


RESEARCH ARTICLE			The Algerian Family and the Crisis of Moral Values	
Zbida Tahar		Dr.		
		Department of Sociology, University of Algiers 02		
		Algeria		
		Email: zbidatahar16@gmail.com		
Doi Serial		https://doi.org/10.56334/sci/8.10.47		
Keywords		Family, society, values, crisis.		
Abstract				
<p>This study seeks to address the topic of the Algerian family and the crisis of values, as well as the influence of values on shaping and sustaining society. The presence of a value crisis can negatively affect society by provoking conflicts, disputes, and divergent perspectives on principles and values. In this study, we introduce the characteristics, status, and functions of the family, in addition to examining the family structure within Algerian society and the specific features of the Algerian family. On the other hand, we discuss the components and characteristics of values, their sources, and the crisis that arises between the family and values, which entails the family ceasing to defend values and neglecting to uphold them. This, in turn, leads to internal conflicts within society, an overlap of roles and responsibilities, and consequently a loss of balance in the social entity that defines the features and identity of society. This reflects the reciprocal role between the family and values, where each contributes to the continuity, presence, and preservation of the other.</p>				
Citation. Zbida T. (2025). The Algerian Family and the Crisis of Moral Values. <i>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems</i> , 8(10), 528–537. https://doi.org/10.56352/sci/8.10.47				
Issue: https://imcra-az.org/archive/384-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-10-vol-8-2025.html				
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Received: 08.02.2025		Accepted: 09.07.2025		Published: 01.08.2025 (available online)

Introduction:

The study of the family is among those areas that have undergone considerable development, to the extent that it has become known as family sociology. This field has sought to establish concepts and theories that serve to preserve family structure on the one hand and, on the other hand, to ensure that the family remains open to the external environment to benefit from it, thereby avoiding isolation from the rapid changes occurring in the outside world. The family represents a fundamental unit in society, fulfilling a variety of roles and functions to meet social and economic needs. In turn, society itself is composed of a collection of families; that is, interaction occurs both from the part to the whole and from the whole to the part. This interaction between the family and society is facilitated by the values adopted by individuals through familial socialisation, as well as in their dealings with others. Consequently, the values prevalent within families serve to define the contours, directions, and aspirations of society.

Therefore, from a sociological perspective, the study of values refers to examining the set of standards that regulate individual behaviour within a socially accepted framework. Values contribute to the continuity of society and enable life within an exchange of roles and responsibilities. This highlights the importance of studying the social values of the family. Our present study was undertaken to address the relationship between the family and values, with a subsequent focus on the Algerian family. Algerian society, with its Amazigh and Arab dimensions, encompasses a set of deeply rooted values. However, Algerian society, like others, has experienced periods of colonisation and transformation, which have had negative repercussions in various areas. This has resulted in what is known as the crisis of values.

The family, which was once patriarchal and traditional, as explained by Mostefa Boutaghnouchat in his study of Algerian society, has now evolved into Algerian families that are partly traditional and partly modern. These families perform roles and functions that fluctuate between an inclination towards traditional values at times and modern values at others. Consequently, there is neither apparent stability nor definite consistency in the values adopted by individuals due to the continuous influence of Western cultures through the media or exposure to global markets. This has contributed to a gradual departure from traditional values. Therefore, achieving accurate and sound balance requires that family values be neither purely traditional nor purely modern but rather values derived from Algerian identity.

Our study falls within this context and is entitled “The Algerian Family and the Crisis of Values.” In it, we have addressed the definition of the family’s characteristics, its components, and its importance to both the individual and society. We have also examined family structure within Algerian society and the family’s place in that society, as well as what distinguishes it from other Arab societies. In addition, we define the components and sources of values and their characteristics and functions and discuss the Algerian family and the crisis of values. The continuity and strength of society depend on the degree of balance maintained between its elements and components; among the most important of these is the family, which is the fundamental unit and the primary reflection of society’s features and character. The more the family fulfils its assigned role, the more it preserves the values, cohesion, and particularities of society, and the reverse is true when the family fails to fulfil its role in society. In such cases, the family may neglect to uphold or transmit societal values to its children, thereby weakening the prevailing values within it and adopting alien values that conflict with the identity of the society to which it belongs, resulting in a crisis of values. This has led us to pose the following questions:

What are the features of family structure in Algerian society?

