

Parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the level of religiosity in the Kabyle Society

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Abstract---This study aims to examine parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females in Kabyle society, in relation to the level of religiosity in Islam, which granted women a share of inheritance that they had historically been denied in this region. The research sample consisted of 60 fathers from the Kabyle area, selected through a simple random sampling method. Data were collected using the *Religiosity Scale* developed by Saleh ben Ibrahim Al-Sunay'e, adapted to the Algerian context, in addition to a questionnaire on attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females, prepared by the researcher. The study concluded that there were no statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to their level of religiosity in the Kabyle region.

Keywords---Attitudes, inheritance, Kabyle society, religiosity.

1– Introduction:

Kabyle society has long drawn the attention of researchers seeking to understand its customs, traditions, and social norms—particularly because these encompass all aspects of social life and daily practice. This interest has been especially pronounced regarding issues involving men and women, individuals and communities, who coexist within a small, close-knit social environment represented by the village. Among the scholars who have studied this society are Hanoteau, Letourneux, Masqueray, and others.

How to Cite:

Fariza, H., & Rachid, K. (2025). Parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the level of religiosity in the Kabyle Society. *The International Tax Journal*, 52(6), 4092–4098. Retrieved from <https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/399>

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370 © 2025

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Submitted: 10 May 2025 | Revised: 14 October 2025 | Accepted: 17 November 2025

4092

The inhabitants of the Kabyle region share a common social environment and act according to long-established norms and values, which they consider essential for maintaining social continuity. The processes of practice and repetition have played a major role in preserving these customs and traditions, even amid the social transformations that the region has experienced. These changes began with the transition from a traditional to an urban lifestyle and were accompanied by the influx of new cultural influences resulting from contact with other civilizations throughout history—from the pre-Islamic period, through French colonization, to the modern era of Western civilization. The spread of education has further strengthened this cultural interaction, allowing individuals to adopt new patterns of thinking and behavior.

Education has indeed had a profound impact on customs, traditions, and social habits, many of which no longer align with the contemporary social changes the Kabyle region has undergone. The older generation now fears that modernization and technological advancement may lead to the disappearance of these traditions.

However, despite these transformations, Kabyle society continues to resist in order to preserve what it considers fundamental—particularly issues related to honor and inheritance. Families often reserve their property, whether movable or immovable, exclusively for men, driven by the belief that granting inheritance rights to women might jeopardize the family's collective assets by allowing a husband to become a co-owner through his wife's inheritance. As a result, Kabyle women remain largely deprived of their inheritance rights.

The issue of inheritance is one of the most striking manifestations of gender-based discrimination in Amazigh culture. The traditional Algerian family—especially in Kabyle society—generally does not acknowledge these rights. According to prevailing customs and traditions, a woman's inheritance is regarded as a source of shame or dishonor, particularly in rural areas. Consequently, women themselves sometimes refuse or relinquish their inheritance for that very reason (Houria Mahfoud, 1996, p. 41).

The right to inheritance is viewed as a privilege reserved for males and is granted to daughters only when there are no male heirs. In many cases, girls are completely deprived of inheritance without exception. Even when a woman does accept her inheritance, her husband may object in order to avoid public criticism, invoking the pretext that daughters are born merely to enrich other families.

As noted in a study by Pierre Bourdieu (1985), a meeting was held in one of the villages of Tizi Ouzou in 1748, during which discussions focused on women's shares in inheritance. The aim of this gathering was to deprive women of this right, establishing that any man without male heirs would have his wealth transferred to *habous* (religious endowments). (Pierre Bourdieu, 1985, p. 32)

The deprivation of women from inheritance in Kabyle society remains one of the most contentious issues. For generations, it has been customary in this region to exclude females from inheritance, particularly in matters related to land ownership. Despite the social transformations the area has witnessed, the inheritance issue has persisted, resisting the influence of these changes.

Nevertheless, this reality cannot be regarded as an absolute rule, since there are indeed fathers who have granted their daughters their rightful shares of inheritance, despite the dominant negative attitudes prevailing in their community. This raises a fundamental question: what distinguishes these individuals from others who reject the idea of females participating alongside males in inheritance? Undoubtedly, certain objective factors have driven some fathers to adopt positive attitudes toward their daughters' inheritance rights, setting them apart from the rest of society. Accordingly, the research problem can be expressed through the following question:

- Are there statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the level of religiosity in the Kabyle region?

Research Hypothesis:

There are statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the level of religiosity in the Kabyle region.

This study seeks to explore the attitudes of Kabyle society toward the division of inheritance between males and females, and to determine whether differences in parents' attitudes toward inheritance division are influenced by the level of religiosity in the Kabyle region.

2. Definition of Concepts:**2.1 Definition of Attitudes:**

Psychologists regard the term "attitude" as one of the most fundamental and indispensable concepts in contemporary psychology. However, there is no single, universally accepted definition of the term, as the interpretations vary widely depending on the theoretical orientation of each scholar (Suhair Kamel Ahmed, 1995, p. 23).

