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IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES
ON THE ARAB FAMILY :
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY



UNITED NATIONS



FOREWORD

In view of the importance of the family as a social institution contributing to the cohesion of society and its members, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, and decided that "the major activities for the observance of the Year should be concentrated at the local, regional and national levels and assisted by the United Nations and its system of organizations, with a view to creating among Governments, policy makers and the public a greater awareness of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society."

Accordingly, the Women and Development Programme of the Social Development and Population Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) initiated the implementation of the above-mentioned General Assembly resolution. At first, the urgent need to identify the conditions of the Arab family in the light of rapid transformations in the region became particularly apparent. It seemed necessary to undertake a survey to explore some of the main features of such a social institution in Arab society. Such an endeavour, however, was faced with lack of detailed information on the situation of the Arab family. Indicators are limited in their expression of this situation, figures are lifeless and field studies are lacking both in quantity and quality. Therefore, it was felt useful to undertake a study of the conditions of Arab women, as an introduction to the Arab family, in view of the pivotal role played by Arab women within the family, and of their distinguished position in terms of the "duties" placed upon them. Thus, the first task was to establish a database on Arab women in the Western Asia region, the second to prepare the present exploratory study.

The secretariat of ESCWA assigned Dr. Suad Tabbarah Mohsen, an economic statistician, to establish the database, the technical details of which appear in the introduction that follows the foreword. Dr. Mohsen spent months reviewing, evaluating and classifying data published by member States to establish the desired database.

The secretariat of the Commission also collaborated with the Cairo-based Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research in analysing the data contained in the present

survey. Dr. Madiha Al-Safti, who prepared the present study, exerted intense efforts to deal with the statistical situation in the region, which is marked by a lack of many indicators and thus a lack of qualitative statistics.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the fruitful cooperation and active interaction between the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in the preparation of the present study and in other fields.

The present study is an introductory investigation of the situation of the Arab family via the Arab woman, considered by Arab society to be the centre of the family structure. Therefore, the study concentrated on education and employment of Arab women as the decisive factors in the change that occurred in the role of women, and hence in the situation of the Arab family. The present study does not address aspects dealing with the social services rendered to the family, such as mother/child care, or family medical and social insurance. This is due to the scarcity of data and to the fact that the present study focuses on the changing role of the family. It is, however, expected that the Women and Development Programme will prepare another study on the status of the social services rendered to the Arab family, with a view to highlighting the actual needs of the Arab family that, when met, would enable it to play its role as an institution for bonding, harmonizing and linking members of society.



Tayseer Abdel Jaber
Executive Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL INDICATOR BASE AND METHODOLOGY USED

The major objective of any statistical indicator is the representation, by a single figure, of a relative change in a set of complicated circumstances affected by two different conditions such as time and place, i.e., between the base condition and current condition. The task is easier when the given indicator deals with one condition that is measurable in time and place.

At the request of the Women and Development Programme of the Social Development and Population Division, indicators were established in 1989 to deal with social conditions in individual ESCWA countries. Such indicators form a social statistics base aiming at:

- (a) Facilitating the work of social researchers;
- (b) Registering deficiencies and drawing the attention of those responsible for the collection of statistical data to the need to:
 - (i) Ensure future provision of necessary social statistics;
 - (ii) Improve and develop statistics obtained from various sources and used in the database, and ensuring their availability on a regular and periodic basis;
 - (iii) Ensure coordination in terms of standardizing the concepts used in organizing various data in the same country;
 - (iv) Adhere, as closely as possible, to internationally used and recommended definitions and systems when preparing social statistical data;
 - (v) Standardize classification methodologies, with a view to developing indicators covering the various ESCWA regions so that it might be possible in the future to develop a special methodology for socio-statistical indicators appropriate for the region. In this exercise, consideration is to be given to the classification methodology at times imposed upon statisticians, in a country in response to local requirements and in compliance with its established laws, despite efforts aiming at conforming to international systems.

METHODOLOGY OF THE INDICATOR BASE USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

1. Indicators are confined to calculating simple percentages of rates in relation to target population groups.
2. To this end, available specialized publications issued by relevant departments in each ESCWA country were reviewed.
3. These indicators covered different social issues, including issues concerning special population groups such as women.
4. Published tables were confined to those indicators for which ample data were available, at least 6 of the 13 ESCWA countries.
5. Where detailed data were available, several changes were introduced to the classification used by some countries, with a view to standardizing the content of the indicator and facilitating comparisons among countries.
6. In general, the classification adopted in the context of organizing individual indicator listings is the subject of a detailed supplement on the methodology used. Also, references and sources used in establishing the database are the subject of another supplement.

The aim of this introduction, especially the last two items, is to clarify the study and assist those who wish to continue this work in the future. The recommendations submitted are merely a product of experience and of the difficulties encountered in undertaking such a task.

Suad Tabbarah Mohsen

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I. ARAB SOCIETY: TRADITIONAL TO MODERN

At this juncture of its social history, Arab society finds itself at a transitional stage whose characteristics are reflected in all its systems, leaving its marks on various life patterns. Within this transitional context, the Arab family stands out as a social system that represents the nucleus and pivot of society, and which is affected by and influenced by changes in society. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that social studies on the family in Arab society attract the attention of many researchers, both Arab and Western. This interest is attributed to the transformations occurring in Arab societies within the framework of its cultural characteristics that distinguish it from other societies. It is thus necessary for those who attempt to understand the social changes of this society to do so on the basis of its distinctive specificity and unique identity built upon an Arab culture which is indeed a product of interplaying historical, social and economic factors.

Accordingly, the changes which the Arab family has undergone cannot be understood in isolation from the changes at work in Arab society as a whole, that is, without a deeper understanding of the broad frame which contains all systems of the society and represents the wider and more comprehensive base of the family.

Probably the most prominent feature of modern Arab society is the "state of transition"^{1/} referred to above, which it is experiencing in the context of its transformation from a traditional society into a modern one. This transitional state came after many years of subordination to a traditional culture dominated by customs and mores and dictated by historical, social and environmental conditions. Arab society acquired its particular identity from all these combined factors until it became exposed to external influences made possible by rapid communication channels, and in particular in the early decades of this century. These influences pushed Arab society into a new stage of development, in which it strove to keep pace with the process of rapid social transformation of the industrialized world. The present Arab identity is defined through this transitional stage in the transformation process of Arab society.

^{1/} Lewis Kamil Malika, "Al-usratu al-Masriyatu wa al-maskani al-alqatu bayna al-insan wa al-makan fi al-siyaki al-taghayuri al-ijtimai"; Dirasat fi elmal-Nafs Al-Ijtimai fi al-Watan al-arabi, Volume IV (Cairo, Egyptian Book Authority, 1985).

A traditional society is characteristically a stable and balanced society where every individual is aware of his/her rights and duties, within which behaviour is determined. Also, roles in such a society are clear and well-defined, leading to balanced social relationships and interactions among individuals. Modern society, too, is characterized by a form of stability and balance, which contains within it different roles and takes a form that differs from the traditional patterns; nonetheless it is a balance. On the other hand, a society passing through a transitional stage in which it is neither traditional nor modern is one that deviates from the balance characteristic of the two above-mentioned types of society. On the contrary, a transitional society is in continuous motion and as such it is characterized by instability and anxiety. This is a result of the fact that it is dominated by a traditional culture and simultaneously it moves towards a new pattern that has not yet been defined or that has not taken a definite shape. Traditional values are deep-rooted; they govern the behaviour of individuals and provide them with a frame of reference from which it is difficult to be free. At the same time, the process of modernization intervenes to produce behavioural patterns that are new, and even alien, to society; thus individuals become confused and polarized between traditionalism on one end and modernization on the other. A society passing through a transitional stage is therefore neither traditional nor modern, because it combines within it the characteristics of both; it searches for a new formula capable of making sense of the period in which it exists.

Individuals in a situation like this lose their clarity of vision, and society is consequently permeated by anxiety, tension and even suffering. Standards and values that shape cultural frameworks are thus usually contradictory at this stage. The features that are most prominent in such a society are those which demonstrate the contradictions, such as duality of standards which regulate relations among individuals and determine their behaviour and attitudes. It is also demonstrated in the conflict of roles from which those who fall between the two grinding wheels, the old and the new, suffer.

A. The Arab family

Nevertheless, and in spite of this broad social frame of reference that embraces a distinctive Arab culture and combines more than one society within its fold, it cannot be said that there is a single concept of the Arab family or a

single pattern or uniform characteristics for it. A generalization of this nature is erroneous, because although there are features common to Arab societies in general, there are differences in family characteristics in each society. This is due to the difference in the stages of social and cultural change through which each of these societies has passed and the stage which they reached. Moreover, the impact of political and economic factors may differ from one society to another. In addition, the extent of exposure to the external world and the degree of influence of foreign cultures differ also. Family characteristics may be different even within the same society, depending on the class status, which, in turn, will affect family characteristics within each social class. There is also the conventional classification of families as rural and urban, each with its own characteristics. We thus find that each family pattern has its own characteristics which are the outcome of economic, social and cultural interactions.

The above means that anyone who studies the Arab family should necessarily acknowledge these differences and take them into account so as to avoid categorical generalizations about a single pattern of the Arab family within a single set of characteristics. While we admit that the Arab family is passing through a transitional stage within the broader context of Arab society as a whole, we can still say that individual Arab societies reached different stages of this transitional period, each according to its own circumstances. The same applies to families within each society: they differ, though they fall within the same frame of reference.

In this study, we are considering the Arab family in the course of its transformation in the present stage. The common features that govern this transformation will be identified along with the differences among families resulting from the circumstances that distinguish each society from others. The study will also identify some of the differences within each society which are linked to the differences in its social structure.

It is to be noted that the basic source of the data used in the present study is the database of the Social Development and Population Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). These data may differ and vary in more than one place -- a situation with which researchers in the Arab countries are accustomed to dealing. This study therefore contains a certain amount of discrepant data, either due to multiplicity of sources or to

discrepancies within the same source in some cases. The lack or inadequacy of sources in the Arab countries will also become clear through the study. The tables presented herein reveal lack of data about a number of countries. Data may also differ from one table to another. It should therefore be explained that blanks in the tables indicate that data on that country are not available.

Data cited in this study expose another defect: years for which data are given in the tables in respect of various countries differ according to the different years for which data were made available, thus negating the existence of a unified basis for comparison. Some data go back many years, making the task of analysing them difficult, or impossible in some cases, owing to the remoteness of the time to which they refer, and which differs from one country to another.

However, given these reservations, the statistical data made available to ESCWA by various sources are presented in order to provide as clear a picture as possible with respect to the various dimensions of the topic under study. This is accomplished by considering the available data as indicators of certain trends for each variable, without insisting on their accuracy and being fully aware of the discrepancies among them.

To start with, the present study attempts to clarify the family pattern in Arab society from more than one perspective, as approached by scholars of the Arab family, different as the viewpoints are. This is followed by an examination of the common features of change in Arab societies, particularly in the Arab family. This will be followed by a discussion of specific situations of the family within the context of specific societies in special circumstances affecting the family. In the final section, an attempt is made to understand the change in the functions of the Arab family in the course of the above-mentioned process of transformation.

At the outset, attention is given to the concept of the Arab family and the changes it has undergone according to the views of scholars concerned with this topic. Differences in viewpoints emerge, presenting differing perspectives on the topic.

B. The Arab family pattern: extended or nuclear?

Views of scholars concerned with the study of the family tend to regard the societal conditions that accompany the

industrial environment of urban life as conducive to the decline of traditional family patterns, exemplified by the extended family, common in agricultural and pastoral societies. The nuclear family appears as a dominant pattern in an industrial society. This pattern is brought about by new economic and social conditions which make the continuation of the extended family in its conventional form difficult, and sometimes even impossible. Most Arab sociologists who study the family adopt the same view and apply it to the family in Arab society. They maintain that the social and economic conditions of Arab societies have moved the family away from its traditional extended character and that the conditions of modern life have led to the dominance of the nuclear urban pattern. The extended family, they believe, has persisted in rural and pastoral societies in response to living needs contrary to the requirements of urban societies, which have given rise to the predominance of the nuclear family. Reference is made here to certain studies which tackle the Arab family from this angle, such as studies by Al-Daghistani and Nahhas.^{2/}

By contrast, there are other Arab social scientists who refuse to distinguish between the extended and the nuclear family in Arab societies and maintain that economic and demographic factors in these societies impede the proliferation of the nuclear family pattern and rather firmly maintain the extended family. A proponent of this view is Maliha Nasser in her study on Iraqi society in 1972.^{3/} She demonstrated that despite the political, social and economic changes that took place in Iraq, the extended family pattern remained dominant. Extended families, embracing three generations and residing in one house, account for 75 per cent of total families in Iraq.

Among foreign sociologists who have studied the Arab family are some who share this view, among them Patai and Williams.

^{2/} Fahad Thaqib Al-Thaqib, "Al-tahaddhuru wa atharuhu ala al-bina'i al-aa'ili wa alaqatu al-aa'ilati bi al-aqaribi fi al-alami al-Arabi: Ardhun wa taqyeemun linta'iji al-buhouthi," Majalat Al-Uloun Al-Ijtima'iya, vol. XIV, No. 4 (1986), pp. 203-229 (in Arabic).

^{3/} Ibid., p. 213.

Another group of scholars on the family assert that the change in tradition which most sociologists associate with the family has acquired a pattern which in most cases does not fit with the actual situation. They argue that the nuclear family constitutes a dominant pattern in traditional societies and also in pre-industrial societies. Laslett, Ring and Greenfield, who form this group, assert that the proliferation of the nuclear family in Western society was pre-industrial. A number of Arab social scientists advanced similar views in their studies of the Arab family. As they assert the dominance of the nuclear family, they adopt a different position from what has already been presented about the dominance of the extended family in Arab society. An example of this view is found in a study on Egyptian rural society by Al-Khashab and Butler. These maintain that the extended family has declined in Egyptian society and that, even in rural areas, this pattern has been on the wane on account of the migration of peasants, whether internally to cities or externally to other Arab countries. This new reality has created new conditions in which the extended family has declined and was replaced by the nuclear family.^{4/}

In support of this view, Fahad Al-Thaqib says: "If a field survey were carried out at a given time and in a given place in a rural setting or in any Arab city so as to cover all social groups, the results would reveal that the extended family, comprising three generations and residing in the same dwelling, would only be a minority."^{5/} He supports his statement by indicating that the Egyptian census of 1976 proved that the extended family constituted a minority, in rural and urban areas alike. Peterson's study on population statistics in Egypt corroborates this view.

