

**Representations of Older Women in Algerian Television Programs:
Between Media Exclusion and the Imperative of Social Care**

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representations of older women in Algerian television programs by uncovering the mechanisms of media exclusion that mark their presence, contrasted with the dominance of a social-care discourse as the primary framework for their appearance. The study adopts a sociological–communication approach grounded in the theory of social representations of gender, the concept of symbolic violence, and the intersectional approach to understand the overlap of gender- and age-based discrimination within television discourse. The results show that aging is not excluded per se, but is reframed according to gender affiliation; the older man is granted legitimacy to appear as an expert or analyst, whereas the older woman is excluded from positions of cognitive agency or reduced to narratives of pity and care. The study concludes that Algerian television channels reproduce symbolic representations that legitimize male dominance and exclude older women from the public sphere, stressing the necessity of shifting from a logic of care to a logic of recognition and empowerment.

Keywords: older woman; media representations; symbolic exclusion; Algerian television; gender; symbolic violence; social care.

Introduction

Television programs, in general, are among the most important forms of media discourse capable of penetrating the fine details that constitute social, political, cultural, and economic life, as they establish a reciprocal relation of influence with social reality. This role has contributed to consolidating television’s position as a central medium within the traditional media system and as one of the most important instruments of socialization, given its ability to shape values, reproduce representations, and influence patterns of perception and behavior within Algerian society.

In this context, television programs constitute the core of media discourse most present in daily life; however, the representations of the elderly, and particularly older women, still suffer from limited treatment in both quantity and quality. Despite the absence of specialized programs addressing the issues of the elderly on Algerian television, the presence of older women appears sporadically within some social segments, where the older woman is presented through narratives that primarily highlight cases of familial and societal exclusion, portraying her as a victim of marginalization within her family environment or as a figure who has lost her social value after the end of her productive or symbolic roles. This exclusion is clearly

manifested in the representation of certain artistic or social figures who were active in an earlier phase and were then marginalized and forgotten as they aged, living on the margins of collective memory; their media presence is only summoned on occasional occasions, such as belated honors or after death, reflecting mechanisms of symbolic exclusion that reproduce marginalization instead of questioning it. This type of treatment reveals the emergence of a media discourse that sheds light on suffering after it has occurred, without rising to build a preventive or empowering vision based on sustainable social care.

The present study seeks to explore Algerian television media discourse related to the image of the older woman and her multiple issues by analyzing her representations within television programs and revealing the limits of this discourse between the logic of media exclusion on the one hand and the possibilities of strengthening the ethics of social care on the other. Despite growing academic interest in the elderly and their relationship with the media, the literature indicates that most studies have focused primarily on measuring this group's orientations toward media content or on analyzing general stereotypical images of aging, without delving into the analysis of the nature of media discourse itself or evaluating its performance in representing the problems and actual needs of older women.

Recent literature reviews have shown that the media tend to present older people with limited and insufficient representations, often through stereotypical images that emphasize weakness and dependency instead of highlighting accumulated experience and social value, with their presence as active sources of information or participating voices in public discourse being rare (Camacho-Markina & Santos-Díez, 2025). Other studies have shown that negative media representation of older people is associated with reinforcing ageist stereotypes and negatively affects self-perception among this group (Wangler & Jansky, 2023).

In the context of film and media studies, particularly in the Western context, recent research has revealed that older people suffer from weak representation in media content, and that older women face compounded discrimination based on the intersection of age and gender compared to men, which aligns with theories of age and gender discrimination (De Sutter, 2025; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Gullette, 2004).

In the Algerian context, studies addressing the issues of the elderly, especially older women, remain limited; they have mostly focused on diagnosing the general roles of media discourse and the professional challenges associated with covering these issues, without an in-depth analysis of the representations of older women within television discourse (Sishi, 2022). Stemming from this research gap, this study aims to evaluate Algerian television media discourse concerning the issues of older women, with particular attention to the potential of feminist media discourse to reconstruct these representations and shift them from a logic of marginalization and exclusion toward a horizon of social care and symbolic empowerment.

While feminist media discourse is given importance in this research, emphasis is placed on its role in reinforcing the ethics of social care by highlighting the importance of media coverage of care issues and services and by stressing the necessity of television's contribution to raising public awareness about the importance of restoring the dignity of older women. This group, which contributed to building the family and society, has moved—due to demographic and social transformations—from a position of providing care to a position of needing it, a shift

that requires a humane media approach based on recognition and empowerment rather than pity or marginalization.

