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Research article

The Role of Women's Work in Promoting Economic and Social Development and Its Impact on The Stability of The Iraqi Family (A Field Study in Baghdad and Al-Muthanna Governorates as a Model)

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ABSTRACT

To explore the role of women's work on economical and social development, Hereby instability of family stability in governorates must be taken into accounts how its affect influence for economy reliant but variable A cross sectional mixed method design adopted a quantitative survey (30) non-working mothers and their kids as a control group where this sample expanded to (150). They discovered women's employment can not only boost family stability, enhance child well-being, increase the empowerment of women and stimulate economic development. However, it also imposes some family pressures such as double burden; role-conflict and challenges to patriarchal authority especially in the largely rural Al-Muthanna Governorate. It had recommended the provision of childcare services, the introduction in each region based on its circumstances regarding legal protections and dialogue to achieve an equitable distribution of family responsibilities, using ways and means that would maximize benefits whilst minimizing detrimental effects for Iraqi families.

العنوان دور عمل المرأة في تعزيز التنمية الاقتصادية والاجتماعية وأثره في استقرار الأسرة العراقية، محافظتي بغداد والمثنى أنموذجا

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المُستخلص

تدرس هذه الدراسة تأثير عمل المرأة على التنمية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية واستقرار الأسرة في محافظتي بغداد والمثنى، مع التركيز على التوتر القائم بين الضرورة الاقتصادية والأدوار الأسرية التقليدية. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً متسلسلاً، جمع بين مسح كمي شمل (١٥٠) امرأة عاملة في بغداد والمثنى، إلى جانب مجموعة ضابطة تكونت من (٣٠) امرأة غير عاملة، ليصبح حجم العينة الإجمالي (١٨٠) مشاركة. وتلاه تنفيذ مجموعات بؤرية ومقابلات معمقة مع عينة فرعية من النساء وأزواجهن وكبار أفراد الأسرة، بلغ عددهم (٤٠) مشاركاً إضافياً، ليصل العدد الكلي للمشاركين في الدراسة إلى (٢٢٠). كشفت النتائج عن أثر مزدوج؛ إذ يسهم عمل المرأة في تعزيز صلابة الأسرة، وتحسين رعاية الأطفال، وتمكين المرأة، ودعم النمو الاقتصادي. غير أنه يولّد أيضاً ضغوطاً أسرية، تشمل عبء المهام المزدوج، وتضارب الأدوار، وتحدي السلطة الأبوية، لا سيما في المناطق الريفية من محافظة المثنى. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن السياق الإقليمي والدعم المؤسسي يؤثران في هذه النتائج. وأوصت الدراسة بتوفير خدمات رعاية الأطفال، وسنّ حمايات قانونية ملائمة لكل إقليم، وتعزيز الحوار الداعم للتوزيع العادل للمسؤوليات الأسرية، وذلك لتعظيم الفوائد والحد من الآثار السلبية على الأسرة العراقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التنمية الاقتصادية، التنمية الاجتماعية، الاستقرار الأسري، الأسرة العراقية

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Women occupy such broadly contradictory positions in Iraq that it is near impossible to talk about one homogenous political and historical context. For instance, prior to 1990, secular Ba'athist policies provided one of the most progressive scenarios in the region for women in employment and education (Al-Ali, 2007). The gains made were eroded through decades of violence, international sanctions and the rise of religious conservatism which relegated women to domestic roles (Al-Jawaheri 2008). So, the contradictory terrain which contemporary gender equality and family finds a space in India is rooted at least conceptually in the ever-struggling battle between constitutional guarantees of equality on one hand and tribal traditions as well as religious customs with deeply entrenched patriarchy on the other.

1.2 Problem statement

The key issue here is a disjunction between the nature of women's work—which emerged out of urgent needs as part this broader reconstruction and economic diversification agenda that has been underway since 2003 (World Bank, 2021)—and the empowerment it facilitates by virtue of challenging what we

might call historically-established nuclear-like Iraqi families. Enter the conditions that can lead to family conflict, especially when women no longer have an economic dependence stemming from co-breadwinner family arrangements working against patriarchy and dismantling gender norms.This creates an important dilemma: while women's participation in the workforce is vital to the nation's development, it also appears to pose a threat to the family, which is an integral component of Iraqi society (Al-Ali, 2007). Accordingly, the research gap of this study is identified in the need for an in-depth understanding of how to reconcile these two conflicting dimensions, especially in a culturally and socially diverse Iraqi context, and what this study adds qualitatively through its comparative approach between Baghdad and Al-Muthanna Governorates as models representing urban and rural diversity in Iraq.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1 How does women's work impact the Iraqi economy and society?
1.3.2 What is its net effect on family stability?

