The Identities and Lived/Career Experiences of Algerian Female Academics at Universities: A Feminist Postcolonial Perspective

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Declaration of Original Authorship

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I certify that this is my own work, and the use of all materials from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged in the test. I confirm that a proofreader has assisted me in the final stages of my writing without compromising my thesis authorship.

Signed: Fatima

Date: 05/09/2022

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, Halima Temmam and Tahar Abbou, for doing their best to make me the person I am now. You are the best people in my world. I will always look up to you as my role model because of your strength, work ethic, and dedication to managing our family while working as educators. Thank you for everything, *Mama et Papa!* May Allah bless you with happiness and good health.

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Abstract

Exploring the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles has received considerable attention from researchers and academics worldwide. Nevertheless, there seem to be limited studies focusing on the lived experiences of female academics in Algerian universities. This thesis addresses that gap. It explores how female academics' lived experiences impact the way they define and construct their identities in private (domestic) and public (professional) spheres. It seeks to unveil how sociocultural, organisational, and personal factors shape female academics' identities and the strategies they deploy to navigate their multiple roles. This study's conceptual and theoretical framework centres on identity, giving attention to identity work and regulation theory (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), gender performativity (Butler, 1988) and feminist postcolonial theories (Petersen and Rutherford, 1986; Mernissi, 2003) and women's careers in the context of Algerian higher education.

This research adopts a critical paradigm, taking a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of 18 female academics. Data was collected in two phases, beginning with a pre-interview task, followed by semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The main findings of this study indicate that female academics in Algeria are under double colonisation, stemming from the patriarchal local culture and historically from colonial imperialism, which has left an effect on the Algerian educational system and shapes the construction of women's identities in public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres in line with social norms. This study's findings have important implications for higher education gender equality policy and practice. This study makes an important contribution to the Algerian literature concerned with women's identities and careers in higher education and paves the way for future studies to extend the Algerian literature in the field.

Keywords: Female academics, Algerian Higher Education, Gendered Identity, Double Colonisation, Identity Work and Regulation, Women's Careers, Exploratory Qualitative Research.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores female academics' lived/career experiences and how these experiences impacted the way they define and construct their identities in Algeria. Research around identity has gained much attention in recent years in higher education (Castelló et al., 2021) as it can provide deeper insights into academics' lived experiences and the factors influencing their identities and careers. Understanding how female academics construct their identities and the factors influencing their identity formation and careers may highlight their status at Algerian universities to offer some insight of why women are underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles. This study adopts a critical approach using an exploratory qualitative methodology.

This chapter provides an opening and an overview of the thesis. First, section 1.2 begins by identifying the personal motivation and interest of the researcher, then establishing the problem and the central thrust of the research in section 1.3. Section 1.4 sets out the aims, objectives, and research questions, followed by a summary of the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks in section 1.5. Section 1.6 provides an overview of the methodology selected, while section 1.7 provides an overview of the significance and outcome of the study. Finally, section 1.8 provides an outline of the structure of the thesis and a summary of the chapter in section 1.9.

1.2 Personal Interest and Motivation: Researcher Background

Before identifying the problem and statement of purpose guiding this study, it is essential, first, to share my background to understand the motivation that led me to choose this topic. Exploring my motivation and personal interest can help me acknowledge my subjective assumptions that influenced my ontological and epistemological position aligning with the critical approach I selected for this study (Jolly, 2016). Being an Algerian and a Muslim woman has undoubtedly shaped my experiences and worldview, and in this section, I will reflect on these experiences and link them to the decisions I made in this study.

From my childhood, growing up as the only daughter in my family, I understood what was expected of me as a woman. For instance, my brother was encouraged to fix computers because men are usually perceived as better when dealing with technological devices. In contrast, I was encouraged to be a teacher, preferably of foreign languages (French or English). This is because teaching is considered a suitable occupation for a woman as it is thought to have fewer working hours and more vacation time to look after my family. These factors shaped my career orientation, as I chose English and Linguistics as my discipline at the university to become an English teacher, and now I am pursuing a career in

academia. Then when I reached university, I remember that there were few female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles, as I assumed at that time that this was because of the dual demands of family and career responsibilities.

One of the essential objectives of the Algerian school, especially after the Black decade[1] in the late twentieth century, is to prepare young people to be global citizens whose values align with the Algerian identity (Abdellatif Mami, 2020). However, the influences of patriarchy and colonial heritage were still present in the national curricula. Patriarchy was evident as I remember in the primary school reading book the images of the mother in the kitchen preparing dinner while the father is watching television, and we took these images for granted as to how things should be. Moreover, as a person who enjoyed history classes, especially learning about the Algerian resistance against the French Colonisation and the great women warriors such as Lala Fatma Nsoumer, who led an army to defend her region, I realised that our national history was male-centred and western-centred. To illustrate these points, I remember that my history teachers always emphasised how the French described the Algerian freedom fighters rather than what they said about themselves or what Algerians said about them. For example, Lala Fatma Nsoumer is often named in history books as the Algerian Joan of Arc because of the resemblance of their journeys as women fighters in patriarchal societies. There is no doubt that both women are role models who should be celebrated but using a western figure to define and make sense of non-western figures could be linked to how knowledge production is western-centred. Moreover, despite the existence of strong female freedom fighters who had an influential role in the success of the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962), their role is often portrayed as secondary to male freedom fighters (Drif-Bitat, 2017). Reflecting on these past experiences has shaped my epistemological and ontological beliefs and motivated me to understand the current influences on Algerian women in general and in academia particularly.

My first attempt in the field around women's careers and experiences was in my MA dissertation, in which I explored how men and women leaders use indirectness when giving orders and apologising in the workplace. When I looked for participants holding senior leadership roles at my university, I only found two women holding senior leadership roles. This experience made me explore the reasons hindering women from reaching academic leadership and professorial roles despite the high graduation percentage of female students. Topics around women's position in public (professional) spheres in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region can raise much controversy (Mernissi, 2003). After all, in most Muslim countries, there is a fuzzy boundary between religion and culture, and

[1] The Algerian Civil conflict during 1990s or the "Black Decade" is one of the violent events in the Middle East and North African region, in which the Algerian army and various Islamist groups engaged in an armed conflict resulting in the death of around two hundred thousand Algerian civilians (Daoudi, 2016).

sometimes cultural practices are viewed as God's commands. I remember how frustrated I used to be when discussing topics related to women's rights, careers, and women's representation in different fields in the public sphere, particularly when arguments taken from Islamic teachings were used to endorse women's subordination. This made me think a lot about the relationship between Islam and women's rights, and maybe this is when my intellectual journey started.

After finishing my master's degree with distinction, I got an opportunity to compete nationally for a scholarship to pursue my PhD in the United Kingdom. These scholarships reflect the government's strategy to improve the quality of education. There are a set of criteria that students need to fulfil to sit for the contest, including excellent academic records, and the student's age must be 25 or under by the contest time (Guerriche, 2020). As a result, I did not have a long professional experience to trigger my interest in this research; however, I remember that after getting the scholarship, I spent much time reflecting on my past learning and limited teaching experience at the university as an assistant teacher. Furthermore, I wanted to undertake research that would prepare me for my future career. In fact, through my limited experience, I noticed that some unwritten rules prevent women from progressing and being fully engaged in the public sector. When I started reading some literature in the field to prepare for my proposal, I could not find enough articles tackling the experiences of female academics at Algerian universities, and their lived and career experiences to explain the reasons behind their underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles[2]. Therefore, I decided to seize this opportunity to explore the situation of women in higher education to prepare me for my future career while developing my research skills and arguments at one of the prestigious British universities, Reading University. The following section explores the issue that this research addresses.

1.3 Identifying the Central Thrust of the Research

Algerian women have played an active role in shaping the future of their country. They fought side by side with men doing jobs like hiding weapons, cooking for the National Liberation Front militants, transporting secret messages between the fighting camps, leading the armies, taking care of wounded resistants, or providing medical care for *mujahidīn* (freedom fighters) (Leonhardt, 2013). However, Salhi (2003) argues that:

> "The challenge of Algerian women during the liberation struggle was on two fronts: it was, simultaneously, a rebellion against the colonial occupation of Algeria by France, and against the restrictive attitudes of traditional Algerian society." (p.27).

[2] Roles and positions are used interchangeably in the thesis.

As Salhi's quote shows, the struggle of Algerian women was not only against the French Colonisation but also against the traditional Algerian society; and men who may view them as belonging to the private and domestic sphere as the primary caregiver (Mernissi, 2003).

In the post-independence period (1962 to now), promoting women's rights was one of the essential points on the agenda of the newly independent country as a recognition of their valuable contribution to the Liberation war ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021). Article 37 of the Algerian constitution states,

> "All citizens shall be equal before the law and shall be guaranteed the right to equal protection. There shall be no pretext for discrimination on the basis of birth, race, gender, opinion, or any other personal or social condition or situation." (p.11).

Moreover, article 71 states that:

> "The State shall work towards promoting equity in terms of opportunities between men and women in the job market. The State shall encourage the promotion of women to positions of responsibility in public institutions and administrations, as well as in the enterprises." (p.17).

However, despite the pivotal role that women played in Algerian history and the efforts of the Algerian government after independence, Algeria is still struggling to make its own national identity mediating between different ethnicities, languages, political and religious views (Ladjal & Bensaid, 2012), and between traditional beliefs regarding women's position in the society and more modern conceptions of gender equality.

To illustrate, in Algeria, 64% of Algerian university holders with undergraduate degrees are females (Statista, 2017). Nevertheless, female participation in the labour market is still low, with approximately 19.7% of the Algerian labour force in 2016 (ONS, 2016). The underrepresentation of women in the labour force can result from the general discourses surrounding women's role in society that can assert male dominance in the public space. For instance, in the culture and traditions of Muslim societies, when it comes to organising families there is an emphasis on men's domination over women by providing a religious justification to support this argument simply because historically, most of the religious interpretations and discourses have been made by men (Shah, 2018). As a result of this dominant discourse about the relationship between men and women, some women do not aspire to work because they think that the man is provider of the family, and even if they do, they might view their family work as more important because it is a religious obligation. Another reason for the underrepresentation of women in the Algerian labour force can be drawn from Algeria's historical, political and economic situation, which significantly impacted the position of women in Algerian society (Bouhdiba, 2008; Salhi, 2010). The absence of peace during the French colonial period (1830-1962) limited women's engagement in the public sector and confined them to the private sphere. Moreover, Algeria inherited the French administrative system after its independence that did not

meet the Algerian people's culture and needs, similar to most colonised countries (Sharonova et al., 2018).

Specific to the present study, exploring the situation of female academics can play an important role in addressing the issue of gender equality, as a whole, in any given society. Globally, researchers in the field of gender equality have shown an increased interest in women's careers and identities in higher education because universities are viewed as a beacon of change, and there is evidence that they have a pivotal role in any given country's cultural, intellectual, and scientific transformation by providing academic support for social development (Samier & El Kaleh, 2021). However, higher education can also be a site for reproducing patriarchal and colonial ideas that may put women at a disadvantage (Odhiambo, 2011). For these reasons, universities are considered "an institution of contradictions" (as mentioned in Adusah-Karikari, 2008, p. 36; Morley, 2005), making them an interesting site to observe the nuances of patriarchal local culture and the colonial imprints that left its traces on the colonised countries' systems.

Moving more specifically to Algeria, the Algerian higher education sector knew many expansions, especially after the independence, and the percentage of female academics improved over the years (Meyer & Benguerna, 2019), as will be elaborated in section 2.3. However, women are still underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles (Ait-Zai et al., 2014), like elsewhere in the world (Madera, 2017; Morley, 2014; Tran, 2022). Female participation is important in higher education because as many countries are going through educational reforms to improve their educational systems, including Algeria, women must occupy top academic leadership and professorial roles. There is substantial evidence in the literature that links female participation in educational change development and the improvement of gender equity at the level of leadership and decision-making, ensuring social justice at the level of society (Nakku, 2021). Although there has been considerable research into the lived experiences of female academics in several contexts, a literature search revealed that few studies were conducted in the MENA region, especially in the Algerian higher education context. That is why there is a need to understand Algerian women's lived experiences of pursuing a career in higher education, including the barriers, motivations, and opportunities.

Previous studies in Algeria on the position of female workers are limited to quantitative surveys with no direct focus on the experiences of female academics particularly (Charaa, 2018; Ghyath, 2014; Mouafek & Hicher, 2015), and no prior qualitative research about Algerian female academics appears to have been undertaken. Qualitative research is suitable for focusing on marginalised groups because learning about women's lived experiences can help in giving women a voice and generate rich insights into their life to the world to understand their situation more in-depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Moreover, most studies conducted in the MENA region are produced in the middle east, mainly in Gulf countries, where women's status in society is quite different to Algeria. Furthermore, this body of research has mostly been concerned with women who are already senior leaders (Al-Jahani, 2021; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Al Naqbi, 2016). As a result, little is known about the lived experiences of female academics in Algeria and the potential reasons behind their underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles. Furthermore, previously published studies have given limited attention to exploring female academics' lived experiences using the identity lens when adopting the feminist postcolonial theory that is relevant when exploring the experiences of female academics in colonised countries, including most African countries like Algeria (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Nakku, 2021). The conceptual and theoretical framework around identity, gender and women's careers in higher education adopted to answer the study's research question is unique and will contribute to filling the knowledge gap in research and published literature.

1.4 Research Aims and Questions

Following section 1.3, which identifies the central thrust of the research, this section will state the research aims and central questions guiding this research.

1.4.1 Research aims

This study's overarching aim is to offer insights into the lived and career experiences of female academics and the manner they construct their identities. Focusing on the participants' identity construction will provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing their career trajectories.

The main aims of this research are to:

- Explore female academics' lived experiences at Algerian universities using a qualitative approach to provide an in-depth insight into their experiences at Algerian universities. This qualitative study addresses important gaps in Algerian literature.

- Understand female academics' lived, and career experiences through the identity lens will provide more significant insights into the sociocultural, organisational and personal factors affecting women's careers and the strategies they use to navigate their circumstances and conditions.

- Analyse how the female academics' lived and career experiences shape the way they define and construct their identities.

- Explore the factors influencing female academics and how the historical, political, and social factors shape female academics' experiences and, consequently, their identities. That is why this study aims to provide a theoretical understanding of the influence of the Algerian context on female academics.

1.4.2 Research questions

In order to reach the aims of the research, this study's central research question is as follows:

How do female academics' lived/career experiences shape the way they define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres?

The following sub-research questions, which originated from the extensive literature review in Chapter 3, will guide this query to answer the main research question.

1- How do female academics within Algerian universities define and construct their identities?
2- What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' identities?
3- What are the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' identities?
4- What strategies do female academics deploy to manage their multiple roles and identities?

The following section will provide an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to reach the research aims and answer the research questions, which will be elaborated further in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

1.5 An Overview of Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The key concepts framing this study are identity, gender, women's careers and experiences in higher education. It is hoped that using these concepts will provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of female academics at Algerian universities to answer the research questions.

The first concept is identity, which is a complex concept and has been researched from multiple perspectives and lenses in the literature. This study adopts a post-structuralist perspective that views identity as an ongoing process shaped by the experiences of the individual (Alvesson et al., 2008; Ibarra, 1999). The post-structuralist perspective on identity is interested in examining how the general discourses shape someone's identity, specifically how individuals position themselves and others within the dominant discourses (de Fina et al., 2006). To illustrate, female academics in this study have multiple roles and identities taken from the professional (public) and private (domestic) spheres, like mothers, researchers, wives and lecturers. Then, contextual factors and discourses shape the interplay between the multiple identities, and as a result, female academics position themselves, consciously and unconsciously, in congruence with their context. This process is referred to in the literature as identity work and identity regulation. This study uses Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) theory to explain how contextual factors shape identity through discourses by conforming, resisting and adapting, and positioning their identities in congruence with the general social discourses. This study aims to shed light on an important concept, identity, that should be studied more in-depth in educational settings as it may provide more clarification about the lived experiences of female academics at Algerian universities to inform policymakers and other academics to introduce policies to promote gender

equity at the level of higher education. Moreover, there is a scarcity of research published in the Algerian, MENA or African contexts that selected identity as part of the theoretical and conceptual framework; that is why this study will attempt to extend the literature on women's careers and identities in these contexts.

The second major concept guiding this study's theoretical and conceptual framework is gender. Similar to identity, gender is a contested concept that has been tackled in early literature from an essentialist point of view. However, constructivist and social constructionist views have become increasingly prominent due to the influence of Butler's (2004) theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990), where gender is viewed as something people do rather than something they have (Butler, 1988). This study links the concepts of gender and identity to understand how women construct their gendered identities in accordance with the discourses related to being a woman in Algeria. In other words, Algerian women are influenced by the Algerian context, impacting how they perform gender and construct their gendered identity. A feminist postcolonial perspective is considered suitable for theorising the Algerian woman identity construction by using the concept of double colonisation that was first introduced by Petersen and Rutherford (1986) and the impact of double colonisation on the position of women in public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres. As Chapters Two and Three will illustrate the notion of double colonisation, it seems that Algerian women struggle with a patriarchal indigenous culture and the influences of the French colonisers, mainly the French Colonisation (Harrat & Meberbeche Senouci, 2020).

Consequently, women are under double systems of oppression that affect their position in public and private spaces. Even after the independence of Algeria, women are still experiencing double colonisation, as illustrated by the North African feminist and thinker Fatima Mernissi (2003), who explained that even though more women are being educated and joined the professional sphere, they are still regarded as belonging to their homes being mothers and wives. Exploring the position of women in public and private spheres could provide some insights to explain the underrepresentation of women in the Algerian labour force (Barry & Dandachli, 2020) and academic leadership and professorial roles (Ait-Zai et al., 2014). Similar to using the concept of identity, there is a scarcity of exploring how female academics in the Algerian context perform gender and construct their gendered identity. So, this study attempts to contribute to the studies of gender in Algeria, and in higher education, in particular.

The third concept is women's careers/lived experiences and identities in academia. The rationale behind choosing academia and universities as the context to explore the experiences of Algerian women is that, historically, universities were built upon the expectations of men. As a result, women

always felt like “the other” in the western context (Jones, 2020). Similarly, in newly independent countries, like Algeria, universities were not only built upon the expectations of men but also the expectations of the colonisers, the French in the case of Algeria, as these newly independent countries inherited their educational systems from their colonisers without adjusting it to their local needs (Miliani, 2021). For this reason, universities are an interesting site to explore how female academics do identity work and regulation and construct their gendered identity because the traces of the patriarchal indigenous culture and the imprints of colonial history are noticeable (Tran, 2022).

The underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles is a global phenomenon (Akyol & Tanrisevdi, 2018; Coughlan, 2021; Ysseldyk et al., 2019), and previous research has established that female academics are affected by sociocultural, organisational/institutional and personal factors that influence their careers and experiences (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Longman et al., 2018; Nakku, 2021). Moreover, important qualitative studies were conducted in postcolonial contexts (Ghana and Uganda), and they deployed feminist postcolonial theory to explain how the influences of the local indigenous culture and the colonial history shape the experiences of female academics (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Nakku, 2021; Tran, 2022). However, the impact of double colonisation on female academics’ identities is understudied, particularly for female academics in African contexts, such as Algeria. Exploring the experiences of female academics through the concepts of identity and gender might offer greater insights because previous studies show that academic identity is complex. After all, academics are required to fulfil several unrelated jobs, teaching, research and holding leadership roles (Barnard, 2019). To date, few researchers focused on the lived experiences of female academics and the interplay between their multiple identities taken from the public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres (Karam & Afiouni, 2014).

By linking these concepts together, it is hoped that this thesis will provide a more holistic view of how contextual factors shape the identities of female academics in Algeria. Chapter three provides further details about the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks and how this research will extend the literature around women’s careers and identities in Algerian higher education.

1.6 An Overview of the Methodological Approach Selected

While Chapter Four will fully describe the methodology used in this study, this section briefly points out the most important steps undertaken to collect, analyse and interpret the data.

A critical paradigm was adopted to address the research questions and reach this study’s aims. The critical paradigm was considered suitable because it aligns with the researcher’s view of reality and truth, as explained in detail in section 1.2. An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted because it fits the research aims and is suitable to answer the research questions outlined in section 1.4 (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, as mentioned in section 1.3, there are limited/no studies reviewed in the Algerian context that adopted the qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of female academics at universities. Thus, the qualitative approach is suitable to reach the study's aims and address the current gaps in the literature. Moreover, since this research is concerned with exploring the lived experiences of female academics, with an emphasis on understanding and meaning construction, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach was selected as it aligns with the current study's aims and objectives (Neubauer et al., 2019).

To answer the research questions, the participants were selected from five universities, three from urban areas and two from semi-urban areas. The sampling strategy was purposeful, which is suitable for qualitative enquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The female academics selected for this study were all working full-time with different backgrounds and experiences; for instance, some participants have experience holding senior leadership roles, while others do not. This sampling strategy is hoped to generate diverse insights from the collected data to answer the central research question.

In order to collect the data: pre-interview tasks and face-to-face/online interviews were used. The pre-interview task collected the participants' background information and guided the interview questions. The participants were also asked to draw a river/timeline/ table to mark critical dates in their lived/career experiences. Then the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, fourteen were face-to-face, and four were online, either by telephone or via their preferred software. In total, the researcher conducted eighteen interviews. Most interviews lasted around 60 minutes, which allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the participants' lived experiences.

Analysing the data obtained from the participants is the most challenging part of conducting research; that is why rigorous analysis is needed to answer the research questions. First, the data were transcribed and translated, then organised to be coded. Thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the data following the six steps of Braun and Clarke (2006) while also using Saldaña (2016) as a guide. The analysis process was iterative, adopting deductive and inductive approaches to write the findings chapters. Moreover, all the ethical considerations and trustworthiness components were followed and respected to overcome and avoid any potential ethical challenges. This will be elaborated further in Chapter Four.

The following section will explore the significance and outcomes of the study to highlight why this study is essential.

1.7 Significance and Outcomes of the Study

Addressing the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles at Algerian universities is important because it will help to understand their lived experiences, in other words, what it is like to be a female academic in Algeria. This topic matters because there is much work to be done, at different levels, to reach a more equitable society. As mentioned in section 1.3, universities are not only learning institutions; they are the promotors of democratic change and the centre of any social development. It is hoped that this research makes an original contribution to the study's field in several important areas. These important areas are outlined as follows:

- Exploring the experiences of female academics at Algerian universities using a qualitative approach has not been done before. As explained in section 1.6, a qualitative approach is suitable to get a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals. Thus, this study aims to address this methodological gap by selecting an exploratory qualitative design and conducting 18 semi-structured interviews with female academics working full-time at an Algerian university. This approach allows Algerian female academics to speak about their experiences from their own perspectives. This is important because the postcolonial thinker Edward Saeed wrote that people in the Arab world need to speak about their experiences from their own experiences (Karam & Afiouni, 2014) to move away from the Orientalist representation of the region, especially around what it is like to be a Muslim woman. This study could also provide the groundwork for future researchers in the field of women's leadership and careers in other sectors.
- Addressing gender inequality issues, especially around the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles, may inspire policymakers to make the necessary adjustments and policies to encourage female academics (Ait-Zai et al., 2014). It is anticipated that the recommendations made by this research may help not only female academics but also address some organisational challenges at the level of universities by contributing to the limited body of knowledge on Algerian higher education leadership and management.
- Using the unique conceptual and theoretical framework encompassing the concepts of identity, gender and women's careers in higher education aims to provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of female academics in Algeria. More specifically, the importance and originality of this study lie in helping to understand how female academics construct their identities within the Algerian context using the feminist postcolonial lens, which argues that women are affected by double colonisation, one coming from the patriarchal indigenous culture and the other from colonial history. Outcomes from this aspect of the study may enrich

the field of women's careers and identities as it may offer new insights into how women in Algeria construct their identities through the feminist postcolonial lens.

To conclude, answering the research questions developed from the extensive literature review will attempt to fill in a methodological, empirical, and theoretical gap as outlined before. The findings of this study will hopefully make an important contribution to the field and will inspire future researchers to address the limitations of this study. It is essential to acknowledge that the scope of this thesis may be too broad, especially since an exploratory qualitative design was adopted; however, this could be explained by the fact that this is the first study of its kind on female academics, and future researchers could address specific issues facing female academics more in-depth in the future.

The following section will provide an overview of the thesis chapters.

1.8 Overview of the Thesis Chapters

The thesis is divided into nine chapters, structured as follows:

Chapter One introduces this research. It situates the central thrust of the research by explaining why exploring the reasons behind the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles is essential and worthy of further research. Then, a brief outline of the research aims, questions, conceptual and theoretical framework and methodology will be given. Finally, the research significance and outcomes are highlighted with the achievements the research aims to achieve.

Chapter Two is devoted to the context of the study, and it begins by explaining the challenging aspects of conducting research in Algeria, especially concerning the lack of updated statistics. Then, a deep exploration of the historical influences on the position of women in Algeria is explored, with a special focus on the concept of double colonisation. Lastly, a detailed description of the position and careers of women in Algerian higher education is provided.

Chapter Three examines the relevant literature, guided by the theoretical and conceptual framework within this study's boundaries. Other empirical studies were reviewed to highlight their contribution to the knowledge and identify the gaps that guided the formulation of the research questions.

Chapter Four tackles the methodology used to guide the research with the rationale for selecting the critical paradigm. Then, a detailed explanation of the qualitative exploratory research design, sampling method, methods of collecting data, approaches to analysing data, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration.

Then, chapters five, six and seven are devoted to reporting the research findings. The findings present according to the sub-research questions guiding the study. Each section is broken into themes and subthemes to answer each sub-question.

In Chapter Eight, the discussion chapter, the key findings will be discussed with the literature to interpret the findings in relation to the theories and other empirical studies.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, Chapter Nine, there will be an overview of the study's aims and the main findings that answer the research questions with the study's limitations. In addition, the original contribution will be highlighted, and the implications will be discussed by suggesting recommendations for policymakers at the Ministry of Higher Education level to improve gender equity policies. Besides, recommendations for future research will be offered, and finally, the researcher will share her reflections after the PhD journey.

1.9 Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter provides a brief overview of the study's central problem, the research aims and questions, the theoretical and conceptual framework, methodology and the significance of the outcome of this research. Finally, an overview of the entire thesis is outlined. The following chapter will explore the position of women in the Algerian context, focusing on their position in Algerian higher education.

Chapter 2 Context of the Study

2.1- Algeria as a Research Context

The previous chapter provided an outline of this study's aims and objectives and how the Algerian context influenced the position of women in public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres. This chapter offers the contextual information needed to understand the broader influences impacting the experiences of Algerian women and, as a result, how they construct their identities. It is essential to note that Algeria as a research context can be challenging due to the absence of up-to-date official statistics, especially concerning the position of women in the workplace and higher education in particular (Ait-Zai, 2014). Another important challenge when conducting research in Algeria, and in higher education particularly, is that many changes were observed from one reform to another. Moreover, these reforms did not consider the system's current state and did not prepare the ground to implement the new reform, as these changes were always done in a top-down manner (Lahmar & Abbou, 2022; Miliani, 2021; Souleh, 2017). In addition, there is a lack of shared vision between different political agendas, which brings instability to the system and influences the lived experiences of academics (Miliani, 2021). For instance, when analysing the rules and regulations of academic career progression, there seem to be some changes from one year to another which may affect the academics' progression and ability to plan their milestones. This is explored further in this chapter and will be elaborated on later while linking it to the current study findings in the discussion chapter.

This chapter begins with a general overview of women's status in relation to Algeria's history, politics, society, and national identity (section 2.2). Then, an extensive analysis of the Algerian higher education system, including the regulations, educational leadership, and reforms, with a special focus on the situation of female academics (section 2.3).

2.2 An Overview of Algerian History and Context

Algeria is the largest country in Africa, encompassing an area of 2,381,741 square kilometres with a rich heritage and history. Algeria, officially the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, is a northern African country part of the so-called "Maghreb" region. It consists of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya, and it is the occidental part of the Muslim World. It plays a significant role regionally and internationally as an active member of the Arab League and the African Union. According to the United Nations, the population of Algeria is 41,5 million people making it 34th internationally ("The World Factbook: Algeria," 2018). The original inhabitants of Algeria were the Berbers or Amazighs (ⵣⵉⵔⵉⵜⵏ in Tifinagh letters). After the Arab conquest in the 7th century, most of the Berber population converted to Islam and, in part, also Arabized, creating a unique hybrid

culture. Algeria is administratively divided into 58 Wilayas, with the capital, Algiers, being the most populous.

The strategic location of Algeria exposed the inhabitants to different cultural and civilisational influences because it is a transit region between the Orient, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe. It witnessed several occupations, the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Ottomans, and the French. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, France conquered Algeria and took full political power in the region by 1830. Between 1830 and 1962, The French imposed the idea of French Algeria or *l'Algérie Française* by implementing an assimilationist policy of total Frenchification and deculturation. After 132 years, the Algerian people, led by the National Liberation Front (known as FLN), got their independence on July 5th, 1962. Algeria experienced many challenges as a newly independent country: poverty, illiteracy, lack of social and economic infrastructures, and a mono-party system represented by the National Liberation Front (FLN) that became a political party after the war of liberation ("The World Factbook: Algeria," 2018). However, the most challenging time for Algeria after independence was during the Black Decade, which was marked by the killing a quarter of a million Algerians (Ajami, 2010). It was not until the 1999 presidential elections that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, backed by the army, declared an amnesty for the Islamist rebels to stop the bloodshed (Zeraoulia, 2020).

According to Wharton (2009), "gender inequality must be understood as the product of a more complex set of social forces" (p.12). For this reason, it is essential to understand the historical, social, and political factors influencing women's lived experiences in Algeria. In this section, the status of women is examined through Algeria's history. Because of the long history of Algeria, the study will be limited to the position of women in the Berber tradition, after the Arab conquests, during the French Colonisation and finally in modern-day Algeria.

2.2.1 The position of women in the Berber (Amazigh) tradition

In pre-Islamic North African history, women in the Berber tradition played an essential role in societal development. Some powerful Berber queens and warriors accounts include Queen Tin Hinan and Dihya or Al- Kahina (Frawsen, 2003; Salhi, 2022). Queen Tin Hanan is believed to be the ancestress of the Tuareg people, who are a subgroup of the Berbers, and she is for them "the mother of us all." The Tuareg tradition is matrilineal, giving power to women in society, and they used to own lands and animals, and in the case of a divorce, men have to leave the house (Salhi, 2022).

The other famous Berber queen-warrior, Al-Kahena, also known as Dihya, led the resistance war against the Arab invasion in 682 AD. She was a strategist who united all the Amazigh people against the Arab conquests until she was defeated by *Mūsá bin Nuṣayr*, an Arab general in the Islamic army

(Frawsen, 2003). Al-Kahina was not only a warrior queen; Salhi (2022) believes she can be considered one of the first feminists because she believed that men and women should work together to change the social conventions that oppress women. Although some scholars believe that the current position of women in Algeria is because of the influence of Islam after the Arabs' conquests, others think that even in the Islamic heritage, several women had a strong position in society, either Berbers or Arabs (Salhi, 2022). The following section will shed light on the position of North African women after the Arab conquest.

2.2.2 The position of North African women after the Arab conquests

After the death of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim empire started expanding and reached North Africa, and by 709 AD, the region was under the control of Arabs and many Berbers converted to Islam (Manzo & Bello, 2022). The Islamic religion advocated for women's rights (Samier & El Kaleh, 2021), and it was shown in the presence of strong female role models in the prophet Muhammed's family (Samier, 2015). Similarly, in the Islamic heritage in north Africa, some powerful Muslim women contributed to the development of the region, most notably Fatima bint al-Fihri, who founded the Mosque of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez in 859, which became later a centre of knowledge in the medieval Mediterranean (El-Shorbagy, 2020). This university-mosque is considered one of the oldest universities in the world, and its presence is proof of the significant part that women played in the spread of education in the Islamic world in general and North Africa in particular (Kahera et al., 2009). Although some reports claim that the people in Algeria were illiterate and girls had no right to learn how to read and write, several historical records show that both boys and girls used to study in the mosque or *Zawiyas* (Laaredj-Campbell, 2016). This is not surprising since men and women are treated equally in Islam (Shah, 2016), as they share the same religious duties except in some particular circumstances (Salhi, 2022). In this regard, it is mentioned in the Quran, the Islamic holy book that:

> O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. (The Quran, 4:1)

It is obligatory for men and women to be educated and be part of public life and even in religious leadership. There are several influential female role models in religious leadership like Rabia Al-Basriyah, who used to be an intellect with excellent knowledge and wisdom in Islamic Mystic Sufism (Shah, 2016), and Shuhda bint el-Ibari in Andalusia who used to be excellent in determining whether the prophet's Hadiths are valid or not (Salhi, 2022).

However, it is evident that men took control of making various interpretations of Islam in most Muslim countries, including Algeria (Barlas, 2019), and Muslim women were excluded from making religious interpretations. For this reason, the discourses around gender are often taken from a male point of

view, and powerful discourse of male domination developed over time (Foucault, 1980). As a result, these patriarchal practices have been integrated into the Islamic culture, and people often consider these cultural practices religious and right (Shah, 2018). Due to this patriarchal interpretation of Islam, submitting to male authority is viewed as a religious obligation by some Muslim women who believe that they are obeying God (Allah) by submitting to male authority.

Despite the possible similarities between Muslim women in different contexts because the practice of Islam, in general, is influenced by patriarchal interpretation, according to Esposito (2011), each Muslim country's political, educational, and economic development significantly influences women's status and roles. For this reason, it is essential to note that Algerian women are not only influenced by the patriarchal interpretation of Islam but also by some contextual factors, such as the French Colonisation that influenced the position of Algerian women in their society, explored in the following section.

2.2.3 Algerian women during the French Colonisation

Algeria was considered the "jewel" and the door for Africa for the French Colonisation because of its strategic location, as indicated in section 2.2 and for its natural resources and market opportunities (Brown, 2018). However, in the official statement of the French invasion of Algeria, the French, said they were on a mission to civilise less enlightened people. Nevertheless, several French historians like Marcel Émeret explained that in Algeria before 1830, mosques and *Zawiyas* had played a significant role in spreading education amongst all children (as mentioned in Laaredj-Campbell, 2016, p. 86). Since the beginning of French colonialism, the French worked hard to close these mosques and *Zawiyas* to erase the local identity, and as a result, Algerian men and women have fought fiercely to end this occupation (Abbou, 2020). As a reaction to the French practices, some female warriors emerged as leaders of resistance movements against the French army, such as Lala Fatma Nsoumer, an extraordinary Muslim Berber leader (Touati, 2018).

As in any conflict, women and children are the most vulnerable categories affected by the traumatic consequences of war (Snoubar & Duman, 2016). Algerian women under the French occupation were no exception; they suffered from different ways of torture, including rape by French soldiers. This was documented by French officers who stated: "We burnt down a village in the Khremis…the most hideous thing is that women were killed after being dishonoured" (Bennoune, 1999 as cited in Salhi, 2010, p. 114). Dishonouring women was a way to intimidate men's resistance movement (Laouar, 2020). In fact, under the French policies of imposing religion, western values, and language, women were given the role of the family values guardians. In this respect, Bouhdiba (2008) said that: "…women were now promoted to the historical and unexpected role of guardians of tradition and the collective identity; women had thus found a new function" (p. 232). Because of these French policies,

Algerian men confined women in the private sphere to protect the Islamic cultural values in Algeria and so that they did not get arrested by the French soldiers. In fact, the French became aware of the important role assigned to Algerian women, making them a target to culturally dominate Algerian people (Salhi, 2010). Fanon (1966), one of the prominent postcolonial thinkers, talked about how the French put Algerian women at the centre of their political strategy to demolish the Algerian culture by treating women as victims who needed protection. As a reaction to these French policies, the first nationalist union for Algerian women was created in 1943, whose main goals were to fight against colonialism and promote Algerian women's rights (Salhi, 2010).

When the War of Liberation started in 1954, all militant women from different political parties joined the PPA (the Party of the Algerian People), and they played an essential role in the war of liberation as "nurses, combatants, cooks, spies, fundraisers" (Laouar, 2020, p. 24; Salhi, 2010). One of these prominent women is Zohra Drif, who recently published her memoir *Inside the Battle of Algiers* (Drif-Bitat, 2017), in which she speaks about her active role during the war, especially in recruiting other women to join the liberation army. Nevertheless, an analysis of women's representation in the film *The Battle of Algiers*, directed by the Italian Gillo Pontecorvo, found that in the whole 121 minutes of the film, women are present for only fifteen minutes (Amrane Minne & Clarke, 2007). This underrepresentation could be attributed to the desire to maintain the traditional view of what women can or cannot do and how these views contributed to their diminishing role in modern Algeria. Section 2.2.4 will shed light on gender equality in modern-day Algeria and women's current challenges.

2.2.4 Gender equality in modern-day Algeria and current challenges

After independence, Algeria adopted a socialist system with an emphasis on the homogeneity of land, language and religion ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021). One of the government's priorities was to set a centralised planning process that gives the central administration a vital role in running the political and economic systems in a bureaucratic state (Makhlouf & Errami, 2017). It should be reminded that the vast majority of Algerian people are Muslims following the *Maliki school,* with less than 1% of Christians and Jews, and the constitution of 1963 considers Islam the religion of the State ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021). Most Algerian people are religious, and it can be seen from the large influx of mosques during the Friday congregational prayer and during the month of Ramadhan by all age groups, gender and socioeconomic categories (Achoui, 2006).

As men and women fought side by side to end the French occupation, promoting women's rights was one of the critical points on the agenda of the newly independent Algeria (Medkour & Abdeldjebar, 2021). After the independence, the first Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella said that the role of Algerian women was essential in constructing the country while keeping and respecting ‘a

revolutionary Islam' that gives women their rights (Laouar, 2020). However, in the first years of Algeria, two conflicting ideological views emerged, the liberals and conservatives. The former wanted to integrate women into all aspects of public life following worldwide efforts to reach gender equality, while the latter aimed at reviving the Algerian Islamic cultural values (Salhi, 2010). The conservatives believed that the role assigned to women during the French Colonisation as the guardians of the Algerian identity in the private sphere was the main factor behind the birth of the resistance movement (Salhi, 2010). These conflicting ideologies influenced the family code that has been the centre of heated debates. Another key historical event in Algeria's history was the "Black Decade" in the 1990s, in which a quarter of a million people were killed in conflict areas (Ajami, 2010) which is regarded as one of the brutal wars in the MENA region (Zeraoulia, 2020). As a result of the conflict between the Algerian army and Islamists (Boubekeur, 2008), civilians were targeted, especially women who were kidnapped, raped, and abused (Salhi, 2010; Slyomovics, 2016). Many Algerian feminist groups documented their struggles and contributed to making the country stable again after the election of President Bouteflika in 1999.

Socially, the family structure is patrilineal, fathers and grandfathers are supported by both the legal system and social norms as heads of the family (Zaimeche & Brown, 2019), and the wife should be obedient and supportive. In this respect, when conducting his ethnographic study in Algeria, immersed in its culture and traditions, Bourdieu (1962) noted that:

> "The family is the alpha and omega of the whole system: the primary group and structural model for any possible grouping, it is the indissoluble atom of society which assigns and assures to each of its members his place, his function, his very reason for existence and, to a certain degree, his existence itself" (p. 97).

The traditional family structure should not necessarily be viewed negatively because it ensures that family members support each other. These values can also be considered sacred. In this regard, in the Quran, it is stated that:

> "And your Lord has decreed that you do not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both reach old age (while) with you, say not to them (so much as), "ufff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up (when I was) small." (17:23)

By the early post-independence period, Algerians started shifting to smaller nuclear families consisting of husband, wife and adult unmarried children, a family structure that became common. These changes were due to the rise in urbanisation and minimum wages, with more women working outside the home and joining the labour market (Achoui, 2006; Lalami, 2017).

Traditionally, women have always contributed to the family's income the same as men, but mostly doing unpaid work such as farming, making textiles, and even teaching. However, with the spread of education, the percentage of female graduates is much higher than males (Ouadah-Bedidi, 2018). This success has not been translated into labour market participation, about 20% in 2016 (ONS, 2016). This weak participation of women in the public space can be attributed to the belief that women should go to the kitchen sink to protect themselves from sexual assaults, rape, and emotional violence (Laouar, 2020). This is also backed by a study conducted by Rohlof (2012) in which she examined the representation of Algerian women in an Algerian film *Viva L'aldjérie* [Long Live Algeria] (2004), and she noticed that women are predominantly regarded as sexual, and their sexuality needs to be controlled; otherwise, men will inevitably take advantage of it.

Despite having powerful female role models such as Lala Fatma Nsoumer (as indicated in section 2.2.3), there has been no female president or prime minister in the history of independent Algeria. However, there have been several measures made to empower the role of women in Algerian society. For instance, in 2012, the law of feminine quota that states women should be given a quota in the parliamentary elections was adopted in Algeria, and it made the country one of the pioneers in the Arab world in empowering women in politics. On May 10th, 2012, the legislative elections allowed women to hold 119 seats out of the 462 in the People's National Assembly (APN) (Benzenine, 2013). The situation improved in the 2017 legislative elections as the number of female MPs jumped from 119 to 146 out of 462. This change allowed Algeria to move to the first rank in the first position in the Arab world and the fortieth in the world (Union, 2018). Besides, the UN praised Algeria in 2014 for appointing for the first time seven female ministers and considered Algeria, a role model for its neighbouring Arab countries. However, increasing the number of female MPs did not necessarily improve the situation for women and empower them as they were treated as tokens, especially after being called the strawberries of the list by a male party leader (Cherif, 2021). After the election of the new president, Tebboune declared that the era of quota law was over as it was more harmful to women's empowerment in politics (Marwane, 2021).

Considering the current political events in Algeria, the Algerian *Hirak* is the people's movement against the authority, and women and men alike were present to express their dissatisfaction with the political system, mainly through peaceful demonstrations. From the first day of the movement, women participated beside men to express their views for change. In this context, a lawyer said in one of the demonstrations:

> The struggle for a free democratic Algeria cannot be divided and separated at all from the struggle for equality between men and women. As you notice, Algerian women have taken to

> the streets with all courage to say that they exist and will remain present until they get a response to their constant struggle (AFP, 2021, p. 1).

Women addressed several issues during their protests, including the "*family law*" that many feminist activists see as biased and holding women as minors all their lives compared to men in issues like divorce, inheritance, and child custody. For example, although the law grants the woman full custody of her children (Achoui, 2006), this can change if she wants to remarry. Many think this is unfair and needs to be reviewed. Moreover, feminist activists believe that women need more protection, especially from domestic violence, sexual abuse, and feminicide. It should be noted that the government's efforts to improve women's situation are notable. For instance, in 2014, financial compensation was given to women victims of sexual abuse during the Black Decade. Then in 2015, sexual harassment in public places and violence by a spouse became criminal offences (Bouagache, 2021). Still, the current situation of women has not improved enough because there is a need to implement the laws effectively by providing shelters for them and protecting them from social pressure. Empowering women in the economic and political fields are crucial as it will undoubtedly help develop the country (Bouagache, 2021).

Section 2.3 is devoted to exploring the status of women in Algerian higher education as it is this study's context to deeply understand the contextual factors influencing the lived experiences of female academics.

2.3 The Status of Women in Algerian Higher Education

In the early post-independence period, Algeria faced many issues, including a poor economy, high rates of illiteracy, and the vacancy in critical positions in the central government. However, the government greatly improved the situation, especially by providing the opportunity to be educated for every child. Every educational system is organised according to a set of regulations that reflect the country's history and system of governance.

For this reason, this section provides a brief historical background of the Algerian higher education system, focusing on female education (2.3.1). Section 2.3.2 is dedicated to exploring the current position of female academics within Algerian higher education, including the opportunities presented to them and the current challenges they face.

2.3.1 A brief historical background of women's participation in Algerian higher education

According to the Algerian constitution, Article 65, "The State is the organiser of the education system, the right to free education is guaranteed for all Algerians, and thus basic education is compulsory. The State shall protect equal schooling and vocational training" ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021, p. 15). These policies helped spread literacy to all Algerians because it was free and compulsory for children

up to 16 years old (Ouadah-Bedidi, 2018), especially females. Note that the French Colonisation did not only influence the position of women in the Algerian society, as discussed in section 2.2.3; Algeria inherited some French aspects of the system of governing and administering as well (Miliani, 2021). After all, it was more convenient because most of the educated Algerian people were French-educated, with the vast majority of the population being illiterate (Ryabi & Darwich, 2021).

There is a need to track the literacy rate of girls in relation to Algerian history to have an idea about women's participation in higher education. As mentioned in section 2.2.3, children had access to informal learning in mosques and *Zawiyas* where they learned Islam and Arabic before the establishment of colonial rule. This kind of education did not extend to higher education because few establishments were providing higher education because of issues related to authority and stability (Bouaziz, 2020). However, little is known about whether women and girls had wider access to these spaces (Laaredj-Campbell, 2016). During the French Colonisation, formal schools were established to teach French children and some local Muslim children, primarily boys, to train them as skilled workers to fulfil the needs of the French settlers (Bouaziz, 2020). However, as stated in section 2.2.3, most girls were confined in private spaces, while a small percentage of girls went to French schools and were mainly taught French, Arabic and knitting to fit their role as women (Laaredj-Campbell, 2016).

After the Independence of Algeria, the illiteracy gap between boys and girls was significant because males benefited from more opportunities in education, and access to higher education was easier for them than for females, especially in rural areas (Lalami, 2017). In 1966, the overall illiteracy rate among Algerians aged ten years and more was 75%, divided into 62% amongst males against 85% amongst females (Ouadah-Bedidi, 2018). However, the gap started decreasing due to compulsory education policies, the expansion of schools and universities, and the sociocultural shift in relation to girls' education (Lalami, 2017). Recently, the success rate of girls in the *Baccalauréat* exam, which allows access to university, is higher than the boys' success rate, 54% for girls against 33% for boys (Ouadah-Bedidi, 2018). The following paragraph will continue tracing female participation in higher education.

The Algerian higher education sector witnessed many changes that inevitably impacted the number of women enrolled on higher education. At the Algerian independence, there was only one university in Algiers and two engineering schools with 2000 local students and less than 200 academics (Souleh, 2017). After ten years, higher education in Algeria remained French in terms of diplomas, and only the elite had access to universities, as only 811 Algerian students got their diplomas. At that time, there used to be no difference between the French and Algerian universities (Woldegiorgis et al., 2020). It can be assumed that the percentage of women who were granted a university diploma at that time

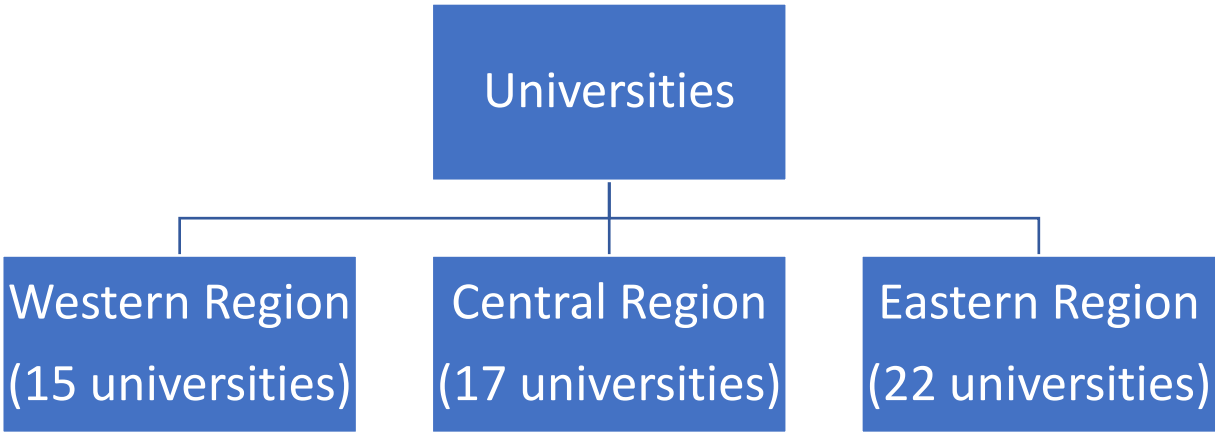
was very low because, as explained in section 2.2.3, women were viewed as the guardians of the national identity, so women's participation in higher education would still have been affected.

In 1971, nationalist policies were introduced, and the first "Algerian university" was created (Woldegiorgis et al., 2020). In that period, the national policies focused on giving more importance to teaching Arabic (Arabisation), and Islamic studies and preparing skilled administrators who would fill the vacuum left by the departure of the French (Benghabrit-Remaoun & Rabahi-Senouci, 2009; Lachheb, 2014; Rezig, 2011). Another significant reform in 2004, Algeria adopted a new system of higher education by joining the international higher education reform of the Bologna process known in Algeria (as well as in France) by the Licence-Master-Doctorate (LMD) system ("Higher education in Algeria," 2019). Because the ground was not prepared to adopt the new system, it could not be fully implemented until 2010. It started gradually with changing the 'Licence classic' (BA) to a "Licence LMD" where the number of years was reduced from 4 to 3 years; then the master's degree started in 2007, replacing the *Magister* degree that lasts for two years, and the LMD doctorate in 2009 which should be completed within three to four years.

As a result of the nationalist policies implemented in Algeria after independence, there are 123 higher education institutions, including 54 universities across the country, with one and a half million students ("Higher education in Algeria," 2019; MESRS, 2020; Souleh, 2017). In this thesis, the focus is only on the expansion of universities as the study sample, mentioned in section 1.3 is female academics working at universities, not research centres. Universities in Algeria are divided into three geographical regions, Centre, East and West (see Figure 2.1).

As a result of higher education expansion, more girls could pursue their undergraduate studies locally. It is evident as now that they are dominating the percentage of graduates, especially in medicine, social sciences and humanities, as they comprise 60% of the undergraduate degree (Ouadah-Bedidi, 2018). Moreover, in 2009 the percentage of females enrolled in the master's programme was 11% compared to 7% of females who obtained the same degree. However, by 2015 the percentage of females who enrolled on a master's programme increased to 28%, among whom 34% received their degree (Meyer & Benguerna, 2019). Further qualitative studies are required to understand the very low success rate, but a potential reason could be early exit because of marriage responsibilities.

Figure 2. 1 The structure of universities based on geographical region



Note. The Number of Universities by Region (adapted by the author) (MESRS, 2020).

For postgraduate studies, the ministry is responsible for granting the opportunity for universities to deliver a doctoral program. For this reason, regional differences can be observed as the majority of postgraduate opportunities are in the central region of Algeria, especially the capital Algiers (Meyer & Benguerna, 2019). Nevertheless, in recent years, most universities have been approved to provide a postgraduate degree, leading to an increase in female students opting for a postgraduate degree. It should be noted that fewer women complete their doctoral degrees than men and choose academia as a career (Meyer & Benguerna, 2019). The following section will explore women's careers in Algerian academia and the different policies and regulations that could affect the lived experiences of female academics at Algerian universities.

2.3.2 Women's careers in Algerian higher education: current opportunities and challenges

As indicated in section 2.3.1, much academic staff were recruited due to the steady growth in the number of students and universities' expansion. This number of academic staff kept increasing throughout the years to fit the needs of universities. Regarding academics' recruitment to universities, there seems to be no discrimination between men and women because most universities in Algeria are public and financed by the government, which emphasizes the importance of treating women and men equally ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021).

As Table 2.1 shows, the participation of female academics in the academic staff improved from the academic year 1997/1998 to 2015/2016, especially in the associate professor position (*Maître de Conférence A and B*), which improved from 9% in 1997/1998 to 37% in 2015/2016. However, in lower ranks as assistant professors (*Maître Assistant A and B*), the percentage of male and female academics

is balanced. The difference between men and women in higher academic ranks is significant, especially in professor rank. This leaky pipeline phenomenon, explained later in section 3.4, is similar to other research about women's careers in higher education, exploring why women in academia struggle to reach higher positions (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014). That is why it is essential to get an insight into their lived experiences to identify the barriers they can face and provide more support to reach higher academic ranks. One way to explain this leaky pipeline phenomenon is through the concept of double colonisation taken from the feminist postcolonial lens, as it helps to explain how the historical factors affecting women, explored in section 2.2, influenced the position of women in Algeria and at universities particularly. Section 3.3.3 will explore this concept and how it affects the representation of women in public (professional) and private (domestic) spaces.

Table 2. 1 Male/female distribution in academic staff on a national level (1997/1998 and 2015/2016)

		1997/1998	2015/2016
Professor	Male	86%	80%
	Female	14%	20%
Maître de Conférence A and B (associate professor)	Male	91%	63%
	Female	9%	37%
Maître Assistant A and B (assistant professor)	Male	68%	52%
	Female	32%	48%

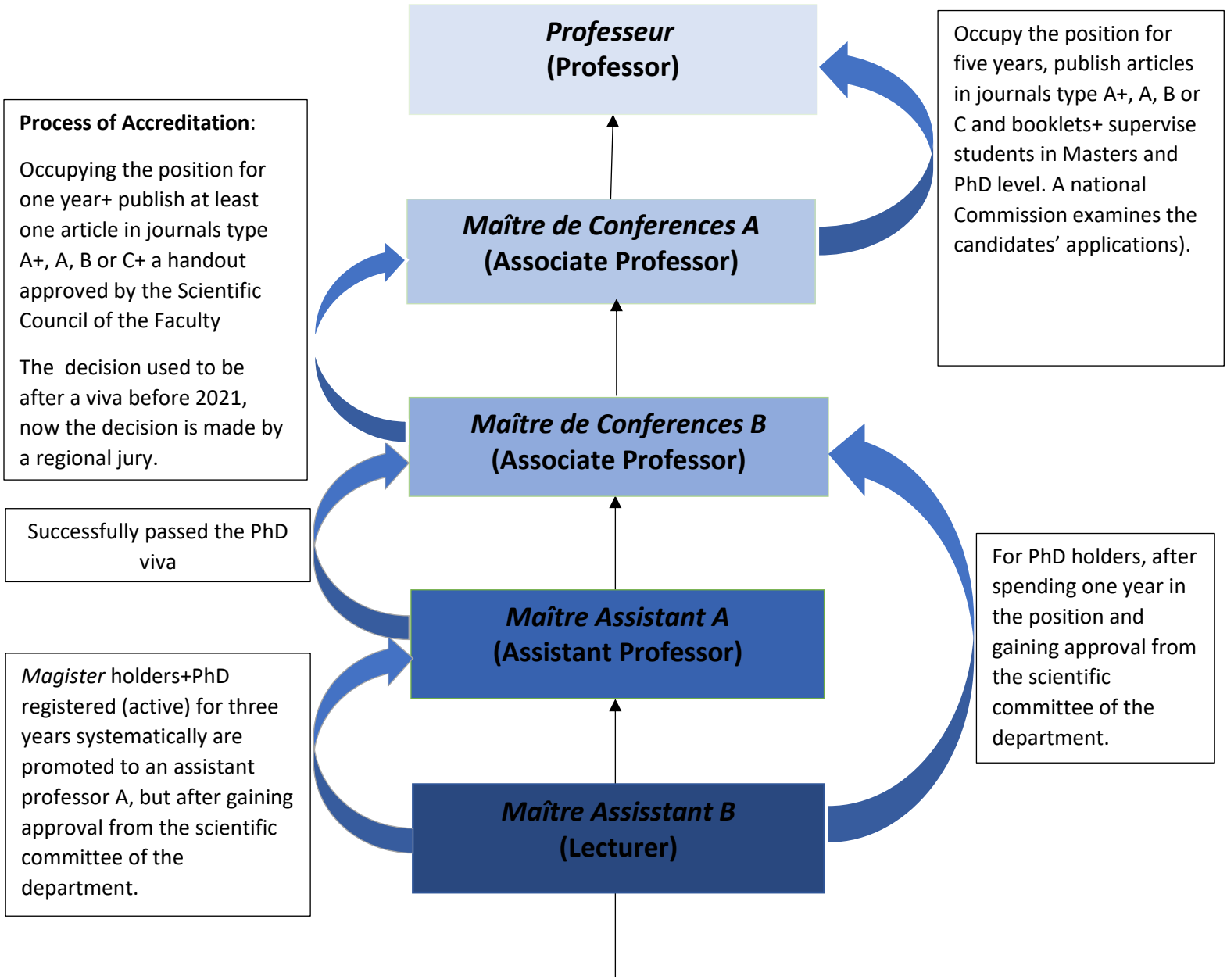
Note. This table was created by Meyer and Benguerna (2019) based on data from the Ministry of Higher Education (2017) adapted by the author.

There is a need first to describe the progression system governing Algerian higher education to understand the lived experiences of female academics and the potential challenges or opportunities facing them. As a centralised system, the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for issuing the regulations governing academic career progression, which are similar to those in the French system but different from those in the UK system, where every university has its policy (Evans, 2022). Figure 2.2 summarises the most influential progression rules for Algerian academics. The French names for the position will be used to avoid confusion between the government text and the figure, and the British equivalent is written between brackets.

To move to the most senior positions, the evaluation of the application is made by counting the scores; for instance, in the process of accreditation (*habilitation*), publishing in a journal ranked A+ is worth 100 points, whereas giving lectures is worth 15 points/per year (MESRS, 2021a). Research output in highly ranked journals (rank A+, A or B for exact and applied sciences academics and rank C for academics in social sciences) is the most valuable criterion for academic progression (MESRS, 2021). In contrast, holding a leadership position (either pedagogical or administrative) and teaching do not significantly impact the career progression decision (MESRS, 2021).

The most-reported challenges to academic progression in Algeria are that first Algerian academics enjoy a high level of job security as they do not fear losing their job or being degraded from their rank (Souleh, 2017). Second, there is no efficient system ensuring quality, accountability and a lack of research funds (Miliani, 2021; Souleh, 2017). Finally, as Figure (2.2) shows, career progression decisions rely on other staff members, which could increase unethical practices by academics who use their positions to get what they want through informal management, especially in the absence of accountability practices (Miliani, 2021; Souleh, 2017).

Figure 2. 2 The progression process of Algerian academics



Note. The author created this figure based on articles 16, 17, 38, and 42 from the official journal issued by the Ministry of Higher Education (2008) to regulate universities in addition to MESRS (2021).

Concerning leadership positions at Algerian universities, there are two “unrelated spheres (pedagogy and administration)“ (Miliani, 2021, p. 108). Pedagogical roles ensure the students' academic training quality, such as the team responsible for the branch training, and the selection of these positions are made at the university level. In contrast, administrative ones, such as a head of a department, a dean, and a rector (the equivalent of a vice-chancellor), manage the universities and have the upper hand over the pedagogical positions (Miliani, 2021). The appointments to these positions are made at the ministry level based on the university's recommendations. Then, the ministry forwards a file to the president's office, which will appoint them by presidential decree. They should have at least the rank of an associate professor (*Maître de Conference A*) or a professor (Professeur) (Government Secretary General, 2003).

Much research was conducted to evaluate the management of Algerian higher education, and they found that the problems of this sector are due to bureaucracy, corruption and lack of accountability practices (similar to the challenges of academic progression) (Miliani, 2021; Souleh, 2017). As a result, informal management practices were observed, especially that appointment to senior administrative positions is made upon recommendations of other staff. It could result in some academics holding these positions using their authority and influence to manage universities. To my knowledge, there are no official statistics on the percentage of female academics occupying administrative or pedagogical roles. However, some independent research indicates that women are underrepresented in Algeria, especially as university rectors (Ait-Zai et al., 2014; Eleraqi, 2018).

In relation to gender equality policies at Algerian universities, since the Algerian system is centralised, the ministry did not initiate gender equality plans or other measures to reach gender equality in universities and research institutions (Ait-Zai et al., 2014). Furthermore, there are no specific programs for mentoring women, as mentoring is absent for both sexes (Ait-Zai et al., 2014); until recently, they started a training program for newly recruited academics. Concerning the different laws to help women manage their work-life balance, in Algeria, female academics and all women working in the public sector benefit from 100% of their salary 98 days after giving birth. Moreover, after returning from maternity leave, every female worker has the right to leave work for two hours to breastfeed her baby during the first six months after returning and for an hour during the next six months. Additionally, the insurance fund takes care of all pregnancy-related expenses. In comparison, paternity leave is only three days. If women wish, they can leave their job for 0 to 5 years to raise their children, but this will be unpaid leave, and it is required by law that they reincorporate in work. However, there are no special measures to help these women who return to their work after career breaks (Ait-Zai et al., 2014; "The Algerian Work Code," 2006).

The following chapter will explore the research done to examine Algerian academics' lived experiences and identify the gaps that this research is trying to fill in following the aims and objectives in section 1.4.

2.4 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter provides contextualisation of the research project by providing a brief overview of Algerian women's history and the different influences that impacted their position. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the women's position in higher education, starting from their educational journeys and the impact of the different reforms on their position in higher education. Further points were explored about the different policies governing academic career progression and holding administrative or pedagogical roles. In the next chapter, the main theories used to inform this study are explored in relation to the empirical research done in the area.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

There is still an underrepresentation of women in professorial roles and academic leadership globally (Abalkhail, 2017; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Madera, 2017; Morley, 2014; Shah, 2018; White & Özkanlı, 2010; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017), and Algeria is no exception, as statistics have shown (see section 2.3.2). Therefore, this thesis explores how female academics define and construct their identities to delve into their lived experiences to understand how the sociocultural, organisational and personal factors shape their identities as well as the strategies they use to navigate their personal and professional lives.

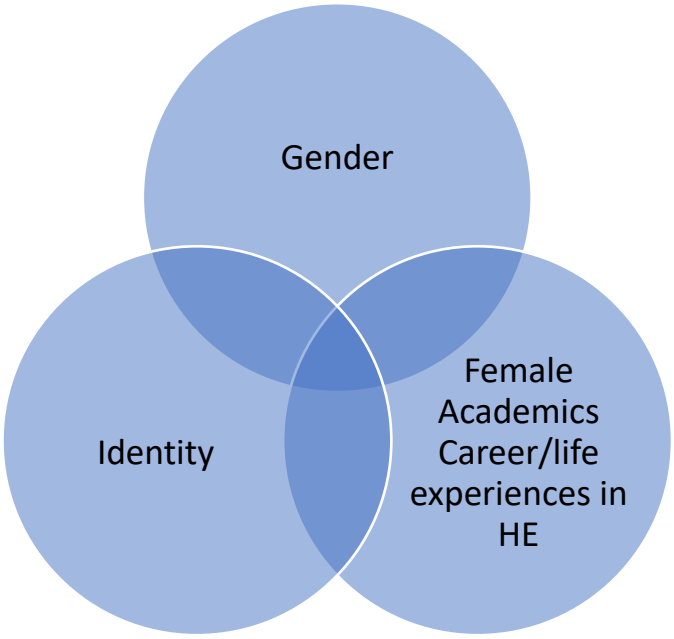
The chapter reviews the current theoretical and empirical research on women's gendered identities and their relationship to women's careers in higher education to frame the current study. This offers a deep theoretical understanding of female academics' lived/career experiences at Algerian universities. Hence, the main research question is:

> **How do female academics' lived/career experiences shape how they define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres?**

The chapter begins by outlining the theoretical framework underpinning this research by reviewing different theories in the literature regarding identity and gender while highlighting the theories guiding this research. Understanding what it is like to be a female academic is essential because identity is understood as "a performative process" done through different interactions within the society or the workplace and influenced by historical, societal/cultural and institutional factors (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003; Samier & Milley, 2020). Hence, as the literature review will show, discourses around gender and women's lived/career experiences in academia influence female academics' identity construction.

In this thesis, discourse is understood as the ways of thinking, talking and writing about an issue, which results in framing how people think, understand, and consequently act about any particular issue (Watson, 2001). Then, explaining how these discourses influence these female academics' identity construction is informed by identity regulation theory (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), explained in section 3.2. Understanding the experiences of gender in this study is informed by the notion of performativity by Butler (1990) with a feminist postcolonial lens (Ashcroft et al., 1989; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Mernissi, 2003), which are explored in section 3.3. Finally, linking them to empirical research about women's careers in higher education while narrowing it down to the Algerian context in section 3.4. Section 3.5 will explain the contribution of the reviewed published literature and identify the gaps that this research sets out to address. Figure 3.1 shows the main concepts guiding this study.