What are the characteristics of the family in Algerian society and the prevailing values within it?

Moreover, to what extent does the crisis of values manifest itself within the family?

1. Operational definitions:

1.1 The Family:

The family is a fundamental social unit that forms the basis of society. It consists of parents and children, wherein the parents are responsible for raising the children and instilling in them the prevailing values of society, thus enabling them to behave in a socially appropriate manner. This occurs through the family's internal interaction as well as its interaction with society at large.

1.2 Society:

Society is the overarching framework that determines the relationships among individuals living within its bounds, who share the same principles and values, and who also participates in the exchange of interests and the pursuit of the common good.

1.3 Values:

Values are a set of standards that enable us to judge certain things as desirable and others as undesirable. They also represent the collection of principles and attitudes taken towards a particular subject. Furthermore, values serve as regulators and correctors of behaviour within the society in which the individual lives.

1.4 Crisis:

A crisis is a phase experienced by society as a result of a significant problem affecting its units and components, such as the inability of these units to fulfil their functions. An example is the family failing to transmit the culture and values of society to its children and instead adopting new values that conflict with those of society, which leads to an imbalance among its components.

2. Importance of the Family:

The importance of the family can be addressed from two perspectives: the first concerns the individual, and the second concerns society. For the individual, the importance of the family lies in the following:

1. Procreation and preservation of the human race
2. Satisfaction of biological, material, and social needs
3. The socialisation of the individual by moral values

The importance of the family to society is manifested as follows:

1. Maintaining the structure and cohesion of society
2. Raising children and subjecting them to values consistent with those of society
3. Guiding children according to the expectations and orientations of society
4. Serving as a cornerstone for achieving the aspirations and goals of society
5. Functioning as a system that changes through the transformations and interests of society¹

3. Characteristics of the Family

The family is a social institution distinguished from other institutions by the following features:

1. The family represents the fundamental social unit constituting society.
2. The family is the primary source of values and morals.
3. The family comprises a group of individuals bound by relationships characterised by cooperation and affection, meeting essential needs within the framework of family belonging.
4. The family both influences and is influenced by society.²
5. Among the characteristics of the family, as observed by Mostafa El-Khashab in his book *“Studies in Family Sociology,”* is that it grants individuals both individual and collective freedom.
6. Both men and women share tasks and responsibilities.
7. Dialogue and channels for listening exist among family members.
8. The family functions as a consumer unit concerned with outwards appearances.

¹ Wahiba Al-Wafhili, *The Muslim Family in the Contemporary World*, 6th ed. (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 2010), 21.

² Nadia Hassan and Manal Abd Al-Rahman, *Family Relationships and Problems*, 1st ed. (Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Fikr, 2011), 59.

9. The family has become more restricted, with relationships limited primarily to parents and children.³

4. Functions of the Family:

Talcott Parsons identifies two primary functions of the family:

1. The function of socialisation according to the norms of society
2. The formation of children's personalities, even after reaching adulthood

Murdock identifies four primary functions of the family as follows:

1. Sexual function
2. The economic function
3. Reproductive function
4. The educational function⁴

Durkheim, on the other hand, considers the most important function of the family to be social organisation, as all societies work to develop and refine their moral systems so that they are compatible with the social structure of society.⁵

5. Family structure in Algerian society

The structure of the family in Algerian society, like that of other Arab societies, shares the factors that influence its formation and determine its final form, which distinguishes it from other societies. The following are the factors that influence family structure in Algerian society:

5.1 Demographic Factors:

This is considered an important factor in family structure, as changes in family, economic, social, and cultural conditions occur. Increases in birth rates, the number of women entering the workforce, and urban expansion have significantly contributed to the transformation of the family structure from year to year.

5.2 Economic Factors:

Meeting the material needs of the family, and the difficulty in doing so, has led families to place greater importance on the material aspect at the expense of other functions, such as child-rearing. This has resulted in neglect and an increase in divorce rates.