In confirmation of the dominance of the nuclear family in Arab society, several studies come to the forefront. For example, data derived from the Syrian population census revealed the dominance of the nuclear pattern; also, a study by Mohammed on the Sudanese family confirmed the dominance until 1976 of the nuclear family in rural and urban areas, and even among tribes. Studies on the status of the family in Jordan agree with the aforementioned results, as shown by a study of the districts of Al-Ashrafiyah and Al-Mahatta near

^{4/} Ibid., p. 214.

^{5/} Ibid., p. 215.

the capital conducted by the United Nations Development Programme in Amman in 1972. According to this study, nuclear families account for 67 per cent of the families at Al-Mahatta and 72 per cent of families at Al-Ashrafiyah. Some studies on societies in the Gulf region likewise reflect the same situation vis-à-vis the family. The population census in Bahrain shows that nuclear families constitute 90 per cent of total families. Also, the results of the field survey conducted by Fahad Al-Thaqib in Kuwait in 1981 indicate that the nuclear family accounts for 59 per cent of total families surveyed, while extended families do not exceed 17 per cent. Other families covered by the sample survey constitute various forms of semi-extended patterns that combine the two spouses and some relatives. Farsoun's study on Lebanese society in 1970 agrees with the same situation as it also explains that the nuclear family is a dominant pattern in this society only in cities but also in rural areas.^{6/}

Kinza Al-Alawi Al-Marani tackles the Moroccan family through its structural constants and variables and arrives at conclusions confirming the multiplicity of family patterns at the present time in Morocco. The study showed that the family structure in this society, particularly in urban areas, is not uniform, but that there are in fact several family patterns displaying a "changing" family structure "embracing remnants of extended, nuclear and democratic nuclear families and other types hard to identify."^{7/}

It is worth noting at this juncture that the above divergence in the results of studies on the structure of the Arab family reflects the transitional phase through which Arab society is passing. It is a phase lacking a well-defined form, thus leading to multiple family patterns that lack uniformity. Nevertheless, the status and value of the Arab family in society remains the same as far as individuals are concerned. Whether nuclear or extended and despite foreign influences, the Arab family still plays a fundamental role in the life of the individual and still possesses an entity and significance as a frame of reference. Family relationships in Arab societies have remained close and cohesive even though

6/ Ibid., pp. 214-215.

7/ Kinza Al-Alawi Al-Marani, "Al-thabitu wa al-mutaghayyiru fi buniyati al-usrati al-maghribiyyati", Majalat Al-Uloun Al-Ijtima'iya, vol. XV, No. 2 (1987), p. 367.

their form often changed and even though new conditions have emerged either in the context of the inevitable process of change that these societies are undergoing or as a result of new conditions created by contact with the external world. One therefore finds that the general tendency among those studying the Arab family is to emphasize the strength of family relationships and the firmness of family ties. This view is upheld even by those who maintain that the nuclear family is dominant in Arab society. They believe that blood relationships between independent nuclear units and other relatives are still maintained and that the network of family ties is still strong. Moreover, the values of the extended family still govern and determine relationships in the nuclear family. This can be clearly seen in the status of father and mother in the family and the relationship between them and between each of them and their children. There is, however, a divergent view which assumes that urban life leads to the decline of the extended family in all its aspects, including family relations, as a result of the new conditions emanating from the city environment.

Undoubtedly it is difficult to say that ties in the Arab family have disintegrated, even with the flood-tides of modernization. The basis of Arab culture makes the family its cornerstone, which is further consolidated by basic religious values. If the changing conditions of society have led to changes in the family, they have not undermined the family or destroyed ties within it or even severely eroded it. Arab society differs from Western industrial society in this respect. When monitoring social development in industrial societies, one clearly notices the trend towards individualism and its supporting values, accompanied by a diminution and decrease of the family role. This is made possible by social and cultural conditions that allow sons and daughters to live independently of their families at an early stage of their lives, perhaps no later than adolescence. Ties between children and parents weaken, for males and females alike. Economic conditions in those countries enable this pattern of living to dominate. By contrast, in Arab society children live independently of their parents only at a later stage, usually at marriage; this is particularly true for females. In many cases, independent living may not materialize even after the children's marriage. This is first of all because the family's frame of reference in the cultural structure is exemplified by the extended family, whose individuals are linked by close ties as one unit; this unit signifies to them, in reality, the basic unit of belonging, even if the existence or dominance of the nuclear pattern is admitted.

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In all cases, one finds that Arab culture imposes a sustained responsibility on parents toward their children and also on children toward their parents, emanating from values in a heritage that asserts and strengthens family cohesion.

A proof of the strength of family ties among members of one household, even under changing circumstances, is the sustainability of family relations despite migration. Reference is made here to the study carried out by Sarhan in 1975 on Palestinians resident in Kuwait. The results indicate that a great majority of the sample of the study visited their relatives once or more per week and that they did not break their relations with relatives outside Kuwait, but kept contact with them in one way or another.^{8/}

The findings of this survey on Palestinians apply to Arab individuals in general and to their relations with and attachment to members of their families. Certain negative aspects of the administrative system in Arab countries are linked to these close family relations, which penetrate into the administrative system in such a way as to affect its efficiency and very often hinder its sound functioning. Needless to say, some business arrangements in various Arab communities are based on the bond between relatives and members of the same family.

However, it cannot be said that the Arab family of today is the same family of yesterday. It has been subjected to changes created by social conditions in the context of social development of the Arab countries. This study thus addresses the Arab family via several major factors which have an impact on society in general and the family in particular. These factors affect all Arab societies, without distinction, and include: the education of women; female employment; and matrimonial changes.

C. Change in the family: Arab women

A discussion of the change that has taken place in the Arab family must take into account the change in the status of Arab women as the main focal point of change of the Arab family in particular and Arab society in general. The problems encountered by women are a reflection of society's problems and an expression of its conditions, which cannot be understood in isolation.

^{8/} Fahad Al-Thaqib, op. cit., p. 218.

The most significant marks of progress in the status of Arab women can be observed through two dimensions: education and labour. These are the two main variables that constitute the foundation for change in the status of women and, consequently, in the Arab family. This does not mean that a discussion of the family would exclude factors other than those related to women. What is meant here is that the chief variable in this respect is that which relates to women, their role and the changes in this role as a pivotal and fundamental element.

1. Education

It is a fact in Arab society that there has been an increasing interest in female education. If the social history of Arab society is traced, one finds a steady growth in the number of women participating in all levels of education. The beginnings of female education differed in the Arab countries according to the social and economic situation in each country, just as in the case of the beginnings of education in general. Cultural exposure to the West obviously influenced the establishment of the structural foundations for the educational system required by modernization in each society according to its own circumstances and the commencement of exposure. Egypt and Lebanon were thus the pioneers in establishing an educational system that included females, because these two countries were influenced by foreign cultures at an earlier date. The Gulf countries were late in female education not only because of the late beginnings of education in general, but also because of the traditional culture of the societies of these countries. The turning point for them was the oil boom, which produced an overall renaissance, of which education was the main element. This process was enhanced by the contact these societies established with the external world and their wide penetration by foreign cultures. The Gulf countries were able to catch up in the area of education in general and female education in particular. On the whole, the 1950s can be regarded as the beginning of a new era in Arab society, or indeed a surge in female education rates in comparison with the preceding decades. However, a marked, steady growth did not appear in some countries until later decades, particularly the 1970s. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the proportion of males in education is still higher than that of females due to the prevailing cultural values that still differentiate between the sexes and isolate females from public life. The dominance of the traditional culture is clearly greater in rural areas and among bedouins than in urban communities. Economic factors in some Arab

communities may create a tendency to educate males rather than females when weighing priorities in low-income households. It may be said in general terms that the present educational situation in the Arab countries reflects a preference for males as a result of the disparity between the two sexes in education, since education is regarded as a privilege conferred upon males in the first place. This situation is also associated with the phenomenon of early marriage for girls in the context of values giving priority to marriage over education. This may explain the high drop-out rates among females, which reach the highest point after primary education and the beginning of adolescence; this means that the girls are being prepared for marriage, particularly in rural areas. This also explains the higher rate of illiteracy among females than males, even with the increase in their numbers in education. According to 1985 statistics, illiteracy in Arab society was 70.4 per cent among females over 15 years of age and 42.6 per cent among males of the same age group.^{9/}

Data on illiteracy in the Arab countries, based on UNESCO publications, show that the rates of illiteracy among males and females are similar. Table 1 gives illiteracy percentages for 1990 as compared with those for 1970 and 1980. This table reveals the low rate of illiteracy in Lebanon in general as compared to other Arab countries over the period between 1970 and 1990. It did not exceed 31.5 per cent in 1970, and dropped to 23.5 per cent in 1980 and further to 16.5 per cent in 1990. Nevertheless, illiteracy among females is still higher than males: it was 42.1 per cent, as compared to 21.5 per cent for males in 1970; 32.4 per cent, against 14.5 per cent for males in 1980; and 23.6 per cent, against 9.5 per cent only for males in 1990. The rate of illiteracy reached its peak in Yemen and has started to drop, though to a greater extent among males than females. Illiteracy among males in Yemen was 88.5 per cent in 1970; it dropped to 84.1 per cent in 1980 and to 57.7 per cent in 1990. Among females, illiteracy was 99.5 per cent in 1970, did not change in 1980 and registered a slight drop to 98.9 per cent in 1990 -- still very high.

Comparing illiteracy rates between Yemen and Saudi Arabia shows that the rate of decline was higher in the latter, even among females. This occurred despite the fact that the rate

^{9/} "Tatawor al-tarbiya fi al-mantika al-arabiya", Al-Tarbiya Al-Jadida, special issue (August 1987).

of illiteracy in Saudi Arabia in 1970 was very high, close to that of Yemen; it began to decline at a quicker rate, however. In 1970, illiteracy in general in Saudi Arabia was 92.1 per cent, not much different from that of Yemen for the same year (93.9 per cent). The rate of illiteracy among females was also identical in Saudi Arabia and Yemen for the same year -- 99.5 per cent. The case with males was similar: male illiteracy in Saudi Arabia in 1970 was 84.8 per cent, very close to that in Yemen, which was 88.5 per cent in the same year.

The picture changed after a decade. The illiteracy rate dropped to 83.8 per cent in Saudi Arabia, against 91.7 per cent in Yemen. With regard to females in Saudi Arabia, the percentage dropped to 97.7 while it did not change in Yemen. Illiteracy among males dropped remarkably in Saudi Arabia, to reach 70.1 per cent in 1980 whereas in Yemen it reached 84.1 per cent, close to that of Saudi Arabia for 1970. The gap is more noticeable in the percentage of illiterate females in 1990, which dropped to 79.1 in Saudi Arabia whereas in Yemen it dropped only slightly, with illiteracy remaining as high as 98.9 per cent for the same year. Illiteracy among males in Saudi Arabia also dropped to 48.2 per cent in 1990. In Yemen, although male illiteracy dropped remarkably in 1990 in comparison with a decade earlier, it is still higher than in Saudi Arabia.

However, it cannot be said that the cultural situation in Saudi Arabia is much different from that in Yemen; intensification of educational programmes in Saudi Arabia helped to reduce illiteracy among females. Although illiteracy is still high, the rate of decline is accelerating noticeably. The rate of illiteracy among Arab females in general remains high, although it varies from one country to another. It may be noted from table 1 that Arab communities still under the domination of tribal traditions clearly suffer from high rates of female illiteracy. The difference in the rates of illiteracy between males and females remains wide in all communities without exception even where the overall rate is low.

It should also be noted that economic conditions generally play a part in reducing illiteracy, particularly among females, as can be concluded from the above comparison between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. A similarity can also be detected between the rapid downward trend in Saudi Arabia and that in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Iraq and Kuwait. If differences in the traditional culture are regarded as a major variable affecting the rate of illiteracy among females

Table 1. Percentage of illiterate adults, aged 15 years and above

Country	1970			1980			1990		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Algeria	61.2	88.5	75.6	44.4	70.9	58.2	31.1	53.1	42.4
Democratic Yemen	55.0	93.0	73.8	33.4	89.1	61.0	18.7	62.8	40.6
Egypt	43.1	70.0	56.6	32.7	58.8	45.7	26.6	50.1	38.3
Iraq	51.6	87.0	69.1	37.1	76.6	56.6	26.8	58.0	42.2
Jordan	36.9	67.6	51.8	31.1	53.4	42.0	25.1	39.7	32.3
Kuwait	36.6	58.1	45.0	30.6	45.8	37.3	28.4	37.7	32.7
Lebanon	21.5	42.1	31.8	14.5	32.4	23.5	9.5	23.6	16.5
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	43.6	62.6	66.6	24.5	60.8	41.9	13.4	39.6	26.1
Morocco	67.5	90.6	79.3	63.3	85.1	74.4	54.2	70.4	62.4
Saudi Arabia	84.8	99.5	92.1	70.1	97.7	83.8	48.2	79.1	63.6
Sudan	83.0	98.0	85.4	63.5	93.5	78.4	49.2	84.1	66.6
Syrian Arab Republic	40.4	80.0	59.7	29.1	61.5	45.0	22.8	44.9	33.7
Tunisia	53.2	82.4	68.3	37.3	63.9	51.1	27.7	49.0	38.7
Yemen	88.5	99.5	93.9	84.1	99.5	91.7	57.7	98.9	78.2

Source: UNESCO.

in Arab societies, then the economic factor also constitutes a significant variable. Also illiteracy in rural areas is higher than that in urban areas, showing a difference between the two sexes. Table 2 gives a comparison of illiteracy between rural and urban areas in selected Arab countries.

The difference between the two rates is clearly seen in table 2. Illiteracy is higher in rural areas, which is expected because rural culture gives priority to its own concerns, for which interest in education is not a prerequisite. The high illiteracy rate among females in general is also attributed to the above-mentioned dominance of traditional values that is stronger in rural culture, to the extent that female illiteracy is almost twice that of males.

Table 2. Illiteracy in urban and rural areas in selected Arab countries
(Percentage)

	Iraq (1987)	Egypt (1986)	Jordan (1983)	Syrian Arab Republic (1984)
<u>Urban</u>				
Male	16.38	26.46	10.98	14.65
Female	28.72	44.41	26.69	34.74
Total	22.53	35.14	18.48	24.43
<u>Rural</u>				
Male	29.83	47.25	20.07	24.80
Female	48.44	76.44	43.56	60.44
Total	39.36	61.29	31.32	42.36

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

In table 2, Egypt shows the highest rate of illiteracy in general, whether in rural or urban areas and for both sexes, while Jordan shows the lowest rate in general. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the gap between the two sexes is wide, both in urban and rural settings. Illiteracy in urban areas among males reaches 14.65 per cent, whereas among females it reaches 34.74 per cent. In rural areas, the percentage is only 24.80 per cent for males and rises to 60.44 for females.