Allport considers "attitude" to be one of the most prominent concepts in modern psychology, asserting that no other term appears as frequently in both experimental and theoretical research (Mostafa Sweif, n.d., p. 327). This view is supported by Allport's compilation of sixteen (16) different definitions of attitude and its nature (Ahmed Ali Habib, 2006, p. 94). Despite this diversity, several definitions have achieved broader acceptance among specialists, including the following:

A. Definition by Bruvold:

"An attitude is a positive or negative affective reaction toward a tangible or abstract object, or toward a controversial issue." (Zein Al-Abidin Darwish, 2005, p. 90).

This means that an attitude represents the emotional component adopted by an individual toward people, objects, or issues that constitute the subject of the attitude.

B. Definition by Thurstone:

"An attitude is the degree of positive or negative feeling associated with certain psychological objects." (Abd Al-Rahman Mohammed Al-Issawi, n.d., p. 195).

This definition emphasizes the cognitive component of attitude. By "psychological objects," Thurstone refers to symbols, issues, persons, institutions, or ideas.

C. Definition by Allport:

"An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations related to it." (Suhair Kamel Ahmed, 2001, p. 99).

From these definitions, it becomes evident that attitude, as a psychological phenomenon, represents a predisposition or tendency to respond in a particular way toward specific stimuli or situations. This predisposition may be temporary or relatively stable and develops through experience as a result of the individual's interaction with their environment. It directs a person's responses toward the situations and objects forming the subject of the attitude. In other words, attitude is shaped through the continuous interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment, as well as through experiences encountered throughout life. Hence, it is a learned and acquired construct.

D. Operationally:

It is represented by the score obtained by the individual on the questionnaire measuring attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females, designed by the researcher.

2.2 Definition of Religiosity:

Rashad Abdulaziz (1993) defines religiosity as "the behaviors, attitudes, and religious beliefs that an individual adopts toward their Creator, the members of their community, and themselves, through embodying the virtuous morals advocated by religion."

This definition was further affirmed by Bashir Ibrahim and Abdulkarim Saeed (2006), who emphasized that intrinsic religiosity is fundamentally based on sincerity of intention to God in both word and deed.

Their view aligns with that of Allport, who considered religion to be a form of self-service, protection, and personal satisfaction, providing the believer with comfort and spiritual salvation (Abd Al-Raqeeb Al-Buheiri, 1989, p. 257).

Al-Sunay'e defines religiosity as the commitment of a devout individual to the true faith through belief in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and divine predestination—both good and bad—and the reflection of such belief in one's conduct by practicing what God has commanded and abstaining from what He has forbidden (Al-Sunay'e, 1414H, p. 149).

It is also important to highlight the comprehensive definition presented by Zidan Abdulbaqi (1981), who viewed religiosity as adherence to a specific religious doctrine, the performance of its obligations, and the practice of its rituals and acts of worship toward the recognized deity of that religion. According to him, this religious commitment manifests itself through the application of religious principles in all types of relationships and interactions that occur within society (Zidan Abdulbaqi, 1981, p. 54).

A. Operational Definition of Religiosity:

It refers to the degree of adherence to Islamic religious principles and the extent to which their rulings are applied. This is expressed by the score obtained by the individual on the *Religiosity Scale* developed by Saleh bin Ibrahim Al-Sunay'e, which was adopted in the present study.

3. Methodology:

This study employed the descriptive method due to its suitability for the current research, as the nature of the topic is the main factor determining the choice of method. The present research seeks to examine whether differences exist in attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the level of religiosity, within a sample of fathers from Kabyle society. Therefore, the most appropriate approach for this type of investigation is the descriptive-analytical method (Turki Rabah, 1984, p. 129).

3.1 Research Sample:

The study sample consisted of a group of fathers belonging to Kabyle society, as fathers in this community occupy a special status conferred upon them by the prevailing patriarchal culture. Previous studies have shown that Kabyle society is inherently patriarchal; therefore, determining the attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females within this specific group holds great significance. Fathers are the ones who decide how their property will be divided—or, more precisely, they possess the authority to manage their assets during their lifetime and to distribute them among their children, either exclusively among sons or among both sons and daughters. They also have the right to designate, by will, up to one-third of the estate to be disposed of after their death.

3.2 Sample Characteristics:

The study sample included 60 fathers from the Kabyle region, selected using the simple random sampling method, which relies on random selection from the original population. The participants belonged to different age groups, ranging from 38 to 75 years old, and had varying educational levels, from primary to university education.

3.3 Research Tools and Instruments:

A. Religiosity Scale:

The study utilized the Religiosity Scale as a tool to measure the level of religiosity among participants. The scale, developed by researcher Saleh bin Ibrahim Al-Sunay'e, consists of sixty statements, each offering three response options. Each response is assigned one, two, or three points, arranged in ascending order for some statements and in descending order for others, to reduce the effect of random responses. The items of the scale cover the following themes: the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, and the branches of faith, including both obligations and prohibitions.