5.3 Ideological Factors:

Family structure in Algerian society has been significantly influenced by Western practices aimed at erasing the Algerian Islamic identity and by the actions of the French colonial administration, which sought to erase individual identity and dismantle families in the past. Additionally, Western thought has infiltrated through

³ Mostafa Al-Khashab, *Studies in Family Sociology* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya for Printing and Publishing, 1985), 85.

⁴ Samia Mostafa Al-Khashab, *Social Theory and the Study of the Family*, 1st ed. (Cairo: International House for Cultural Investments, 2008), 35.

⁵ Al-Sayyid Al-Hasani et al., *Studies in Social Development*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Dar Al-Ma'arif, 1973), 147.

the media, causing changes in family structure by introducing ideas and attitudes that conflict with those of the Algerian family.

5.4 Cultural Factors:

Openness to the outside world has facilitated the adoption of various cultures, mainly as a result of influences from the media and economic changes that have led to the pursuit of employment abroad. Like other Arab societies, Algerian society has been affected by this openness, which has resulted in a transformation of the authentic family structure in Algerian society.⁶

6. The Family in Algerian Society:

Mostefa Boutaghnouchat observes that the family consists of parents and children. Whenever a close relative is added, it becomes an extended family representing a social and economic entity on the basis of mutual commitment and the fulfilment of reciprocal roles. This definition determines the nature of relationships and roles, as well as the character of the family as a social entity and as an economic unit meeting the needs of its members. Accordingly, the Algerian family is characterised by several features, which can be summarised as follows:

1. The Algerian family is an extended family.
2. The Algerian family is subject to the authority of the father and grandfather.
3. The Algerian family is agnatic, carrying the father's name.
4. The Algerian family is undivided and cohesive, signifying solidarity and living under the authority of elders in a unified manner without internal division.

Mostefa Boutaghnouchat also added that the family is distinguished by social cohesion and collective action, known as *asabiyyah* (group solidarity).⁷

Thus, the Algerian family is distinguished by characteristics that are evident in the performance of roles and the status of individuals, in addition to fulfilling the function of socialisation, namely, the internalisation of values that stem from Algerian society and the economic function, which involves meeting the needs of individuals within a framework defined by society.

7. Components of values:

Sociologists and anthropologists maintain that the components of values are as follows:

7.1 Cognitive–Intellectual Component (Choice):

This refers to the knowledge and concepts that contribute to learning and the formation of values. The cognitive–intellectual component functions by selecting the values to be acquired according to their importance and the consequences of their outcomes. This selection is made voluntarily by the individual.

7.2 The Affective-Emotional Component (Appreciation):

⁶ Mohamed Taher Bouchlouch, *Social and Economic Transformations and Their Impact on Values in Algerian Society, 1967–1999* (Dar Bin Marabet for Publishing and Printing, 2008), 10.

⁷ Mostefa Boutaghnouchat, *The Algerian Family: Evolution and Modern Characteristics*, trans. Ahmed Dembri (Algerian University Press, 1984), 38.

This is the latent aspect governed by inclinations and emotions towards specific values, as well as pride in and adherence to those values.

7.3 The Behavioural-Guiding Moral Component (Action):

This means translating value into observable behaviour through psychomotor performance, which is manifested in the individual's daily practices.⁸ These components interact with one another and are influenced by the nature and culture of society.⁹

8. Sources of Values:

The sources of values differ from one society to another, according to the nature and culture of each society. The primary sources of values are as follows:

8.1 The Family:

The family serves as the cultural framework for the individual, primarily through the process of socialisation. The family instils the culture of the surrounding environment in the individual and teaches behavioural patterns consistent with the orientations of society, thus ensuring physical care and the internalisation of social values. It also imparts ideas, reinforces adherence to religious values, and fosters the adoption of social attitudes such as cooperation and solidarity.¹⁰ This is supported by the Dictionary of Sociology, which defines the family as "a group of individuals connected by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, involving interaction between husband and wife, as well as between parents and children." The more cohesive these relationships reflect a society that is cohesive in values and principles¹¹, the more the family preserves the values and general characteristics of society. Martine Segalen also considers the family to comprise the social relationships that connect parents, friends, and neighbours, with particular emphasis on the couple and close relatives. Mutual understanding and affection among them reflect the values and principles of the society to which they belong.¹²