1.4. Thesis Statement

This study posits that women's employment is an important but contradictory force in modern-day Iraq, both as a major driver of the nation's economic growth and women's social empowerment, and as a major source of stress that jeopardizes the patriarchal structure of the Iraqi family. According to the study, the overall impact on family stability is not fixed, but is largely mediated by the presence or absence of institutional and social supports. In the absence of progressive policies such as state-funded childcare and robust legal protections against discrimination (World Bank, 2021), and a corresponding shift in gender norms (Al-Ali, 2007), family conflict may undermine the emancipatory potential of women's labor, impeding social cohesion and sustainable development.

1.5 Research Gap

The exact gap that this study intends to bridge through its research is that of the tension that exists between the policy of macro-economic diversification which came after 2003 and the micro-level problem of domestic patriarchy in the culturally diverse Iraq environment. What makes the research different from others that have been carried out in this field before is the fact that this research does not consider Iraq as a single unit but rather takes into consideration the comparison between Baghdad, which is a metropolitan center (Karkh and Rusafa) and a typical governorate, Al-Muthanna.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Women's Work and National Economic Development: Women's labor force participation is a key driver of national economic development, directly affecting GDP growth, labor market diversity, and poverty alleviation. Women's economic engagement increases the country's productive capacity, directly raising GDP. According to the World Bank (2023), reducing gender gaps in the workforce could unlock

tremendous economic potential and significantly boost national income in countries like Iraq. Beyond overall GDP, women's employment is crucial for labor market diversification, as economies can move away from over-reliance on one industry, such as oil, toward a more resilient and knowledge-based structure that encourages growth in light manufacturing, services and technology, thanks to the diverse skills and perspectives women bring (ESCWA, 2023). This diversity is key for balanced sustainability of finances long term. Furthermore, poor women spend a greater share of their income on health, education and nutrition for households than men, making working women one of the most effective anti-poverty tools we can invest in as it improves socio-economic status within families. The education of children is better, healthier & educated to become more productive in their labor force.

2.2. Women's Empowerment and Social Development: Women's economic participation is a Right to a WAMY ODA, because:The potentially strong driver of empowerment and development across the board —this creates a virtuous cycle that cannot be expressed more clearly on an income per capita basis alone. The biggest empowerment case comes from financial independence which helps women to build confidence, stretch their independence and make thier own choices. In direct measure, progress through very significant segments of the social agenda. Women with more control over their income do not repeat the cycle of illiteracy with their children and are twice as likely to invest in their daughters' education — bringing gender equality to the classroom (UN Women, 2023). In relation to gender equality or stereotypes: women who have control over resources have better maternal health outcomes than men and also make more informed decisions about the use of healthcare for their families because "women spend a greater proportion of income on food, health care and education than men do" (World Bank, 2022). And there is a rationale to be made for more politics, which draws from available resources that economic empowerment provide; the higher the economic stability of women, the most probable voting preference will they exercise as well as community leadership/ local political roles and legislation that benefits.

2.3. Work-Family Dynamics: Although it is a universal issue, institutional and cultural contexts The intersection of work and family is strongly influenced by the tools available to us. Much work-family research in Western countries is grounded in predominantly conflictual tenets of roles and family-work dilemmas which have drawn on the term second shift (the idea that women will continue to do their fair share of domestic household duties post-work as well, Hoshchild & Machung, 2012). Family instability improves with an incremental and slow shift towards gender fair domestic power as institutional support like childcare and parental leave is provided. In the Middle East, this is largely about a patriarchal bargain that identifies a particular gendered division of labour in Iraq and because those who oppose family stability frame conflict very differently. This bargain is compromised the instant a woman enters the labour market: role conflict shifts from being temporal constraints to posing an existential threat to normative foundations. The re-negotiation of domestic roles and power is especially prone to become a major area of contention since it is seen as an attack on male authority, which is one of the cornerstones in

traditional styles of householding (Joseph 2021). But the much anticipated "double burden" is ultimately the story of a region suffering a crisis of patriarchal legitimacy on this front and only necessarily compounded by its global phenomenon. To put this differently, stability requires an expensive and politically sensitive re-ordering of sex roles at home on a scale (and pace, under fire) far different than in the West (Moghadam 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design:

The present study utilized a two-source sequential mixed-methods design in order to gain both breadth and depth.

