



**Inés Fernández Moral**

**Title: Childcare in Bahrain: The Role of Extended Family and Domestic Workers**

**Abstract:**

This paper explores the role of extended family and domestic workers in childcare among Bahraini families, delving into parental responsibilities, childcare arrangements, and individuals' navigation between family, care, and work in single and dual-earners households. To examine opinions and experiences regarding childcare, semi-structured online interviews were conducted with 28 Bahrainis aged 18 to 66 years old during 2021. This paper aims to improve understanding on this under-investigated subject of study in Bahrain by incorporating alongside those of women, interviews with men, who have often been excluded from studies examining views and experiences of childcare, thereby contributing to the burgeoning work on childcare in the region. The main findings of this research present the maternal grandmother as the most desirable and preferred form of childcare support, making this matrilineal pattern of caregiving the dominant arrangement for childcare. This intergenerational transfer depicts the nuclear family as a no autonomous family entity that often relies on a cooperative network, the extended family, for childcare support. The continuity of kinship care appears to confirm the prevalence of the extended family's caregiving role. The reliance on family-based care contrasts with the deep ambivalence surrounding female foreign domestic workers when it comes to entrusting them with childcare responsibilities. Although domestic workers were commonly viewed as beneficial and helpful in assisting parents with childcare, the widespread employment of foreign nannies was widely questioned due to their potential implications for the upbringing of the children, the quality of parenting, and the parent-child relationship. Participants' reluctance to employ domestic workers for childcare was grounded in the notion that excessive utilisation of nannies may lead to the absence and disengagement of parents from childrearing, a role they seemed unwilling to transfer.

**Bio:**

*Inés Fernández Moral is a researcher specialised in gender and family in the Middle East, with a regional focus on the Arab Gulf. She holds a degree in Communication Studies from San Pablo CEU University (Spain) and a master's degree in politics and international Relations of the Middle East from the University of Exeter (United Kingdom). She worked in the Communications Department of the Bahrain Public Transport Company for three years, until commencing a PhD in Sociology at the University of Exeter, where she submitted her thesis on family change in Bahrain in June 2023.*

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