Figure 3. 1 The conceptual framework



3.2 The Theoretical Understanding of Identity Guiding this Study

The following section explores the theoretical understanding of identity, which informs this study. First, section 3.2.1 will explain the study's view that identity construction is ongoing (Chasserio et al., 2014). Then section 3.2.2 will focus on identity work and identity regulation theory (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) to elaborate on how people's identities are constructed within their contexts.

3.2.1 Identity as an ongoing process

Research around identity is essential for organisation studies because the way someone perceives themselves affects their worldview and how they act and react in their social lives (Alvesson, 2008). Nevertheless, different theories exist in the literature regarding identity, as it is a complex concept that has been viewed from different perspectives. The earliest published literature had an essentialist approach to identity as fixed and self-manifested through traits and characteristics (Owen, 2007). Theorists who assume that our identities are fixed believe that people's identities are static and do not change over time (Chasserio et al., 2014). It is important to acknowledge that some of the prominent literature on identity had interpretive and critical underpinnings, including multicultural (Miller & Colette, 2019), cosmopolitan (Spisak, 2009), transcultural (Vauclair et al., 2014), and subaltern (Gavaskar, 1995) identities. It was on this earlier foundation that later ones were constructed.

Recently, a more post-structuralist approach to identity started to emerge, which includes this study, that views identity as an ongoing process, which means it is something people 'do' instead of something people 'have' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Butler, 1990), shaped by the social interactions and

experiences of the individual within the context in which they live. They consciously or unconsciously construct and negotiate their multiple identities (Alvesson et al., 2008; Ibarra, 1999). These multiple identities are related to the different social roles in people's private and public (professional) spheres (such as a mother, daughter, wife, lecturer, academic, and researcher) (Alvesson et al., 2008; Hall, 2004; Zhao & Jones, 2017).

The post-structuralist perspective on identity focuses and examines the role of language in shaping and constructing a person's identity. In this regard, de Fina et al. (2006) state that:

> "Indexing identity in everyday face-to-face interaction is both reflective and constructive of social reality. On the one hand, speakers use indexicality to project identities based on social norms and expectations about what it means to be a certain kind of person or act in a certain kind of way; on the other hand, they can use the same tacit understandings to build new associations and therefore to construct new types of identities "(p. 15).

In other words, individuals are not only positioning themselves but others as well within the dominant discourses. Because constructing an identity is viewed in this thesis as unfinished or as a process and mainly the product of dominant discourses around, for instance, good woman, good academic, good mother, it is essential to investigate the social, cultural, and historical contexts as identity is formed through social interactions. Thus in this study, "identity is considered as being unstated, contextually driven, and emerging within interactions of a given discourse" (Kouhpaeenejad & Gholaminejad, 2014, p. 200).

In this study, female academics' identities are viewed as formed through the negotiations between themselves and their context, elaborated further in section 3.2.2. Moreover, this study will focus on the identities they construct within the private (domestic) and public (universities) spheres. At the same time, it acknowledges that other social identities, such as being a Muslim or Algerian, affect how female academics construct their identities in the public and private spheres.

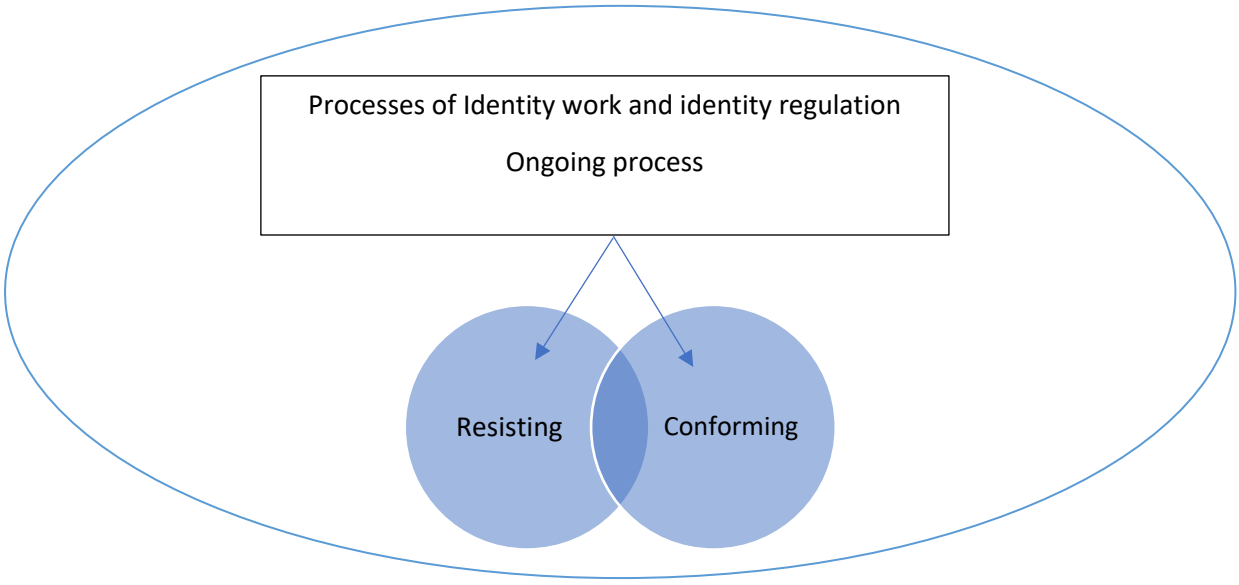
3.2.2 Identity work regulated by the context

In every organisation and society, norms, values, and rules regulate the expectations of members belonging to that particular organisation or society. This means that people learn how to behave according to their membership in a social category (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Chasserio et al., 2014). In the literature related to organisation studies, this process is referred to as identity work, which refers to the process that explains how these discourses are not simply adopted by the individual but rather through adaptation, transformation, and rejection (Albouss, 2017; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Identity regulation is also a process that explains how the context regulates the identity work (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) and that although individuals have some agency, their identities are mainly shaped by powerful discourses in society (Cunliffe, 2009).

This study is guided by the view that identity construction is an ongoing process, and each change in the contextual factors influences the norms associated with each social identity (Chasserio et al., 2014). In this respect, Alvesson and Willmot (2002) add that: "a complex mixture of conscious and unconscious elements, an interpretive and reflexive grid gradually shaped by processes of identity regulation and identity work" (p.626). Technically, identity work is the process by which each person constructs their own identity by crafting a self-narrative using their memories, and cultural values based on their own experiences to have an overall sense of self.

In this regard, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) add: "identity work is forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (p.626). In the scope of this study, female academics are influenced by different discourses related to, for instance, how to be a good mother, wife, daughter and academic. This means they are always trying to mediate between what is required of them and what they want. This kind of identity work is crucial to understanding how they construct their identities and manage their multiple roles. Figure 3.2 shows an illustration of this study's theoretical understanding of identity. It shows how identity is viewed as an ongoing process, and female academics construct their identities between resisting and conforming to social discourses. This view on identity and how it is affected by the cultural context is used in this study's design, data collection, and analysis.

Figure 3. 2 An illustration of the theoretical understanding of identity guiding the study



Most research on female academics' identity construction has been conducted in the western context in which they focused on different aspects of the academic identity, for instance, the researcher or mother's academic identities (Barnard, 2019; Bowyer et al., 2022). In the middle Eastern context, research on the identity of female academics often focused on the female academics holding leadership roles (Al-Jahani, 2021; Al Naqbi, 2016). Research is scarce in studying female academics

while considering identity as part of the conceptual framework in North African and Algerian contexts. The research reviewed around questions of identity in the Algerian context usually tackles Algerian identity in politics (Mortimer, 2010), in the business sector (Baba et al., 2021), or when investigating women's identity is usually taken from the cultural or historical perspectives (Jansen, 2021).

For this reason, this study seeks to extend the literature on academic women's experiences in Algerian higher education while taking identity as one of the concepts investigated. Further details will be provided in section 3.5 that will explain the contribution of the reviewed literature while identifying the gaps that this research is trying to fill. The following section explores the view guiding this research in relation to gender while linking it to the study's understanding of identity to theorise women's experiences in Algeria in general and female academics in particular.

3.3 A Theoretical Understanding of Women's Gendered Identities in Algeria

Female academics can have multiple identities related to their different social roles. However, in this section, the gendered identity is explored because it is probably the most influential in the process of identity work and regulation (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). After all, as mentioned in Chasserio et al. (2014): "gender identity probably is the most structuring process in our societies, and the most important for women" (p.131). For this reason, section 3.2.1 considers how gender is viewed as a social construct in this study. This is followed by elaborating on the theory of performativity and its link to this study in section 3.3.2. Finally, section 3.3.3 will link the view identity guiding this study with feminist postcolonial theory with particular attention to two concepts, double colonisation and the position of women in public and private spaces in Algerian society.

3.3.1 Gender as a social construction

Tracing back in history, the current conceptualisation of gender goes to the 1950s work of John Money, a psychologist who specialised in sexual identity and the biology of identity (Goldie, 2014). The evolution of the term gender has been influenced by different philosophers such as Marx, Foucault, and Derrida (Bradley, 2007) and different phases of the feminist movement. For instance, early feminists saw gender from an essentialist point of view, saying that people are born men, women, or of another sex, and they started to shed light on gender inequalities and the impact of patriarchy on women's lives (Stone, 2004). However, the essentialist view has been criticised because while being a *female* may have some shared anatomical features, being a *woman* is socially constructed around discourses that define what it is like to be a woman (Stone, 2004). Recent social scientists are interested in gender studies and have adopted a more constructivist and social constructivist approach to investigate gender-related issues, similar to this research (Butler, 1990).

Foucault's theory (1980) usually comes first to mind when discussing the concept of power because he developed a novel way of understanding power dynamics and how it operates within a given society. He believed that power makes us who we are because it is exercised on everyone through discourses produced culturally/socially and that these discourses are “never free from history, power and interests” (Foucault, 1980 as cited in Shah, 2016, p. 71). Bearing in mind his theories, feminists could challenge the Western paradigms that have been taken for granted since the Enlightenment. His anti-essentialist approach questions the nature of subjects as rational unified beings with fixed core and essence (King, 2004). Based on his theories, feminists started to examine gender not as a predetermined concept but more as a social construct. More specifically, they started examining the cultural discourses that contribute to creating gender inequalities. Even though Foucault's analysis dealt with power and its effects on social hierarchies, his analysis was gender-neutral because he was not interested in gender issues (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1980) states that within every society, there is a “regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth”, which dictates which kind of discourses are accepted and considered the truth (p. 131). This truth influences society, and what it is like to be a man, or a woman is inscribed on people.

The famous saying "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" by De Beauvoir (1988) started a conversation investigating the different mechanisms that construct gender within societies. Connell (2009) proclaims that 'gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relation and culture' (p.4). While Butler (1990) argues that gender is a performance in which people consciously or unconsciously are actively acting and constructing their gendered identity: that is to say, boys and girls are bombarded with messages about acting like men or women from a young age, and they unconsciously follow these images. Butler (1990) adds that "as a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "pre-discursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (p.11). Butler believes that gender-related aspects, such as gender norms and agency, are produced by discourses (Xie, 2014).

Therefore, the social, cultural, and political structure can influence the construction of gendered identity to the image of how people should be and behave to fit the social norm (Tran, 2022). Agreeing with Butler, in this thesis, gender is viewed as repeatedly performed through interaction by discourses and influenced by the context (Butler, 1990; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Simply put, understanding how Algeria's historical, cultural and religious influences, explored in chapter 2, shape the societal discourses around gender and women’s careers in higher education, affecting the identity construction of female academics. Section 3.3.2 will further explain this position and how it informs this study.

3.3.2 Gender identity as performativity

Theorising gender as performativity is in accordance with the view of identity construction as something we do rather than we have, as explained in section 3.2.1. Judith Butler challenged the essentialist view about gender and viewed that gender is created through the "repetition of acts" (Butler, 1988, p. 519). Drawing from the phenomenological approach, people are not conscious when engaging in patterns of actions that define their gendered identity (Tran, 2022). She believes that gender performativity comes from the desire to be perceived within " a certain set of norms" (Butler, 2004, p. 3). Moreover, gender performativity is appealing because it creates coherence and homogeneity within the society, and the failure to perform can result in a clash with society and punishment (Butler, 1988), especially in collectivist societies (Tran, 2022).

Although the idea of performativity is used to theorise the understanding of gender guiding this study, several critics sparkled from Butler's theory, especially around agency and the complicated relationship between gender norms and performance (Mahmood, 2011). Following the same point, Nussbaum discussed that Butler's theory did not address why someone would want to (un)do gender (Nussbaum, 2011). In this regard, Butler's theory could not explain how people could resist the contextual factors and the norms imposed on them. For this reason, as Alvesson and Willmott (2002) explain, this study adds that people engage in identity work and regulations in which they conform to gendered norms and resist the forces acting upon them.

As mentioned in section 3.2.2, the context regulates the gendered identity because performativity does not happen in isolation (Tran, 2022). In this regard, Butler (1990) argues that cultural and political factors are crucial to understanding how gender is performed in a particular context. In this thesis, culture is defined as the shared values and beliefs shared by a specific group that separates them from another group (Northouse, 2018). It includes the language, symbols, religion, food, music, festivals and most importantly, the social expectation of everyone in the society. The pressure to conform to the cultural understanding of gender in each society is unique, despite the common oppression shared by all women (Tran, 2022). For this reason, in this study, Muslim or colonised women are not regarded as a homogenous group because the country's cultural and political situation influence how patriarchy and colonialism are experienced.

The following section, 3.3.4, will explain how the experiences of female academics in Algeria could be understood through the feminist postcolonial theory while highlighting the concepts of double colonisation and the position of women in public and private spaces in Algerian society.

3.3.3 Theorising Algerian woman identity construction: a feminist postcolonial perspective

This section explains why the feminist postcolonial perspective is chosen to describe the discourses influencing the identity construction of female academics. First, the focus will be on explaining the postcolonial theory (section 3.3.4.1), then linking it to feminist postcolonial theory (3.3.4.2) and the current study.

3.3.3.1 Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial studies investigate and assess how the colonial heritage, in addition to neocolonialism and imperialism, influences and shapes newly independent countries (Kerner, 2017). Postcolonial is a term that refers to the resistance against colonial powers that is not over simply by the ex-colonies gaining independence, and it was developed by various social scientists such as Edward Said (1978), Gaytri Spivak (1994), and Franz Fanon (1970). Postcolonial theory can be multidisciplinary, ranging from political science to cultural studies and sociology (Browne et al., 2019). Initially, it sought to understand the current influences of European colonialism on the recently independent countries' historical, political, social, cultural, and economic structures (Ashcroft et al., 1989; Kerner, 2017). Moreover, it challenged Western centralised theories by recognising the heritage of colonised communities more. Finally, it acknowledged these communities' intellectual and social heritage by constructing a genuine understanding of their culture (Samier & Milley, 2020). In the field of education, Nkrumah (1965) maintains that the educational system of the newly independent countries is culturally colonised, and this can be regarded as the most dangerous stage of imperialism; this view is shared by various authors, such as: Freire (1970) and Fanon (1970). Therefore, education and even higher educational institutions are tools to spread colonial ideas mainly through globalisation (Zajda, 2018), influencing all aspects of knowledge, learning, and pedagogical practices. As explained in section 2.3, after independence, Algeria inherited the French educational and administrative system (Miliani, 2021) without adapting it to the cultural needs of the Algerian people.This might influence the identity construction of people working in educational institutions, which has implications for the present study (Samier & Milley, 2020).

3.3.3.2 Feminist postcolonial theory [3]

Postcolonial feminism came as a reaction or extension to the postcolonial theory that often neglected gender in the struggle against oppression (Lewis & Mills, 2003). Even in Edward Said's Orientalism study, there was little attention to female experiences and agency, making it male-centred. It was also a reaction to the Western feminist ideas that neglect the aspects of race, class, socio-historical and

[3] The terms feminist postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism are used interchangeably throughout this this thesis.

cultural context while investigating the issues of colonised women (Ali, 2007; Tyagi, 2014). Postcolonial feminists felt a crucial need to extend the feminist theory to include more social identities and how women in these groups experience gender. Thus, Knapp (2005) points out that feminism must be inclusive while maintaining its political and moral principles. Moreover, feminists in the ex-colonies felt the need to represent themselves because they understood the effect of colonialism on their experience of gender (Nakku, 2021) and its effects on the way they construct their identities. Feminist postcolonial theory is helpful for insight into the lived experiences of women from colonised countries, especially when studying women from a non-western context (Jamjoom, 2020; Nakku, 2021), like Algeria.

This study is informed by feminist postcolonial theory because, as mentioned in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 of the context chapter, the social discourses influencing Algerian women could originate from the imposition of French values in the public sphere in Algeria, including schools and administrations, and Algeria's own patriarchal culture stemming from the religious interpretations of religion (Harrat & Meberbeche Senouci, 2020). Many key areas of investigation are associated with postcolonial feminist theory, including "issues related to gender, economics, sexuality, representation and the development of effective political activism" (Lewis & Mills, 2003, p. 3). In this research, the focus is on the notion of double colonisation (Petersen & Rutherford, 1986) and exploring the consequences of double colonisation on the position of women in the society between the public and private spaces (Mernissi, 2003).

3.3.3.2.1 Double colonisation

The notion of "double colonialism" is concerned with understanding the influences of the colonisers and the patriarchal indigenous culture on colonised women. This concept was first introduced by Petersen and Rutherford (1986), who investigated the position of female writers in the men's world (Nakku, 2021; Shene, 2019). Double colonisation is suitable to explain the experiences of Algerian women because it provides a theoretical understanding of the discourses that could influence their lived experiences.

First, as explained in section 2.2.2, most Algerians are Muslims, and Islam as a religion has sparked many debates, especially around women's rights and position. Some may argue that Islam is why women are suppressed in the Islamic world (Alharafesheh, 2016). Others, such as Moghadam (2008), believe that women's experiences in the Muslim world are diverse and affected by the social structure of each Muslim country and its political, economic, and cultural policies. For example, this socio-political ideology shaped by these powerful discourses is promulgated through authoritative figures

such as the Turkish president, *Erdoğan,* declaring that motherhood is the most important duty of a woman (Telegraph, 2014).

Many female Islamic scholars reacted to both the patriarchal Islamic teachings and the secular feminist movements, which is why Islamic feminism appeared to offer a new way of viewing Islam without neglecting gender equality issues (Tønnessen, 2014). All these views contribute to the general view of women and what they can or cannot do outside their homes. It can be traced to the late twentieth century during the Islamic revolution in Iran, when the feminist voices started negotiating women's rights within the Islamic law, and they saw how these patriarchal laws were Islamically unjust. According to a prominent Islamic feminist, Omaima Abou-Baker, the Islamic feminist Project is ongoing to challenge the gender-biased readings done by male jurists and offer new readings that align with the principles of justice and equality (Tønnessen, 2014).

Second, colonisers imposed their values, culture and systems on their occupied countries, and the Algerian context is no different (Ali, 2007; Ashcroft et al., 1989). During the 132 years of colonisation, France imposed its values in schools and administrations, including religion and language, as indicated in section 2.3.2. Consequently, Algeria inherited the French educational system after independence without adjusting it to the Algerians' cultural and social needs, as explained in section 2.3.1. This imported system also imposed French values, including gendered views around the social expectations of leaders, who were deemed to be male and other patriarchal practices in the workplace (De Beauvoir, 1988). It is not exclusive to Algeria: other African countries under European Colonisation are also struggling with an inherited educational system that does not meet Africans' needs (Jaiyeola, 2020; Ndiaye, 2012; Sharonova et al., 2018).

As a result, Algerian women are exposed to patriarchal notions coming from the indigenous culture (Petersen & Rutherford, 1986) and colonisation. It is important to note that even before the French Colonisation, women struggled with a patriarchal indigenous culture that prevented them from, for instance, inheriting land in the Berber tradition, even though Islam provides a share of inheritance to women (Hoque et al., 2013)[4]. Moreover, as stated in section 2.3.1, education in Algeria before colonisation excluded or limited women's education as they were prepared to fulfil their social roles as wives and mothers (Harrat & Meberbeche Senouci, 2020; Laaredj-Campbell, 2016), but most girls were able to read and write. However, under the French colonial occupation in Algeria, girls were more excluded from education; in which the percentage of girls in schools was lower than boys, and

[4] The inheritance law is one of the debateable topics in most Islamic countries, and preventing women from inheritance in the Berber culture according to some historical records was not only because of the patriarchal culture. In 1749, many tribes in Kabylia deprived women from their right of inheritance because they did not want the ownership of their lands to go to strangers in case the woman remarry (Benchikhe, 2018).

the percentage of schooled Algerian children was very low (Harrat & Meberbeche Senouci, 2020) because of the hostility of the settlers towards the indigenous people and the suspicion of the Algerian people towards French education. The general consequence of this was that Algerian women were under double systems of oppression: the patriarchal system and colonial power.

3.3.3.2.2 Public and private spheres

As a consequence of these two systems of oppression, Algerian women's position in public and private spheres has been affected. Research around the public/private sphere division has been under thorough enquiry by feminists because the domestic space is seen as the primary place for women, while her access to the public is sometimes viewed as exceptional or unusual (Mills, 2003). The boundaries between the spaces are not created arbitrarily but are based on men's power over women (Mernissi, 2003). Men were assigned work in the public sphere, while women were responsible for the private one. According to Mernissi (2003): “Muslim society is divided into two subuniverses: the universe of men (the *Umma*, the world religion and power) and the universe of women, the domestic world of sexuality and the family” (p.490).

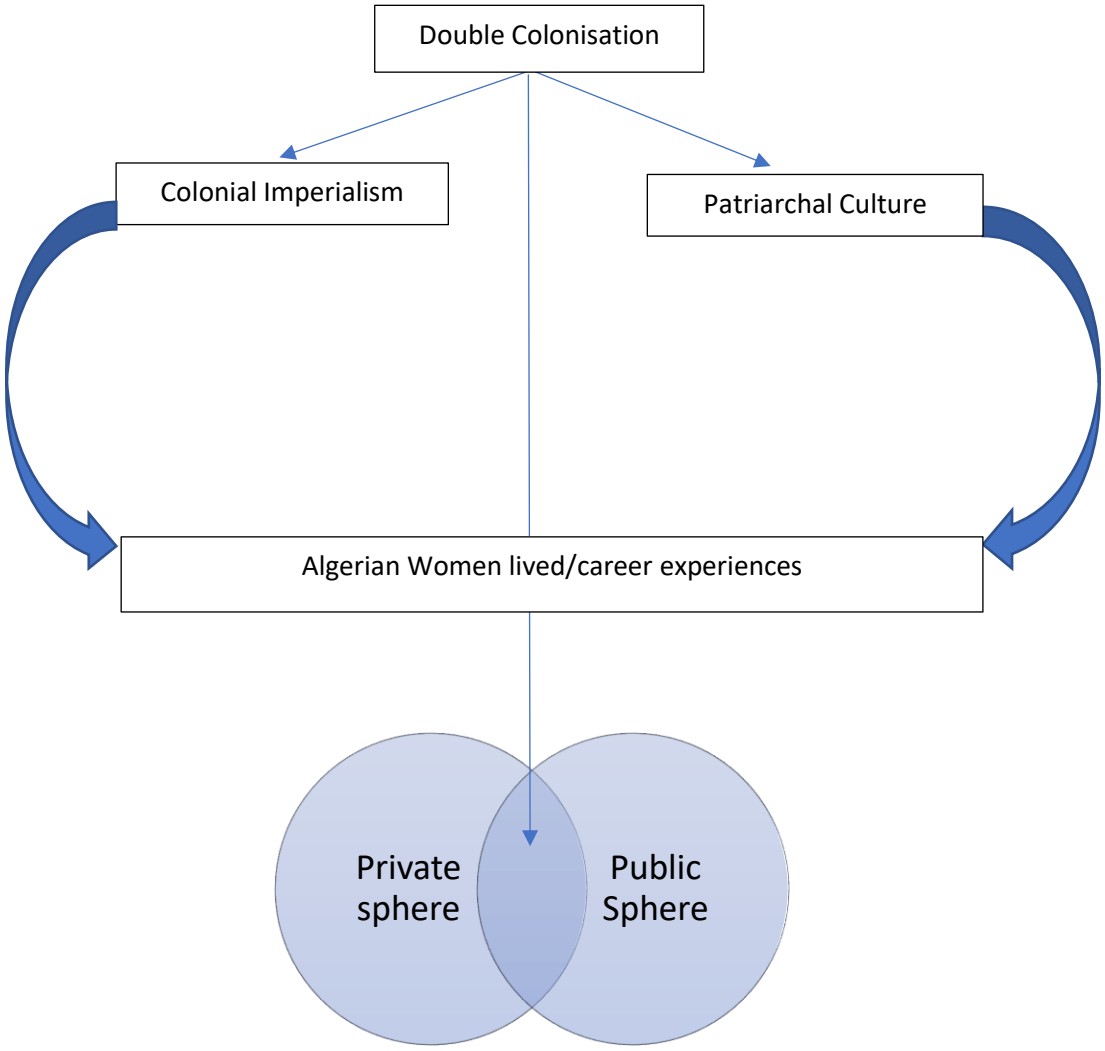
For that reason, women are excluded from the serious affairs of the *Umma,* including religious matters, politics and management. Even in the domestic space, the husband has the authority over women who need to obey him to be a "good" Muslim (Shah, 2018). Furthermore, the French colonisation might have added another layer of oppression because Algerian men confined women in the house in their attempt to protect their national identity (Bouhdiba, 2008). This shows the relationship between double colonisation and its impact on the position of women in public and private spaces. After independence, the Algerian government expanded education for all children, boys and girls, and made it compulsory for parents to send their children to schools, as explained in section 2.3.2. This led to an increase in women’s education; however, it did not translate into women’s participation in the labour force as it is still low (Barry & Dandachli, 2020).

Mernissi (2003) explored the spacial boundaries of women in Muslim countries, taking Morocco as a context. She explained that with more women joining the public sector, especially after the independence period, public institutions expanded, and many women were recruited as typists and secretaries in subordinate roles compared to their males’ colleagues. She drew a comparison between the male boss’s secretary at work and the boss's wife or sister, and she suggested that men would usually use their privilege (economic and societal superiority) to make women feel that they do not belong in the public space (Mernissi, 2003). Even now, women are competing with “their former masters” (p.496), men: reaching top positions causes tensions and conflict because women are still

viewed as belonging to private matters, and their central role is to be a mother or a wife (Mernissi, 2003).

However, there is a scarcity of research exploring modern women's presence in public and private spheres and how these notions have changed throughout time. That is why, it is important to explore how female academics construct their identities in public and private spheres to understand the influences impacting how they construct their identities and how they navigate their lived/career experiences and challenges. Figure 3.3 summarizes all the key concepts to understand the relationship between double colonisation and its impact on the position of women in public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres.

Figure 3. 3 Summary of the key concepts taken from feminist postcolonial theory



The following section will dig deeper into the research context of Algerian academia while drawing from international and national research and theories. This section will link the theoretical

understanding of the main concepts guiding this study with the empirical findings conducted about female academics.

3.4 Women's Career/Life Experiences and Identities in Academia

Historically, universities are a man's domain in which being a man will be favoured because male managers choose employees who share the same profile, resulting in female exclusion subtly in the western context (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Madera, 2017). Around the world, women in higher education struggle in their careers, and even now, they are underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Waheeda & Nishan, 2018; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Empirical research worldwide shows that the high representation of women at the university does not necessarily mean universities have reached gender equality and there is no oppression (Monroe et al., 2008). Despite the advancement of gender equality in several fields, men's roles and expectations are still related to being breadwinners (professional public sphere), while women's roles are still related to parenting and motherhood (domestic in the private sphere) (Afiouni & Karam, 2017).

For instance, only 12 % were rectors in the European Union, and 21% were full professors (EUA, 2017). Similar to Australia, 15% are vice-chancellors and 35% of professors (AG, 2019); in the United Kingdom, 28% of professors and 29% of all Vice-Chancellors (Coughlan, 2021; Jarboe, 2019) and in Canada, 27% of professors (ST, 2018). In this respect, Özkanlı and White (2008) said that the low representation of Australian female academics is similar to most European Union female academics. However, Turkey has the highest and most remarkable percentage of female professors globally and in developing countries, with 31% (Akyol & Tanrisevdi, 2018), but they are only 9% of rectors. The percentage is much lower in African and middle eastern countries (Chouari et al., 2021; Laaboudi, 2021; Nakku, 2021), including Algeria, as indicated in the context chapter section 2.3.2. This phenomenon is usually referred to as the “leaky pipeline”, which explains why there is a high number of female graduates in many countries, including Algeria. However, few academics reached full professorship or senior leadership (administrative) roles (Ysseldyk et al., 2019).

Many studies confirmed that female academics are affected by several reasons that could be social, institutional and personal that influence their career progression and representation in senior leadership positions (Longman et al., 2018; Nakku, 2021; Zhao & Jones, 2017). However, few studies explore their academic identities construction (Barnard, 2019; Kudarauskienė & Žydžiūnaitė, 2018). In this respect, Saunderson (2002) states that:

> "By using identity as a powerful sensitising concept, interesting and valuable findings have been produced about academic women's perceptions, feelings, positions and responses to their working lives in the university sector (p.382)."

That is to say, exploring how female academics construct their identities may provide a deeper insight into their lived experiences because, as indicated in section 3.2.1, identities are shaped and regulated by the social structures and norms in which female academics construct their identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Zhao & Jones, 2017). For this reason, it is essential to understand how female academics lived/career experiences shape the way they construct their identities within the public and private spheres.

In this section, an attempt is made to understand how female academics construct their academic identities (section 3.3.1), and then a particular focus is made on constructing their lecturer, administrator (when holding a formal leadership position) and researcher identities. This is followed by an exploration of how female academics manage their multiple roles and identities taken from the professional (public) and domestic (private) spheres in section 3.4.2. Then an exploration of the sociocultural, organisational and personal factors influencing female academics' careers and identities and their strategies to manage their multiple roles. In every section, empirical studies in the field are used to support the arguments leading this study from different contexts and identify the current literature gaps. There will be a particular focus on research from the African, Muslim and Arabic contexts because of the shared history and culture with this study's context. For instance, Algeria shares the same history of colonialism, liberation wars, and economic and political instabilities as most African countries, which can influence the experiences of female academics at universities. As well as, Algerian culture can be similar to Arabic and Muslim countries because 59.1% of Algerian people are Arabs, and 99% are Muslims ("The World Factbook: Algeria," 2018). Finally, North African countries are the most similar to the Algerian context because of the shared history, ethnicities, and Islam school (*Maliki school*), which can provide an insight into the position and experiences of women and female academics in particular.

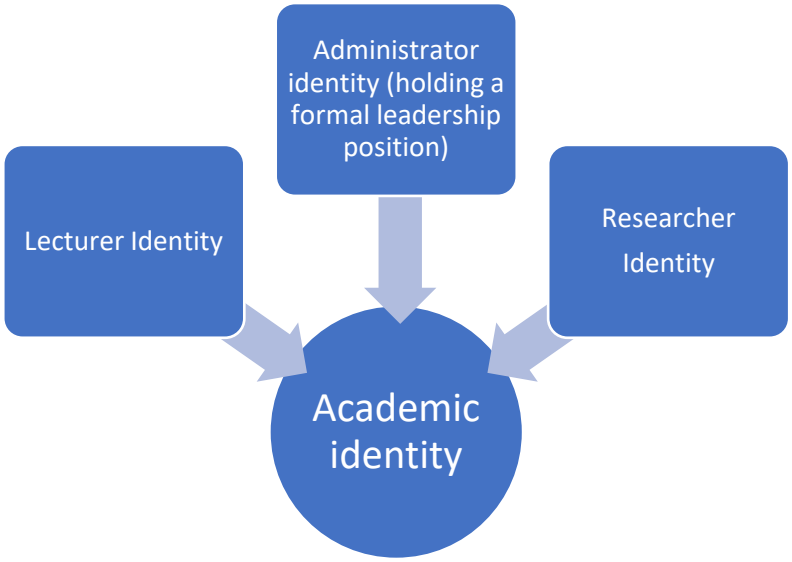
3.4.1 Constructing female academic identity

A considerable amount of literature has been published on female academic identities and careers, especially in the Western context, in the last 40 years (Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Tsaousi, 2020). These studies have explored the lived experiences of female academics, especially in the UK (Cooper, 2019). However, there is a scarcity of research focusing on academics' lived experiences and careers, especially female academics, or how they construct their identities in the MENA region (Karam & Afiouni, 2014), especially in the North African and Algerian ones. Morley (2005) confirms that plenty of published quantitative and qualitative literature on questions related to the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles and how gender shapes their experiences in academia in the Western contexts. In comparison, there is a scarcity of research published in developing countries.

Moreover, the available literature is mainly quantitative and funded by international organisations like World Bank or other research conducted mainly in Commonwealth nations (Morley, 2005).

Academic identity is constructed on fulfilling multiple roles, such as teaching, research, and holding formal leadership roles (Barnard, 2019). As explained in section 2.3.2, it is important to note that leadership roles in Algeria can be administrative or pedagogical. Moreover, in this thesis, senior leadership roles are used synonymously with administrative roles only because, as explained in section 2.3.2, administrative positions are more senior than pedagogical ones (Miliani, 2021). Much research has indicated that academic identity could be "messy, complex and contested" (Watermeyer & Tomlinson, 2022, p. 2). As indicated in section 3.2.1, female academic identity is viewed as ongoing and affected by other contextual factors that define what it is like to be an academic or a woman and the tensions that may arise between the two discourses (Bolden et al., 2012). Being an academic means having multiple roles, such as lecturer, researcher, and leader (when holding a leadership position, either administrative or pedagogical) (see figure 3.4). This thesis distinguishes between identifying as a leader, which has no relation to occupying a formal position and being an administrator when holding a formal leadership position because this study is guided by the view that "a leader can be anyone who is engaged in moving the collective in a common direction, irrespective of formal position" (Egan et al., 2017, p. 6). Whereas being an administrator, in this thesis, is linked to holding a formal leadership role at the university level.

Figure 3. 4 Academic roles explored in this study



As indicated in the introduction of this section, despite the high percentage of female graduates from universities, female academics are still underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles. One way of explaining this is that historically being an academic was built around men's

expectations, which could have influenced the way women construct their academic identity as the "other" to the norm of being a male academic (Jones, 2020). These expectations could be that the successful female academic in the western context is the one who prioritises her career, publishes in high-rank journals, and prioritises her research career rather than teaching or performing administrative work with a high number of publications in prestigious journals (Raddon, 2002). As a result, there is a tension between the different roles required in academic work, especially between teaching and research (Xerri, 2017), and usually, in this tension, the researcher identity diminishes compared to the lecturer identity (Barnard, 2019; Boyd & Smith, 2016). Higher education institutions still regard research as the essential criterion to determine academic success, so it is crucial to explore how female academics construct their researcher identity. Further details are explored in section 3.4.1.2 around managing the different roles and identities, especially when adding up other roles from the domestic (private sphere), such as being a wife or a mother.

The following section illustrates some of the challenges women face in academia, especially in relation to holding formal leadership roles and reaching professorial roles.

3.4.1.1 Female leadership identity in academia

Leadership in higher education has captured the attention of researchers to explore how leadership is perceived and practised in different contexts. Although this study does not aim to create a woman's leadership/empowerment model in Algerian higher education (Samier & ElKaleh, 2021), it is essential to explore the literature on women's leadership in academia to deeply understand their lived experiences and the discourses influencing their identity formation in the public sphere (Abalkhail, 2017).

First of all, there is a need to define both education and leadership. According to the online etymology dictionary, the word "education" is derived from the Latin word ēducātiō, which means breeding, bringing up, or rearing. However, defining the term education nowadays can be challenging because it is influenced by many factors such as culture, the desired outcome from the process, and politics, making its definition constantly changing following the needs of human beings (Sewell & Newman, 2014). The word "leadership" comes from the verb "*lædan"* from old English*,* which means "guide", and the interest in leadership can be traced back to pre-modern times to the Epic of *Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia* and Plato and Aristotle's work (Al Naqbi, 2016). However, from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, early Western leadership theories such as "the Great Man Theory" saw that "leaders are born, not made", in which leaders are viewed as superior beings who have special abilities that allow them to fulfil their tasks which suited the idea of having a monarchy at that time (Roberts, 2007). Recently, a more constructivist and social constructivist approach to

leadership has been adopted as Sharma, and Jain (2013) indicate that being an effective leader requires continuous efforts through training, education and experience. Moreover, there is a growing body of literature on how culture influences leadership and various studies highlighted the differences in the perception of leadership in different cultures. For instance, there is no word for the concept of "leadership" in the Japanese language because, in the Japanese culture, the leader is inseparable from the others (Handy, 1993, as mentioned in Shah, 2016, p. 117). Therefore, leadership expectations are different from one society to another.

Even though more women are working now, their role in educational institutions has known evolutions throughout the history of education (Scott, 2018). Research has only recently focused on women and educational leadership in the MENA region (Al-Jahani, 2021; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Madsen, 2010). Further compounding the challenges for women, the term leadership is always associated with masculine qualities in most Muslim countries, and it is reinforced by the patriarchal interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah (Moten, 2011). Coleman (2011) states that leadership is often considered a gendered concept because, in different cultural contexts, the strong, competent leader is still expected to be a male rather than a female, similar to being an academic. Grummell (2009) states that masculine leadership traits are often privileged in most of the world, and there is always that unwritten rule that women are unfit to be leaders (as mentioned in Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). To climb the gendered organisational hierarchy, they need to deny their femininity to fit in the masculine leadership model. As a result, female leaders were stuck between assertive and aggressive, considered rude, collaborative and nurturing, and weak (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Referring to Butler's theory, explored in section 3.3.2, leadership could be understood as a performance linked to being masculinised (Tran, 2022).

The view that women are unfit to lead could be explained by the theory influencing this study: Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory, which considers that there is a negative stereotype or prejudice against female leaders, which contributes to having fewer women leaders at universities globally. Historically, men have dominated top positions in different fields and higher education, which created the view that men are more suitable to lead. This phenomenon can be traced to the different socialisation processes that young girls and boys go through during childhood, in which they learn how to perform being a woman or a man. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), these differences are embedded in society's different views and expectations of men and women that can be traced to the historical division of labour. These expectations are then translated to behaviour and reflected in female and male worldviews.

Moreover, Eagly and Sczesny (2009), women are described according to "communal qualities such as affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken" men; on the other hand, are viewed as exhibiting agentic qualities such as aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful as well as self-reliant, self-sufficient, and individualistic" (p. 23) that are linked with power, competition, task accomplishment, competence, and, ultimately, leadership (Eisner & Harvey, 2009). That makes it difficult for women to reach formal leadership positions because, as Eagly and Carli (2007) believe, leaders are not expected to have feminine communal and nurturing characteristics but rather to possess more masculine and agentic characteristics. However, these views have been criticised as being essentialist, as if all women in all cultures are the same. Nevertheless, many people still think that women's essence has communal qualities, proving that full gender equality is not achieved yet.

Several studies have explored female academics' lived experiences and identities in holding senior leadership roles at their universities. For instance, in a study conducted by Al-Jahani (2021) adopted an interpretive paradigm with a narrative approach, conducting 24 semi-structured interviews with female academics holding leadership roles. One of the key findings of this study is that there is resistance to female leadership that could impact the career advancement of female academics and possibly impact how they construct their leadership identity. This study found that this resistance could originate from sociocultural or organisational factors, discussed further in sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3. This could also be explained as Eagly and Karau (2002) found prejudice against female leadership, which could lead to resistance. Moreover, despite the similar contextual factors in the Al-Jahani (2021) study participants, personal circumstances such as family support and opportunities offered at the level of universities impacted their career experiences.

Similarly, Al-Wahaibi (2017) conducted a study in Oman consisting of 13 semi-structured interviews with female faculty members at the University of Sultan Qaboos. Al-Wahaibi found that despite the considerable advancement of women's education, some cultural factors still hinder the progression of female academics. The research findings explain this because culture is still male-centred, which views women's place at home as the dominant social expectation surrounding women, limiting their ambitions and shaping their experiences and, consequently, their identities. These studies are essential to understanding the leadership experiences of female academics holding senior leadership roles. However, it would have been quite interesting to explore the experiences of female academics who are not holding senior leadership roles and how they manage the multiple roles taken from the public and private spheres. For this reason, the following section will explore how female academics manage their multiple roles and identities, as it is the main focus guiding this study without neglecting the important area of research in relation to women’s leadership in higher education.

3.4.1.2 Managing multiple roles and identities

As explained in the previous section, the expectations around women are always linked to fulfilling their domestic (private sphere) duties, while men are expected to be the breadwinners. That is why a growing body of literature explores the interplay between the different identities taken from the different roles that women need to fulfil in the domestic sphere and academia. An important theme in this field is the impact of motherhood and marriage on the academic career of female academics. In this respect, Raddon argues that the dominant discourse is that the mother needs to give 100% to her children, which can be challenging if she fulfils the requirements of being an academic (Albouss, 2017). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) see that motherhood and academic work are "greedy institutions" and demand undivided attention and commitment (p.253). In addition, these women need to fulfil the traditional and feminine roles, mainly being a mother. In this respect, Coleman (2011) views that there are two ways of explaining the underrepresentation of females in the labour force, in general, which are the burden of familial responsibilities and the stereotypes around female leadership, explained in section 3.4.1.1. Because of that, some women choose to reduce or abandon their career/leadership ambitions completely. Moreover, even if a woman is not married, there is a tendency for women to be expected to fulfil the duty of motherhood (Fotaki, 2013).

Various studies have explored women's interplays in various fields, such as higher education, to understand how women construct their identities within conflicting discourses about women's careers and societal roles. In a study conducted in Tunisia using a mixed-method quantitative and qualitative approach in two Tunisian institutions, the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences of Sousse (FAHSS) and the National Engineering School of Sousse (ENISO). Chouari et al. (2021) wanted to understand why women underrepresentation in high academic ranks despite having equal job opportunities, recruitment conditions, health insurance and social welfare between men and women. They collected quantitative data to know the exact number of academic staff of both genders in their academic and leadership positions, so they used simple calculations of percentages. Then, these data were processed using Excel, followed by a comparison between FAHSS and ENISO. This research shows that although there is an increase in the number of women holding leadership positions, it is still low. Some findings suggest that women struggle because of factors such as family life and cultural barriers, explored in sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3 and 3.4.4, and their need to fulfil various roles like teaching tasks, research, and motherhood responsibility. Chouari et al. (2021) study is interesting as it provides us with the different roles and responsibilities that female academics need to fulfil that prevent them from progressing in their career. However, this study is the first of its kind in the Tunisian context, and further studies using the identity lens are needed, especially regarding the interplay between their domestic and professional identities.

Furthermore, in research conducted in a South African institution of higher education, Barnard (2019) followed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach with a socio-analytic methodology. This allowed the researcher to interpret the lived experiences of female academics using identity work theory (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). The data was collected by conducting three focus groups with four women engaged in research in higher education, with every focus group lasting approximately 4.5 hours. This research highlights the tensions between the participants' social and role identities in which they always try to downgrade their researcher competence to give the impression that it is congruent with stereotypical femaleness. This study helps understand how female academics construct their researcher identity; however, it did not focus on how female academics construct their leadership identities when occupying formal positions.

Zhao and Jones (2017) conducted a study exploring the tensions and interplay between the different roles of female academics in Chinese higher education. Their study adopted an interpretive and qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with nine female academics occupying formal leadership positions sampled using the snowball technique. Moreover, one of the theoretical understandings of identity guiding this study is Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) theory of identity work and regulation, similar to the current study. One of the significant findings of this study is that the participants shape their identities in congruence with the social norms. Consequently, they reject the leader identity although they occupy leadership positions which could be understood, as mentioned in section 3.4.1.1, being a leader is incompatible with being a woman. On the other hand, they highlight their lecturer identity which could be explained in light of how the context regulate which group someone may feel they belong to and which they do not (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). This study is helpful to the current study; however, it would have been more relevant to the current study if it also included how female academics construct their researcher identity. Taken together, these studies clearly explain the impact of the contextual factors on how female academics construct their academic identities in; which they identify as a lecturer and struggle with both their researcher and administrator ones (when they occupy a formal leadership position) as both of them are perceived as a masculine performance, incongruent with being a woman (Butler, 1988).

The Covid-19 outbreak highlighted the issues experienced by female academics primarily related to the tensions between their academic and mother identities. Mothers experience a "second shift" (p.311), meaning that after the academic mother returns from work, she needs to fulfil another equally demanding job. Bowyer et al. (2022) conducted a study in an Australian university in which they employed qualitative methodologies to deeply understand what it is like to be an academic mother. They used a collaborative, reflective auto-ethnography narrative to encourage various viewpoints on the phenomenon studied and to have a more in-depth understanding of the

experiences of academics who are mothers. The findings show that women struggle to regain their professional identity after the post-maternity career break. For this reason, they try to prove to themselves and others that they are valuable academics, indicating that somehow motherhood is a barrier to being a successful academic. The data in Australia shows that the role of colleagues is pivotal for academic mothers to regain their professional identity in addition to the institutional policy and practices such as flexible working hours. However, the academic mothers still felt that within the social structure in which they operate, they feel that society would view them as mothers first, then professional workers, which may affect the way they construct their identities. The data also illustrates that parenting affects the academic career significantly because of childcare, financial challenges, and access to collaboration. Another interesting finding is that women are expected to be engaged with financial issues but are still associated with traditional feminine practices. The Covid outbreak just exposed the issues related to gender equity in which the data shows that academic mothers took the majority of childcare while still required by their universities to stay active and fulfil their duties.

As a result of these conflicting discourses around being a successful mother and a successful academic, female academics are under pressure. Being a mother while pursuing an academic career contributes to high stress and anxiety levels for female academics when they try to manage their roles as mothers and academics (Bowyer et al., 2022). Even when a mother decides to give importance to her career, this is viewed negatively (Raddon, 2002). Academic guilt is a concept explored in the literature on female academics' lived experiences. It is concerned with the conflict between fulfilling their professional and private roles. The literature on the feeling of guilt experienced by female academics has highlighted how juggling the familial life and academia is the main reason behind this feeling, and it has become a "constant presence" (Kudarauskienė & Žydžiūnaitė, 2018, p. 2).

For this reason, some studies explained that it is almost impossible to be a working mother and not experience that guilt (Giugno, 2015; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2011). For instance, Kudarauskienė and Žydžiūnaitė (2018) conducted a qualitative study in Lithuania in which five male and seven female academics from different scientific disciplines were asked about their daily routine and how they are managing their two lives. The researchers adopted a phenomenological analysis because it allows them to deeply capture their experiences "being in-between the family and work" (p.2). This study revealed that female academics believed their careers bring them satisfaction and recognition. However, they pointed out the challenges they experience when managing their two worlds: domestic responsibilities and academic careers. The feeling of guilt was found in these participants' stories, especially mothers, who experience high-stress levels when managing their teaching, formal leadership roles, research and domestic responsibilities. For instance, one of the mothers experienced it every time she needed to choose between cooking a meal instead of working on her academic work

or vice versa. The researchers found that having children can also motivate academic productivity because it may ensure a better future for their children after receiving the work rewards. To conclude, the phenomenological approach provided deep insight into the female academics' lived experiences to explore their daily routines. It showed that although gender equality increased in the work environment, female academics are still torn between their domestic and work responsibilities contributing to their feeling of guilt (Kudarauskienė & Žydžiūnaitė, 2018). This is also mentioned in the study by Barnard (2019) that female academics experience guilt for not complying with the different opportunities presented to them. However, this study did not use the identity concept to explain how these female academics feel in-between family and work.

Similar findings were reported in the Omani context in which Al-Lamky (2007) conducted ten in-depth interviews with ten Omani women working in senior positions in different fields such as social development, academia and foreign affairs. They all reported the feeling of guilt they carry because of not fulfilling their duties as mothers and wives as they should. This research could have been more helpful to the current study if it only focused on female academics to understand their lived experiences in academia in the MENA region.

As mentioned in section 3.2.2, context plays an important role in regulating and shaping people's identities. Thus, the following section explores the sociocultural factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities.

3.4.2 Sociocultural factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities

To date, several studies have investigated the sociocultural factors influencing career choices and trajectories, especially in the MENA region (Abalkhail, 2017; Al-Wahaibi, 2017). As explored in sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, fulfilling domestic roles such as being a mother and a wife is still expected of women. As a result, women often construct their identities in conformity with these social norms (Zhao & Jones, 2017). For this reason, this section explores the impact of gender on women's careers in general while focusing on the trajectories and identities of female academics in higher education in the MENA region, African and Algerian contexts.

3.4.3.1 Impact of gender on women's careers choices and trajectories in HE

Previous research has established that gender impacts the choices women and men make in careers in a process called occupational gender segregation. The latter can have horizontal or vertical dimensions (Gedikli, 2020), and research around occupational gender segregation helps address gender inequality. Worldwide statistics show that men are more likely to pursue higher-paying careers in more profitable sectors, while women are more likely to pursue careers with lower salaries in less

profitable sectors (Mroczek-Dąbrowska & Gaweł, 2020). For instance, education and being a teacher are usually considered suitable careers for women, and teaching can be described nowadays as a feminised profession (Schmude & Jackisch, 2019). This phenomenon is usually referred to in the literature as the feminisation of education (Kundu & Basu, 2022). Various research in different contexts has confirmed that pursuing a career in education is desirable for women, even in the MENA region. For instance, a qualitative study conducted by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) interviewed 32 women managers to understand how gender, work, and family impact their career progression in Lebanon. One of the major findings of this study is that women's career choices are still influenced by the stereotypes surrounding what careers are more suitable for women. They found that a career in education or social services is highly perceived by society as a career for women compared to a career in construction or engineering (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). This study helps understand how gender impact women's career in general, but it would have been more relevant to this study if it only focused on women in higher education.

Educational institutions, including universities, usually reflect their context (Shah, 2018). Taking higher education as an example, there are more male academics in "prestigious" departments such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) departments and more female academics in "less prestigious" departments such as nursing, social works, and education (Sassler et al., 2017). For instance, in the UK, male academics comprise 77.8% of the total percentage of academics working in IT-related subjects, whereas women comprise 66.9% of the academics working in education (ECU, 2018). It may be difficult to conclude whether this is the case in Algeria due to limited published data on the gender composition of disciplines in the HE sector (Ait-Zai et al., 2014). However, research conducted by Ouadah-Bedidi (2018) in which she observed that despite some modernisation in Algeria and the spread of girls and women's access to universities and dominating some fields such as medicine and social sciences, "applied sciences, technology and veterinary remain male-oriented" (p.91). Moreover, as indicated in the introductory part of section 3.4, women are underrepresented worldwide in academic leadership and professorial roles (Al-Wahaibi, 2017). This could be linked to sociocultural discourses originating from patriarchy and the colonial heritage of women in MENA region and African countries that influence women's experiences and identities in higher education (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Tran, 2022). The following section explores how patriarchy and colonisation impact women's experiences and identities.

3.4.2.2 Impact of patriarchy and colonisation on women's experiences and identities

As Algeria is an African country with a majority Muslim population, the empirical studies reviewed in this section explore patriarchy originating from the interpretation of Islam and the impact of colonisation on the colonised women's experiences and position in the societies. However, there is an

acknowledgement that patriarchy is a universal problem that transcends borders (Alnabilsy et al., 2022) and that Muslim women are not a homogeneous group, as the political situation of every country influences the situation of women differently (Esposito, 2011), as mentioned in section 2.2.2.

Studies on women's underrepresentation in Muslim societies suggest that women struggle to get involved in the workplace because of their sociocultural expectations and discourses about women, leadership and academia (Abalkhail, 2017; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Shah, 2018). in Muslim societies, gender roles are constructed and mixed with cultural and religious discourses making men responsible for women. The situation is more complex because there is a fuzzy boundary between religion and culture, and some cultural practices are viewed as obligations according to Islamic teachings. In this respect, Shah (2016) stated that the foundation of Islamic philosophy, including the Quranic texts, may promote gender equality. However, the interpretations and discourses produced within the context of each Muslim society can often be gender discriminatory. According to Hamdan (2005), culture, not the Islamic religion per se, reinforced this view in a similar vein. This powerful religious discourse shapes how people think about female leadership because it represents knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1972). Consequently, there needs to be a change in the dominant discourses, opening a more moderate and modern discourse to emerge. Because the famous interpretations of the Quran were made by men in the past, as mentioned in section (3.3.3), women were excluded from the religious leadership roles, making the interpretations patriarchal (Shah, 2016; Wadud, 1999).

Abalkhail (2017) study also contributes to understanding the reasons behind the underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership positions in Saudi Arabia. The researcher interviewed 22 female managers who were purposively sampled from two public universities. Female managers still believed that men were privileged to access senior leadership positions, and they thought it could be linked to cultural reasons and power from religious views. The discourses around women, careers, and leadership are shaped by Islam's patriarchal interpretation that shapes the relationship between men and women. One example found in this research is the idea of *qiwama* mentioned in the Quran to regulate the private relationship between men and women (husband and wife), which states that the one who is spending more will be responsible for the other. However, some interpret it as men being superior to women, and they apply it even with their female colleagues. Moreover, because men are viewed as the breadwinners (responsible) for their families, the selection and promotion process would favour men, aligning with the findings in the western context (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Various studies have supported these findings in the Muslim context (Al-Lamky, 2007; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Laaboudi, 2021; Shah, 2018). This study is important as it focuses on the barriers female academics face to having access to leadership positions. However, it would have been more relevant to the scope of this study if it also investigated the discourses influencing Saudi women’s identity construction.

Jdaouli (2018) conducted a quantitative study in Algeria in which surveys were administered to 320 people. They were asked several questions about their views on female leaders in an educational setting. The results show that the Algerian people accept women as leaders in educational settings. In fact, age also plays a significant role in whether they accept it or not; the older the female leader is, the more accepting people are. However, surveys can be limiting in transmitting the actual views of the population. That is why, there is a need for qualitative studies to explore the perceptions and views of female leaders in an educational setting.

Another common theme around the sociocultural factors influencing women's experiences is that the discourses about motherhood are strong in the Muslim context, as indicated in section (3.4.1.2). For this reason, several studies have shown that marriage and having children is the most crucial factor that causes the low participation of women in the workforce in general and in higher education in particular (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Shah, 2016). In this respect, Shah (2018) conducted research in Malaysia positioned within the interpretive paradigm using a feminist lens to analyse the in-depth interviews of nine Muslim women academics. She found that although the doors were opened for female academics to progress in their careers, the unwritten rules of being a good Muslim woman prevented them from even wanting a promotion which served as a barrier to the advancement in their careers. The desire of Muslim female academics to be viewed as good Muslims is fuelled by the seductive power of religious discourses and the fear of challenging the discourse. According to Shah, the women she interviewed were all dressed in Malay and wearing a headscarf; they mentioned that they started wearing it because of the affirmative action policies that asserted that all Malay people are Muslims (Shah, 2018). This could explain why these women view motherhood as the highest position for them, and their male relatives are their guardians because of the influence of religious discourses on shaping their identities. Similar findings were reported in Ethiopia (a third of its population are Muslims), in which one of the female academics reported that male academics are always addressed with their academic titles such as doctor and professor. However, more non-professional nouns such as '*enatu*', which means mother in their local language, are used to address female academics (Semela et al., 2020).

According to Shah, many *hadiths (prophetic sayings)* spread among people and have shaped the discourses around women, careers, and identities. To support this claim, they often quote some prophetic sayings that advised women to obey their husbands, such as:

> *"-Had it been permissible that a person prostrates before another, I would have ordered that a wife prostrate herself before her husband. -Allah will not accept the prayers of a woman whose husband is angry with her. - Whoever leaves her husband's house without his permission, the angels curse her until she returns or repents."*

Shah's study is helpful as it examines how the religious discourses within a particular context shape the understanding of religion and influence women's actions and identity construction. Similar to the findings of the study of Al-Wahaibi (2017), explored in section 3.4.1.1, women in Oman and women in Malaysia are both Muslims, but the recognition and influence of the religious discourses are different as Shah found that it was all related to religion and what God wants from them as Malaysian women. In Oman, the participants perceive it as more related to culture and tradition. Al-Wahaibi also concludes that the key challenge for Omani women is finding the balance between work and family, contributing to their lack of desire to pursue senior leadership positions. There are studies in the Western context, especially after the Covid 19 outbreak, that confirmed the findings of Al-Wahaibi in terms of female academics who are mothers are more affected by the lockdown as they are still the primary child carer (Crook, 2020). This study helps contribute to the gap related to the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in the MENA higher education region. However, it would have been more relevant to the current study if Al-Wahaibi also focused on how the dominant discourses influence the participants' identities.

Interesting qualitative research was conducted to explore the experiences of female academics in African countries. More relevant to this research, Adusah-Karikari and Nakku adopted a feminist postcolonial theory as they argue that African women were discriminated against by the colonial powers who favoured the education of indigenous boys than girls, and also from the patriarchal local culture that put more obstacles on women (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Nakku, 2021). For instance, in Ghana, Adusah-Karikari (2008) used a qualitative inquiry by employing three kinds of data collection: open-ended interviews, observation, and written documents. She interviewed 14 female faculty members and six administrators and did participant observation as their primary data source while using government document analysis as a secondary data source. Qualitative inquiry allowed the researcher to hear women's voices working in HE, giving a deeper insight into their lived experiences. She found that the situation of women in academia reflected the larger society's expectations for women. These women were expected to keep up with their traditional roles of taking care of the family and doing domestic chores, especially when they became mothers. According to this study, mothers working in academia are torn between two demanding roles, explaining the lack of women in senior leadership positions and professorial roles, as women often choose their families over their careers. She stated that despite the increase in the number of women in leadership positions in educational institutions, balancing their work-life balance as mothers and their career progression is challenging. In contrast, male colleagues can progress quickly without choosing between family and career. In this regard, Adusah-Karikari (2008) concludes that: "the patriarchal culture of the universities serves to undermine women's authority and frames their identity in subordinated

paradigms" (p.5). The feminist postcolonial theory was used in Adusah-Karikari's (2008) study to explain and make sense of women's experiences, especially under double colonisation, both imperial and patriarchal ideologies (Ashcroft et al., 1989), and it is essential as it highlights the struggles of women working in HE to redesign policies that would help the progression of all women to higher education. However, Adusah-Karikari's study would have been more relevant to the present study if it only focused on female academics' experiences rather than female administrators. However, it is helpful as it gives an idea about what it is like to be a woman working in Higher education in Ghana while highlighting the barriers and opportunities that women face.

In a similar vein, Nakku (2021) used an ethnographic case study approach to explore the lived experiences of 20 women faculty administrators in Ugandan Higher education and examined how the culture of higher education influenced their leadership. The study is also informed by postcolonial feminist theory and added gender and leadership theories (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Northouse, 2019). She found that the participants faced gender discrimination, especially during their childhood education, resulting from the inherited colonial system that ignored women's education, similar to Adusah-Karikari (2008) findings. Therefore, women continue to face barriers to career progression and access to senior leadership positions in higher education. However, as Morley (2005), most research about women's experiences in academia in the developing countries was from commonwealth countries, as both Uganda and Ghana were colonised by the British, whereas Algeria was colonised by the French, as explored in section 2.2.3.

Another study used the feminist postcolonial lens to analyse the experiences of female academics in Vietnam; Tran (2022) adopted the critical paradigm and narrative approach using the feminist liberal and postcolonial lenses to analyse her data. Although the Vietnamese context is not part of the MENA region or the African continent, it is relevant to the current study because of the shared history concerning French colonisation. Although it is important to note that Tran's study considered all the waves of colonisation and their impact on the local culture, the current study only explored the last colonisers' influence on the local people. Tran conducted 28 in-depth interviews with Vietnamese academic women working in several fields, including pedagogy and natural sciences. One of her significant results about the impact of colonisation on the performance of gender is that most women she interviewed emphasised their role as good wives and mothers informed by Confucian teachings about the role of women. She also found that women in academia transfer this performance to their workplace as they were less ambitious to progress in their careers. Tran's study was helpful to the current one in explaining how feminist postcolonial theory can help explain the experiences of female academics in Algeria; however, one of the recommendations of her research is to explore the phenomenon using the multiple identities of individuals.

Tran (2022) noticed that colonisation's influence was observed not only in terms of the sociocultural discourses about women's position but also in organisational practices. For this reason, the following section will explore the organisational factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities.

3.4.3 Organisational factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities

Data from several studies suggest that organisational culture has an essential impact on shaping the behaviour and identities in any organisation. Hofstede (2010) argues that the organisational culture "consisting of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p.6). So, one way of explaining the reasons why women are struggling to progress can be that these unwritten rules of the social game are suitable for men, which will make it difficult for women to excel, and the literature shows how organisational culture disadvantages women in terms of their career advancement (Al-Shanfari, 2005; Morrison, 2012). A significant influence on this thesis is the work of Edgar Schein (2004, 2010) on the relationship between culture and leadership and how each society's cultural norms greatly influence leadership practices in organisations. Schein (2004) believes that the organisational culture is affected by invisible assumptions and values, which have a tremendous impact on how the culture of any organisation is constructed. This is referred to in the literature as an "iceberg" model. For instance, patriarchy has been a tradition for many years ago. Although men and women are contributing to society nowadays, there are still some expectations from the workers that have some patriarchal values and assumptions and this lead to what is called masculine organisational culture in the literature. This could have implications in this study as it can contribute in understanding how the organisational culture influences the identities of female academics.

Another little inspiration for this thesis is the work of Gareth Morgan's Images of Organization (2006), in which he uses eight methaphors to understand and solve organisation's problems. These eight metaphors are "machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, and Instruments of domination" (Digha, 2014, p.201). This theory is important as it can help individuals visualise and explore the lived experiences of female academics in Algeria.

Over the last few decades, extensive research in Western countries shows that organisations have always been male-dominated, although education is feminised, including higher education, as mentioned in section 3.4.2. This section focuses on the impact of the organisational culture in higher education on female academics' advancement, emphasising the influences of patriarchy and colonialism on higher education management (section 3.4.3.1). Then, section 3.4.3.2 explores the

specific policies made to support female academics' advancement, such as maternity leave, mentoring programmes and the importance of staff support and female role models.

3.4.3.1 Influences of patriarchy and postcolonial heritage on organisational culture

Research shows that organisational culture is gendered (Longman et al., 2018; Wilson, 1998). According to Schein (2010), historical events, religion, and group decisions significantly impact the construction of a particular organizational identity. For this reason, it is crucial to investigate the organisational culture of every context as it is unique depending on where and who is in charge. According to a study conducted on women leaders at CCCU (Longman et al., 2018), the authors used a constructivist grounded theory approach and interviewed 16 women identified as emerging leaders. One of this study's main findings is that the old boys' club male networks create barriers for women who have no access to these clubs. In the literature, this is usually referred to as homosociality, the desire to create social bonds with people of the same sex (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014). Longman et al. (2018) concluded that the organisational culture shapes women's leadership experiences. One of the limitations reported in the article is that most of the women interviewed were self-identified as Caucasian, which may miss the other challenges faced by other minorities.

Similarly, Chouari et al.'s study, mentioned in section 3.4.1.2, found that the current male networks rarely select a female leader, which can be disappointing, especially after Tunisia's political environment after the Arab Spring. The researchers believe that the culture is still male-domination in high academic ranks and senior leadership positions, internalised by both genders, similar to the findings found in the Arab, Muslim and African contexts (Chouari et al., 2021; Nakku, 2021; Shah, 2018). Also, surprisingly, they found that females were very critical of having a female leader, which adds to the barriers around female leadership. Chouari et al. (2021) study is a helpful start for future studies to be conducted in Tunisia that can be more focused on understanding the lived experiences of these female academics and how they construct their identities which, at the same time, can build upon this study.