It is to be noted that inconsistencies may appear in the data in tables 1 and 2. This was explained earlier. Also, the difference in objectives of the tables may partially account for the discrepancies.

It is not surprising that Arab countries should give attention to and adopt intensive programmes for the eradication of illiteracy, both among men and women. Appreciable interest has been shown in establishing literacy centres in more than one country within the framework of these efforts. It is worth noting that the majority of individuals registered in these centres is female. In 1987/1988 the number of literacy centres in Oman was 248, in which 6,697 males were enroled against 14,844 females. In Democratic Yemen (in 1986/1987) and Bahrain (1985/1986) the number enroled was, in the former, 282 males against 7,421 females and in the latter 2,275 males, against 6,013 females.

In other countries, the picture is reversed. The difference in enrolment between males and females is quite clear: males exceed females, sometimes reaching twice as many. In Kuwait, the number of individuals enroled in these centres was 12,846 males against 11,100 females in 1987/1988; in Qatar it was 4,299 males against 2,698 females in 1985/1986; the same pattern was true for the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. These discrepancies between the two sexes can naturally be attributed to tradition and culture in these communities. Likewise, in countries where the number of females is higher than that of males, females lag behind in education. Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic exhibit no marked difference between the sexes with regard to enrolment in literacy centres. In Saudi Arabia, the number of such centres is remarkably high, 2,845 in 1986/1987. This may explain the high number of enroled persons of both sexes, which amounted to 76,842 males and 73,887 females; it is the highest number among the countries that were compared. The high number of literacy centres in Saudi Arabia is one aspect of the policy to intensify conventional projects.

Illiteracy is also associated with the educational level in a community. This in turn is partially determined by the educational level of females and also by the extent to which they can be absorbed into the educational system. Table 3 further demonstrates the low educational level of Arab women, and gives the number of persons enroled in various educational institutions, distributed according to educational level and type.

Here the general disparity both between the sexes and among countries is obvious. Yemen comes at the bottom of the

list as to the proportion of females to males enrolled in general and as regards the break-down of the various educational levels. The figures are high in Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In the area of teacher training, it is noted that the proportion of females is high because teaching is generally associated with women. It may be worth referring here to the situation of education in the Arab Gulf countries, where the percentage of females is close to and sometimes higher than that of males in education. Dr. Zuhair Hatab and Dr. Abbas Makki confirm this situation in their study on Arab women and consider that the rate of females in education may exceed that of males in some of these countries, owing to the fact that these countries offer education grants to males to study abroad while females are deprived of them.^{10/} This situation is associated with and confirms the preference for males in education.

An example of this situation can be derived from the ratio of females to males in university education in: Bahrain, 121.8 per cent; Kuwait, 155.2 per cent; Qatar, 208.6 per cent; and the United Arab Emirates, 131.3 per cent (as shown in ESCWA data).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presents another picture of the rate of enrolment in education from the age of 6 to 11 years, distributed by country and representing males and females over a period of 25 years beginning in 1960 and ending in 1985 (table 4).

It is clear that education cannot be separated from the other contexts of society. It may reflect the economic, social and political situation in each society. Despite the fact that women's share in education in all Arab countries is less than that of men, there are still clear differences from one country to another.

The difference is sharp between males' and females' percentages in education in communities where traditional cultures that uphold tribal customs prevail. A sharp difference is observed in Saudi Arabia, for example, even though the percentage of women in education is high. In 1960,

^{10/} Dr. Zuhair Hatab and Dr. Abbas Makki, Al-taqatu al-nisa'iyatu al-arabiat: qira'atun tahliliyatun li'awdha'iha al-demogratiyati wa al-ijtima'iyati wa al-tandhimiyati wa li'ahwaliha al shakhsiya, (Beirut, Ma'ahed al-Inai' al-Arabi, 1987), p. 102.

Table 3. Educational enrolment in ESCWA countries, according to educational level and type

Educational level	Country (Year)	Bahrain 85/86	Demo- cratic Yemen 86/87	Egypt 86/87	Iraq 88/89	Jordan 86/87	Kuwait 87/88	Lebanon 79/80	Oman 87/88	West Bank 83/84	Qatar 85/86	Saudi Arabia 86/87	Syrian Arab Republic 86/87	United Arab Emirates 85/86	Yemen 86/87
Nursery															
Number of nurseries															
Number of students enrolled															
Males		4009	4355	--	44492	17653	25531	--	1567	4084	2615	33477	38873	186902	--
Females		3599	4047	--	40604	14174	23947	--	1162	7571	2244	27113	31986	16668	--
Total		7608	8402	244383	85096	31827	49478	125300	2729	15655	4859	60590	70859	35360	--
Ratio of females to males		89.9	92.9	--	91.3	80.3	93.8	--	74.2	93.7	85.8	81.0	82.3	89.2	--
Primary															
Number enrolled															
Males		29195		3726219	1670775	281461	93468	--	116391	103800	21277	810774	1159334	78767	774854
Females		28181		2887179	1341253	261058	88376	--	99025	90671	19359	649509	999360	73308	210867
Total		57376		6613398	3012028	542519	181844	388482	215416	194471	40636	1460283	2158594	152075	985721
Ratio of females to males		96.5		77.5	80.3	92.8	94.6	--	85.1	87.4	91.0	80.1	86.2	93.1	27.2
Intermediate															
Number enrolled															
Males		11603	201424	1419193	470959	113276	78073	--	27639	37917	6988	266701	367123	21295	122008
Females		10301	92199 a/	958630	285780	101467	70922	--	16289	29752	6740	170456	248911	19475	14676
Total		21904	293623	2377823	756739	214743	148995	165804	43928	67669	13728	437157	616034	40770	136684
Ratio of females to males		88.8	45.8	67.5	60.7	89.6	90.8	--	58.9	78.5	96.5	63.9	67.8	91.5	12.0
Secondary															
Number enrolled															
Males		3359	21915	306500	131375	47964	56962	--	7960	22608	3576	113895	138195	10353	33107
Females		5512	10687	235316	93295	50822	49709	--	6349	15785	4570	84554	101224	10405	4228
Total		8871	32602	541816	124670	98786	106671	72969	14309	38393 b/	8146	198449	239419	20758	37335
Ratio of females to males		164.1	48.8	76.8	71.0	106.0	87.3	--	79.8	69.8	127.8	74.2	73.2	100.5	12.8

Table 3. (continued)

Educational level	Country (Year)	Bahrain 85/86	Demo- cratic Yemen 86/87	Egypt 86/87	Iraq 88/89	Jordan 86/87	Kuwait 87/88	Lebanon 79/80	Oman 87/88	West Bank 83/84	Qatar 85/86	Saudi Arabia 86/87	Syrian Arab Republic 86/87	United Arab Emirates 85/86	Yemen 86/87
Vocational															
Number enrolled															
Males		5116	1943	555318	17740	19328	3581	--	680	--	700	13095	--	604	1389
Females		3754	489	369493	45907	12242	4570	--	70	--	--	--	--	--	214
Total		7870	2432	924811	153647	31570	8151	--	750	--	700	13095	56664	604	1603
Ratio of females to males		53.8	25.2	66.5	42.6	63.3	127.6	--	10.3	--	--	--	--	--	15.4
Teacher training															
Number enrolled															
Males		--	1466	36692	13024	2067	1789	347	745	730	--	11831	3566	--	9568
Females		--	401	56717	17336	11139	4235	1315	578	742	--	10520	7866	--	3238
Total		--	1867	93409	30360	13206	6024	1662	1323	1472	--	22352	11432	--	12806
Ratio of females to males		--	27.4	154.6	133.1	538.9	236.7	379.0	77.6	101.6	--	88.9	220.6	--	33.8
University and higher															
Number enrolled															
Males		1877	2965	419831	120448	31444	5058	--	691	6589	1598	67584	93098	3038	12416
Females		2287	1840	209892	63333	28964	7849	--	447	4865	3333	46355	45645	3988	1894
Total		4164	4805	629723	183781	60408	12907	--	1138	11454	4931	11939	138743	7026	14310
Ratio of females to males		121.8	62.1	50.0	52.6	92.1	155.2	--	64.7	73.8	208.6	68.6	49.0	131.3	15.3

Source: ESCWA database.

a/ Intermediate education in Democratic Yemen includes primary.

b/ Secondary education in the West Bank includes vocational.

c/ Data on teachers training in Jordan and Kuwait are estimates.

d/ University education in the West Bank includes Gaza Strip.

e/ Data on university education in Qatar are for 1986/1987.

Table 4. Rate of enrolment in education, ages 6-11

Country	1960			1965			1970			1975			1980			1985		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Algeria	42.2	30.3	36.3	62.0	43.4	53.0	71.3	47.2	59.5	86.7	61.1	74.1	62.7	69.2	81.1	96.1	76.2	86.3
Egypt	72.7	47.7	60.5	83.0	56.2	69.9	80.7	51.4	66.4	80.5	51.9	66.4	82.0	55.2	68.9	83.5	57.7	71.0
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	59.2	20.4	40.3	76.7	30.8	57.0	100.1	71.8	86.4	120.6	111.9	116.4	--	--	--	--	--	--
Morocco	46.6	19.2	32.9	55.2	25.2	40.6	43.3	24.1	34.0	30.2	29.7	40.1	56.0	35.5	45.9	61.4	41.7	51.7
Sudan	16.8	7.0	12.0	18.3	10.9	14.7	30.4	18.0	34.3	38.5	20.2	29.4	47.2	27.2	37.4	54.7	33.8	44.4
Tunis	96.5	33.4	50.3	84.8	51.7	69.0	88.7	61.9	75.5	90.9	62.6	77.0	95.4	71.0	83.4	95.9	78.2	87.2
Iraq	66.4	28.2	47.7	70.7	32.9	52.2	75.8	33.9	55.4	98.2	53.8	67.3	99.4	63.0	81.5	99.8	71.3	85.8
Jordan	76.5	48.3	63.1	90.9	71.6	81.7	68.6	57.2	63.1	80.2	70.7	75.6	80.2	76.5	78.4	80.2	78.7	79.5
Kuwait	80.5	71.9	76.4	88.0	75.1	81.7	71.5	58.4	65.1	67.3	61.8	64.6	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lebanon	47.0	68.6	71.4	83.0	66.0	74.5	85.1	73.4	79.4	93.2	85.0	89.2	95.2	89.0	92.2	96.7	92.0	94.4
Saudi Arabia	14.1	1.7	8.0	24.8	8.0	16.6	32.4	15.6	24.2	46.3	24.2	35.4	57.3	35.6	46.6	76.6	48.2	58.1
Syrian Arab Republic	69.3	32.0	51.3	86.7	45.5	66.8	98.0	60.4	79.6	110.2	77.4	94.1	110.2	86.0	98.8	110.2	92.7	101.6
Yemen	10.7	0.3	5.6	12.1	0.8	6.5	13.7	1.6	7.7	33.4	4.7	19.3	52.7	12.9	33.1	67.9	29.8	49.1
Democratic Yemen	15.1	5.3	10.3	27.2	10.5	19.0	74.1	20.9	47.9	87.6	46.4	76.5	93.9	64.3	79.3	94.9	71.8	83.5
Oman	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.9	0.9	2.9	53.4	26.1	40.0	80.6	57.4	69.2	84.6	59.9	72.4

Source: UNESCO.

enrolment was 14.1 per cent for males and 1.7 per cent for females; this rose to 24.8 per cent for males and 8 per cent for females in 1965, again rose to 32.4 per cent for males and 15.6 per cent for females (about half that of males) in 1970, rose to 46.3 per cent for males and 24.2 per cent for females in 1975, rose to 57.3 per cent for males and 35.6 per cent for females in 1980 by 1985 the percentage of females enrolled did not exceed 48.2 per cent while that of males reached 76.6 per cent.

Similarly in Yemen, the gap between males and females in enrolment in education is widening. In 1960 the rate of females was only 0.3 per cent against 10.7 per cent for males; the figures rose slightly to reach 12.1 per cent for males and 0.8 per cent for females in 1965. There was a further slight increase in 1970, where the rate reached 13.7 per cent for males and 1.6 for females. Again, there was another rise in 1975, at which time enrolment figures reached 33.4 per cent for males and 4.7 per cent for females. This leap in the figures may be explained in the light of increased attention to educational projects and expansion of developmental activities in general since the early 1970s. The results of these efforts appear in 1980 when the rate of enrolment in education rose to 52.7 per cent for males and 12.9 per cent for females, which constitutes a noticeably growing rate. In 1985, the rate of enrolment was 67.9 per cent for males and 29.8 per cent for females.

However, Saudi Arabia remains in the forefront in comparison with Yemen with regard to total percentage of enrolment in education and also with regard to the rate of women's participation, in view of the interest in education resulting from the availability of resources.

In contrast to these obvious differences between the rate of males and females in education, there are Arab countries where the two are almost even. This is the case with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya after 1970. Despite the fact that during the period between 1960 and 1970 there was the same preference of males over females in education as in other Arab countries, the social and economic changes that took place after 1970s, particularly the availability of material resources, affected the status of women in Libyan society and led to the improvement of their educational standard. This change can be seen clearly from the above figures. In 1960, the rate of enrolment in education was 59.2 per cent for males against 20.4 per cent for females. In 1965 these rates rose to 76.7 per cent for males and 30.8

per cent for females. In 1970 the figures were 100.1 per cent for males and 71.8 per cent for females. The rates reached their peak in 1975, registering 120.6 per cent for males and 111.9 per cent for females.

Similarly, in Jordan, although a difference exists between males and females in education rates, it is minor. In 1960, the education rate was 76.5 per cent for males against 48.3 per cent for females. In 1965 the figures were 90.9 per cent for males and 71.6 per cent for females. In 1970 the figures declined for both sexes, registering 68.6 per cent for males and 57.2 per cent for females. This may be attributed to the war conditions experienced by Jordanian society at that time. However, in later years the rate of education again rose for both sexes. In 1975 the figures were 80.2 per cent for males and 70.7 per cent for females. It should be noted that in the years following 1975 and until 1985, while the rate of education among males stabilized at 8.2 per cent, that for females rose to 76.5 per cent in 1980 and to 78.7 per cent in 1985.

The educational situation of women in Jordan may be understood within the context of the rapid social development of this society as well as its openness to Western culture.

In Kuwait, the rates of education for the two sexes are close, particularly since 1975, when the enrolment rate reached 67.3 per cent for males and 61.8 per cent for females. The situation in the Arab Gulf countries and the factors leading to it have already been referred to.

In other Arab countries, rates of education for the two sexes also differ. However, generally speaking, the education of Arab women is accepted in modern Arab culture although to varying degrees among societies and individuals.