8.2 The School:

The school is considered the second social institution contributing to the formation of values in the individual. Through the acquisition of knowledge and concepts in various fields, the individual is enabled to learn about cultures different from his or her own. The role of the school lies in preparing, educating, and professionally qualifying the individual to serve the nation with sincerity and dedication. The degree of this preparation varies according to the level attained by the individual; the higher the level is, the better the preparation.¹³

8.3 Religion:

Religion serves as a guide and corrector of individual behaviour, restoring the individual to the right path by regulating and rectifying conduct. This enables the individual to achieve balance and moderation in all aspects, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and psychological, without excess or deficiency. Moreover, religion is a

⁸ Mohamed Al-Shanawi et al., *Child Socialisation*, 2nd ed. (Amman: Dar Al-Safa, 2001), 12.

⁹ Tawfiq Mar'i and Balqis Ahmed, *Guide in Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Furqan for Publishing and Distribution, 1994), 236.

¹⁰ Mohamed Mostafa Zeidan, *Social Psychology* (University Press, 1986), 11.

¹¹ J. Sunpf and M. Hugues, *Dictionnaire de Sociologie* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1973), 131.

¹² Martine Ségalen, *Sociologie de la famille* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1981), 6.

¹³ Nourhan Munir Hussein Fahmi, *Religious Values of Youth from the Perspective of Social Work* (Alexandria: Al-Maktab Al-Jami'i Al-Hadith, 1998), 25.

source that clarifies how to interact with the external environment in a mutually beneficial relationship between the individual and society, thus ensuring that the individual's equilibrium is maintained.¹⁴

8.4 Customs and Traditions

These are all behaviours inherited from ancestors that determine an individual's identity and sense of belonging to society. Preserving them is the responsibility of future generations, as they distinguish and reflect the culture of society, promote unity, eliminate ethnic rivalry and competition, and foster strength, cohesion, and mutual support in various situations.¹⁵

Media:

The media are considered an important source for disseminating the values of society, shaping individual character, and providing experience and knowledge. However, media outlets differ in their level of influence and the nature of the messages they convey; some serve the interests and values of society, whereas others may contradict its orientations and values.

8.5 Civilisational Framework:

Civilisation is regarded as the material manifestation of society, embodying its orientations and values. Civilisation signifies the progress and development achieved by societies through adherence to sources of individual identity such as religion, language, history, and attachment to a specific geographical area.¹⁶

9. Characteristics of Values:

Abd al-Rahman Khalil al-Ma'aytah, in his book *Social Psychology*, identified the following characteristics of values:

- Values possess both subjective and social dimensions.
- The values are relative.
- The values are hierarchical, with priorities arranged accordingly.
- Values involve judgments and opinions regarding individuals and concepts.
- Values are more stable than inclinations and attitudes.
- Values are manifested as behaviours performed by the individual or as explicitly stated expressions.¹⁷

Kamal Al-Tabi'i further added that value:

- Direct and determine behaviour
- Reflect the goals to be achieved
- Are objective and agreed upon, such as the values of beauty, goodness, and evil

¹⁴ Mohamed Ahmed Deyouni and Afaf Abdel Alim Nasser, *Family Sociology* (Alexandria, Egypt: Dar Al-Ma'rifa Al-Jami'iya, n.d.), 182.

¹⁵ Nourhan Munir Hussein Fahmi, previously cited, 28.

¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹⁷ Abd al-Rahman Khalil al-Ma'ayta, *Social Psychology* (Amman, Jordan: Dar Al-Fikr for Printing and Publishing, 2000), 189.