Taken together, these studies are informative in understanding that the gendered organisational culture is a global phenomenon and how they influence women's leadership experiences. However, these studies did not tackle how homosociality can influence women's research productivity, which might impact their careers and identities. In this regard, in an article written by Keller et al. (2021), they analysed the peer-reviewed articles published in business in two decades. One of their main findings was that there is a gender gap, especially in the most prestigious journals. They proposed several possible causes for this gap, including the influence of the lack of networking for women on their research productivity. Unfortunately, to the researcher's knowledge, no reviewed studies

explored the research performance of female scholars in the MENA region. However, a common problem reported is that women do not have access to formal and informal events that could potentially create an opportunity for future collaborations because of sociocultural barriers (Allam et al., 2021) that could be the consequence of patriarchy.

When exploring how colonial heritage impacted the organisational culture of universities in Africa, Amondi (2011) conducted a study to investigate the factors leading to the underrepresentation of women in top educational management and leadership positions in Kenya using cultural feminism theory. Data was collected in the ministry of higher education using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the findings of this study show how social, organisational and individual factors hinder women's progression. Concerning the organisational factors, this study established those masculine ideals had shaped the organisational culture and the negative impact on girls' education because of colonialism. Nevertheless, this study might have been relevant to this research if the author had just focused on female officers working in the ministry to delve into what it is like to be a woman in Kenya to understand their lived experiences. Likewise, Odhiambo (2011) conducted a critical review analysis of the gendered nature of leadership in Kenya. He confirmed Amondi's (2011) findings that subtle discrimination against women contributes to being underrepresented in senior leadership positions and career progression. He also added that several studies have discussed that universities trained males to replace the male colonial civil servants in the post-colonial period of the newly independent countries as the colonial model was adopted, just as what happened in Algeria discussed in section 2.3.1. Odhiambo proposed not to use the western feminist models as they do not represent other people's realities and suggested using African feminist approaches to understand the issue in relation to the context. He believes there is a real need to develop policies and strategies to enhance the position of female academics and conduct qualitative studies rather than relying on quantitative research funded by international organisations.

Odhiambo's view is supported by Tran's (2022) study, which adopted liberal and postcolonial lenses. She also observed that the multiple waves of colonisation in Vietnam had left their traces on the organisational culture of academia. For instance, research is the most important criterion for academic career progression, similar to western academia, including the French one, which disadvantages women, as explained in section 3.4.1. Moreover, she noticed the French legacy in the salary scale that provides academics with a fixed monthly amount. These studies show that both patriarchy and colonial heritage impact the organisational culture and the position of women in higher education (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Nakku, 2021). The following section explores the impact of family-friendly policies, staff support and the importance of female role models.

3.4.3.2 Impact of family-friendly policies, staff relations and female role models

In the African context, the representation of women in education has gained attention since the early 1990s in international and national policies (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). As a result, many African countries implemented policies to increase females enrolling in tertiary education, such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Algeria ("Algeria's Constitution ", 2021; Kasozi, 2016). An example of these policies was allowing women who met the minimum requirement to enter the universities and increasing girls' bursaries (Onsongo, 2009). Despite the increase in female participation in higher education, there is still an underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions and professorial roles in African universities (Amondi, 2011), including Algeria, as mentioned in section 2.3.2.

Several themes have been explored in the literature on the different policies adopted to support women's career advancement in higher education. For example, many studies have attributed the underrepresentation of women to the lack of mentoring programs, female role models and family-friendly policies (Ait-Zai et al., 2014; Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Maheshwari, 2021; Nakku, 2021). An article by Karam and Afiouni (2014) explored the current status of academic women in the MENA region, and one of this study's goals is to identify the current policies used to create a family-friendly environment for women in higher education. They selected 20 region-wide reports and 63 peer-reviewed academic articles through a critical review of the literature. They compared the status of female academics in seventeen countries in the MENA region, including Algeria. First, they explained a need to develop policies that reflect the local culture, not just adopt western policies, similar to what Odhiambo (2011) suggested in section 3.4.3.1. Furthermore, they identified the common challenges on the organisational level like "duration of maternity leave, childcare support and mentoring programs." (p.527). This article is helpful as it provides a list of recommendations for future research to explore the lived experience of female academics in the MENA region to develop systems that could support women's career progression.

Another common theme related to the organisational factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities is having female role models/mentors in academic leadership and professorial roles that can inspire younger female academics to progress in their careers. The literature has established that role models are one of the promising strategies to reach gender equity (Torres-Ramos et al., 2021). However, as explained in section 3.4.3.1, the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles makes women feel that they are inadequate in terms of progress in their careers (Probert, 2005). In the study of Al-Jahani (2021), mentioned in section 3.4.1.1, female leaders in Saudi Arabia are still struggling with absent role models despite removing many barriers to empowerment. However, no reviewed literature has explored the lack of

female role models on the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles. For this reason, there is a need for more emphasis on inspiring female academics to be part of societal change in their societies. Then, due to the lack of female leadership, fewer women are involved in decision-making, which may favour men in getting more support in their research, travel to conferences, and women may struggle even more because of their dual burden (Allam et al., 2021).

Section 3.4.4 sheds light on the personal factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities.

3.4.4 Personal factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities

There has not been extensive research to tackle the experiences and cultural barriers or opportunities to women's participation in the labour force in North Africa compared to the Middle East or how they construct their identities. When studying human experiences, personal reasons might be unique to every participant. However, similarities (or differences) can be found between people who share the same experience in the same context, and it might help identify the struggles faced by that group. Familial factors play an important role in the lives of female academics around the world. These factors can be considered barriers or helping women progress in their academic and professional lives. In the Human Development report (2015), it is stated that women have limited choices when it comes to giving priority to unpaid work and staying out of the labour force; this will make them perhaps miss considerable opportunities to expand their capabilities in the workplace. In higher education, academics are required to fulfil many duties to progress in their careers, including teaching, publishing and holding formal leadership roles. For women, especially mothers, the social responsibilities that state that they are the main caregivers put them under tremendous pressure between their academic careers and familial responsibilities (Huppatz et al., 2018; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). The following section explores the effects of family and work-life balance on female academics' experiences and identities and how personal factors, in general, can impact their status in academia.

3.4.4.1 Influence of the family

Several studies conducted in the MENA region reported the theme of the influence of the family (Al-Lamky, 2007; Al-Wahaibi, 2017, 2020). For Instance, in Al-Wahaibi's (2020) article, inspired by her PhD study, explored in section 3.4.2.2, familial support is reported to be the main enabler for their career advancement, especially in Arab societies in which women's roles are usually related to being a good wife and mother. The participants in Al-Wahaibi's study explained that their careers would have been affected negatively without the support of their families, which helped them overcome the different challenges. They added that they would not have become leaders in their universities without their

families, particularly spouses, especially in providing practical help, including looking after children and supporting their career advancement by supporting their mobility in a patriarchal society. Although this study is quite important to understanding the familial role in the career advancement of female academics, it would have been more helpful if the sample included female academics who did not hold senior leadership roles. Furthermore, as indicated in section 3.4.3.1, more studies are needed to understand the influence of family on female academics' research output and performance, as research is an essential part of academic career progression.

Research could be challenging as it demands much time, especially in societies where women are required to fulfil all domestic duties. For instance, in a study conducted in the Turkish context, Parlak et al. (2021) interviewed 21 female academics working at home because of the Covid 19 pandemic. The researchers used an interpretive phenomenological research approach. Two of the main subthemes they found were the prioritising of the husband's work and the unsupportive attitude of their spouses towards their academic work, even in the case of the husband himself being an academic. As a result, female academics could only fulfil their teaching duties while they had to postpone their research and publications. One limitation of this study is that the sample is small and from one region of the country. However, from Al-Wahaibi (2020) and Parlak et al. (2021), the role of the spouse is highlighted, especially in patriarchal societies where gendered roles are internalised. Although few studies focus on the familial role of female academics' experiences and identities in the Algerian context, the following section explores the work-life balance theme in the Algerian society.

3.4.4.2 Work-life Balance

So far, a number of studies have shown that, even when women are working, most still believe that their primary job is at home, being the main carer for their children (Sadek, 2014). For instance, Greene and Richmond (2016) compared the experiences of female academics in scientific fields in North Africa and the United States; 14 interviews with North African women (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) and eight American academics were conducted. They found that female scientists in the US and North Africa experience "gender" differently. North African academics expressed the lack of support at home, where they have to take nearly total responsibility for taking care of home and children. They documented that women are often slower to get promoted than men because of the dual burden of household and work, and they reported that working at home is "the work of woman, not of the man" (p.252). At the same time, American academics expressed the lack of gender equity in the workplace and how they need to "push" themselves in, whereas at home, they have an equal partnership with their husbands, helping them reach professional success. The American academics were concerned about North African academics' huge responsibility as they argued that having an equal partnership with their husbands was crucial in their professional development. This research

offers excellent insight into potential differences between the Western context represented by the USA and the North African context and potential similarities and differences between these two different contexts. However, it would have been more helpful if the interviews had been conducted in the mother tongue of the academics as maybe they could not express themselves freely in their third or fourth language, which was observed by the two researchers who noticed that the North African academics' quotes were less expressive. Moreover, more localised studies in each North African country are needed to provide a more in-depth view of the experiences of each group of women rather than comparing with other women from a western context.

In Algeria, Ghyath (2014) explored 11 female leaders' experiences, mainly in the political sector and how they balance their work and family obligations. He distributed qualitative surveys to understand their experiences. He found that although these participants had great support from their families, they were politicians. However, although Algerian women now have reached many powerful positions as judges, business owners, and even in the military, they are still responsible for doing most household work. Women do not opt for challenging positions as leaders because it will demand much effort from them. The findings of this study are similar to Greene and Richmond (2016), that the expectations for women to be the primary caregiver are still predominant in Algerian society. However, this study lacks a theoretical framework and discussion to explain how these women experience gender, which can be considered a gap the study attempts to fill using the identity and gender theories through a feminist postcolonial lens.

3.4.5 Strategies deployed by female academics to navigate their career/life experiences

As explained in section 3.2.2, this thesis acknowledges the influence of the powerful discourses on female academics' career/lived experiences and identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002); however, this study also views that individuals have some agency through strategies that can help them navigate their career/life experiences (Cunliffe, 2009). For this reason, in this section, empirical studies are reviewed to explore the different coping strategies women use to manage their multiple roles and identities, especially in higher education and identify the current gaps in the literature. Strategies used in both public (workplace, universities) and private (domestic) spheres are highlighted in this section.

3.4.5.1 Navigating the tensions between the private (domestic) and public (academia) spheres

As indicated in section 2.3, obtaining a PhD and getting a job in academia can take a considerable time (at least 8 years in the LMD system to finish the PhD thesis). For this reason, several studies have emphasised that female academics deploy different coping strategies to overcome sociocultural, organisational and personal challenges and pursue a career in general and in academia in particular. For instance, resilience, adaptability, and optimism with vision were important strategies that women

discussed when recalling their career journeys taken from multiple contexts, especially in the MENA region and African contexts (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Dukhaykh & Bilimoria, 2021). Particularly, Adusah-Karikari (2008) study found that some attributes and strategies were shared among women who have succeeded in higher education. As a result of the patriarchal culture in Ghanaian society, women need to be resilient and determined to succeed by focusing on their research to progress in their careers. Moreover, the participants emphasised the importance of planning in navigating their lived/career experiences. They explained that they take most of the responsibilities at home, so they need to plan their day very well to fulfil their duties. For example, one of the participants talked about how she planned her pregnancy after finishing some important projects in her career. Another important strategy is being flexible because the borders between work and family can sometimes be blurry, so being flexible can allow female academics to change their working time according to their circumstances and domestic work responsibilities. Finally, negotiating with others is fundamental as it allows woman to juggle their multiple roles and find creative ways to survive as academic mothers. This study is essential to explore the strategies used by women working in Ghanaian higher education; however, it would have been more relevant to this study if it had explored the relationship between the strategies used and how they construct their identity.

In a similar vein, an interesting study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, in which Dukhaykh and Bilimoria (2021) interviewed 30 Saudi women professionals. Their sample did not only include women working in higher education. Nevertheless, some important findings emerged mainly to understand the strategies used by these women to overcome the different barriers. They explored the strategies used by women in traditional and non-traditional work careers. It is important to note that the participants in this study considered academia one of the most suitable careers for women compared to, for instance, engineering (p, 735). However, both groups of women emphasised the importance of optimism to have a future vision to keep going despite the challenges. This study is fundamental to exploring the impact of social pressure on women's career aspirations and ambitions. However, further studies are needed to understand the organisational factors contributing to women's career choices.

In a study conducted in higher education, Devineau et al. (2018) interviewed 28 French female academics with full-time university positions. Most of the interviewees explained that they lack time to focus on their research because of their heavy teaching loads and familial responsibilities. As a result, female academics developed an obsession with time and planning every stage of their days to manage their domestic and professional roles. Similar to Adusah-Karikari's (2008) findings, planning is an important strategy because of the heavy academic career demands, on the one hand, and motherhood, on the other. This study also found that these female academics learned to multitask to

manage unexcepted events. Devineau et al. (2018) focus on understanding the organisational and personal factors influencing female academics' careers and the strategies they deploy to manage their academic and domestic responsibilities. However, sociocultural factors also influence women's career trajectories, as explained previously in section 3.4.2. As indicated in section 3.4.1, female academics are required to fulfil multiple roles, so the following section will explore how female academics are navigating their academic career responsibilities.

3.4.5.2 Navigating the academic career responsibilities

As elaborated in the introduction of this section (3.4.5), female academics are underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles. Particularly, conducting research can be challenging because of the multiple roles and responsibilities women need to fulfil, and there is a challenge in building the necessary network to keep progressing, especially within patriarchal cultures. One of the strategies female academics adopt to stay productive in their research is working and co-publishing with their students. In addition, they chose the family holiday places according to where they needed to conduct their research (Sadek, 2014). Similarly, in France, female academics sometimes request research away time to focus on their publishing (Devineau et al., 2018).

In the study of Nakku (2021) in Uganda, female academics occupying a formal leadership role emphasised the importance of teamwork and collaboration with other staff members. The participants in this study seem to have adopted a collaborative way of leading by raising their students' and colleagues' confidence and listening to their concerns rather than being authoritarians. Their concept of leadership is based on the motto: "listening, facilitating, developing and encouraging." (p.153) and emphasises the necessity to act as a role model for other women in their faculties. This study's interesting finding is that those female lecturers are often perceived as mothers with nurturing traits congruent with the image of a good woman. For this reason, female academics struggle to occupy formal leadership roles because they need to fit the typical image of a woman; that is why they emphasise the need to be sensitive to others' needs and give time to listen to their concerns.

Likewise, Al Naqbi (2016) conducted a study where she deployed a qualitative approach to explore the factors influencing women's leadership development in three public higher education in the UAE (United Arab Emirates). One of the participants explained that one of the most important strategies when leading and dealing with people is listening, valuing their opinions and allowing them to be heard. Moreover, reading and developing their leadership skills allowed them to deal with new situations as part of their continuous personal development. This study is important to understanding the leadership development of women leaders in higher education. Consistent with Al Naqbi's findings, Al-Wahaibi (2020) found that most of her participants believed that the female leader in

higher education needs to have a set of skills, such as the ability to communicate and collaborate with and willingness to serve others, congruent with the image of a nurturing mother.

Considering sections 3.4.5.1 and 3.4.5.2 together, there is a gap in exploring the strategies deployed by Algerian female academics, as most studies reviewed focus on the strategies the Algerian government used to empower women or the factors influencing them (Sadek, 2014). Moreover, most studies reviewed did not explore why women deploy these strategies. For instance, why all women holding a formal leadership role talked about the importance of listening and helping their students, and how the fact that they are perceived as mothers influences their leadership practices. The following section will elaborate more on how this study attempts to fill the literature gaps and contributes to the field of female academics' lived/career experiences.

3.5 Limitations of Previous Studies and Identification of the Gaps

The studies related to the underrepresentation of female academics require a deeper insight into their lived experiences in each particular context. For this reason, the conceptual framework of this thesis revolves around gender, identity and female academics' lived and career experiences in Higher education. Moreover, the study's main theoretical framework is female academics' identity construction, which is viewed as an ongoing process in this thesis, and identity construction is explained through identity work and regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Moreover, gender is viewed as a social construct, while taking butler's theory (1988) of performativity to explain how the discourses around gender influence how women construct their gendered identities. Finally, the postcolonial feminist theory is used to explain how women in Algeria and female academics are under double colonisation, which see that patriarchy in the local culture and colonialism, or colonial heritage influence the position of women in the private and public spaces, as explained thoroughly in section 3.3.3.2. This view of the world allows exploring women's experiences, whose views and experiences may vary from women in Western contexts (Jamjoom, 2020), reflecting the researcher's personal beliefs and understanding of the world and women's experiences (Osanloo & Grant, 2016).

The examination of the available literature review shows the following shortcomings or gaps:

I- There is a scarcity of research exploring the experiences of female academics at Algerian universities using a qualitative approach and the critical paradigm. Moreover, most of the qualitative studies reviewed in the MENA region explored the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female academics in leadership positions (Al-Wahaibi, 2017). This study will also look at the barriers to research because this study explores the lived/career experiences of female academics.

II- There is a gap in using the identity lens when using the feminist postcolonial theory to explore the experiences of female academics in the African context (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Nakku, 2021), as the reviewed studies did not explore this phenomenon through how the factors are influencing the identity construction of female academics. For this reason, the conceptual and theoretical framework is unique in using identity, gender and female academic lived/career experiences.

After reviewing the available literature and identifying this research's theoretical and conceptual framework, the following chapter states the questions that this research attempts to answer in order to contribute to closing perceived gaps in the literature.

3.6 Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter, the main concepts guiding this research were identified as identity, gender and women's careers and experiences in higher education, and the main theories defining each concept were elaborated. Other empirical studies were reviewed to identify their contributions and limitations to address this study's questions. The following chapter will explain the methodology selected to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study explores how female academics define and construct their identities in public and private spheres and the sociocultural, organisational, and personal factors shaping their identity construction. Moreover, it attempts to understand the strategies deployed by female academics to manage their multiple roles and identities within their context. As mentioned in section 3.5, this study is important because there is a scarcity in the literature exploring the identity construction of female academics in the Algerian context. In this respect, this study aims at answering the following main research question:

How do female academics' lived/career experiences shape the way they define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres?

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study by outlining this research's ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Section 4.2). Also, it explains the rationale behind the choice of the methodology and the primary method used to answer the research questions (Section 4.3). Section 4.4 explains the rationale of the sampling strategies and the context in which they are selected. Then, the data collection process for the pilot and main study is summarised by describing the steps taken (section 4.5). Section 4.6 explains the stages of data analysis, including transcription, translation, data analysis method, and some examples of data analysis from the current study. Then, the issues related to ensuring research trustworthiness and reflexivity are addressed (section 4.7), and ethical considerations (section 4.8). Finally, a conclusion is provided to summarise and link it to the findings chapter (Section 4.10).

4.2 Research Paradigm

The word "paradigm" is defined by Kuhn (1962) as a "set of common beliefs and agreements" shared by researchers regarding "how problems should be understood and addressed" (p.23). Paradigms help researchers understand and interpret knowledge using certain philosophical assumptions, affecting the investigation approach and their interpretation of data (Bryman, 2012). Accordingly, every researcher should be aware of the philosophical assumptions that guide their way of perceiving the world (a worldview), which align with the study's purpose to avoid the negative impact of holding unexamined beliefs on the value of research (Mertens, 2010). This section explains the rationale for choosing the critical paradigm by illustrating the current study's ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions.

A critical paradigm is chosen because the main research aim is to identify factors contributing to the low proportion of women in academic leadership and professorial roles at Algerian Universities by

exploring the experiences of female academics in this context. It also aims to unravel the power relationships within the social structures (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Critical researchers believe that reality is socially constructed, as do interpretive researchers. However, instead of just accepting the multiple realities experienced by the participants, critical researchers try to analyse the world using the theoretical lens guiding their studies to critique the status quo (Fay, 2014; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). According to Creswell (2014), the critical paradigm's primary concern is to empower people to overcome the challenges imposed on them for various reasons such as their race, gender, or class. This aligns with the researcher's epistemological, ontological and axiological views, as explored in section 1.2, and this research's objective to understand the impact of female academics lived and career experiences on their careers and identities.

The main theories used to guide this study are identity work and regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), explored in section 3.2, Butler's (1988) theory of performativity and feminist postcolonial theory, elaborated in section 3.3 (Mernissi, 2003; Petersen & Rutherford, 1986). These theories align with the choice of the critical paradigm as it allows an understanding of how people make meaning within the powerful discourses in society (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Bolyard (2016) clarifies this further by explaining that "how people come to make meaning of things depends on their experiences with those things, or the place at which they enter the transaction with their environment" (p. 48). Table 4.1 links the critical paradigm's ontological, epistemological and axiological positions with the specific aims of the current study to clearly explain the rationale of the paradigm selected.

Critical Paradigm	**Perspectives**	**Connection to the Current Study**
Ontology (Historical Realism)	Multiple realities are shaped by society, politics, culture, and mass media; as a result, one reality is often privileged (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ryan, 2018; Scotland, 2012). It emphasises the need to understand the past of the context studied to move forward (Ryan, 2018) with the belief that it is constantly under internal influence (Scotland, 2012).	This study explores the lived experiences of female academics; more specifically, the factors influencing the female academics lived/career experiences. The reality of these women is shaped by being Algerian, Muslim, academics and women, and the power dynamics between these levels.
Critical Epistemology (Modified Subjectivity)	Since there are multiple realities shaped by social, political, cultural, and religious values, knowledge is constructed and influenced by the power relations inside the society. Simply put, Cohen et al. (2002) explain that "what counts as worthwhile knowledge is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge" (p.27).	In Algeria, women were historically excluded from both religious and political leadership (section 2.2). As a result, the political and religious discourses often exclude women from the public domain. Moreover, most people internalise this knowledge in constructing meaning to explain their realities.
Axiology (Knowledge is not Value Free)	Knowledge is culturally derived, historically situated and influenced by political ideology, which means it is not value-free (Scotland, 2012).	As explained in the ontological and epistemological position, the knowledge produced within this study's context is not value-free, which means that the knowledge produced can be male-centred and western-centred.

Table 4. 1 The rationale of the paradigm chosen (Guba, 1990; Jolly, 2016) (Updated)

Nevertheless, according to some theorists, the critical paradigm has several limitations. The most important limitation of the critical paradigm is that it uses multiple theoretical foundations, such as "feminism, Neo-Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism" (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008, p. 27). As a result, there can be confusion and ambiguity between the contested views resulting in not having one theoretical foundation (Tran, 2022). However, this provided critical paradigm with flexibility as it can be applied to various methodologies if it addresses the reasons behind the phenomenon instead of simply interpreting it (Fay, 2014).

The research design is explained further in the following section.

4.3 Research Approach

As elaborated in Chapter 3, similar studies to the current one deployed qualitative methodologies (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Shah, 2018; Tran, 2022; Zhao & Jones, 2017) to transmit the experience of female academics in various parts of the world. However, in the Algerian context, all the works reviewed by the researcher (Ghyath, 2014; Jdaouli, 2018; Sadek, 2014) used quantitative approaches to hear the voices of women in different workplaces since no reviewed study, to the researcher's knowledge, deployed the qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of female academics in Algeria.

This research explores female academics lived/career experiences and the influence of societal discourses around gender and women's careers in higher education on constructing their identities. Doing this makes female academics lived experiences visible so that other academics, policymakers, and even aspiring and future academics will be aware and conscious of the challenges that female academics face. In addition, exploring their lived experiences could provide insight into the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles. These research aims to fit the qualitative approach as it seeks to understand how the contextual factors in Algeria, explored in section 3.3.3, influence female academics' identities at Algerian universities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Qualitative methodologies became very popular when addressing lived experiences, aligning with the researcher's objective. A qualitative approach is more suitable for this research because it allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspective in their natural environment. It is important to highlight that this study adopted an exploratory qualitative methodology, as this could be the first study to explore a neglected sample, female academics at Algerian universities.

A qualitative approach can be challenging for novice researchers as it has no fixed model. Also, since the researcher is the one who is going to analyse data, personal biases could affect the research outcome. An answer to this potential disadvantage when researching social sciences is that researchers or readers should expect that this bias is unavoidable, and what the researcher can do,

according to Robson (2016), is to showcase the data analysis steps (section 4.6), acknowledging the researcher positionality (section 4.7), and explain the steps undertaken by the researcher to address the potential ethical issues (section 4.8). Although the data gathered from the participants cannot be generalised, the common themes that emerged from the interviews may give an idea of the different insights shared by female academics. Furthermore, while adopting the theoretical lens guiding this study, it can interpret the findings to provide an understanding of how female academics in Algeria construct their identities. This may provide some insights into the reasons behind the low percentage of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles. Consequently, it would have implications for informing policy recommendations to create a more gender-equitable environment for female academics and highlight some gender-related issues related to the universities' management.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics are suitable approaches to answer the research questions as the current study focuses on understanding the lived experiences of female academics at Algerian universities. This will be discussed in the following sections (4.3.1) and (4.3.2) in turn.

4.3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a qualitative approach concerned with understanding the "essence" of a phenomenon by trying to understand and explore the perspectives of the individuals who have experienced it (Neubauer et al., 2019). The main objective of the phenomenological approach is to describe and highlight how several individuals perceive a phenomenon compared to the narrative approach, which focuses on a single individual (Creswell, 2013). Standing (2009) adds that:

> "It assumes that we make sense of lived experience according to its personal significance for us, and implies that experiential, practical and instinctive understanding is more meaningful than abstract, theoretical knowledge. " (p.20)

Consequently, the researcher will get a deeper insight into what it is like to be a female academic. Simply put, "phenomenology is the study of an individual's lived experience of the world" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.92), which aligns with the current study objective to explore the lived experiences of female academics working at Algerian universities to understand the reasons behind their underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles.

There are two main phenomenological approaches: transcendental (descriptive) and hermeneutic (interpretive). These two main phenomenological approaches differ in terms of philosophical underpinnings and origins. Transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology originated from the work of Husserl, who viewed that descriptive phenomenology focuses on describing the perceptions and views of those who have had the lived experiences to find the commonly perceived features (universal essences) of the phenomenon. Husserl argues that using phenomenology as a research method

requires the researcher to “suspend his/her own attitudes, beliefs, and suppositions in order to focus on the participants’ experience of the phenomenon and identify the essences of the phenomenon” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.93). This process is referred to as *bracketing*, which means that the researcher should bracket off themselves, including “previous understandings, past knowledge, and assumptions about the phenomenon of interest” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.93). Another important assumption of Husserl's understanding of phenomenology is that the common features shared by those living the same phenomena should be generalised to others who have lived the same experience (Hellman, 2016). The second approach to phenomenology is hermeneutic (interpretive), which is more appropriate for this research as it acknowledges the researcher's influence on the data analysis process and refers to it as a process of co-constitutionality. This will be explored further in the following section (4.3.2).

4.3.2 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology originated from the work of Heidegger, who challenged key concepts in transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology. As indicated in the previous section (4.3.1), a key difference between the two phenomenology approaches is the researcher's role in the research process. While Husserl believes that the researcher should bracket off themselves, Heidegger believes that the researcher’s knowledge, experiences and assumptions of the phenomenon under study are valuable to produce “useful knowledge” (Hellman, 2016, p.74). However, the researcher needs to acknowledge their position and assumptions, mainly through reflexive practices elaborated in section 4.7.

Another key concept of hermeneutic phenomenology is called situated freedom, which is an “existential phenomenological concept that means that individuals are free to make choices, but their freedom is not absolute; it is circumscribed by the specific conditions of their daily lives” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.729). This indicates that understanding the lived experiences of individuals cannot be separated from understanding the context in which they experience the phenomenon. Simply put, “hermeneutic phenomenology studies the meanings of an individual’s being in the world” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.94). This approach is useful to this study as it seeks to understand how female academics' lived and career experiences shape how they define and construct their identities and the different factors influencing their experiences and careers.

4.4 Participants' Selection and Context

There are two types of sampling: nonprobability sampling, commonly used by qualitative researchers and probability sampling, which is more frequently used by quantitative researchers (Cohen et al., 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The most common form of nonprobability is purposeful or purposive

sampling, which this study selected as it allows the researcher to understand and gain data to develop a theory and answer the study's central research questions. In this regard, Creswell (2013) explains that when choosing purposeful sampling, the researcher needs to select individuals and sites that "can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p.156).

The population of this study is Algerian female academics working full-time at Algerian universities. The researcher selected five universities, three of which are in an urban city, whereas the two other universities are in a semi-urban city. All these universities are public from different geographical locations. The most crucial feature that led to the selection of these universities is knowing an academic who can facilitate access because qualitative inquiry can be demanding and requires a high level of trust (Guillemin et al., 2018), especially when investigating issues related to lived experiences. Another important feature was the availability of family, relatives or friends in that city because the researcher is a young woman, and sometimes it can be challenging to travel and stay alone in hotels, especially in semi-urban cities.

The population's division is based on whether the participant had/has experience holding a formal leadership role (administrative or pedagogical) or not and from different universities, disciplines, civil status, the number of children under 18 and age range. In addition, female academics were selected based on their willingness and interest in the study (Cohen et al., 2002). In section 4.5.4, a further description of the participants is provided to show the diversity and variation of the sample selected. Thus, the researcher included female academics who have/had held formal leadership together with those who had not because the central aim of the study was to understand the lived experiences of female academics at Algerian universities regardless of their status. Hence, having diverse experiences and insights could provide more depth to the research findings.

There is no straightforward answer for qualitative researchers regarding how many interviews are enough or when to reach data saturation, as the authors' recommendations differ (Vasileiou et al., 2018). According to Guest et al. (2006), a minimum of 12 interviews could be enough, especially if the sample is somehow homogenous; in the case of this research, it is female academics working full-time at Algerian universities. Saunders et al. (2013) suggest a minimum of five to 25 interviews whereas Braun and Clark (2019) argue that the number of the sample depends on the data obtained from the interviews. The researcher considered all these recommendations and the contextual limitations and decided that 18 interviews would represent a reasonable number within the timeframes available, and this number is well-supported by other theorists.

Eighteen female academics were selected for this research from different disciplines and universities. The selection of the participants was based on the recommendations from both the personal and Algerian Laureate networks (group of Algerian PhD students sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education). While recruiting participants, the researcher got a better response from the potential participants referred by their colleagues/friends/family members than the potential participants who were emailed directly by the researcher using their professional email. For example, the researcher did an online search on the websites of the universities that she was planning to visit. She sent around 30 emails to potential participants holding different formal leadership roles and academic ranks to ensure the diversity of the sample. However, she got only one response. The reply rate was very high if a colleague/friend/ or family member would first speak with the potential participant, and then the researcher would email them. The following section will elaborate more on the data collection journey of the researcher.

4.5 Data Collection

Data collection refers to the process of collecting information from the selected participants to answer the research questions. The data collection process, including the pilot study, started in mid-December and finished by the end of March 2019, approximately five months after receiving ethical approval from Reading University's ethics committee. Section 4.5.1 tackles the pilot study and how it helped the researcher to plan for the main study. Section 4.5.2 explains the pre-interview tasks sent to the participants before conducting the interviews. Then, section 4.5.3 elaborates on the process of conducting interviews and concludes with an overview of the sample in section 4.5.4.

4.5.1 Pilot study

Pilot studies can be considered one of the essential parts of any research project. Stewart (2016) says that the pilot study is used to check on a smaller scale if the data collection strategies can work on a larger scale. Simply put, the pilot study allows the researcher to identify potential problems that may affect the data quality later during the data collection phase and ensure the feasibility of the study. Before starting the main study's data collection, the pilot study was conducted over a month to evaluate and refine the data collection methods. After contacting four academics following the criteria of sampling participants outlined in research ethics procedures (See Appendix B), the researcher piloted the pre-interview task and interview schedule with two female academics. These two participants are Zeyneb, an assistant professor with experience holding a formal leadership position (vice-head of the department), and Soumia, a professor with no experience in holding a formal leadership role at the time of the interview.

The researcher then contacted the two participants using their preferred means of communication and explained the research objectives by sending them the academics' information sheet in their professional emails (See Appendix C). After they both agreed to participate in the study, the pre-interview task was sent to them, including the "Rivers of Life" activity, and we agreed on the interview time. None of the two participants did the "Rivers of Life" activity, and they drew a table highlighting their most important career and lived experiences the researcher used to prepare the interview questions. One of the interviews lasted around one hour, while the other was around 45 minutes. They were both audio-recorded, and the researcher asked for feedback from the participants on whether the phrasing of the questions was precise or not. Both participants gave positive and constructive feedback.

The pilot study positively impacted the researcher's skills, especially as a novice researcher, in recruiting the participants, explaining the study more straightforwardly, and, most importantly, testing which questions could be improved or rephrased for better responses. For instance, the researcher corrected some mistakes in translating technical words and phrasing interview questions in Arabic as they were initially written in English. Moreover, the researcher learned that rephrasing the question according to the participants' preferred language is sometimes necessary. Some participants were Anglophones, others Arabophones or Francophones, so the interview Schedule had to be prepared in English, French, and modern standard Arabic. In addition, the researcher tried to encourage the participants by asking more about their opinions and perceptions using how and why rather than yes/no questions, and the researcher explained that there were no right or wrong answers as the aim of the study was to explore the lived and career experiences of female academics. Another significant change after the pilot study was giving the participants a choice to draw a River of life or a table /timeline, as both pilot study participants agreed that it could be time-consuming for academics to draw Rivers of Life, and a table or a timeline was more practical for them.

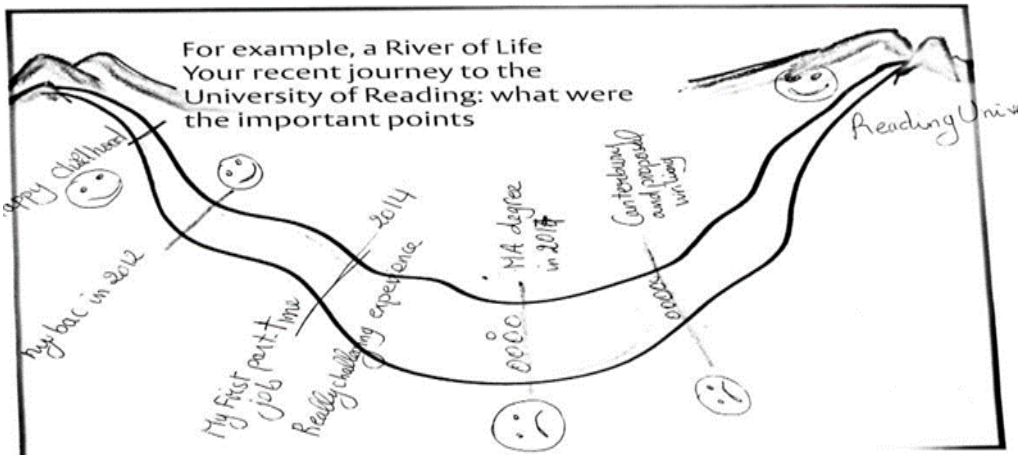
It should be noted that the data obtained from both pilot interviews were included as part of the main study, especially since both Soumia and Zeyneb were generous with their time and provided some valuable data to answer the central research question. Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) suggested that including the pilot study data as part of the main data was a common practice among qualitative researchers as they are less concerned about contamination than quantitative researchers. After conducting the pilot interviews, the researcher made the necessary changes to the pre-interview tasks and interview schedule and started contacting potential participants for the main study data collection.

4.5.2 Pre-interview tasks

This data collection method was used to obtain background information from the participants and give them time to reflect on their personal experiences before the interview. In this way, the researcher could adjust the interview schedule according to the background information obtained from every participant. In this pre-interview task, female academics were asked general questions about themselves, including age, civil status, number of children and whether they occupied formal leadership positions (administrative or pedagogical). Later, they were asked to draw a River of Life, a table or a timeline based on their preference to encapsulate their career so that during the interview, the researcher would use that timeline/ table /River of Life to guide the interview so that the participants would be more prepared and not spend much time thinking about previous experiences.

The Rivers of Life method is suitable as an initial method of inquiry as it allows the researcher to have simultaneous knowledge about the participants' experiences (Glover et al., 2019). The use of this technique was inspired by the EdD thesis "Never too late' – life histories of retirement transition amateur instrumentalists: music education, lifelong learning and identity" by Janet Jolly (2016), in which she talked about how helpful this technique can be in stimulating uncovered details and giving more data about the participants' perceptions and attitudes.

Figure 4. 1 River of Life activity illustration



Drawn by the researcher during the qualitative training provided by the Institute of Education 2018/2019

However, in this study, as explained in section 4.5.2, only five participants drew their River of life, while six drew a table; four participants preferred using a timeline, and three did not draw anything and just mentioned all the points needed during the interview. A set of questions was included to help the participants to draw their Rivers of Life/timeline/table, and these questions were inspired by the Project River of Life Exercise sheet.

According to the participants, filling out this pre-interview task did not take more than 30 minutes. Although drawing the Rivers of Life or any method of visualising, including drawing tables or timelines, may be time-consuming for the participants, it allowed the researcher to guide the interview by reflecting on the main events of the participants' lives. Appendix K shows some extracts from the pre-interview tasks of some participants as an illustration. After receiving the pre-interview tasks, in most cases, and the signed consent form, in all cases, the researcher would organise a meeting with the female academic to conduct the interview. This is explained further in the following section.

4.5.3 Conducting interviews

Interviewing has become a popular method of collecting data, especially when we find different talk shows, social media, and print media where that heavily rely on interviews to explore the lived experiences of individuals. However, in research, the interview is not simply a spontaneous conversation with the interlocutor; instead, it needs a structure and purpose (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) around one or multiple topics with one person or more (May, 2011). It is defined by Kvale (1983) as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174). One of the essential things to remember is that conducting interviews is a systematic activity that can be developed, and this was discussed in many books such as Merriam and Tisdell (2015).

There are three types of interviews. First, there are highly structured or standardised interviews in which the wording and order of the questions are predetermined, and in qualitative studies, it is usually used to obtain demographic data such as age, gender, or ethnicity. Second, semi-structured interviews have more flexibility regarding wording and order, and a list of questions and issues must be explored. Finally, the unstructured or informal interview is used with open-ended questions, and it is more like a conversation. It is usually used when the researcher initially does not know what they are looking for when exploring a phenomenon.

Moreover, Kvale (1996) pointed out two different approaches to interviews. The first one is that the interviewer, or researcher, will consider themselves a 'miner' by extracting the information from the interviewee who knows the phenomenon being studied. The second approach is that the interviewer, or researcher, will see themselves as a 'traveller' who will take the interviewee on a journey to discover new places, meaning that the researcher is co-constructing knowledge alongside the interviewee. In the current study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data because they allow flexibility to discuss the issues and to add probes. Because of this flexibility, the communication process proved more effective between participants and interviewers, which generated a smooth exchange of ideas to get authentic data (Cohen et al., 2002). That is why the participants could freely

express their opinions with the right to abstain from answering any question. Moreover, the researcher could exhibit traditional greeting manners, knowing when to be silent, pause, and other social cues with participants because she was born and raised in Algeria (Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2015). This allowed the researcher to build trust quickly with the participants because they viewed her as a cultural insider, especially when discussing sensitive topics like gender equality and familial relationships.

Once the participant accepted the initial interview offer, several documents were sent by email. They included the pre-interview task and the consent and information form to allow her an opinion on the research topic. Four potential participants dropped out at this stage as they explained they were not interested in the topic. Once participants agreed to meet, they were asked to fill out the pre-interview task before starting each interview: research ethics procedures were followed, and informed consent was given to record the interviews (See Appendix E). The questions were prepared ahead of time and divided into six sections. The first section has several general questions about their decision to become an academic, the opportunities that helped them, and the obstacles they faced to reach their position. Then they were asked about what leadership means to them and the qualities of good and bad leaders. The questions became specific regarding their experience in holding formal leadership roles, executing them, and understanding the potential barriers to holding such roles. Afterwards, the questions became more general to ascertain their opinion of the low representation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles. Later, the participants were asked for their recommendations to enable women to access senior leadership roles and improve their current situation in relation to publishing. Finally, the questions focused more on the balance they created between their professional and personal lives and how different factors affect their career progression positively or negatively.

Throughout the interviews, the researcher ensured that the participants felt at ease, and she remained in the background to make the conversation relaxed and natural and get most of the participants' experiences while being engaged and focused. Before that, the researcher thanked the participants for being open and generous with their time and gave them a small gift as an appreciation. On average, the interviews lasted around one hour. However, some were longer (two hours) while others were short, at about 30 minutes. It depended on the circumstances of the participants and their engagement with the researcher and the topic. For example, Meriem had to leave because her son was sick, while Hadjer had to pick up her daughter from school. The interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate the researcher's analysis.

After conducting two online interviews for the pilot study via the participants' convenient and preferred communication, the researcher travelled to Algeria to conduct the main study interviews. Because of the vast area of Algeria, which equals roughly ten times the total area of the United Kingdom, and due to lack of time, cost of travel, accommodation and Covid-19 constraints, the researcher, perforce, resorted to both face-to-face and online interviews. She met 14 participants in four cities face-to-face (FtF), while two interviews were conducted online. The researcher had to travel to different cities for over 1100 km, which was quite challenging, costly, and time-consuming; however, it was worth getting closer to the participants and establishing trust. As Opdenakker (2006) stated:

> Due to this synchronous communication, FtF interviews can take advantage of social cues as no other interview method. Social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc., of the interviewee, can give the interviewer extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question" (p.3).

Online interviews were conducted with two participants in the main study, Naima and Zahira. The researcher could not meet Zahira FtF for pragmatic reasons in relation to travelling and cost, whereas for Naima, it was not possible because of the Covid-19 lockdown. The researcher conducted a video call with them in their preferred communication software. Doing online interviews also helped the researcher overcome geographical barriers, allowing her to see both the participants' faces and hear their voices using communication software. However, it has some weaknesses related to the fact that the call may be interrupted because of poor connection or software breakdown, which happened with one participant, Naima. As a solution to this issue, the researcher and Naima finished the conversation on the phone.

It is crucial to have the full recording as it is beneficial to get an accurate interpretation: as Patton (2005) states, capturing the participants' actual words is an essential part of the data collection process as it helps in the data analysis get more accurate results. Moreover, the researcher made a mistake at the end of the interview with Maria and pressed the button "delete" instead of "save", losing a valuable interview. Seventeen audio recordings are available, including the pilot study recordings.

When the researcher started analysing, she noticed that some participants did not elaborate on some important points, so she called Zeyneb, Soumia and Leila again for more clarification. The follow-up calls were direct and did not take more than 15 minutes as the researcher was aware that the participants were extremely busy academics. The following section will provide an overview of the sample.

4.5.4 Overview of the sample

The participants are all Algerians who grew up after the independence; their education was free and guaranteed by the government. The background information on the participants is based on their status when the data was collected. The participants were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. Twelve participants held different roles at the university level, while six did not have experience holding formal leadership roles (administrative or pedagogical). Six participants are single or divorced, while twelve are married, with some having one child under 18. The participants come from different regions in Algeria, which may affect their experiences and perceptions regarding their professional and domestic balance (urban and semi-urban areas). All the participants had at least five years of experience and were engaged with their academic environment. Table 4.2 below provides a summary of the demographic information of the participants.

Table 4. 2 Summary of the participants' demographic information

No.	Name	Age range	Academic Rank	Formal leadership (administrative or pedagogical) role(s)	Years of Experience	Marital status (Children under 18)	Field
1	Soumia	51-60	MCA	None/ not aspiring to it	More than six years	Single with no children	Humanities
2	Zeyneb	31-40	MAA	**Currently:** vice head of department (administrative role)	Eight years	Divorced with one child	Social Sciences
3	Zoubida	41-50	MAA	**Former:** vice-dean (administrative role) **Currently:** none	More than 11 years	Married with three children	Applied Sciences
4	Sirine	41-50	MCA	**Currently:** Pedagogical role	More than 11 years	Married with one child	Humanities
5	Maria	31-40	Professor	**Former:** head of the department (administrative role) **Currently:** editor-in-chief of an academic journal (pedagogical role)	More than 11 years	Married with three children	Humanities
6	Cheikha	51-60	Professor	**Currently:** director of a research laboratory (pedagogical role)	More than 11 years	Married with no children	Applied sciences

7	Leila	31-40	MCA	None/ not interested	More than 11 years	Single with no children	Social sciences
8	Chahra	31-40	MCA	**Former:** head of the department (administrative role) **Currently:** President of the scientific committee (pedagogical role)	More than 11 years	Single with no children	Humanities
9	Meriem	31-40	MCA	**Currently:** Member of the doctoral training team (pedagogical role)	More than 11 years	Married with three children	Business
10	Zahira	31-40	MAA	**Former:** Vice head of department and head of department (administrative roles) **Currently:** none	More than six years	Married with one child	Humanities
11	Djaouza	31-40	MCB	**Currently:** Pedagogical role	More than 11 years	Married with three children	Natural Sciences
12	Sarah	41-50	MCB	None	More than six years	Married with seven children	Social Sciences
13	Hadjer	31- 40	MAA	None/aspiring to	Five years	Married with two children	Humanities
14	Besma	41-50	MCA	**Former:** vice head of department (administrative role) **Currently**: editor-in-chief of an academic journal (pedagogical role)	More than 11 years	Single with no children	Humanities
15	Manar	51-60	MCB	None/ not interested	More than 11 years	Married with one child	Humanities
16	Alia	41-50	MCB	**Currently:** pedagogical role	More than 11 years	Married with three children	Humanities
17	Halima	31-40	MCB	None	More than six years	Married with no children	Social sciences

18	Naima	31-40	MCA	**Currently:** pedagogical role	More than six years	Married with one child	Business

MAB=Assistant lecturer; MAA= Lecturer; MCB= Assistant professor; MCA= Associate professor

(See the context chapter section (2.3.2) for more details). HoD= head of department

Currently=the time of the interview (between mid-December 2019 to March 2020), Previously= before the time of the interview

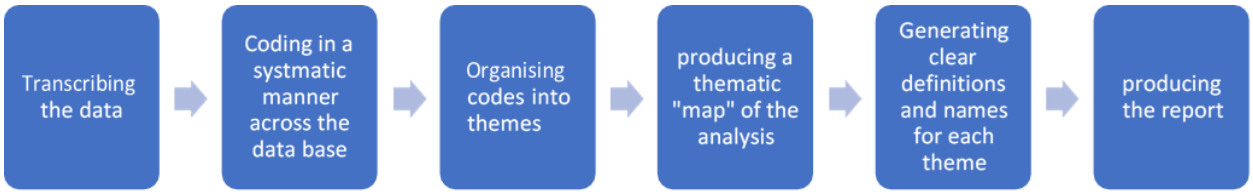
The following section elaborates on the data analysis steps taken by the researcher.

4.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be considered the most challenging step in the research process (Merriam & Tisdell,2015), as it can extend indefinitely. Analysing data can be very long and tiring because it requires a lot of patience and tolerance of ambiguity, and often novice researchers are afraid that they will not be able to answer their research questions or that the data is insufficient. In this regard, according to Flick (2014), qualitative data analysis is making sense of the linguistic or visual data to come up with statements to answer the research questions, which is the central aim of the data analysis.

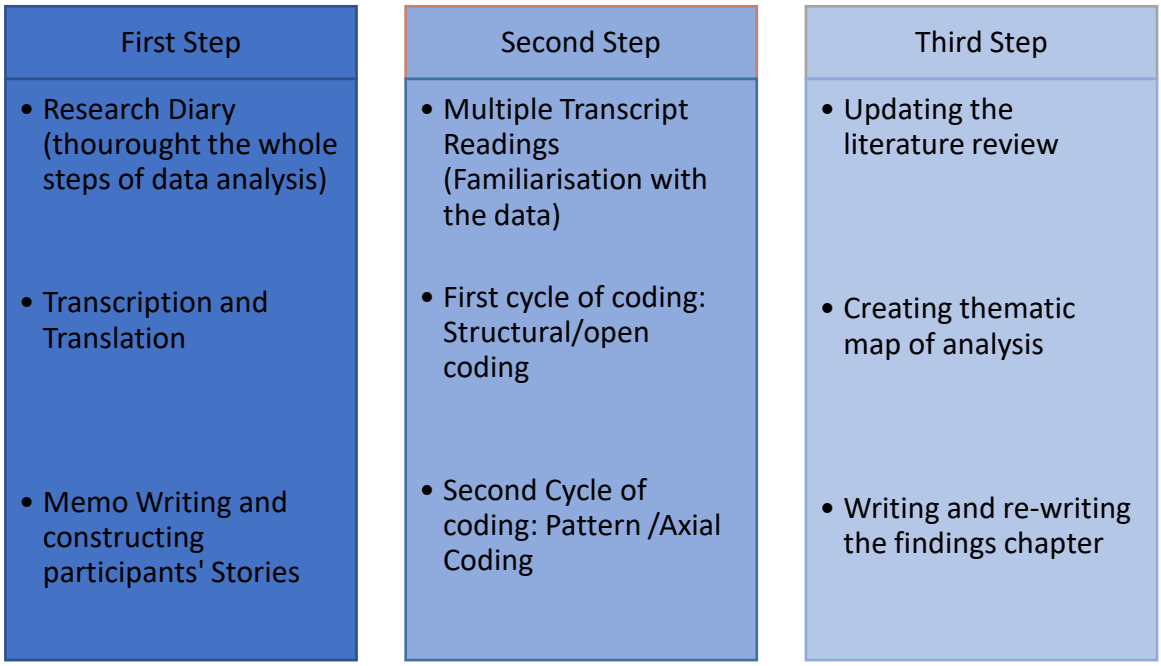
In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data following the six stages of Braun and Clarke (2006). They define it as: "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes [the] data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Figure 4.2 shows the different steps to analyse data using thematic analysis, which was used to produce the report to answer the central research question.

Figure 4. 2 Phases of thematic analysis



The data analysis process was iterative, going back and forth to the transcripts while updating the literature review to produce clearer findings chapters. This section explains the process of transcribing (section 4.6.1) and translating (section 4.6.2), followed finally by an elaboration of each step of thematic analysis (section 4.6.3) while also providing examples from the current study. Figure 4.3 summarises the steps taken to analyse and interpret the data.

Figure 4. 3 Stages of data analysis followed by the researcher



4.6.1 Transcription

The researcher employed transcription and translation because, although it was time-consuming, it allowed the researcher to be familiarised with the data. Since Bryman (2012) states that one hour of recording takes up to five or six hours to be transcribed, it allowed the researcher to get familiar with the data while gaining some experience in transcribing interviews in this early stage of the researcher's career. To aid this process, the researcher used the transcription software Scribe, which allows its users to modify the recording speed to write them down; then, the researcher used Google Word Document to voice type translation faster. It was not convenient to use paid software to do the transcription because most participants were code-switching between different languages and dialects, so it had to be done manually by a multilingual person, i.e., the researcher. Non-verbatim transcription was used instead of verbatim transcription because adding nonverbal elements such as pauses, eye contact, and gestures may make the transcription and analysis part more time-consuming, and it is not needed to answer the research questions. However, in some instances, the researcher added details, such as when participants laughed or paused for a long time because it could contribute to understanding the phenomenon.

One of the issues faced during the transcription process was choosing between Latin and Arabic alphabets to write the transcript because most participants were code-switching mainly between Arabic and French, while English was used primarily by the academics teaching in the English departments. For this reason, it was hard to decide which alphabet to use, knowing that some Arabic letters do not exist in the Latin alphabet and vice versa. However, the choice was made based on the

participant's language more frequently during the interview. Later, the researcher used conventional numbers to refer to the missing letter, for example, using 9 to refer to the letter « ق » or using 2 to refer to «ء ».

Figure 4. 4 Transcription using the Arabic alphabet

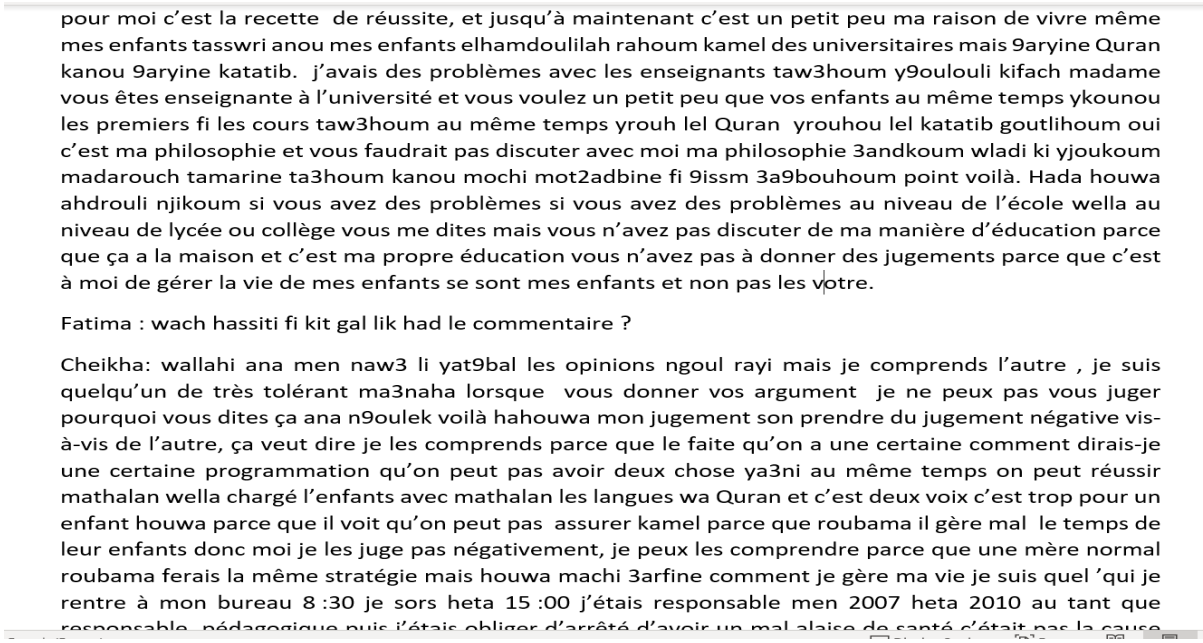
فاطمة السؤال الاول نبداو كيفاش اكاديمية واش هوما الحوايج لي خلاوك تخيري المجال الاكاديمي

ليلى امم اولا مرحبا نتمنى ليك التوفيق في الموضوع تاعك يبقى باش وليت اكاديمية كاسن مرحلة كبيرة قبل ما نوصلو للجامعة الجزائرية في البداية اولا انا خريجة جامعة تيسة في 2002 لما تخرجت كيفي كيف اي طالب كان يطمح باش يلقى منصب عمل بطريقة اه بدينا في رحلة البحث على العمل انا اصلا من مدينة فيها فرص العمل قليلة ما نيش من بحكم انو كاين الكثير من المدن الداخلية لي هي ما فيهاش الكثير من فرص العمل دونك بديت كمسيرة مكتبة في المركز التعليمي الترفيهي لي كان في ذلك الوقت يسموهم في هذا الوقت يسموه المركز التعليمي الترفيهي لي يسموه في ذلك الوقت دار الشباب لي هي تابعة للشبيبة و الرياضة كانت هناك , بديت بلا منحكي تفاصيل كثيرة بديت كمسيرة مكتبة بحكم اني ايضا في التكوين تاعي كنا جذع مشترك علوم تكنولوجيا و اخترت تكنولوجيا من بعدها اخترت فيزياء كتخصص دقيق يبقى قضية تسيير المكتبة نفعتني فيها هديك الدراسة لي درسناها المكتبات علم المكتبات سما كنت مسيرة مكتبة لفترة طبعا ربما فترة قصيرة هي كانت ربما عام بعدها مباشرة عملت في ميدان الصحافة وين عملت كي صحفية في اذاعة القناة الثالثة و كانو في السابق يسموها بالتسمية هكا و دركا اذاعة الوطنية الثالثة لي هي موجودة في كل الولايات بعد ذلك يعني طبعا انا مازلت مسيرة مكتبة و كي نجحت في مجال الصحافة لي كان حلمي منذ الصغر كان حلمي باش نكون صحفية حابة نكون صحفية

فاطمة يعني ماكونتيش باغية المجال الاكاديمي

ليلى لا هي المجال الاكاديمي انا منقدرش نستبعدو نهائيا و لكن هو جاء بالتدريج لان نعرفو حنا كي نكونو صغار حلم طفولي في الاول مكن منعرفوش تفاصيل كل مهنة منعرفوش واقع كل مهنة منعرفوش تفاصيل منعرفوش قدراتنا و لا منعرفوش ممكن و لكن بالتدريج نبدا تنضج الفكرة بلتجارب تبداي تقدري تعرفي تتخذي القرار الصحيح و لا المناسب بالنسبة لي حتى اختياري للفيزياء كان ايضا اختيار

Figure 4. 5 Transcription using the Latin alphabet



pour moi c'est la recette de réussite, et jusqu'à maintenant c'est un petit peu ma raison de vivre même mes enfants tasswri anou mes enfants elhamdoulilah rahoum kamel des universitaires mais 9aryine Quran kanou 9aryine katatib. j'avais des problèmes avec les enseignants taw3houm y9oulouli kifach madame vous êtes enseignante à l'université et vous voulez un petit peu que vos enfants au même temps ykounou les premiers fi les cours taw3houm au même temps yrouh lel Quran yrouhou lel katatib goutlihoum oui c'est ma philosophie et vous faudrait pas discuter avec moi ma philosophie 3andkoum wladi ki yjoukoum madarouch tamarine ta3houm kanou mochi mot2adbine fi 9issm 3a9bouhoum point voilà. Hada houwa ahdrouli njikoum si vous avez des problèmes si vous avez des problèmes au niveau de l'école wella au niveau de lycée ou collège vous me dites mais vous n'avez pas discuter de ma manière d'éducation parce que ça a la maison et c'est ma propre éducation vous n'avez pas à donner des jugements parce que c'est à moi de gérer la vie de mes enfants se sont mes enfants et non pas les votre.

Fatima : wach hassiti fi kit gal lik had le commentaire ?

Cheikha: wallahi ana men naw3 li yat9bal les opinions ngoul rayi mais je comprends l'autre , je suis quelqu'un de très tolérant ma3naha lorsque vous donner vos argument je ne peux pas vous juger pourquoi vous dites ça ana n9oulek voilà hahouwa mon jugement son prendre du jugement négative vis-à-vis de l'autre, ça veut dire je les comprends parce que le faite qu'on a une certaine comment dirais-je une certaine programmation qu'on peut pas avoir deux chose ya3ni au même temps on peut réussir mathalan wella chargé l'enfants avec mathalan les langues wa Quran et c'est deux voix c'est trop pour un enfant houwa parce que il voit qu'on peut pas assurer kamel parce que roubama il gère mal le temps de leur enfants donc moi je les juge pas négativement, je peux les comprendre parce que une mère normal roubama ferais la même stratégie mais houwa machi 3arfine comment je gère ma vie je suis quel 'qui je rentre à mon bureau 8 :30 je sors heta 15 :00 j'étais responsable men 2007 heta 2010 au tant que responsable pédagogique puis j'étais obliger d'arrêté d'avoir un mal alaise de santé c'était pas la cause

4.6.2 Multilingual translation issues

As stated previously, Algeria is a multilingual country; in the words of Chami (2009): 'Algeria was a place of invasion and a crossroad of civilisations that made the linguistic plurality reign among its speakers since Antiquity' (p.1). However, when it comes to research, collecting the data in different languages (dialects), including French, standard Arabic and Algerian dialect, and English and writing up the findings in English may have an impact on the validity and trustworthiness of the research

(Birbili, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Van Nes et al., 2010). The problem arises because, as Birbili (2000) states, sometimes some words and concepts exist in one language that does not exist in another, and idiomatic expressions can also be culturally sensitive. For this reason, since data analysis is the process of sense-making, the translation process should be as accurate as possible.

Many factors may influence the quality of the translation, including 1) the translator's linguistic competence in both the source language and target language and 2) the translator's cultural knowledge of the sample under study. Consequently, the choices and decisions made by the researchers need to be explicitly described to promote the validity and trustworthiness of the findings (Birbili, 2000). The researcher did not use a professional translator as it may have caused some issues: as Kluckhohn states, there are three fundamental problems from the use of interpreters: 'a) the interpreter's effect on the informant; b) the interpreter's effect on the communicative process; and c) the interpreter's effect on the translation' (as mentioned in Birbili, 2000). However, the researcher has some experience in translation and studied a translation module during her master's degree that gave her some basic knowledge on the technical ways to have an accurate translation. Also, the researcher used the three strategies: back translation, consultation with other people, and piloting, as Birbili (2000) suggests.

Back Translation is a widespread technique in cross-cultural research which means the following: first, translate the original text to the target language, then again translate the transcript in the target language back to the original language (See Figure 4.6). Next, a comparison is made between the original text and the new translation until all meaningful differences are clarified or removed. Some researchers claim that back translation is not the best solution to multilingual translation issues, as it can be very tedious and time-consuming. However, due to time constraints, the researcher did not employ this process for the whole transcripts. Instead, she used these techniques on the quotes selected to be included in the thesis (see figure 4.7 for an example). When doing the back translation process, no significant changes were found between the first and the last translation.

Figure 4. 6 The process of back translation

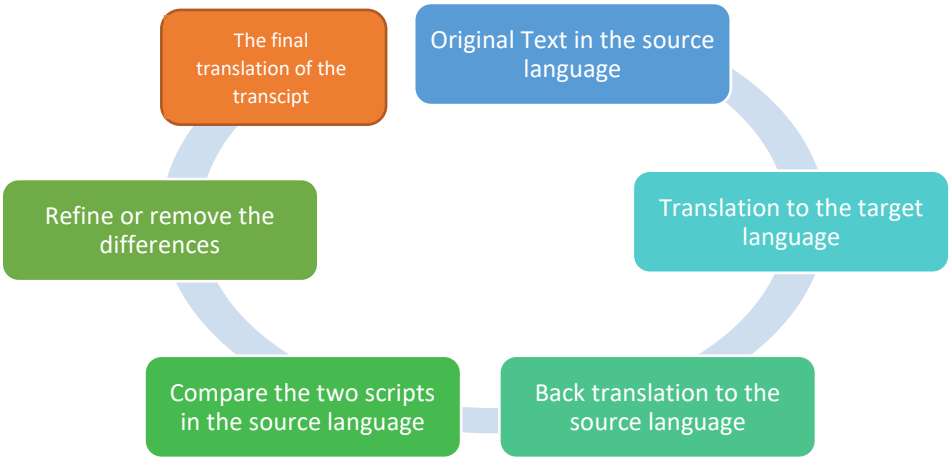


Figure 4. 7 An example of the process of back translation

Original Text in the source language

سيرين | السبب هو كما قلت لك الاستاذة الجامعية ام و منظفة و مجلية اواني في بيتها و و و اذا هي ربة البيت و زادو ليها عمل اذا كانت المراة ربة البيت تشتكي من الظروف و العمل و غيرها فما بالك بالاستاذة الجامعية , لهي استاذة و من المفروض باحثة بالاضافة الى ربة بيت تزيدي ليها منصب قيادي صعب صعب الا اذا كانت لها محفزات يعني هي غير متزوجة متفرغة او متزوجة و لها ظروف مواتية كاين وحدة تساعدها في شغل البيت زوجها متفهم اطفالها ربما كبار تجاوزو الاهتمام تاعها مثل هذه الامور مثل هذه الامور .

Translation to the target language

Sirine said : the reason is the female academic is a mother, cleaner, dishwasher which means she is a housewife and they added her a full-time job. If housewives are complaining about the workload, what about female academics who is s supposed to be a teacher, researcher, in addition to being housewife, and you want her also to hold a leadership position (she means an administrative one) hard only if she has motivators for example not married, or married with helping circumstances there is someone who helps her at home, her husband is understanding, her children are maybe old and they don't need her something like this."

Back translation to the source language

سيرين السبب ان المراة الاكاديمية هي الام،المنظفة، غسالة الاواني معناها هي هي مراة ماكثة في البيت و زادوها عمل. اذا كانت المراة الماكثة في البيت تشتكي كثرة الاعمال في المنزل، فمابالك بالاكاديمية التي يجب عليها ان تكون ايضا استاذة، باحثة، الى جانب كونها ماكثة في البيت و تريدين ان تضيفي اليها منصب قيادي لا صعب صعب ممكن اذا كان عندها بعض المحفزات مثل كونها غير متزوجة، او متزوجة و لديها من يساعدها في المنزل، زوجها متفهم، اولادها كبار و لا يحتاجونها كثيرا او شيء من هذا القبيل.