Based on the foregoing, the research rests on three main theoretical approaches. The first is the technological factor theory, which starts from considering technological development as a primary driver of social change, reflecting the material and intellectual culture of society. Within this framework, the study seeks to explore how television, as a technological medium, can contribute to providing symbolic and media opportunities for the care of older women. The second approach is gender theory, used to analyze feminist media discourse in relation to the traditional cultural and social context. The use of this approach stems from the media reality itself and its reading in light of the specificities of media and communication sciences, which assume that the media may reflect society's image or reshape it, as noted by researcher Marlène Coulomb-Gully.

Thirdly, the study is based on framing theory, which Irving Goffman defines as an organized structure of expectations used by the media to make individuals more aware of social situations (Al-Hajj, 2020, p. 59). This theory assumes that events do not carry fixed meaning in themselves but acquire significance through the frame in which they are placed (Al-Hajj, 2020, p. 60). Entman also identified four core functions for frame analysis: problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, and the suggestion of remedies (Lamflah, 2014, p. 45), functions that will be adopted in analyzing the content of the television programs under study.

Despite the moral presence of terms such as respect and care in Algerian media discourse, the representations of older women within television programs remain governed by a striking contradiction between an ethical discourse that symbolically elevates them and media practices that effectively exclude them from public discussion or reduce them to exceptional social cases. From this contradiction arises the problematique of this article, which questions the nature of representations of older women in Algerian television programs and the limits of media discourse between reinforcing social care and reproducing symbolic exclusion, raising a central question about television's capacity to move from episodic coverage to a logic of recognition and media empowerment. In light of this problematique, the article seeks to answer a set of research questions, most notably:

- What are the main Algerian television programs that have addressed the issues of older women?
- To what extent does media discourse with a feminist perspective contribute to strengthening the ethics of social care toward older women, as manifested in some Algerian television programs, notably programs on Echourouk TV?

First: Representations of the Older Woman between Media Silence and Symbolic Protection

The representation of the older woman in media discourse constitutes a sensitive semantic field in which mechanisms of silence and symbolic framing intersect, rendering her media presence limited in quantity and framed in meaning. In contrast to the near-total absence from the daily media agenda, the older woman appears only within humanitarian or care-related contexts, presented as an object of protection and pity rather than as a social actor possessing

experience and a life trajectory. This pattern of representation produces what can be called “symbolic protection,” whereby relations of exclusion are cloaked in an ethical and humanitarian discourse that reaffirms images of vulnerability instead of interrogating them. This section aims to unpack these representations by analyzing how media silence around the older woman is constructed and how her limited presence is reframed within symbolic templates that regulate the social vision of feminized aging.

1. Media Silence: Symbolic Exclusion

Media silence is one of the most covert and influential forms of symbolic exclusion in representations of older women within Arab, and specifically Algerian, media discourse. The absence of this group from the media scene is not merely a deficit in representation; it supports the stripping of social legitimacy from their presence and role, transforming them into invisible actors within the public sphere. This phenomenon falls under what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu terms symbolic violence resulting from the unseen and the unsaid in discourse (Bourdieu, 1991). This absence does not appear random but is linked to a selective logic governing media production, which favors images associated with youth, attractiveness, and consumer capacity, while marginalizing fragile age stages that do not align with the prevailing values of the image economy (Hall, 1997). Thus, media silence becomes a symbolic practice that reproduces both age-related and gendered vulnerability.

Recent media-monitoring reports in North Africa and the Middle East confirm the persistence of this exclusionary tendency in the representation of women within media discourse, with clear structural gender gaps. Results from the Global Media Monitoring Project indicate that women receive only about 26% of media coverage globally, with a marked decline in Africa and the Middle East compared to Europe, reflecting the continued dominance of the male voice in the media sphere, especially on public and political issues (GMMP 2025). This exclusion intensifies when it concerns compound categories such as older women, whose presence almost disappears from the media scene, embodying a doubled form of symbolic violence based simultaneously on social type and age.

In the Maghreb context, regional data show similar results. The report of Morocco’s High Authority for Audiovisual Communication indicates that women’s contributions to news bulletins did not exceed 18.01% in 2023 versus 81.99% for men, with a relatively higher presence of women in public media (29%) compared to private media (17%) (HACA, 2023/2025). These figures, despite slight improvement compared to previous years, reveal the limited nature of that progress, remaining within a quantitative representation that does not amount to a genuine redistribution of symbolic power within media discourse.

In the Algerian case, these indicators align with findings from recent studies (2024–2025), which show that the representation of women on television, especially in drama and social programs, remains governed by traditional stereotypical images that confine them to the domestic sphere and present them as weak or subordinate beings, with their near-total absence from decision-making and socially effective positions (Bouamoucha, Chetouane, 2024; Aimeur, 2025). These studies reveal that the presence of older women remains even more precarious, reduced to symbolic roles associated with care or pity, without recognition of their experience or voice as social actors.