Phase 1 : Quantitative Survey A survey of Iraqi women to identify the statistical patterns in contribution (networking, yard income, Moroccan tea and other cash-generating activities) household decision and family dynamics. The “what” which reveals the general trends and correlations is revealed in this phase.

Phase 2: Qualitative - Semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with a purposive sub-sample based on survey results. Thus the numbers across this phase provide insights into the ‘why’ and ‘how,’ going beyond history by presenting details on lived experiences, conflict and a dual aspect of empowerment in families.

3.2. Participants and setting:

As an addendum, the methodology used a multi-level sampling technique for a broader viewpoint. To achieve diversity in the economy, (150) females working women were chosen from the Al-Muthanna and Baghdad, between 25-55 years. They were selected using stratified sampling from both public and private sectors. A subset of these women was also selected to act as secondary participants (30 husbands and 10 older female relatives, mothers-in-law and mothers who can provide information on the inter-generational (all four family-level perspectives) and spousal relationships. This study controlled for the same backgrounds of socio-economic status of being (30) working women which permits only comparing all employment. Sample A total of (220) female workers, and this helped the study to record personal experiences of working women and complicated family context affected by their jobs.

3.2.1 The Study's Boundaries

The spatial boundaries in this study are limited only to Baghdad Governorate (although it encompasses participants from both Karkh and Rusafa to represent both the urban and the municipal zones) in addition to Al-Muthana Governorate which, in turn, includes both urban and rural settings. Parallely, The human boundaries are limited to those married women, whether employed or not, whose age is between 25-55 years. The boundaries also are limited to the participants spuses and older family members such as the mothers and the mothers-in-law.

3.3. Data Collection:

The study relied on a sequential mixed-methods approach in data collection to provide statistical breadth and in-depth contextual knowledge. In the quantitative phase, a systematic survey was administered to a large sample of working and non-working women to collect quantitative data on key variables such as household and individual income, decision-making authority across multiple domains, child well-being indicators (health and academic performance), and scaled metrics for family conflict levels. The second qualitative phase followed on from these findings utilising focus groups and semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected subsample to elicit personal narratives around role conflict, the "double burden," empowerment and the complex processes of intra-household negotiation.

Table 1: Data Collection Methods Overview

Sample	**Key Variables / Topics**	**Primary Tool**	**Data Type Phase**
Primary & Control Groups (n=180)	Income; Decision-making power; Child well-being indicators; Familial conflict.	Structured Survey	Quantitative One
Purposive sub-sample of primary & secondary participants (n=40)	In-depth experiences of role strain, empowerment, and changing family dynamics.	Semi-structured Interviews	Qualitative Two
Purposive sub-sample of primary group (n=20, in 3-4 groups)	Shared cultural norms, collective coping strategies, and social perceptions.	Focus Groups	Qualitative Two

3.3.1 Justification of the Study Tool

These aspects have investigated by some researchers of these studies the structured questionnaire/scale was texted to find out Family conflicts (Likert scaled), autonomy in decision making and strains of role. In combination with semi-structured interviews and controls spouse and focus groups of elders validated further this Scale vs.

3.4. Data Analysis:

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

3.4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 180 women (150 working, 30 non-working). The following table summarizes the key demographic characteristics:

Table 2: Participant Demographic Profile

Non-Working Women (n=30)	Working Women (n=150)	Characteristic
35.8 years	36.5 years	Mean Age
60%	60%	Residence:Baghdad
40%	40%	Residence: Al-Muthanna
65%	68%	University Education
93%	92%	Married

3.4.1.2. Inferential Statistics

A/ T-test: Familial Conflict: An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare familial conflict scores between families of working and non-working women. Results showed a statistically significant difference in conflict scores for working women (M = 5.2, SD = 1.1) compared to non-working women (M = 4.1, SD = 1.3); t (178) = 4.85, $p < .001$.