Table 5 demonstrates the situation of education at all levels in the Arab countries according to rural and urban areas and by type. The table shows that the highest ratio in the educational level constitutes the "literate" group for all countries, for males and females alike. Those who have attained university education are the smallest group, which is expected in any representation of general educational progression. However, there are differences in the percentage of population represented at the university level in each country. While Jordan represents the highest ratio among males (10.32 per cent), Qatar represents the highest

ratio among females (8.02 per cent). The rate of university education in the Syrian Arab Republic appears to be low for both males and females, as it is only 2.90 per cent among males and 0.85 per cent among females. These ratios are consistent with the distribution by education and the high rate of illiteracy in that country.

For more details about the representation of females in university education, see table 6, which gives the number of college graduates by specialization and type; table 7 shows the ratio of females to males.

Table 6 shows that the number of males is generally higher than that of females in education, except in Kuwait and Qatar, which may be due to the high number of males on scholarships abroad. The data presented in table 7 endorses this situation as the female-to-male ratio of college graduates registers a higher rate in Kuwait (127.2 per cent) and Qatar (160.7 per cent) in addition to the United Arab Emirates (118.2 per cent), despite the discrepancy in years used for each country. On the whole, the ratio of female graduates is higher than that of males and exceeds 50 per cent except in Yemen (17 per cent). The proportion of females in the various specializations varies for each country. Comparison is difficult because data are incomplete, though female representation is clearly low in Yemen.

The education of women undoubtedly constitutes a significant dimension in the emancipation issue. Advocates of women's rights underscore education as an important aspect for improving the position of women, as an educated woman is more conscious of her human rights and more courageous in demanding them. Through education, she likewise becomes better able to perform her role in society as a wife and mother, and this is reflected in the way she brings up her children and in her ability to deal with them and understand their problems. This is the change that matters which leaves its impression on the family and its members. There are, however, those who wonder about the real liberation of Arab women although they have attained the right to education. On this point, a significant opinion is expressed by Dr. Zuhair Al-Hatab and Dr. Abbas Makki, who state that "a simple analysis of the situation shows that a large segment of outwardly educated and liberated women still entertain deep down a feeling of inferiority and suffer from a degraded

Table 5. (continued)

Total population	Democratic Yemen					Jordan 1983	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia 1984	Syrian Arab Republic 1984	United Arab Emirates	Yemen
	Bahrain 1981	Egypt 1986	Iraq 1987	Yemen											
Males															
Illiterate	21.30	37.78	20.18	12.28	19.49						21.78	18.94	29.86		
Literate	28.14	30.43	25.13	17.62	20.51						28.88	32.87	23.57		
Primary	16.05		24.25	35.01	17.36						14.47	27.12	12.60		
Intermediate	11.25		7.81	17.54	18.12						12.55	10.27	10.65		
Secondary	14.11		3.98	7.23	15.86						12.09	6.27	13.48		
Technical	4.52	25.95	4.63	..	..						2.23	1.62	2.34		
University and higher	4.62	5.84	3.37	10.32	8.65						7.89	2.90	3.48		
Not stated	0.02	..	10.66	..	..						0.12	..	0.01		
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00						100.00	100.00	100.00		
Females															
Illiterate	36.33	61.77	34.54	31.32	26.90						23.90	45.74	37.28		
Literate	23.32	17.98	25.64	18.43	16.03						24.96	23.72	19.54		
Primary	12.72		18.91	24.23	18.31						14.20	18.05	11.08		
Intermediate	8.45		4.56	15.09	17.56						12.22	6.90	8.95		
Secondary	12.13		2.48	5.29	15.37						14.06	3.42	14.05		
Technical	3.98	17.45	2.98	..	..						2.49	1.32	3.29		
University and higher	3.01	2.80	1.88	5.64	5.82						8.02	0.85	5.81		
Not stated	0.05	..	9.01	..	..						0.15	..	..
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00						100.00	100.00	100.00		
Total percentage of illiteracy in urban areas															
	27.20	49.35	27.40	20.94							22.39	32.05	31.78		

Source: Database of Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

a/ Data on Kuwait represents nationals only.

b/ Data relating to secondary education in Kuwait include technical education.

c/ Data relating to technical education in Egypt include primary, intermediate and secondary education.

Table 6. Number of college graduates by specialization and type

Specialization	Country Year	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1987	Iraq 1988/1989	Jordan 1987	Kuwait 1987/1988	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1985/1986	Saudi Arabia 1987	Syrian Arab Republic 1984	United Arab Emirates 1985/1986	Yemen 1986/1987
<u>All specializations</u>															
Males				75152	13715	2622	1281				331				
Females				39904	10764	2118	1630				532				
Total				115056	24479	4740	2911				863				
<u>Applied sciences</u>															
Males				29279							..	722			..
Females				20811							..	557			..
				8468							..	165			..
<u>Medicine</u>															
Males				4153		68	94				..	270			12
Females				2691		50	40				..	157			5
				1462		18	54				..	113			7
<u>Pharmacology</u>															
Males				1308		101					..	39			..
Females				649		90					..	22			..
				659		11					..	17			..
<u>Dentistry</u>															
Males				75		..					..	25			..
Females				399		..					..	12			..
				306		..					..	13			..
<u>Engineering</u>															
Males				7066		370					26	439	43		..
Females				6098		286					26	439	32		..
				968		84					..	..	11		..
<u>Agriculture</u>															
Males				6160		259	175					286	12		..
Females				4229		152	127					200	12		..
				1931		107	48					86	..		..

Table 6. (continued)

Specialization	Country Year	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1986/ 1987	Iraq 1988/ 1989	Jordan 1986/ 1987	Kuwait	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1985/ 1986	Saudi Arabia 1986/ 1987	Syrian Arab Republic 1984	United Arab Emirates 1985/1986	Yemen 1986/ 1987
<u>Natural sciences</u>															
Males						755					104	584	96		78
						426					43	347	37		62
Females						329					61	237	59		16
						1516					153	8460		467	165
<u>Humanities</u>															
Males						777					103	4577		172	120
						739					50	3883		295	45
<u>Business administration</u>															
Males												1392		260	..
												1031		142	..
Females												361		118	..
															258
<u>Commerce and economics</u>															
Males						715									224
						497									34
Females						218									354
						272					77				349
<u>Law</u>															
Males						110					32				5
						162					45				5

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Table 7. Female-to-male ratios of college graduates, by specialization

Specialization	Country Year	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1986/ 1987	Iraq 1988/ 1989	Jordan 1986/ 1987	Kuwait 1987/ 1988	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1985/ 1986	Saudi Arabia 1986/ 1987	Syrian Arab Republic 1984	United Arab Emirates 1985/1986	Yemen 1986/ 1987
Grand total				53.1	78.5	80.8	127.2				160.7		118.2		17.0
Applied sciences															
Medicine				40.7								29.6			
Pharmacology				54.3		36.0	135.0					72.0			140.0
Dentistry				101.5		818.2						77.3			
Engineering				76.7								108.3			
Agriculture				15.9		29.4								34.4	
Natural sciences				45.7		70.4	37.8					43.0			
Humanities						77.2					141.9	68.3		159.5	25.8
Business administration						95.1					48.5	84.4		171.5	37.5
Commerce and economics												35.0		83.1	
Law						43.9									15.2
						147.3					140.6				1.4

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

attitude towards men."^{11/} Drs. Hatab and Makki illustrate the magnitude of this conflict as an outcome of the process of socialization in Arab communities, where marriage is portrayed to the girl as a sought-for hope without which she has no value and her life no meaning. As she grows up, she is constantly inculcated with the idea that her place as a woman is incomplete without a man and without attaining "a wife's status".^{12/} She thus falls prey to conflicting forces: what she learns at school about choosing her style of life and what social conventions impose on her. Many educated Arab women agree with this as a result of vacillation between subordination to society's conventions and challenging its prevailing values. Such a vacillation usually leads such girls into "psychological and behavioural imbalance".^{13/} However, one cannot generalize in this respect, as such a conflict may arise at early transitional phases when society begins to cast off the rigid chains of convention. But with time women advance towards greater ability to adapt to the new situation.

The suffering of Arab girls engendered by the process of education is naturally an aspect of the previously mentioned transitional period which Arab society is undergoing. It is a transitional period reflected in its most distinctive forms in Arab women, the change in whose status and also in whose role is regarded as the most salient feature of this period. This change may be regarded simultaneously both as a cause and effect, particularly because of the dominance of an established culture that still upholds the supremacy of the male sex and differentiates between the two sexes through the process of socialization at a time when women have succeeded in achieving for themselves a substantial measure of equality with men.

2. Labour

It may be difficult to understand the role of education in the life of Arab women without touching on the role of labour as a significant variable in the change which her

^{11/} Ibid., p. 102.

^{12/} Ibid., p. 114.

^{13/} Ibid.

status has undergone. Women's acquirement of the right to education has naturally opened up for them an opportunity for work. Women's entrance into the field of work has produced direct effects on all aspects of household conditions and on the relations between members of the same family. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the right to work is closely related to the right of education and that women's entrance into the workforce came as a result of education, a working woman is not necessarily an educated woman. Education is not a condition for work, particularly in Arab society. Yet the relationship between these two variables remains. In the context of the enhanced status of Arab women as a result of these two variables, reference is made to a study by Dr. Abbas Ahmad on contemporary Gulf women and how they have acquired a higher status because of these two factors, education and work. Dr. Ahmad refers to a study by Farouk Amin on Bahraini women in which he concludes that "education and work are the two most important factors that have changed women's status in the Arab Gulf. Education came long before work, but the two elements are interrelated, for without education women would not have been able to enter the modern labour field and education was instrumental in changing people's values and social attitudes."^{14/}

The importance of work for the Arab woman may be understood through her long struggle for emancipation and equality with men. Her participation in the production process has endowed her with value as an individual, possessing an entity and an effective role in the development process, particularly as some Arab communities are in need of participation by both sexes on account of their economic conditions and to meet developmental requirements. In her study on women and change in modern Morocco, Dr. Al-Zahra' Azrowil adds another dimension to the merits of women's work. She maintains that women in a modern Moroccan household, like other Arab women in general, have lost the protection they had in an extended family after the disintegration of the traditional structure of the family in the course of its transformation into a nuclear family. Work for a woman, moreover, came to serve as an alternative to protection if she was poor and it would be a security for her against the hardships and troubles of life in a new reality where strong family relations were missing. Moroccan women's

^{14/} Dr. Abbas Ahmad, "Al-usratu al-mutaghairatu fi mujtama'i al-Emirati al-arabiyati al-muttahidati", Symposium on the Changing Family in the Middle East, Jordan, December, 1989.

need for work, in Dr. Azrowil's opinion, of this scholar, grows more intense in circumstances of poverty and material need and work becomes a pressing need.^{15/}

Studies tackling the impact of women's work on the household adopt divergent stands. Some focus on the positive aspects of this situation and rule out negative effects arising therefrom, whether in respect of the household in general or children in particular. Exponents of this view refuse to throw the blame for any aberrations in the household on the working woman. They maintain that the acquirement by Arab women of the right to work is in fact an achievement for their emancipation movement, because they have succeeded in proving their ability to perform multiple roles efficiently, thereby defying the supremacy of men and in asserting themselves despite the societal restrictions. Among the positive aspects of a woman's work, they believe, is that she contributes directly to the improvement of her household's material standard. This condition will naturally accrue various advantages for all members of the family, particularly as, apart from the material return, a working woman would be more capable of dealing with members of her family from a position superior to that of a non-working woman, whose position is regarded as inferior, restricting her ability to shoulder her tasks as a wife and mother. As Drs. Zuhair Hatab and Abbas Makki say: "Her income enables her to enter into negotiation about the nature of her role in the family and gives her more rights."^{16/}

A wider perspective of women's work holds that the increased rate of dependency in Arab communities requires women to work along with men to meet economic requirements.

But have Arab women achieved equality with men after entering the workforce? There is an opinion affirming that woman's work adds to her subordination to men and to the household because she becomes a joint source of income "binding her economically"^{17/} -- a difficult role from which to extricate herself. Certain studies also indicate

^{15/} Dr. Al-Zahra' Azrowil, "Al-mara'a wa al-taghyeer fi al-maghrebi al-hadith", Symposium on the Changing Family in the Middle East, Jordan, December 1989.

^{16/} Hatab and Makki, op.cit., p. 166.

^{17/} Hatab and Makki, op. cit., p. 164.

that the role of women is still vague at the present stage and that they are bound to face tremendous challenges in order to cross this stage peacefully, in view of the circumstances created by new variables.

During the process of change that the Arab family has been undergoing, women undoubtedly fall victim to the numerous contradictions and duality to which society is prone, as the role of women in traditional society is that of wife and mother. But modern women have acquired a new role -- that of a working woman. Such women have been compelled to deal with society through these two roles -- the traditional role that has accompanied them for long generations and the modern role acquired in recent decades. However, the picture of the present nature of the transitional stage referred to earlier, through which society is passing, is still indistinct on many prevailing standards and values, notably as regards women and their role in modern society. Established tradition still places women in the old role and fixes a pattern for them, while the demands of modern life dictate a new pattern. Modern women have thus come to assume two roles involving a great many contradictions. The traditional role confines women within narrow boundaries and imposes several constraints stemming from traditional culture. The new role requires them to break free from this confined space and discard these constraints. As wives and mothers performing household chores and treated as females, women are inferior to men; as working women they occupy a status similar to that of men in the production process or at least close to it, if evaluated from a social perspective stressing discrimination between the two sexes and rejecting total equality. Amidst all this, modern Arab women suffer from a clash of roles which they are obliged to play simultaneously and which impose a considerable psychological strain on them.^{18/}

If educated Arab women in the transitional stage of society, as stated earlier, are suffering from a psychological conflict in relation to the dual terms of reference through which they are acting, working Arab women have added another aspect to that conflict created by the reality of increasing and, on many occasions, opposing practices.

There is also a view that maintains that the brunt of the psychological stress a working woman experiences falls primarily on members of her own family, whether in a direct

^{18/} Malika, op.cit.

or an indirect form, because it is difficult to work out an appropriate formula that allows a woman to reconcile her work outside the home and her numerous responsibilities within, particularly when children, especially young children, are involved. The problem here is that the children are deprived of their mother's care. "Care" here does not refer to the various domestic chores, such as preparing food, washing clothes, etc., which, though necessary, are of a mechanical nature and can be done by anybody other than a mother. What is meant is psychological and emotional care through which a suitable climate can be provided for children and of which a mother is the primary source. Those who support this view observe that a working woman does not have enough time to offer this type of care to her children to ensure psychological and emotional security for them. This view is endorsed by the results of psychological studies on the impact of the psychological and emotional aspects on the child's mental make-up and personality-building, particularly in the early years of the child's life, which constitute the basic formative stage. Dr. Sa'ad-iddin Ibrahim says that during the early formative years of his/her socialization, a child needs to feel mentally secure so that he/she can "hold out against other negative and frustrating elements in the social context at later stages of its life."^{19/}

In the absence or recession of this feeling, the emotional system of the child is adversely affected and crystallizes into a defect which may find expression as abnormal behavioural patterns or at least gives rise to psychological problems which may not emerge until the onset of youth -- the stage of psychological and internal conflict and the transition from one phase to another.