These data can be read as clear indicators of the reproduction of male dominance within the media institution, as part of the social structure that consolidates power relations and naturalizes them as given. This aligns with Bourdieu's analyses of symbolic violence, particularly in the Algerian context, where he called for dismantling traditional cultural structures that reproduce exclusion through invisible mechanisms within discourse and institutions (Bourdieu, 2001). Thus, the weak representation of women, and older women in particular, should not be understood as a technical flaw in media coverage but as the product of a symbolic structure that excludes what does not conform to the logic of prevailing masculine dominance and effectiveness.

In this context, types of Algerian television discourse continue to reproduce stereotypical representations of women by confining them to traditional roles, despite the existence of some programs with a feminist orientation. However, these programs often fail to effect a real transformation in the image of women, which remains subject to a structural system based on separation, hierarchy, and gender discrimination across various social fields. This system supports the conversion of cultural arbitrariness into a natural fact, allowing the perpetuation of conservative representations that entrench male dominance and restructure power relations through patterns of perception and social valuation (Bourdieu, 2001).

Within the same framework, the Egyptian researcher in comparative literature and feminism, Omima Abu Bakr, attributes this situation to what she calls theological patriarchy, resulting from masculine interpretations of religious texts in particular, which reproduce male dominance within the public sphere (Abu Bakr, 2013). Anthropological studies, including the work of Algerian researcher Ridwan Boujemaa, also confirm multiple forms of exclusion faced by women in decision-making spaces within traditional societies (Boujemaa, 2007/2006). Researcher Sahbi Ben Nabila notes that Algerian television, like other Maghreb broadcasters, often transmits stereotypical images of women through rapid media construction of content that relies on invoking shared cultural codes that are easy to mobilize, contributing to the reproduction of these representations without subjecting them to critical scrutiny and entrenching women's presence within preformed media messages (Ben Nabila, 2009, p.97).

Media exclusion of the older woman is not limited to absence; it also appears in representational distortion, where her presence is reduced to limited stereotypical images such as the incapacitated, ill, or wholly dependent woman, as seen in the series *El-Dar El-Kabira* (1974) with the elderly character Umm Lalla Ainiy. In Arab media, the older woman is often presented as a symbol of weakness or a social burden, without highlighting her life experience or capacity for action and participation, reflecting the logic of ageism in media discourse (Bytheway, 2005). This reductive representation contributes to entrenching a charitable-medical view of aging that excludes the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the aging experience and reproduces power relations that place the older woman in a subordinate rather than an active position (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010).

2. Symbolic Protection between Care and Moral Objectification

Media discourse about the older woman occurs at the intersection of the institutional dimension of care and the symbolic dimension of representation. While public policies, as in the Algerian context, reflect increasing legal and social recognition of the rights of older people

through legislative and institutional frameworks that seek to guarantee decent living and social protection, the presence of the older woman within television discourse remains governed by a different symbolic logic based primarily on moral veneration and emotional sanctification rather than actual recognition of her social agency.

Within this framework, the media sometimes adopt what can be called “symbolic protection” by embracing a discourse of care and respect associated with the image of the mother or grandmother, a discourse grounded in cultural and value references that elevate old age and filial piety. Yet this representation, despite its apparent humanitarian character, is not without deep problems: it often strips the older woman of individuality, reduces her identity, and dissolves it into traditional familial roles in which she is presented as a being deserving of care rather than as an actor capable of expression, participation, and decision-making.

Thus, symbolic protection shifts from a mechanism meant to enhance social recognition to a soft form of moral objectification, whereby the older woman is granted symbolic value conditional on her conformity to an idealized image of tenderness, sacrifice, and silence, without being afforded space to appear as an autonomous subject with opinions, lived experience, and social expertise. From this perspective, discursive care does not lead to genuine empowerment; rather, it may reproduce exclusion under an ethical and humanitarian guise, which intersects with Nancy Fraser’s critique of recognition discourses that settle for symbolic respect without addressing imbalances of power and representation in the public sphere (Fraser, 2000). In this sense, representations of the older woman in television discourse reveal a fundamental paradox between the logic of institutional care and the logic of media representation: the older woman is celebrated morally, yet her voice is effectively excluded from public debate, limiting the possibilities for real recognition and media empowerment.

3- Algerian Media between Cultural Reference and Modernization Logic

When we speak of older adults, we refer on the one hand to a social category characterized by specific physical, health, and psychological features and by accumulated life experience; on the other hand, we emphasize the need to be aware of the importance of caring for this group, which yesterday provided care and required our attention, and today has become a group in need of attention, care, and provision of their needs, given the health problems they face such as impaired vision and hearing, osteoporosis, slowed mobility, high blood pressure, and the inability of some organs to perform their intended functions (Hizir, 2025, p. 143).