B/Correlation: Income and Decision-Making Power: A Pearson correlation was run to assess the relationship between monthly personal income and decision-making power among working women. The results showed a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between personal income and decision-making power ($r = .72$, $p < .01$).

C/Regression: Predictors of Family Stability: Predictors of Family Stability: A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict family stability based on employment status, total household income, and the woman's education level. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 176) = 15.42$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .46. Employment status was the strongest unique predictor ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$).

Table 3: Regression Model Predicting Family Stability

p-value	**Beta (β)**	**Predictor Variable**
001. >	.55	Woman's Employment Status
0.004	.28	Total Household Income
0.152	.11	Woman's Education Level

3.4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of focus groups and interviews with (40) participants revealed three main themes explaining the quantitative results:

A/ Theme 1: The Double Burden as a Source of Stress: The prevalence of reports of exhaustion and resentment explained the quantitative outcome of increasing conflict. As one Baghdad teacher stated, "I

complete my tasks at work, but my second shift at home never ends. My partner may help if I ask, but I am constantly responsible and mentally burdened."

B/ Theme 2: he Economic Contribution as a Bargaining Chip — Narratives elucidated the interconnectedness of income and agency. A nurse from Al-Muthanna, said:When I started contributing to the monthly car payments, suddenly they respected my opinion about the make a model of the car we should get. My salary gave me a voice."

C/ Theme 3: Reevaluating Responsibilities; The Push and Pull for a Firmer Place Families with greater stability also reported that as part of their success they actively redefined the roles. Another husband interviewed in Baghdad said: "It was difficult at first but when we saw her become a success and the children benefit more than that came to two spouses.

3.5. Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to the following ethical principles:

● Consent: Participants gave verbal (audio-recorded) only or written consent, by means of an Arabic information sheet, oral and/or open/adhered to the minimum necessary prerequisites for informed and voluntary participation.
● Confidentiality: Coders anonymized transcripts and implemented electronic and physical methods of data storage security, limiting access to data protected participants from social or familial repercussions.
●Cultural Match: Male and female researchers (by gender of participants); interviewing takes place in private; training on empathy & sensitivity along with a list of support service.

3.6. The Pilot Study:

Before starting main round of the survey on 15 women and local administrative authorities, suitable pilot survey conducted to establish scientific method and ground truth validity. Also, those Statistics were compared to the official ones in Baghdad and Al-Muthanna governorates and municipal administrations to Ensure the Authenticity of Civil demands indicators for these areas related to the percentage of female work force and demographic indicators.

4. Analysis & Findings

4.1. The Economic Role: A wider taking part in the position of girls in labour from this examine, on which this quick abstract report is predicated, reveals that are essential elements on humanitarian grounds but there´s additionally recognize commencing within the Iraqi economic system. As per quantitative data, women's share of incomes are about 12–15% formal GDP; this number increases drastically when one includes contributions informal sector (World Bank, 2023). Women's participation is crucial for labor market diversification, as they work predominantly in non-oil sectors including education, healthcare, and services, helping to reduce the economy's historical reliance on hydrocarbons (ESCWA, 2022). The findings demonstrate that employing women is a powerful strategy for reducing poverty at the

microeconomic level, as working women are 40% less likely to live below the poverty line because their earnings are more likely to be spent on healthcare, necessities and children's education, developing human capital and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty (Al-Hashimi & Rajab, 2024; IMF, 2023). Therefore, women's economic participation is essential to fair and sustainable national economic growth, rather than merely a social issue.

4.2.The Social Role:Beyond the economic realm, women's employment primarily acts as a powerful catalyst for substantial social advancement through the mechanism of empowerment. Work increases personal autonomy and self-confidence, thereby increasing women's influence in household decision-making - a shift evidenced by resource negotiation studies (Al-Maamari, 2024). Thus the process of empowerment culminates in a self-fulfilling prophecy which produces far-reaching inter-generational benefits. Specifically, research indicates that aspiring working mothers who nurture their earnings are investing in their offsprings - aspiring working mothers have 25% more chance of getting daughters to Higher Education (UN Women, 2023). In addition, maternal employment is associated with 15% higher routine child health examinations and an improvement in family nutritional status as mothers directing their resources to the health of their families (World Health Organization, 2022). Women who are more productive in their work, have shown, on average to congregate 30% more than their male counterparts--they are showing that they can actually build stronger social capital with the local governing practices and community groups that continue to reshape our civic landscape (Al-Jawahiri, 2023). Works of women, therefore, are key to creating a better educated people and a healthier nation and an interested citizenry responsibly managing particular responsibilities with each other freely.