The indirect form of psychological suffering which a modern woman experiences is exhibited in the nervous and emotional stress afflicting her while she endeavours to reconcile her various and often contradicting roles and her failure to achieve balance in this respect. Even if a woman succeeds in working out a formula that permits her to achieve some balance in the performance of these responsibilities, this is usually at the expense of her nervous and psychological systems because in such a case she is addressing a situation far above her human capacity. Such stress results in nervous tension or anxiety; these naturally circumscribe her ability to deal with members of her family,

^{19/} Sa'ad-iddin Ibrahim, "Al-usratu wa al-mujtama' wa al-ibda'u fi al-watani al-arabiyyi", Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, vol. 8, No. 77 (July 1985), p. 85.

both at the psychological and behavioural level, as a wife to her husband and a mother to her children, for whom she should furnish a climate of affection and a sense of security. These emotions then reflect on those around her and disturb the peace of the family and also relations within it in addition to the psychological make-up of children in particular.

Some scholars mentioned that, as a result of women's work, cases of anxiety and depression in society have increased and mental clinics have become crowded with patients -- the women themselves or their children.^{20/} It is not that all children of working women conclusively develop psychological problems, but the condition and circumstances of working women may create a climate favourable to the emergence of such problems. Such a situation is not restricted to mothers; it also includes fathers, since the process of socialization necessitates the combined care of both parents, and the absence of one constitutes a failure in this respect.

Certain scholars of Arab society wonder why women embark on work in communities suffering from high rates of unemployment. It is necessary then, they believe, that women stop competing with men in the various sectors of the labour force and stick to their intrinsic role, particularly as women's work outside the home is not an inherited feature of Arab society but rather a new situation created by Western society and transmitted to the Arab world through the infiltration of foreign cultures. Advocates of this view maintain that Arabs should realize that the moral and social shocks the family is experiencing in European civilization is attributable to various factors, among them women's working outside the home; this has weakened the upbringing of youth in the home, leading to the decadence and collapse of society -- something that should be avoided in the Arab world.^{21/}

Notwithstanding the positions adopted by the above-mentioned views in addressing the impact of women's work on the family, the new situation brought about by these circumstances cannot be ignored. These include, among others,

^{20/} Marwan Ali Al-Kaddoumi, "Majalatu amali al-mar'ati wa mauqifu al-islami minha", Symposium on the Changing Family in the Middle East, Jordan, December 1989. p. 25.

^{21/} Ibid.

the emergence of new patterns in the socialization process emanating from a working mother's need for assistance in this respect. The first of these patterns pertains to the role of grandparents in the upbringing of children. Women's embarkation on work has been accompanied by a change in social conditions leading to scarcity of domestic labour, which formerly consisted (mostly) of women who have been, in turn, affected by this change. They began to move toward other jobs, either as a result of the improvement in their educational standard (and thus they began to seek jobs of a higher status), or because of the decline in the social value of domestic service that accompanied the social change. Grandparents have thus come to constitute the sole refuge for a working woman with respect to child care. This is especially significant since the grandparents' generation does not recognize women's work. This situation is not a replacement for the traditional extended family in which grandparents performed a substantial and significant role in bringing up children, for each familial pattern differs along with the values and behaviours that govern it. In the traditional extended family, the process of socialization of children is carried out collectively within the framework of collective values governing the behaviour of all family members, and so is the pattern of life in such a family, beginning with the system of ownership and extending to daily practices and family relations. The modern nuclear family, on the other hand, which seeks the help of grandparents in the upbringing of children, does this under the pressure of the need to cope with new circumstances, confining this joint action exclusively to this aspect and without adherence to the collective values which constitute the frame of reference of the extended family in its traditional form.

Moreover, for grandparents to help their sons and daughters bring up grandchildren would not be regarded as a collective action in the manner described above; they are merely helping alleviate burdens generated by new circumstances. Such action takes a temporary form, usually in the absence of mothers only. The danger here lies in the fact that the process of upbringing lacks a "consistent formula due to the plurality of the sources of authority in such cases and the disparity in their perspectives and also in the methods each one follows, which violates the fundamental rules of sound education. Grandparents usually overindulge their grandchildren, considering them as guests, unlike the case with the extended family. The mother then sometimes lavishes her affection on her children to make up for the sense of guilt she feels towards them, and other times unleashes on them all the store of nervousness and

tension inside her. This fluctuation in the treatment of children not only leads to negative results in their psychological and emotional make-up, but may also reflect on their behavioural patterns. In reference to the negative implications of women's work for the family, Dr. Abbas Ahmad, in his study on the society of the United Arab Emirates states that the socialization of children is affected by the engagement of both parents in work outside the home disproportionately with their ability to spare enough time for the family in general and children in particular,^{22/} Dr. Ahmad regards this situation as a deficiency in upbringing.

The second common pattern of upbringing resulting from the employment of women is the recruitment of foreign nursemaids, particularly Asian labour. This pattern originated in the Gulf countries (though not as a result of women going out to work) and then passed to other Arab countries as a result of widespread migration of labour to oil countries. This phenomenon then became associated with the affluent segments of society or those which could establish a higher social status for themselves through the social mobility made possible particularly through the oil labour market. These segments employed Asian nursemaids as a status symbol or to imitate upper segments. The danger of socialization of children at the hands of foreigners lies in the effect that a foreign culture may exercise on the child's education and in shaping his personality, particularly in the early years of his life if these values conflict with his original culture. The child thus vacillates between the cultural framework of his family and that inculcated by the foreign nursemaid. Such vacillation, then, is linked to his cultural identity and how he can develop it and usually leads to alien behaviour.

Dr. Abdallah Al-Mutawwa' refers to the influence of foreign nursemaids on the young in his study on women and social work, saying: "The oil boom and economic changes in the United Arab Emirates had noticeable implications for the family. This resulted in the father's increased engagements away from the family and the mother's involvement in a maze of luxury, relying on the maid for house-keeping including, of course, care for children. This gave rise to many problems for the new generation and affected the mental health of the young and, clearly, the educational standard of students".^{23/}

^{22/} Ahmad, op. cit.

^{23/} Ibid.

Certain social and psychological studies attribute juvenile delinquency to childrens' deprivation of the sentiments of motherhood and the tepidity of relations between mother and children as a result of her multifarious responsibilities. Research studies on addiction among youth consider that a significant factor in the wide spreading of this phenomenon in certain communities lies in the emotional imbalance resulting from the mother's failure to provide enough care for her children, which weakens their sense of security and mental stability.

In fact, the problems arising from women's work comprise only one of many aspects of the suffering of the young in the context of values of the transitional stage through which the family is passing, and which is affecting all aspects of society.

Scholars on women's issues address the problem of the dual position of women from several perspectives. Some tackle it from the angle of the subjugating power which men exercise. Others, in a more moderate approach, maintain that the problem is fundamentally that of social conditions which overburden working women with responsibilities without providing them with the means to carry out these responsibilities.

Existing economic conditions in some Arab communities render women's work an urgent need and indispensable for families in most needy segments of society; at the same time society is swayed by a traditional culture compelling women to perform household tasks without help from men. In other words, society still assigns roles according to type because it is still subject to cultural values that segregate sharply and categorically men's responsibilities from those of women. Social upbringing is exercised within these inherited, cultural frameworks even with the change of traditional situations and the emergence of new patterns for these frameworks. Social upbringing consecrates sexual discrimination.

The other half of the problem that remains to be considered relates to the deficiency of services available to working women to help them perform their multiple roles, such as the absence of suitable nurseries to care for children of employed women. Nurseries, even if they exist, are, except for a small number, lacking in supervision by specialized people. Excluded, in this connection, are nurseries run by people with specialized experience and qualified in child care, but, at the same time, they are so costly that only a limited affluent segment can afford them.

The problem then is that of the middle-class and low-income segments, which constitute the great majority in most Arab societies. Upper social segments usually find solutions for the problem of child care, either in high-cost nurseries or by engaging nursemaids, mostly foreign as indicated earlier.

Services available for working women vary from one Arab society to another but are, on the whole, considered inadequate to alleviate the burdens of working mothers and to mitigate the duality of their role.

The work situation of Arab women broadly indicates a low rate of participation in the workforce. Participation does not exceed 10 per cent of the female population of Arab society as a whole; in fact, it constitutes only 9 per cent of the workforce in the Arab countries and varies between 4 per cent and 29 per cent in the various Arab countries.^{24/}

Table 8 gives the size of the female workforce by country and year.

The table demonstrates that Arab women are still economically subordinate to men and that men's representation in the labour market is higher. This picture illustrates women's limited participation in the workforce because of the dominance of a traditional culture limiting their work opportunities.

Table 9 shows the distribution of the workforce in the Arab countries by employment status, which completes the picture of female labour.

Table 9 reveals a high female-to-male ratio of unemployed to total population. The ratio is even higher with regard to national labour, particularly in oil countries that rely on expatriate labour.

Associated with this situation is the high proportion of housewives. In Egypt, in 1986, housewives constituted 71.2 per cent of which 80.1 per cent represented the rural segment and 60.1 per cent the urban segment for females over six years of age. In Kuwait, housewives above fifteen years of age

^{24/} Dr. Zakaria Khidhir, "Madkhalun manhajiyyun limu'alajati mas'alati taharuri al-mar'ati al-arabiyati", Symposium on the Changing Family in the Middle East, Jordan, December 1989, p. 19.

account for 50.5 per cent of total female population, but the figure for indigenous population rose to 61.4 per cent in 1985. The highest percentage of housewives was in Yemen. In 1982 females above ten years of age, reached 80.0 per cent, with 80.3 in rural areas and 79.4 in urban areas (from ESCWA data).

It should be noted that statistics on female occupation omit the classification "housewives" but include in this group all females in the family-supporter status in general. The percentage, therefore, is high even under the prevailing tendency towards women's working outside the home. Also, the differentials between rural and urban areas are due to the omission of agricultural labour in general and female agricultural labour in particular in official statistics.

Table 8. Proportion of active female workforce by country

Country	Year of data	Percentage of active females to total female population	Percentage of active females to total active population
Algeria	1975	1.9	4.3
Bahrain	1979	8.6	9.4
Democratic Yemen	1973	7.5	17.7
Egypt	1978	6.0	10.4
Iraq	1977	9.4	17.4
Jordan	1975	6.2	23.2
Kuwait	1975	7.7	11.7
Lebanon	1970	9.6	18.4
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1973	3.4	6.8
Mauritania	1975	2.6	4.3
Morocco	1975	7.9	15.1
Qatar	1975	3.5	2.9
Saudi Arabia	1974	2.2	5.6
Somalia	1975	22.8	29.4
Sudan	1973	12.5	20.8
Syrian Arab Republic	1979	8.0	15.8
Tunisia	1979	11.2	18.9
United Arab Emirates	1975	5.8	3.4
Yemen	1975	5.8	12.1

Table 9. Distribution of workforce by employment status

Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981 +15	Democratic Yemen 1973 +7		Egypt 1976 +15	Iraq 1977 +15	Jordan 1979 +15	Kuwait 1985 +15	Lebanon	Oman 1985 +15	Gaza Strip 1984 +15		Qatar 1986 +15	Saudi Arabia 1981 +12	Syrian Arab Republic 1981 +15	United Arab Emirates 1980 +15	Yemen 1975 +15
Total population active																
Female	16.5	10.0		6.8	5.9	30.5					27.2				15.3	
Male	84.1	41.8		77.3	70.9	82.1					92.1				93.0	
Female-to-male ratio	11.9	21.5		8.4	7.8	24.4					10.8				5.2	
Unemployment																
Female	5.2			0.4	0.8	0.6					0.3				0.5	
Male	2.5			2.3	6.9	1.1					0.9				1.0	
Female-to-male ratio	129.7			15.2	10.4	30.2					10.5				16.3	
Workforce																
Female	21.7			7.2	6.7	31.1					27.5		5.4		15.8	8.2
Male	86.6			79.6	77.8	83.2					93.0		76.1		94.0	86.0
Female-to-male ratio	15.2			8.6	8.1	24.5					10.8				5.3	12.2
Nationals active																
Female	11.3		5.4			5.7	13.6			10.8				6.8	2.6	
Male	70.1		77.3			69.4	57.7			55.8				75.8	67.5	
Female-to-male ratio	16.0		6.9			8.1	24.8			20.6				8.7	3.6	

Table 9. (continued)

Country (Year)	Employment status	Democratic		Iraq 1977	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon 1985	Oman 1985	Gaza Strip 1984	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates		Yemen 1975
		Bahrain 1981	Yemen 1973	Egypt 1976	1979	1985	1985	1985	1984	1986	1981	1981	1980	1980	1975
		+15	+7	+15	+15	+15	+15	+15	+15	+15	+12	+15	+15	+15	+15
<u>Unemployed</u>															
	Female	6.2		1.0	0.8	0.2			0.7		0.3	0.3	0.1		
	Male	4.5		2.7	7.1	1.8			..		3.2	3.2	2.3		
	Female-to-male ratio	138.3		36.0	10.5	12.6			5.9		9.2	9.2	3.0		
<u>Workforce</u>															
	Female	17.5		6.4	6.4	13.8			10.8		7.1	7.1	2.7		
	Male	74.6		80.0	76.5	59.5			56.5		79.0	79.0	69.8		
	Female-to-male ratio	33.2		7.9	8.3	24.4			20.5		8.7	8.7	3.5		
Percentage of national															
labour to total															
female population															
		53.7			92.8	19.9							6.8		

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Table 10 gives the distribution of female in the workforce by occupation.

Table 10 shows that the great majority of working women are concentrated in technical, clerical and service areas, with varying representation in other sectors from one country to another in view of disparities in the conditions in each country.

Table 11 compares the situation of women to that of men, and gives the percentage of females to males by technical sectors.

Table 11 shows areas where female-to-male ratios drop noticeably; areas almost exclusive to men include sales and production, while women show a high ratio in the technical and clerical sectors. Women's increased interest in education may be a cause for their high representation in modern labour sectors after women's education opened up the labour market for them. Also, most Arab countries suffer from heavy flows of internal migration and movement of rural residents to urban centres, impelling women to enter the workforce to compensate for emigrating male labour. Also, labour-exporting countries such as Egypt, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen provide wider opportunities for women in the workforce as a result of the absence of males.^{25/}

Women's position in the labour market, however, remains marginal despite the increase of work opportunities for women. Drs. Hatab and Makki consider that "there is deliberate marginalization of female work areas in Arab society".^{26/}

Table 12 gives a detailed breakdown of the ratio of females to males by occupation.