Final Translation

Sirine said : the reason is the female academic is a mother, cleaner, dishwasher which means she is a housewife, with another full time job. If housewives are complaining about the workload, what about female academics who is s supposed to be a teacher, researcher, in addition to being housewife, and you want her also to hold a senior leadership position (she means an administrative one) hard hard. It can only if she has some motivation for example not married or married with good circumstances such as there is someone who helps her at home, her husband is supportive, her children are maybe old, and they don't need her something like this."

Then the next strategy used was consulting other bilingual people and communicating with them to decide the best way to translate the meaning into the target languages (Birbili, 2000). Only the excerpts used in the findings chapter were shared with the researcher's bilingual colleague at the IOE to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews. They expressed satisfaction with the translations made by the researcher. The last strategy that the researcher used was piloting the initial interview questions, which were written in English and conducted in Algerian Arabic (*Darja*) and asking the pilot participants about their interpretation of the questions and how the researcher would change the

wording of the questions, as indicated in section 4.5.1. Because each technique has some weaknesses, combining them can be an efficient way to overcome such deficiencies (Birbili, 2000).

4.6.3 Coding process

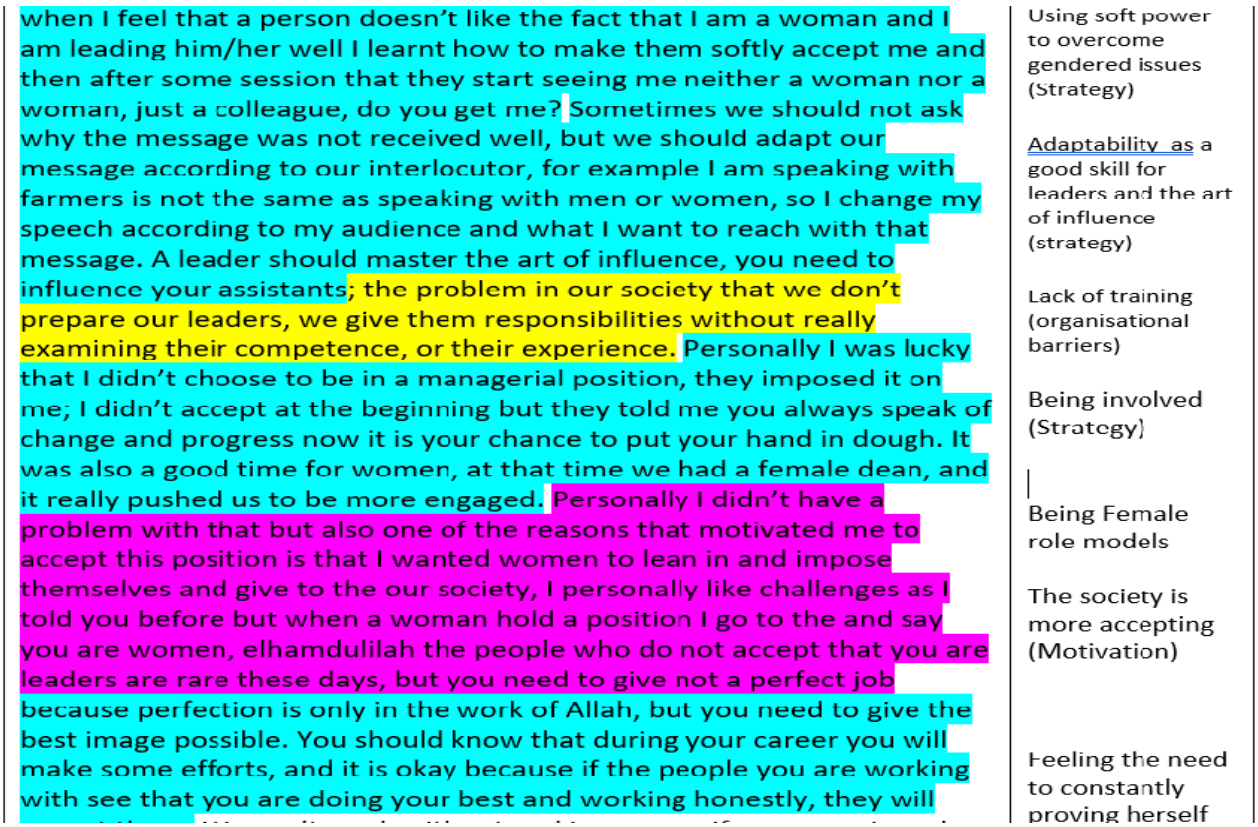
Data analysis, especially in qualitative research, can be challenging; however, if it starts early during the data collection, the process can become manageable and less stressful. Based on the supervision experience of Merriam and Tisdell (2015), they noticed that one of the greatest mistakes that novice researchers make is to wait until finishing all the data collection; then, they will be overwhelmed with the amount of the collected data. For this purpose, the analysis began with transcribing the first two pilot interviews to use time efficiently and learn from mistakes in order to avoid them in the following interviews. Coding can be simply defined as replacing the participants' lengthy statements with shorter sentences or words to be easily retrieved later. In other words, it is nothing more than storing and organising them according to different categories that emerge in the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Patton (2005) states that no formula has been established that a researcher can follow to transform raw data into findings; although reading methodology books may offer some directions, the destination is unique to every researcher. The researcher mainly used Saldaña's (2016) book because it offers practical steps to help novice researchers find their way. Knowing there is no perfect way, the researcher followed her instinct when making decisions. However, the research questions can help select the best way to code the interview data (Saldaña, 2016), and the steps followed by the researcher are explained below.

Stage One: Familiarisation with the Data and Generating Initial codes

The researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading the transcripts several times. The ‘familiarisation’ process is essential in any qualitative research, and what also helped in this study is that the researcher transcribed and translated the data by herself, facilitating the immersion into the data (Byrne, 2021). The researcher considered whether to use coding software like Nvivo or to do it manually (using paper or Microsoft word) and finally decided to analyse the data manually to have more freedom. The interview data were initially coded using structural or open coding methods by assigning a large set of data with codes. Both Structural and open coding strategies are appropriate for exploratory qualitative studies that use semi-structured interviews as a tool for collecting data (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher coded the interviews manually by highlighting the segments in different colours according to what research question is potentially answered (structural coding). Also, there are instances when the researcher was unsure which research question this section was answering, so these sections were coloured differently to reflect on them later in the process (open

coding). This stage allowed the data to be reduced in length so that it became more manageable to make sense of them. Figure 4.8 illustrates how the data was initially coded.

Figure 4. 8 Actual initial coding process using Microsoft Word



Stage Two: Generating a clear definition of each theme and producing a thematic map

Pattern/axial coding was used as a second-cycle coding method in which the similar summaries generated after the structural/open coding were grouped into categories, themes or concepts (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher organised the reflections and ideas after the interview and used them when writing the memos. Then, the researcher used the memos and the pre-interview tasks to construct stories for each participant to help cross-check codes and themes between the participants (Appendix J).

Then, the researcher drew an initial thematic map to help visualise the themes and sub-themes and see their connections. This step allowed the researcher to see the connections between the different codes answering the same research question while considering the relation between the different themes and subthemes. It should be noted that the sub-research questions were phrased differently at the beginning of the analysis, and they changed to reflect the final report organisation. For instance, the initial sub-research question asked about the barriers facing female academics to progress in their

careers and hold senior leadership roles, and in another question, the researcher asked about the motivation and enablers. So, in the thematic map, the researcher tried to identify the sociocultural, organisational and personal barriers as elaborated in Figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11.

Figure 4. 9 An initial thematic map indicating five candidate sub-themes

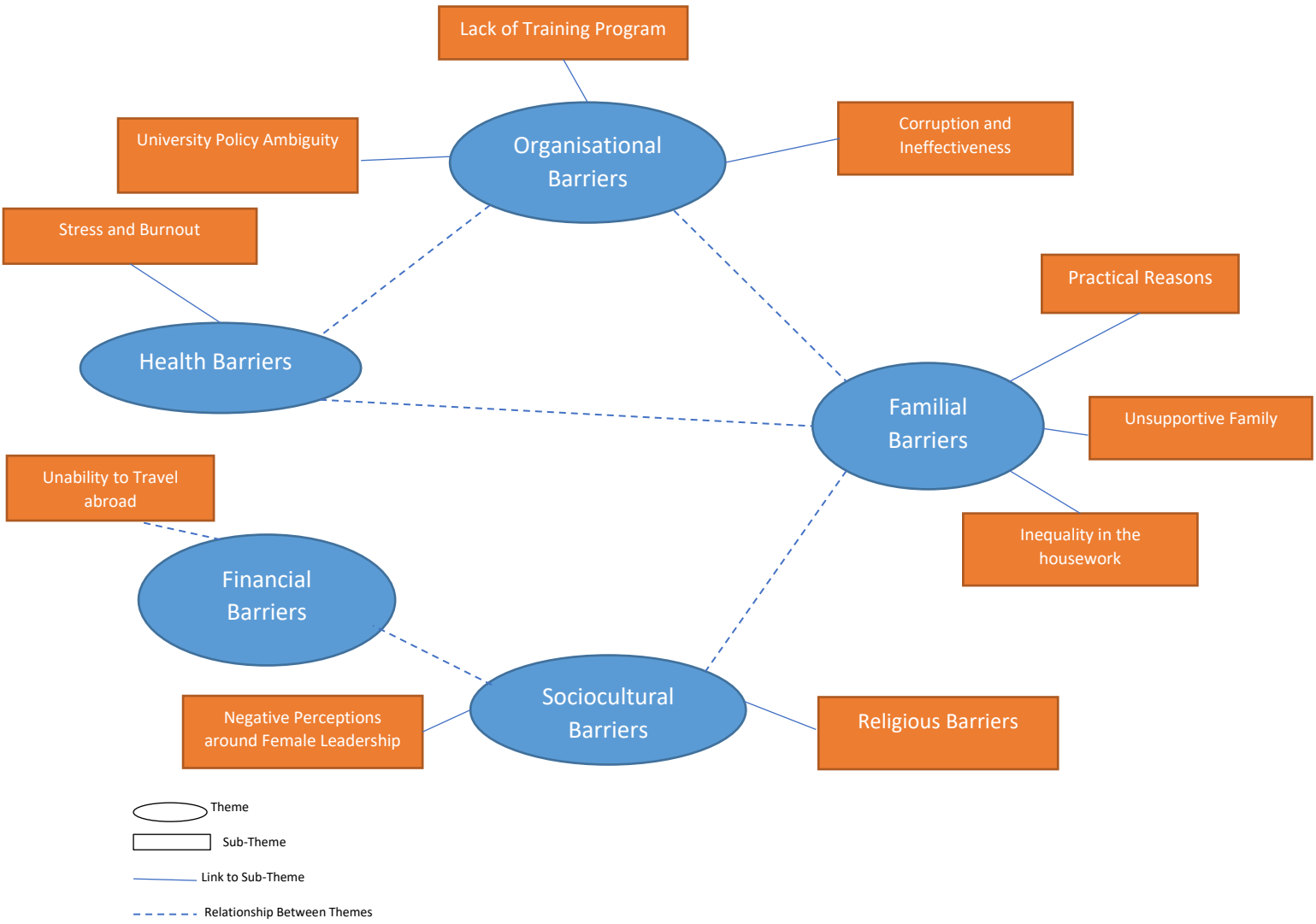


Figure 4. 10 A working thematic map demonstrating three subthemes

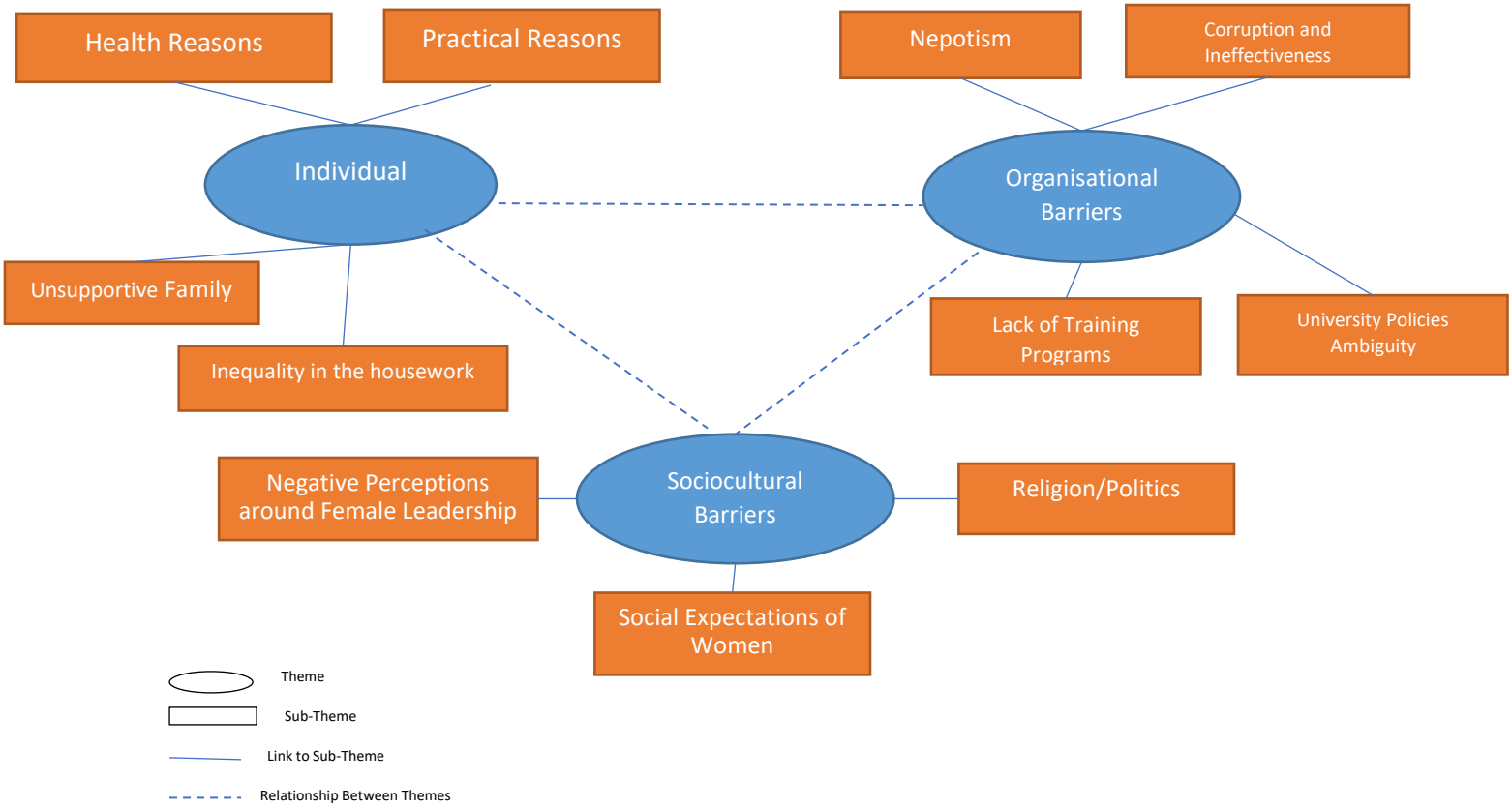
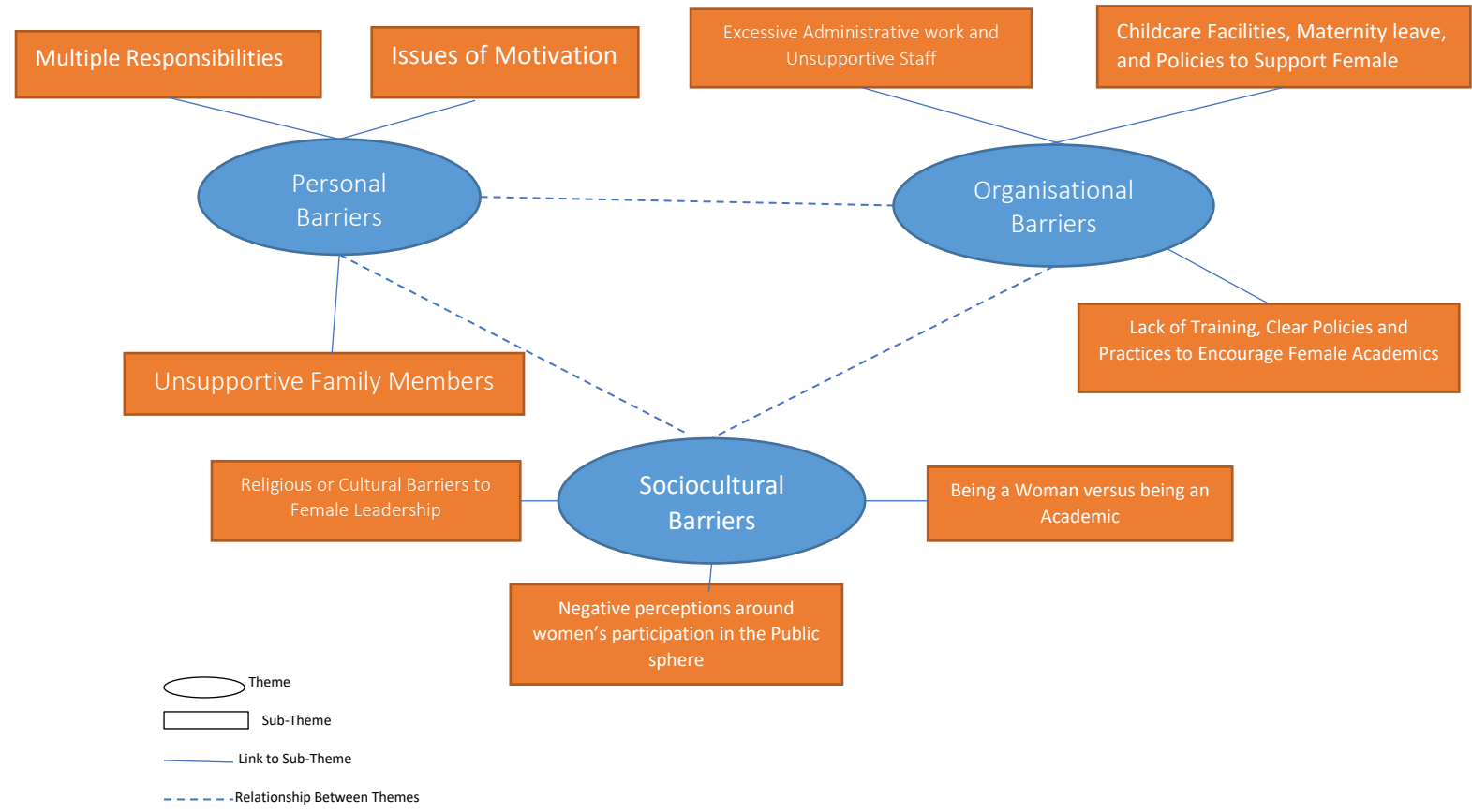


Figure 4. 11 A finalised thematic map demonstrating the barriers female academics face



In this study, both inductive and deductive approaches were adopted, as the conceptual/theoretical framework was already identified around the concepts of gender (mainly Butler's performativity theory (1988) and feminist postcolonial theory (Mernissi,2003; Petersen & Rutherford,1988) and women's careers in higher education. However, the concept of identity was added after the initial data analysis as the participants used their multiple identities to justify their actions and beliefs, and it helped link how the different factors influence female academics (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Chapter 5 explores further how using the concept of identity provided a helpful way to understand in-depth the lived/career experiences of female academics. To conclude, the conceptual and theoretical framework influenced the data analysis process (deductive approach), and the data influenced the analysis process (inductive approach).

As indicated in Figure 4.3 (third step), when the researcher drew the thematic map for all research questions, she could recognise more connections between the codes and themes, so she created Table 4.3 to group the themes and sub-themes more logically and coherently and started producing the report. It is essential to acknowledge that the steps of the thematic analysis were not followed one after the other as a systematic process; instead, it was more of an iterative process between the different steps. In this regard, Clarke, Braun, and Hayfield (2019) indicate that qualitative research analysis is characterised by fluidity, so the steps of thematic analysis should not be followed strictly; however, the analysis process and steps should be elaborated. Appendix L describes the coding process in response to every research question (Saldaña, 2016).

Table 4. 3 An example of the coding process to explore the sociocultural factors influencing female academics

Final code/ Theme: Societal Views Vis-à-Vis Women's Participation in the Public Sphere		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
The obstacles I faced were mainly societal. I got married just after finishing my bachelor's degree. Then, I became a mother. It was not easy to be a mother with much ambition. It was not easy.	Society is a barrier to women	Negative perceptions around women's participation
Not all women have that drive. Nevertheless, I should say that these women do not struggle that much like I am struggling because our societies are purely patriarchal. They expect women to be always in the margin, and only men can focus on their careers, which is not expected from women.	Patriarchal society	
In our society in general, we have a female model that is preferable for all women to fit, and you may struggle if you do not fit. My husband and I, for instance, decided not to have children until I finished my PhD thesis, and we agreed because he does not have a traditional mindset. However, you should see society and even my male colleagues asking me why we still do not have children and whether there is a problem.	The pressure of society to fit a model	
Our society lets men control their lives until it becomes a habit. However, my husband knows me and knows where I am, and I married him after I was convinced with his character...in Algeria, we have an ideal image of how a woman should be, she should be married, wearing modest clothes, a specific way of talking, and should go through all the steps that women should go through, being married, then to be a mother.		

The following section will address the researcher positionality, described in Section 1.2 and how it influenced the data analysis process and the steps undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

4.7 Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

The researcher's positionality consciously and unconsciously affects the research process and knowledge production, especially qualitative research that primarily relies on the researcher's judgements and interpretation (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022) especially when selecting a . For this reason, discussions about reflexivity are important and should be addressed in depth. Moreover, ensuring the trustworthiness of the research is also essential, as it shows that the findings are "worthy of attention" (Nowell et al., 2017, p.3). This section attempts to explain the researcher's efforts to reflexivity, section 4.7.1, and how she addressed the challenges related to ensuring the research's trustworthiness 4.7.2.

4.7.1 Efforts to engage in reflexive practices

There are many definitions of reflexivity. A more general definition of reflexivity is as Haynes's (2012) said:

> "An awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research process and outcomes" (p.1).

Considering the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, the researcher made considerable efforts to acknowledge her role throughout the research process. Walsh (2003) explains that there are four dimensions or perspectives of reflexive processes: personal, interpersonal, methodological and contextual reflexivity: therefore, discussion about reflexivity should be oriented toward these four issues. Each dimension will be discussed in turn and the strategies deployed by the researcher to address the potential issues.

First, personal reflexivity addresses the impact of the researcher's unique perspectives and background on the research process. In section 1.2, the researcher explained in depth the personal motivation behind choosing this topic and how she could observe inequalities in the numbers of women in academic leadership and professorial roles in Algeria. Moreover, during the data collection of her Master's dissertation, she noticed how female leaders working at the university are struggling with heavy burdens from their domestic and professional roles. The researcher's position as an insider in Algerian society and a woman whom similar sociocultural factors might have influenced her upbringing on the one hand. On the other hand, the researcher is also an outsider because she does not have experience working full-time at the university. For this reason, the data collection journey was more than just the process of gathering data for the researcher, as it was also an opportunity to reflect more on the researcher's seemingly "simplistic" assumptions that women are all victims and hence the need to explore the nuances of their lived and career experiences. After all, personal reflexivity should also explore the impact of the research on the researchers (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

Second, interpersonal reflexivity refers to how the relationships between the researcher, the participants and the power dynamics at play influence the research process (Finlay, 2002). This perspective recognises the participants' influence and unique knowledge on the research process, such as how the participants interpret the questions directly influence the data collected. In this regard, "data can only be understood as a product of the unique power relationship between researcher and the participants." (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022, p.4). As explained in section 1.2, the researcher is part of a government scholarship for students under 25 years old who just finished their Master's degree, so, understandably, she could be perceived by the participants more as a "student" rather than a "colleague". For this reason, the researcher showed more respect to the participants, as it is customary for students to treat their teachers in Algeria. For example, in one of the interviews, the researcher asked the participants whether it was a good idea to have training programmes for academics, and the participant replied, yes, for you, training is essential, as you will be unprepared for the job as a young doctor. After this answer, the researcher could challenge the participant and explain that it is necessary for all academics, whether young or old, to do training as part of their continuous professional development. However, she chose not to say that as she might be perceived as arrogant and impolite. Instead, she asked the participant if she were part of the training programme team, what her aims and objectives of the training would be, and why it is important for novice academics. As the example shows, the researcher always tried to be conscious of her status and respond accordingly to the participants.

Third, methodological reflexivity is concerned with critically examining the methodological choices of the researcher. An essential part of methodological reflexivity is how the researcher's positionality affected the paradigmatic orientation (Walsh, 2003). In section 1.2, the researcher explained her interest and motivation behind choosing this topic in-depth and how she could observe that knowledge was male-centred and western-centred. Then, she tried to find a paradigm that reflected her view of reality and knowledge production, and she selected the critical paradigm, as elaborated in table 4.1. Moreover, the researcher was reflexive about aligning her critical paradigm with her theoretical and conceptual framework, as indicated in section 4.2.

Fourth, contextual reflexivity tackles issues related to how the research questions and their answers should always seek to positively impact the study's context. This was done by respecting the participants' beliefs when reporting the data and encouraging them to reflect more on their lived and career experiences.

To conclude, the best-known strategy to harness reflexivity in research is reflexive writing (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). That is why the researcher kept a journal and recorded voice notes to herself to

document her thinking during the research process. Appendix M provides some extracts of the researcher's written and audio journaling, revealing her reflections.

4.7.2 Trustworthiness

As the current study deployed a qualitative approach, the discussions of validity and reliability were replaced with the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), with its four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These will be discussed in turn.

First, ensuring the credibility of the research is one of the most crucial criteria for establishing the research's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility deals with the question: "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (Shenton, 2004, p.64). In other words, credibility explains how the researcher captured the participants' views authentically and represented them convincingly, showing that he/she truly grasped the case at hand (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). In this regard, the researcher used various provisions to ensure the credibility of the findings. First, before conducting the interviews, the researcher tried to be familiar with the participants by calling them initially and telling them about her background to establish trust. Second, the researcher ensured that the participants worked at different universities, civil status, fields, number of children and ages, as indicated in section 4.5.4. Moreover, the member-checking technique was used in which two participants were sent transcripts in both Algerian Arabic and English to check. These two were chosen because they both mastered English and could check the translation the researcher made. Then, a copy of the findings was shared with them to confirm that the final themes and concepts reflect the phenomenon studied adequately (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Finally, during the research process, especially when finalising the findings and discussion, the researcher seized every opportunity to present at conferences and join discussion groups with her peers at the Institute of Education to challenge her assumptions and get a fresh perspective that would help develop her understanding of the data.

Second, transferability is another criterion for establishing the trustworthiness of the research. This deals with transferability or whether the research results are generalisable (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985, as described in Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). The issue the researcher may face in this regard is selective plausibility. In other words, the researcher needs to show how his/her findings are connected to other empirical studies and theories in the field and then show with confidence how their contribution is valid to answer the research questions. If the researcher fails to do so, any conclusion will not be credible enough to claim that an original contribution to the field is made, and in the worst case, the researcher may think that they did bring something new to the field and it had been already discussed in previous studies (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). For this reason, the researcher made a detailed and thick

description of the context in Chapter 2 and explained in depth the data in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to help the readers contextualise the study and decide if the research findings can be transferred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility and dependability are interrelated because the latter cannot be reached without the former. Several provisions were used to achieve dependability. First, the researcher explained in depth how she analysed the data in section 4.6. Also, there was peer review and lengthy discussions with colleagues about how the study was conducted and whether the data relates to the findings and interpretations during the research seminars and conferences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, as explained in section 4.7.1, the researcher was committed to reflexivity by keeping a written journal of her research process (Appendix M).

The last criterion discussed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study is confirmability. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability can only be obtained when credibility, transferability and dependability are attained (Nowell et al., 2017). Koch (1994) “recommended that researchers include all markers such as the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study” (as mentioned in Nowell et al., 2017, p.3). The researcher documented this process in the previous sections, mainly sections 1.2, 4.2 and 4.6, so readers can understand her research process.

The success of any research and establishing a sense of credibility and trustworthiness within the academic environment are hugely important for any researcher. In this respect, Patton (2005) says: "ultimately, for better or worse, the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of those who collect and analyse the data –and their demonstrated competence" (p.706). For this reason, the researcher was committed to ensuring the trustworthiness of the research. The following section will deal with how the researcher overcame the ethical challenges she faced.

4.8 Overcoming Ethical Challenges

In this section, the ethical challenges and considerations will be addressed. Before starting the data collection phase, the researcher obtained the university of Reading's ethical approval in October 2019 (Appendix B), which included: 1) a brief description of the project; 2) a Risk Assessment form; 3) Data protection declaration for ethical approval; 4) the information and consent form sheet for the academics (Appendices C, D, E and F); 5) the pre-interview task (Appendix G) and finally the interview schedule (Appendix H). Moreover, the researcher also followed British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2018, p.5), which are:

- responsibilities to participants

- responsibilities to sponsors, clients and stakeholders in research
- responsibilities to the community of educational researchers
- responsibilities for publication and dissemination
- responsibilities for researchers' wellbeing and development.

The points above were taken into consideration in the current research as follows:

- The researcher was committed to treating the participants of this study ethically. This was done by sending an information letter and consent form via email to all participants, and they were asked to sign it and return it to the researcher by email or on the meeting day. In some cases, some participants did not bring their signed consent forms, so the researcher gave them a spare one before starting the interview to save time and effort of the participants. It was crucial to get the signed informed consent before participating in the research, and the researcher made sure that participating in this research was entirely voluntary. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of everything said because, during the interviews, participants might address sensitive topics related to their domestic situation and private matters. That is why an information sheet and consent forms were provided to all participants, and the researcher was available to explain to them any point and answer any concerns before or after the interview (see appendix C). The researcher should ensure that the participants' identities are anonymous to protect their privacy and that they cannot be traced (Cohen et al., 2002). For this reason, the researcher must be careful not to identify people when analysing data; as Punch (1994) says: "the cloak of anonymity of character may not work with insiders who can easily locate the individuals concerned, or what is even worse, claim that they can recognise them when they are, in fact wrong" (p.92) (as mentioned in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher ensured that the interview questions respected the cultural specifics of Algerian society and that the questions were neutral and unbiased. The recordings of the interviews were saved on the researcher's personal computer and can only be accessed using her fingerprint, and the folder containing the recordings was secured with a password. The researcher transcribed and translated the interviews. Then, every participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity, and all identifying markers were also assigned a pseudonym.
- The researcher also has responsibilities toward the sponsors, clients and stakeholders in research. As indicated in section 1.2, the researcher is sponsored by the Algerian Higher Education and Scientific Research Ministry, a government body. In the current research, the ministry did not interfere with the researcher's choices regarding the topic, methods, data ownership, and reporting of the findings. This is important to ensure transparency and open

access to publicly funded research. Moreover, the researcher was committed to providing an annual process review as agreed with the ministry.

- In the current research, the researcher was committed to ensuring that the “community of educational researchers” are considered throughout the research journey. This was done by following the research's ethical guidelines to ensure the research's trustworthiness and credibility.
- As indicated in section 4.7.2, the researcher shared a copy of the findings with two participants who are competent in English. Moreover, concerning publications, some of this thesis data was used in a book chapter about educational leadership in Algeria, and it was fully acknowledged that it was part of the second author’s PhD thesis. Further publications are considered.
- Qualitative interviews can be very challenging, especially for novice researchers, because it is mainly concerned with human lives and experiences (Broussine, Watts, & Clarke, 2014). That is why the researcher must look after her wellbeing and development. For example, in one interview, the researcher felt a little bit emotional when the participant started speaking about one of the obstacles she faced during her career, the Algerian civil war in the 1990s, and it was challenging to stay calm and move the conversation naturally. The participant talked about how she found her name on the execution list and went out thinking she would be killed at any moment. The researcher tried to stay calm and carefully listen, although it was hard not to become emotional because it is a shared memory between Algerians. Nevertheless, when dealing with human experiences, the researcher should be ready to face such painful experiences. After the interview, the researcher used her support system to maintain her wellbeing.

4.9 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter illustrates the rationale and justification behind the methodology adopted for this study, including the research approach, participants’ section, and context. This is followed by a clear clarification of all the steps taken during the data collection and analysis processes. Finally, the researcher’s reflexivity is highlighted to ensure the research's trustworthiness and overcoming ethical challenges. Following the methodology explained above, the next chapter answers the research questions while examining the findings that emerged from the data.

Chapter 5 Female Academics Identity Construction at Algerian Universities

5.1 Introduction

This thesis explores how female academics define and construct their identities and the factors influencing their identity construction. Understanding how these factors influence the participants' identity construction may elicit deeper insights into their lived experiences and may help to explain the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles in Algeria. The following three chapters (5, 6 and 7) answer the research questions and report this study's findings. Below is the main research question that the present study investigates and four sub-questions.

Main Research Question:

How do female academics' lived/career experiences shape the way they define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres?

Research Questions:

1- How do female academics within Algerian universities define and construct their identities?
2- What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' identities?
3- What are the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' identities?
4- What strategies do female academics deploy to manage their multiple roles and identities?

The three chapters reporting the findings are structured around the sub-research questions as follows: Chapter 5 explains how the participants define and construct their identities. It seeks to explain how female academics organise and prioritise their multiple identities taken from their different social and professional roles while focusing on the identities taken from their public (academic) and private (domestic) spheres. Moreover, it attempts to understand what it is like to be not only a woman in Algeria, but an academic at Algerian universities and the tensions that arise when trying to conform to or resist the societal discourses related to every role.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to answering the second research question dealing with the sociocultural and organisational factors influencing how female academics define and construct their identities. While Chapter 7 focuses on the personal factors influencing female academics' identity construction, including the enablers that could help women advance as well as the challenges that may hinder their career progression. Furthermore, Chapter 7 includes some strategies adopted by the participants to navigate their domestic and professional responsibilities.

Chapter 5 sums up the findings answering the first sub-research question:

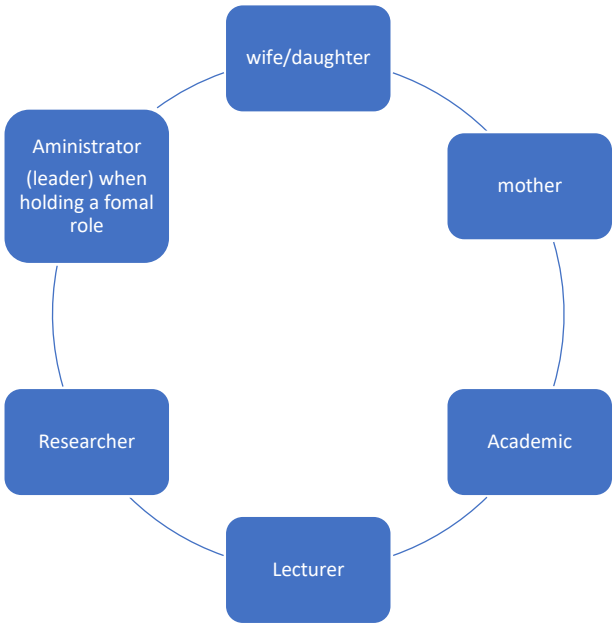
RQ1: How do female academics at Algerian universities define and construct their identities?

The results of the analysis are organised as follows. Section 5.2 deals with how female academics define themselves throughout the interviews to show how they position themselves within their context. Then, the following sections elaborate on how they construct their identities in public and private spaces. The first section, 5.3, highlights how they see and understand their lived experiences as women in Algerian society between resisting the social norms and being different from the typical woman (section 5.3.1) while also conforming to the norms (section 5.3.2). Section 5.4 elaborates on how the participants construct their academic identities and the lecturer identity's prominence compared to other identities in the public sphere (researcher and administrator when holding a formal leadership position) in section 5.4.1. This is followed by exploring the tensions between research and holding a formal leadership role and how most participants think the researcher identity should always have prominence over their administrator one (section 5.4.2). Finally, the tensions between fulfilling their duties in public and private spheres are explored through the participants' feelings of guilt for not fulfilling any role as expected in section 5.5. Finally, a summary of chapter 5 is provided in section 5.6.

5.2 Participants' Self-definition of Identity

Analysing the data collected shows that the participants identify with multiple identities, taken from their different social roles in private and public spheres. When asked the interview questions, the participants talked about their multiple identities directly or indirectly. For instance, when the participants talked about their work/life balance, they answered by describing themselves using the different roles they occupy in their lives. The identities used by the participants to describe themselves can help in understanding how the participants are constructing their identities and managing the intersections between them. Figure 5.1 shows the participants' multiple identities to identify themselves found throughout the data.

Figure 5. 1 The different identities used by female academics to define or describe themselves



The majority of the participants identified themselves using roles taken from their domestic roles (mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, and sister) and professional roles (lecturer, researcher, and administrator (when holding a formal leadership role). The leader identity also came up and will be discussed further in section 5.4. Furthermore, some added their religious identity (i.e. Muslim) or national identity (i.e., Algerian, Southern/northern Algerian). However, this study focuses only on the identities used in public (academic) and private (domestic) spheres while considering Algeria's contextual background, as mentioned in chapter 2.

During the interviews, the participants sometimes tended to rank their multiple identities based on importance. For instance, Zahira, who is married and a mother of one girl under 18 years old, wanted to explain how she organised her multiple identities and duties. She said:

I am a wife, a mother, a lecturer, and then a researcher.

Zahira identified herself as a wife and mother in the domestic sphere, and she explained that her domestic roles are always her priority. This was shared by most married participants with children or who have responsibilities towards their extended families (see section 5.3). Moreover, Zahira did not identify herself as an academic alone, but she divided it into a lecturer, researcher and administrator (when holding a formal leadership role), as did all the other participants.

In addition, single academics with no children identified themselves as daughters because they have responsibilities toward their parents as their primary caregivers. As Leila said:

> *I am a daughter, researcher, and lecturer in my hometown. However, when I go to my work city, I am a researcher, lecturer, and daughter... It depends on the situation, as some situations require one identity's prominence over others.*

According to the data, Leila's self-definition influences her actions and decisions to put her role as a daughter first and to look after her old parents as they need help when she is in her hometown. However, when she goes to the city where she works, her priority change to being a researcher and a lecturer. While all participants who have children under 18 prioritise their mother and wife identities, the participants who have no children under 18 or no children explained that sometimes they focus on their professional (public sphere) identities and other times on their domestic (private sphere) identities. This view was echoed by Soumia, who commented that: "*having sisters who would look after my parents gave me more freedom to focus on my research and academic career*". However, Chahra and Besma, who are the primary caregivers of their parents, argued that it is harder to focus on their academic careers while looking after two old parents. This is elaborated further in section 7.2.2.

The data shows that participants, such as Muslims or Algerians, use other identities to identify themselves. For instance, when Sirine wanted to explain the reasons behind not opting for senior administrative roles, she replied by saying: "*I am a Muslim, and no one is obliging me to follow the teachings of Islam. That is why I am convinced that I should not go to a restaurant with a man even for work and academic purposes".* Sirine wanted to explain in this quote that she feels that being a Muslim is incompatible with the requirements of holding a senior leadership position. This is explored further in section 6.2.3. Another respondent wanted to talk about some organisational barriers she faced, like her identity as an Algerian. Leila said:

> *I think academia has some issues, but these are issues faced by all of us as Algerians in an unstable system with many challenges.*

She refers to the centralised system and how the state intervenes in higher education and scientific research. This will be further detailed in section 6.3. Although, these two identities are not used when examining the interplay between different identities taken from the public (professional) and private (domestic sphere), they confirm the contextual factors influencing the participants' experiences.

This section introduces understanding the multiple identities that the participants use to describe themselves. The following parts will explore each layer of the female academics' identities, starting with how they construct their Algerian female identity and academic identity, and finally, the tensions between being an academic and a woman in Algerian society.

5.3 Constructing Identities between Resisting and Conforming to the Norms

This section will expand on the data, emphasising how the participants construct their identities within the Algerian context, from which two related and often conflicting major themes emerged. The first section elaborates on how female academics build their identities differently from the typical woman (5.3.1) to challenge societal norms. Then, section 5.3.2 explores how the participants conform, to a certain degree, to fit the typical image of an Algerian woman described in the previous section (5.3.1). These two parts explain how the participants construct their identities between resisting and conforming to societal norms.

5.3.1 Feeling different from the typical Algerian woman as a form of resistance

The most prominent data is the notion that the participants described themselves as different from the typical woman. As an illustration of this view, they used phrases and sentences such as, *unlike other girls* (Cheikha), *I was not thinking like other girls* (Hadjer), and other variations that separate them from the typical Algerian woman. They generally viewed a typical woman in their communities as someone who usually submits to the societal expectations regarding marriage at a certain age, being a good daughter, wife, and mother, and being less focused on her professional career. For this reason, the data shows that the participants view their paths as atypical compared to other girls or women in their communities. Commenting on this matter, Hadjer was an ambitious academic who tried many times to succeed in the *Magister* contest and had to go to another city away from home to pursue her postgraduate study. She said:

> *After we graduated and got our BA degrees, all my friends thought about settling down and getting married. This was the last thing I was thinking about (referring to marriage). I wanted to pursue a postgraduate degree.*

Hadjer's comment shows that being married at a younger age is still viewed as a desirable criterion for being a good woman. Also, Hadjer's decision not to marry and pursue her postgraduate studies first shows that, in her opinion, marriage could be a barrier to her career advancement, especially at earlier stages. Moreover, pursuing an academic career could be challenging as it would take longer (3 to 4 years *Magister* and 4 to 6 or more years PhD in the classical system in Hadjer's case), and it might require a lot of sacrifices and adaptability to different life events as will be discussed in section 7.4. This may explain why pursuing an academic career could be viewed by some people as incompatible with the societal expectations of women who should get married and have children while they are still young. However, the data showed that younger participants received more support than older ones, and the participants from urban areas received less opposition than those from semi-urban and rural areas (discussed further in section 6.1.1), which may also affect the way they construct their identities.

Another interesting example of how some participants see themselves as different from the norm is that three participants (Naima, Cheikha, Zoubida) explained that they did not finish their maternity leave period and went back to work because of unfinished research, or they were needed at the level of the university management. They added that their families did not support this as it was unusual for women to return to work before the end of their maternity leave. To illustrate this point, Cheikha recalled:

> *I will tell you a story. After giving birth to one of my children, I returned to the lab after 40 days. However, this did not please my mother because people would congratulate me in my parents' house, and my mother would feel embarrassed if I were not there. As a solution, she asked my sister, who looks like me, to sit at my place so they would think it was me in case someone came.*

After giving birth, Cheikha was expected to stay at her mother's house to be looked after, and guests would come to congratulate her as is customary in Cheikha's region. However, Cheikha explained that she had to return to the lab, although Algerian law gives the woman her full salary during the maternity leave for a period of three months, and there is no risk of losing their job, as explained in section 2.3.2. Cheikha's story shows that the pressure to follow societal norms might not align with academic career requirements and ambitions, which could explain why pursuing an academic career might be undesirable for the typical woman, as Cheikha's story illustrates.

Commenting on how the participants feel different from the norm, Sirine believes that not only she is different from the typical Algerian woman but also insists that all female academics must always act and behave differently from the norm. Sirine believes that being an academic means influencing society through research and teaching future generations. In this regard, she explained:

> *The female academic should believe that she a woman with a great duty, not out of arrogance, but because everyone has a unique path. I am not like other women. I have duties in life. I am a person who influences society and students more than any other woman with another job. So, I should invest my time writing articles and educating my students to be good citizens. A female academic should not be like other less educated women than her. Again, this is not out of arrogance. No, it is because I am an academic, and I know what is wrong with my society. I should not follow the norm and agree with it, and I know it can be sometimes harmful.*

Sirine views stemmed from her beliefs around the purpose of education and academia in influencing society, as explained in the quote. She emphasised her role as an academic to identify negative societal customs and fix them by conducting research and influencing her students positively.

The participants' quotes explored in this section demonstrate how being an academic influences the construction of the participants' female identity as different from the norm because of the nature of their career and the requirements needed to progress in it. The data also shows, for most parts, that pursuing an academic career may not always align with the societal expectation of women and being

a typical woman, which may create a resistance influencing how these academics construct their female identity.

Even so, the following section explores how despite the participants' belief that they are different from the typical woman, the data shows that there was also conformity to societal expectations around women in the Algerian society.

5.3.2 Accepting and internalising the general societal discourses as a form of conformation

In contrast to how the participants view themselves as different from the typical Algerian woman, as explored in section 5.3.1, the data reveals that they are also conforming to fit the norm and social expectations related to being a typical woman in the Algerian society, which, undoubtedly, influence how they define and construct their identities. These expectations could be related to being a good mother and wife, less focused on her career and more engaged in her domestic life.

The theme of participants' conforming to the norm came up, for example, in discussions of how the participants describe their work-life balance or the factors influencing their academic career progression positively or negatively. Though few married participants explicitly explained how they organise their multiple identities, all of them indirectly described how they usually put their domestic role first, especially being a mother. Alia and Naima even suggested that although they pursue the same career as their husbands, who are also academics, they believe they should be the primary housekeepers. For this reason, the participants tended to prioritise their domestic roles, mainly being a mother and a wife, over their professional ones, being a researcher or a lecturer. Zahira illustrated this point perfectly. She said:

> *I am a wife, a mother, a lecturer, and then a researcher…when I was an administrator (being a former Vice head of department and head of department), it took the place of my researcher identity, now, I resigned from my administrative role, and I feel better because I can focus on my research.*

Djaouza added:

> *I invest in my children! I want them to be better than me, and I want them to be specialised from now, and everything that I wish I did, they would do...the fact that my children are succeeding is everything I need in life. Thanks to Allah, I try to do my best to progress in my career, but sometimes I feel bad because I cannot give it the attention it deserves due to my domestic commitments.*

Djaouza and Zahira clearly explain that being a wife and a mother is their primary goal. Djaouza also explained that with her situation of having three boys under the age of 18, it is essential to give them much attention to succeed in school, especially since she also believes that having successful children

is her main objective. Djaouza's view is shared among all the participants who expressed that their children's success is their primary goal. Although Djaouza admits that she is not giving her professional career the attention it deserves, she does not view being a mother as a barrier to her advancement. Like most participants, she accepts that motherhood is central to her identity as a woman.

Naima, for instance, echoed Djaouza's statement about how the participants' priority should always be for their children, especially at a younger age. For example, in explaining why being a mother should come first, Naima said:

> *Before becoming a mother, I prioritised my career because I love my field and wanted to learn more about it. However, the feeling of motherhood changed me. It is in women's nature to sacrifice for their children and help them reach their full potential at the expense of their ambition.*

Naima elaborated throughout the interview how committed she was to her studies and research as someone who got a scholarship to finish her postgraduate studies abroad because she was the top student in her class. She explained that she had always prioritised her academic career and did not think that would ever change until she found herself gradually prioritising her domestic role after becoming a mother.

None of the participants who are mothers questioned the fact that mothers are the primary caregivers or viewed it negatively, and some even explained that they want to progress in their careers mainly to secure a better future for their children. Commenting on this point, Zeyneb, who is vice head of the department, explained:

> *Being a mother is the real force that keeps me moving; it is my most significant role, and I am blessed to have my son…the more I progress, the better it is for him.*

Zeyneb's feelings could stem from the fact that she is not only the main caregiver for her son, but she had full custody of him after her divorce. For this reason, she explained that the more she progresses and earns more money, the better future she can secure for him; that is why he is the reason for her motivation to progress in her career. This example shows how even for academics who are part of their university leadership, like Zeyneb, their domestic role always comes first. Furthermore, the most intriguing finding is that none of the participants talked negatively about how they always needed to prioritise their motherhood identity. On the contrary, the data shows that all the participants saw that they must prioritise being a mother and looking after their children. As a result, they seem to conform to what they believe to be the image of a typical Algerian woman (explored in section 5.3.1).

According to the data, there seem to be some push and pull factors influencing the construction of academic woman identity between traditional views about the image of a "typical" woman and feeling different from the typical woman because of being an academic, as explored in section 5.3.1.

In the following section, an in-depth examination is made to understand how female academics construct their academic identity within Algerian higher education to delve deeper into how they build their identities. The academic identity is complex as academics are required to fulfil different but related duties: teaching, conducting research and holding formal leadership roles. The following section will explore these tensions and link them to section 5.3.

5.4 Constructing Female Academic Identity: Lecturer, Researcher and Administrator

As mentioned in section 3.4.1, the academic identity can be considered challenging to understand as it requires fulfilling different unrelated roles: teaching, research and holding formal leadership roles. When the participants talked about their academic identity, they divided it into three main parts: lecturer, researcher, and administrator (when holding a formal position), as explored in section 5.2. The following section focuses on the identity work and regulation involved in constructing the female academic identity. It is important to remember the definitions used throughout this thesis. As mentioned in section 2.3.2, formal leadership roles in Algeria can either be pedagogical or administrative; however, senior leadership roles are only administrative (Miliani, 2021). Moreover, leadership in this thesis means influencing a group of people to reach a common direction and has no relation to the individual's formal position (Egan et al., 2017). For this reason, a distinction is made between the leader identity, which is related to the female academic's view of whether she is influencing her colleagues, students or field and the administrator identity, which is referred to as the identity that female academics develop when they hold a formal leadership position.

Concerning how the participants construct their academic identity, a recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense of their belonging to academia amongst interviewees. For instance, when the participants were asked why they chose academia, they all demonstrated that this is the domain they found themselves in and strongly see themselves as academics. In this regard, Sirine observed:

> *I used to work in primary school from 1999 to 2005…I always used to say I would never stay as a teacher in primary school…I felt that my way of thinking did not fit this environment … I want to achieve more…that is why I participate at national and international conferences… and the people that meet there give me confidence in my language, performance, and research. I come back with positive energy... when I meet other academics and exchange ideas and visions…I feel that this is where I belong.*

Sirine's response shows how she was on a quest to find a career where she felt a sense of belonging. She recalled all the transitions she had to make to find where she could use her expertise, meet like-minded people, and feel satisfied after reaching every milestone in her academic career. Developing this feeling of belonging is essential because, as the data shows, the participants who expressed this feeling of belonging to academia progressed faster and were more connected with their colleagues despite the challenges. Likewise, Chahra expressed a similar sentiment about how, unlike other

domains, academia gives her a sense of moving and constant improvement either when teaching, doing research or contributing to university management. She also believes that her values align perfectly with the values needed to be a "good" academic. She explained:

> *I like conducting research work, and I like moving and going to work. In academia, I feel like someone contributing to knowledge by conducting research or teaching…I feel that I am constantly improving…That is why I am happy to be an academic.*

Chahra's quote explains how she is exhibiting some values, including constant improvement and contributing to knowledge through research and teaching her students, which are essential to being a good academic, in her view. Her feeling of happiness in being an academic is reflected in her career progression and taking up many senior leadership roles, including the vice-head of the department in charge of students' affairs and the chairperson of the scientific committee.

Like Chahra, Besma echoed the same feeling of attachment to the university. The comment below illustrates Besma's view:

> *University was always part of my life, even when I used to work in a primary school. I used to work as an assistant teacher to stay part of the university and access the library because I wanted to be in the academic field.*

Besma's story shows that even after she got her bachelor's degree and started work, she kept going to the university library to study and look for job opportunities, such as being an assistant teacher. Moreover, Besma remains enthusiastic about being at the university, and she engages well within her environment, in her opinion. Also, she believes that being single gives her much time to invest more in her academic career by being the editor-in-chief of her department journal, working as a vice-head of the department for some time and contributing to the organisation of study days and conferences in her department. Besma and Chahra's extracts, similar to most participants, show how the sense of belonging to academia drives the female academic to be more engaged in her academic environment. This significant theme in the data displays the relationship between academic identity construction, a sense of belonging to academia and career progression or taking up senior leadership roles at the level of university management. The following section will delve deeper to understand how female academics construct their lecturer, researcher and administrator (when holding a formal position) identities and what tensions can arise between them.

5.4.1 Tensions between lecturer and researcher identities

As indicated in section 5.2.1, Sirine explained that being an academic means being different from the typical woman because of the role of academics as change-makers in their societies and communities. Most participants shared a similar view with Sirine, who believed that being an academic means

influencing their students or colleagues by fulfilling their teaching roles, holding an administrative or pedagogical role or research.

The prominence of their lecturer identity over the other academic roles was clear in how all the participants described leadership as a way of influencing their students through teaching. The word cloud (figure 5.2) shows the participants' frequently used words in order to explain what leadership means to them, with the most common words including “students” and “influence”.

Figure 5. 2 Word Cloud showing words used by the female academics to describe what leadership means to them

For this reason, the informants defined themselves as leaders in all cases because they believed that they were influencing through their lecturing. In this respect, Sirine stated:

> *Leadership does not mean that I am holding an administrative position, but I am also teaching a group of students, motivating them, and changing them into the best, making me a good leader. When my students tell me their reading skills have improved, I feel like a real leader. Leadership does not need a table and a chair, but it impacts society and directs visions*.

Similarly, Hadjer shares the same view by linking her understanding of leadership with transforming her students to their best version. She said:

> *For me, leadership means transforming ordinary students and making them unique, ambitious, enthusiastic people who will eventually make an impact and leave their fingerprints. This is my message to my students.*

The extracts show that Sirine and Hadjer do not view being a leader as not related to formal positions; instead, it is more related to the act of influencing, especially influencing their students. It can also be

seen that the lecturer's identity for female academics is essential in developing their own academic identities as they realise their vision through influencing their students. That is why female academics prioritised their lecturer identity before their researcher or administrator identity (when holding a formal position). There are possible reasons to explain the prominence of the lecturer's identity and its strong link to the concept of leadership as influence. It could be because being a lecturer is a form of conformity to the social discourses around women's careers because it fits the image of being a woman in Algerian society. Another potential reason could be that there is more organisational pressure to fulfil teaching duties than, for instance, research ones.

Furthermore, a question was asked to the participants whether they felt active in their research or not. The researcher identity is essential in the academic identity; considering the progression regulations at Algerian universities, mentioned in section 2.3.2, publishing research is the main requirement for career progression, as it is elsewhere in the world. A variety of perspectives were expressed to answer this question; eight of the participants stated that they are not active in publishing, while nine said they are, but they did not reach their desired level of research activity, and one participant explained that she is in between being active and inactive (See table 5.1).

Table 5. 1 Participants' perceptions around their research activeness

Name	Situation (in her words)
Soumia	Active
Zeyneb	inactive
Zoubida	inactive
Sirine	Active
Maria	Active
Cheikha	Active
Leila	Active
Chahra	Active
Meriem	inactive
Zahira	inactive
Linda	inactive
Sarah	In between
Hadjer	inactive
Besma	Active
Manar	inactive
Alia	inactive
Halima	Active
Naima	Active

Unlike how they answered the direct question of whether they were active in research or not, the fact that the researcher's identity was the least developed was a theme that recurred with most participants. The majority of the participants place their researcher identity last after their domestic roles (being a mother and a wife) or their professional roles (being a lecturer or an administrator (when holding a formal position). As indicated in section 5.2, Zahira placed her researcher identity last among all her roles and explained that she had to resign from her senior leadership role to regain her researcher identity. In this regard, Sirine added:

> *The Algerian female academic will do her best to manage the three roles, being a housewife (mother and wife and housekeeper), lecturer, and researcher, and in all three, the researcher is usually lost.*

Sirine's comment sheds light on a significant issue contributing to the underrepresentation of women in professorial roles in Algeria. She explained in depth why the researcher's identity usually struggles between the two. One way to explain this could be because of the lack of organisational pressure and the feeling of job security even if they are not active in research, contributing to the fact that being a researcher is the least developed. However, the researcher's identity is important for academic career progression, and struggling to develop it also means slowing down career advancement and increasing the risk that women will abandon their careers. Talking about this issue, Cheikha put it:

> *So, I had to educate my children in a way that would make them ambitious. Also, I had to finish my thesis while working as a full-time lecturer. As a result, I decided to postpone my research to look after my children and resumed my research after they became old enough.*

Like all mothers in this study, Cheikha found herself obliged to postpone working on her thesis because she had small children who needed much attention. Although Cheikha is now active in research and has become a professor, she experienced struggles to develop the researcher's identity, as shown in the quote. Moreover, Leila explained that all the researchers struggle in Algerian higher education because of the absence of research culture and support for researchers. She explained:

> *I am one of the few academics at the level of my university who could publish in an international journal. Therefore, I was invited to a meeting to discuss improving the number of publications at my university. I need to tell you that; few Algerian academics get published in high impact journals, so I try to write my articles in English to have more international visibility and increase the number of readers.*

Only a few participants, Leila and Soumia, explained that they are confident as researchers because their research is influential in their fields. Also, they explained that they prefer to have the ambition to publish more research rather than holding a formal leadership position because research gives them freedom; this will be elaborated further in section 5.4.2. In this respect, Leila said:

> *After all my experiences, I realised that scientific research is the best place to freely influence your colleagues and students.*

Similarly, Soumia added:

> *I am one of the pioneers in my field, and I am the only woman in the working-team.*

Both Soumia and Leila explained how their research is an essential part of their academic identity, and it was reflected in how they sometimes prioritise their researcher identity before their lecturer and daughter identities. An interesting comment on this finding is that both Leila and Soumia are single with no children to care for, which could help them dedicate more time to research. It may seem that

the mother/wife identity challenges the researcher as research is usually done at home; Maria explained that academics in Algeria do not get offices unless they occupy a senior administrative role.

The following section explores another interesting interplay between the researcher and administrator identity (when holding a formal leadership role).

5.4.2 Tensions between researcher and administrator identities

As explained in section 5.4.1, all female academics have/experienced struggles with developing their research identity because of various factors, such as being a mother and having heavy domestic duties. However, a prominent theme in the data was that most participants, especially those who had/have experience in holding senior leadership roles, explained how their researcher identity was lost because of their administrative duties. They added that they prefer to focus on their research instead of holding senior leadership roles and becoming an administrator. In this regard, Zahira explained:

> *When I was an administrator (holding a senior leadership role), it took the place of my researcher identity; now, I resigned from my administrative role, and I feel better because I can focus on my research.*

Besides, Zahira's statement also shows tension between administrative duties and research, resulting in losing her researcher identity, as discussed in section 5.4.1. For this reason, she resigned from her senior administrative role to focus more on her research. This view was shared by most participants who believed that being an administrator is a barrier to developing their researcher identity, especially when the female academic has less support from her family and colleagues, as elaborated further in sections 6.3.3 and 7.2.

Similarly, Zoubida is one of the participants with long experience in senior administrative roles (over ten years of different positions). She was one of the few qualified people in charge of expanding a new university in a semi-urban area and contributed significantly to its establishment. Expanding on Zahira's point, Zoubida explained:

> *I have always enjoyed holding a senior administrative role because I like managing institutions. However, it slowed my academic research because teaching and taking the administrative role left no time for scientific research. I still had time at night, but you know how that goes when you have children and deal with their needs. Managing a senior administrative position while being a lecturer and a mother is challenging, so holding an administrative role delayed my research progression.*

Zoubida's experience resonates with most participants who held a senior administrative position. They noticed that they were not active in their research when holding a senior administrative role, but they could focus more on their research after they had resigned. They both experienced satisfaction in their academic career once they regained their researcher identity. Besides, the participants who progressed quickly in their careers (e.g., Naima, Soumia, Leila) explained that they did not want to

hold any senior position because they wanted to focus on their research bearing in mind other domestic responsibilities. In this regard, Soumia explained:

> *I do not have time for administrative or pedagogical roles, and I also find I should invest my time in scientific research rather than holding senior leadership roles. So, conducting research is even better for my career.*

Soumia clearly states here that conducting research is better for academic career progression; that is why it is essential to explore how the participants construct their researcher identity within their academic one. In addition, section 6.3 will elaborate more on the challenges faced on the organisational level that may contribute to many academics not wanting to hold senior leadership roles.

In addition to being a barrier to developing their researcher identity, the participants also explained that being an administrator (holding a senior administrative role) is a barrier to being a leader (as explained in section 5.4.1, which means being influential). In this regard, Zeyneb explained:

> *I cannot qualify what I am doing as leadership because it is just administrative work. Being a leader and having influence comes from my personality, but not from my formal administrative position.*

Zeyneb, vice-head of her department and "*his right hand*", according to him, explained that she is not a leader because she holds a formal leadership position. She added that her personality gives her power and influence, not the position per se. Following the view that leadership is about influence, Leila added that holding a senior administrative role could even be considered a barrier to being a leader. She explained:

> *I do not consider someone holding a senior leadership position a leader because leadership is more significant than holding a formal position. Most senior administrators find themselves fulfilling bureaucratic duties rather than influencing their colleagues.*

Leila's quote shows the incompatibility between being a leader, in her opinion, and holding a formal senior leadership role. As the data shows, when holding a formal senior leadership role, the academic would be preoccupied with excessive bureaucratic and administrative duties, as will be discussed further in section 6.3.1, and might not influence their colleagues as they should. Another possible explanation why the participants reject the leader's identity when occupying a formal position could be their belief that being a woman is incompatible with the requirements of these positions in the Algerian context. Some participants elaborated on this point (e.g., Sirine, Leila); they explained that leadership is associated with being a man, and women are not supposed to hold senior administrative roles. Section 6.2.3 will elaborate more on the sociocultural perceptions of female leadership in general and higher education in particular. To conclude, most participants identified themselves as

leaders because they influence their students, colleagues, or fields without necessarily occupying a formal position.

As explained in section 2.3.2, there are two kinds of formal leadership roles in Algeria, administration and pedagogy. Pedagogical roles are usually related to students' teaching and learning, whereas administration is about managing the universities and colleagues. A surprising theme was that the participants preferred to hold pedagogical roles or positions that allowed them to serve their students rather than manage their colleagues. Zoubida explained that dealing with students is more fulfilling and gave her more happiness than other roles that involve dealing with her colleagues.

> *I held the position of vice-dean, then I resigned, and I became responsible for the students' enrollment at the level of the Rectorat. I started establishing connections with all the university faculties, and it allowed me to stay in contact with the students. I enjoyed this role even better than the first one because I was helping students with their problems rather than dealing with my colleagues.*

Likewise, Sirine echoed Zoubida's comment by elaborating:

> *My pedagogical role description allows me to follow the students' academic attainment, the issues they face, and anything related to learning. However, Subhan Allah (an Arabic interjection to express surprise), I found myself learning about my students' needs and helping them, especially those with special needs. The beautiful thing is that these students with special needs started to participate more and engage during the lesson. Leadership is love, taking good care of people's hearts and emotions and positively influencing them.*

Sirine recalled a story that she had students with special needs, but the university did not provide them with any support system and even did not tell the lecturer about their conditions[5]. However, she explained how helping them by letting the lecturers know about their conditions gave her much satisfaction, significantly when their level improved, and they started to be more engaged with their studies.

The two extracts explain how these participants prefer to influence their students by holding formal positions. There are possible reasons for this choice. First, it could be because they believe that influencing their students is more meaningful for them than influencing the management of their department, aligning with their understanding of leadership as a process of influence regardless of the formal position. Another possible explanation of their view might be that the image of the helpful and nurturing female academic is congruent with the image of the typical woman; as also mentioned in section 5.3.2, female academics might also try to conform to societal expectations by choosing the roles that would allow them to be seen as "nurturing" and being a mother in their institutions. For this reason, most participants seem to construct their identities in conformity with the social expectations

[5] Despite the improvements in the integration of children with special needs at Algerian universities, there is still a need for policies to guarantee the inclusiveness of this vulnerable group (Bessai,2019).

of being nurturing through influencing their students through teaching or holding positions that allow them to help their students, which are usually middle or lower leadership positions, rather than through research or leading their colleagues in senior leadership roles. As a result, the data may indicate that the participants construct their academic identity with some female characteristics related to being a mother.