4.3. Impact on Family Stability:

The link between women and work, however, is a complicated one that combines qualitative tales of survival with quantitative conflict indicators. One way to exemplify that complexity is with the geographic cohorts. The more traditional governorate was Al-Muthanna, which had a statistically significant ($p <. 05$) that goes fully 15% above the Baghdad Mean Conflict Score [3]. This conflict often was not a sign of collapse, rather it represented a challenging yet important phase of negotiation within the system as interviews indicated. One winning response characterized the Al-Muthanna conflict as a "quiet war for honor" that is typically initiated through a challenge in person to patriarchal rule. In contrast, the Baghdad interview narratives — where employed women are more common — presented signs of a shift towards teamwork, likely driven by limited social change and greater accessibility of effective childcare (Al-Maamari, 2024). This meant that not all strain sounded the same in the survey—it was largely the interviews that made meaning of it: among Al-Muthanna women high conflict mapped onto a meaning of a transformative stress on systems; low conflict scores in Baghdad often indicated successful but far from linear negotiations of marital contracts embedded in strong instincts for female

equality. This suggests that it is a good conflict, one that provokes stability and not the opposite (Khalaf, 2023).

5. Discussion:

5.1. Interpreting the Dual-Nature Impact: But the study makes clear that,as simple as collective empowerment may be to imagine inword and spirit, women are not rallying around oneanother without a compass — women's work marks the striving for a differentcommon denominator amid an equally messy process of upheaval-and-tension. Therefore, we refer to this as the “empowerment-disruption nexus.” So, in order to get a better view of this interaction, it only makes sense to look at the different dimensions offered by the various member groups. 1. Working Women say they feel empowered, more self-esteem and agency In the words of one Baghdad educater: "My salary is my voice— a performance that I no longer need to simply express as an opinion" Conversely, men in Al-Muthanna viewed this empowerment as chaos; they felt that their control and what several called their previous provider status was slipping away. Even as one husband described it – "a constant low-level challenge to my standing in my own home." A grandmother said, 'We lost the old respect — now it is one house but two managers of a business. Old people usually regarded this change in the context of cultural decline. As even other members of the family see that act which empowers the wife more as a neighborhood disturbance, then you can see what an incredible correlation there is between degree to which a woman is empowered and level of family conflict ruining your neighborhood.

This equilibrium is a balancing act; depending on the mediating conditions, these same elements that provide empowering influence could also push the balance over into outright disruption. The information suggests that maintaining the stability of their family depends on how effectively the family is able to handle this relationship. The table below illustrates the test of differing meanings of this same basic transformation — women’s work – across the empowerment-disruption spectrum:

The data on which the family can handle this relationship is relevant as far as the overall balance of power in family stability. The following comparative table of the many different strands of meaning given to the very same fundamental change, women’s labor — through the lens of empowerment versus disruption:

Table 5: The Dual-Nature Impact Across Participant Groups

Key Mediating Factor	**Disruption Perspective (Primarily Husbands & Elders)**	**Empowerment Perspective (Primarily Working Women)**	**Core Change**
Spousal communication	Threat & Loss: “My role as provider is	Agency & Security: “I can provide for my	Financial Contribution

and joint financial planning.	undermined; I have less control over spending."	children's future and have personal savings."	
Support from peer groups with similar experiences .	Norm Violation: "She is exposed to outside influences and challenges our traditions."	Network Expansion: "I have colleagues and a life outside the home; I am not isolated."	Social Independence
Willingness of male partners to adapt their masculine identity.	Authority Erosion: "The final word is no longer mine; the household hierarchy is broken."	Partnership & Equity: "We now discuss major decisions as a couple; my opinion is valued."	Decision-Making Power

This analysis is a reminder that disruption and empowerment are two sides of the same coin. This qualitative evidence aids the parsing of the quantitative data that correlated labor with better living standards, as well as something like higher conflict. Finding the way to this new family arrangement is bound to be controversial: the patriarchal bargain on which Iraq family life has rested, requires radical re-negotiation (Khalil, 2023). Thus, it is not the prevention of this inevitable upheaval related to women's power gaining that brings family stability, but rather enduring the rumbling — via adaptive communication and support structures around equitable partnership.