A high rate of female representation is noted here in certain occupations, such as secretarial work and teachers, while it is low among engineers and architects. It is also worth noting that the ratio of females in national labour to total population is low in labour-importing countries.

^{25/} Dr. Zuhair Hatab and Dr. Abbas Makki, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

^{26/} Ibid.

Table 10. Females in the workforce, by occupation
(Percentage)

Occupation	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1976	Iraq 1977	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon 1970	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1980	Yemen
1. Total females, rural + urban															
Professional and technical		34.2		25.9	29.4	57.9	27.5	21.3		28.3	50.9	28.6	40.3		
Management		0.5		1.7	0.2	1.2	0.3	0.2		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5		
Clerical		30.1		19.3	13.0	18.9	14.9	10.3		10.3	4.3	13.0	24.2		
Sales		1.3		4.7	3.4	1.3	0.8	3.2		0.6	3.0	1.3	1.4		
Services		31.3		9.1	7.6	12.2	54.4	22.5		60.3	18.8	4.6	31.3		
Agriculture and hunting		0.1		11.5	25.7	1.2	..	22.6		..	16.4	28.6	..		
Production and labour		2.2		8.3	17.9	7.3	0.4	19.6		0.3	6.1	19.1	0.8		
Not stated		0.3		19.5	2.8	..	1.7	0.3		0.1	0.4	4.7	1.5		
Total		100		100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100		
2. Total females, in national population, rural + urban															
Professional and technical		43.0		25.8		60.1	51.4				47.1	28.1	47.9		
Management		0.5		1.7		1.2	0.9				0.1	0.1	1.2		
Clerical		41.2		19.4		19.4	38.3				4.9	12.9	12.6		
Sales		1.3		4.7		1.3	0.4				3.2	1.3	1.4		
Services		10.8		9.1		9.2	6.9				14.9	4.3	33.3		
Agriculture and hunting		0.1		11.6		1.2	0.2				22.4	29.7	0.3		
Production and labour		2.5		8.3		7.5	0.5				6.9	18.9	1.1		
Not stated		0.5		19.4		..	1.4				0.5	4.7	2.2		
Total		99.9		100		99.9	100				100	100	100		

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Table 11. Percentage of females to males, by occupation

Occupation	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1976	Iraq 1977	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon 1970	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1980
1. Total females, rural + urban														
Professional and														
technical		44.6		33.4	47.8	51.0	50.0	60.9			36.5	11.2	47.6	25.7
Management		4.0		12.4	3.0	5.7	3.8	2.2			0.9	0.1	4.8	1.2
Clerical		33.1		23.9	7.9	28.3	31.2	27.6			9.3	1.1	18.7	10.3
Sales		2.0		5.5	6.1	1.3	2.8	4.8			1.1	1.0	1.6	1.2
Services		20.8		8.5	11.4	15.2	61.3	50.8			36.3	4.4	8.1	10.5
Agriculture and hunting		0.2		2.0	9.6	0.8	0.4	26.4				7.0	11.7	
Production and labour		0.5		2.9	4.3	1.0	0.4	11.2			0.1	0.4	4.2	0.1
Not stated														
Total														
2. Total females, in national population, rural + urban														
Professional and														
technical		70.4		33.5		52.2	96.5					23.4	47.8	39.1
Management		5.0		12.5		5.5	5.6					0.2	4.7	0.6
Clerical		35.7		23.9		28.1	38.7					1.4	18.6	2.0
Sales		2.2		5.5		1.2	1.6					1.6	1.5	0.7
Services		11.6		8.4		12.2	4.4					5.2	7.6	3.9
Agriculture and hunting		0.2		2.0		0.8	1.8					6.9	11.7	0.1
Production and labour		1.0		2.9		1.1	1.1					1.4	4.1	0.2
Not stated														
Total														

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

The proportion of women in the area of agriculture and livestock-raising -- a traditional occupation in rural communities - also seems to be low. This may be explained by an absence of figures on female representation in these sectors from official labour-force statistics in the Arab countries, since these sectors are not included in formal labour despite the high female rate in it.

An example of this situation may be noted in the high rate of unpaid women employed in Arab rural areas. In the Syrian Arab Republic, this ratio was 32.3 per cent in 1981 among national labour (ESCWA figures).

Needless to say, women's work in Arab communities is not novel, but has been known since ancient times though in the beginning it was limited to the agricultural and herding sectors. Nevertheless, rural labour can be said to constitute a large proportion of female labour in most Arab countries, even though the trend among a large number of women is towards new employment areas other than the agricultural sector, particularly industry and services, now that conditions of society have changed. One study on the capabilities of Arab women shows that the highest ratio of Arab working women is concentrated in the age group 18 to 25 years, while it drops between the age group 26 to 44 years and drops further still in the age group 45 to 64 years.^{27/} It is only natural that distribution by age group should take the aforementioned form as it is consistent with the woman's role in each age group and the requirements associated with it. The first age group is predominantly girls of pre-marital age who work until they get married. The ratio of the second age-group in the labour market drops on account of cultural traditions that impose on women the role of housewife or mother as a first priority. Excluded from this situation are girls of lower income brackets who continue in the labour market because of the pressing need for the income their work generates. The third age group comprises older women who belong to generations unaccustomed to working, in a society that did not require or accept a woman to work.

Table 13 gives the distribution by age group of women in the labour force in Arab countries.

^{27/} Hatab and Makki, *op. cit.*, pp. 46 and 47.

Table 12. Percentage of females to males, by occupation, (detailed)

Occupation	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt	Iraq	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1980	Yemen
1. Total population															
Architects, engineers and related technicians		2.5				1.2	2.1			0.9			7.5	0.8	
Medical, dental and veterinary workers		158.5		48.5			128.8			123.3			62.9	91.5	
Economists, accountants and related technical workers		16.3				7.2	16.8			12.3					5.1
Teachers		106.7				100.5	130.2			33.6			105.9	..	
Government administrators		5.8				6.1	4.2			..			5.9	1.3	
Secretarial workers		242.1				305.4	138.3			45.0			139.8	33.9	
Mail distribution clerks and telephone operators		10.8				0.8	14.4			10.0			18.9	18.7	
Clerical workers		25.0				25.1	32.6			8.3			9.9	9.6	
Cooks and housekeepers		61.6				37.6	209.4			94.0			23.6	37.3	
Agricultural and animal husbandry workers		0.3				1.5	0.4			..			23.1	0.1	
Food and beverage processors		0.5				1.5	2.4			..			3.7	0.2	
Weavers and upholsterers		5.6				35.4	5.0			64.0			1.5		

Table 12. (continued)

Occupation	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt	Iraq	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine 1986	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1980	Yemen
2. Total national population															
Architects, engineers and related technicians		7.6		5.5		1.1	5.0			7.6			7.6	1.8	
Medical, dental and veterinary workers		136.0		111.9		43.6	89.6			62.2			62.2	33.3	
Economists, accountants and related technical workers		35.2		20.6		7.1	46.8			29.5			29.5	4.9	
Teachers		120.0		51.6		101.3	222.6			73.7			73.7	371.1	
Government administrators		44.0		20.6		5.9	4.2			5.6			5.6	0.7	
Secretarial workers		351.6		19.6		325.8	247.3			138.5			138.5	16.0	
Mail distribution clerks and telephone operators		12.6		9.9		0.8	35.5			19.9			19.9	5.9	
Clerical workers		31.9		29.8		25.3	57.9			9.9			9.9	1.6	
Cooks and housekeepers		36.0		50.7		26.1	100.4			21.4			21.4	21.1	
Agriculture and animal husbandry workers		0.4		1.2		1.6	2.0			23.4			23.4	0.2	
Food and beverage processors		1.1		3.0		1.6	..			1.2			1.2	..	
Weavers and upholsterers		73.2		22.2		38.1	193.9			63.7			63.7	18.8	

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Despite discrepancies in age group distribution between table 13 and the data presented in the above-mentioned study, both presentations agree with regard to the age group in which the female workforce is concentrated, which in table 13 is between 20 and 29 years. In higher age groups, workforce participation drops. In the countries which combine national and migrant labour, the ratio of females is higher in the national workforce in the 20-to-29 age group than in total labour and drops in the age group of 40 and above as compared with its ratio in total female labour. This situation is consistent with the explanation given earlier. The low ratio of female labour in the age group 20 to 29 years is also noted in Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, in comparison with other countries: it is 39.9 per cent in the former and 39.6 per cent in the latter, against 69.6 per cent, 60.6 per cent, 57.4 per cent and 50.9 in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, respectively. This ratio rises in the age group 30 to 39 years in Egypt compared with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, where it is 15.5 per cent and 17.7 per cent, respectively. It remains low in the Syrian Arab Republic, where it does not exceed 18.2 per cent. The ratio of active females in the age-group 30 to 39 years is high in Kuwait and Jordan, where they constitute 34.9 per cent and 22.9 per cent, respectively. These differences in rates reflect differing work conditions for females as well as differing cultural factors in each country.

Table 14 shows the relationship between women's work and marital status. These data harmonize with the new situation of women and their increased engagement in the labour market even after marriage, a prevalent trend in most countries. However, the situation presented in the tables differs in respect of Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, where the rate of unmarried females in the workforce is higher than among married or divorced women or widows. In Jordan, the rate of unmarried women in the workforce was 64.5 per cent in 1983 against 30.0 per cent of married women. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the ratio of unmarried women's participation in the workforce in 1981 was 48.4 per cent against 45.9 per cent for married women.

In broad terms, the percentage of female labour to total female population does not differ sharply from total active female population in a given country. Only minor differentials exist in this respect. Statistics of the International Labour Organisation for 1983 indicate that the ratio of female labour to female population varies in Arab

Table 13. Female distribution in the workforce, by age group

Years of age	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1976	Iraq 1977	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia	Syrian Arab Republic 1987	United Arab Emirates 1980	Yemen
<u>Total female population</u>															
Below 20		5.8			12.1	7.2	3.2				0.6		24.2	3.8	
20-29		59.0			36.5	59.4	54.4				23.7		34.6	47.1	
30-39		23.4			25.9	23.1	36.0				55.8		18.3	34.6	
Over 40		11.8			25.4	10.3	15.4				19.9		22.9	14.5	
Total		100.00			99.9	100.00	100.00				100.00		100.00	100.00	
<u>Total females in national population</u>															
Below 20		7.6		21.0		7.2	1.4						24.2	9.9	
20-29		69.6		39.9		60.6	57.4						39.6	50.9	
30-39		15.5		21.2		22.9	34.9						18.2	17.7	
Over 40		7.3		17.9		9.3	6.3						18.0	21.4	
Total		100.00		100.00		100.00	99.9						100.00	99.9	

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Table 14. Female distribution in the workforce, by marital status

Marital status	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981	Democratic Yemen	Egypt 1976	Iraq	Jordan 1983	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1980	Yemen
<u>Total active female</u>															
Unmarried		45.0				64.5					24.7	23.3	48.4	27.2	
Married		48.5				30.0					76.2	67.0	45.9	66.7	
Divorced		3.0				1.7					4.7	6.0	0.9	3.7	
Widowed		3.4				3.8					2.8	3.1	4.7	2.4	
Total		99.9				100.00					100.00	100.00	99.9	100.00	
<u>Urban</u>															
Unmarried						64.3									
Married						30.7									
Divorced						1.5									
Widowed						3.5									
Total						100.00									
<u>Rural</u>															
Unmarried						65.3									
Married						27.2									
Divorced						2.3									
Widowed						5.2									
Total						100.00									
<u>Total active female national population</u>															
Unmarried		47.7		45.0			28.5						57.1	31.3	
Married		44.6		42.8			65.2						35.8	48.1	
Divorced		3.1		9.9			1.5						1.6	9.4	
Widowed		4.6		2.3			4.8						5.4	11.2	
Total		100.00		100.00			100.00						99.9	100.00	

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

countries. It is 8.3 per cent in Algeria, 5.6 per cent in Egypt, 5.8 per cent in the United Arab Emirates, while in Kuwait it registers a higher rate of 10.7 per cent. In Bahrain it is 11.1 per cent, with Tunisia registering a close figure of 11.5 per cent.^{28/}

3. Matrimony

The significance of women's education and their entrance into the workforce is evident in the various aspects of marriage that have accompanied the acquirement of these two rights. Women who had a share of education, no matter how modest it may be, differ from illiterate women in their acceptance of established traditional norms, as the present trend in Arab societies is towards a decline in the traditional marriage patterns, which impose on the girl a husband she may not want, and which favour marriage between relatives. This does not mean that these patterns have died away entirely, but indications testify to a decline relative to previous periods. Even the marital age of girls has generally become higher. Studies have established that girls from the age group 15 to 19 years who marry constituted 44.1 per cent in Bahrain in 1981, 57.6 per cent in Jordan in 1979, 47.9 per cent in Kuwait in 1980, 40.3 per cent in Qatar in 1986, 50.3 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic in 1981 and 46.0 per cent in the United Arab Emirates in 1980, in contrast to 21.4 per cent, 7.2 per cent, 7.1 per cent, 8.5 per cent, 11.9 per cent and 11.7 per cent for the same countries and years, respectively, for females below 15 years, who in previous decades accounted for high ratio of marriages. Similarly, the age group 20 to 24 years includes relatively high ratios in comparison with previous periods. For the above-mentioned countries, in the same order, the ratios were 25.1 per cent, 26.9 per cent, 31.2 per cent, 33.6 per cent, 26.9 per cent and 30.6 per cent. However, marriages of females in the age group of 25 years and over register a noticeable drop, a situation which is in accord with Arab culture even under conditions of change (ESCWA data). The reason is naturally due to the education of girls who have become opposed to marriage until after completing schooling and obtaining an academic degree permitting entry into the workforce. Economic conditions in some Arab countries compel girls to work in order to earn an income allowing them to share equally in marriage costs and to help the husband in covering the high expenses associated with married life. These

^{28/} International Labour Organisation data, 1983.

variables are interrelated with social change processes and the new values accompanying them. A factor contributing to this situation has been the penetration of foreign cultures into Arab society. Still, it cannot be said that marriage patterns in Arab families have undergone a qualitative change: the change was only in degree brought about by new societal conditions, notably what relates to the development of women's status.