In Algeria, care for older persons is provided in accordance with the principles of Islamic law, and is organized through the pension system, social insurance, and the social security system. Because health care for older persons is not confined to hospital wards and clinics, it extends to the home, institutions, and the community. To care for those who suffer from the absence of family members or relatives who check on and care for them, nursing homes have been established; in Algeria these are called elderly homes or “houses of mercy,” where all daily life requirements—food, clothing, and health, psychological, and social services—are available, and residents are allowed to leave the facility provided the administration is notified (Hizir, 2025, p. 144).

In the Algerian context, representations of the older woman intersect with a value system that elevates old age and filial piety, which is reflected in media discourse that tends toward

moral veneration without translating that veneration into an actual presence in public debates. Despite the importance of institutional efforts, these do not find a balanced media translation that transforms the older woman from a "neglected" figure into an "active citizen"; rather, she remains within the "symbolic protection" discussed above, and is rarely summoned as a social witness or an experienced actor, often being employed within narratives of commemorative occasions and collective memory, which limits the possibilities of recognizing her as a contemporary social actor (Mellouk, 2018).

Within this framework, television is viewed as a symbolic authority and a social institution that reflects the society's representations and imagination and reproduces power relations within it; its media production is also influenced by prevailing economic and political structures. Since Algerian public television is an institution of the state, it is obliged to provide a public service that guarantees the principle of equality between citizens, as stipulated by Article 29 of the 1996 Constitution and by the regulatory specifications governing audiovisual activity.

Overcoming the binary of media silence and symbolic protection requires rethinking approaches to representing the older woman within television discourse by moving from a logic of benevolence or exclusion to a logic of recognition and empowerment. This demands media discourse that highlights the diversity of older women's experiences and grants them space to express themselves and their concerns, away from stereotypical images and ready-made roles, thereby strengthening symbolic justice and social inclusion (Hall, 1997; Fraser, 2000).

Second: Cases of Exclusion of the Older Woman through Television Programs

The digital world today opens new horizons for promoting dignified aging and offers older adults increasing opportunities to participate as active citizens capable of exercising their full rights and contributing their knowledge and experience to enrich their communities. After decades of entrenching stereotypical perceptions that reduced older generations to a fragile category or a social and economic burden on younger generations, strategies of active and healthy aging have emerged, notably those linked to information and communication technologies (ICT), as tools able to dismantle these misleading images and rebuild more positive representations of older adults as social actors and potential drivers of the so-called "silver economy."

The report "Aging in a Digital World: From Being Affected to Making an Impact" issued by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) confirms this shift by calling for the digital inclusion of older adults, in line with the "leave no one behind" principle underpinning the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, this empowering discourse, important as it is, collides in the television media reality with divergent representations that reproduce images of family exclusion, especially when it concerns the older woman.

1. Narratives of Family Exclusion in Social Programs

Analytical reading of the content of a number of Algerian television programs shows that representations of family exclusion are strongly present through emotionally charged humanitarian narratives, usually presented without structural framing or in-depth social critique. In the program "Ma Wara' al-Judran" broadcast by Ennahar TV, the media treatment is

primarily based on stories from nursing homes, where the fates of fathers and mothers who have been subjected to various forms of neglect or injustice—whether by children, partners, or extended family—are displayed. These cases are presented as shocking examples of the breakdown of family bonds and the erosion of familial solidarity, within a dramatic framework that emphasizes moral shock more than analysis of the social contexts that produce them.

In the same vein, the program "Asht wa Shuft" employs humanitarian narratives that embody the phenomenon of filial ingratitude, through stories of older women such as al-Hajja Fadila and al-Hajja Yamina, where these testimonies reveal the suffering of older women who have been ostracized by their families and subjected to symbolic violence. Although this treatment is emotionally powerful, it remains governed by a simplistic moral logic that attributes the crisis to "moral deviation" without interrogating the structural economic and cultural factors that contribute to producing these conditions.

The discourse of some programs on Echourouk TV does not depart from this framework; they too tend to adopt sensational humanitarian narratives with a clear focus on emotional impact and moral arousal, reinforcing an approach based on pity and sympathy rather than on critical analysis that links family exclusion to broader social transformations. In this type of media treatment, women—often older women—appear as the most affected group, a presence that reflects gendered representations entrenched within media discourse.