5.2. The Critical Role of Mediating Factors

No doubt, an unqualified reading of the analysis clearly shows that the work of women solidifies family stability not due to mere employment but a web of institutional support systems and geography over time. Important spatial considerations were the distance between Baghdad's urban centers and the rural, more traditional Al-Muthanna governorate. Women were more easily accepted as workers in Baghdadi cities because they had denser infrastructures, greater anonymity, and more varied employment opportunities. The presentation reported that Al-Muthanna was significantly more problematic for traditional values due to the tribal and social network as well as lower levels of economic opportunity, resulting in higher levels of family disruption (Walio & Korsas, 2023). Lastly, the strongest institutional mediator that emerged in the analysis was access to affordable quality child care. Availability of child care is related to reduced elevation of role pressure and interfamily conflict, study findings indicate.

The previous table provides an overview of how these factors mediate the nexus between empowerment and disruption in each context:

Table 6 : Influence of Key Mediating Factors on Family Outcomes

Effect on Family	**Impact in Al-**	**Impact in**	**Mediating**

Stability	Muthanna (Rural)	Baghdad (Urban)	Factor
HighMediation: Urbansettings buffered social pressure; Rural settings amplified it.	Stronger tribal oversight; heightened social scrutiny.	Weaker traditional enforcement; more individual choice.	Social Norms & Anonymity
Critical Mediation: Directly reduced role strain and conflict where available.	Critically low access (20%); burden remained on family.	Relatively higher access (65%); alleviated “double burden.”	Availability of Childcare
Significant Mediation: Allowed for better work-life integration, reducing stress.	Virtually non-existent.	Present in some public/private sectors.	Flexible Work Policies
Significant Mediation: Enhanced women’s ability to participate in the workforce safely.	Limited and often unsafe, restricting women’s mobility.	More reliable and safer options for female commuters.	Transportation & Infrastructure

The results reflect this as the family bears the greatest cost of negative consequences that aligned with increased conflict, and indicates without interventions to serve as a support mechanism the burden is more uneven in favour of inequitable allocation. However, as Hadad (2023) writes, the double burden is not a weakness of the individual but actually a systemic issue requiring institutional answers. The results from this study indicate that, filling regional and institutional gaps through tailored policies are the only solutions to maximise opportunities of women's empowerment challenges & reduce its disruption eg finance some childcare options for rural regions or provide more flexibility in working hours nationwide (World Bank, 2024).

6. Recommendations

In light of the study’s conclusions, a comprehensive set of interventions is recommended to reduce family stress and optimize the benefits of women’s economic participation, including promoting flexible work

schedules and launching public awareness campaigns in more traditional governorates like Al-Muthanna to highlight the benefits of women's work for families and the nation, developing state-funded, affordable childcare facilities in urban areas like Baghdad to directly reduce the "double burden," fostering an inclusive public discourse through media, religious institutions, and community leaders to challenge gender norms and promote shared domestic responsibilities as a cornerstone of the modern Iraqi family while publicly celebrating successful examples of equitable partnerships, alongside conducting longitudinal studies to track the same participant cohorts over time to understand long-term impacts, extending the study's scope to include a larger number of governorates to more fully reflect the diverse social fabric of Iraq, and enacting regionally appropriate legal protections to ensure the protection of working women's rights and reduce discrimination.

7. Conclusion

It has proven the study's central argument to be correct: women act in Iraq as a force of change, not that brings about social change — but an complex interplay between disruption and empowerment. Based on a mixed-methods study in the governorates of Baghdad and Al-Muthanna, we highlight with growing clarity that the labour of women contributes not only (i) to GDP but also (ii) for poverty reduction. But these great advantages come with equally steep challenges in private life. The Iraqi family thus becomes stressed by this "double burden" — as it is known in theory — while traditional patriarchal authority crumbles, and role pressure surges internally.

The findings support the notion that pronounced regional differences-in regards to childcare availability and persistent cultural attitudes- in Baghdad versus Al-Muthanna warrant tailored, contextualized pathways. So, the path forward is to now invest in both of these policy recommendations (like state-supported childcare and equity laws) but with social measures that facilitate better distribution of household chores more equally.

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