The following section combines the findings of sections 5.3 and 5.4 around the discourses on being a woman and an academic, respectively, and how they affect the participants' identity construction and tensions that may arise.

5.5 Tensions between being an Academic and a Woman in the Algerian Context

Sections 5.3 and 5.4 elaborate on how the participants construct their female academic identities and highlight the tensions experienced due to the interplay between the different identities taken from the public and private spheres. A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst participants that they constantly struggle with an internal conflict affecting their careers and identities. This view surfaced mainly concerning the tensions between the discourses related to being a woman and an academic in Algeria, and all the participants expressed a feeling of guilt that stemmed from their belief that they were not fulfilling any role adequately.

For instance, most participants, especially those who are married and have children, thought their husbands, children, and even their parents or parents-in-law were not getting the attention they deserved. This was illustrated in how they constantly ensure that other people are satisfied with them, while also trying to keep up with their ambition to progress in their careers and be good lecturers, researchers, or administrators if they hold a senior leadership role. In this regard, Zeyneb Said:

> *Now I left my son alone in the house, and I should not do it, and sometimes I come tired from work, and I cannot revise with him, I am not giving my son his right.*

Zeyneb explained that sometimes she needs to leave her son alone in the house because she may have a meeting or need to stay late in the office to deal with her administrative duties. Zeyneb's experience is like most participants holding a senior administrative position who are required to go to the university five days per week. According to the data, when children are under 18, they require much effort to look after them, including teaching and cooking for them every day, as Zeyneb explained. However, using terms such as "*his right*" shows how Zeyneb feels that it is her duty alone to look after her child, as also explored in section 5.3.2, for all participants seem to have internalised the fact that they are the primary caregiver.

Besides, they sometimes feel guilty because they are not giving their research the attention it needs and their families. Akin to Zeyneb's experience, Djaouza added:

> *When I was doing my PhD, my husband helped me a lot and took me to different cities to find what I needed for my lab work. When I graduated, it was time to give back. I felt that I owed my success to my family…I think, I am doing what I can as a mother because my children are my life. In terms of teaching, I am trying to update my lessons and improve the level of my students. However, I am falling short in my research duty, and I am not satisfied.*

There are several interesting points in Djaouza's narration. First, she explained that her husband supported her progression and helped her move around the country to do her lab work for her PhD thesis. However, after finishing her thesis, she felt that she needed to repay him for helping her. This might be understood that she views her husband's help as a sacrifice on his part. Second, she had to reaffirm that being a mother is her greatest achievement, conforming to societal expectations as a woman, as mentioned in section 5.3.2. Finally, as explained in section 5.4.2, the researcher's identity is always the one aspect to give up in all this tension, in addition to rejecting all offers to hold a senior administrative role. However, not being satisfied as a researcher might increase her feeling of guilt because Djaouza might feel torn between being a good mother and being a good academic, in her opinion.

Djaouza and Zeyneb's statements about their guilt resonate with most participants even if they were active in their research, and two attitudes were observed in the data. Some participants slowed down their careers (e.g., Zoubida, Meriem) and became less productive. This aspect is explored in section 7.4, which focuses on the strategies deployed by female academics to manage their lived/career duties, especially when their children are under 18. Alternatively, they may have health issues because of stress and burnout due to the dual tension in their personal and professional lives (e.g., Soumia, Chahra), as mentioned in section 7.3.

As a result of feeling guilty, conforming to the general societal expectations was observed throughout the data because pleasing others is consistent with the image of a good woman who should think about her family and focus on her nurturing side. Some participants even feel guilty when they need time to look after themselves, as they feel the need to please everyone in their lives, their children, husbands, parents or even their colleagues. In this regard, Besma reflected:

> *I always try to manage my parents' needs and work requirements to please everyone, but this is at my expense. Sometimes I do not have time to do a facial mask, so I need to stop doing other tasks to look after myself.*

Chahra echoed the same opinion and explained:

> *I am still working and moving forward, but I must look after myself, especially my skin and hair. I do not like the fact that I look tired with small eyes, and I am losing my eyesight. So, I feel like I have become selfish in order to keep moving forward.*

Besma and Chahra are single, with no children under 18, and engaged at the level of their department management while keeping active in research. They both explained their struggle because of excessive

administrative work while trying to overcome the societal and personal barriers, as will be explored in chapters 6 and 7. Besma, for instance, explained, "*I am thankful for the sleeping time; otherwise, I would spend the whole day standing*" because of her commitments at the level of her department management and her responsibilities towards her sick parents. Similar to Chahra who experienced burnout, she started losing her eyesight because of the pressure and the dual burden of her private and professional lives.

Although the participants do not share the same portfolio, they all shared their feeling of guilt for not fulfilling their research duties, not looking after their families as they should, or not looking after themselves. They all shared their need to overcome barriers from different levels, creating tension between their different roles. As a result, it is an ongoing struggle for all the participants, affecting how they define and construct their identities within conflicting discourses about being good women and good academics.

5.6 Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand how female academics define and construct their identities.

First, the data shows the participants' different identities align with their domestic and professional roles in the public and private spheres, such as being a mother, sister, wife, lecturer or researcher. Moreover, some participants described themselves using their national identity (i.e. Algerian), or religious identity (i.e. Muslim). These self-descriptions came up in various parts of the transcripts, for instance, when the participants wanted to justify one of their choices, and how they defined themselves definitely impacted how they constructed their identities.

A major theme in the data was that all the participants explained that they feel different from the typical Algerian woman as they view their path as atypical to most women in their surroundings. However, the data revealed that they were also in other parts of their lives conforming to the general societal expectations around being a mother and wife, and internalising these expectations, as none of the participants questioned the fact that she is the primary caregiver.

Concerning how the participants construct their academic identity, all the participants indicated that they found themselves in academia as a profession. They divided their academic identity into three parts, lecturer, researcher and administrator when holding a formal leadership role. They all identified themselves as lecturers because they influence their students through teaching. Then, an in-depth understanding of how the participants construct their researcher identity is made, showing that researcher identity could sometimes be the least developed among other identities. This could be

linked to the tensions between being a mother and researcher as the participants conform to the societal expectation in relation to being the primary caregiver. In addition, there was also a tension between the researcher identity and administrator identity for participants who have/held a formal leadership role. Most participants explained that research and publishing are more important than holding formal positions; for this reason, they had to resign from their senior administrative roles or never aspired to hold one in the first place. Finally, when discussing the administrative or pedagogical roles, most participants explained that they prefer to hold positions that allow them to meet their students' needs rather than manage their colleagues and institutions. The data reveals that female academics construct their academic identities in conformity with the social expectation of being perceived as "nurturing".

Finally, the data shows minor and major themes linked to how female academics define and construct their identities. However, the most significant theme was how the tensions and interplay between their multiple roles and identities resulted in a feeling of guilt. This guilt could stem from how they feel they are not fulfilling their domestic and professional roles for various reasons explored in the following chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). Interestingly, these various reasons could positively or negatively influence the participants' careers and identities. That is why, highlighting the nuances between the opportunities and challenges might be essential for a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the participants.

Chapter 6 Sociocultural and Organisational Factors Influencing Female Academics' Identities and Careers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the collected data in response to the second research question:

RQ2: What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' identities?

The chapter is divided into two parts to address this research question by identifying the sociocultural and organisational factors influencing female academics' careers and identities within Algerian universities and informing how they define and construct their identities.

The first part (6.2) deals with the sociocultural factors influencing the participants' career progression and holding formal leadership roles at Algerian universities. Three main subthemes emerged from the analysis that affects the participants on a sociocultural level. Section 6.2.1 tackles the societal perceptions of women's participation in public life according to the participants' experiences in general. Then, a specific focus on the societal perceptions around being a female academic in section 6.2.2. Finally, the impact of the religious teachings on societal expectations in relation to women's role in society is explored in section 6.2.3.

The second part (6.3) tackles the factors influencing female academics on the organisational/institutional level. The data was themed as follows: First, section 6.3.1 explores the current issues and improvements of ministerial policies and regulations that impact female academics' experiences in higher education. Section 6.3.2 gathers the participants' opinions regarding policies supporting female academics specifically. Finally, section 6.3.3 discusses how female academics' staff relation influence their lived experiences. Understanding how these organisational factors influence female academics' careers and identities provides insights into how they construct their identities.

6.2 Sociocultural Factors

The sociocultural factors theme was one of the predominant themes in the interview data, and it illustrates how the general social discourses influence how the participants define and construct their identities. The following sections will elaborate in depth on this broad theme.

6.2.1 Societal views vis-à-vis women's participation in the public sphere

One of the Algerian government's top priorities was to promote women's rights and improve their participation in public institutions and universities. For this reason, there were enormous efforts to expand educational institutions and universities in every province in the country to ensure women's access to higher education; also, it was compulsory that parents send their children to school, whether a boy or a girl, as explained in section 2.3.1.

The data indicate that traditional views regarding women's roles persist despite some modernisation in Algeria. That is why a recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst the interviewees that women's socio/cultural expectations in their society influenced their career progression negatively. In this respect, Cheikha said:

> *The obstacles I faced were mainly societal. I got married just after finishing my bachelor's degree. Then, I became a mother. It was not easy to be a mother with much ambition. It was not easy.*

Similarly, Zeyneb, an academic holding a senior leadership role, feels that the traditional views are still present despite her career success. She elaborated:

> *Yes, too much pressure. No matter what I do and how hard I try, I am just a woman, cook, clean, and stay at home. That is what matters for our society*.

Although Zeyneb was one of the few female academics in her department who had a senior administrative role, she still believes that, for society, her professional success does not matter compared to her domestic one. Saying that "*I am just a woman*" illustrates how she believes society views her as just a woman who is required to fulfil her domestic duties. Furthermore, being married may also be socially encouraged as it may give more prestige to the female academic as it fits the criteria of a good woman in Algerian society, as expressed by Halima, who was the only participant who talked about this point explicitly. She said:

> *In our society in general, we have a female model that is preferable for all women to fit, and you may struggle if you do not fit. My husband and I, for instance, decided not to have children until I finished my PhD thesis, and we agreed because he does not have a traditional mindset. However, you should see the society and even my male colleagues asking me why we still do not have children and whether there is a problem.*

Halima's comment shows that for the female academic to have full approval, she may need to fit the traditional model of being the virtuous female who is a mother and dresses modestly. As a result, concerns were shared by these female academics that they might conform to some societal norms because they might be afraid of others' judgment. In this regard, Soumia talked about her struggles as a single woman and an active academic in publishing. She explained that she faced many issues in her department simply because her male colleagues felt alienated. She said:

> *Not all women have that drive. Nevertheless, I should say that these women do not struggle that much like I am struggling because our societies are purely patriarchal. They expect women to be always in the margin, and only men can focus on their careers, which is not expected from women.*

Soumia became a professor after eight years after being rewarded her PhD degree, so her progression is considered exceptional by her colleagues. She explained that her female colleagues are not keen to be active researchers and are not encouraged to do so as they usually are not fully engaged in their

professional lives. For this reason, according to her data, Soumia, who is competing with her male colleagues in the number and quality of publications, is facing many issues and less support in her department as she might not fit the image of the typical woman who needs support and is more focused on her domestic role. She also added that as long as the female academic is in the margin of her professional life, she would receive support; that is why women tend to prioritise their domestic roles.

Another example of this concern shared by Halima was about the harsh criticism received from society when the female academic does not fit the image of the ideal woman. Halima's husband is very supportive and "*allowing*" her to join a charitable organisation because he noticed that her mood improved when she did voluntary work. As a response, Halima's mother told her that she should be grateful for her husband "*allowing*" her do all these activities and accepting that she does not always cook for him when she is busy with many academic duties. In this respect, Halima said:

> *Our society lets men control their lives until it becomes a habit. However, my husband knows me and knows where I am, and I married him after I was convinced with his character…in Algeria, we have an ideal image of how a woman should be, she should be married, wearing modest clothes, a specific way of talking, and should go through all the steps that women should go through, being married, then to be a mother.*

Halima's extract shows the societal expectations of women, being married, modest in clothes and talking, and being a mother. However, when a woman exhibits traits that could be not incompatible with being a typical woman, she would face harsh criticism, even from their parents, like in the case of Halima. Furthermore, it seems that even in the professional setting, women are always expected to fulfil their domestic role and expected to stay in the margin, as Soumia elaborated. This could explain why their domestic roles are prioritised to avoid the negative comments from most participants.

However, it is of note that differences were observed in the pressure women experienced from their communities. These differences might be the consequence of their age or geographical background. First, older participants in the age group (51-60 years old) (e.g., Cheikha, Zoubida and Manar) talked about how society was less supportive of women's education and participation in the public sphere, whereas younger participants (such as Meriem, Zeyneb and Chahra) had more social support. According to the participants' experiences, in the past, people used to be less supportive of women's education, and it could be because of such beliefs about women's position or safety fears, especially during the Black Decade in Algeria. In this regard, one interviewee reported that:

> *When I was young, I could not travel abroad to study and work, but now things are better, and everybody supported my daughter. I knew in my time that studying and doing my PhD in my*

> *local university was the limit…education is the only way to change the mentality of the whole society, and a small group can make this change. (Cheikha)*

Cheikha grew up in a semi-rural area in the 1970s, in which she explained that being ambitious was challenging in a society that did not encourage women to pursue a postgraduate degree or to study away from home. Cheikha's experience was not dissimilar to other older participants who explained that society in the past was more conservative than it is now, and girls were not encouraged to travel to pursue their postgraduate degrees. Similarly, during the Black Decade in the 1990s, many women and men were killed, including students and teachers. Manar witnessed one of these attacks while pursuing her bachelor's degree. She recalled:

> *In the final year of my bachelor's degree in 1992, I witnessed the explosion of a car bomb in the centre of Algiers… and felt it although I was a little bit far. We lived in fear, and it was very challenging for me to finish my degree and get my diploma. However, I could not register for a Magister degree because the ministry of higher education stopped working because of the country's political situation. My dad and elder brother ran away because terrorists wanted to kill them, and I started teaching in a secondary school. It was difficult, and I still could not recover fully after living that trauma.*

Manar explained that her family supported her dream of becoming a professor, but she could not achieve it because of all the trauma she witnessed. Although Manar was the only interviewee directly affected by the country's political situation in the 1990s, the effects of the conflict of earlier generations of women could explain the lack of female role models, as will be discussed in section 6.3.3.

Second, there was a difference in terms of societal pressure and support between participants who grew up in urban areas (e.g., Meriem, Sarah, Djaouza) and participants who grew up in semi-urban or rural areas (e.g., Hadjer, Zahira, Leila). It was noticeable in the data that the participants from urban cities seemed to have less societal pressure as their communities were more encouraging and supportive of women's education, with much more opportunities to pursue postgraduate degrees in their local universities. However, the participants from semi-urban cities had fewer opportunities locally for postgraduate degrees and more societal pressures because of the mindsets that tend to be more conservative and parochial. Commenting on this issue, Sarah, who comes from an urban city and currently living in a semi-urban one, explained:

> *Where I come from, people are more open-minded compared than here. I noticed that here people are more traditional and reserved. I think that it is essential that we learn and exchange knowledge.*

Sarah noticed that although women now are working everywhere in the country, they are encouraged less where she is working (semi-urban area) compared to her home city, where she used to be a student (urban area). She explained that there is not much exchange between academics, especially

between women, because they are mainly encouraged to look after their homes rather than their careers. Another possible explanation for Sarah's observation is that education might have taken longer to reach semi-urban and rural areas knowing that independent Algeria is just 60 years old. For this reason, the change may need more time in places with newer universities compared to urban cities.

Nevertheless, all the participants agreed that they could notice a positive societal change regarding women's participation in public life and more support for women pursuing higher education. In this regard, Leila and Naima said:

> *Traditionally, Algerian women have worked with men in informal settings such as helping the family farms, and Algerian men have always supported their informal role (working and earning money from home. After independence, with the government's efforts to encourage the participation of women in public life, there was some resistance from society, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. However, now I think it is changing, and not everybody thinks that women should stay at home because they have started realising that they need to look at women differently. (Leila)*

> *From my experience, the number of female students is much higher than male students, and in some classes, I did not have any male students. So, I think female participation in public places, including universities and senior leadership positions, would increase with time…I think that free education and health services helped improve gender equality in Algeria compared to other countries in the region. (Naima)*

Leila and Naima explain how government policies after independence have significantly contributed to changing social discourse about the position of women in society. Moreover, they both believe that the societal perception about how pursuing postgraduate degrees is necessary now for women to have better jobs. Thus, this change in the societal perception of women's careers might have influenced female academics' identity construction.

The following section will delve deeper into the societal discourses around being a female academic in Algerian society.

6.2.2 Social discourses around being a female academic in Algeria

A common belief among the participants and most evidenced in the data is that being an academic is considered preferable for women in Algeria. As a result, they indicated that they are highly respected in society. Commenting on how society perceives female academics, Zahira recalled a story about one day when she was on her way to the university. She reported:

> *Being an academic in Algeria is something regarded as prestigious. It is not only because we are well paid, but also because people admire us. The police did not give me a driving warrant because I explained that I was driving fast because I had a class, they gave me back my driving licence. Also, being an academic, especially for women, is highly regarded in social gatherings because we are seen as more knowledgeable.*

Zahira listed various reasons why being an academic is highly regarded, such as good salary and being perceived as more knowledgeable. Zahira's lived experience is not an exception as none of the participants experienced a negative reaction when they said to people that they were academics; on the contrary, it is highly regarded and respected within society.

Moreover, Alia elaborated on why being a female academic is highly regarded. She said:

> *There are many advantages of being an academic in general: the prestige of working at the university, hours of work (teaching two days per week), conducting research you are passionate about, and the good salary compared to other sectors.*

Similar to Zahira's view, the salary[6], teaching two days per week, and conducting research that she is passionate about are the main reasons why being an academic is regarded as prestigious, in Alia's opinion. Moreover, five out of twelve interviewees (Zoubida, Leila, Zeyneb, Chahra, and Zahira) worked outside the education sector before joining higher education. They decided to change their profession mainly because they believed being an academic was more suitable for women. Zoubida explained that, in her experience, being an academic is more convenient compared to being an architect. She added:

> *Being an architect is very difficult for women because they need to work with men in the field. I guess it went well initially, but it was evident that I needed to be corrupted or have connections to get projects after some time. For this reason, I decided that being an academic is a much better and simpler idea.*

Zoubida explained that she felt that architecture in Algeria is "*a men's world*", so she thought that being an academic could be more suitable for her as a woman because she would not need to be obliged to progress in her career. In addition, in other sectors such as banks or government offices, the female administrators may be under lots of pressure from their bosses, as explained by Zeyneb, so she also thinks that being a female academic is more suitable for women and supported by society. One possible explanation of this striking finding appears to be because being an academic would allow women to look after their domestic affairs as they would only be required to go to the university two days per week if she was not holding an administrative or pedagogical role. Also, an academic career could be considered congruent with Islamic religious beliefs about women's work as the contact between women and men is limited within the learning and teaching environment, which might be viewed positively in society compared to, for instance, architecture.

Although being an academic is highly regarded by society, there are misconceptions about what it means to be an academic. According to the data, the discourses around being a female academic in

[6] Although the participants explained that they are well paid compared to other sectors. The salary of the Algerian academic is considered one of the lowest in the world (K, 2018).

Algeria are that it is the best job for a woman because they do not have many teaching hours, which would allow them to look after their husbands and children better than women working in other sectors, as previously mentioned without taking into consideration the research aspect of being an academic. Meriem described it perfectly by saying:

> *If you work at the university, they will tell you lucky you! You only teach for two days. If you do not go to a social gathering, they will ask you why you did not come? They do not understand what it is like to be a researcher. I am a teacher for them, teaching for two days with a good salary. I am the best.*

Meriem talked about a real-life incident that happened to her in this extract when she did not go to her friend's party because she was working on her research. According to Meriem, most people do not understand the struggles of being a researcher, and if she starts to explain that she needs to work and progress, they will not understand why she is struggling. The social discourses around being an excellent academic seem unrelated to publishing and progressing in their career or holding a senior leadership role at their university. They seem to relate more to how the female academic is involved in her social and familial life (being a wife, mother, or daughter), which is reflected in their struggle to develop their researcher identity and prominence of the lecturer one, as discussed in section 5.4.

For this reason, concerns were expressed by the participants about receiving negative comments not only outside the university but even from other female academics who treat their academic career as a teaching career without thinking of progressing and improving their level through research. The participants commented that they all hear some discouragement from their professional and personal circles when they struggle to publish in high-quality journals or manage their senior leadership roles, if they had one. The following comment below illustrates this view:

> *Her colleagues and family will say why you are bothering yourself*! *Raise your children and get your salary at the end of the month. (Zeyneb)*

Zeyneb's comment resonates with Meriem's that the family and colleagues of female academics might not understand why they would go into all the struggle to publish in high-ranking journals, for instance. Especially that, academics in Algeria enjoy a high level of job security, mentioned in section 2.3, some colleagues and family members of the female academics will not understand why they are going into that struggle. What is essential is to look after their children and get their salary at the end of the month, and many female academics seem to be conforming to the dominant social discourse about what it means to be a female academic and focus more on their domestic life rather than progressing in their careers, especially after getting their PhD degree. In this respect, Cheikha added:

> *However, what bothers me about female academics who are my colleagues or even I met at conferences, they tell me now, "we are doctors, it is enough, it is enough; I have a position at the university, I do not need to progress because my success is when I succeed at home as a*

mother and a wife". This will let her sacrifice her future for her Children's future; unfortunately, I have met many women like this.

From Cheikha's observation and experience, the effect of these negative messages was seen more in the answers of the married participants because they appear to be more affected by these social considerations. It is suggested that they might get disapproval from society if they prioritise their professional roles more than their domestic ones, which was reflected in how they conform to the general societal discourse explored in section 5.3.2. Also, there was an agreement among the participants that these social expectations are making them tired, contributing to the fact that they are not fulfilling their duties as academics or as women (mothers, wives, or daughters), and to their feeling of guilt discussed in section 5.5. For example, Besma, who is a single academic, said that because of these social expectations, she feels unable to focus on her career:

My mother is an old woman; is it acceptable to let her do the cleaning at home even if I am tired? Sometimes I stay standing up the whole day until the time of sleeping.

Although Besma is single with no children, her domestic role as a daughter remains as important as her job as an academic. Besides, she indicated that she wants to compensate her parents for her time at work.

As a result of trying to fulfil these expectations, female academics would be obliged to sacrifice one of these roles, usually their academic career and research (as observed in section 5.4.3). Because of that, they seem less active in publishing and more reluctant to hold senior leadership roles, especially if they cannot manage their multiple roles and do not have someone who can help them with domestic chores (such as a family member or maid). The interviewees were not asked whether they should bring a maid; only Maria talked about hiring a maid to clean her house and spend quality time with her daughter. While the rest of the participants only talked about receiving help from a family member, which is discussed further in section 7.1.2. Maria explained:

I know it is not acceptable for many women to have a maid in the house, but I have one, and I am so happy because I can focus on playing with my daughter and teaching her.

Maria is one of the few participants who had an exceptional career. She has recently been promoted to a professorial role while having three children under 18. She said that she struggled at the beginning of her career because she lived with her parents-in-law. However, when they moved to her place and had a maid coming to do the cleaning, it saved her more time for her children and research, although she indicated that she does not have time to look after herself. Sirine believes that hiring a maid is a common problem among Algerian women generally, and it is rooted in the belief that the woman should look after her house and children and not hire a maid. Sirine explained:

> *The female academic became only an employee because she did not get rid of old societal insecurities. They (female academics) say I should take care of my house; I do not accept a maid coming and doing my job.*

Sirine explained in this quote that the majority of the female academics internalised the societal view that they need to look after their houses alone and be the best mothers or wives because this is what counts for society, as discussed in section 5.3.2. A possible explanation might be that hiring a maid to do what is socially required of them to do is culturally unacceptable. From the statement of Sirine, it seems that the experiences and perceptions of female academics are influenced by the social understanding of what it is like to be a female academic and the expectations of women in general. There is more encouragement nowadays for women to pursue higher education, as discussed in section 6.2.1, and being an academic is culturally preferable for women for various reasons (good salary and flexible working hours). However, when choosing between their domestic role and investing time in research or holding senior leadership roles, the data shows that women are discouraged from being engaged and involved in their professional lives.

The following section will detail the impact of the social understanding inspired by the Islamic religion, specifically around female leadership, careers and roles in general and higher education.

6.2.3 Impact of religious interpretations of Islam and culture on women's careers and roles

The impact of religious interpretations of Islam on women's experiences was not particularly prominent in the interview data. None of the participants expressed that religion per se is a barrier to women's advancement in the workplace. However, some religious influences were observed in the data, mainly when the participants talked about the barriers to female leadership and how women should always prioritise their domestic roles as mothers.

Section 5.3.2 explains how female academics have put the mother or wife identities first, especially those married. Although not all the participants talked about how their Islamic beliefs guided their thinking, choices, and decisions, some expressed that women should always prioritise their domestic role in Islam. In elaborating on the religious motivation behind their choices, Soumia explained that:

> *These are the priorities, being a mother and wife first, then other roles can come, if you can manage between them, then you add your work, it is okay. However, the priority should always be being a mother and a wife...God asked women to stay in their houses, meaning that women should not leave the house unless there is a necessity, and her priorities should always be her husband and children.*

Soumia's statement captures the perceptions/views of some of the participants who are mothers, as they also believe that being a mother/wife should always come first because God instructed them to focus on their role in the private sphere. Nevertheless, they do not all share the same opinion about the source of this obligation. While some participants (Cheikha, Maria) agree with Soumia that Islam

recommends that women always put their domestic role first, others (Alia, Zoubida, Zahira, Zeyneb, Naima) think that motherhood is their most important role, and it comes from their nature as women. In explaining why being a mother should come first, Naima said:

> *Before becoming a mother, I have always put my career first because I love my field and wanted to learn more about it. However, the feeling of motherhood changed me. It is in women's nature to sacrifice for their children and help them reach their full potential at the expense of their ambition.*

Soumia and Naima's statements show the divergent and often conflicting explanations leading to choosing motherhood over other identities and that motherhood is considered the noblest job for most participants. However, in both cases, the expectations around women's roles seem to praise mothers, wives, and housekeepers and discourage women who choose to put their careers first. This might explain how female academics construct their identity while conforming to societal expectations around women's roles and position in society.

Another prominent theme in this section was the topic of women's representation in senior leadership roles at the level of higher education and the reasons behind the underrepresentation of female leaders. Men and women have been granted the same rights and duties since Algeria's independence, and any discrimination based on sex is considered illegal ("The Algerian Constitution," 1963). However, in all Algerian history, there are few prominent women in politics, and there has never been a female president (see context chapter 2.2.4). Despite all these challenges, since 1999, Algeria's policy has focused on promoting women's rights and increasing their participation in political leadership.

Two views were generated on whether female leadership is socially desirable in Algerian society in general and in higher education. First, a prominent theme in the data is that the general societal discourses around leadership are usually related to being a man and not in favour for female leadership. Leila commented,

> *Leadership is masculinised in our culture as it is usually expected of men rather than women. It is a fact that it has never been a problem in Algeria we have had female ministers before, and Algerian women have never been prohibited from doing any work in terms of law; however, there may be some cultural barriers…because they feel that women should not do this because of her 'weak' nature. (Leila)*

Leila believes that men are socially more expected in Algerian society to be leaders in different spheres of public life rather than women. However, Leila did not specify the source of these cultural barriers. Nonetheless, a small number of the interviewed participants talked about the religious barriers. For instance, Sirine explained.

> *I want to stress that we should not lie to ourselves, especially in theocratic countries. I will say it without any shame. For example, if I become a head of the department, I will always meet*

people, and I do not shake hands[7] with men, so it will always be uncomfortable for me during meetings... For this reason, I am out from all this.

This could explain why some women do not want to hold a senior leadership role. Unlike what someone may think, Sirine is taking her academic career seriously as she is close to becoming a professor while also taking a pedagogical role by being a Team Leader for her Speciality. However, because of her religious convictions, she insists on choosing positions that only require her to deal with students rather than other academics.

That is why men would be more socially and religiously encouraged to pursue senior leadership positions. Zahira observed that her male colleagues strive more than female academics for senior leadership roles, giving them a sense of accomplishment. She said:

Men would want to hold a senior leadership position because they would like to occupy themselves for the whole week and earn extra money. Most importantly, men love authority and responsibility, depending on their mentality.

Zahira quote shows that men might be more encouraged to focus on their careers to earn more money, which might be related to their religious view that men should be breadwinners[8].

In addition, when a woman exhibits some leadership traits traditionally associated with being a man, such as giving direct orders, she would receive negative comments from the male and female staff compared to a male leader.

In this regard, Zeyneb added that:

Female leaders need to be careful when giving instructions because sometimes it would not be received well compared to when male leaders give instructions. They would say, for example, how dare she speak with me like this? What is she thinking of herself?

Similarly, the participants also reported some negative words used to discourage the female leader; Besma, for instance, told a story about her male colleagues talking about their female head of department. They said: she is acting like a *"chefa",* which means chief, and the suffix '-a' is added to masculine nouns to the feminine form, or like Cheikha said: they used to call her *Aicha Rajel; the word Rajel* is an Arabic word meaning 'man', and Aicha is a female name, when combined, they mean a

[7] In some Islamic interpretations, shaking hands with non-mahramμ women is strongly forbidden, Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him said: "If one of you were to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle, it would be better for him than touching a woman whom he is not permitted to touch." Source: https://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/PrintFatwa.php?lang=E&Id=82318

μ. A mahram is an Arabic word meaning: "a member of one's family with whom marriage would be considered haram (illegal in Islam).

[8] In Islam, men are obliged to provide for their wives as Allah said in the Quran: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth." **[an-Nisa 4:34].**

woman acting like a man. Furthermore, Chahra said that when they had a strict female dean, her colleagues would say behind her back: *does not she have a husband to control her?* Another example is how Leila's colleagues call her "*the iron lady*". These expressions are used to intimidate women, according to the data, when using male terms to refer to them, such as *Aicha Rajel*. Moreover, when a woman appears to be confident as a leader, her colleagues might try to undermine her by asking her husband to control her as if she is not free in her own decisions, as the data illustrates.

These extracts showed how the general societal perceptions of leadership might be negatively linked to being a woman. Also, the negative comments a woman could receive if her behaviour is not congruent with the typical female role assigned to her by society may explain the interplay between the different roles constituting their academic identity, as mentioned in section 5.4. As an illustration, some participants (Meriem, Sirine, Zahira, Zoubida) indicated that they would prefer to deal with a male leader/male colleague. They believe that women are unsuitable to lead/be professional because of their nature. In this regard, Meriem said:

> *No, no, I would not say I like to deal with women. I prefer dealing with men, and women are more jealous and sensitive. I do not want to deal with them at work at all.*

Even some of the participants who have experience in holding senior leadership positions shared the same point of view; that is, women are less professional and seek more social favours. Most importantly, they would expect the female leader to be more understanding as she is also a woman with similar struggles. However, Zahira expressed that:

> *As head of the department, I had many issues with my colleagues because I was very strict. I wanted teachers to bring their marks early to come on time and things to move quickly and smoothly, but it did not happen. I had my most considerable opposition from female academics as they were the ones who did not follow my instructions, and they always gave me excuses related to their private life. I could not handle it.*

Zahira explained that her female colleagues expected more understanding from her because she is a woman. They opposed her until she resigned when she would not give them any favours. The possible reason for this is that women are overwhelmed with their domestic responsibilities, making it hard for them to fulfil their university duties.

However, although most participants explained that there is opposition to female leadership because of religious and cultural reasons, a second major theme illustrated in the data was that the participants' encouragement from society was much more than the discouragement, linked back to sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2. They elaborated that the main reason behind the underrepresentation of women in higher education is related to workload (discussed in section 6.3) and domestic roles (explored in section 7.2) rather than direct opposition to their leadership. This was illustrated by the

fact that the female leaders' staff selected them to hold their positions (e.g., Cheikha, Zeyneb, Maria). Cheikha, for instance, explained:

> *I was lucky that I did not choose to be a leader; members of my department chose me; I did not accept initially, but they told me you always speak of change and progress; now it is your turn. It was also a good time for women; we had a female dean, pushing us to engage more. I did not have a problem because most of the staff members were my former students, who always supported and respected me.*

Cheikha's experience may show that being a male or female might not be an issue, but it is also related to age and seniority. She explained that because she was part of the first cohort in her local university, she was directly recruited after finishing her studies, allowing her to be the former lecturer to most of her colleagues. That is why, she believed that she mostly had an issue leading her team because she was older and more senior than most of them. This was echoed by Chahra, who held a senior leadership position, and she struggled to be accepted. However, she believes that it was not because of her gender but instead of her younger age. She reported:

> *It is all because of the environment where you live. In my case, society and my colleagues did not accept me to be a young leader. Though they admire young leaders in other countries they see on social media, and you can see that the comments are usually positive, but society prefer elder people to be our leaders...they know that I am good, and I deserve to be their leader because of my knowledge and experience, but each time they keep undermining me because of my age.*

Both Cheikha's and Chahra experiences could be viewed that the society is more accepting of having competent female leaders, in their view, who are usually older with more experience and have a good relationship with her colleagues. Although the data collected did not investigate the experiences of young male leaders to conclude whether the acceptance or rejection of being a leader is related to age more than gender, it seems that being an older female leader (51 to 60 years old) may be more accepted than being a young female leader (31 to 40 years old).

Moreover, despite the participants' negative experiences when they held a senior leadership position, none of the participants experienced rejection from holding these positions because they were women, as most were selected by their staff (e.g., Maria, Cheikha Zoubida). This encouragement might result from the female academics having more experience working at the university (more than 11 years), such as Zoubida and Cheikha. Alternatively, the female academics might be just competent in administrative work because of their previous experiences before joining their universities, like the case of Zahira and Zeyneb, as they both worked in factories' administration, giving them the skills needed to hold a senior leadership position in higher education. One possible explanation for the participants' negative experiences stated by Leila is that it could be more related to individuals and

their convictions and understanding of Islam rather than general societal views or the Islamic religion itself. She said:

> *We are fortunate to be Algerian women because our government and society reasonably support women's leadership. I do not deny that there are instances when women are deprived of a promotion because of their gender, but I think this is because the person responsible is corrupted but not the system or society in general.*

Although it may seem contradictory to the experiences of some participants, Leila's statement shows that being a leader is generally accepted and encouraged in some cases in higher education. She justifies the underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership roles to people's judgement rather than the higher education system or society as a whole. Therefore, the data shows that societal views regarding female leadership are changing despite the persistence of some traditional views about women's roles and positions in society.

In the following section, the organisational/institutional barriers are examined to unveil the organisational/institutional factors influencing female academic career progression.

6.3 Organisational/Institutional Factors

The theme of organisational/institutional factors influencing female academics' career progression and identities was less prominent in the data than personal and sociocultural factors. Although the participants talked extensively about how their universities are managed, it was not all gender-related problems. Section 3.4.3 elaborates on the theoretical influences that guided this study section. For this reason, section 6.3.1 will deal with the effect of these general issues on female academics' careers and experiences in higher education. This is followed by sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3, which will deal with organisational/institutional factors that exclusively influence female academics. Exploring the organisational factors influencing female academics' lived/career experiences may provide insights into understanding how the participants construct their identities. Note that there were some overlaps between the two parts in some instances, especially that the working environment within the universities is affected by sociocultural factors and vice versa, mainly when discussing social perceptions around female leadership and its impact on the experiences of female academics.

6.3.1 Higher education management issues and improvements

One of the Algerian government's priorities has been promoting women's rights, and their engagement within their working environment and the higher education sector is no exception ("The Algerian Constitution," 1963), as also mentioned in section 6.2. The higher education sector has been witnessing improvements and reforms in the policies since its establishment in 1970 (see section 2.3 for more details).

Because of the centralised system in Algeria, the Ministry of Higher Education (following the government's vision) is responsible for all the policies and regulations related to the promotions and holding senior leadership roles at all universities across the country. A prominent theme in the data is that most participants believe that the ministry's policies provide equal opportunities for men and women. In this respect, Sirine said:

> *there is no marginalisation or neglect. On the contrary, they open the doors for us as female academics and women in all sectors.*

Sirine's view was like all the participants who affirmed that the ministerial policies or laws are not discriminatory against women. However, some may also think there should be more policies to encourage women's career progression, such as reviewing the period of maternity leave which is explored in section 6.3.2. However, they believe, overall, that men and women have equal opportunities. In this regard, Leila commented that there is no gender pay gap in Algeria as in other countries. She added:

> *As I told you before, there is no pay gap between males and females in Algeria like in other countries. I talked with some friends in the United States, and they told me that there is a difference in salary between men and women in performing the same work. This does not exist in Algeria.*

Leila compared female academics in Algeria and the US and explained that there is no gender gap between men and women in Algeria for doing the same job. Moreover, when the participants were asked about their opinion on the percentage of female professors, which is 24%, some showed their satisfaction. They considered it a success regarding the political issues faced by Algeria in the past, particularly during the Black Decade, as referred to in section 6.1.1. Also, none of the participants attributed this percentage to discriminatory policies against women at the level of their universities. In this regard, Naima said:

> *For me, this percentage is incredible, reflecting the shift in society because of the expansion of free education across the country in which more females are educated now and pursuing higher education. After 10 or 20 years, the percentage would be higher because I can observe that most students at universities are females. I believe that when females are more educated and reach higher positions is good for the development of our society… I do not think there are any discriminatory policies against women in recruitment because I have never heard that a woman's application was rejected. After all, she was a woman.*

As also mentioned in section 6.2.1, the government and ministry efforts were reflected in the shift in society's views on women's education and participation in the workplace. Like Naima, all the participants shared the same observation that there are more males than females nowadays, and consequently, opportunities for a postgraduate degree are more open for women, as illustrated in section 2.3 about the percentage of female PhD students in Algeria. Moreover, many academics

interviewed (e.g., Leila, Naima, Halima, Zahira) had already benefited from a fully funded scholarship. They explained that they got it because they met the ministry's requirements and had no problems whatsoever. There are different kinds of opportunities for academics. They could do it at the beginning of their career if they were top students like Naima and Halima. Alternatively, they could apply during their PhD like Zahira or at any point of their career for continuous personal development purposes. None of the participants felt she was denied the opportunity because she was a woman. On this point, Naima said: "*studying abroad was a turning point in my life, and because of that opportunity, I am now a good academic.*" However, other participants did not benefit from any opportunity abroad, but the reason was familial rather than organisational or institutional. On this matter, Zoubida said:

> Concerning scientific research in the past years, there were many opportunities to go and develop my skills abroad, *but I did not apply for any because* my children were young.

Zoubida's view echoes the participants' views that organisational/institutional opportunities are presented to them, but women cannot take them mainly because of personal factors, as discussed in section 7.1.

Although the participants explained that they did not face discriminatory policies, they talked about some challenges affecting their careers and experiences in higher education. First, one of the questions to the participants was about their inclusion in training provided by their universities. All the participants answered that their university did not train them to teach or hold any leadership (administrative or pedagogical) role. However, opinions differ as to whether it is necessary to have training programmes. For example, Naima believes that having no training before undertaking a role can be challenging and time-consuming and may contribute to the reluctance of female academics to put themselves forward to hold senior leadership positions. She added:

> *I was appointed in a role related to preparing a file about the quality of teaching in our department without giving me any instructions, and when I went and asked, I found that sometimes even at the level of the department, they do not know. This idea of training does not exist. I struggled to finish the task.*

Naima explained that it was challenging for her to fulfil her role because of the university administration's lack of training and clear instructions. Also, none of the participants had an academic role model or mentors at the university level, and they added that the most important support they received was from their family, as discussed in section 7.2. For this reason, female academics would not want to add an extra burden, especially since they do not know what to expect.

However, Meriem thinks that there is no need for training for new academics or before occupying a senior administrative or pedagogical position because everything is well explained in the university/ministry manual, and she said: *"but it was obvious, and all my responsibilities were clearly*

stated in the official journal." One possible explanation of this view is that Meriem has limited experience in administration compared to some participants because most participants with long experience in senior leadership recommended that there should be some training programs for academics.

Besma, who held the position of head of the department and is currently editor-in-chief of an academic journal, supports Naima's view. She also added another concern: the ambiguity of the current policies, which may contribute to the slow academic progression of the female academics and their reluctance to hold senior leadership positions. She said:

> *We did not take training on teaching when I got recruited, and until recently, they started teaching training programs. However, I still think that these teaching training programs need improvement and more focus on quality…on the other hand, the university still does not provide any training before holding an administrative or pedagogical position. I am aware of the law and regulations thanks to my position, but other teachers are not, so they need to read about the law to know their rights and duties; otherwise, we will always be in unnecessary fights that would have been avoided if we knew our rights and duties.*

Most participants who held or are holding a senior leadership position agreed with Besma and questioned, to some extent, the current ambiguous regulations, which are open to personal interpretations, which may cause disagreement between colleagues. For this reason, most of the participants emphasised the importance of starting with improving laws and regulations and updating them to fit all situations. Additionally, the data indicated that training academics would as well help improve the law itself when they may give their feedback and recommendations, and for this reason, they have recently started training the academics for teaching, as Besma's quote shows.

Besides, many participants stressed three main issues related to policy ambiguity. First, Section 2.3 explained the promotion requirements for each academic rank and mentioned that the academic needs to publish a specific number of articles in classified academic journals. However, some participants expressed concern about this condition, especially since there is a limited number of ranked journals. As a result, their response time rates were too long and caused a significant delay in the article's appearance, see section 2.3. As Meriem indicated:

> *It took me a year to get published because of the limited number of ranked journals; the response time is slow. That is why my progression was slow.*

In this regard, Soumia, who had a remarkable career progression, explained that her lack of knowledge about the requirements of getting promoted caused her promotion to be delayed for a whole year. She argued:

> *I did not know the law of getting promoted states that you should publish in a scientific journal issued from a university, not an association or a group of scientists. It must be issued from a*

> *university; otherwise, your application will be rejected. I published my article in a prestigious journal not associated with a university. For this reason, my promotion was postponed for a year. The law was not clear, and I was not aware of it.*

This policy ambiguity affects the career progression of both men and women as the participants did not experience discriminatory policies, as explained above in this section. However, as section 7.2 illustrates, female academics are under social pressure to focus on their domestic lives, which adds another challenge for them compared to male academics. The ministry made some improvements to higher education to make the system fairer so that female academics would progress in their careers by establishing a digital platform to ensure the blind and quick review of articles. According to Meriem, the blind reviewing process takes a long time and is subject to nepotism. In this regard, Besma, who is an editor-in-chief of a journal, indicated that:

> *The measure helps avoid conflicts between authors and the editors-in-chief …and nepotism and favouritism may disappear by submitting articles through the platform.*

Although the participants explained that establishing this platform did not completely solve the issue of nepotism, it is a step toward reaching a fairer system, according to the data. However, the participants indicated that the system needs many improvements not only related to gender issues, which is beyond this study's scope.

Second, concerning the unclear selection process, Hadjer, one of the few participants who seemed willing to hold a senior leadership position, expressed that she wanted to contribute to her department and improve its situation. However, she was unaware of how they were appointed to hold senior leadership positions. She explained:

> *I do not think women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions because they do not want to. I want to be head of the department and learn and improve my administrative skills. I always put myself forward and applied for grants or scholarships abroad. However, nobody helped or showed me how to do that.*

The unclear section process and lack of transparency may be why female academics seem disengaged from their working environment. However, Soumia, who once attended how her colleagues selected the head of the department, described it as:

> *There is no democracy in the selection process. People were asking their friends to choose them.*

Soumia's experience could be explained in terms of homosociality, and because most senior leaders are males, they would probably select a male because it would be more convenient for them as they rely more on informal networks than the clarity of policies and law, as will be explored in section 6.3.3.

Third, in most cases, excessive administrative duties were reported as the main reason that makes women more reluctant to hold senior leadership positions, especially those who have not finished

their PhD and have other domestic responsibilities. Zahira, a PhD student when she became head of her department, indicated that because there was no support system and the staff were not helpful, she had to resign. Her main concern was that she could not focus on her research. She said:

> *No, I wasted much time when I was head of the department. That is why I resigned. I did not write* a single word or a sentence *until I got rid of the administration and focused on my teaching tasks… Now alhamdulillah (thank God) it is going well, but before it was horrible, I was working non-stop because I am a perfectionist… that is why women refuse administrative work first because of the PhD, and she would say I cannot focus on my PhD because of work so I should add another administrative position. Responsibilities for children, husband, and work are more than enough. I cannot add more.*

This might also be linked to the dominant socio/cultural discourses that recommend that women put their families first, which could be understandable for married women with children under 18. However, some single participants with no domestic duties (no sick parents or siblings) indicated that they still would not opt for an administrative position because some felt they would want to focus on their research. This could justify the tensions rising between the administrator and researcher identities, as Soumia explained in section 5.4.2. Moreover, academics would also not prefer to hold senior leadership positions because the code of conduct could be sometimes ambiguous, so the female leader would always need to justify her decision. For this reason, there is a need to improve the regulations and code of conduct first so that female academics would be more encouraged to lean in. In this regard, Maria said:

> *When I first occupied this position (head of the department), I had to create many rules to manage the relationship between colleagues. Sometimes, it might cause some personal disagreement with me which I could avoid if the regulations were clear for every possible incident.*

Maria explained in this quote that the absence of regulations or ambiguity where they existed could be why many participants consider holding that holding a senior leadership role is challenging. For this reason, the administrator, who has a formal leadership role, may rely on the staff relations and networking discussed in section 6.2.3 to manage and lead. These administrative issues could be related to how the universities are managed, as indicated in section 2.3. in Addition, the prerogatives of each position are defined by ministerial circulars, not at the level of the university. For this reason, many participants believe that these issues related to centralisation could contribute to the underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership positions, not because they are discriminatory, but because women might struggle when they are required to fulfil their duties. Meriem indicated that:

> *women do not want to hold positions because of the administrative issues that all the institutions suffer from in Algeria.*

Although this reason would seem to affect both men and women, it might affect women more because, as indicated in 6.2, there are already some barriers to women's access to the public sphere, which could add another barrier to women's access to senior leadership positions. The challenge is not exclusive to holding a senior leadership role. In addition, being an academic in the Algerian context has its advantages and challenges, as the data shows, which might influence female academics' identity construction, especially when conducting research. Leila explained that:

> *conducting research in Algeria is hard…because of the current political situation Algerian universities became government institutions instead of being a free place for research and innovation*.

Leila refers to the centralised system and how the state intervenes in higher education and scientific research. She believes that because of the organisational structure of higher education, women and men are struggling to be the academics they want to be, which influences how they construct their identities.

The following section will explore the opinions of female academics regarding policies to support their progression.

6.3.2 Family-friendly policies influencing female academics' experience in higher education

While some female academics feel there is a need for family-friendly policies to encourage them to be more involved in their academic environment, others believe that there is no need to as there is no discrimination between men and women in terms of the law. For instance, Alia, a mother of three children under 18, believes that: "*there is no need to have policies to support female academics because there is no discrimination against women regarding promotion*". Many other academics share this viewpoint with Alia, and they justify the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions and high academic ranks because there could be cultural or personal barriers rather than organisational/institutional ones. In this regard, Leila thinks that female academics should take their jobs seriously and not submit to the dominant socio/cultural discourse. She said:

> *we should not take this as a gendered problem because, in the end, women agreed to take this job and signed a contract. They know that they need to do scientific research and attend conferences*.

In this extract, Leila blames female academics for disengaging from their working environment, especially since most participants feel that there are no discriminatory policies against women. On the other hand, other participants believe that the universities/ministry should introduce some policies to help the advancement of female academics, considering their particular circumstances as their children's primary caregivers. For instance, Sirine observed that some universities provide childcare facilities convenient for their female and male staff. She argues:

> *Why don't we have some childcare facilities inside the campus like in Egypt? I will be in the library working and of course, working in the library is much better than working at home, and then when I finish, I bring my child and go home. It is better than my current situation where I am studying, and he is distracting me, but I do not have another choice.*

Sirine's university does not provide childcare facilities near the university, and she explained that when she goes home, she cannot focus on her research while looking after her child. Moreover, she wants a childcare facility near her workplace for logistic reasons. Speaking about the issue of childcare facilities, Besma said that her university provides childcare facilities though the service provided needs much improvement. For this reason, universities should also ensure that they provide a good service that would help the advancement of female academics.

In addition, concerns were also expressed regarding policies to support female academics, especially during postpartum. Two divergent and often conflicting opinions emerged when discussing maternity leave and whether this period is long enough or not. Some interviewees argued that the 14 weeks (98 days) break is more than enough, while others considered a need to reform maternity/paternity leave policies. Hadjer had a strong opinion about the period of three months and argued that it is not enough for women to recover after childbirth. She said:

> *After giving birth twice, I think the maternity leave should be at least five months until the baby dispenses with breastfeeding and be able to eat food. Also, the government should provide mothers with a sum of money to help cover the expenses related to birth.*

Hadjer mentioned that the government should provide money for female academics because, as indicated in section 2.3, the government, through the ministry of higher education, is responsible for all policies relating to higher educational institutions.

Whereas other participants, such as Zoubida, believe that though maternity leave is essential, the female academic should not forget that she signed a contract and should honour their commitments. In her accounts of the events surrounding maternity leave, Zoubida remembers that she went back to their university before the end of her maternity leave. In this respect, she said:

> *However, if possible, why would I waste my time staying home on maternity leave when I can show up for a few hours and work. I feel responsible for my department, and I cannot abandon it in a time of need, so when there is work to do, I would show up despite being on maternity leave.*

Zoubida does not mean that women do not need maternity leave, but she indicates that women should be responsible and take their jobs seriously. This view is also shared by Cheikha, who did not finish her maternity leave when she went back to the lab to finish her project. A possible reason to explain why these participants have different opinions is that sometimes the participant may have

another support system, such as a supportive family member, that she could rely on, whereas other participants do not have.

Nevertheless, some participants suggested that to improve gender equality policies and change the notion that only women should look after their children, paternity leave could alleviate the situation. Leila, a single academic with no children, suggested that instead of making maternity leave longer, the government or universities should introduce a paternity leave policy. In this regard, she said:

> *They give many exceptions for females regarding maternity leave and breastfeeding time… why are you giving women these privileges and not giving them to men? Why do we have only maternity leave, and we do not have paternity leave? Many countries started implementing this because they understand that parenting is shared between men and women... the problem is that we are still holding stereotypical gender role divisions that have been frustrating both men and women.*

It is worth noting that only a few participants mentioned the idea of paternity leave. Leila also indicated that it is an idea that could be challenging to implement in Algerian society because of the traditional beliefs about the roles of men and women, as explored in section 6.2. Men are still viewed as the breadwinners and women as the caregiver, even if she occupies a very demanding profession like academia. For this reason, policies related to paternity leave might help introduce new ways of distributing tasks, which could contribute, according to the participants who talked about paternity leave, to the rise of the representation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles.

Moreover, some participants (e.g., Naima, Besma) talked about the need to have flexible hours or the ability to change to a part-time contract instead of full-time, and they both indicated that there is a lack of awareness about the different laws that could help female academics after returning from maternity leave. Moreover, they both explained that there is no option for the academics to change their contract to part-time; nevertheless, they could ask for a year without pay. Commenting on this matter, they observed:

> *There is no flexibility in the Algerian higher education policies, especially after becoming a mother, because it is not easy to look after small children while staying active in academia. There is a need for some policies and regulations to improve their conditions. (Naima)*

> *Moreover, changing the contract from full-time to part-time would be a great idea as it may provide work for other unemployed people. (Besma)*

Similar to paternity leave, few participants mentioned this possible policy that could help female academics as the participants were not aware of the possibility of having flexible working hours or changing their contract to part-time, especially after maternity leave. Naima and Besma explained that having flexible work hours and the possibility of moving to a part-time contract could even be

beneficial to increasing female academics' productivity. That is why staff support was an important theme discussed by female academics in the following section 6.3.3, as the ministry adopts no official policy to help women manage their domestic responsibilities and their professional ones.

6.3.3 The influence of staff relations and female role models in academia

Staff relations is a recurrent theme throughout the dataset: for example, in discussions of organisational challenges and opportunities, the participants described it as an important factor influencing their career experiences in higher education. Moreover, most participants indicated that their colleagues' support was critical for developing their academic identity and undoubtedly impacted the interplay between their different social roles and identities.

The data shows that informal or personal staff relationships directly influenced the formal staff relationship; for this reason, the informal or personal staff network was more prominent than the formal ones. As an illustration, Meriem talked about how a dysfunctional relationship with her previous head of department caused a delay in her academic progression. She explained:

> *The ministry intervened and forced the old administrative team to resign after receiving our complaints. The new team they appointed is excellent and understanding. They are helping all of us, which suits me because my children are young.*

Meriem's experience is similar to other participants who believe that staff support contributes significantly to their career progression. She explains that having children under 18 is "*always expecting the unexpectable.*" because they could be sick or injured and require the complete dedication of the parents, especially the mother. For this reason, Meriem explains that with the new team, she can contact them to explain her situation, and they will understand, unlike the previous team. This shows that having a good personal or informal relationship with the staff can improve the participants' lived experience within their working environment.

Another example of informal or personal staff support is when Sirine's head of department implemented a rule that female academics do not work in the afternoon, which helps them to manage their domestic and professional lives. This rule is considered personal or informal because the ministry does not implement it. She explained:

> *Our head of department made sure that none of us worked in the afternoon to take care of our children. He is excellent in this respect.*

Sirine explained that this informal rule implemented by her head of department helped her female academic colleagues significantly because they would have more time to focus on their research to progress and avoid burnout and stress, as discussed in section 7.2. Another example of this support was provided to a couple working together in the department; Alia explained that:

> *I work with my husband in the same department as I told you. Our head of department helps us by making sure we do not work simultaneously to be able to look after our children. Moreover, if I need some help, they are always more than happy to help me.*

The experiences of Alia and Sirine are good examples of the support staff members could provide for female academics that help them, according to the data, fulfil their duty as primary caregivers without undermining their work as academics or their career progression. Nevertheless, according to these participants (e.g., Sarah, Halima), a lack of encouragement from the staff to exchange ideas and collaboration, especially among women who usually share similar challenges, caused distress and unhappiness resulting in slower career progression or less engagement with university management. In this regard, Halima explained:

> *I had some issues with my colleagues when I was first recruited. I felt that they did not like me. So, imagine I faced this in my first days as an academic; it was a real shock to me, and even during the meetings, I used to sit in the corner and not say a word. I felt weak and powerless.*

Halima's story illustrates that although she chose to be an academic because of her passion for scientific research and teaching, her feeling of alienation grew because of the lack of support of senior academics to her. Halima's feeling of alienation was reflected in her career progression, which shows that it took her six years to finish her PhD thesis, and she did not hold any senior leadership role. Halima's experience is like other participants who felt alienated from academia despite their passion for joining it because of the lack of informal staff support. Not having the right environment might be difficult, especially for novice academics like Halima, who felt incompetent as a researcher and a lecturer. This shows how the influence of staff relations increases the feeling of belonging/alienation to academia and positively or negatively influences the construction of the participants' academic identity.

Concerning senior leadership opportunities, most of the participants who had/has experience in senior leadership positions indicated that their staff members selected them to be their leaders, holding a formal position. Cheikha, for instance, was the former lecturer of most of her colleagues, and they respected her. For this reason, having an excellent informal relationship with the staff members can help them be appointed and selected for senior leadership positions.

On the other hand, not having a good informal relationship with the staff members would make it challenging for the female academic to hold a senior leadership role and manage her domestic and professional lives. For instance, Zeyneb, the vice-head of the department, explains that sometimes her male colleagues decide to have a meeting on short notice, which may be inconvenient for her because of her family commitments like looking after a child while they do not have such commitments. She added that:

> *No, they do not even ask. My head of the department just told me the meeting would take place at this time. Sometimes, I do not know where I could leave my child and be obliged to bring him to university, and I leave him for hours in one of the classrooms near our offices.*

Zeyneb explained that her team does not consider her domestic responsibilities to take her opinion on suitable times for meetings. Relating this idea to sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, the lack of direct rules governing the relationships between the staff members, the lack of childcare facilities and inconsiderate staff who do not consider the domestic situation of their team might increase the reluctance amongst female academics and make them feel that the environment is hostile for their contribution. In addition, as indicated in section 2.3, there is an underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles, which may explain why women would be less willing to hold senior leadership positions. That is why, the data indicates that the staff's relationship with the female academics significantly impacts their identity construction.

Another reported organisational barrier to formal leadership in higher education is that the people who usually hold them have a questionable reputation and could be perceived as unethical and only doing it to use their power for personal gains. In this regard, Zahira stated:

> some *men like to have responsibilities so that students come to them for marks and intervention. This would allow them to build their network.*

Zahira had an experience two years being head of department, and she had many interactions with other male heads of departments, deans, and rectors because of her position. She observed that her male colleagues like to be in senior roles to build a network within and outside the university. Moreover, she observed that they could use their position unethically so that some students could pass without merit. It may also be understood that the general societal discourses around leadership in Algeria, in general, may also be linked to being unethical.

This view was echoed by another respondent who received negative feedback from her former PhD supervisor after accepting to be vice-head of the department. She commented:

> *My supervisor was a very competent and experienced academic. She was not happy when I told her about my decision to be vice head of department. When I asked for the reason, she replied that people who hold these roles have the reputation that they want them to build a network to look for their interests, not doing it to make the department or the university better.*

Zeyneb's view aligns with Zahira as it illustrates the belief that the academics who hold senior leadership roles are usually dishonest and only do that role for their gain.

Another subtheme reported by a few participants was how having a female role model in a leadership role helped improve their experiences at the university. Cheikha explained that she became the director of her laboratory thanks to the encouragement of her female dean. She stated:

> *It was a good time for women. At that time, we had a female dean, and it pushed us to be more engaged. I did not have a problem with that, but one of the reasons that motivated me to accept being the laboratory director is that I wanted women to lean in and improve themselves.*

Another participant talked about how the situation as female academics improved after they got a female vice-head of the department in charge of pedagogy and students' affairs. Djaouza explained:

> *Nobody used to consult which days were convenient for us in the past. However, things started to change when a senior female leader started doing our timetables and asked us which times were suitable for our schedule. She also asks for the opinion of our male colleagues, and she has been our leader for three years, and nobody experienced any problem with her. Before, they were all men; they never thought about consulting or involving us in the decision-making.*

From the positive experience of Djaouza and Cheikha with their female leader, it could be possible that having more female leaders could improve the experiences of female academics, as indicated in the data. However, not all the participants agreed that having a female leader is necessarily helpful in their career progression and holding senior leadership positions. To sum up this point, Cheikha phrased it perfectly, saying that:

> *In this time of Algerian history, we (as senior female leaders) need to provide a positive role model because we do not have many senior female leaders. We do not need to stay in the position until our performance declines; we must quit while still operating successfully. In this way, the perception of the incompetence of female leaders will start changing gradually.*

From Cheikha's comment, it may be understood that female leadership in higher education could be considered a new idea given the contextual barriers concerning female education in Algeria (see chapter 2 for more details). For this reason, it may be essential for the current female leaders in higher education, according to Cheikha, to set a good example to change the societal perceptions about female leadership, as explored in section 6.2.3 concerning the negative experiences in relation to female leadership.

6.4 Summary of Chapter 6

This chapter was divided into two parts to answer this sub research question. The first part was dedicated to exploring the sociocultural factors and the second to the organisational/institutional ones.

The prominent theme reported in this chapter regarding sociocultural factors is that traditional gender-related issues persist despite the improvements in Algerian females' participation in public life. Furthermore, the data showed that the age and geographical location of the female academics (rural or urban areas) affected the social support or resistance to female education and participation in their working environment. In addition, this chapter highlighted that being a female academic is highly regarded in Algerian society as one of the best professions for females. The data provided many

reasons to explain this view, mainly because of the flexible teaching hours and good pay compared to other sectors. However, the social discourse about being a good female academic seems not related to publication and engagement with leadership roles, but instead to how good the female academic is in her domestic roles (being a good mother and academic). Finally, the sociocultural view of female leadership in general and higher education is explored according to the participants' views. The findings suggest that leadership is supported for women as long as the female leader behaviour is congruent with the image of a good Algerian woman.

Then, organisational/institutional factors were explored, and in all cases, the participants reported that the ministry's policies and regulations provide equal opportunities and salaries for male and female academics. However, some general issues related to unclear and ambiguous policies and lack of training were reported in the data that could influence female academics' career progression and willingness to hold senior leadership roles. Moreover, the participants' opinions differ regarding policies to support female academics. While some believe that there is no need to introduce any policy to support female academics as the system provides them with all the support they need. Others believe that improvements concerning maternity/paternity leave, childcare facilities at every university level, and introducing the possibility of changing to a part-time contract with flexible working hours are suitable, especially for new mothers or fathers. Last but not least, the participants foregrounded the importance of staff relations as the most crucial factor that could positively or negatively influence female academics' career progression or willingness to hold senior leadership roles. In addition, a minority of the participants explained that having a female leader role model made them lean more towards occupying senior leadership roles.

The following chapter will continue with the personal factors influencing the identity construction of female academics and conclude with their strategies to navigate their personal and professional duties that highlight their agency.

Chapter 7 Personal Factors Influencing Female Academics' Identities and Careers and Strategies to navigate their Lived/Career Experiences

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 reports the main findings after the data analysis process to answer the two last research sub-questions:

RQ3- What are the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' identities?

RQ4- What strategies do female academics deploy to manage their multiple roles and identities?

To answer the two research questions, the participants spoke about the personal challenges and enablers that influenced their academic careers while discussing the different strategies to help them manage their personal and professional lives. Three sub-themes emerged from the data analysis under the broad personal factors theme. Section 7.2 explores the impact of male family members, especially fathers and husbands, on female academics' mobility during their educational and academic journeys. The following Section (7.3) investigates how having multiple responsibilities influence female academics' career progression. Finally, section 7.4 discusses female academics' strategies to navigate their careers and overcome sociocultural, organisational/institutional, and personal factors.

7.2 Family Influence on Female Academics' Careers and Identities

The familial influences on female academics' career trajectories were predominant in the data as a challenge and an enabler. This influence came up in accounts related to the mobility of female academics both in their educational journeys and academic career progress, explored in section 7.1.1. Moreover, the familial influence came up when the participants talked about how they are managing their household responsibilities, elaborated in section 7.1.2.

7.2.1 Influence of male family members on female academic's mobility

A recurrent theme in the interviews was the importance of mobility on the participants' educational journeys and academic career progression. Every participant shared her story and how their families' decisions, especially male family members, influenced their mobility. This influence has sometimes been an enabler and, other times, a challenge for female academics' progression, highlighting the complexities of their lived and career experiences. As the data shows, male family members played a pivotal role in supporting or creating barriers for the participants, especially fathers and husbands.