Television treatment of various issues of family exclusion of older persons, particularly those concerning older women, shows that the discourses of these programs do not operate as neutral mirrors of social reality but play an active framing role in shaping public perception of these phenomena. According to Robert Entman's framing theory, framing involves selecting certain aspects of reality and highlighting them in a way that directs the audience toward a particular definition of the problem, an interpretation of its causes, a moral evaluation, and the suggestion of remedies (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In this context, the television programs under analysis tend to frame family exclusion as an individual moral crisis resulting from "children's ingratitude" or "moral decline," with intense emphasis on the emotional and affective dimension while marginalizing structural factors related to economic transformations, changing lifestyles, and weak social care policies.

This pattern of framing steers public debate toward moral blame and human sympathy rather than toward questioning the social and institutional structures that produce and reproduce exclusion. Highlighting shocking individual cases and isolating them from their social contexts turns the older woman into a humanitarian case invoked to elicit pity, not into a social actor with a voice and the capacity to participate in defining her problems and their solutions, which aligns with Entman's observations on the ideological effect of media frames in fixing particular readings of reality (Entman, 2004). To clarify the mechanisms of this framing systematically, the following table (Table 1) provides an analytical reading of the content of a number of Algerian television programs according to the axes of problem diagnosis, moral judgment, and proposed forms of "remedy."

Table 1 shows an analytical reading of the contents of a sample of Algerian television programs

Treatment methods	Moral judgment	Diagnosis of causes	Problem	Program and episode title	Broadcast date	Channel
Absent	Duty of filial piety	Children's disobedience	Family rejection	I Lived and I Saw (Asht w Shuft) "Unbelievable Stories: The "Oppression of Mothers	202/05/31	Echorouk
Absent	Moral crisis	Deviation of values	Family neglect	Beyond the Walls (Ma Wara' al-Judooran) "Violence Against "?Women: Where To	2020/12/2	Ennahar TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Positive initiative	Care institutions	Coverage of the activity of Dar Al-Nazaha: Day reception centers for the elderly.. a humanitarian initiative to lighten the family burden	2025/3009	Echorouk News TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Positive initiative	Care institutions	Coverage: Atmosphere of Eid al-Adha at the Old People's Home in Dali Ibrahim in the capital	21/08/2021	Ennahar TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Positive initiative	Care institutions	Coverage: Residents of the Old People's Home in Bir Khadem congratulate Algerians on Eid al-Fitr	2017/6/25	Ennahar TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Children's disobedience	Care institutions	Coverage: An elderly resident in the Old People's Home.. when life turns its back on you in the twilight of age	2019/6/16	Ennahar TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Deviation of values	Care institutions	Coverage from the Old People's Home: an elderly resident at Dar Al-Rahma, Hadjout, tells a story that makes stones weep	2023/4/6	Ennahar TV
Institutional containment	Moral crisis	Positive initiative	Care institutions	Very frank: This is how the elderly at the Old People's Home spend Ramadan.. between longing and nostalgia	2021/4/17	Ennahar TV
Social containment	Moral crisis	Positive initiative	Care institutions	Hamza".. a young man " whose family died and decided to spend all his time inside the nursing home.. watch	2022/8/28	البلاد TV

The table shows that the programs under analysis rely on a convergent framing logic, which diagnoses family exclusion as a direct result of “filial impiety” or “deviation of values,” while assigning an explicit moral judgment that places full responsibility on the family. In

contrast, the “Remedies” column reveals an almost complete absence of any structural approaches within the social programs, alongside the dominance of an institutional containment logic in news coverage, where nursing homes are presented as the ultimate response to the crisis, without questioning their social conditions or their symbolic effects.

In this context, the story of «Hamza» (El Biled TV, 28/08/2022) acquires a different analytical significance, since it does not concern a young man seeking containment within a care institution, but rather an act of reversed care that reflects a profound shift in the logic of family relations. After losing his mother, Hamza took an elderly woman out of the care home to care for her in his own house, presenting her as a symbolic substitute for the absent mother and as an “elder” who restores emotional and social balance to the family space. This act cannot be read merely as an isolated individual initiative or as an expression of charitable inclination; rather, it should be understood as a non-institutional social response to the breakdown of the traditional care system, where the extended family is no longer able to guarantee the presence of the “elder” within the home, and institutions are no longer able to produce meaningful alternative human bonds. This model reveals a shift in care from a vertical duty (from children to parents) to a horizontal relationship reconstructed outside the logic of biological kinship.

However, the media treatment of this story, despite its human dimension, remains captive to an emotional frame that highlights the act as a moral exception rather than as an indicator of a structural crisis in care policies and in society’s conception of the status of elderly women. Thus, the elderly woman is reintegrated into a discourse of pity and symbolic containment, without being empowered as an agent or recognized as a social subject possessing history, experience, and a role within the family and society.