- They are general and widespread among individuals
- Are acquired through interaction with society¹⁸

10. Functions of Values:

The functions of values are as follows:

- Values form an integrated and cohesive system that reflects all changes occurring within society.
- This value contributes to reducing the intensity of conflicts and differences of opinion.
- Values assist in decision-making across various issues.
- Values serve as a standard for self-reflection and reviewing our orientations.¹⁹
- Values enable the individual to achieve balance with social and moral norms.
- Values help the individual justify his or her behaviours and defend themselves.²⁰

11. The Family and the Crisis of Values:

Values serve to guide and direct individual behaviour, functioning as the standard by which society accepts or rejects specific actions. The presence of a crisis of values signifies not the loss of values themselves but rather the cessation of their defence. The individual bears the responsibility of preserving values and ensuring their continued practice among members of society. Over time and with societal developments, two types of values have emerged: traditional values and modern values. The individual, within society, both influences and is influenced by factors that shape values, such as the media and exposure to the outside world, which have led to a state of globalisation. This has made it more difficult for individuals to comprehend their actual social reality, which in itself represents a crisis of values that requires attention and examination. The following question arises: should the individual remain attached to values inherited from the family or to those acquired from other sources that may conflict with one's upbringing? The individual must be sufficiently imbued with values rooted in society to enable discernment between what is compatible with society and what is not, which is one of the fundamental roles and duties of the family. However, achieving this goal demands effort and a thorough understanding of the values of the society to which one belongs. Globalisation acts as a sweeping force, eroding traditional standards and inherited customs. It alters the ideologies of society, subjecting them to influences that present a distorted version of Western values, often contradicting what is preached and what is practised. Moreover, increasing materialism in societies has led individuals to prioritise material wealth, valuing individuals according to their possessions and wealth. This has resulted in the widespread adoption of two key values:

- a) The value of acquiring wealth;
- b) The value of superiority over others.

Consequently, values associated with material and economic dimensions negatively affect values and family structure, contributing to the emergence of problems such as divorce and family disputes. This has disrupted

¹⁸ Kamal Al-Tabi'i, *Social and Economic Transformations and Their Impact on Some Social Values in Saudi Society* (PhD diss., Ain Shams University, Cairo), 119.

¹⁹ Ali Abd Al-Razzaq Jibli, *Studies in Society, Culture, and Personality* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, 1984), 130.

²⁰ Nourhan Munir Hussein Fahmi, previously cited, 108.

the functional balance of the family, which has come to prioritise quick gain, excessive consumption, and irrational spending.²¹

Conclusion:

The continuity of society depends on the extent to which the values and principles upon which children are raised within the family align with the orientations and aspirations of society. The greater this alignment is, the more stable society enjoys, and the better equipped it is to confront any changes or attempts to erode its features. The stability of values, therefore, plays an important role in safeguarding society, distinguishing it from others, and shielding it from all impurities. This study has enabled us to identify the characteristics of the Algerian family and its structure. Examining family values allows us to analyse the features of society and diagnose its strengths and weaknesses, as well as to identify the key reasons that may lead to either the abandonment or retention of values in any society.

Like other societies, Algerian society has experienced successive periods of colonisation and numerous transformations in its past. Currently, China has experienced significant openness to the outside world, which has resulted in the emergence of new values that sometimes conflict with, and at other times are consistent with, its traditional values. This has led to what is known as a crisis of values. Therefore, it has become necessary to conduct in-depth studies of Algerian society and identify the prevailing values to preserve them and accept only those foreign values that serve and safeguard them while rejecting all values that conflict or clash with them. From a sociological perspective, values represent the continuity and preservation of social structure. To study the crisis of values in Algerian society, it is essential to understand the components and sources of values, as well as their key characteristics, to arrive at a sociological reading that reflects the reality of society, the central values prevailing within it, and their acceptance among Algerian families. It is also important to recognise the challenges associated with the family as a structure based on a network of sensitive and fundamental relationships, to identify the problems facing Algerian families, and to determine the factors influencing the formation and adoption of values within society. Social reality is characterised by an alternation between tradition and modernity, making it crucial to preserve our traditional values to highlight the particularities and features of Algerian identity and to resist globalisation, which tends to dissolve the individual's personality and encourage subservience to others, a phenomenon created by Western societies to promote dependence on them. It is therefore necessary to raise and guide future generations properly so that they adhere to values that embody the actual characteristics of Algerian society, serve its interests, preserve its identity achieved through social solidarity and overcome challenges to confront all the changes that aim to dismantle the relationships and bonds within and between families and society. This does not imply isolation from the outside world; rather, it is necessary to create a balance between traditional and modern values in our society so that we do not remain disconnected from the changes occurring around us but instead adopt everything that contributes to the cohesion, strength, and continuity of society.

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