Starting with the influence of mobility on their educational journeys, some participants' parents, especially fathers, refused that their daughters leave their homes, but they supported their education as long as they stayed local (e.g., Cheikha, Zahira). Other participants' fathers (like Leila, Naima,

Halima) helped their daughters finish their postgraduate studies outside their homes despite receiving negative comments from their traditional surroundings to let them travel to other cities to finish their studies. Cheikha, who grew up in a semi-urban area, explained that her father supported her education but made her choose a field in her local university despite her wishes to be a doctor in medicine. She added that her father struggled to let her go to university and pursue a postgraduate degree locally. Cheikha explained:

> *I told my father that I wanted to keep studying after my baccalaureate exam, and he promised me that he would support me in studying medicine because we did not have many female doctors in my city. However, my father changed his mind…and forced me to choose a domain close to my home at the local University because there was another problem with girls going to the university campus, and it was not easy to tolerate a girl living far from home. So, for this reason, I looked for a domain at the local University… It was not easy for my family, especially my father, to have a very ambitious daughter. It was not easy for him because he was ridiculed in the mosque for allowing his daughter to get a university degree and work.*

Cheikha's experience could reflect the lived reality of many girls in semi-urban and rural areas, as mentioned in section 6.2.1, especially twenty or thirty years ago when girls' pursuing higher education was less encouraged. Cheikha's father supported his daughter's education, thanks to which she could progress in her career, and now she is one of the senior academics in her department. However, Cheikha had to compromise her dream because she could not travel outside her city to become a doctor, but she explained that: "*I knew that was the limit for me, for this reason, I made sure that my daughter studied outside the country*" reflecting the shift in the society explained in section 6.1.1. Like the story of Cheikha, Zahira's father did not allow her to finish her *Magister* degree because she needed to go to another city as her local university did not provide this degree. She said:

> *Then I wanted to finish my studies, but I had an obstacle: my father, rest in peace, did not let me go far to study because he wanted me to stay at home. So, it was an issue, and it delayed my progress in a way that I did not want.*

Zahira explained that she could have finished her studies if she were a male as the inability to decide about moving to another city is in her father's hands, not hers, because she is a woman. The lack of mobility for women seems to continue to exist, and it is putting a big obstacle for women. A possible explanation for this phenomenon could be related to safety issues, especially during and after the Black Decade, as discussed in section 2.2.4. Another possibility could be related to the dominant societal discourses that seem less encouraging for women to progress in their careers after getting their bachelor's degrees because men are supposed to be the breadwinners. It could also be for religious reasons that oblige, according to some people, women to be accompanied by male family members (*mahram*).

Leila's parents, especially her father, supported his daughter to pursue a postgraduate degree, and similar to Cheikha's father, Leila's father also received negative comments about supporting his daughter to go outside her city to do her *Magister* degree. In this regard, Leila explained:

> *The pressure was not only on me but also on my family, especially at the beginning because they did not know the results … so even my father was under attack from society, but I liked that my father did not tell me about this until he showed people the results of his trust. So now they are asking him, how did you do it? We want our children to be as successful as yours.*

Leila's extract echoes the view of the participants that personal factors are more influential than sociocultural and organisational/institutional ones since having the parents' support, especially the father, can be the most important enabler or barrier for the female academic career progression. It also aligns with the findings of section 6.3.1 that the societal views concerning women's education are changing and improving despite the persistence of some traditional views. Like Leila's story, the concern related to mobility for women and not being able to travel for a postgraduate degree, especially within the government scholarship programme for top students, some female students declined the government offers to study abroad for familial objections, which slows down and even jeopardise their career progression. Talking about the matter, Naima and Halima had an opportunity to study abroad when they finished their bachelor's degrees. They both talked about how in their time, it was difficult for girls to study far from their homes nationally, so internationally was even more challenging. In this regard, Halima said:

> *I remember how many people would come to me and try to make me scared to study abroad. Society was not as supportive as nowadays. I could only do it because of my parents, especially my father, who believed in me and said, you cannot miss this opportunity.*

Halima's experience shows that organisational/institutional opportunities were always presented to women as the policies are not discriminatory, as explored in section 6.3.1. However, the determining factor was the support of the parents, especially the father, as shown in the case of Halima. Because of that, Halima could eventually go abroad to do her *Magister* and become an academic.

The influence of family on the participants' academic careers does not end once they finish their PhD and get recruited to their universities, but it influences their academic progression and their research skills' improvements throughout their careers. Travelling and attending conferences are essential for academic self-development, as indicated by Sirine. She explained:

> *I want to achieve more, and honestly, the things that made me say I want to do more when I am here at the university, I do not feel I am doing enough. That is why I travel out of my hometown to participate in conferences… the secret is that it brings back my confidence and takes away the negative energy when I meet other people and exchange ideas and visions; it brings me back hope*

Sirine emphasised the importance of travelling for conferences and presenting her research to the wider academic community to keep progressing in her career. However, the data shows that while some academics had a supportive male figure, some did not, which influenced their mobility and, as a result, their academic career progression.

The data illustrates two ways that husbands' support, the first group of husbands accompany their wives for their training or conferences (e.g., Djaouza, Cheikha, Sirine); alternatively, it is not an issue for their wives to travel alone (like, Zahira, Zoubida). For this reason, Cheikha emphasises the importance of having a male figure's support, mainly the husband or the father. In this respect, she said:

> *I owe my success to Allah, my husband, and my father. When I was single, it was my father. I come from a conservative family, so my father used to go with me everywhere to the capital to visit the national library and meet my supervisor. Then, since I got married, my husband has accompanied me to conferences and libraries.*

This example can explain the great importance of male family members on female academics' progression. Moreover, it helps to understand why personal factors are the most critical. It can also give a possible reason why the majority of the female academics have experienced struggles in developing their researcher identity, elaborated in section 5.4.3. Speaking of the matter, Meriem was the only participant who clearly stated that she could not be an active researcher in attending conferences and benefiting from the organisational/institutional opportunities because of her husband's lack of support. In this respect, Meriem stated:

> *I cannot attend conferences outside my city because my husband does not want, so in my CV, I have been an academic for a long time, but* I have not attended any conferences outside my hometown.

Leila also echoed Meriem's experience that some of her colleagues told her that their husbands do not allow them to travel alone, so they can only attend local conferences. She said:

> *I have a friend whose husband told her even before getting married that I do not accept that you travel alone for conferences or any other reason, and she accepted.*

One possible explanation for the importance of having male figures support could be related to the fact that the Algerian culture might still be male dominated, especially in the public space. For this reason, it could be necessary for female academics to have their husband or father's approval and full support to progress and excel in their careers. However, the data could confirm that public engagement of females in general and female academics might still be tricky. Unlike what many of the participants think about the importance of mobility on female academics' career progression, Zeyneb (divorced with one child under 18) and Leila (single) think that female academics should not take

personal factors as *an excuse* and female academics should find ways to stay active in their research. She explained:

> *However, as I said, it is not an excuse; even single women will struggle, their fathers will not allow them to travel, or they cannot leave their mothers alone. It is hard for women, but it is not an excuse she can participate at conferences at her university so that she can progress, there is no other way. This is how I see it!*

Zeyneb's extract elaborates those female academics can progress in their careers if they only attend conferences at their universities. However, as Sirine stated, this may affect their level because meeting people abroad can open the floor for future collaboration and assistance. Moreover, the data shows that not having male family members support girls and women could jeopardise their educational journeys, so they might not even become academics in the first place. For this reason, the influence of a male family member on the mobility of female academics is one of the prominent enablers and barriers explored in the data. The following section will elaborate on another critical enabler or barrier to female academics' career trajectories: managing household responsibilities and the importance of familial support.

7.2.2 Work-life balance

Throughout the interviews, managing household responsibilities was challenging for all participants, especially those married with children under 18. Most participants explained that they must fulfil many roles inside their households, which may present a real challenge for female academics' career progression or willingness to hold senior leadership roles. Sirine briefly explained the roles female academics need to fulfil. She said:

> *The female academic is a mother, cleaner, dishwasher, a housewife. In addition to that, she has another full-time job at the university.*

Cheikha also added:

> Algerian women have many burdens and responsibilities.

Sirine and Cheikha's extracts explain the challenges for women to manage the balance between their careers and home duties, and the participants shared some strategies (discussed in section 7.3) to help them manage their private and professional lives. Both participants explained that women in Algeria are required to fulfil many roles, and it is not even socially desirable to hire a maid to help you manage your household responsibilities, as mentioned in section 6.1.2.

Various concerns were identified when the participants were asked about challenges and support in their private lives. In each interview, the participants explained that they could not focus on their careers because of the tensions between their private and professional roles, discussed in section 5.5. A key sub-theme in the data is that women do more housework than men, especially married

academics. Overall, all the married participants demonstrated that they take the most significant responsibility for caring for the house and children. Speaking about the impact of marriage on the life of female academics, Djaouza believes that:

> *Before marriage, the female academics would be active in their research and willing to hold senior leadership positions. However, they would quit after getting married and having children.*

Djaouza, a married academic with three children under 18 years old, explained that the inequality in the housework, especially after marriage, is the main reason behind the reluctance of female academics to stay active in their research and be willing to hold senior leadership roles. She added that they also have responsibilities toward their extended families. In this regard, Djaouza explained:

> *I have responsibilities towards my extended family; sometimes, they visit, and I need to look after them according to our social traditions. My husband is understanding and supported me when I was doing my PhD, but he would not cook and clean while we had guests. It is my responsibility according to our society.*

Although not all the participants talked about their responsibilities towards their extended families, the social tradition in Algeria might still oblige the wife to look after her husband's parents. It seems challenging for female academics to manage all these responsibilities for these reasons.

Zahira provided a real-life example of why female academics struggle with housework inequality. She provided an example of her colleagues who are married and working together:

> *I have two colleagues; a man and a woman married and started their PhD around the same time. He finished and graduated, but she has not finished yet. Because she was giving birth, cooking, cleaning. However, he (the husband) comes from work to study directly and finds everything ready, so he finished and graduated, and she is still struggling. While she has multiple responsibilities, he is only focusing on his career. They started together, and he is Maitre de conference (assistant professor), and she is still a teaching assistant.*

Zahira explained that this story is not unique to her colleagues; it is the story of all couples who both have full-time jobs. A plausible clarification of this inequality is that the social perception of academics is that they are academics at the university. However, once they get home, they would need to fulfil all the familial obligations required from any woman, explored rigorously in section 6.2.2. The example above would be a possible consequence of the expectations from men as the breadwinner, and that is why Zahira's male colleagues seem to be prioritising their careers to earn more money because of their progression. However, the socio/cultural expectations directly influence how her female colleague focuses more on her domestic role, reflected in how they prioritise their motherhood identity in section 5.3.2. Although the female academics who are not married (e.g., Soumia, Leila and Besma) said they must fulfil all the housework duties, especially if their parents are old and need

special care, the pressure is relatively less than it is on married participants. In this regard, Soumia believes that:

> Concerning supporting female academics' career progression, I do not think a law can fix the situation because the current laws are above men and women with no discrimination. The real issue is at home, and a law cannot fix that.

Soumia believes that the only barrier hindering the career progression or willingness to hold senior leadership for female academics is the inequality in the housework. She thinks that no matter what family-friendly policies the ministry could implement, discussed in section 6.3.2, women's struggle for career progression would continue if the married couple did not share the housework equally.

The second subtheme explored in the data focuses on how familial support influences female academics' managing their work-home conflict, especially parents and husband support. First, the married participants' accounts of their work and home balance highlighted the support they received from their parents. Most of them recalled that their parents' support (e.g., Zoubida, Naima) was before their marriage, and even after, parents kept helping their daughters. Naima said that her mother's support was essential to finishing on time when she was doing her PhD. She said:

> *I could not have done it without the help of my parents. They supported me when I was single and continued their support even after my marriage. I will never forget my mother's support when she used to take care of my baby girl while I was finishing my PhD thesis, and I used to come only to breastfeed her and go back. I do not think I would have been able to progress in my career without the help and support of my parents, especially after I gave birth to my first baby.*

This comment shows that even after marriage and having children, parents keep helping their daughter and providing her with the support needed. Naima's mother helped her look after her baby when she finished her thesis because, as explained before, women are expected to fulfil most childcare and household responsibilities. Besides, Zahira, for instance, explained that her sister used to look after her little daughter when she used to be the vice head of department and head of the department. Work-home conflict is challenging for married participants, as illustrated by the data, but Soumia, a single participant, explained that she could focus on her research because she has many sisters. She said: *I could only do what I am doing because I know my sisters look after my parents and do housework. They are the reason I am publishing.*

Talking about partners' influence, most married academics who had a steady career progression over the years and were more willing to hold senior leadership positions talked about the importance of having a supportive partner who understands the nature of academic work and is willing to help and share the domestic duties if needed. Although there is no full equality of household chores division between men and women, the support was, according to the data, giving them emotional support,

contributing more to the chores, and taking care of children. These participants (e.g., Cheikha, Maria, Sirine, Zoubida, Alia, Sarah) even say that they owe their success to their partners and explain that if it were not for their support, they would not have progressed the way they did.

> *However, even though my husband is not as well educated as I am. When we got married, he told me, please, I want you to progress and become a professor. He said that he was an orphan and could not finish his studies. He is my most significant support…He sacrificed his rights for me to focus on my studies. (Sirine)*

> *When we got married, I only had a bachelor's degree, but my husband always called me "doctor" he is my biggest motivation. A single mother raised him. For this reason, he has much respect for women. My advice to all young female academics is to choose a husband who likes their jobs as academics because his motivation is so important if they want to progress*. (Sarah)

> *I owe all my success to my husband because I wanted to abandon the PhD project, but he encouraged and helped me keep on. (Alia)*

These reflections show how husbands play an essential role in the career progression of married female academics, akin to their role in facilitating their wives' mobility, as discussed in section 7.2.1. In this regard, Maria and Sarah confirmed this by recommending that married female academics should always prioritise their private life so that the husband would support his wife's career progression. Maria explained: "*your private life and relation with your husband should always be prioritised because, without it, you cannot progress*". It seems that Maria's statement limits female academics' career progression and gives more credit to a male family member rather than the efforts of the female academic herself. Zahira echoed Maria's view and even considered that whether female academics agree with it or not, the husbands' support is necessary for female academics' progression. She explained:

> *A significant percentage of women's success or failure is on the husband. For instance, if somebody's husband* causes delays in her progression, this may lead to her failure*. The only way to succeed is to divorce him because* it is impossible to succeed under such circumstances.

Zahira's statement emphasises the critical role of the husband. It may indicate that Algerian society is still patriarchal, and men are opening the door for females to participate in public life. As the data shows in sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, male figures were pivotal in supporting or creating barriers for women.

The following section elaborates on how most participants lack the motivation to progress and how their multiple responsibilities contributed to some health problems, including stress and burnout.

7.3 Health Problems, Stress and Burnout

Most participants confessed that they sometimes struggle to stay motivated to progress in their academic careers, and they identified several reasons to explain their feeling. A predominant theme

in the data is that because of their multiple responsibilities, the participants are struggling with some health problems, including stress and burnout, that could make them unable to focus on their careers. Multiple responsibilities emerged in discussions when the participants explained that they have supportive fathers and husbands but are still not fully engaged in their academic environment. Commenting on these multiple responsibilities, Alia answered the question concerning why women are not involved in their universities management:

> *Probably this low percentage of women in senior leadership roles is because women, in general, do not want to have these roles because they have families and children, and they cannot meet the requirements of the role, for instance, attending meetings with officials in the ministry or something like this.*

This view is echoed in the life experiences of many participants whose husbands and families support their career progression. However, female academics, especially mothers, would sometimes be unable to manage all their multiple responsibilities, especially when their children are under 18 which may need more attention and support, contributing to their lack of motivation. Djaouza explained that her husband also lacks the motivation to progress in his career because of their multiple responsibilities as parents to three young boys. She indicated that:

> *Being parents to our three children is our most significant investment for my husband and me. We both refuse to hold senior leadership positions in our workplaces because we want to focus on the education of our children, which would be challenging if we both had many responsibilities at work.*

Djaouza and her husband prioritise their children and refuse to progress in their careers to focus more on raising them. According to Djaouza, parenting their children takes time, so they cannot focus on their careers. So, for Djaouza, there are sociocultural, organisational/institutional, or even familial barriers, but the most important one has multiple responsibilities. The solution for Djaouza and her husband is to focus on their children because it is the central matter, especially at their younger age.

Other participants explained that their lack of motivation is due to health problems caused by workload, including burnout, stress, and anxiety, and they explained how it has negatively affected their career progression and willingness to hold leadership positions. Most participants, old or young, confirmed that some health problems pushed them either to resign from their leadership roles or not to think of holding one in the first place. Zahira, who used to be the head of a department while being a wife and mother, described the experience as very hard and stressful. She said:

> *It was hard for me to manage my responsibilities as a head of the department, lecturer, mother and wife. That is why I resigned. My health deteriorated because of the workload and stress. Fortunately, my sister came to help me; I was tired. Now I feel better because my husband helps me, I have two days of work, and my daughter is seven years old.*

As indicated in sections 6.2, 6.3 and 7.2, the different barriers influencing female academics could contribute to their health problems because of the lack of a support system. Overall, the participants shared the same view of Zahira and said that they did not want to risk the health and wellbeing of their families. Also, as mentioned in section 5.3.2, they feel that their priority should be their homes and children, considering the limited support at their universities, as indicated in section 6.3.2. In their accounts of events surrounding their academic career, Cheikha explained how this is affecting her health. she says:

> *I received no support. I had to work two full-time jobs, one at the university and the other at home. I suffered from burnout because I was drained, no free time. Now the doctor told me you should not go to work. I should take a rest.*

This situation illustrates how Cheikha, and many other participants' have been living a conflict between their careers, families, and health issues. The data suggests that it could be because there is a lack of support in the personal, professional, and social spheres, resulting in the serious health issues of the participants contributing to their lack of motivation.

In addition to this, few participants talked about another reason to explain their lack of motivation to hold senior leadership roles: their view that they are unsuitable for senior leadership roles because their female nature is more emotional and sensitive. Chahra stated that:

> *The idea is for females…you know why? Because female leaders cannot deny the fact that they are naturally more emotional.*

This was reflected in Maria's senior leadership experience, and she indicated that some so-called 'natural' female traits could be a barrier for women to lead. Moreover, Djaouza talked about her need to please and be kind to others, contributing to their reluctance to hold senior leadership positions. In this regard, Djaouza said:

> *I do not like to give orders and be rude. I also struggle to say no, so I sometimes do more tasks than my job description…I am so afraid of responsibility. I am afraid that someone would be treated unjustly in my department, and unfortunately, I cannot follow everyone to make sure they are doing their job correctly. Moreover, I cannot be sure that I will always make the right decision.*

Djaouza expresses in her comment that she believes that she does not have the qualities needed for leading. That is why she does not have the motivation to hold senior leadership roles. She seems to conform to the sociocultural discourses that women are not suitable to lead, discussed in section 6.2.3. This inevitably impacts how Djaouza, and other participants, construct their identities and conform to the social norm, as shown in section 5.3.2.

The following section explores female academics' strategies to continue progressing in their careers and overcome their challenges.

7.4 Strategies Deployed by Female Academics to Manage their Multiple Roles and Identities

This section sheds light on female academics' strategies to manage their work/lives and effectively lead their colleagues. Sections 6.2, 6.3 and 7.2 are dedicated to exploring the factors influencing female academics' career trajectories and identity construction. However, this section highlights the strategies to navigate their academic career and overcome the challenges they face when possible. Four sub-themes emerged from the analysis. The first section, 7.4.1, explores an essential strategy adopted by female academics: self-advocacy and adaptability to different life experiences to reach their goal and become academics as they always wanted. Section 7.4.2 deals with the importance of being aware of managing time effectively while making necessary sacrifices to manage their multiple roles. Thirdly, the participants also adopted an important strategy in their workplace: developing the right network while keeping their minds open for continuous personal development (section 7.4.3) to collaborate with colleagues and progress in their careers). Finally, section 7.4.4 explores the participants' leadership or managerial practices to lead their teams.

7.4.1 Self-advocacy and adaptability

Ten out of eighteen participants expressed that academia was not their first career, but because of their effort and self-worth, they progressed in their careers and did their *Magister* and PhD degrees. Moreover, as expressed in section 6.1.1, pursuing an academic career is perceived as prestigious for women in Algeria, so these women wanted to improve their social and economic status by working hard to reach their goals. Some participants (e.g., Zahira, Sirine, Manar) had to work full-time while doing their *Magister* degree in a society where traditional gender divisions persist despite some modernisation elaborated in section 6.1.1. However, prominent strategies in the data were how all the participants talked about advocating for themselves and their abilities while adapting to different circumstances to succeed and reach their goals.

In their accounts surrounding their decision to join academia, all participants expressed different reasons why they made this decision. Nevertheless, the source of all these decisions was their feeling that they deserved more, and they were ready to adapt to their circumstances to enter academia, keep progressing and be more engaged within their academic environment. Commenting on some of their journeys to choose academia, some participants said:

> *…I believe in destiny, but I also believe that people should always know their self-worth and work to reach that. Reality is harsh; believe me, I struggled with people saying to me, why are*

you doing all this? What is the point? … I had to quit many jobs until I reached academia. I could not have reached this level without my strong sense of self and knowing my worth. (Leila)

I chose academia honestly because of the feeling of my worth. I used to work in the primary school from… while I was preparing my Magister degree and something inside me always used to say, you deserve more, I will never stay as a teacher in the primary school. My female colleagues used to mock me for wanting to do better. (Sirine)

When I graduated and got my BA degree, I tried to find a job, and like most Algerian youth, I could not find a job right away. Then, all my former classmates started getting married, and the societal pressure increased. Nevertheless, I knew that I wanted to finish my studies, do postgraduate degrees, and be an academic, then if I found the right person, I would get married…I applied for a Magister degree three times, but I failed, and I kept applying until I went to a southern city and applied then and finally, I was accepted. I have a vision for myself, and I know my worth, so I will adapt to any condition to reach my goal. (Hadjer)

The main obstacle I faced that prevented me from finishing my postgraduate study was the civil war in Algeria (the black decade). Meanwhile, I worked as a teacher but kept looking for an opportunity because that was my original aim. I was patient and refused to study abroad because I wanted to study and work in my country. I moved to the South of Algeria to a very disadvantaged area, and there I found an opportunity to do my Magister degree. After I had spent seven years as a secondary school teacher, I got my Magister degree, and I resigned from my job. (Manar)

All these women believed in themselves and persevered to reach their goals because they knew they needed to fight for themselves. These stories show that all these accomplished female academics were confident and adapted to many circumstances to reach their goals, especially since women are not usually encouraged to aim for a high-paying job and should often aim to get married and raise their children, as elaborated in section 6.2.1. Manar, for instance, had the most challenging life circumstances related to the country's political situation; however, she kept believing in herself and changed the city where she used to live while keeping her dream in mind. For this reason, she was successful. Adapting to the different life experiences while advocating for themselves could be seen as undesirable for women, making other women give up and submit to the dominant social discourses, for instance, in Sirine's experience with her female colleagues' comments. However, in every single story of the participants interviewed, there was a strong sense that there should be a way to fulfil their potential, but they should also be able to adapt to different life circumstances while keeping the goal in mind. The following section investigates two common strategies female academics use to manage their professional and private lives.

7.4.2 Time management and making the necessary sacrifices

Time management was a predominant strategy used by all informants to progress in their career to lead, especially as Cheikha explained in section 7.1.2, that Algerian women are required to fulfil many roles and responsibilities. Most participants talked about how they try to manage their time effectively

to fulfil their daily domestic and professional duties. Having multiple responsibilities is identified as the main barrier for participants who are not progressing well in their careers and are unwilling to hold senior leadership roles (e.g., Meriem, Djaouza, Alia), especially for the married participants whose children are under 18. However, other participants who were active in research and held senior leadership roles argued that it could be possible to manage time using some tips. Although, they also explain that no strategy could always be adopted, as sometimes unpredictable things can happen. For instance, Cheikha suggested that:

> *… In my opinion, it would be better involving all your surroundings; this is the key to success. I always tell my children, look, I am working from 9 to 4:30 in the laboratory, and then I come home and cook healthy food for you. I can be selfish and bring you takeaways, but I am working hard for you, so you need to work hard for me… Honestly, I could not have done it without involving my children to manage my time better, as they know they need to study and help me by looking after themselves.*

Cheikha's strategy seems to have worked out as she reported that all her children now have a university degree, although it was sometimes not easy, she said. Time management can be challenging, especially when the children are young because, as Meriem said, consistently predict the unpredictable when you have small children. For this reason, it may be challenging for female academics to manage their time effectively.

The female academics sometimes would find themselves overwhelmed, stressed and unable to manage their time effectively. For this reason, in all cases, the informants reported that it is necessary to make the necessary sacrifices. Several forms of sacrifices were identified in the data. Some participants such as Sirine, Zeyneb, Naima talked about reaching the help of their families to help them focus on their careers. They explained that sometimes they need to focus on their careers because sometimes opportunities come, and they need to be seized. For instance, Sirine said:

> *For example, I am planning to prepare my file to apply for a professorship soon, so what I will do is I will send my child to my family for three or four months so that during this time, I will finish a paper. There is no magical recipe for managing everything. We are just thinking of a way to solve the problem in our hands.*

Sirine plans to send her three-year-old son away from her for three months which may seem like a huge sacrifice for them. She also added that no magical recipe could always be used, as it is a challenge that requires sacrifices all the time. Another form of the sacrifices used by the participants is slowing down in their careers, especially when their children are under 18 years old or when they feel burnout, such as Chahra, Zoubida, Djaouza, Meriem and Cheikha. Cheikha and Zoubida, for instance, both missed an opportunity to finish their PhD abroad because they could not leave their small children. However, now that their children are old enough, they are more active in their research. Cheikha elaborated:

I have priorities in life. At that stage, my children were my priority. This did not mean I would not focus on my PhD, but I just slowed down. I did not go to France like most people…I struggled to finish my PhD because I had to travel from my city to the capital…However, I am happy that people sometimes come to me and say that your former supervisor always speaks highly of you as one of her best students. I say yes, alhamdulillah (Thank God).

Cheikha indicated that the research productivity must slow down until the children grow up, even if the husband or father is supportive. Managing all the responsibilities can be challenging, and for this reason, the more engaged participants are either single or did not have children under 18 years old, which gave them the energy and space needed to fulfil their academic duties. Zeyneb concluded by saying:" *You need to make the sacrifices needed to manage the two lives".* This statement captures the views/experiences of most of the participants. For this reason, the data shows that female academics always try to find solutions for their daily challenges based on their living conditions and their kind of support or challenge. The following section elaborates more on the strategies they use in the professional environment to keep progressing: developing the right network and consistently developing their skills and abilities.

7.4.3 Developing the right network and continuous personal development

Most of the participants viewed developing the right network within their universities and other academics in the field as one of the prominent strategies female academics need to do to stay updated and have the support to motivate them to keep progressing and collaborating with other academics. As explored in section 6.2.3, the staff relation is essential to make the female participants feel like they belong to their universities and positively influence the construction of their academic identity. In addition, the data shows that attending conferences and meeting other academics is helpful in keeping the academic activities engaged in their academic environment. Thus, developing the right network was adopted as a strategy by the female participants to keep progressing in their careers or hold senior leadership roles. In this regard, some of the participants said:

Recently, I went to a national conference and met a group of female colleagues; I liked the intellectual level of the conversation, and when we were together in the hotel, I felt that this was where I belonged. Of course, our conversations were filled with humour that fits our status as lecturers. (Sirine)

Yes, I must do this. The other day, another female colleague whom I met recently asked me to collaborate with her to take my ready theoretical part, and she would add the practical part. It was a great experience because collaboration can improve your level. (Soumia)

I have friends and relatives who helped me when I was trying to get recruited by the university. (Zeyneb)

The reflections of these participants are the same as others who believe that developing the right network may extend the female academics' knowledge, improve the opportunities for collaboration

or just a support network to motivate them to stay productive. As indicated in section 6.3.3, the relation between the staff members is essential for the progression of female academics. Additionally, like in the case of Sirine and Soumia, by attending conferences outside their cities, they could develop a network that motivates them, and it was consistent with how they defined themselves as active in their research, explored in section 5.4.3. Also, like in the case of Zeyneb, developing the right network may offer female academic opportunities for recruitment, collaboration and being part of the organising committees of conferences or academic events. This might increase their sense of belonging to academia and help them keep progressing in their fields.

Another essential strategy reported in the data is that academics who seem more engaged with their academic environment and active in publishing can continuously develop their skills and learn from others. As discussed in section 6.3.1, there is no formal training for the academics to help them meet the expectations of their academic and leadership roles. For this reason, the female academics who seemed to be more engaged in their academic environment (e.g., Cheikha, Leila, Besma) emphasised that they are always searching for courses to improve their skills as it can help them progress better in their careers. For instance, Cheikha, who is an academic in a scientific field, said that:

> *I attended courses in psychology and linguistics because I wanted to learn how to deal with my students and colleagues. I learned that you reflect deeper when you say anything, and you may hear a word that can change your life.*

Continuous personal development was an essential strategy for these academics because it gave them the different skills needed to do their job effectively. Cheikha explained that it is necessary for academics to learn how to deal with one another, especially if someone wants to hold senior leadership positions. Commenting on the need for continuous personal development, Leila and Besma talked about how their IT knowledge helped improve their level and progress in their careers. In this regard, Leila said:

> *Importantly I used to learn different skills in computer sciences because at that time it was new, and our father bought us a computer, so all these skills I learned in my free time were so necessary when working; for this reason, I believe that you should always learn different skills to improve your competence.*

Besma added:

> *I am the editor-in-chief of my department's journal, and I learned how to do graphic design to improve our journal. I do not have organisational support to help me deal with this stuff. Moreover, I am not paid for this work, but I am happy to know that the impact factor of our journal is increasing, and I am grateful for that.*

The importance of learning new skills, especially in IT, could also result from not having the necessary organisational support, as discussed in section 6.2. For this reason, a female academic need to be

autonomous and rely on herself to learn how to use, for instance, different programs, get the necessary skills to publish in conformity with the different templates of the ranked journals. The data shows that developing the right network and constantly learning new skills is necessary, especially in the Algerian context, where limited academic support is provided.

7.4.4 Strategies to manage the administrative or pedagogical roles

Holding an administrative or pedagogical position could be seen as a challenging task knowing all the sociocultural, organisational, and personal factors influencing the participants' decisions or willingness to be engaged in the leadership teams of their universities, as explored in 6.2, 6.3 and 7.2. However, most participants holding administrative or pedagogical roles (such as Cheikha, Naima, Chahra) indicated that their colleagues selected them as their leaders (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.3 for more details). They added that their colleagues recognised their leadership abilities and trusted their ways, which allowed them to access these positions. The participants who have experience managing people expressed a variety of strategies, and the most prominent one was the importance of mastering the art of communication because they noticed that many issues when leading stemmed from miscommunicating their ideas. Cheikha, one of the participants with positive leadership experience, expressed that she could lead her team successfully because she developed her abilities and tried to improve her communication skills. She stated that:

> *I master three languages, and one of the crucial tools of strong leadership is mastering the art of communication to understand others and lead them. Moreover, you also need to understand how they think, which Needs basic knowledge in psychology. For this reason, even if you are in the applied sciences field, you should have some knowledge of social sciences. Even when I meet a man who disapproves me as a female leader, I need to indirectly convince him to think about me as a colleague, not male or female, and it worked. I also believe in the cycle of life; it starts, then keeps progressing until it reaches its apogee, then it declines, so the intelligent person should leave when he or she reaches the apogee; they should not wait until they start decreasing then leave.*

The comment above illustrates the different challenges that the female administrator may encounter when holding a senior administrative role and how to communicate while considering the psychological and social factors influencing their colleagues' thinking. Cheikha does not deny that as a female leader, she encountered people with patriarchal thinking who think she does not fit a leadership position; however, she believes that instead of directly opposing them, learning how to communicate with them seemed to have better-lasting results. An essential aspect of leading people is to know how to communicate and understand your team's background and deal with them accordingly. According to all participants, staff relations are essential, as explored in section 6.3.3. For this reason, many issues could be avoided when mastering the art of communication.

Creativity was another important aspect of leading that was essential for female academics with a long experience holding senior leadership positions. Maria, for instance, was selected by her colleagues to be the head of a new department, and with unclear or absent ministerial policies and regulations and lack of organisational support (discussed in section 6.3), she needed to create a management system for the department. She said:

> *To be a successful leader, you need to think outside the box and create ways to manage the department better. Even the person who is holding the department now is following the system I established.*

The experience of Maria is like other participants such as Zahira, Cheikha, Chahra, Besma and Zoubida, who were also one of the first leaders in their departments and needed to create a system to establish order. Their different skills and strategies allowed them to be creative in their leadership.

Finally, all the participants emphasised the humanistic and nurturing side of leadership and indicated that they enjoy the positions that allow them to deal with students and solve their issues. On this point, Zoubida explained:

> *I enjoyed my role of being in charge of students' affairs rather than being the vice dean dealing with academics.*

Similarly, Sirine added:

> *I hold a pedagogical position, and it allows me to change the lives of my students. I used to speak with my students and told them that you could find information everywhere nowadays, but the human experience and human soul, if you break it, can never be fixed. For me taking good care of the human soul is what matters.*

Sirine and Zoubida seem to take a more nurturing approach to leadership, similar to other participants who had a positive leadership experience. It could be understood that the female academic would be better accepted if she exhibited a more nurturing leadership style that fits with the social discourse of being a good woman. It seems to be the preferred strategy of female academic leaders to get the approval of their staff. This could be linked to how they construct their female identity, explored in section 5.3, as it is more socially acceptable for women to focus on nurturing, motherly roles.

7.5 Summary of Chapter 7

Chapter 7 summarises the findings, answering the third and fourth sub-research questions concerning the personal enablers and challenges facing female academics and the different strategies they deploy to navigate their academic career and impact their identity construction.

First, family members have a crucial role in influencing two essential aspects of female academics' career trajectory: their mobility and work-life balance. The data shows that family influences, especially male family members like fathers and husbands, could be the most influential enabler or

challenging barrier. Familial influence on mobility was one of the important aspects discussed in the data in which the female academics believe that it greatly influenced their career progression. Some participants experienced delays in their progression because they were not allowed to travel to finish their studies or participate in scientific events such as conferences, symposia, and study days. However, other participants could progress well because of the support they received from their male family members. Equal to the mobility issue, finding the balance between their professional and personal lives was also affecting female academics' progression. Issues related to the inequality of housework and the different duties women need to accomplish as mothers, daughters or daughters-in-law appear to be the major challenge for the participants. However, female academics who had a steady career explained that they could not have done it if they did not receive much support from their families, including their husbands, parents, or siblings. These push and pull factors undoubtedly influence their identity construction and how they manage their different roles.

Second, most of the participants expressed that sometimes they experience a lack of motivation, (section 7.3) to progress in their careers or to hold senior leadership roles. They indicated that this lack of motivation comes from the lack of organisational or familial support, making it challenging for them to manage their personal and professional lives. In addition, they are experiencing health issues as well related to stress and anxiety resulting from overwork. This could be the reason why they lack motivation. These factors influence their identity construction and make the participants feel torn between their professional and personal responsibilities.

Finally, section 7.4 explores the different strategies female academics use to navigate their academic career under the influence of sociocultural, organisational, and personal factors. First, self-advocacy and adaptability seemed to be the two important strategies that allowed the participants to reach their goals, especially considering the different challenges. Moreover, to manage their professional and personal lives, the female participants developed strategies to manage their time effectively, such as engaging their families with them while learning how to make the necessary sacrifices. Then, the participants highlighted the importance of developing the right network within their working environment while always continuing their learning process to improve their skills. The last strategies used by the participants when holding senior leadership roles are learning how to communicate effectively, being creative, and leading in a nurturing way congruent with their image as good women.

The following chapter will discuss the major themes alongside the relevant literature and theories.

Chapter 8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out an analysis of this study's findings as presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This chapter is organised according to the four research questions; how female academics define and construct their identities in public and private spheres (RQ1) in section 8.2. Section 8.3 deals with the sociocultural and organisational factors influencing female academics' experiences and identities (RQ2). This is followed by the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' experiences and identities (RQ3) in section 8.4. Section 8.5 discusses the strategies used by female academics to manage their multiple roles and identities (RQ4). Lastly, section 8.6 summarises the study's findings and theories used in a model that describes female academic identity formation. The main findings will be restated and discussed in every section in relation to the international literature and the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the study.

In a nutshell, this chapter aims to address the following questions:

Main Research Question:

How do female academics' lived/career experiences shape the way they define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres?

This study is important because there is a scarcity in the literature exploring the identity construction of Algerian women in general and female academics at universities in particular. Exploring how female academics define and construct their identities will provide greater insight into women's underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles at Algerian universities. Furthermore, no reviewed literature explored the experiences of female academics in Algerian higher education using concepts from feminist postcolonial theory: double colonisation and its impact on their participation in public and private spaces while adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative approach. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature by delving deeper into the experiences of female academics at Algerian universities by trying to understand the process, the tensions and the interplay between their multiple identities and roles that might impact their engagement in public and private spheres.

8.2 The Way Female Academics Define and Construct their Identities (RQ1)

This section's findings explore the answers to the first research question of how female academics at Algerian universities define and construct their identities. Exploring how the participants define and construct their identities might provide a good understanding of their lived experiences.

As mentioned in the literature review (section 3.5), very little research was found on the question of how Algerian women define or construct their identities, and in higher education in particular. For this reason, the initial objective of this study was first to explore how female academics in Algeria define themselves. The current study found that most participants used a variety of identities taken from their private/domestic and professional/public spheres to define themselves. These identities could be mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, or sister in the private/domestic sphere, and lecturer, researcher, or administrator (when holding an administrative or pedagogical role, formal leadership role) in the public/professional sphere. Similar to the findings of Zhao and Jones (2017) in Chinese higher education and Chasserio et al. (2014) in the French business sector, the data showed that the participants defined themselves using multiple identities based on their multiple roles, explored further in the following sections. The following section, 8.2.1, explores how they construct their identities between resisting and conforming to the norms by highlighting the tensions between the identities of the private (domestic) and public (professional) spheres. Then, section 8.2.2 focuses on their academic identity and the interplay between the different roles they need to fulfil as academics. Finally, tensions that may arise between trying to fulfil their roles in the public and private spheres and their feeling of guilt are explored in section 8.2.3.

8.2.1 Female academics identity construction: resisting and conforming to the norms

This study shows that female academics construct their identities between resisting and conforming to social norms. Their resistance was highlighted in terms of seeing themselves as different from the typical Algerian woman. They view the typical Algerian woman as someone who usually submits to societal discourses on matters such as marrying at a certain age, being more focused on her domestic role as a mother or wife, and not being too ambitious academically. At the same time, the data revealed that they were conforming to societal expectations, particularly in prioritising motherhood over their careers and being obedient and good wives/daughters. All the participants who are mothers explained that motherhood is their greatest achievement and that they focus on raising their children more than focusing on their careers, especially for the participants whose children are under 18 years old (e.g. Zahira, Meriem, Zoubida, Alia). Similar findings were found in different contexts, such as Malaysia and China, where female academics viewed motherhood as their highest achievement (Shah, 2018) and prioritised their mother identity over others (Zhao & Jones, 2017).

A possible explanation for this might be that the sociocultural discourses, discussed further in section 8.3, influence the identity construction of female academics, making them construct an identity congruent with the social norms (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This is the process of identity regulation that Alvesson and Willmott (2002) talked about that individuals try to manage between what is required of them and what they want; for this reason, they see themselves as different from the norm

because they, somehow, did not follow the typical path of women in their communities. At the same time, they conform to fit the image of being a good mother and a good wife by prioritising their motherhood identity in all cases (Butler, 1988; Berger et al., 2022). For instance, most of the participants explained that in different parts of their lives, they have/resisted the norm, such as finishing their postgraduate studies and marrying later in their lives (e.g. Hadjer), not participating in social events (e.g. Sirine), and focusing on their careers despite the challenges (e.g. Cheikha). In this way, they were rejecting that or at least mediating some norms coming from the external events and culture acting upon them (Chasserio et al., 2014).

Few participants (Halima, Soumia, Leila and Zahira) think that women in Algerian society are pressured to construct an identity that fits the social norms and expectations because of the fear of backlash from their communities. Once women exhibit traits that are not perceived as congruent with the image of a typical woman, they may receive some backlash (Butler, 1988; Tran, 2022; Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). These traits could be, for instance, being too invested in their careers and research (e.g., Soumia, Leila), not attending social gatherings (e.g. Meriem), not wearing modestly or not getting married and having children (e.g., Halima). For this reason, fear of backlash may explain why the participants position their identities following societal norms. A note of caution is due here as further research is required to explore how Algerian women construct their identities from different fields and occupations. These findings could be unique to women working in higher education because their academic identity in the public sphere could influence how they construct their identities in the private one.

The following section will explore how they construct their identities in the public sphere (academic identity).

8.2.2 Constructing of the academic identity: tensions and interplay between academic roles

In reviewing the literature, several studies have explored the academic identity and highlighted how it could be considered challenging to explore as it requires fulfilling different, unrelated roles (see section 3.4.1). This section explains how Algerian female academics construct their academic identities and the interplay and tensions between the different roles constituting an academic career (teaching, research and holding formal leadership roles). First, it is important to note that the more female academics feel connected to their universities (especially with their staff members), the more they get involved in their working environment due to constructing their academic identities as competent (e.g., Sirine, Chahra and Besma). Despite facing some challenges, sometimes, these participants would deploy strategies to keep this feeling of belonging to academia as a profession, as discussed in section 7.4. However, some participants (e.g., Halima and Meriem) struggled with being an academic because

they felt alienated from their professional environment. This study shows that the feeling of belonging, and alienation varies among participants because of different factors, discussed further in sections 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5. Moreover, it was reflected in the participants' career trajectories and identities. Consistent with the literature, developing a sense of belonging is a "fundamental human motivation" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 1), especially in academia and in research collaboration (Horta et al., 2022). The following section will delve deeper into constructing the academic identity and its three essential components: lecturer, researcher, or administrator (if they hold an administrative or pedagogical position, formal leadership roles).

The first important finding is that the lecturer's identity is prominent in the tensions between teaching and research. This was illustrated in the fact that most participants identified themselves as leaders because they were teaching and influencing their students. In contrast, only two participants (Soumia and Leila) talked about identifying themselves as leaders in their respective research fields.

This finding was reflected in most participants' experiences of losing or downgrading their researcher identity in different parts of their careers. Research and publications are still considered the main criterion for progression and establishing a name in academia (Nakku, 2021), and Algeria is no exception, as explored in section 2.3.2. For this reason, losing or downgrading their researcher identity significantly impacts their academic careers. The outcome of this study is consistent with the reviewed literature that explained that female academics experience tension between the researcher and lecturer's identities, and the researcher's identity is usually the one with the least development affecting the representation of women in professorial roles (Barnard, 2019; Rawat & Meena, 2014). A possible explanation of this finding is that research could be constructed following male attributes that do not fit with female ones. For example, being a researcher means investing more time in one's career, which is not congruent with being a good woman who should focus on her domestic role, as explored in section 8.2.1 (Butler, 1988). Other reasons could be sociocultural or organisational factors that regulate the identity work of women's identities and their engagement in the public sphere (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), explored further in the following sections.

Another noteworthy finding is that there are tensions between being a researcher and an administrator (holding a senior leadership role). Most participants, who have had experience holding a senior leadership role, especially as heads of department (e.g., Zahira), or vice deans (e.g., Zoubida), explained that they had to resign from their positions to regain their researcher identity. After fulfilling their teaching duties, the participants believe focusing on their research is more valuable for their careers. Participants seem to internalise the western view that the academic career is related to "knowledge production" (Ball, 2012; Felisberti & Sear, 2014; Tran, 2022, p. 183). Like Western

academia, including the French one, Algerian rules of academic career progression rely heavily on research and publication, as explained in section 2.3.2.

This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in the area, discussing how holding a formal leadership role can hinder their research productivity (Morley & Crossouard, 2015; Tran, 2022). Similar to the views of female academics in Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, who believe that teaching and research are the most important duties for academics, and holding a formal leadership role is perceived as a burden (Morley & Crossouard, 2015, p. 68). Although Morley & Crossouard's study (2015) did not examine female academics' identities, it explained why one of the reasons for losing or downgrading the researcher's identity is being an administrator and the need to resign from the formal leadership role to regain and develop the researcher identity as it is more beneficial for their academic career.

Surprisingly, female academics who held senior administrative roles, such as head of a department or dean, did not consider themselves leaders because of their position; instead, they believed to be leaders because of their influential personalities (e.g., Zeyneb). Consistent with their view that leadership means to influence, they considered that being an administrator, especially holding an administrative position, hindered their influence as it was more about fulfilling bureaucratic duties, which may contribute to the reluctance of female academics to these positions and not associating it to leadership, as a process of influence. These findings might appear inconsistent with the finding of Zhao and Jones (2017), in which the female academics reject the leader identity entirely as it could be viewed as problematic for women and inconsistent with female qualities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Whereas Algerian academics consider themselves leaders, they do not view it as linked to a formal position. This inconsistency may be due to the word leadership itself and how the participants define it and link it to gender. As a result, it could be that in Chinese culture, it is not acceptable for women to say that we are leaders due to the influence of the Confucianism that emphasizes heavily on the "ranked pattern of society,…husbands over wives" (Tran, 2022, p. 20). As a result, female academics in China downgrade their leader identity, whereas Algerian academics consider themselves leaders but not linked to the formal position. Therefore, it is possible that both female academics in China and Algeria may construct their identities within the societal discourses about women's position and find ways to do gender, leadership, and identity work (Zhao & Jones, 2017). Section 8.6 will explore female academics' strategies to navigate their career/life experiences linked to how they construct their identities.

Another possible explanation could be the system's centralised nature, which limits the autonomy of educational institutions and leaders. Similar findings could support this interpretation about the

impact of the centralised system on decreasing autonomy, decision making and bureaucracy, making the female academics reject being identified as a leader in relation to holding administrative or pedagogical roles, especially in the Algerian context (Miliani, 2021). However, it is essential to distinguish leadership from the administration without conflating all roles to leadership and highlight how the participants' link between being a lecturer or researcher and leadership could be the impact of various forces, such as neoliberal globalisation, and how it affected how people define and understand leadership.

Further details will be explored in section 8.4, tackling the organisational factors influencing the identity construction of female academics. That is why this study's results provide good insights into the current situation of Algerian higher education, which may provide recommendations to improve the participation of female academics at universities and have practical implications for the management of the universities.

The next section will explore how female academics experience guilt due to the tension between their multiple roles and identities and how this feeling influences their identity construction process.

8.2.3 Feeling of guilt: tensions between being a good woman and a good academic

Prior studies have found that female academics, especially mothers, experience a feeling of guilt stemming from the tensions they experience from fulfilling their roles in the private and public spheres, as mentioned in section 3.4.1. This study shows that female academics in Algeria also experience feelings of guilt that they are not fulfilling their domestic or professional roles properly. This finding is consistent with the literature taken from different contexts that found that female academics experience guilt (Kudarauskienė & Žydžiūnaitė, 2018; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

Their guilt could be related to not being able to conduct the research they want and losing their researcher identities in the public sphere (e.g., Djaouza). Moreover, they experience guilt for not looking after their children as they think they should (e.g., Zeyneb) or for not looking after themselves (e.g., Chahra), resulting in their stress and anxiety, explored in section 8.5.2. This result may be explained that female academics in Algeria might be influenced by social discourses impacting how they construct their identities in the private (domestic) and public (academia) spheres. As explained in section 8.2.1, although female academics reject some social norms, they conform to the image of a good mother, wife or daughter who is more focused on her private life (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The performance of motherhood is congruent with the image of a good woman who prioritises her domestic role (Butler, 1988; Semela et al., 2020; Shah, 2018).

Likewise, in section 8.2.2, most participants experienced struggles in developing their researcher identity. They explained that research is important for their career progression, internalising the Western view about the nature of an academic career (Tran, 2022) inherited from the French higher education system (see section 2.3). Therefore, it is possible to suggest that Algerian female academics are torn between their roles in the public and private spheres, influencing their identity work to construct a gendered academic identity (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Section 8.6 will elaborate more on the strategies female academics deploy to navigate their lived/career experiences to understand better how their identity work is manifested through their actions. As Thomas (2009) explained that "identity can be understood as the outcome of the interaction between discourse and human agency" (p.7).

Section 8.3 will delve deeper into the sociocultural factors that influence female academics' identities.

8.3 Sociocultural Factors Influencing Female Academics' Careers and Identities (RQ2)

The research findings showed that sociocultural factors influenced female academics' identities and engagement in public and private spheres. This part explores the societal changes towards women's roles in Algerian society (section 8.3.1). This is followed by the social perceptions of pursuing an academic career for women (section 8.3.2). Finally, a particular focus is made on the influence of religious interpretations on women's roles and positions, specifically on the perceptions of motherhood and leadership in Algerian society and how they affect the participants' identity construction. Hence, the key sociocultural factors influencing female academics' identities are explored in relation to the literature and theories guiding this study to understand the lived experiences of female academics in Algeria.

8.3.1 Societal changes toward women's roles in the Algerian society

Prior studies in the area of women's careers in general and higher education, in particular, have highlighted the impact of the position of women in society at large on their position in higher education (Chouari et al., 2021; Nakku, 2021). That is why, one of the questions guiding this research is to identify the sociocultural influences on the participants' identity construction process in public (professional) and private (domestic) spaces.

The most interesting finding to answer this research question is that although there is some modernisation in Algeria due to government policies after independence, traditional views towards women's roles are still experienced by female academics. This modernisation could be observed through the Algerian government's efforts after independence. All the participants explained that the participation of women in the public sphere is increasing because more girls and women are educated. Their observation is backed by the national statistics that show that now most university graduates

are women, 64% (Statista, 2017). In addition, according to the male/female distribution of staff from 1997 to 2016, the percentage of women's participation in higher education is increasing, as elaborated in section 2.3. Moreover, the data shows that age and geographical background also contributed to the societal pressure/support experienced by the participants. This finding is consistent with that of Lalami (2017), in Algeria, that women are now more encouraged, to some extent, to get married and be a mother later in their 30s, enabling them to study for a more extended period (postgraduate studies) compared to how they used to be in the 1980s when the average age of marriage was eighteen. Similar findings are reported in MENA region countries as women's participation at universities has risen considerably (Al Naqbi & Samier, 2020).

Contrary to the expectations, despite this socioeconomic shift, it was not translated to the participation of women in the public space as it is still limited even among the educated youth (Barry & Dandachli, 2020; Lalami, 2017), and traditional views about women's roles persist. These findings are identical to the data obtained from different studies conducted in Algeria (Lalami, 2017; Sadek, 2014), as women are more likely to work in the private (domestic) sphere, such as childcare, elderly care, cooking and housekeeping, which may prevent some women from reaching higher positions, such as in academic leadership and professorial roles (Mernissi, 2003). Furthermore, a comparison of the findings with those of other studies from the Middle East and Muslim contexts (Abalkhail, 2017; Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Shah, 2018) showed similar findings that the social discourses that men are breadwinners and women are the caregivers, and their impact on the representation of women in the public sphere are the main reason behind the low participation of women in the workforce. This might explain how female academics experience a loss or downgrading of their researcher identity, in a way to conform to societal expectations and focus on their lecturer identity, for example (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason behind the persistence of these traditional views in relation to women's roles, as it could be related to patriarchy and the influence of religious discourses (Abalkhail, 2017; Afiouni, 2014), as it is discussed in section 8.3.3, or the organisational factors stemming from the troubled Algerian history influencing higher education institutions, elaborated further in section 8.4. The following section will explore a deeper understanding of the sociocultural perceptions of pursuing an academic career for women.

8.3.2 Pursuing an academic career in Algeria for women: societal perceptions

As mentioned in section 3.4.3.1 of the literature review, gender impacts the careers chosen by men and women in a process called occupational segregation (Mroczek-Dąbrowska & Gaweł, 2020; Tran, 2022). For this reason, one of the aims of this study was to understand how society perceives the

academic career of a woman. The most striking finding was that being a female academic seemed to be highly regarded by Algerian society. However, many misconceptions exist about what it is like to be a female academic in Algeria. Being a good female academic does not seem to be related to her research output, academic rank, or being engaged with her university management; instead, it is viewed as a job that would allow the woman to fulfil her traditional role as the main caregiver, conforming to the heteronormative performance of being a woman in Algeria (Butler, 1988). This finding is contrary to most research conducted mainly in the western context because research output is a fundamental pillar in the academic career (Barnard, 2019; Rawat & Meena, 2014). However, this finding broadly supports other research conducted in the MENA region that views the flexibility of an academic career, fewer teaching hours, and the ability to conduct research at home as suitable for women to be able to fulfil their traditional roles (Afiouni, 2014). In addition, the study conducted by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) in Lebanon found that women still keep choosing careers perceived by society as more feminine, like educational and social services, which may also explain why pursuing academia is highly valued by the Algerian society. Reviewing the literature, section 3.4.3.1 explored the impact of gender on women's careers, and several studies confirmed that education is feminised including higher education (Schmude & Jackisch, 2019).

There are several possible explanations for this result. First, it could be related to the persistence of the traditional discourses explored in section 8.3.1 and how female academics usually conform to the social expectations resulting in the struggle to develop their researcher identity mentioned in section 8.2.1. Even choosing an academic career could be understood as conforming to social norms, such as Zoubida, who gave up her career in architecture and chose to be an academic because it is more suitable for women (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

Furthermore, female academics are not at risk if they are not engaged in their working environment. Algerian academics enjoy a high level of job security (Souleh, 2017), similar to French higher education, which is considered a barrier to competitiveness (European University Institute, 2022). Consequently, female academics may face a backlash if they are career-oriented instead of family-oriented, pushing the participants to sit in the margin and conform to the social expectations of putting their lecturer identity in prominence and downgrading their researcher identity, affecting their career progression. In general, it seems that women are left with no choice other than to focus on their roles as mothers and be less engaged in their academic environment.

The following section will provide further details on the influence of religious interpretations on the societal discourses influencing women's roles and identities, focusing on the perceptions of motherhood and leadership.

8.3.3 Influence of religious interpretations and culture on female academics' careers and identities

Several studies have found that the religious interpretations of Islam have influenced the societal discourses around women's careers and participation in the public sphere, including in higher education (Mernissi, 2003; Shah, 2018). However, very little was found in the literature about the influence of religious interpretation on the lived and career experiences of female academics in North African countries, including Algeria.

The current study found that the patriarchal interpretations of Islam influenced the lived/career experiences of female academics in Algeria, particularly in their understanding of motherhood and holding senior leadership roles at the level of their universities. A comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms that the patriarchal interpretations of Islam have shaped women's experiences in most Muslim countries, which does not necessarily reflect the religion itself (Samier & Al-Qallaf, 2020; Shah, 2016). For instance, when discussing motherhood, all the participants agreed that it should be the priority of every woman who has children, as mentioned in section 6.2.3. However, surprisingly, few participants (e.g., Soumia, Sirine, Cheikha) talked about how it is an Islamic obligation. In comparison, the other participants seem to consider it a natural feeling, internalising the view that men are breadwinners and women should be the caregivers as a way of doing gender (Butler, 2004). A possible explanation for this finding is reported in Abalkhail (2017) study, who explained that this view could have originated from the concept of *qiwama*. This concept is used to regulate the husband and wife relationship in the private (domestic) space, which states that men are responsible for the financial spending in their household. As a result, women should be the caregiver and look after their children (Mernissi, 2003).

In addition, the most prominent finding from the analysis consistent with the literature is that leadership is still associated with being a man (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Al-Jahani, 2021). Despite the existence of influential Muslim Female leaders in history, mentioned in section 2.2.2, such as Lala Fatima Nsoumer, this finding was reported in most contexts reviewed, including the MENA region (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; Neale & Özkanlı, 2010). Moreover, this study reported that even female academics prefer male leaders because they view them as more suitable to lead, consistent with the literature (Chouari et al., 2021; Hoffmann & Musch, 2019; Tran, 2022). Taken these findings together, traditional views persist, despite some considerable improvement, in relation to women's roles which could influence the participants' view that women are unsuitable to lead in the workplace and focus on their domestic roles, mainly being a mother. In addition, even the women who held an administrative or pedagogical role explained that they prefer to hold positions that allow them to deal with students (people-oriented roles) rather than positions of senior administration and management (task-

oriented), aligning with the image of a "nurturing" woman (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Semela et al., 2020). Another possible explanation could be the fear of backlash, explored in section 8.2.1, that could influence women in constructing their identities in congruence with female qualities that may be seen unfit for leading (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution as other organisational/institutional barriers could influence both men and women in reaching senior leadership roles because of the centralised system in Algeria and the influence of the political system on the decision-making at universities (Miliani, 2021).

The following section will explore the organisational factors influencing female academics' identities to understand their lived experiences in their professional environment (public sphere).

8.4 Organisational Factors Influencing Female Academics' Careers and Identities (RQ 2)

As mentioned in the literature review section 3.4, several studies conducted in different contexts have noted that universities are still hostile toward women's participation which may explain the global underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership and professorial roles (Nakku, 2021; Suárez-Ortega & Risquez, 2014; Tran, 2022; Zhao & Jones, 2017). However, as indicated in the literature, very little is known about the impact of the organisational/institutional factors on female academics' careers and identities in the Algerian context. Hence, this section will discuss the key findings in relation to the literature and theories in the field to understand how the organisational/institutional factors influence the identity construction of female academics in public and private spheres.

8.4.1 Algerian Higher education management challenges and opportunities

As reported in section 6.3.1, a key finding in the data is that men and women working in higher education benefit from the same opportunities as there is no discrimination in legal/policy terms, including salaries. This finding is similar to most countries that have a centralised educational system, such as France, Turkey, Vietnam and Oman, in which the ministry of higher education regulates the salaries and all the policies related to promotions in all public universities, which constitute the majority of universities in those countries, similar to the situation in Algeria (Al-Wahaibi, 2020; European University Institute, 2022; Inanc & Özcan, 2016; Mate et al., 2019). However, a possible explanation could be that Algerian female academics are unaware of gender equality issues because of the centralised system. However, in Algeria, women working in privately-owned businesses experience gender discrimination, making the privately-owned sector less appealing to women than the public (state-owned) sector because it offers more stability (Namane & Saqfalhait, 2020). Again, choosing an academic career in a state-owned university is somehow consistent with the social norms

and women's roles, as indicated in section 8.3.2. A note of caution is due here since this study's participants all work in state-owned universities, so further studies are needed to explore the perceptions of female academics working in privately-owned universities in Algeria.

Another reported finding in this study is other organisational issues, such as lack of training and mentorship, which none of the participants benefited from despite its importance in academics careers, personal development and knowing what to expect (Torres-Ramos et al., 2021). These findings are similar to other findings in the context of Uganda (Nakku, 2021) and in the Middle East (Afiouni, 2014). Although it may be argued that these challenges are the same for male academics and females, women would struggle more because they do not have access to informal networking because of cultural or religious restrictions, which may cause homosociality in senior leadership roles and research collaboration. Section 8.4.3 will provide more insights into the importance of staff relations and their impact on the engagement of academics in the public sphere.

Finally, an interesting finding in the data was related to the impact of the centralised system and the policy ambiguity on female academics' university experiences. Some participants (e.g. Meriem, and Leila) explained that the underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership and professorial roles could be related to the system itself that may not provide the autonomy and freedom needed for universities (Bakhouch, 2021; Miliani, 2021, Schein, 2004). This might explain why most participants holding an academic administrative position argued that they feel the position can hinder the influence because it is all about fulfilling bureaucratic duties. Still, academics holding administrative positions have the upper hand over other academics focusing on their research (like Soumia) or holding pedagogical roles (such as Sirine), which could be a reflection of the neoliberalism forces, Algerian history and the current political system, as mentioned in section 2.3.2. To illustrate, a comparison of these findings with Mate et al. (2019) in the context of Vietnam showed similar sentiment because of the rigidity of the country's education system that makes the universities part of the "state-owned enterprises" (p.867). Like the Algerian one, Vietnamese higher education inherited the French model and centralisation policy (Miliani, 2021; Tran, 2022), which may explain the similarities between the two contexts. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because the influences of postcolonialism are not the same in all colonised countries. After all, postcolonialism results from the interaction between the colonising powers and the local cultures (Fasakin, 2021; Tran, 2022).

Nevertheless, these findings may help us understand some possible reasons why lecturer identity is prominent compared to researcher and administrator ones, as explained in section 8.2.2. It may

explain why female academics adopt the slogan "*raise your children and get your salary at the end of the month* ", as stated by Zeyneb in section 6.2.2.

The following section will explore the main organisational support/barrier reported in the findings while linking it to key literature in the field.

8.4.2 Impact of the organisational culture on female academics' experiences and identities

As indicated in section 3.4.3, very little was found in the literature on the impact of the organisational culture on female academics' careers and identities at Algerian universities. The current study found that female academics struggle because of a gendered organisational culture that influences their experiences at the workplace. As indicated in section 8.4.1, female academics struggle with the lack of mentoring and training on the organisational level. In addition, this study found that having a good relationship with the staff in the workplace was the most influential factor in the experiences of female academics and had a significant impact on their academic career trajectories. Moreover, the data shows that formal relationship is affected by informal or personal relationships.

Consequently, the findings indicate that women struggle more to develop their networks. Consistent with the literature, female academics tend to be more excluded from formal and informal networks in their universities (Eslen-Ziya & Yildirim, 2022; Šandl, 2009). The lack of networking influences not only the access of female academics to senior leadership roles but also research collaboration and projects (Keller et al., 2021). This result may be explained by the fact that the broader sociocultural views about female leadership affect their position at the universities (Schein, 2004). As a result, Algerian female academics may struggle to develop their network even more because, as explained in section 8.3.1, traditional views about women's roles persist despite some modernisation in Algeria.

Moreover, women might not have access to the informal spaces of men because of religious and cultural reasons, similar to other contexts in MENA regions like Jordan (Mernissi, 2003; Al-Twal & Cook, 2021). As a result, women would often construct their identity as *unfit* and conform to the societal discourses about women's roles and position, as elaborated in section 8.2.1. After all, even if they occupy a senior leadership role, they are not fully involved because they do not have access to men's spaces where they socialise and collaborate (Mernissi, 2003; Morgan, 2006).

Additionally, the centralised system and the absence of a clear gender equality policy, such as flexible working hours, childcare facilities, paternity leave, and the short period of maternity leave, could make the staff relation crucial for female academics' career progression and willingness to hold senior leadership roles (Ait-Zai et al., 2014). Female academics might feel that the public (university) space is hostile, pushing them to focus more on their domestic roles (Souleh, 2017). This finding has an

important implication in suggesting a need to regulate the staff relation and clearly explain each staff member's role to reduce the potential for personal conflicts. This is an important issue for future research to provide suggestions to the Algerian higher education ministry to improve the conditions of female academics and all people working at Algerian universities.

The following section will explain the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' identities in public and private spaces.

8.5 Personal Enablers and Challenges Affecting Female Academics' Identities and Careers (RQ3)

The findings highlighted that the personal factors profoundly impacted the participants' lived/career experiences and, most likely, how they defined and constructed their identities. This section discusses the key personal challenges and enablers that affected female academics, mainly male family members, that had a decisive impact on the participants' mobility and work-life balance, explored in section 8.5.1. Then, the potential reasons behind the reported stress and anxiety experienced by female academics. The findings of this study will be discussed while comparing/contrasting them with similar findings from different contexts and linking them with the theories informing this study to explain how the personal enablers and challenges influence the way female academics define and construct their identities in the public and private spheres.

8.5.1 Familial influence on female academics' identities and careers

As mentioned in section 3.4.4, familial influences on female academics' lived/career experiences were influential on their mobility and work-life balance. For this reason, one of this study's questions was to explore the familial influences on the participants' lived/career experiences.

The current study found that the approval of family members, especially fathers and husbands, was necessary for female academics' education career decisions, mainly in pursuing postgraduate study. As a result, fathers and husbands played a pivotal role in supporting or creating barriers for the participants. First, the influence of the parents was decisive in their daughters' mobility to continue (e.g., Halima, Naima) or delay (e.g., Zahira) their postgraduate studies despite the similar contextual factors influencing girls and women in Algeria. The fathers' support made a difference in their daughters' lives/careers because they resisted the traditional views around women's position in society, explored in section 8.3. Similar findings were also reported by Al-Wahaibi (2017) in Oman, and Adusah-Karikari (2008) in Ghana, that emphasised the role of fathers in their daughters' educational journeys and mobility, especially for women pursuing an academic career usually takes longer, as explained in section 2.3, or maybe they had the opportunity to pursue their PhD abroad. However, in

the study of Tran (2022), the female academics did not specify whether their mothers or fathers provided them with the support needed to pursue their careers. This difference could be related to the different cultures in Vietnam compared to the MENA region and African contexts. Likewise, the husbands' role for married participants in Vietnam was equally crucial for the female academic career. As this study shows, the husband's "permission" allowed the participants to finish their postgraduate studies, travel to libraries, attend conferences and study days away from their hometown.