From the perspective of the scholar Erving Goffman, these treatments can be read as work on the “frames” that organize social experience and give it meaning (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). The stories of elderly women are placed within a moral-dramatic frame that predefines the actors’ roles: an elderly woman as victim, an absent or harsh family, and a caregiving institution performing the role of symbolic rescuer. This frame reduces the lived experience of the elderly woman to scenes of silence, waiting, and dependence, thereby excluding the possibilities of representing her as an independent subject or as an active citizen.

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of media representations of the elderly woman in Algerian television programs, highlighting her frequent absence as an independent actor and the media discourse’s reliance on value frames linked to moral duty and care rather than to knowledge or social participation. The table also shows that programs often employ the symbolic presence of the elderly woman in the context of celebratory activities or coverage of care homes, reflecting the limited space for expressing her role in public issues or public debate. Analytically, the table demonstrates how this pattern contributes to the reproduction of cultural classifications of aging according to stereotypical templates based on pity and care, instead of enabling the elderly woman to occupy a position as a cognitive and social agent, which aligns with what media framing analysis frameworks indicate about the ideological effect of media framing in shaping public perception of social phenomena (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974).

Table 2: Frames of representing the elderly woman between symbolic exclusion and institutional care

Analytical observation	What appears in the table	Symbolic / critical dimension	Dimension	Classification of representations
Presence / Absence	Majority of programs present the absence of the elderly woman as an independent actor	Entrenches a logic of pity and containment instead of recognition of agency	Reflects the symbolic exclusion of the elderly woman	The elderly woman is summoned only as an exceptional case or as a witness to the past
Value frame	Filial duty, moral crisis, humanitarian initiative	Aligns with symbolic violence (Bourdieu) and reproduces male dominance	Representation tied to caregiving and moral functions more than to knowledge or social action	The structural and social dimension of the crisis is overlooked
Broadcast / Program	Social programs, holiday coverages, or nursing-home activities	Reflects double exclusion (gender + age)	Employment of the elderly woman in a symbolic frame, limited in time and visibility, not in public issues	Limited and discontinuous presence
Treatment	Pity, care, humanitarian content, activity coverage	Constrains the role of the elderly woman within pity and symbolic containment	Reproduction of the cultural classification of aging according to stereotypical templates	The elderly woman is presented as a recipient of care rather than as an actor
Social role	Victim / Beneficiary	Erases the social agency and personal history of the elderly woman	The elderly woman is often a victim	It entrenches the logic of pity and symbolic containment
Emotional / Affective dimension	Pity / esteem	Reproduces the stereotypical image of aging and women in the media	Focus on the human or emotive dimension	It dominates structural analysis
Structural dimension	Causes of the crisis	Reveals the need to link phenomena to social policies and structural transformations	Filial impiety, deviation of values	It overlooks social and economic transformations
Practical examples	Individual cases	Displays the "moral exception" instead of treating the crisis as a social indicator	Stories such as "Hamza" and "I Lived and I Saw"	Exceptional cases turn into moral discourse rather than structural analysis

This framing is clearly manifested in coverage related to elderly care centers, such as “Manazil al-Nazaha,” where the visual and narrative discourse is constructed around highlighting the institution’s physical spaces and valorizing the initiative in itself, while the voices and subjective experiences of elderly women are absent. According to the logic of media framing, this editorial choice is not neutral but directs the audience to read institutional care as a sufficient and closed solution (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), as previously noted. Regarding

what Echorouk channel offered through its media coverage of elderly care centers, notably “Manazil al-Nazaha,” these were presented as positive social initiatives expressing the state’s commitment to caring for vulnerable groups. However, from the perspective of framing theory, such coverage is generally framed within an institutional evaluative logic that focuses on showcasing the initiative itself rather than interrogating its social and symbolic conditions (Entman, 1993). The media treatment limits itself to displaying the centers’ physical spaces without delving into the lived experiences of the elderly, especially elderly women, who are excluded from the center of the narrative.

In contrast, analysis of the images accompanying the report reveals a stereotypical visual framing of the elderly, where women and men are shown in states of stillness within shared halls, or men appear in cafés and public gardens, reinforcing a visual representation based on temporal emptiness and social inactivity rather than agency and participation. According to Goffman as well, this type of imagery falls within the “frames” that organize the audience’s perception of social experience and predefine the actors’ positions within it (Goffman, 1974). The questions posed alongside the report are primarily directed to young and middle-aged groups outside these institutions (especially in the case of coverage of Dar al-Nazaha), an editorial choice that recenters the discourse on the surrounding community instead of listening to the voices of the elderly women themselves. This framing supports the transformation of the elderly woman from a speaking subject into an object of external moral discussion and evaluation, consistent with what Entman calls the “ideological function of the frame,” whereby the problem is defined and assessed without involving those concerned in producing its meaning (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Accordingly, it can be said that this coverage, despite its apparent humanitarian dimension, reproduces media representations that reduce the elderly woman to the position of passive recipient of care rather than an active social agent possessing voice, expertise, and a life trajectory. This pattern of framing amounts to symbolic protection that entrenches quiet exclusion instead of opening the way to genuine social recognition based on empowerment and participation. Thus, television programs, through their dominant framing logics, reproduce social and gendered representations that fix the elderly woman’s position within the circuit of care and pity, limiting the potential shift from a circumstantial moral discourse to one grounded in recognition and empowerment. In this respect, television functions as a symbolic actor in reproducing familial exclusion rather than serving as a critical space for rethinking care policies, the status of elderly women, and their rights within the public sphere.