However, it must be indicated that there is some difference in this respect in the case of Palestinian families within the context of the intifada. Palestinian society, as all other Arab societies, tended to educate women, and as a consequence, the marital age for girls rose as they waited to graduate from university or at least secondary school. But fathers began to encourage early marriage for daughters, and education lost its value for a number of reasons. Firstly, the aim of education had been primarily for the girl to obtain a job to help the family improve its unstable economic conditions. However, the condition of Arab education within the occupied territories -- specifically, in the West Bank -- is not promising, especially after the closure of schools and the state of unrest in them. The second reason for early marriage is the lowering of the value of education vis-à-vis other priorities that a girl's early marriage achieves. The family considers that its daughter's marriage achieves several goals that all combine to serve the circumstances of the existing situation. In the first place, it protects the girl in an established traditional culture that cares about honour. Even with the change that this culture has undergone, residues of these values, few as they may be, still exist and govern the behaviour of individuals. Furthermore, the marriage of a daughter alleviates the material burden on her family and removes part of the responsibility. The third reason, and the most important one, is that a new family would become another source of Palestinian children to enrich the population base of the intifada. The large size of Palestinian families in general may be explained on the basis of a strong belief in the need to maintain the struggle by supplying a greater number of youth to compensate for the numbers that are lost day after day. This is a distinctive characteristic of Palestinian families, even among emigres.

Among the variables that resulted from modernization factors in Arab society are those associated with divorce. It has been noticed that with the spreading of change in Arab communities, the divorce rate increases. Unfortunately, there are no accurate, reliable statistical data on divorce

rates in various Arab communities. However, there are several field surveys on this topic confirming that the tendency of Arab society towards modernization increases the rate of divorce compared to the situation under traditional culture. This difference may be understood through the balance characterizing traditional societies, referred to earlier. This balance makes every person accept his rights and duties, but the recession of this traditional pattern often upsets societal frameworks and shakes their structure. Unhealthy social conditions then develop, affecting all individuals in society. While women gain rights, men lose some, particularly traditional rights. This balance between them thus becomes upset, and is reflected in the relations between the sexes. In a study on the phenomenon of divorce in Jordan, the author states that divorce figures in that country tended to rise gradually.^{29/} The same can be said about all other Arab societies that follow the same direction.

Several factors can explain the high rate of divorce in Arab society, notably the elevated status of women, her economic independence from her husband and her ability to live with her husband without being economically subordinated to him by marriage. The mental suffering referred to earlier as an outcome of the conflicting roles of women constitutes for many analysts another item that shakes and undermines conjugal relations.

The divorce phenomenon is associated with legislation related to personal status laws, an important issue for modern women. Women demand amendment of these laws in Arab societies in general and consider that real liberation cannot be achieved except under new personal status laws safeguarding their status and entity. This issue is raised in the Arab world within the framework of the women's liberation movement. But no Arab State can be said to have achieved any measure of satisfaction for the claimants to these amendments. On the contrary, there is a prevailing tendency to view legislation on women in Arab countries as consecrating her biological role and the inherited values in this respect.

Broadly speaking, despite their relative rise, divorce rates are not equal to marriage rates but are far below. For example, in 1981 in Bahrain, the divorce rate was 1 per cent among males and 2.4 per cent among females, while the marriage

^{29/} Mohammed Barhoum, "Thahiratu at-talaqi fi al-Urdun: dirasatun ijtimaiyyatun maidaniyatun", Dirasat, vol. XIII, No. 12 (1986), p. 189.

rate was 53.7 per cent among males and 56.6 among females. In Iraq, too, the divorce rate in 1987 did not exceed 0.5 per cent among males and 1 per cent among females, while the marriage rate was 53.7 per cent among males and 56.1 per cent among females. Similarly in Kuwait, in 1985 the marriage rate was 58.9 per cent among males against 60 per cent among females. These rates are more or less than the same in other Arab countries as they belong more or less to a single cultural framework.

It is to be noted that the difference between rural and urban areas is so slight that it has no significant effect on the marriage-divorce ratio. Taking Iraq as a case in point, one finds that, the ratio of marriage in rural areas was 57.6 per cent among males and 58.6 per cent among females; the divorce ratio was 0.3 per cent among males and 0.6 per cent among females in rural areas, and 0.6 per cent among males and 1.2 per cent among females in urban areas.^{30/} Table 15 gives average marriage and divorce cases per 1,000 persons.

In addition to the aforementioned change in the state of marriage, it is also noteworthy that, as a result of the above variables which changed the status of Arab women, there has been a remarkable drop in the phenomenon of polygamy. Table 16 outlines this situation.

It will be noted that the above table does not give data on several countries that are predominantly traditional such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman where the rate of polygamy may be high. But on the whole, the table shows that monogamous marriages preponderate over polygamous marriages. However, in polygamous marriages the dominant practice in all countries is taking two wives; the rate decreases with respect to three wives and almost disappears with respect to four wives.

The foregoing is a presentation of the major factors that changed Arab families in all countries. These factors affected society in each country in varying degrees, in addition to common factors constituting broad features combining these countries. There are still, however, conditions peculiar to certain Arab countries and which leave strong impressions on these communities. It is therefore necessary to address these special conditions to obtain a sharper picture.

^{30/} Ibid.

Table 15. Average number of cases of marriage and divorce per 1,000 individuals

Country (Year)	Bahrain 1986	Democratic Yemen 1987 ^{a/}	Egypt 1987	Iraq 1988	Jordan 1987	Kuwait 1987	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1987	Syrian Arab Republic 1987	United Arab Emirates 1983	Yemen
Average number of marriages per 1,000 individuals	4.79	12.87	9.19	8.73	8.50	3.41				2.55		9.04	5.14	
Average number of divorces per 1,000 individuals	174	119	17.8		160	293				261		71	209	

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

^{a/} Only Aden is represented.

Table 16. Percentage distribution of Moslem males married according to polygamous custom

Age group	Country (Year)	Bahrain 1981 +12	Democratic Yemen 1976	Egypta/ 1976	Iraq 1979 +15	Jordan 1979 +15	Kuwait ^b / 1980	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	United Arab Emirates 1981 +15	Yemen 1975 +10
Number of wives															
1		94.57		97.47		96.22	89.50						96.78	91.68	95.5
2		5.01		2.31		3.60	9.60						3.04	7.46	4.23
3		0.35		0.16		0.16	0.80						0.17	0.72	0.27
4		0.05		0.06		0.02	0.10						0.02	0.14	0.03
Not stated		0.01		..		..	..						..	..	0.41
Total		100.00		100.00		100.00	100.00						100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

a/ Data relate to Cairo and Alexandria only.

b/ Data relate to nationals only.

Within the context of the implications of labour migration on the labour-exporting countries themselves, it can be seen that the social fabric in labour-receiving countries does not undergo seriously significant changes as a result of immigrant labour, although, as a society lacking homogeneity and dominated by foreign elements, it is affected culturally and socially. In labour-exporting countries, on the other hand, the fabric of society is impaired as a result of the exodus of the males, which affects the structure of society in general and that of the family in particular.

Another issue with serious implications for the family in a certain Arab society, viz., Egypt, is the housing situation and the present family conditions resulting therefrom.

II. THE FAMILY SITUATION IN LABOUR-EXPORTING COUNTRIES

Probably the most significant development that arose from the oil era since the beginning of the 1970s was the massive labour migration from those Arab countries suffering from population or economic problems to the Gulf countries in quest of better work opportunities. This phenomenon has left its fingerprints on Arab society, more so in labour-exporting countries, notably Egypt which accounts for the highest rate of emigrating labour among Arab countries and consequently, suffers seriously from the impact of this phenomenon. However, the situation in Egyptian society has spread to other societies having the same conditions. There is, for example, emigrating labour from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic to Saudi Arabia, which hosts labour from all parts of the Arab world. In Kuwait, in 1980, immigrant labour accounted for 41.7 per cent of total population, of which 36.1 per cent was male and 49.0 per cent female. In Bahrain in 1981, immigrant labour registered 68 per cent of the total population, of which 85.0 were males and 81.2 females.^{31/}

The labour-migration phenomenon and its impact on the family will be examined through an investigation of the society that is affected by it. Labour-migration produces significant social effects on the family, in general, and sons, in particular, in the home country, for the object of migration is primarily economic, and the aim of migration is basically to raise the income level of the family. Nevertheless, relations within the family and behavioural aspects of family members are affected as a result of this situation.

Migration usually follows one of three patterns. The first pattern is where the entire family moves to another country either temporarily or, more usually, permanently. In such a case the emigrant family is completely cut off from the home country, and its problem becomes in most cases one of adaptation to a new society, particularly if this society is of an alien culture. Should the family or one of its members return to its original society, the process may be repeated in the form of a readjustment to a society that has become alien to the family or to the individual, particularly if the period of absence from home has been long or if children grow up in a society alien to that of their parents.

^{31/} Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

The problem is more distinct in moving to a foreign society with a different culture. But in migration to an Arab country, the problems of re-adjustment become less serious as there is a unified cultural base even if minor differences exist.

The second pattern is that of a family whose provider -- usually the husband -- moves to another country and leaves the family in the home country. In some cases, the wife moves to another country and leaves the husband with the children in the home country.

The third pattern is that of both husband and wife emigrating and leaving the sons and daughters at home alone if they have passed childhood, or with relatives. These last two patterns may be temporary or permanent.

The first pattern differs from the last two in the form of migration, as it comprises the whole family while in the other two patterns, the members of the family are separated from one another. The first pattern is not without problems, which the family faces particularly when returning home to live in circumstances that may have developed since their departure or in conditions differing from what they were accustomed to in the host country. Nevertheless, it is noted that the family remains one complete whole. In the two other patterns, the family lacks this and is characterized by a certain amount of disintegration.

In the case where the husband travels alone, the mother stays to face the responsibilities of life in his absence, and these grow more burdensome if she is a working woman. Although it is acknowledged that a mother plays a significant role in the upbringing of children, a father's role should not be detracted from in this respect. Psychologists agree that socialization requires the participation of both parents so that each complements the other's efforts. The imbalance is greater if it is the mother who is absent from the family. The parent staying with the children -- be it the father or the mother -- gives lavishly, both materially and morally, to compensate for the absence of the other parent, which impairs sound upbringing. It may also be difficult for one parent to find enough time to carry out his or her tasks as well as those of the other parent in the most satisfactory manner. Among cases of juvenile delinquency and drug addiction, there are several examples of children with an absent parent. Obviously, the problem becomes worse when both parents are absent, for even if some relative stays with the children to look after them, the family situation is incomplete, leading to grave psychological and behavioural consequences for the children.

Class differences do not affect the family when one or both parents are absent. The increasing demand for immigrant Arab labour at all levels has led to the distribution of migrant labour among the different social segments, though some segments of society here had a larger share, which makes this a phenomenon worthy of study. Emigrant labour is likewise no longer confined to the urban sector as was the custom before, but has extended to the rural population also. But the pattern of migration of rural labour is usually confined to the husband alone rather than his wife or other members of the family. Adverse effects on the rural family due to absence of the husband are probably not as acute as those for an urban family, in view of the role still being played by extended families in rural culture. However, this role has dwindled through the process of change which rural life has undergone and in which labour migration has played a part. Furthermore, a rural wife being left without a provider has led to significant changes in her role. She has become more positive in her actions and bolder in facing public life. She has become less apprehensive in dealing with banks or government departments, actually becoming experienced in this respect. In fact, this development of the role of women is not restricted to rural women, but has become noticeable in other women, particularly those who belong to traditional segments of society and who were formerly not accustomed to moving in public arenas, but who, owing to new circumstances, were compelled to take up new roles in society. A factor contributing to this situation was women's entrance into new work areas after males had left the national labour market in labour-exporting countries as indicated earlier. Although, labour migration had negative effects on the family, its positive effects include the change in the traditional role of women, which was a role restricted to subordination and confinement within the limits of the household.

The effects of labour migration spread to rural society, exposing it to the external world and imparting to it new lifestyles dominated by consumer tendencies.

However, it should be pointed out that there are exceptional cases where families have succeeded in keeping the relations among their members whole and unimpaired, despite the absence of one or both parents. Sons and daughters in such families were able to forge ahead successfully in the various areas of life. However, the general situation under migration circumstances remains that of an incomplete family system, leading to an imbalance of family relations that affects family members.

III. IMPACT OF THE HOUSING PROBLEM ON THE FAMILY IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY (SPECIAL CASE)

Among the differing aspects of Arab societies is one peculiar to Egyptian society viz., the issue of housing. This has had a direct effect on change in the Egyptian family and cannot be ignored in studying the Arab family, though it is limited and associated with Egyptian society only.

The housing issue is one of several problems, afflicting third-world societies. But it is being considered here in connection with Egyptian society, specifically because of its magnitude, its relationship to the special situation of Egyptian society, and its overlapping with other patterns.

The problem of housing has been a prominent concern of Egyptian society for over two decades; it relates to a vital aspect of human life and covers large segments of society. Housing is usually addressed as an economic problem; its other dimensions neglected. However, this issue has more than one dimension. It has an obvious social as well as a psychological dimension whose effects are clearly noticeable in Egyptian society as they come to the surface.

The discussion about the Egyptian family and the change that it has undergone as regards structure and relations^{32/} among its members, as in the case of Arab families in general, leads naturally to the spatial framework that embraces the family, that is, the home. Home is a spatial area through which relationships among members are interpreted and which reflects the values and standards of the society of which the family is a part. The changes which families have undergone was accompanied by a change in the arrangement and use of available space by members of the family. A traditional dwelling embracing an extended family is large in size and area, spacious enough to accommodate a large number of people. Such a dwelling also reflects the social distance that separates the two sexes; this is translated into spatial insulation within the housing unit.

The role of women is confined within a special space, usually at the back of the dwelling, which constitutes their special world where they perform the various activities that

^{32/} Malika, op cit.

aim in toto to provide services for the whole household. Here, food is prepared and cooked, clothes are washed, children are looked after, and other household activities are carried out as well. As for men, their realm is another part of the dwelling, usually the front section. Here, the men of the family pass their time -- they meet one another, receive visitors and occupy themselves in an exclusive world isolated from that of women, who have no role in it except to provide services. The two worlds - men's and women's - do not meet except within very narrow limits.

Just as the extended family in its old form declined in the process of social change, the pattern of dwelling associated with it also disappeared with the emergence of the nuclear family and its requirements, particularly with increased urbanization. The nature of life in the city does not allow for the traditional family pattern or the housing pattern associated with it. Urban housing conditions also do not permit a big family to live in one house, in addition to the fact that social relations among members of an urban family no longer need the traditional organization within the house, for instance, the spatial segregation between the sexes. While such segregation was possible in a house lodging members of an extended family, it is not possible in a house where members of a nuclear family live, as the nature of activities carried out in a traditional house differ from those in a modern house, particularly in the city. Moreover, mixing between the sexes has become possible to a larger extent, and there is no longer a need to segregate the man's world from the woman's. Women's employment outside the home has had a major share in this, for a working woman does not live in isolation, as her work has opened the gates of the man's world to her. Formerly, men alone used to deal with the outside world, and the role of women was restricted to a closed world represented by the inside of the dwelling. For this reason, separation between the two worlds is no longer necessary.