Another important finding that shows the importance of the husbands' or parents' support was improving the work-life balance, especially for mothers whose children are under 18 years old. It might be because, as highlighted by Nakku (2021), parenthood affects women more than men, so having a husband who is willing to take on more responsibilities at home provides the female academic with the necessary time for her academic career (such as: conducting research, taking up administrative or pedagogical roles). Moreover, throughout the interviews, there was a sense of gratitude for the husbands' support because most participants believed their husbands were giving up their rights when they supported them.

Taken together, these findings might indicate that the male figure's influence on the female academic career/lived experiences is fundamental. It is not surprising because, as explained in section 8.3, traditional views about women's roles are still present in Algerian society. However, once women have the support of their fathers and husbands, they can finish their PhD despite the need to travel to different labs (e.g., Djaouza), put more time into research (e.g., Sirine, Cheikha) and be more engaged in their university's leadership (e.g., Zahira). These results are likely related to the religious and cultural norms in relation to the obligation to respect one's father or husband and male family member acting as the protector or as *Mahram* (close male relative such as a father, brother, or husband) for the woman trespassing to the public sphere (Mernissi, 2003). It is possible, therefore, that the construction of the good mother, wife, and daughter identities in this study could be linked to the Algerian culture, as the woman is always perceived as belonging to the private space, even if she is now allowed to work in the public space (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Hence, women resist or conform to the social expectations within the limitations set by their male family members, especially with the lack of organisational opportunities supporting women's participation in higher education (see section 8.4). It could explain why most participants might have internalised this view about what it is like to be a woman and *perform* it accordingly (Butler, 1988). That is why a minor finding was that female academics said they do not like to hire a maid because they want to cook for their children. A local Algerian newspaper article discussed this finding: Algerian women reject hiring a maid entirely, even those with full-time jobs (Ariss, 2017).

The present study raises the issue that for a long time, women were excluded from the religious interpretations for various reasons, such as men's domination of the religious interpretations (Feather, 2017) and colonialism in the case of Algeria, which made the engagement of women in the public space dangerous for safety reasons (Leonhardt, 2013). However, these findings provide an insight into how women in Algeria are *doing* gender within an understudied context. Nevertheless, a further study focusing on careers that are not socially perceived as feminine, such as being an architect (Zoubida's case) or journalist (Leila's case), is therefore suggested to deeply explore the familial influence on women's career choices like this study of Dukhaykh and Bilimoria (2021). They explored the factors influencing women's careers in non-traditional work careers and found that similar to the current study's findings, family support, particularly family leaders such as fathers and husbands, shapes personal factors.

As a result of these conflicting discourses and tensions between the requirements of the public and private roles, women might sometimes experience health problems, particularly stress and anxiety issues that influence their lived/career experiences. This is discussed in relation to the key literature and theories in the following section.

8.5.2 Impact of health issues on female academics' careers and identities

As mentioned in the literature review section 3.4.1.2, women in academia are trying to balance family and academic work requirements (Buchmann & McDaniel, 2016; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), which may sometimes cause some health issues related to stress because of multiple burdens. Likewise, this study found that Algerian female academics struggle with some issues of motivation to be engaged in the public sphere (academia) because of their multiple responsibilities and workload, and as a result, suffer from health problems, including stress and burnout, that could make them unable to focus on their careers. For instance, Chahra explained that although she is young, she is experiencing severe health problems because of the workload and stress. Consistent with the current study results, previous studies have demonstrated that female academics experience high stress and anxiety (Akın et al., 2014; Bowyer et al., 2022; Redondo-Flórez et al., 2020) in multiple contexts, which could explain why female academics are underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles globally and Algeria as well.

This is not surprising because, as indicated in section 8.3.1, women are still socially expected to fulfil their traditional roles as primary caregivers in their homes. Moreover, universities lack institutional policies that consider the disadvantage of women working as academics to support their engagement, as explored in section 8.4. Then, the familial influence, especially from husbands and fathers, still impacts their mobility and work-life balance, making female academics torn between domestic and

academic responsibilities, especially for those who do not have familial support. That is why female academics experience the feeling of guilt for thinking they were not fulfilling any role properly, leading to stress and burnout. Women may experience this because they feel they do not belong to academia (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). After all, it was built on the expectations of men, who should be the breadwinners (Afiouni & Karam, 2017), while women should be the primary caregivers, belonging to the private (domestic) space (Mernissi, 2003).

Furthermore, they believe that to be good academics, and they need to be active in publishing because of the influence of the inherited educational system from France (Miliani, 2021). However, because of the tensions created between their domestic and professional identities, they feel inadequate for not fulfilling any role as they should. To conclude, it may be that this feeling of stress is the result of the double colonisation, on the one hand, from the patriarchal culture internalised by female academics in their feeling that they should always prioritise their mother identity; and the influence of French colonial history on the Algerian society and higher education (Mernissi, 2003; Petersen & Rutherford, 1986).

Despite the different challenges female academics face, they developed some strategies to navigate their lived/career experiences. The following section will explore female academics' strategies to manage their multiple roles and identities.

8.6 Strategies Deployed by Female Academics to Manage their Multiple Roles and Identities (RQ 4)

In this part, the strategies used by female academics to manage their roles are highlighted from the data and discussed in relation to the theories and other published literature. Section 8.6.1 will discuss the strategies they used to manage the tensions created between their multiple roles in the domestic and professional spheres, such as the need for adaptability and time management skills. Then section 8.6.2 will shed light on the strategies they used to manage the multiple roles of their academic career.

8.6.1 Managing the tensions between the public and private spheres' identities

As elaborated in sections 8.3 and 8.5, Algerian society still views women as responsible for most domestic duties, even if they have full-time jobs. Section 3.4.5 from the literature review included prior studies that have noted some of the strategies deployed by women in general and female academics in particular to navigate these patriarchal societal practices. The current study found that Algerian female academics deployed several strategies to become an academic and maintain the balance between their domestic and professional lives.

First, all the participants talked about advocating for themselves and their abilities while adapting to different circumstances to succeed and reach their goals. Although the participants' stories differ, they all explained how they adapted to circumstances while believing in themselves and aiming for higher goals (joining academia). For instance, Zahira's father did not let her go to another city to get her *Magister* degree; however, she started working in the management of a factory until she got married. Then, she joined the university and started working as a vice head of the department. These stories show that all these accomplished female academics were confident and adapted to many circumstances to reach their goals, especially since women are not usually encouraged to aim for a high-paying job and often aim to get married and raise their children, as elaborated in section 6.1.1. Comparing this finding with other studies confirms that women, especially from the MENA region and African contexts, adopted these strategies to pursue an academic career because the traditional views are still predominant (Adusah-Karikari, 2008).

Second, the majority of the participants talked, as well, about how they try to manage their time effectively to fulfil their domestic and professional duties every day while making the necessary sacrifices. As explained in section 8.2.3, women are torn between two demanding roles, being an academic and a mother, so they need to plan their time very well and make sacrifices if needed. As an illustration of these strategies, Cheikha explained that she plans her day between her job and home. She said that including her children in planning her day process was fundamental to her success. Furthermore, making the necessary sacrifices was common among these female academics. For example, Zoubida explained that she did not finish her maternity leave period as she had to resume her work at the university. These findings were also reported by Devineau et al. (2018) about the importance of time management and Tran (2022) about how some female academics did not finish their maternity leave and resumed their work after a few days.

Although these strategies have contributed positively to the career progression of these female academics and allowed them to balance their domestic and career responsibilities, these strategies show that women internalised the traditional views about women's position, and they are mainly trying to adapt and conform to the societal discourses instead of rejecting them (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Butler, 1988). Furthermore, these strategies show that female academics are sometimes making some heavy sacrifices and working so hard, especially for those who do not have a support system at the level of familial and professional levels, which could explain why the majority of the participants are experiencing health issues, caused by stress and burnout, mentioned in section 8.5.2. As a result, other women who do not have the same resources and support system will not be able to pursue an academic career because these female academics are just adapting and conforming to the status quo (Tran, 2022). This also can be explained by the belief that women do not belong to the public sphere,

so when she chooses to trespass to the public, she needs to make all the necessary sacrifices (Mernissi, 2003). Otherwise, as Zeyneb stated, female academics tend to focus on their domestic responsibilities and getting their salary from the university without making an effort to progress and contribute to the working environment. The following section will explore the strategies used by female academics to manage the tensions between the different academic roles (teaching, research and holding formal leadership roles).

8.6.2 Managing the tensions between the different academic identity's roles

As mentioned in the literature review, several factors affect women's representation in academic leadership and professorial roles. The previous section (8.6.1) explored female academics' strategies to manage their domestic and professional responsibilities. This section explores, in detail, the strategies female academics use in academia to keep progressing in their careers.

The results of this study indicate that networking was a common strategy shared by female academics. Most participants viewed developing the right network within their universities and other academics in the field as one of the prominent strategies female academics need to do to stay updated and have the support to motivate them to keep progressing and collaborating with other academics, especially with other female academics. For instance, Soumia recalled the story in section 7.4.3, when she collaborated for the first time with another female academic, she met at a conference. Soumia expressed that it was a pleasant experience and a win-win situation because when academics work together, they learn from each other as part of their continuous personal development. These results match those observed in earlier studies, such as Kim and Kim (2021) and Adusah-Karikari (2008), about the importance of networking with colleagues, especially with other female academics. These results are likely to be related, in the Algerian context, to the patriarchal and gendered organisational culture explored in section 8.4, so female academics work around the status quo by developing networks that can help them keep progressing and publishing, as elaborated by Soumia (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The struggles to develop the researcher's identity were shared among all the participants, and some participants, like Sarah, explained that they wished to have a supportive network to keep progressing.

Developing the right networking is beneficial for the research career and accessing senior leadership roles. As an illustration, most of the participants who had access to leadership roles explained that their colleagues selected them for those positions (e.g., Maria, Cheikha, Zoubida). Several studies have explored the experiences of female academics when they hold a formal leadership position, as mentioned in section 3.4.5.2. Although this study focuses on how contextual factors shape female academics' identities, the leadership experiences of female academics holding formal positions are an important part of understanding how the context shapes their leadership practices and identities. This

study found that female academics prefer to hold positions that allow them to help their students instead of managing their colleagues and institutions. Moreover, these female leaders emphasised the importance of developing their communication skills to fulfil their administrative or pedagogical duties. These results are in agreement with other research Nakku (2021), Al Naqbi (2016), and Al-Wahaibi (2020), that found that women exhibit some collaborative strategies when leading by listening to others' needs and showing a willingness to collaborate.

Even though these strategies could be helpful for every leader in any context, these female academics focused particularly on exhibiting more nurturing leadership practices that involve listening, being willing to collaborate and serving their students. A possible explanation for this is that women construct a gendered leadership and academic identity that fits the social expectations of being a good woman (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Butler, 1988). It seems to be the preferred strategy of female academic leaders to get the approval of their staff; that is why they focus on being collaborative and good listeners. This could be linked to how they construct their identities between resisting and conforming to the norms, explored in section 8.2, as it is more socially acceptable for women to focus on nurturing, motherly roles to perform their gender (Butler, 1988). These results are consistent with the literature in most Muslim countries in which the discourses around motherhood are strong (Semela et al., 2020; Shah, 2018). In this regard, Semela et al. (2020) found that the word mother was used to address female academics even in a professional setting, which could explain why female academics exhibit nurturing traits in leading. It is essential to acknowledge that another possible explanation for their leading preferred strategies could be related to the influence of their Islamic understanding of leadership and the great importance of values such as consultation *(Shura)* and patience (Elkaleh & Samier, 2013), which is a reflection of the cultural norms and values in Algeria inspired from Islam.

Linking sections 8.6.1 and 8.6.2, although female academics have some agency, exhibited through the strategies they adopted to manage their multiple roles and identities, they are still limited within the context that influences and shapes their identities (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Jones, 2020).

The following section will link back to the study's theoretical framework and empirical findings to construct a model that showcases the Algerian female academic identity construction model as a way to explain how the lived/career experiences shape the careers and identities of female academics.

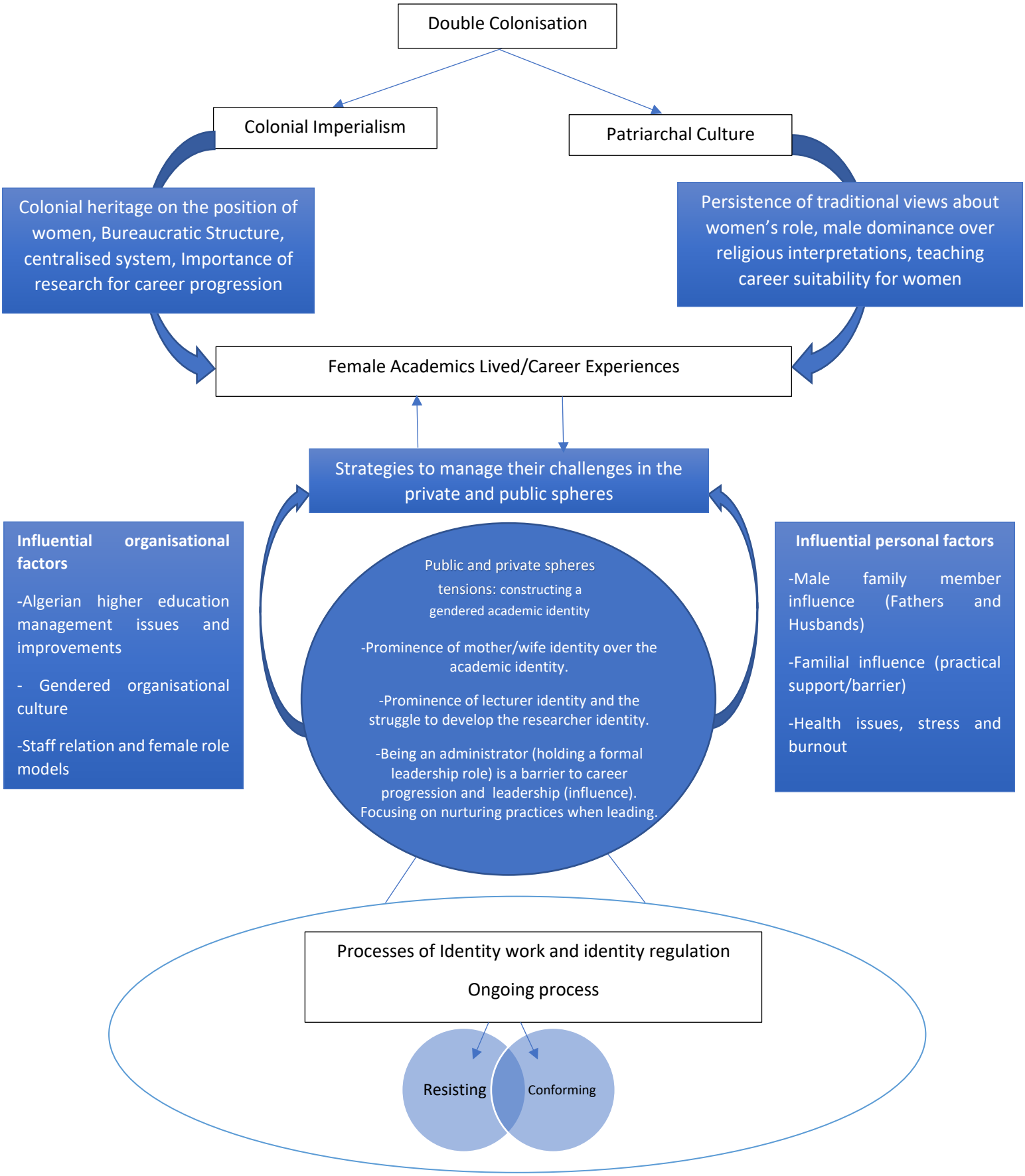
8.7 Algerian Female Academic Identity Construction Model

Although the discussion so far has explained how the lived/career experiences in Algeria influence the way they define and construct their identities or, in other words, prioritise one identity over the other, and what discourses are influencing their choices (Thomas, 2009), there is a need to theorise the

findings linking it back to the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the study. For this reason, a model is created to offer a potential understanding of how female academics' identities work and regulation processes operate in Algerian higher education (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 illustrates the model created to explain how contextual factors influence the identity construction of female academics. First, the model starts with the concept of double colonisation (Petersen & Rutherford, 1986). As Chapter 2 highlights, Algerian women are under the pressure of the local culture on women's career choices and roles in society and the colonial imprint on the educational system and country's administration (Miliani, 2021). The two arrows emphasise how these contextual factors directly influence female academics' lived/career experiences. At the bottom of the model, identity construction is viewed as ongoing, and the process of identity work and regulation is visualised, focusing on how female academics experience tensions between conforming and resisting the discourses acting upon them (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The circle in the model shows how female academics construct their gendered academic identity, and the core findings that emerged from the analysis highlight several characteristics resulting from the tensions between the private (domestic) and public (professional) spheres (Mernissi, 2003). The two boxes on the right and left summarise the main personal and organisational factors resulting from the double colonisation imposed on female academics. Finally, the strategies female academics deployed to navigate their career/lived experiences are placed as an outcome of the interaction between the general discourses and the women's identity work construction (Thomas, 2009). For clarification, the empirical data are coloured in blue to distinguish between the findings of this study and the theoretical and conceptual framework.

Figure 8. 1 Female academic identity construction model



As indicated in Chapter 2, women's position in Algerian society is characterised by tension arising from Algeria's colonial heritage and patriarchal local culture. As mentioned in section 1.3, studying the status of women in higher education is important because higher education is the source of economic and political transformation (Samier & El Kaleh, 2021), especially for a country like Algeria, witnessing political turmoil for several years (Zeraoulia, 2020). This study is important because it is the first to explore the lived experiences of Algerian women in general and in higher education in particular. The female academic identity construction model proposes an answer to the study's central question. Throughout the data, female academics described themselves using multiple roles and identities, highlighting the tensions between conforming to and resisting the general discourses around women's role in society. As a result, they construct a gendered academic identity congruent with the social expectations of women in the Algerian context (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Butler, 1988). Linking all the discussion points together, model 8.1 shows how the postcolonial history of Algeria, through the use of the concept of double colonisation (Petersen & Rutherford, 1986), and its impact on the position of women in public and private spheres (Mernissi, 2003) from a feminist standpoint. Moreover, it shows how the cultural and religious influences and discourses through employing, for instance, their Islamic understanding of leadership on women's identity impact how female academics define and construct their identities. The gendered academic identity of the participants has some characteristics resulting from sociocultural, organisational and personal factors, and female academics deploy some strategies to navigate the tensions created between their multiple roles and identities. Each characteristic of this gendered academic identity is discussed in turn, linking it back to the contextual factors and how female academics reacted.

First, the data revealed that academic women who are mothers tend to prioritise their private (domestic) roles or identities over their academic roles, which was not the case for academics who were not mothers. This is not surprising because, as elaborated in section 8.3, although Algerian society has progressed in terms of women's rights and supporting their engagement in the public sphere, traditional views persist, especially about the importance of motherhood and how it is the sole responsibility of the woman. As explained in section 8.3.3, in Muslim countries, prioritising motherhood can be viewed as an Islamic obligation, and although not all the participants in this study mentioned this point, they agreed that women must always put their mother identity first (Abalkhail, 2017; Shah, 2018). These social discourses are reflected in the organisational culture and the absence of family-friendly policies (see section 8.4), and as a consequence, women feel that they do not belong to the public space and take subordinate roles when they do (Mernissi, 2003).

Second, the academic identity requires fulfilling various roles, mainly being a researcher and a lecturer and holding formal leadership roles. The findings show that all the participants described themselves

as leaders because they believe their role as academics is to influence their students through their teaching. Being a lecturer was more prominent than other academic roles and responsibilities, which may be explained by the social expectations that women's role in society might influence their choices. For instance, between research and teaching, teaching as a profession (either in K12 or higher education) seems generally accepted for women in MENA region countries (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011); which could explain why the lecturer identity is more prominent as they are positioning their identities in congruence with social norms in relation to women's roles (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Butler, 1988). Moreover, as elaborated in section 2.3.2, publishing research is the most important criterion for academic progression and promotion. However, most of the participants experienced struggles in developing their researcher identity. This could explain why women are underrepresented in professorial roles, and a possible reason could be that focusing on their careers or research might not be congruent with the social rule that men should be the breadwinner and focus on their careers while women should focus on being a mother. In fact, an interesting finding in the data was that the academic career was perceived positively by the Algerian society because it allows women to focus on their domestic duties, as they are required to fulfil fewer teaching (working) compared with women working outside academia. In addition, although most participants agree with the statement that there is no gender discrimination within Algerian higher education, the data revealed some organisational barriers, mainly gendered organisational cultural practices, that put a double barrier to female academics (See Figure 8.1 for further details).

Third, the discussions around administrative or pedagogical roles provided some ground-breaking insights into the management of Algeria's higher education and possible reasons why women are underrepresented in academic leadership, especially that, as indicated in section 2.1, the field of leadership and administration in Algeria is still in an embryonic phase (Lahmar & Abbou, 2022; Miliani, 2021). While all the participants considered themselves leaders because they influence their students through teaching, and few indicated that they influence their research fields, none of the participants holding a formal position said they are leaders or influence their colleagues. They described it as "just fulfilling bureaucratic duties", as stated by Zeyneb. The data revealed that the centralised nature of the Algerian system, inherited from the French, constrained the leadership identity development of the participants. Leila even explained that holding a senior leadership role can be a barrier to career development for both men and women; that is why it is better not to occupy these positions and focus on conducting research and regaining their researcher identity (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). Another important point is that women exhibit some nurturing traits when leading, aligning with the sociocultural expectations about women's societal roles as mothers (Alvesson & Billing, 2009).

Finally, section 8.6 explores the strategies used by female academics to navigate the double colonisation processes acting upon them. The evidence from this study shows that female academics construct their gendered academic identity following the image of a good Algerian woman (Butler, 1988). The importance of male family members' influence on the career trajectories of these participants confirms that despite the modernisation in Algeria, the participation of women in the public space is still not entirely up to them. Furthermore, the social expectations around women's roles are passed on from the private realm to the public realm, limiting women's participation at their universities and contributing to their underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles (Mernissi, 2003).

8.8 Summary of Chapter 8

This chapter has discussed the main findings of this study in relation to previous studies and the relevant theories and concepts guiding the study. Predominately, this study reveals that the participants construct a gendered academic identity that fits the Algerian higher education context and the tensions between female academics' experiences between their private (domestic) sphere and public (academic) sphere identities. This results from the double colonisation of female academics because of the local culture, stemming from the patriarchal interpretations of Islam and cultural practices and the colonial imperialism on Algeria's education and administration, as discussed in the chapter. The following chapter will serve as the study's conclusion, highlighting these contributions and proposing recommendations for future studies in the field.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study has explored how female academics' lived/career experiences shape how they define and construct their identities. The concluding chapter is set out as follows: section 9.2 summarises the study and the key findings to answer the research questions. Section 9.3 highlights this research's original contribution on the theoretical and empirical levels. The limitations are acknowledged (section 9.4), and the implications of this study are elaborated (section 9.5). This is followed by recommendations for future research in section 9.6. Finally, a personal reflection on the PhD journey and some concluding remarks are presented in section 9.7. Section 9.8 provides a summary of the conclusion chapter.

9.2 Summary of the Study and its Main Findings

This research was undertaken to understand why female academics are underrepresented in academic leadership and professorial roles in Algeria. To achieve this aim, this study explored how female academics' lived and career experiences shape their identities. This exploration was centred on answering the following research questions:

1- How do female academics within Algerian universities define and construct their identities?
2- What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' identities?
3- What are the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' identities?
4- What strategies do female academics deploy to manage their multiple roles and identities?

The following sections summarise the answer to each question, in turn, highlighting this study's findings and providing a general answer to the central research question.

9.2.1 How do female academics within Algerian universities define and construct their identities? (RQ 1)

This study has shown that Algerian female academics identities are shaped by their multiple roles taken from the public (professional) and private (domestic) spheres. They defined themselves as mothers, daughters, wives, or daughters-in-law in the domestic sphere and lecturers, researchers and administrators (when holding a formal leadership position) in the professional sphere. They construct their identities between conforming and resisting the norms and social values in their context, thus engaged in processes of identity work and identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). First, the resistance of female academics to the general discourses was observed in the way they distanced themselves as female academics from the typical Algerian woman. Being a female academic and reaching this position required resistance to societal expectations, especially related to marrying at a young age and having modest academic career ambitions. Second, the conformity of female

academics to the general discourses around the position of women in society was evident in the way female academics, especially those who were mothers, prioritised their domestic roles over their professional roles, which is similar to other contexts with traditional cultures, such as Malaysia (Shah, 2018) and China (Zhao & Jones, 2017).

With regard to the participants' academic identity, the most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that their academic identity is messy and characterised by several features as a result of the tensions between different roles and identities (lecturer, researcher and administrator) (Barnard, 2019; Watermeyer & Tomlinson, 2022). The first major finding was that the participants experienced tension between fulfilling their research and teaching duties, resulting in the prominence of their lecturer identity and downgrading their researcher identity. Downgrading, or in severe cases losing, the researcher's identity significantly impacts the participants' academic career progression because the progression criteria in Algeria rely heavily on carrying out research and publishing. The prominence of the lecturer identity was shown in the way that all female academics described themselves as leaders to their students. However, fewer participants considered themselves leaders in their research fields. The second major finding is that participants experience tensions between their research and administrator identities (especially when holding administrative roles[9]); consequently, the majority of the participants were of the view that holding senior leadership roles (administrative roles) is a barrier to research and academic career progression (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). Moreover, none of the participants indicated that holding a senior leadership role made them leaders, and they believed that holding a formal leadership role is a barrier to leadership. For most participants, leadership is about influence, and holding administrative roles (senior leadership roles) is associated with bureaucratic duties in the centralised education system.

Finally, due to the tensions between their domestic and professional responsibilities, all the female academics explained that they experience a feeling of guilt. The participants explained that they feel they are not fulfilling any role as they ideally should. For instance, they feel they are not good mothers because they are not able to give their children their undivided attention. At the same time, they feel they are not good academics, especially concerning their research productivity. These feelings of guilt seem to stem from discourses around what it means to be a good mother and a good academic.

[9] Or senior leadership roles.

9.2.2 What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' careers and identities? (RQ2)

With regards to the sociocultural factors affecting the careers and identities of female academics, there were three themes. First, these results have shown that although there are some improvements in women's position in Algerian society, traditional views are still present, primarily related to the view that the main role of women is to be the primary caregiver. Second, an academic career for a woman is highly regarded in Algerian society because an academic career is viewed as more compatible with caregiving responsibilities compared to careers in other sectors. Similar findings were reported in studies conducted in the MENA region (Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

Finally, this study has highlighted the influence of the patriarchal religious and cultural interpretations on female academics' lived and career experiences, especially around their perceptions of motherhood and senior leadership roles (administrative roles). The evidence from this study suggests that female academics perceived motherhood as a priority for women. However, there is a disagreement between the participants on the reason behind this obligation. While some believe Islam obliges women to prioritise motherhood, others believe it is a natural feeling for women.

The women associated senior leadership roles (administrative roles) and preferred to work with a man as the head of the department, for instance, rather than a woman in the same position. Even female academics who are engaged at the level of their universities' leadership prefer to hold positions that allow them to deal with the needs of students, aligning with the image of a nurturing mother. Several studies reported similar findings (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Semela et al., 2020). It can be concluded, therefore, from these findings that sociocultural factors influence female academics' identities and careers, especially around prioritising their motherhood identity and preferring pedagogical roles over administrative (senior leadership) roles. As a result, they construct their identities in congruence with the image of a good woman in Algeria.

At an institutional (organisational) level, several factors were found to support and inhibit women's careers. First, it is positive that women and men enjoy similar opportunities, including salaries, and stability, as there is little risk of losing one's job. This is in agreement with other studies reported in countries with a centralised system like France, Turkey and Oman (Al-Wahaibi, 2017; European University Institute, 2022; Inanc & Özcan, 2016).

On the other hand, this study also reported that lack of training and mentorship programs significantly influenced female academics' careers. Although, this could also be the case for men, women do not

have access to informal networking spaces because of cultural and religious restrictions, resulting in homosociality in senior leadership roles (administrative roles) and research collaborations (Eslen-Ziya & Yildirim, 2022).

The masculine organisational culture hostile to women contributed to women feeling they do not fully belong to academia and the professional sphere. This was illustrated in the accounts of the female academics about their struggles to build a network with their colleagues, as having a good personal relationship was essential to have the opportunity to hold senior leadership roles and to get published, especially since the policies regulating the relationship between colleagues are ambiguous and open to personal interpretations, increasing the possibility of conflicts between colleagues. In addition, the lack of gender equality policies like flexible working hours and childcare facilities make it essential to have a good relationship with colleagues (Ait-Zai et al., 2014).

Further evidence from the study showed that the rigidity of the Algerian centralised system, related to bureaucracy inherited from the French, is one of the main reasons behind the unwillingness of women to hold senior leadership roles (administrative positions). This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in the area of linking the influences of the colonial past with the present system in postcolonial countries, for instance, Vietnam, as they also inherited the French system (S. Mate et al., 2019).

9.2.3 What are the personal enablers and challenges affecting female academics' careers and identities? (RQ3)

The results of this investigation show that personal factors, including the enablers and challenges, significantly affect female academics' identities. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the influence of the family, especially fathers and husbands, was noteworthy on their wives or daughters' careers and identities. Evidence from the study shows that the fathers' and husbands' influence was critical in two aspects. The first aspect is female academics' mobility and ability to travel to pursue postgraduate studies and attend conferences and study days outside their cities for continuous personal development and career progression. The second aspect is the familial effect on female academics' work-life balance, as husbands who support their wives contribute more to the housework and childcare (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Al-Wahaibi, 2017). The importance of a male family member figure could be linked to a male guardian, "*Mahram"*, and the importance of their approval when women are trespassing into the public (professional) sphere (Mernissi, 2003).

Another significant personal factor affecting female academics' careers and identities is that most participants reported experiencing health issues related to stress and burnout because of their multiple responsibilities. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that female academics struggle with high stress and anxiety levels due to their dual burden (Akın et al., 2014; Bowyer et al., 2022; Redondo-Flórez et al., 2020). This finding provides evidence that female academics in Algeria have internalised that they should be the primary caregiver, as shown in section 9.2.1; moreover, they have internalised that publishing is the most important criterion for knowledge production and career progression in academia (Tran, 2022). This could explain why they experience guilt and believe they are not being good women and good academics. It can be concluded that female academics are under double colonisation, one aspect of which is represented in the patriarchal local culture and the other representing the French influence on the inherited educational system in Algeria, contributing to their underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles (Mernissi, 2003; Petersen & Rutherford, 1986).

9.2.4 What strategies do female academics deploy to manage their multiple roles and identities? (RQ4)

The findings of this study have identified several strategies adopted by female academics to manage their multiple roles and identities. First, female academics utilised strategies to manage the tensions between the public (academic) and private (domestic) spheres to balance their different responsibilities. For instance, as mentioned in section 9.2.2, traditional views are still predominant in the Algerian culture, so most participants seemed to have adopted a strategy of advocating for themselves to keep progressing in their careers, like other African women (Adusah-Karikari, 2008). Another important strategy was making sacrifices to manage the challenges of juggling motherhood and academia (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Second, female academics strategies included deploying their professional environment (public sphere), to develop their network to stay motivated, be selected for formal leadership roles and collaborate in future research. This is a common strategy used by female academics from different contexts, such as Korea and Ghana (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2021). However, not all of the women in this study had supportive networks. Those that did and had experience holding senior leadership roles (administrative roles), indicated that they were selected for these positions because they had a good relationship with their colleagues.

Furthermore, when leading, female leaders seem to emphasise on developing their communication skills and being willing to collaborate and serve the needs of their students. Evidence from the study shows that women construct a gendered leadership and academic identity by exhibiting nurturing

leadership practices, aligning with the image of a good mother (Semela et al., 2020; Shah, 2018). To conclude, this study has found that, generally, female academics have some agency, but how they construct their identities and navigate through their domestic and professional lives is limited by the contextual factors that shape who they are (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Jones, 2020).

9.3 Original Contribution to Knowledge

This section will highlight the six original contributions of this study on the methodological, theoretical, and empirical levels to the existing literature on women academics' lived and career experiences and identity.

I. Prior to this study, it was difficult to understand the impact of Algerian history on the current position of Algerian women, their identity construction and their low representation in public (professional) sphere. That is why, one of the theoretical contributions of this study is using the feminist postcolonial perspective and particularly understanding the impact of double colonisation to theorise the impact of the Algerian context on the position of Algerian women in public (academia) and private (domestic) spheres. This study appears to be the first attempt to link the historical, political and social factors to understand female academics' lived and career experiences. It is important to note that the researcher does not assert that the feminist postcolonial perspective through the use of the concept of double colonisation is the only way to understand the impact of the Algerian context on female academics' careers. However, the current study's findings have shown the impact of double colonisation through patriarchy and colonial imperialism on female academics' careers and identities and how gendered norms continue to impact Algerian higher education. This new knowledge is an important element in understanding the reasons behind the low representation of women in the labour market in Algeria. Future studies could benefit from this study's findings to explore and challenge the gendered perceptions around women's careers and work in Algeria, MENA regions and African contexts.
II. Using identity as a lens for this study while linking it to gender performativity provided richer insights into how women construct their gendered academic identities and the factors influencing their gendered identity construction processes (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Butler, 1988). The researcher does not claim that using the identity lens is the only way to understand female academics' lived and career experiences to identify the reasons behind their underrepresentation in academic leadership and professorial roles. However, understanding the interplay between female academics' different roles and identities through the processes of identity work and regulation and the tensions they experience between being a good woman and a good academic has helped to enhance understanding of what it is like to be a

female academic in Algeria. The present study appears to be one of the first attempts to theoretically examine Algerian female academics' lived and career experiences through an identity lens, making it an original contribution to knowledge on the identity construction process and extending the Algerian literature in the field. Thus, this study lays the groundwork for further studies to extend the Algerian literature in this field.

III. It is believed by the researcher to be one of the first attempts to explore what it is like to be a female academic working full-time at an Algerian university through a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative approach suitable for exploring individuals' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The experiences shared by these female academics seek to address a significant gap in the indigenous literature in the unique context of Algeria. As indicated in Chapter 1, there are no prior qualitative studies, to the researcher's knowledge, exploring the lived and career experiences of female academics at Algerian universities. Most of the Algerian literature reviewed deployed a quantitative approach using surveys as their data collection method, which did not allow for a deeper insight into female academics' lived and career experiences. This research has allowed female academics' voices to be heard to share their opinions, and it will serve as a base for future studies to support female academic career progression in Algeria.

IV. Using a career-focused River of Life or timeline or table is, to the researcher's knowledge, one of the first attempts to explore the career trajectories of female academics using innovative methods to collect data. The resulting data guided the semi-structured interviews and helped the participants visualise and reflect on their lived and career experiences, and it was beneficial to the women to reflect on their careers. This approach will prove useful in expanding our understanding of the career trajectories of female academics and academics in general in future studies.

V. This study has been built upon the existing literature in the field, especially from MENA and African contexts, around the factors behind the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles. While some of the study's findings were similar to other research in the region, mainly in Muslim and African contexts, specific challenges facing female academics were found on sociocultural, organisational and personal levels, causing the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles in Algeria. Moreover, female academics shared strategies they deployed to manage their multiple roles, to find a balance between home and work and deal with guilt stemming from fears that they were not adequately fulfilling their academic and domestic duties. The present study confirms previous findings about the challenges of women in academia and contributes additional

empirical evidence that enhances our understanding of the unique experience of female academics in Algeria.

VI. This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the impact of Algerian higher education ministry policies on all academics, as the Algerian system is centralised, including voices from the field which provided some rich insights into the current challenges concerning, for example, research productivity, lack of training, policy ambiguity and regulating staff relations. It is hoped that this new insight will inspire policymakers to move away from top-down decision-making and engage more with academics to ensure their views are reflected in policymaking. Taken as a whole, these findings will allow policymakers to address these challenges more efficiently to improve the whole sector level.

9.4 Limitations

A number of limitations need to be noted regarding the present study.

First, like any qualitative research, the current study was limited by the inability to generalise the findings about how the lived and career experiences shape the identity construction of female academics due to its small-scale nature, as only eighteen female academics were part of the study. However, the purpose of qualitative research is not to produce generalisations, and it is likely to have wider relevance. Moreover, most participants in this study work at a university in the south of Algeria, near the researcher's hometown, which was accessed because of practical constraints such as time, cost, safety, and Covid-19 limitations, which only broke at the end of data collection phase, and one interview was conducted online in addition to few follow up interviews, as explained in section 4.5. Nevertheless, the researcher made significant efforts to ensure that the sample was diverse. For instance, the participants have different ages, ethnicities, civil statutes, academic specialisation, length of experience and rank. Also, although there are some cultural differences between the different parts of Algeria, the higher education system is similar due to the centralisation. Thus, this study's findings could provide a broad understanding of the experiences of other Algerian female academics in different parts of the country, and the findings could be relevant more widely.

Second, the most important limitation is that interviewing female academics can only provide a snapshot of their ongoing identity work and regulation processes and reflect the personal, professional and political circumstances of a particular point in time. Thus, it can be argued that replicating the study can generate some findings that could be similar to the current study's findings but also generate some new insights.

Third, further limitations could be related to the methodological choices of the study. This study adopted an exploratory qualitative design using only two methods of collecting data: pre-interview

tasks, which collected their demographic information and drawing River of life/table/timeline highlighting important career/life events, and semi-structured interviews, which means that methodological triangulation was not applied. Moreover, As a result of adopting an exploratory qualitative design, the scope of the study was too broad. To illustrate, this study did not focus on one aspect of the female academic identities or careers; it could have focused only on female academics' researcher identity or leadership identity development (when holding a formal leadership role) or one aspect of formal leadership in Algeria, either administrative or pedagogical roles. The justification for this limitation is that the fields of educational leadership, women's careers, identity and gender are underdeveloped in Algeria, as explained in Chapter Three. Hence, the current research focused on first exploring how female academics' lived, and career experiences influenced their identities to understand the reasons behind the underrepresentation of female academics in academic leadership and professorial roles. Furthermore, only five participants did the River of Life activity as planned because they thought it was time-consuming and preferred to draw a table or timeline.

Fourth, because of the limited Algerian/Muslim/African literature in the field, this thesis was limited and heavily influenced by western knowledge underpinnings, mainly British and Anglo-Saxon literature. For example, British universities require that academics occupy leadership roles to progress in their academic career, so the researcher focused at first on the barriers and opportunities to holding formal leadership roles. Then, in the analysis stage, the findings suggested that formal leadership roles were considered a barrier to academic progression as that relies heavily on research productivity in Algeria, similar to France, as indicated in section 2.2.3. That is why, the researcher slightly modified the focus of this study to exploring female academics' careers instead, and considerable efforts were made throughout the PhD journey to challenge these western underpinnings that may not reflect the experiences of female academics in Algeria.

Further limitations to this study include conducting the interviews in Arabic and French and the issues related to the translation; however, several techniques to ensure the quality of the interviews were adopted (see section 4.6.2). These techniques are back translation, consultation with other people, and piloting (Birbili, 2000). Also, the researcher's positionality as an international student in the United Kingdom and sponsored by the Algerian higher education ministry could influence the ability of the participants to express their opinions in the interviews because of the Hawthrone Effect. Nevertheless, many attempts were made by the researcher to establish trust and ensure the confidentiality of their data by sending them an information sheet that explained how their data would be handled (Appendix C).

9.5 Implications and Policy Recommendations

Although several limitations were acknowledged in the previous section, this qualitative study has a number of implications at different levels.

The findings of this study have significant implications for understanding the lived experiences of female academics in the Algerian context. The evidence of this study shows that families, especially male family members, have an important influence on women's lived and career experiences. For this reason, focusing on raising awareness about the importance of work for women will strengthen the country's economy, in general, and in higher education, in particular. This can help address the possible sociocultural barriers experienced by female academics. A practical approach to raising awareness in society could be through addressing these issues at the university level because, as indicated in section 1.3, universities can be the source of any country's societal and intellectual development (Samier & El Kaleh, 2021). The following section will provide a list of policy recommendations to address the challenges identified in this study.

9.5.1 Policy recommendations

The following recommendations for policy are put together based on the study's findings.

I. As explained in section 2.1, the absence of accurate statistics about the representation of women in, for instance, formal leadership roles in higher education indicates how much the topic of gender equality is neglected. There is, therefore, a definite need for policies and initiatives to discuss gender equality issues at the level of Algerian universities to raise awareness about this important topic. A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be producing an annual higher education review stating the numbers of men and women in each formal leadership role and academic rank. This information can inform studies to explore the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and professorial roles. Also, an annual survey distributed to all the staff working in higher education in Algeria would enable their opinions and suggestions about gender equality issues to be heard, and this could include other topics such as job satisfaction, professional development, support from the senior management, and wellbeing.

II. Implement family-friendly policies that reflect staff's opinions in every university. Every region in Algeria has its particular challenges, so it may be more helpful if every university gathers their staff's opinions and assists them according to their needs. For instance, opening a childcare facility at the university level, more flexible hours and continued efforts are needed to make senior leadership roles more accessible to women.

III. This study found that the higher education sector in Algeria requires several reforms that could improve the lived experience of all academics to improve their productivity. However, instead of the usual top/down approach, academics should be involved in the decision-making process. A practical approach to achieving this goal could be organising seminars and conferences at the national level, in which academics and policymakers can discuss the challenges faced in teaching and research or when holding formal leadership roles.

IV. Develop training programs to support career progression. During this training, the gendered organisational culture issues should be addressed to ensure that all people working at universities know the possible challenges of female academics to involve everyone in the problem-solving process.

9.6 Recommendations for Future Research Directions

As previously explained in section 9.3, this research contributed to an understudied area regarding women's experiences and identities in Algerian higher education. However, a number of limitations were identified in section 9.4 that could inspire further research to be undertaken. These limitations are as follows:

I. As indicated in section 9.4, there could be regional differences in the experiences of female academics in Algeria, especially since Algeria is the largest country in Africa and the home of several ethnic groups that could have slightly different cultures. So, a natural progression of this work would be to conduct a similar study in the Algerian context using a mixed-method approach by distributing surveys to capture the views and opinions of a larger sample of women and then conducting interviews with female academics from different parts of the country. Another recommendation could be a longitudinal study involving female academics' careers through time, which can delve deeper into the reasons behind choosing an academic career and their career trajectories.

II. The impact of Covid-19 could be a fruitful area for further research as this study's data collection finished during the first lockdown, so female academics might have other insights about their lived and career experiences. Many studies have been conducted recently to explore the effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on working women, especially regarding their academic productivity, and they found that the pandemic has intensified gender inequality (Parlak et al., 2021).

III. As mentioned in section 9.3, one of the contributions of this study was to understand how female academics construct their gendered identities in Algerian higher education. Further research could usefully explore men's experiences to understand how they construct their identities and their career opportunities/challenges. This might allow a greater understanding

of the experiences of all academics and the challenges specific to women working in Algerian higher education.

IV. The academic career is perceived suitable for women in Algeria, similar to other contexts in the MENA region (Dukhaykh & Bilimoria, 2021). After all, a career in education is often desirable for women who wish to combine a career with domestic responsibilities; due to it being perceived as a feminised occupation (Kundu & Basu, 2022) with flexibility and high job security, especially working at a state-owned university. The question raised by this finding is about the experiences of women pursuing socially perceived masculine careers, like architecture (Zoubida's experience), journalism (Leila's case) and private-owned companies or entrepreneurship that do not offer job or salary stability. This could provide a fruitful comparison between women working in traditional careers and non-traditional careers (Dukhaykh & Bilimoria, 2021).

V. As elaborated in section 9.4, this thesis had broad findings as it is the first study exploring female academics' lived and career experiences using the identity lens. Several questions remain to be answered. For instance, considerable work needs to be done on intersectional identities. For example, a study could aim to understand how female academics construct their leadership identity by creating an Algerian (Muslim, African, Amazigh, Arab) model of women's leadership development. Further research could also explore the tensions raised between the mother identity and other professional identities to understand the impact of motherhood on women's careers and identities in multiple professions.

VI. As explained in sections 1.2 and 4.7, the researcher's positionality has influenced her choices in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework. Other studies can explore female academics' lived and career experiences using other lenses, theories and concepts, such as the impact of social capital on gender structures (Angervall et al., 2018) or by exploring female academics' experiences using the concept of emotional labour to understand the pressures women experience in academia and as mothers (Crabtree & Shiel, 2019).

VII. This study's findings showed that the participants considered holding an administrative position (senior leadership role) a barrier to leadership and influence as these positions are perceived to be more about fulfilling bureaucratic duties. This finding has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. For instance, since the decision-making in Algerian higher education comes from the ministry, further research could usefully explore how decisions are made in the Algerian system to offer further policy recommendations to ensure that leaders at the university level can have some autonomy locally. Also, a further study could explore the position of women in the Algerian higher education ministry.

The following section of this chapter will showcase the researcher's reflections on her PhD journey.

9.7 A Reflection on my Doctoral Journey

This doctorate journey was challenging yet rewarding as it allowed me to grow personally and professionally. At the start of my research journey, I had not envisaged that my research would make several original contributions and implications, not only to the Algerian literature but to the wider literature on female academics' careers and identities. Most importantly, this PhD experience allowed me to grow as a researcher after undergoing the research process, including thinking critically, engaging with the literature, collecting data, coding and analysing qualitative data, developing a theoretical and conceptual framework, and writing the final product.

My data collection journey has been transformational for me as an aspiring female academic because meeting these extraordinary women talking about their academic journeys was informative to know what it is like to be a female academic in Algeria. I felt deeply connected to their experiences, making the data analysis phase challenging as I wanted to be truthful in reporting and writing about them. Choosing the concept of identity as part of my theoretical framework allowed me to understand the factors influencing female academics' identity and be conscious of my own bias that was influencing my analysis without noticing.

Moreover, living in the United Kingdom for almost four years allowed me to meet people from different countries and cultures. I believe this was a life-changing experience because it allowed me to grow academically and personally. I believe that the most significant gains in this journey are knowing and being proud of who I am, in addition to not only respecting other people's values but also understanding the reasons behind their thinking. I believe this experience is pivotal in my life as it gave me a new perspective that will continue shaping who I am.

All these experiences gave me the confidence to present my research twice at the International Conference on Gender Research and twice at the annual conference organised at the Institute of Education at Reading University. Also, I was recently accepted to present in BERA (British Educational Research Association). Most importantly, I was asked to collaborate on a book chapter about educational leadership in Algeria, using some of this research's data that will be published as part of a book about educational leadership and administration in the MENA region, published by Routledge. I am excited about this project because, as explained in section 2.1, the educational leadership and administration field in Algeria is still limited, so I hope this book chapter and thesis will contribute to this understudied context.

To conclude, at the beginning of this journey, I thought my goal was to become a doctor. While now, I feel that being a doctor is just the beginning of a long journey to conduct further research in my areas of interest. This PhD process allowed me to gain several skills, and I intend to use this knowledge to conduct research that will highlight topics that have not been addressed before in my context, mainly related to women's careers, identity, postcolonial and feminist theories starting from extracting several articles from this thesis.

9.8 Summary of Chapter 9

In this final chapter of the thesis, a summary of the study's design and main findings is provided in section 9.2. This study's original contribution is highlighted in section 9.3, and the limitations of the theoretical/conceptual framework and methodology are acknowledged in section 9.4. Then, the implications (section 9.5) and recommendations for future studies (section 9.6) are discussed. Finally, the researcher shares a reflection on her doctorate journey.

This study is important as it allowed Algerian female academics to share their experiences which will undoubtedly provide a better understanding of the reality of Algerian women in general and in higher education away from the orientalist representations of women in the Muslim and African world. I will conclude this thesis with a quote by one of the participants, Cheikha, in which she explained her recipe for success. Cheikha's quote is not only a recipe for success for women but also for countries because knowing who we are can help us plan where to go. She concluded her interview by saying:

> "To succeed, you need to have deep roots in your culture and who you are; at the same time, you need to be open and learn to accept things that help you become a better person. It is not good to adapt to new and modern ways without having deep roots, and it is also not good to stick in the mud; that is it. For me, this is the recipe for success; until now, it is my life philosophy and purpose.

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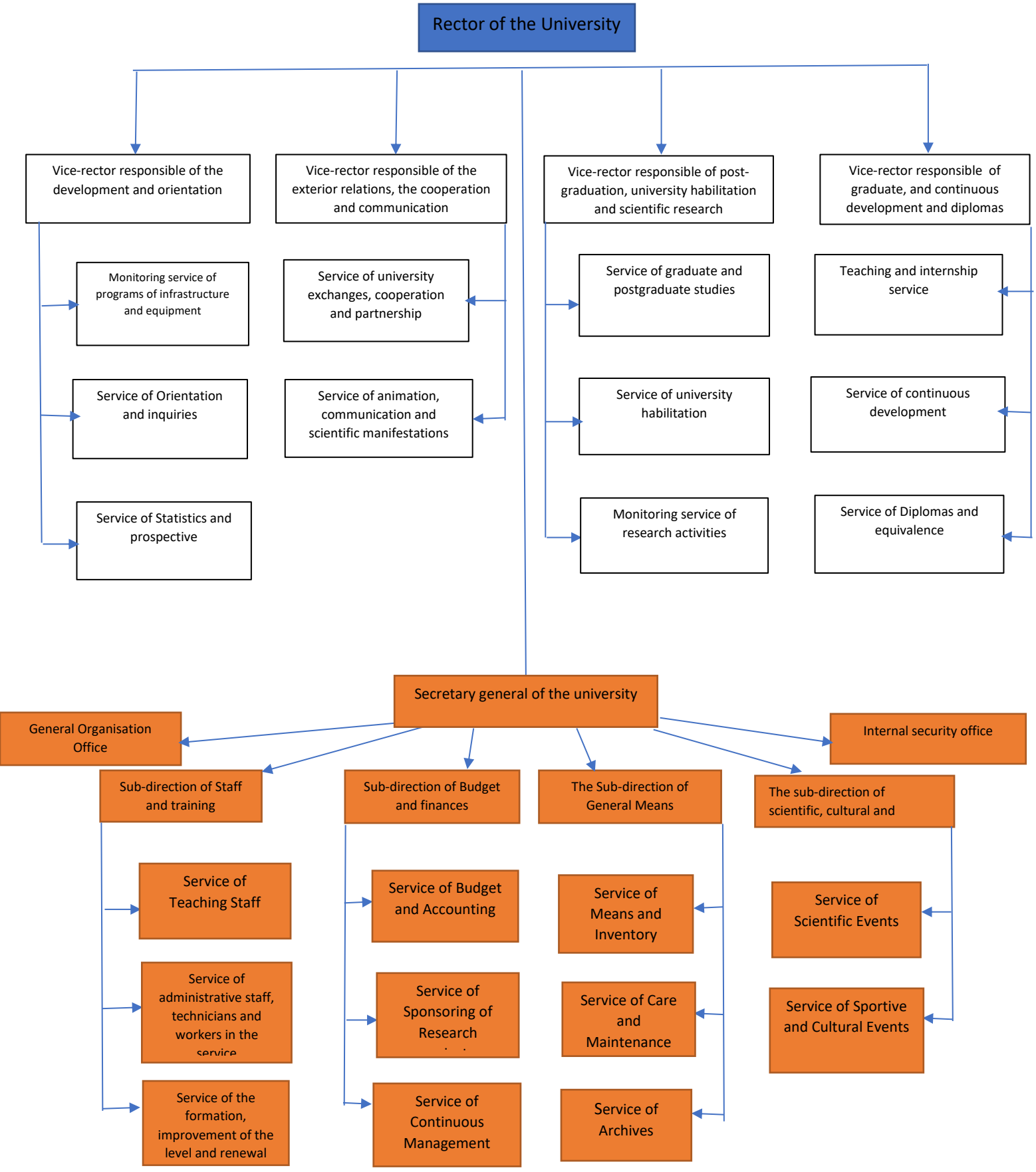
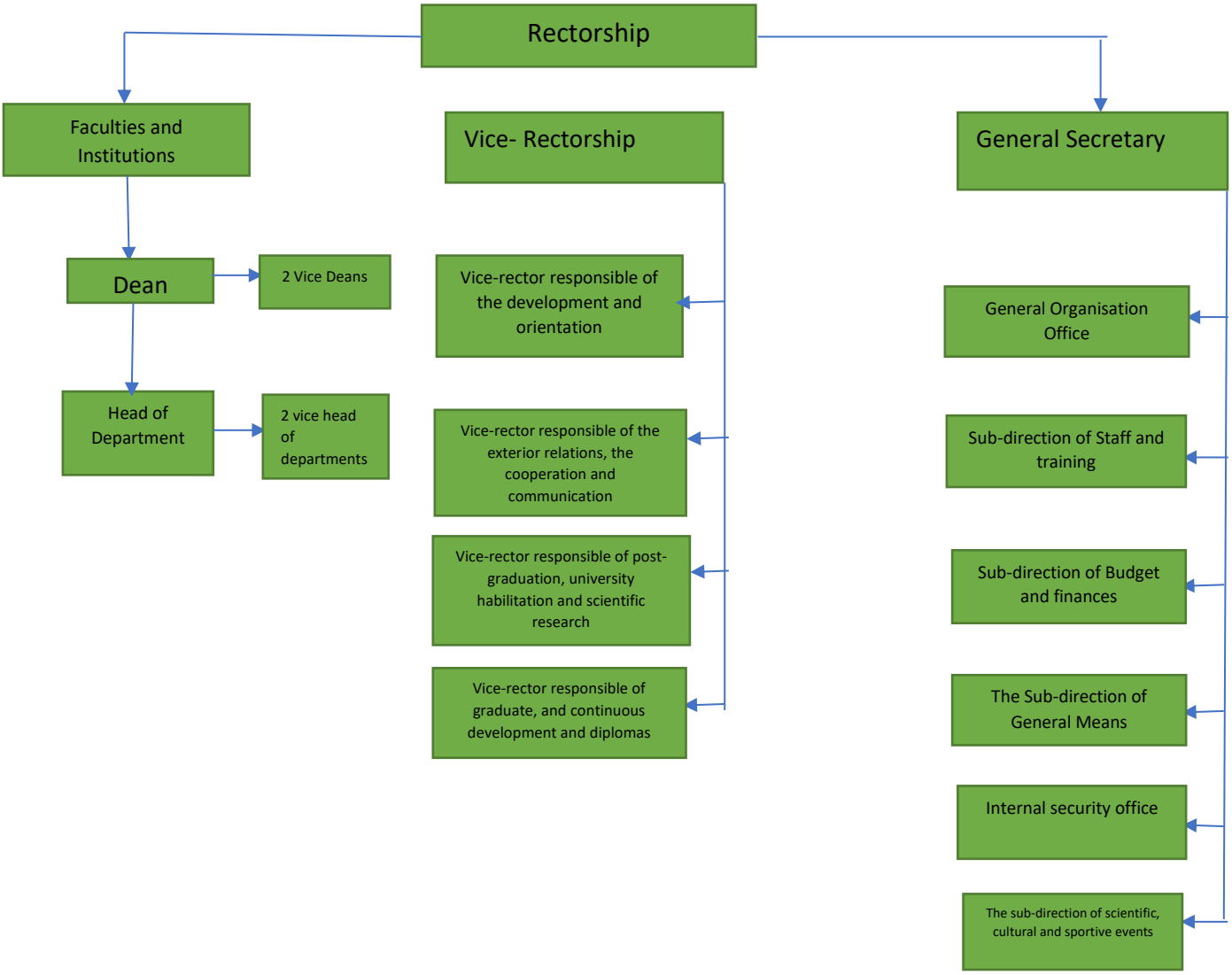
Appendix A- The Organisational Chart of the Algerian University




Rectorship
Faculties and Institutions
Dean
2 Vice Deans
Head of Department
2 vice head of departments
Vice- Rectorship
Vice-rector responsible of the development and orientation
Vice-rector responsible of the exterior relations, the cooperation and communication
Vice-rector responsible of post-graduation, university habilitation and scientific research
Vice-rector responsible of graduate, and continuous development and diplomas
General Secretary
General Organisation Office
Sub-direction of Staff and training
Sub-direction of Budget and finances
The Sub-direction of General Means
Internal security office
The sub-direction of scientific, cultural and sportive events

Appendix B- Ethical Approval Form

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

Tick one:
Staff project: _____ PhD __ ✔ __ EdD ____

Name of applicant (s): Fatima Zahra Abbou

Title of project: **Female Academics' Perceptions and Experiences of Leadership and Career Progression at Algerian Universities**

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr. Karen Jones and Dr. Billy Wong

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

	YES	NO
Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that:		
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	✔	
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	✔	
c) gives a full, fair and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	✔	
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	✔	
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	✔	
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention and disposal	✔	
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	✔	
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	✔	
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email. If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included and their name provided	✔	
k) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants		✔
j) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: 'This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct'.	✔	
k)includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request".	✔	
Please answer the following questions		
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	✔	
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to (1)?	✔	
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		✔
4) Staff Only - have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here:	✔	

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx Please note: students complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.			
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form to be included with this ethics application?	✔		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	✔		
	YES	NO	N.A
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?			✔
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			✔
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?			✔
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[10], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	✔		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			✔
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?	✔		
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?	✔		
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?	✔		
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.	✔		
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		✔	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			✔
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

A: My research goes beyond the 'accepted custom and practice of teaching' but I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	X
Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc. **Pilot Study:**	

[10] Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

For the pilot study,two female academics will be involved in this study. It will include one female academic who had an experience or is holding a senior leadership position, and one female academic who does not hold a senior leadership position.

Main Study:

For the main study, sixteen female academics will be involved in this study. It will include 8 female academics who had an experience or are holding a senior leadership position, and 8 females who do not have an experience holding a senior leadership position.

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting:

1. title of project
2. purpose of project and its academic rationale
3. brief description of methods and measurements
4. participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria
5. consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)
6. a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them.
7. estimated start date and duration of project

The Female Academics' Perceptions and Experiences in relation to Career Progression and Leadership Positions at Algerian Universities

The purpose of this study is to explore the situation of female academics within Algerian universities to understand why there are not many women with professor title or senior leadership positions. This will be done by examining the status quo through the critical/ feminist lenses to see how power relations work within Algerian universities and how female academics are influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. The desired aim of this study is to provide recommendations to contribute in making the Algerian HE environment more gender-equitable by involving more women in the decision making.

The researcher will adopt qualitative research using a qualitative exploratory approach by purposively selecting female academics from different universities in Algeria. These interviewees will be selected based on their involvement at their universities, the recommendations received by the Algerian laureates' network, and the researcher's ability to travel to their cities. 16 participants will be selected for this study and first they will be asked to complete a background information sheet in which they will give basic information about themselves in addition draw a river of life or a timeline highlighting the most important incidents in their lives that led them to having their career path, which will roughly take 30 minutes of their time. Then, they will be asked to choose a date to be interviewed, and the researcher will either travel to them or do it online via Skype which will approximately take 60 minutes of their time.

All participants will be provided with an information letter and consent form via email and hard copies will be provided during the face-to-face interviews with the insurance that the researcher will respond to any concerns or questions they may have by email/telephone. The researcher will encourage participation by sending personal invitations by email, emphasising that participation is completely voluntary and that both filling the background information sheet and the interview will take approximately one hour of their time and will be conducted at a place and time specified by the participants at their convenience.

The ethical consideration that are raised by this project is keeping the confidentiality and anonymity of data, and the researcher will deal with them by informing all the participants about the data security measures taken and carefully explaining to them their rights of confidentiality and withdrawal, either prior, during or after the interview,.

The estimated start date of the pilot study will be within December/January 2019/2020, after receiving ethical approval and gaining confirmation of registration. The main study and the start date for the data collection will be in mid-January 2020. The data collection is anticipated to take approximately 8 weeks, but it might be longer in the case of something unpredictable happening.

B: I consider that this project **may** have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.	
Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.	
Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words. 1. title of project 2. purpose of project and its academic rationale 3. brief description of methods and measurements 4. participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria 5. consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary) 6. a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with then. 7. estimated start date and duration of project	

RISK ASSESSMENT: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of Work/activity:	The researcher will interview around 16 participants, and the place of the interview will be either at the participants' university campus if the researcher can travel to that city or if it was not possible, the interview will be via Skype. The elements of the research will involve a pilot study.

Where will data be collected?	Adrar, Bechar, Setif, Laghouat, Ouregla and Algiers universities (South, East, west and North of Algeria)

Significant hazards:	All interviews will be conducted within universities, so they have a duty to maintain a safe area of work within the university. Concerning travelling within Algeria, the researcher will organise the times of her travelling to be during the daylight, and the cities will be chosen based on the availability of personal connections there to ensure the safety of the researcher.

Who might be exposed to hazards?	The researcher only.

Existing control measures:	The universities' rooms and premises fall within the Health & Safety committee responsibilities of universities.

Are risks adequately controlled:	YES ☑ No ☐

If NO, list additional controls	Additional controls	Action by:

and actions required:		

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required.
Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: [redacted] Print Name: Fatima Zahra Abbou Date:22/10/2019

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: ……[redacted] Print Name Alan Floyd…….
Date…23/10/19….
(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

University of Reading

Information Management and Policy Services

University of Reading

DATA PROTECTION DECLARATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This document can be used to provide assurances to your ethics committee where confirmation of data protection training and awareness is required for ethical approval.

By signing this declaration I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the requirements for data protection within the *Data Protection for Researchers* document located here:

  http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/imps/Data_Protection_for_Researchers__Aug_18.v1.pdf

- I have asked for advice on any elements that I am *unclear on* prior to submitting my ethics approval request, either from my supervisor, or the data protection team at: imps@reading.ac.uk

- I understand that I am responsible for the secure handling, and protection of, my research data

- I know who to contact in the event of an information security incident, a data protection complaint or a request made under data subject access rights

Researcher to complete

Project/Study Title_____

NAME	STUDENT ID NUMBER	DATE
Fatima Zahra Abbou	26825540	11 October 2019

Supervisor signature

Note for supervisors: Please verify that your student has completed the above actions

NAME	STAFF ID NUMBER	DATE
Dr Karen Jones	Nv911468	11 October 2019

Submit your completed signed copy to your ethical approval committee.
Copies to be retained by ethics committee.

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	IMPS	Annually	IMPS	

Academics Information Sheet

Supervisor: Dr Karen Jones
Phone: +44(0)1183782603
Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk
Researcher: Fatima Zahra Abbou
Phone: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177
Email: f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Academics information sheet

Research Project: Female Academics' Perceptions and Experiences of Leadership and Career Progression at Algerian Universities

Dear academic,
I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study about female academics' perceptions and experiences of leadership and career progression.

What is the project?
I am conducting a study at the University of Reading, with funding from the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This research aims to explore and understand female academics' experiences and perceptions in relation to career progression and leadership positions. The study will compare and contrast women's experiences at different stages of their careers in universities in different parts of Algeria. The purpose of this is to explore the reasons that fewer women are professors or hold senior leadership positions at Algerian universities, as demonstrated by government figures. Moreover, the research will help to understand the opportunities and challenges that women face at different stages of their career, and it is hoped that recommendations will arise from the findings to support female academics' career progression.

Why have you been chosen to take part?
You have been invited to take part because you have expressed an interest in this project, and/or because you are a female academic working permanently at an Algerian university. Because of this, you are well placed to share your experiences of career progression and views on female leadership at Algerian universities in order to fulfil the research aims of this project.

Do you have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether you participate in this study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the researcher, Fatima Zahra Abbou, Mob: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177, Email: f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

At your convenience, a background information sheet will be sent to your email address with instructions for you to complete along with a 'Rivers of Life' drawing, which will be used to provide a picture and timeline highlighting the most important incidents and people along your career path. This should take approximately about 30 minutes to complete before you return to the researcher via email.