B. Questionnaire on Attitudes Toward the Division of Inheritance Between Males and Females:

This questionnaire was designed by the researcher and consists of 30 items, each with three possible responses. Each response is assigned one, two, or three points, distributed in ascending order for positive statements and in descending order for negative ones.

C. The Psychometric Characteristics of the Research Instruments

The validity of the research instruments was verified by distributing several copies of the *Religiosity Scale* developed by Saleh bin Ibrahim Al-Sunaie, and several copies of the *Questionnaire on Attitudes Toward the Division of Inheritance Between Males and Females* to a group of experts. This aimed to determine the appropriateness of the items to each instrument and to ensure their clarity and linguistic accuracy. The interrater agreement coefficient for each item in the scale and the questionnaire was calculated using the Cooper formula, and the values ranged between 85% and 100%.

Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which reached 0.868 for the *Religiosity Scale* by Saleh bin Ibrahim Al-Sunaie, indicating high reliability. As for the *Questionnaire on Attitudes Toward the Division of Inheritance Between Males and Females*, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reached 0.859, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire.

4. Presentation of the Results

Table (1) illustrates the differences in attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to the religiosity variable:

Variables	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	F Value	SIG Value
Inheritance	Males	60	1.57	0.000	0.988
	Females	59.96	1.57		
Religiosity	Males	114.83	1.36	0.036	0.850
	Females	114.46	1.36		

The results in the table above indicate that the significance level (Sig) for the religiosity variable equals 0.850, while for the inheritance variable it equals 0.988, both exceeding the adopted significance level (0.05). Accordingly, there are no statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to religiosity in the Kabyle region. Thus, the hypothesis suggesting the existence of statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward inheritance distribution between males and females based on religiosity in the Kabyle region was not confirmed.

5. Discussion of the Results

The findings of this research reveal that there are no statistically significant differences in parents' attitudes toward the division of inheritance between males and females according to religiosity in the Kabyle region. This indicates that the religiosity variable does not constitute a factor of variation in the attitudes of the research sample toward inheritance distribution. Although all participants are Muslims with varying degrees of religiosity, it would be expected that those with higher religiosity would adhere more strictly to the teachings of Islam. The religious texts concerning inheritance distribution in Islam are explicit and conclusive. However, the study results show no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inheritance division according to religiosity level.

These results align with the views of Hanoteau and Letourneux, who noted that the Kabyle society adheres more strongly to customary law than to religious texts. They stated that the community in this region has outwardly accepted the religious text granting women the right to inheritance, but the Kabyle mindset resists the idea of women managing land, as they are perceived incapable of exploiting or

defending it. Consequently, the community decided to exclude women from inheriting land (HANOTEAU & LETOURNEUX, *Op.cit.*, p. 282).

Considering the sociology of the Kabyle society, its traditions, and the individual's relationship to land, the exclusion of women from inheritance primarily represents an economic necessity due to the region's high population density and scarcity of arable land. Furthermore, a woman is viewed as an outsider within her husband's community, remaining in the position of a guest. She does not aspire to inherit from ancestors who are not her own. In the absence of a will, inheritance passes to the deceased's closest male relatives (Bousquet).

Preference for sons over daughters is one of the characteristics of traditional societies, where the son is considered the bearer of the family name, ensuring its continuity. He inherits the larger share, transfers it to his descendants, and assumes responsibility for his parents in old age. A popular proverb reflects this notion: "*The son holds the plow and keeps strangers away from the inheritance.*" Among those considered "strangers" whom the son excludes from inheritance are the daughters' husbands and their children, who usually carry different family names and belong to communities other than the original one.

The transformation of the woman's social and cultural status is closely linked to the evolution of her awareness and her ability to reject and resist. However, such transformation remains insufficient without a corresponding change in men's awareness and their liberation from the constraints imposed by traditions and customs, which draw their strength from established social norms.

6. Conclusion

This article explored a subject that continues to provoke considerable debate — the inheritance rights of Kabyle women, as viewed through the lens of Kabyle society, both in practice and under the law. The study sought to shed light on the social structure of the Kabyle community, its customary legal system, and the position of women within that framework. It also traced the historical circumstances and socio-cultural factors that contributed to the dominance of customary rules, which have long governed inheritance and family matters.

The findings revealed that these customary norms, deeply rooted in tradition and collective consciousness, often carry greater authority in practice than religious or statutory laws. This reality reflects the enduring influence of patriarchal values and the social mechanisms that preserve them, particularly in rural and tribal contexts. By revisiting the foundations of these customs and their persistence over time, the study highlights the tension between tradition and modern legal principles, suggesting that any progress in women's inheritance rights must engage both cultural understanding and legal reform.

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