrumental role (financial) mother	3	11.8652	4.57064	.827
Instrumental role (financial) father	3	14.9765	3.88212	.836
Instrumental role (financial) wife	3	13.3797	4.02653	.850
Instrumental role (financial) husband	3	15.3000	3.86284	.909
Instrumental role (childcare) mother	4	17.6000	5.10882	.774
Instrumental role (childcare) father	4	12.6709	5.21763	.751
Instrumental role (childcare) wife	4	19.7273	4.36082	.819
Instrumental role (childcare) husband	4	17.4286	4.71679	.808

TABLE 2
T-TEST RESULTS FOR FAMILY ROLES ACCORDING TO FAMILY POSITIONS

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Expressive role</i>					
Mother	33.3210	6.10088	3.045	80	.003
Father	30.4321	7.64189			
<i>Expressive role</i>					
Wife	33.6579	7.03241	-3.56	75	.723
Husband	33.8158	7.11564			

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Instrumental role (financial)</i>					
Mother	11.9529	4.50636	-4.746	84	.000
Father	14.9765	3.88212			
<i>Instrumental role (financial)</i>					
Wife	13.3205	4.01780	-4.103	77	.000
Husband	15.4231	3.63789			

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Instrumental role (childcare)</i>					
Mother	17.6154	4.76249	8.279	77	.000
Father	12.6538	5.24919			
<i>Instrumental role (childcare)</i>					
Wife	19.6711	4.36161	5.003	75	.000
Husband	17.4605	4.73973			

TABLE 3
T-TEST RESULTS FOR FAMILY ROLES BETWEEN TWO GENERATIONS

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Expressive role</i>					
Mother	32.7105	6.75241	-2.651	75	.010
Wife	34.0658	6.39445			
<i>Expressive role</i>					
Father	30.1111	7.82836	-4.173	71	.000
Husband	34.4861	5.96231			

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Instrumental role (financial)</i>					
Mother	11.4615	4.37434	-4.543	77	.000
Wife	13.3974	4.04950			
<i>Instrumental role (financial)</i>					
Father	15.0390	3.86769	-.926	76	.357
Husband	15.4156	3.66114			

Scale	Group mean	SD for the group	T value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Instrumental role (childcare)</i>					
Mother	17.5972	4.89800	-3.719	71	.000
Wife	19.5694	4.42727			
<i>Instrumental role (childcare)</i>					
Father	13.0278	5.19743	-6.316	71	.000
Husband	17.4444	4.79110			

The biggest intergenerational changes (table 3) are in the expressive role of the man as well as in his childcare role. This means that the younger generation expects men to provide more emotional support to their wives, children, to ensure better the protection of the family, and to be more active in preserving family relations. While we observed a statistically significant difference on the expressive role in the parental family, there was no such difference in the younger generation's family. Does it mean that women and men are expected to be involved with family matters at the same level and also have the same responsibility for family protection and cohesion? It is difficult to advance an explanation based on the data from our sample.

Slighter but significant intergenerational changes were observed regarding the expressive role and childcare role of the woman in the family (table 3). Although traditionally

in Arab families it was women who bore the main responsibility for raising children and ensuring the emotional support and cohesion of the family, apparently the expectations in this sphere towards them have increased. Coupled with their increased financial role, the pressure on Arab women seems to be even greater than before. It looks as if "we are nowadays living in the period of the superwoman, who is super-professional, super-wife, and super-mother, and the more efficient she is at performing all these tasks, at once, the more rosy her social reputation and status are bound to be" (Sabbagh, 1996: 59).

CONCLUSION

With this article, we wanted to provide a first glimpse in the family roles perceptions and expectations of the young generation in the Middle East and North Africa as well

as to explore the potential intergenerational changes on this subject. The results of our study confirm the observation that families in the Middle East and North Africa have been changing in recent decades and some transformations towards higher levels of equality between men and women can be found among the highly educated young Arab people.

However, more studies are necessary in order to confirm and explain the observed findings. As already mentioned, the characteristics of the sample: age, education and current residence are specific and do not permit generalization as to the rest of the population in their country of origin. The responses of those educated young people living predominantly abroad should tend to represent the leading edge of changes in terms of attitudes and values. In addition, the sample of this research has been relatively small and cannot be deemed representative for the entire MENA region.

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