2. Social representations of gender and the reproduction of exclusion

Researcher Sahbi Ben Nabila indicates that social representations of gender constitute a fundamental cultural reference mobilized by media actors in constructing the images of men and women within media discourse (Ben Nabila, 2009, p. 130). Representation is not limited to an isolated mental image but rests on a complex relation that includes the representation itself, its content, and the actor who uses it, in addition to the “producer” element when the producer differs from the user. A representation may exist within an individual’s consciousness or be embedded in the social and cultural environment in which they operate (Ben Nabila, 2009, p. 131).

From this perspective, social representations of gender cannot be understood as mere reflections of reality but as an organized symbolic system that determines what is considered natural, legitimate, or permissible within the public sphere. Representations do not only describe differences between the sexes; they contribute to hierarchizing them by attributing positive value to certain traits and linking them to masculinity, while neutralizing or marginalizing other traits associated with femininity, especially when intersecting with advanced age.

Thus emerges the close relationship between social representations and media representations of gender, a relation often likened to that between culture and nature, or between gender and the body. Media representations do not merely mirror social reality; they help stabilize and reproduce it within the public sphere through ready-made symbolic templates that determine who has the right to speak and who is reduced to secondary or silent roles.

In this context, media exclusion becomes a direct outcome of preexisting social representations that organize the distribution of symbolic legitimacy within discourse. When a woman is presented within a representational frame that links her femininity to fragility, care, or beauty, she gradually loses her position as a legitimate cognitive actor; this exclusion intensifies when femininity intersects with aging, carrying negative cultural connotations associated with non-productivity, loss of attractiveness, or withdrawal from the public sphere.

Although Pierre Bourdieu did not explicitly address the concept of the reproduction of social representations, his analyses of the media allow us to posit an organic relation between media and social representations within the logic of symbolic reproduction, where domination is presented as natural and invisible (Bourdieu). This argument aligns with the findings of Marlène Coulomb-Gully and Cécile Sourd on mechanisms that exclude women from media discourse—not through explicit prohibition but through marginalization, delegitimization, and confinement to stereotypical roles (Coulomb-Gully, 2012; Sourd, 2013).

Denise Jodelet also emphasizes that the concept of social representations transcends strict disciplinary boundaries, which explains its wide use in media and communication studies to understand the relationship between value systems and ideas on the one hand, and communication practices and media discourse on the other (Jodelet, 1989). In this framework, analyzing social representations of gender makes it possible to understand how media exclusion transforms from a circumstantial practice into a stable symbolic structure that reproduces itself over time. Thus, the exclusion of the elderly woman in television programs should not be read as a transient representational lapse but as the logical outcome of an overlapping series of social representations that exclude advanced-age femininity from circles of recognition and symbolic legitimacy, paving the way for analyzing the mechanisms of this exclusion within television discourse as a technology of power and gender.

3. Television as a technology of power and gender

Drawing on Michel Foucault's thesis, television can be viewed as a "technology of power" (*technologie de pouvoir*) that does not merely reflect social reality but produces norms, organizes behaviors, and regulates representations within society. In the same vein, Teresa de Lauretis describes television as a "technology of gender" (*technologie de genre*), contributing

to the construction of specific representations of masculinity and femininity and reproducing them through discourse, image, and mechanisms of selection and exclusion.

Within this framework, media representations on Algerian television reveal a sharp discriminatory paradox based on the intersection of age and gender: aging is not excluded *per se* but is redefined and reframed according to gender belonging. While the elderly man is granted legitimacy of presence as an “expert” or “analyst” in political, sports, and health programs, the elderly woman is excluded from these symbolic positions or is re-represented within a discourse of pity or moral debate. Consequently, one cannot speak of neutral ageism but rather of gendered age discrimination that reproduces male dominance within the media field.