Following this, there will be a face-to-face interview with you. The interviews will take place at the university campus (or another location that is convenient for you) at a mutually convenient time. If it is more convenient for you, the interview can also be conducted via skype. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The aim of the interview is to understand, by talking to you as an academic working at a university in Algeria, your career path and the different factors that influenced along the day. I am also interested in whether you are/or aspire to hold a senior leadership position within the university and your views on female leadership in higher education. Topics of the interview will explore the obstacles and opportunities that helped/hindered your career progression, your own understanding of the concept of leadership and your experiences of leadership or leadership aspirations, if you have any. There will also be some questions about work-life balance, and how you are managing the different roles that you have to fulfil (e.g. family duties and career responsibilities). You do not have to share anything that you might feel uncomfortable with. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate the collection of information, and later translated and transcribed for analysis.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?
The information given by participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the
researcher and supervisors of the student. Information about individuals will not be shared with the university where they are employed or the ministry of higher education in Algeria. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings of the study might be useful to develop your own understanding of leadership and career progression.

What will happen to the data?
Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your colleagues, or your university to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by that pseudonym in all records. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the researcher Fatima Zahra Abbou and the supervisor Dr. Karen Jones will have access to the records. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. I can send you electronic copies of these publications upon request.

In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to:

Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data. You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk. You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Who has reviewed the study?
This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Project Supervisor, Dr Karen Jones, Tel: +44(0)1183782603, Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
If you would like more information, please contact Fatima Zahra Abbou
Mobile : +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177 Email : f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

I do hope that you will agree to your participation in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it either when we meet for the face-to face interview or via email if we are having an online interview.

Thank you for your time.
Kind Regards,

Fatima Zahra Abbou Date: 14/10/2019

Supervisor: Dr Karen Jones
Phone: +44(0)1183782603
Email:
karen.jones@reading.ac.uk
Researcher: Fatima Zahra Abbou
Phone: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177
Email:
f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Universities Information Sheet

Research Project: Female Academics' Perceptions and Experiences of Leadership and Career Progression at Algerian Universities

Dear

I am writing to invite your female staff members to take part in a research study about the female academics' perceptions and experiences of leadership and career progression.

What is the project?
I am conducting a study at the University of Reading with funding from the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This research aims to explore and understand female academics' experiences and perceptions in relation to career progression and leadership positions. The study will compare and contrast women's experiences at different stages of their careers in universities in different parts of Algeria. The purpose of this is to explore why fewer women are professors or hold senior leadership positions at Algerian universities. Moreover, the research will help to understand the opportunities and challenges that women face at different stages of their career. It is hoped that recommendations will arise from the findings to support female academics career progression.

The study will involve a sample of female academic staff working at this university. They will be provided with an information letter about the study and consent form to indicate that they consent to take part in the study. Prior to the interview, they will be asked to complete a background information sheet and a drawing timeline of their career experiences to date. Following that a time will be agreed when an interview will take place. The interview will be conducted at the University, face-to-face or via Skype and audio recorded to aid accurate gathering of data, then transcribed and anonymised so that neither the university or the academics or anyone associated with them will be identified.

Why has you been chosen to take part?
The University has been invited to take part because of its reputation of supporting researchers and employing female members of staff. Therefore, your university is well placed to be one of the universities selected for this research.

Do you have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether you give permission for the female academics to participate in this study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the researcher, Fatima Zahra Abbou, Mob: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177, Email: f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if the university takes part?
After gaining your permission, female academics working at the university will be contacted by email with an information about the study. Those who consent to take part in the study will be asked to provide some background information, which will take approximately 30 minutes of their time. A mutually convenient time will be agreed for the interview. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will take place in privacy in a room at the university campus.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?
The information given by participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the
researcher and supervisors of the student. Information about individuals or their universities will not be shared with the university leadership or the ministry of higher education. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful to develop your own understanding about issues related to gender, leadership and career progression.

What will happen to the data?
Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking the university to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the researcher will have access to the records. In line with the University of Reading's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. I can send you electronic copies of these publications upon request.

In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical

research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data. You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk. You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Who has reviewed the study?
This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Project Supervisor, Dr Karen Jones, Tel: +44(0)1183782603, Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
If you would like more information, please contact Fatima Zahra Abbou
Mobile : +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177 Email : f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

I do hope that you will agree to the participation of the university in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it either in person or via email.

Thank you for your time.
Kind Regards,

Fatima Zahra Abbou Date: 14/10/2019

Appendix E- Academics Consent Form

Supervisor: Dr Karen Jones
Phone: +44(0)1183782603
Email:
karen.jones@reading.ac.uk
Researcher: Fatima Zahra Abbou
Phone: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177
Email:
f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Academics Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.
I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of the academic: _____
Name of the university: _____

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to my involvement in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet.
YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to fill the background information sheet and complete a rivers of life / timeline drawing activity.
YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to being interviewed.
YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to have my interview audio-recorded.
YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.
YES ☐ NO ☐

Signed: _____
Date: _____

Appendix F- Universities Consent Form

Supervisor: Dr Karen Jones
Phone: +44(0)1183782603
Email:
karen.jones@reading.ac.uk
Researcher: Fatima Zahra Abbou
Phone: +44 (0)7523141516, +213(0)559554177
Email:
f.abbou@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Universities Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.
I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of my institution. All my questions have been answered.

Name of the Responsible: _____
Name of the university: _____

Please tick as appropriate:
I consent to the involvement of the university in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree that female academics will be interviewed, with their consent.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations and pseudonym to refer to this university in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Signed: _____
Date: _____

Appendix G- The Pre-Interview Task

1- In which age range do you fall?

- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-65
- 65+

2- What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

3- Do you have children up to the age of 18? Yes/no, how many?

- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

How old are your children?

----------.

4- How long have you been working at the university?

- Less than a year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11 years or more

5- What is your Title?

- Maitre Assistant B
- Maitre Assistant A
- Maitre de Conference B
- Maitre de Conference A
- Professor
- Other (please specify)……..

6- Do you hold a leadership position? Yes / No

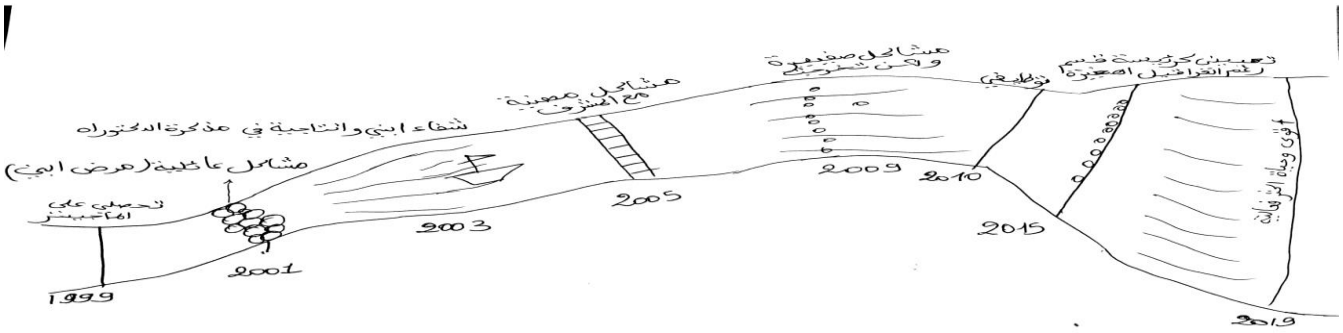
7- Please complete a 'Rivers of Life' activity. This will involve reflecting on your career experiences and writing these down in the form of a drawing with keywords and phrases. If you do not wish to complete this activity, you can answer the following questions in the form you want.

Think about the following questions:

- Think about the shape of your life if it were a river, if convenient?
- Think about all the sudden and smooth transitions, and how would you shape them?
- Are there some obstacles shaped as rocks falling into your river, if convenient?
- Please put the approximate date or age next to every critical incident in your river.
- If you do not want to draw the river, you can simply draw a timeline/table while putting the critical moment in your career.

Please, find below an example of a River of Life:

Name of the River: Roller Coaster



Name your river/timeline/table:

Chart its path in the space below:

Appendix H- Interview Schedule for Academics

1. Please talk me through your river of life drawing, table or timeline.

   Prompts:

   Why did you choose academia?

   How would you describe your career progression?

   How did you become an academic?

   What are the opportunities that helped you become an academic?

   What are the obstacles that faced you?

   Are there key people or role models who inspired you to shape your career, and in what way?

2. How do you define leadership? What is your role?

   Prompts:

   What are the qualities of a 'good' or 'bad' leader from your experience? What are your responsibilities? How would you describe your leadership experience? What skills/experience do you bring to the role? Do you consider yourself a leader? What do you enjoy? What are your main challenges as a leader? Why? Tell me about your leadership position (if applicable)?

   Alternative question if not currently a leader: Have you ever considered taking on a leadership position? Do you aspire to hold it in the future? Why? How would you describe the leadership experience/skills you would bring to the role?

3. 24% of professors in universities in Algeria are women, and a much lower proportion of female academics hold leadership positions. From your own observations and experience, why is this?

   Prompts: How do you feel about this? How does the Algerian society view the role of women? Do you feel that the expectations of society influence you? Does that put any pressure on you? What attitudes prevail towards women leaders, in your opinion? Can you give an example from your own experience when you felt your gender helped you or hindered your career progression?

   What policies and practices support women's career progression in Algerian universities?

Prompts/follow up: Two of the criteria that influence the academics' progression are the number of published articles and conferences attended; what do you think about these criteria? Are you active in publishing? What motivates you to publish/holds you back from publishing? Does the university provide academics with leadership training? Are women included in this? Do you think females' participation in professorial and leadership positions will improve at Algerian universities? Why? What strategies and regulations do you recommend to support women's career progression in Algerian universities improved?

4. How would you describe your "work-life" balance?

   Prompts: How do you manage multiple responsibilities such as scientific research, family, teaching and your leadership position (if applicable)? How does your marital status affect your career, if at all? How does having children impact you/women and your career, if at all? Is this different/the same for men? What support does the university provide for families, e.g. maternity leave, paternity leave, kindergarten, flexible working?

1.لماذا اخترت الوسط الأكاديمي؟
كيف تصفين تطور حياتك المهنية؟

كيف أصبحت أكاديمية؟

ما هي الفرص التي ساعدت في أن تصبحي أكاديمية؟

ما هي العقبات التي واجهتك؟

هل هناك أشخاص مهمون أو قدوة ألهمتك في تشكيل حياتك المهنية، كيف أو من أي ناحية؟

2 .كيف تصفين مفهوم القيادة؟ وما هي صفات القائد "الجيد" أو "السيئ" من خلال تجربتك

أخبريني عن تجربتك في القيادة (إن وجدت)؟

الاسئلة الفرعية: ما هو دورك؟ ما هي مسؤولياتك؟ كيف تصفين تجربة قيادتك؟ ماهي المهارات / الخبرة التي تجلبينها لهذا الدور؟ ما هي التحديات الرئيسية الخاصة بك التي تواجهك كمسؤولة لماذا؟ ما مصدرها و طبيعتها؟

سؤال بديل إن لم تكوني ً في مركز قيادة حاليًا: هل فكرت يومًا في تولي منصب قيادي؟ هل تطمحين إلى ذلك؟ لماذا ا؟ كيف تقيمين خبرتك / المهارات القيادية التي ستجلبينها إلى هذا الدور؟

3. 24 ٪ من الأستاذات الجامعيات في الجزائر وصلن الى درجة استاذ التعليم العالي في عام 2019 ونسبة أقل بكثير من الأكاديميات يشغلن مناصب قيادية. كيف يمكن تفسير هذه الظاهرة حسب رأيك و من خلال تجاربك و خبراتك؟

الاسئلة الفرعية كيف تشعرين حيال هذا؟ كيف ينظر المجتمع الجزائري إلى دور المرأة؟ هل تشعر بأنك متأثرة بتوقعات المجتمع هل هذا يضع عليك أي ضغط ؟ ما هي المواقف السائدة تجاه القيادات النسائية في رأيك؟ هل يمكن أن تقدمين مثالاً من تجربتك خبرتك الشخصية عندما شعرت أن بكونك امرأة ساعدك أو عرقل تقدم حياتك المهنية؟

هل هناك سياسات وممارسات تدعم التقدم الوظيفي للمرأة في الجامعات الجزائرية ماهي إن وجدت؟

الاسئلة الفرعية: أحد المعايير التي تؤثر على تقدم تساعد في ترقية الأكاديميين هي عدد المقالات المنشورة والمشاركات في المؤتمرات ، ما رأيك في هذه المعايير؟ هل أنت نشطة في النشر؟ ما الذي يحفزك/ يعيقك على النشر ؟ هل توفر الجامعة تداريب على القيادة للأكاديميين ؟ هل تشمل هذه التداريب النساء أيضا-؟ هل تعتقدين أن نسبة مشاركة الإناث في المناصب المهنية والقيادية ستتحسن في الجامعات الجزائرية في المستقبل؟ لماذا ؟ ما هي الاستراتيجيات والتوصيات التي تقدمينها لدعم التقدم الوظيفي للمرأة في الجامعات الجزائرية؟

4. كيف تصفين التوازن الذي تضعينه بين حياتك المهنية والشخصية؟

الاسئلة الفرعية كيف تديرين المسؤوليات المتعددة مثل البحث العلمي والتدريس والأسرة وموقعك القيادي؟ كيف تؤثر حالتك العائلية كزوجة او ابنة على حياتك المهنية، إن وجدت؟ ما هي الجوانب التي يؤثر بها إنجاب الأطفال عليك و على حياتك المهنية، إن وجدت؟ هل هذا مختلف / نفس الشيء بالنسبة للرجال ؟ما هو الدعم الذي تقدمه الجامعة للعائلات للأمهات و الاباء من الاساتذة، على سبيل المثال إجازة الأمومة، إجازة الأبوة ، الحاضنة، ساعات عمل مرنة، تخصيص أوقات لإرضاع الاطفال الخ؟

Appendix I- Story 7 Leila (The Nomad)

Leila is in the age range 31 to 40, not married with no kids, assistant professor, one step before becoming a professor. She worked at the university for 6 to 10 years with no experience holding a senior leadership position. She was referred to me by her colleague. Our interview lasted around one hour and a half.

Leila grew up in a disadvantaged area with a very traditional mindset, and her family, especially her father, are behind her motivation to continue her higher degree studies. However, she never thought of pursuing an academic career, and it just happened because, in her own words, she is a nomad. Her first career [redacted]. Then she quit because being [redacted] because she believes that it was not suitable for her as a woman. This could be extraordinary in a society where the most important thing is to have a job and a salary.

Leila's journey to becoming an academic was not smooth, as she had to do the test of *Magister* three times and go to another city to pursue her studies. However, after finishing, she could find a job easily because of the vast expansion of higher education institutions. After trying different careers, she found that being an academic is the best option for her as a woman and because of the freedom to follow her research passion.

There are many challenges facing academics in general in Algeria, mainly the lack of vision from the ministry and taking arbitrary decisions without taking the time to understand the situation and then decide. She also struggled with organisational barriers related to the system's ineffectiveness that are general issues in Algerian higher education.

Her understanding of leadership is linked to influence not related to a senior position as it can be formal or informal. She believes that good leaders are the ones who give freedom to the others to grow and learn, while in Algeria in general leaders usually are jealous of their coworkers because of the lack of collaboration. [redacted] However, she prefers to contribute to her community through the associations as they may have more societal impact

Concerning gender issues in Algeria, she believes that the law does not discriminate between men and women; she doesn't deny the possibility that some people may discriminate against women but because of them not the system itself. She is also against the female quota as it leads that some

women who are not competent to hold senior leadership positions in politics. However, as her father advised, women need to lean in and get involved within the decision making in their country.

She believes that the current representation of female academics in Algeria is actually good compared to other Arab countries because of the political efforts especially with the policies of the former president. Also, the Algerian society is more accepting now to the formal participation of females in the public life. On the other hand, she thinks that in the time of the Algerian revolution, men and women fought side by side, for this reason, older men are more respectful of women than the men of this generation. According to Leila, female leadership in the context of Algerian universities can be challenging because of the patriarchal mindset that could limit female ambition.

Concerning work/life balance, Leila is putting her professional career first because she believes it is part of her; she thinks that she cannot marry until she can find a person who respects her professional life. She is passionate about teaching and researching because this is the path she chose. She recently attended a meeting at the level of decision making at her university because her quality research was recognised and they wanted to hear her recommendations to improve the reality of research in Algeria. She urges female academics to assume their responsibilities by proving themselves as capable.

Appendix J Pre-Interviews Tasks River of life/Table/Timeline Extracts

Extract from Zeyneb's table

عنوان الجدول : الصدفة الجميلة

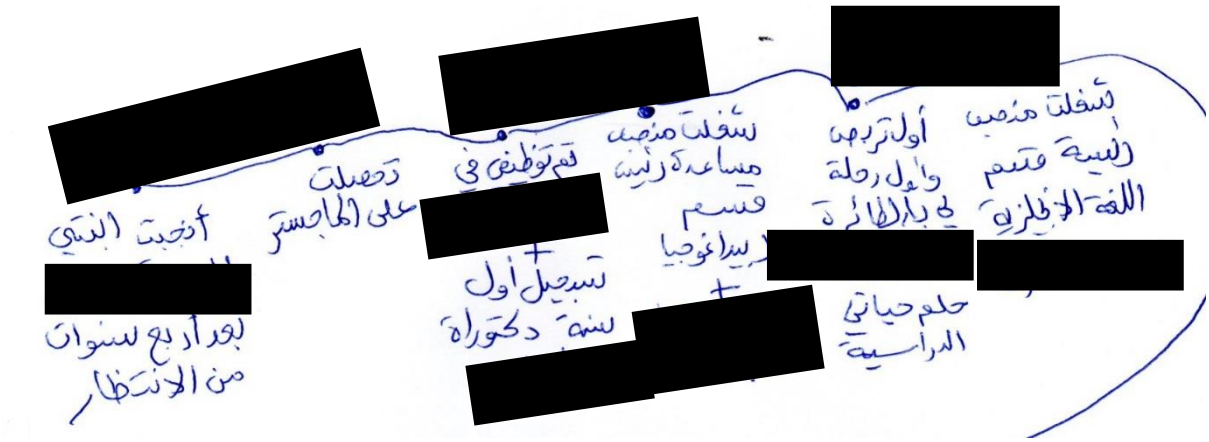
الحدث	التاريخ	الملاحظة (إن وجدت)
النجاح في شهادة البكالوريا	[redacted]	/
[redacted]	[redacted]	التخلي عن التخصص و تغييره
[redacted]	[redacted]	/
زواجي بنفس السنة	[redacted]	[redacted]
إنجاب ابني	[redacted]	بعملية قيصرية
بدء المشاكل و الصعوبات الحياتية	[redacted]	[redacted]
صدور الطلاق الرسمي من المحكمة	[redacted]	
[redacted]	[redacted]	كأستاذ مساعد صنف ب
[redacted]	[redacted]	
استقرار كبير في مجال العمل و التربية بالبيت و اكتساب خبرة من الحياة	[redacted]	

Title of the Table: The Beautiful Coincidence

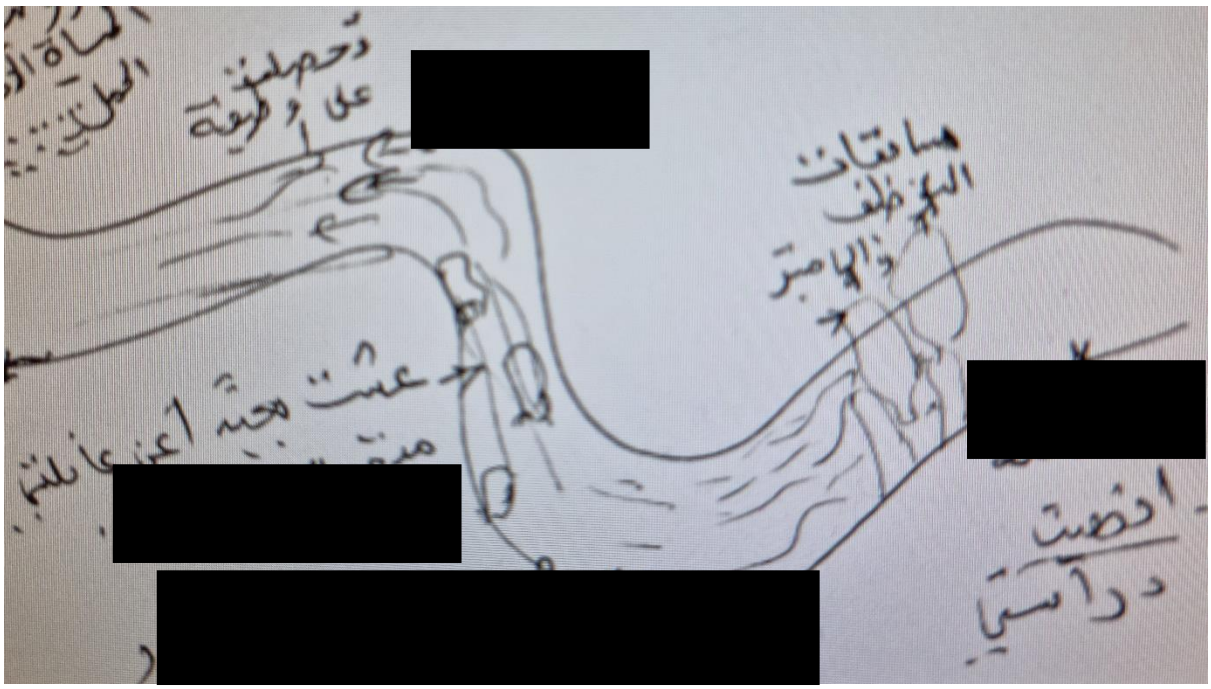
Event	Date	Remark(s)
Obtaining my Bac Diploma	[redacted]	/
Changing Discipline	[redacted]	[redacted]
/	[redacted]	[redacted]
My marriage	[redacted]	[redacted]
Giving Birth to my son	[redacted]	Challenging experience (C-section)
[redacted]	[redacted]	The beginning of challenging personal issues
Getting a divorce	[redacted]	[redacted]
Appointed at the university as a lecturer	[redacted]	[redacted]
Apointed as the vice-head of my department	[redacted]	[redacted]
Enjoying a high level of stability and optimistic about the future	[redacted]	[redacted]

Extract from Zahira timeline

Title: Life is a series of experiences/الحياة تجارب



Extract from Hadjer "River of Life", no title



Appendix KThe Coding Process of the Qualitative Data

1- How do female academics within Algerian universities define and construct their identities?

Final code/ Theme: Feeling different from the typical Algerian woman as a form of resistance		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
After we graduated and got our BA degrees, all my friends thought about settling down and getting married. This was the last thing I was thinking about (referring to marriage). I wanted to pursue a postgraduate degree.	Postponing marriage to finish studying	Following an atypical path to other women
I will tell you a story. After giving birth to one of my children, I returned to the lab after 40 days. However, this did not please my mother because people would congratulate me in my parents' house, and my mother would feel embarrassed if I were not there. As a solution, she asked my sister, who looks like me, to sit at my place so they would think it was me in case someone came.	Not following societal norms	
I never felt like other girls, so I wanted my daughter not to be like other girls. I wanted her to go abroad and study and work; in my time, I could not do that, but I wanted my daughter to go abroad. I knew in my time that studying and doing my PhD was the limit, and I fought so hard for that and the intelligent person should know when to stop fighting, I would never stop fighting, never and it does not have to be my daughter I encourage my supervisees as my daughters, my colleagues as my sisters.	Influencing other women to be different	

The female academic should believe that she a woman with a great duty, not out of arrogance, but because everyone has a unique path. I am not like other women. I have duties in life. I am a person who influences society and students more than any other woman with another job. So, I should invest my time writing articles and educating my students to be good citizens. A female academic should not be like other less educated women than her. Again, this is not out of arrogance. No, it is because I am an academic and know what is wrong with my society. I should not follow the norm and agree with it, and I know it can sometimes be harmful.	The role of an academic	Being an academic means being different from the typical women

Final code/ Theme: Accepting and internalising the general societal discourses as a form of conformation		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
I am a wife, a mother, a lecturer, and then a researcher…when I was an administrator (being a former Vice head of department and head of department), it took the place of my researcher identity, now, I resigned from my administrative role, and I feel better because I can focus on my research.	Struggling between different identities	The negative influence of motherhood on women's careers
I invest in my children! I want them to be better than me, and I want them to be specialised from now, and everything that I wish I did, they would do…the fact that my children are succeeding is everything I need in life. Thanks to Allah, I try to do my best to progress in my career, but sometimes I feel bad because I cannot give it the attention it deserves due to my domestic commitments.	Giving time to raising children	
Before becoming a mother, I prioritised my career because I love my field and wanted to learn more about it. However, the feeling of motherhood changed me. It is in women's nature to sacrifice for their children and help	Mother innate feeling	

them reach their full potential at the expense of their ambition.		
Being a mother is the real force that keeps me moving; it is my most significant role, and I am blessed to have my son…the more I progress, the better it is for him.	The ambition of mothers related to their children	The positive influence of motherhood on women's careers

Final code/ Theme: Tensions between lecturer and researcher identities		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
Leadership does not mean that I hold an administrative position, but I am also teaching a group of students, motivating them, and changing them into the best, making me a good leader. When my students tell me their reading skills have improved, I feel like a real leader. Leadership does not need a table and a chair, but it impacts society and directs visions.	Influencing students to improve their academic level	The prominence of lecturer identity over other academic roles
For me, leadership means transforming ordinary students and making them unique, ambitious, enthusiastic people who will eventually make an impact and leave their fingerprints. This is my message to my students.	Teaching is a message	
The definition of leadership is that the leader should master their subject with good manners, because no matter how knowledgeable they are, if they do not treat their students well and communicate with them to convince and influence their students, it means they are not doing their job correctly. Not only going to the classroom and delivering the lesson without showing any interest in influencing their students like some teachers, who only deliver the lesson and leave as if they are only teaching for the salary; and if the students do not feel that the	Teaching task is central to job satisfaction	

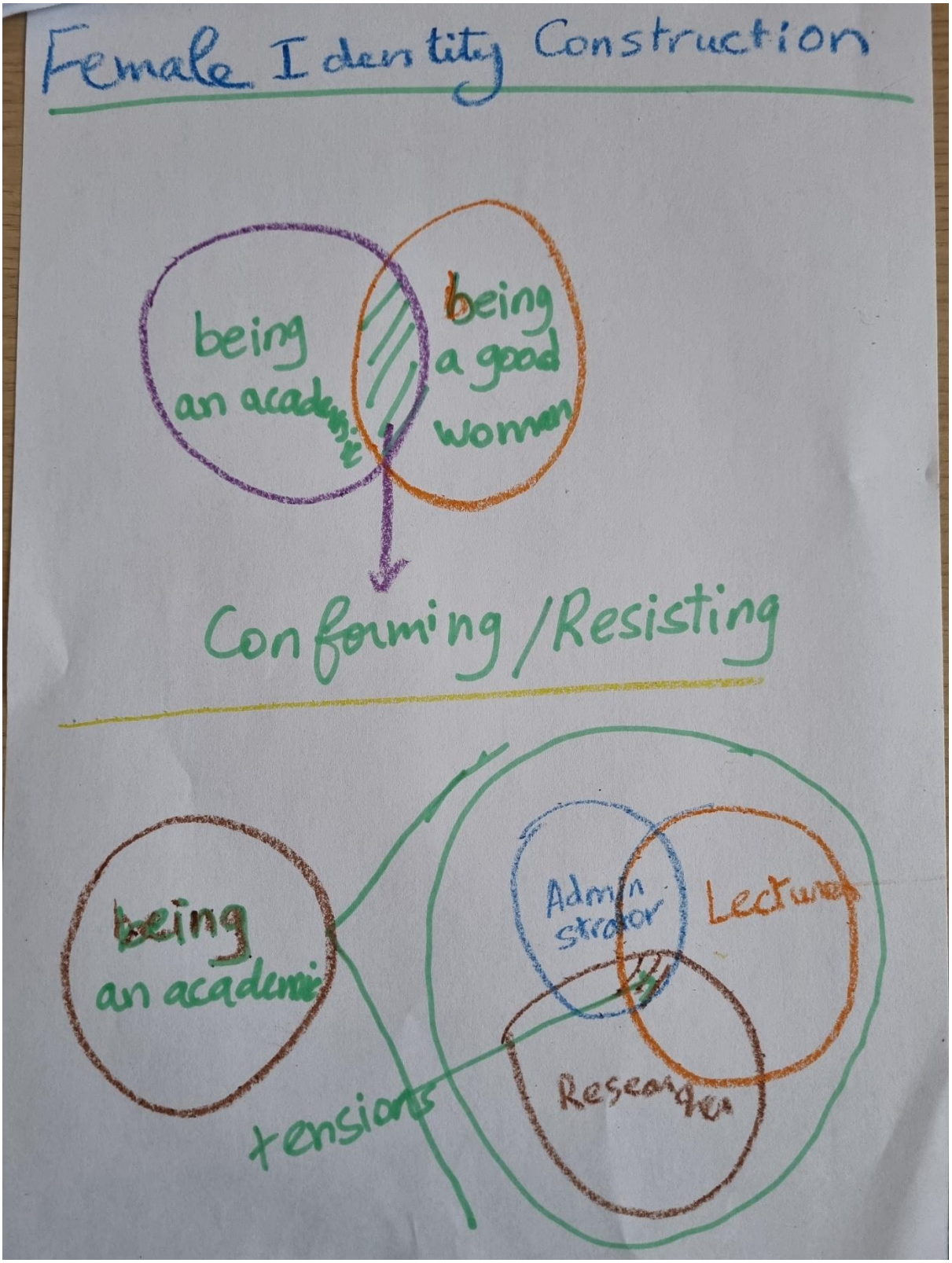
message is coming from the heart, they will not be engaged with them		
The Algerian female academic will do her best to manage the three roles, being a housewife (mother and wife and housekeeper), lecturer, and researcher, and in all three, the researcher is usually lost. *I am one of the pioneers in my field and the only woman in the working team.* *I am one of the few academics at my university level who could publish in an international journal. Therefore, I was invited to a meeting to discuss improving the number of publications at my university. I need to tell you; a few Algerian academics get published in high-impact journals, so I try to write my articles in English to have more international visibility and increase the number of readers.*	Female academics struggle with research Few women focus on research Common problems related to research	The researcher's identity is the least developed among academic roles

Final code/ Theme: Tensions between researcher and administrator identities		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
When I was an administrator (holding a senior leadership role), it took the place of my researcher identity; now, I resigned from my administrative role, and I feel better because I can focus on my research. *I do not have time for administrative or pedagogical roles, and I also find I should invest my time in scientific research rather than holding senior leadership roles. So, conducting research is even better for my career.*	Resigning from the administrative role to focus on research Being a researcher is better for the career progression in Algeria	Importance of developing researcher identity

I do not consider someone holding a senior leadership position a leader because leadership is more significant than holding a formal position. Most senior administrators find themselves fulfilling bureaucratic duties rather than influencing their colleagues. *I do not consider it leadership, but I say administrative position or something like this because leadership is bigger than the position you find yourself that you cannot give because of the system and the universities are just considered part of it.*	Being an administrator is just fulfilling bureaucratic duties	Challenges of holding administrative roles
I held the position of vice-dean, resigned, and became responsible for the students' enrollment at the level of the Rectorat. I started establishing connections with all the university faculties, allowing me to stay in contact with the students. I enjoyed this role even better than the first one because I was helping students with their problems rather than dealing with my colleagues.	Preferring dealing with students rather than colleagues	The prominence of holding pedagogical roles over administrative ones

Final code/ Theme: Tensions between being an Academic and a Woman in the Algerian Context		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
Now I left my son alone in the house, and I should not do it, and sometimes I come tired from work, and I cannot revise with him. I am not giving my son his right.	Neglecting the responsibilities of motherhood	Feeling guilt for not fulfilling the domestic responsibilities

When I was doing my PhD, my husband helped me a lot and took me to different cities to find what I needed for my lab work. When I graduated, it was time to give back. I felt that I owed my success to my family…I think, I am doing what I can as a mother because my children are my life. In terms of teaching, I am trying to update my lessons and improve the level of my students. However, I am falling short in my duty as a researcher, and I am not satisfied.	Struggling with multiple responsibilities	Feeling guilt for not fulfilling professional responsibility
I am still working and moving forward, but I must look after myself, especially my skin and hair. I do not like the fact that I look tired with small eyes, and I am losing my eyesight. So, I feel like I have become selfish in order to keep moving forward. *I always try to manage my parents' needs and work requirements to please everyone, but this is at my expense. Sometimes I do not have time to do a facial mask, so I need to stop doing other tasks to look after myself.*	Struggling with multiple responsibilities The need to please everyone	Feeling guilt for looking after themselves



-The researcher drew this when trying to visualise how female academics construct their identities

2- What sociocultural and organisational factors influence female academics' identities?

Final code/ Theme: Societal Views Vis-à-Vis Women's Participation in the Public Sphere		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
The obstacles I faced were mainly societal. I got married just after finishing my bachelor's degree. Then, I became a mother. It was not easy to be a mother with much ambition. It was not easy.	Society is a barrier to women	Negative perceptions around women's participation
Not all women have that drive. Nevertheless, I should say that these women do not struggle that much like I am struggling because our societies are purely patriarchal. They expect women to be always in the margin, and only men can focus on their careers, which is not expected from women.	Patriarchal society	
In our society in general, we have a female model that is preferable for all women to fit, and you may struggle if you do not fit. My husband and I, for instance, decided not to have children until I finished my PhD thesis, and we agreed because he does not have a traditional mindset. However, you should see society and even my male colleagues asking me why we still do not have children and whether there is a problem.	The pressure of society to fit a model	
Our society lets men control their lives until it becomes a habit. However, my husband knows me and knows where I am, and I married him after I was convinced with his character…in Algeria, we have an ideal image of how a woman should be, she should be married, wearing modest clothes, a specific way of talking, and should go through all the steps that women should go through, being married, then to be a mother.		

When I was young, I could not travel abroad to study and work, but now things are better, and everybody supports my daughter. I knew in my time that studying and doing my PhD in my local university was the limit…education is the only way to change the mentality of the whole society, and a small group can make this change.	Modernisation of Algerian society	Improvements in social views around women's education
Where I come from, people are more open-minded compared to here. I noticed that here people are more traditional and reserved. I think that it is essential that we learn and exchange knowledge.	Regional differences in terms of societal pressure and support	
From my experience, the number of female students is much higher than male students, and I did not have any male students in some classes. So, I think female participation in public places, including universities and senior leadership positions, would increase with time…I think that free education and health services helped improve gender equality in Algeria compared to other countries in the region.	The domination of female students	

Final code/ Theme: Social discourses around being a female academic in Algeria		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
Being an academic in Algeria is something regarded as prestigious. It is not only because we are well paid, but also because people admire us. The police did not give me a driving warrant because I explained that I was driving fast because I had a class, they gave me back my driving license. Also, being an academic, especially for women, is highly regarded in social gatherings because we are seen as more knowledgeable.	the positive social perception around being a female academic	Suitability and social acceptance of an academic career for women

Being an architect is very difficult for women because they need to work with men in the field. I guess it went well initially, but it was evident that I needed to be corrupted or have connections to get projects after some time. For this reason, I decided that being an academic is a much better and simpler idea.	Challenges in pursuing a career in architecture	
If you work at the university, they will tell you lucky you! You only teach for two days. If you do not go to a social gathering, they will ask you why you did not come? They do not understand what it is like to be a researcher. I am a teacher for them, teaching for two days with a good salary, I am the best. *Her colleagues and family will say why you are bothering yourself. Raise your children and get your salary at the end of the month.* *However, what bothers me about female academics who are my colleagues or even I met at conferences, they tell me now, "we are doctors, it is enough, it is enough; I have a position at the university, I do not need to progress because my success is when I succeed at home as a mother and a wife". This will let her sacrifice her future for her Children's future, and unfortunately, I have met many women like this*	Social misconceptions around being a female academic Low expectations from female academics Lack of motivation among female academics	Traditional societal views persist despite being a female academic

Final code/ Theme: Impact of religious interpretations of Islam and culture on women's careers and roles		
Examples of Quotes used	**First Round codes**	**Second round codes**
These are the priorities, being a mother and wife first, then other roles can come, if you can manage between them, then you add your work, it is okay. However, the priority should always be being a mother and a wife...God asked women to stay in their houses, meaning that women should not leave the house unless there is a necessity, and her priorities should always be her husband and children. *Before becoming a mother, I have always put my career first because I love my field and*	Prioritising motherhood is a religious obligation The innate feeling of motherhood	Sanctity of motherhood in Algeria

wanted to learn more about it. However, the feeling of motherhood changed me. It is in women's nature to sacrifice for their children and help them reach their full potential at the expense of their ambition.		
I want to stress that we should not lie t o ourselves, especially in theocracy countries. I will say it without any shame. For example, if I become a head of the department, I will always meet people, and I do not shake hands with men, so it will always be uncomfortable for me during meetings... For this reason, I am out from all this. *Leadership is masculinised in our culture as it is usually expected of men rather than women. It is a fact that it has never been a problem in Algeria we have had female ministers before, and Algerian women have never been prohibited from doing any work in terms of law; however, there may be some cultural barriers…because they feel that women should not do this because of her 'weak' nature.* *No, I would not say I like to deal with women. I prefer dealing with men, and women are more jealous and sensitive. I do not want to deal with them at work at all.*	Being a Muslim woman is incompatible with being an administrator Incompatibility of being a woman and leader (administrator) Preference for male leaders	Leadership suitability to men rather than women
I was lucky that I did not choose to be a leader; members of my department chose me; I did not accept initially, but they told me you always speak of change and progress; now it is your turn. It was also a good time for women; we had a female dean, pushing us to engage more. I did not have a problem because most of the staff members were my former students, who always supported and respected me. *It is all because of the environment where you live. In my case, society and my colleagues did not accept me to be a young leader. Though*	Acceptance of female leadership Age impact on accepting leaders	Societal acceptance of female leadership

they admire young leaders in other countries they see on social media, and you can see that the comments are usually positive, but society prefer elder people to be our leaders...they know that I am good, and I deserve to be their leader because of my knowledge and experience, but each time they keep undermining me because of my age.		

Final code/ Theme: Higher education management issues and improvements		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
There is no marginalisation or neglect. On the contrary, they open the doors for us as female academics and women in all sectors. *Concerning scientific research in the past years, there were many opportunities to go and develop my skills abroad, but I did not apply for any because my children were young.*	Gender equality policies	Higher education management improvements
We did not take training on teaching when I got recruited, and until recently, they started teaching training programs. However, I still think that these teaching training programs need improvement and more focus on quality…on the other hand, the university still does not provide any training before holding an administrative or pedagogical position. I am aware of the law and regulations thanks to my position, but other teachers are not, so they need to read about the law to know their rights and duties; otherwise, we will always be in unnecessary fights that would have been avoided if we knew our rights and duties. *The measure helps avoid conflicts between authors and the editors-in-chief…and nepotism and favouritism may disappear by submitting articles through the platform.* *When I first occupied this position (head of the department), I had to create many rules to manage the relationship between*	Lack of training Issues related to nepotism in publishing Policy ambiguity	Higher educational management issues

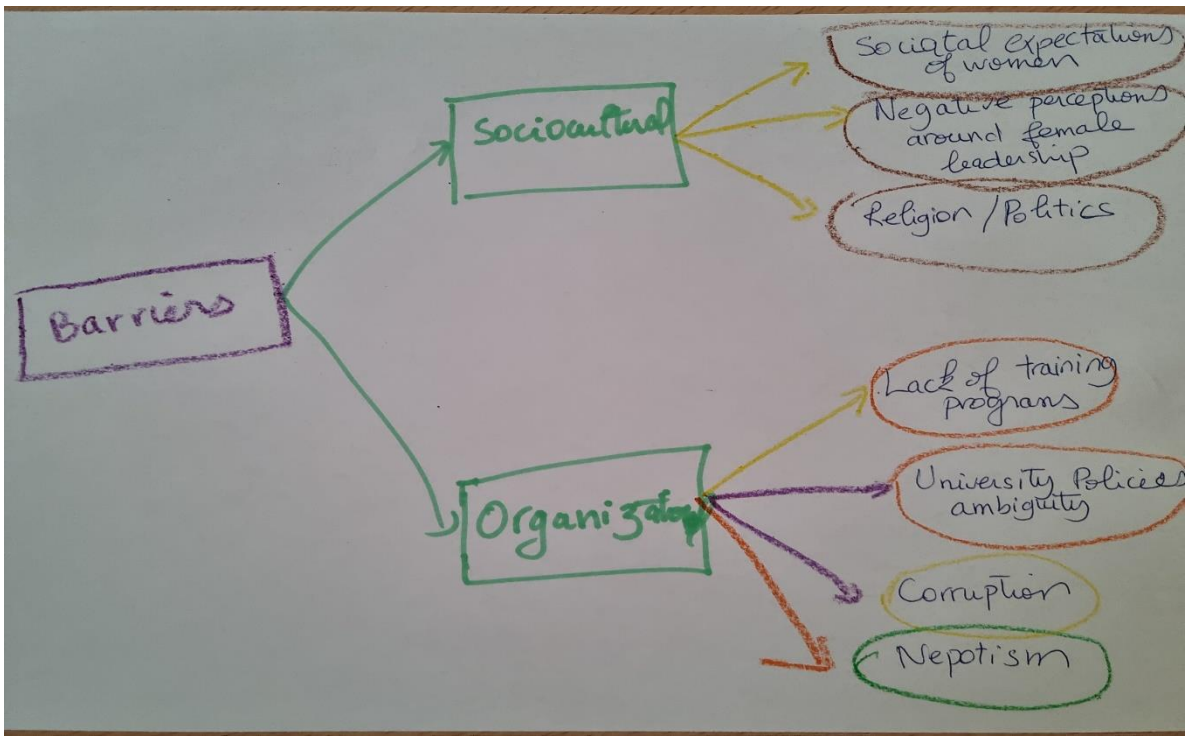
colleagues. Sometimes, it might cause some personal disagreement with me which I could avoid if the regulations were clear for every possible incident.		
conducting research in Algeria is hard…because of the current political situation Algerian universities became government institutions instead of being a free place for research and innovation.	Politics influencing universities	

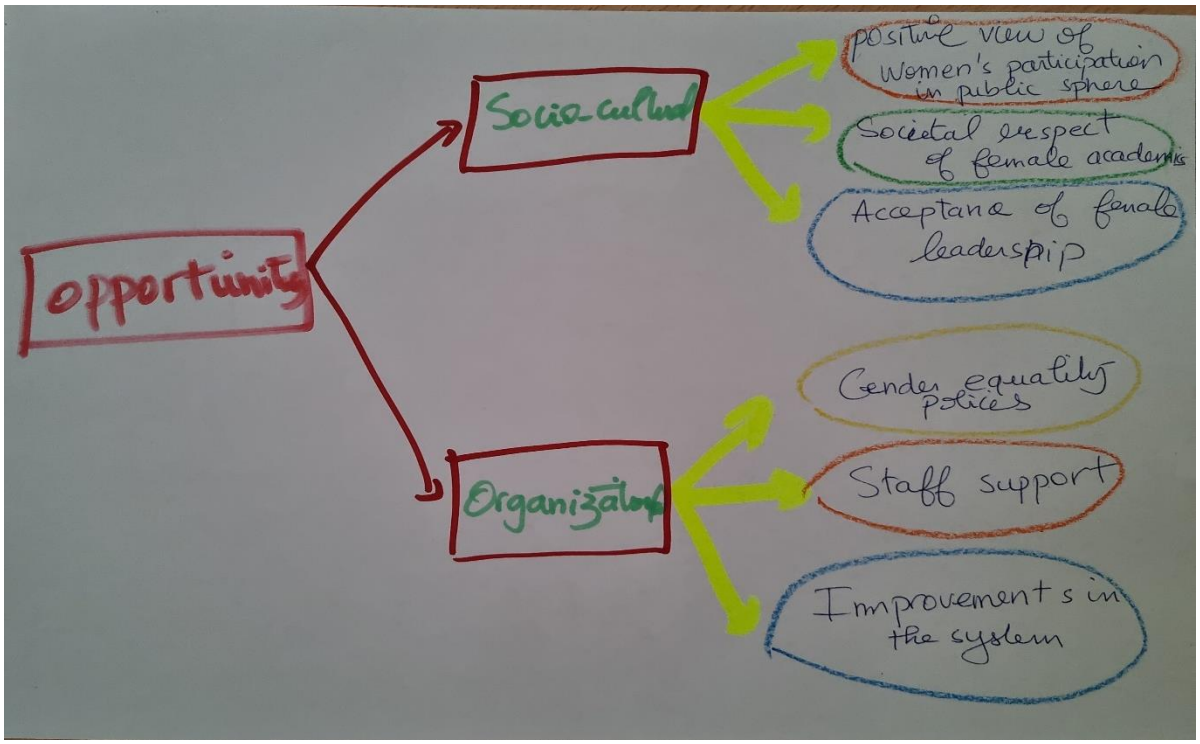
Final code/ Theme : Family-friendly policies influencing female academics' experience in higher education		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
They give many exceptions for females regarding maternity leave and breastfeeding time…	Maternity leave and breastfeeding right	Existing Family-friendly policies
Why don't we have some childcare facilities inside the campus like in Egypt? I will be in the library working and working in the library is much better than working at home, and then when I finish, I bring my child and go home. It is better than my current situation where I am studying, and he is distracting me, but I do not have another choice.	Lack of childcare facilities in Algerian universities	Lack of family-friendly policies
why are you giving women these privileges and not giving them to men? Why do we have only maternity leave, and we do not have paternity leave? Many countries started implementing this because they understand that parenting is shared between men and women... the problem is that we are still holding stereotypical gender role divisions that have been frustrating both men and women.	Paternity leave	
There is no flexibility in the Algerian higher education policies, especially after becoming		

a mother, because it is not easy to look after small children while staying active in academia. There is a need for some policies and regulations to improve their conditions. (Naima)	Lack of flexibility in the Algerian HE system	

Final code/ Theme: The influence of staff relations and female role models in academia		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
Our head of department made sure that none of us worked in the afternoon to take care of our children. He is excellent in this respect. *I work with my husband in the same department as I told you. Our head of department helps us by making sure we do not work simultaneously to be able to look after our children. Moreover, if I need some help, they are always more than happy to help me.*	Staff support	The positive influence of staff support
No, they do not even ask. My head of the department just told me the meeting would take place at this time. Sometimes, I do not know where I could leave my child and be obliged to bring him to university, and I leave him for hours in one of the classrooms near our offices.	Unsupportive staff	The negative influence of the lack of staff support
Nobody used to consult which days were convenient for us in the past. However, things started to change when a senior female leader started doing our timetables and asked us which times were suitable for our schedule. She also asks for the opinion of our male colleagues, and she has been our leader for three years, and nobody experienced any problem with her. Before, they were all men; they never thought about consulting or involving us in the decision-making. *It was a good time for women. At that time, we had a female dean, and it pushed us to be more engaged. I did not have a problem with that, but one of the reasons that motivated*	The positive influence of having female role models on other female academics	The influence of female role models on female academics

me to accept being the laboratory director is that I wanted women to lean in and improve themselves.		



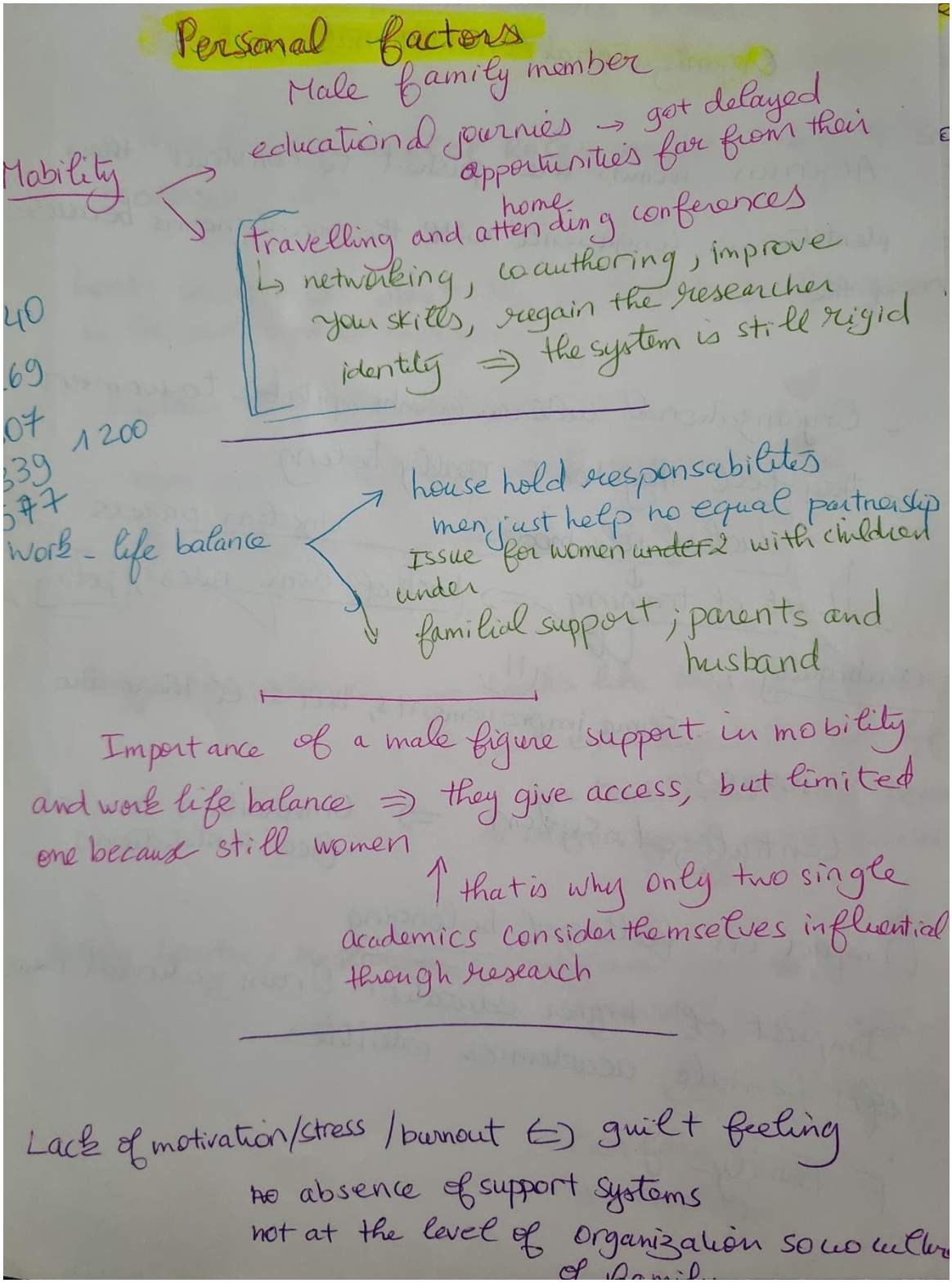


3- What personal enablers and challenges influence how female academics define and construct their identities?

Final code/ Theme: Family Influence on Female Academics' Careers and Identities		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
The pressure was not only on me but also on my family, especially at the beginning because they did not know the results … so even my father was under attack from society, but I liked that my father did not tell me about this until he showed people the results of his trust. So now they are asking him, how did you do it? We want our children to be as successful as yours. *I remember how many people would come to me and try to make me scared to study abroad. Society was not as supportive as nowadays. I could only do it because of my parents, especially my father, who believed in me and said, you cannot miss this opportunity.* *I owe my success to Allah, my husband, and my father. When I was single, it was my father. I come from a conservative family, so my father used to go with me everywhere to the capital to visit the national library and meet my supervisor. Then, since I got married, my husband has been accompanying me to conferences and libraries.*	Support of the father despite the societal challenge Support of the father and husband in the educational journey	The positive Influence of male family members on female academics' mobility
I told my father that I wanted to keep studying after my baccalaureate exam, and he promised me that he would support me to study medicine because we did not have many female doctors in my city. However, my father changed his mind…and forced me to choose a domain close to my home at the local University because there was another problem with girls going to the university campus, and it was not easy to tolerate a girl	Lack of familial support to travel to become a doctor	The negative influence of male family members on female academics' mobility

living far from home. So, for this reason, I looked for a domain at the local University… It was not easy for my family, especially my father, to have a very ambitious daughter. It was not easy for him because he was ridiculed in the mosque for allowing his daughter to get a university degree and work. *Then I wanted to finish my studies, but I had an obstacle: my father, rest in peace, did not let me go far to study because he wanted me to stay at home. So, it was an issue, and it delayed my progress in a way that I did not want.*	Challenge of mobility as a barrier to women's education	
I could not have done it without the help of my parents. They supported me when I was single and continued their support even after my marriage. I will never forget my mother's support when she used to take care of my baby girl while I was finishing my PhD thesis, and I used to come only to breastfeed her and go back. I do not think I would have been able to progress in my career without the help and support of my parents, especially after I gave birth to my first baby.	Practical support of parents	The positive influence of family on Work-life balance
Algerian women have many burdens and responsibilities. *I noticed that before marriage, the female academics would be active in their research and would be willing to hold senior leadership positions. However, they would quit after getting married and having children.* *I have responsibilities towards my extended family, sometimes they come to visit, and I need to look after them according to our social traditions. My husband is understanding and supported me when I was doing my PhD, but he would not cook and clean while we had guests. It is my responsibility according to our society.*	Housework is women's responsibility in Algeria Marriage is a barrier to career progression Husbands' attitude towards housework	The negative influence of family on work-life balance

Final code/ Theme: Health Problems, Stress and Burnout		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
It was hard for me to manage my responsibilities as a head of the department, lecturer, mother and wife. That is why I resigned. My health deteriorated because of the workload.	Struggling with health issues because of work	Health problems
I received no support. I had to work two full-time jobs, one at the university and the other at home. I suffered from burnout because I was drained, no free time. Now the doctor told me you should not go to work. I should take a rest. *Probably this low percentage of women in senior leadership roles is because women, in general, do not want to have these roles because they have families and children, and they cannot meet the requirements of the role, for instance, attending meetings with officials in the ministry or something like this.*	Struggling with multiple responsibilities	Stress and burnout


Personal factors
Male family member
Mobility
educational journies → get delayed
opportunities far from their home
Travelling and attending conferences
↳ networking, co-authoring, improve your skills, regain the researcher identity ⇒ the system is still rigid
40
69
07
339
577
1200
work - life balance
house hold responsabilites
men just help no equal partnership
issue for women under 2 with children under
familial support ; parents and husband
Importance of a male figure support in mobility and work life balance ⇒ they give access, but limited one because still women
↑ that is why only two single academics consider themselves influential through research
Lack of motivation/stress /burnout ⇔ guilt feeling
no absence of support systems
not at the level of organization so no culture

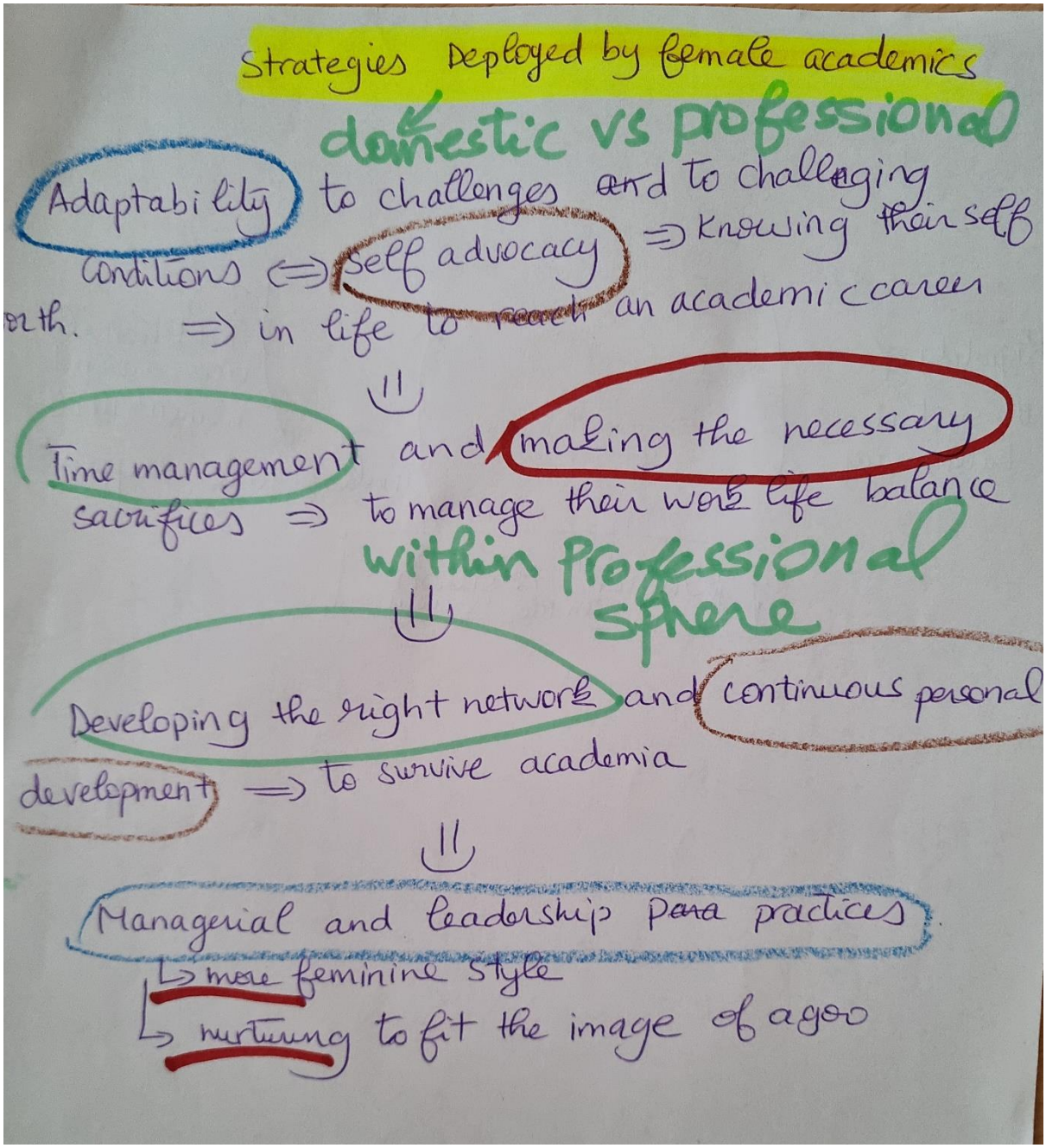
4- What are the Strategies deployed by female academics to manage their multiple roles and identities?

Final code/ Theme: Strategies to navigate the tensions between the public and private spheres' identities		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
…I believe in destiny, but I also believe that the person should always know their self-worth and work to reach that. Reality is harsh; believe me, I struggled with people saying to me, why are you doing all this? What is the point? … I had to quit many jobs until I reached academia. I could not have reached this level without my strong sense of self and knowing my worth.	Believing in herself to keep going	Self-advocacy
When I graduated and got my BA degree, I tried to find a job, and like most Algerian youth, I could not find a job right away. Then, all my former classmates started getting married, and the societal pressure increased. Nevertheless, I knew that I wanted to finish my studies, do postgraduate degrees, and be an academic, then if I found the right person, I would get married…I applied for a Magister degree three times, but I failed, and I kept applying until I went to a southern city and applied then and finally, I was accepted. I have a vision for myself, and I know my worth, so I will adapt to any condition to reach my goal	Managing difficult life events	adaptability
… In my opinion, it would be better involve all your surroundings; this is the key to success. I always tell my children, look, I am working from 9 to 4:30 in the laboratory, and then I come home and cook healthy food for you. I can be selfish and bring you takeaways, but I am working hard for you, so you need to work hard for me… Honestly, I could not have done it without involving my children to manage my time better, as they know they need to study and help me by looking after themselves.	Involving her children in the process to win time	Time management and making the necessary sacrifices
I have priorities in life. At that stage, my children were my priority. This did not mean I		

would not focus on my PhD, but I just slowed down. I did not go to France like most people…I struggled to finish my PhD because I had to travel from my city to the capital…but I am happy that people sometimes come to me and say that your former supervisor always speaks highly of you as one of her best students. I say yes, alhamdulillah (Thank God).	Giving up some opportunities when needed	

Final code/ Theme: Strategies to navigate the tensions between academic identity's roles		
Examples of quotes used	**First round codes**	**Second round codes**
Recently, I went to a national conference and met a group of female colleagues; I liked the intellectual level of the conversation, and when we were together in the hotel, I felt that this was where I belonged. Of course, our conversations were filled with humour that fits our status as lecturers. *Yes, I must do this. The other day, another female colleague whom I met recently asked me to collaborate with her to take my ready theoretical part, and she would add the practical part. It was a great experience because collaboration can improve your level.*	Female support group Importance of Collaboration	developing the right network
I attended courses in psychology and linguistics because I wanted to learn how to deal with my students and colleagues. I learned that you reflect deeper when you say anything, and you may hear a word that can change your life. *Importantly I used to learn different skills in computer sciences because at that time it was new, and our father bought us a computer, so all these skills I learned in my free time were so necessary when working; for this reason, I believe that you should always learn different skills to improve your competence.*	Importance of communication Importance of technology	continuous personal development

I am the editor-in-chief of my department's journal, and I learned how to do graphic design to improve our journal. I do not have organisational support to help me deal with this stuff. Moreover, I am not paid for this work, but I am happy to know that the impact factor of our journal is increasing, and I am grateful for that.		
To be a successful leader, you need to think outside the box and create ways to manage the department better. Even the person who is holding the department now is following the system I established. *I hold a pedagogical position, and it allows me to change the lives of my students. I used to speak with my students and told them that you could find information everywhere nowadays, but the human experience and human soul, if you break it, can never be fixed. For me taking good care of the human soul is what matters.* *For this reason, even if you are in the applied sciences field, you should have some knowledge of social sciences. Even when I meet a man who disapproves me as a female leader, I need to indirectly convince him to think about me as a colleague, not male or female, and it worked.*	Creativity when leading Humanistic side when leading Importance of the skill of convincing	Managing formal leadership roles


Strategies Deployed by female academics
domestic vs professional
Adaptability to challenges and to challenging
conditions ⇒ self advocacy ⇒ Knowing their self worth. ⇒ in life to reach an academic career
Time management and making the necessary sacrifices ⇒ to manage their work life balance within Professional sphere
Developing the right network and continuous personal development ⇒ to survive academia
Managerial and leadership para practices
more feminine style
nurturing to fit the image of a good

Appendix M The Researcher's Notes during the Research Process

Field Note during data collection (16/08/2020)

Meriem was so against the idea that women need a better treatment because of her bad experience with her female academics. Being a mother is a priority for her and her husband is not really supportive
she was really resilient to get her phd while having 3 kids , she has many recommendations to improve the system itself .
I am thinking about how the question of identity and barriers are overlapping and also when I ask them the question why they chose academia is the reason qualified as motivation or identity.
the reason why I am asking them about leadership and good and bad leadership is know how they want their leader to be.
I am thinking of the gender law in Algeria, and I think that in Algeria all what they are doing is just to play [redacted].
I should explore more the concept of leadership in higher education while keeping the gender factor because many of the issues that are holding the real female participation in the decision making is because of the lack of justice in a way...

Reflections during data analysis (08/10/2021)

So I started thinking about all the literature I reviewed and the context of these studies, and I noticed that the majority of the literature I reviewed was from countries with similar systems to the UK system (Pakistan, Ghana, and Malaysia). So I started reading about the European context such as France, Italy, and Germany and found a crucial difference relevant to my study. First, in the UK context holding senior leadership positions is one of the important requirements to progress in their career and become a professor. The focus is more on research in France and Algeria, so technically, holding a senior leadership position could be a barrier to career progression rather than an essential requirement. For this reason, some participants did not aspire to hold senior leadership positions simply because they do not need to become a professor, so they better focus on their research and family life and will still progress. Also, there is not a huge financial intensive to hold a senior leadership position, whereas there is financial intensive when someone becomes a professor, so when women do not hold senior leadership positions and focus only on their research, they will earn more.

I am thinking now that I need to differentiate between an administrative and a leadership position. Also, I understand leadership as making an influence, so when a woman says that I am a leader in my field of research, it means, according to her understanding, she identifies herself as a leader. Also, in section 3.4 I need to speak more about these differences and include more research done in France, Europe as it is more similar to my context.