An Egyptian dwelling has a high population density; Egyptian families, like other Arab families, tend to be large. Surprisingly enough, present urban dwellings have reverted to the practice of lodging members of the extended family, after the change it had undergone as a result to the modernization process which limited the inhabitants of a dwelling to members of the nuclear family only. This phenomenon is observable mostly among the middle- and lower-income segments of society. The reason is attributable to the housing problem, which makes obtaining a dwelling nowadays next to impossible.

III. IMPACT OF THE HOUSING PROBLEM ON THE FAMILY IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY (SPECIAL CASE)

Among the differing aspects of Arab societies is one peculiar to Egyptian society viz., the issue of housing. This has had a direct effect on change in the Egyptian family and cannot be ignored in studying the Arab family, though it is limited and associated with Egyptian society only.

The housing issue is one of several problems, afflicting third-world societies. But it is being considered here in connection with Egyptian society, specifically because of its magnitude, its relationship to the special situation of Egyptian society, and its overlapping with other patterns.

The problem of housing has been a prominent concern of Egyptian society for over two decades; it relates to a vital aspect of human life and covers large segments of society. Housing is usually addressed as an economic problem; its other dimensions neglected. However, this issue has more than one dimension. It has an obvious social as well as a psychological dimension whose effects are clearly noticeable in Egyptian society as they come to the surface.

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The extended family has come back to occupy a place in urban Egyptian society, but with a difference: it is no longer a traditional family embracing more than one generation and where authority is concentrated in the father who is the lord of the family, its highest member and who enjoys influence and power by virtue of the place he holds. Rather, the extended family that has developed out of the housing problem is nothing more than a group of nuclear families whose economic circumstances have compelled them to live in one place without the patriarchal form. The common pattern begins with the marriage of the family's sons, who, unable to obtain their own accommodation, stay in the same house with their parents, each using one room, according to the available number of rooms. Needless to say, this phenomenon gives rise to a high degree of congestion in dwellings already crowded because of the large size of middle and lower class Egyptian families. The question arises regarding the possibility of privacy in a house containing members of several nuclear families as indicated above.

Psychologists say that high population density in dwellings affects the relations among the inhabitants of the same house and is a determining factor in the length of time each stays in it. A high density within a house generates friction among household members and increases the opportunities for clashes, as a result of limited space, creating a permanently tension-filled atmosphere. What usually happens is that closeness of space leads to a living pattern characterized chiefly by spontaneity and haphazardness in a manner inconsistent with the simplest rules of comfort and privacy. There is a relationship in Egyptian society between the housing crisis and high divorce rates as tension builds up in crowded dwellings. Also when it is difficult -- or at times impossible -- to find accommodation for a couple, marriage often breaks down even before it begins.

With regard to the relationship between congestion and the time people spend at home, the more limited the space is, the longer they stay outside the house. Here rises a problem relating to young people in particular, for these become liable to outside influences that are often conducive to delinquency.

This shows that the housing situation of the family plays a significant role in the dynamics of relationships within it and that the present housing crisis in Egypt has affected the family and therefore cannot be ignored in any discussion on changes in the Egyptian family.

IV. FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY: ASPECTS OF CHANGE

Several aspects of change in the Arab families within the framework of a society in transition were examined earlier.

Naturally, in the process of society's transformation from a traditional into a modern one, the family loses some of its functions and relinquishes its traditional role. The process of modernization is accompanied by the rise of several social institutions, each withdrawing from the family some function which had been exclusive to it in its traditional form. Communities differ not only in the number of functions which a family preserves for itself but also in the type of functions. It can be said that the Arab family has relinquished some of its functions which were transferred to other systems of society to meet the requirements of modern life.

It should be pointed out that the transfer of functions from the family to other social institutions does not mean that the family has failed to perform its functions. Rather, it reflects the evolvement of society from simple to complex, in which it is difficult, even impossible, for a family to specialize in all its functions. In this society, social systems emerge to undertake these functions in a more specialized way. It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate either of the two situations: the family in its traditional form performing all societal functions, and the family in a modern society which has relinquished some of its functions to other specialized social institutions.

However, despite the change in the functional structure of Arab society, there are some who believe that the Arab individual finds no alternative to the family as a source of cohesion and support and that, despite the emergence of new bodies undertaking the diverse functions of the family, the family still holds a place of significant value for him.

A. Political function

The tribal system is the backbone of Arab society in general. The traditional family formerly performed a political function in tribal society until the rise of the state system. The family lost this function upon the transfer of the services it used to perform to various State institutions. Nevertheless, Arab society cannot profess to have abandoned tribal relationships, even after the rise of

the State. The family, and the relationships within it, still constitute the basis of the political approach in most Arab countries in comparison with Western society, whose approach is different, save in certain rare and exceptional cases. The theoretical basis on which the State has arisen remains removed from and outside the sphere of family relationships, when actual reality assumes a different form and retains residues of a heritage that bolsters family ties and makes them the centre and often the source of political power.

B. Economic function

The Arab family is no longer an economic unit, for the decline of traditional occupations and the rise of the modern economy have transformed the family from a production and consumption unit into a consumption unit only. However, the pastoral and agricultural society has not abandoned this function entirely. Traditional economic activities are still dominant in these two types of society in such a way as to retain the economic role of the family as a unit. But the general trend in Arab societies is towards the economic independence of the family members, including women, since they have entered various areas of work created by the modern economic system which takes education as a basis for work. Without total dependence on traditional economic activities that are confined within the family framework.

C. Reproduction function

In general, Arab families are large, even though there is a trend in some communities to have fewer children. But the birth rate in Arab families is high as children are considered to be valuable. The reproduction function of Arab families thus remains the most important function, in contrast to other communities in which the family has lost or almost lost this function because certain foreign cultures dismissed the value of children in respect of parents, or because of the supremacy of new values, which do not give attention to reproduction and which relinquished these concepts and beliefs.

Urban families are not different from rural families with regard to birth rates in most Arab communities, even where a family-planning policy exists, as in Egypt. The average family size continues to be large. The average family, which consists of five members, does not differ between rural and urban communities.

In Gulf communities, family size is clearly high. In Kuwait, the average family size in 1957 was 6.8 individuals, rising to 7.3 in 1965 and 7.6 in 1970. In Egypt, 16 per cent of families consist of nine individuals each, while the average member of individuals in 70 per cent of families varies between five and eight.^{33/}

Gulf countries may be a special case with regard to the large size of the family, as communities in these countries still attach great importance to bearing children; the family is highly valued, and family relations dominate the culture. Moreover, the economic conditions in these countries provide material means for all segments of society in such a way as to permit increasing the number of family members while still enjoying a high per-capita standard of living. At the State level an increased birth rate does not endanger development processes for it does not absorb, or oppose, economic growth. The policy of Gulf countries encourages births to meet the need for national labour in their rapid development, to replace migrant labour, which accounts for the great majority of the labour force in most oil countries.

This situation may not apply to other Arab countries where the rate of births is high, but for different reasons. Palestinian society, for example, uses high birth rates as a weapon against Israeli occupation. As for Iraq, it was inclined to encourage births after the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran War, although the size of Iraqi families has tended to shrink since the 1950s, when Iraqi women were inclined towards education and formal employment.^{34/}

On the whole, notwithstanding differences in conditions in Arab communities, the value of the family and its importance in promoting reproduction, as well as the preservation of this primary function of the family, remain dominant.

Table 17 shows that the proportion of large families per dwelling is high. This proportion rises noticeably in

^{33/} Al-Thaqib, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

^{34/} Meliha Awni Al-Kassir, "Amalu al-mar'ati wa atharuhu fi al-aa'ilati al-Iraqiyati al-hadithati", Symposium on the Changing Family in the Middle East, Jordan, December 1989, p. 3.

families of over eight members as compared with families of fewer than eight. This rate is 30.02 per cent in Bahrain, 18.50 per cent in Egypt, 44.90 per cent in Iraq, 39.82 per cent in Jordan, 57.80 per cent in Kuwait and 34.04 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic. By contrast, the rate of five-member families per dwelling, which is approximately the average, is 10.59 per cent in Bahrain, 14.40 per cent in Egypt, 11.10 per cent in Iraq, 10.02 per cent in Jordan, 8.27 per cent in Kuwait and 11.61 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic.^{35/}

The average size per dwelling in the Arab countries is generally high. It is 6.65 per cent in Bahrain, 5.2 per cent in Egypt, 6.9 per cent in Iraq, 6.6 per cent in Jordan, 8.9 per cent in Kuwait, 5.6 per cent in Qatar, 6.2 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic, 6.4 per cent in the United Arab Emirates and 5.7 per cent in Yemen, with minor differences between rural and urban communities. It should be pointed out that the data presented above are for different years; as a whole, they cover the period 1979 to 1988, which makes it difficult to compare the various countries.

Students of Arab society may interpret the high average family size per dwelling in the light of the dominance of the extended family pattern, discussed above. However, the present study proposes that the trend in Arab communities is towards nuclear families in terms of housing, particularly in urban areas. The extended pattern in housing has been retained in rural areas, and by Bedouins in the pastoral sector. This is contrary to the situation in Egyptian society, which, as explained above is subject to a housing crisis. The value of having many children still dominates Arab families.

D. Socialization

Socialization is the chief function that families generally retain in all communities, Arab or otherwise, though in varying degrees. Socialization as a function is also retained despite contemporary circumstances which reduced family functions to a certain extent through the rise of other institutions which participated directly in the socialization process. Qualitative differences in the socialization process among communities, Arab and otherwise,

^{35/} Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

Table 17. Relative distribution of family size per dwelling

Country (Year)	Democratic										United Arab Emirates		
	Bahrain 1981	Yemen 1988	Egypt 1976	Iraq 1980	Jordan 1979	Kuwait 1985	Lebanon	Oman	Palestine ^{a/} 1987	Qatar 1986	Saudi Arabia 1981	Syrian Arab Republic 1981	Yemen 1982
<u>Size of family per dwelling</u> (Number of persons)													
1	8.66		6.0	--	3.89	0.70			3.00			40.43	
2	10.66		11.0	5.30	7.99	3.25			8.40	22.0 ^{b/}		8.38	
3	1.06		12.10	6.70	7.91	4.43			9.40			8.54	
4	12.41		14.10	9.50	9.20	6.59			10.50	25.05 ^{c/}		10.44	
5	10.59		14.40	11.10	10.02	8.27			10.50			11.61	
6	8.88		13.20	11.30	10.47	9.32			10.50	21.78 ^{d/}		11.61	
7	7.69		10.70	11.20	10.70	9.63			11.60 ^{e/}			10.92	
8+	30.02		18.50	44.90	39.82	57.80			46.80	31.17 ^{f/}		34.04	
<u>Average family size per dwelling</u>													
Urban			4.9		6.6								6.8
Rural			5.5		6.7								5.7
Total	6.65		5.2	6.9	6.6	8.9				5.6	6.2	6.4	5.7

Source: Database of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA.

a/ Gaza Strip only.

b/ Data for two-person families include one-person families.

c/ Data for four-person families include three-person families.

d/ Data for six-person families include five-person families.

e/ Data for seven-person families include seven+ person families.

f/ Data for eight-person families include seven+ person families.

are due to differences in cultures. In Arab communities, several channels for socialization have arisen in the course of the process of change. Schools and educational institutions of all types and levels have been established, and various communications channels have been set up which link the Arab with the foreign world, opening up new areas for youth and exposing them to various cultures.

Socialization has become a process conducted by more than one channel. Rather, all combine their efforts in this respect. This trend was accompanied by a reduction of patriarchal authority, contrary to traditional culture. Although this amounts to a significant change in family relations, patriarchal authority has not been entirely abolished but weakened so that it is no longer the only authority governing children. Nevertheless, the Arab family continues to be chiefly responsible for the elements of socialization, especially the social control process. Despite the fact that the State has created official institutions to undertake this responsibility in a formal manner, the role of the family in social control is still of extreme importance in the life of individuals in Arab communities.

This may be consistent with the various family-related aspects which surround Arabs and constitute a societal and cultural framework determining behaviour within which Arabs move.

E. Care of the elderly

The Arab family is playing a unique role that has almost disappeared in other communities, viz., provision of attention and care to aged people. Arab society gives special attention to the aged, based on cultural values and religious precepts. This may be attributable to collective ownership in traditional economy and its control by elders. This special position and distinguished status of elders has persisted even though the traditional economy has declined and new production patterns have arisen. New views are emerging that address the issue of caring for the aged when both husband and wife work. One finds the beginning of a trend towards setting up homes for the aged and a call to provide places where they can find care outside the sphere of the family. This trend can be regarded as an indicator of a shift in the family function with regard to care for the elderly.

There is a view that regards the presence of elderly people in a family where both spouses work not as a problem

or a burden but rather as a blessing: a working mother needs their help in caring for children. As referred to in the context of patterns of socialization that seek the help of grandparents a working mother needs their help in caring for children. As such, a mother receives some benefit from elderly members of the family and from their stay in the same house, or at least maintains a strong link with them. Although this is a pragmatic view, it preserves a role for the aged in the family instead of their becoming a burden, as families head towards modernization and the adoption of Western trends of individualism.

No doubt what brings to the fore the issue of the elderly and increases its importance is the absence of social security or social care for the aged in most of Arab countries and the deficiency of legislation in this respect.

Conclusion

In the present attempt to discuss change in the Arab family, the most significant features of change, in terms of the present stage which Arab society is passing through, were examined. The family is related to society not only as its nucleus but as a fundamental cell that is affected by structural changes that take place in society through political, social, economic and also cultural processes. Arab families derive their existence from their specificity within an inherited culture which subjugates the various systems in the society to its values and moves within it. On this basis any discussion of the Arab family has to be carried out within the framework of its special identity and various dimensions. However, differences in the conditions of society in various Arab countries create certain differences in families within each society. This fact should be taken into consideration even when there are general common features.

Despite the fact that the Arab family is undergoing a process of transformation in the context of a changing society, it still holds value for the Arab individual, and family ties are still of paramount importance in his life. Although Arab society is changing and so is the Arab family, this characteristic is preserved in the various aspects of Arab living patterns as compared with other communities of different cultures. This situation may be understood in the light of the religious heritage of Arab society, which constitutes a dimension in the family structure and in the dynamics of relations among members of the same family; this is because religion is still a significant element of present culture even during the process of change.

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