The absence described does not imply a total disappearance of the elderly woman, since she is sometimes summoned in certain historical programs to give testimony and recall the memory of the Algerian liberation revolution, as is the case with the mujahidat Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired, and Louiza Ighilahriz. However, this presence remains conditional on her symbolic function as a “national memory,” not as an epistemic actor or analyst of current issues. Statistical data clearly support this paradox: GMMP 2025 results indicate that 74% of contributors to gender-based violence (GBV) issues are men, and the category of older men (over 60) constitutes about 15% of that presence, contrasted with an almost total absence of older women. At the level of Algerian public television, the share of male presence is estimated at 81%, while the presence of older women does not exceed 2%, reflecting a compounded symbolic exclusion.

In this context, media silence becomes a companion to the elderly woman, while “symbolic protection” turns into a masculine privilege granted to the older man as bearer of wisdom and expertise. This disparity can be read through the concept of the composite media frame (Entman, 1993), whereby the older man is reframed within the narrative of the “sage analyst,” whereas the older woman—if present—is framed as a “victim” or a “controversial figure,” not as an epistemic actor.

This paradox is evident in the case of Leïla Aslaoui (80 years old), who holds a legal educational background and whose media presence met with harsh digital criticism when she assumed the presidency of the Constitutional Court, whereas the presence of elderly men in positions of political decision-making—many of whom govern the country—is accepted almost automatically. This contradiction reveals a selective logic that strips the educated older woman of the label “expert,” reclassifying her as an “unsettling exception,” while conferring expertise on the older man as a natural extension of his symbolic authority.

This paradox can be understood within Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence, where masculine domination is presented as natural and legitimate and is reproduced through mechanisms of media representation without direct coercion. The media do not explicitly exclude the older woman; rather, they activate soft forms of symbolic erasure by framing expertise and wisdom as masculine traits, thereby depriving older women of epistemic legitimacy.

From an intersectionality perspective, gender discrimination intersects with age discrimination to produce a compounded exclusionary condition: the older woman is excluded

not merely because she is a woman, nor merely because she is old, but because her position lies at the intersection of these two vulnerabilities. This condition is entrenched in the near-total absence of retired female professors and female historical experts from screens, despite their knowledge and experiential capital that equals or even surpasses that of their male counterparts.

Accordingly, Algerian media do not so much reflect reality as reproduce it, by entrenching an unequal representation that legitimizes masculine dominance and excludes the older woman from the public sphere—not for lack of competence, but because she does not conform to the dominant symbolic model of authority and expertise. This limits the media discourse’s capacity to move from a logic of moral care to a logic of recognition and empowerment.

Conclusion

This article concludes that representations of the older woman in Algerian television programs oscillate between two seemingly contradictory but actually intersecting logics: the logic of moral care and symbolic protection on the one hand, and the logic of media exclusion and the symbolic reproduction of frailty on the other. Despite the intensive normative presence of terms such as respect, solidarity, and care within television discourse, analytical reading of social program contents and television reports shows that the older woman is rarely presented as an independent social actor; she is more often cast into the image of the victim or the object of care, within emotionally charged humanitarian narratives that lack critical structural framing.

The study demonstrated that television programs such as *Beyond the Walls* and *I Lived and I Saw* end to address cases of familial exclusion through a moral discourse based on emotional arousal and symbolic shock, without interrogating the economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to the production of these phenomena. Coverage of elderly care centers, such as *Manazil al-Nazaha* on Echorouk channel, also revealed the limits of the media approach, which focuses on highlighting the institutional initiative itself while marginalizing the lived experiences of older women and depriving them of a narrative space to express their selves and actual needs.

In light of the theoretical approaches employed—particularly the theory of social representations, Bourdieu’s analyses of symbolic reproduction, Foucault’s concepts of technologies of power, and Teresa de Lauretis’s framing of television as a “technology of gender”—it becomes clear that television media discourse does not operate outside prevailing social structures but contributes to their reproduction by fixing gendered representations that confine the older woman to traditional roles and symbolically exclude her from the public sphere and from claims to recognition and empowerment.

Thus, Algerian television emerges as a dual-function space: on the one hand a potential tool for raising social awareness about aging and care issues, and on the other a symbolic mechanism that may reproduce exclusion in soft forms through discourse that appears humanitarian on the surface yet remains limited in its capacity to dismantle gendered and age-based relations of domination. Hence the need to rethink editorial policies and narrative choices in television programming to enable a shift from circumstantial coverage and emotional

impact toward a media logic of recognition grounded in empowering older women with voice, representation, and actual participation in shaping public discourse.

These findings confirm that the future of media treatment of older women's issues depends on the ability of media—especially television—to harness digital transformations and active aging strategies not only as technical tools but as symbolic opportunities to reshape representations more justly and equitably, restoring regard for this group as the society's memory and human agent, not merely as a social burden or an object of care.

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