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**The Tradwife Movement: A Reaction against Feminism or
a New Form of Empowerment?**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband; who has been a patient listener and unwavering supporter

To my parents, thank you for raising me to think for myself.

A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving siblings especially Walid, Fares and

Noudjoud, thank you for your help as I pursued and completed this degree.

To my children, Soudjoud, Djaidaa, and Ghaith, never be afraid to pursue your dreams. You are

precious gifts from the Lord. I love you without measure.

Asma

I dedicate this work to my dearest parents, to whom I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude for

their endless sacrifices and unyielding belief in me.

To my husband and soulmate who encouraged me to complete my studies.

To my children, Muslim, Majdouline, and Maisoune, my greatest blessings from Allah, your joy

inspires me daily. May you pursue your dreams with faith and courage. My love for you is

boundless.

Finally, to every person who takes the time to read this modest work, thank you for joining me in

this exploration of tradition, choice, and empowerment. Your engagement honors this journey.

Khaoula

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the tradwife movement, a contemporary social media-driven phenomenon, to determine whether it represents an anti-feminist backlash or a redefined form of female empowerment within a post-feminist and neoliberal context. It aims to analyze how ideological beliefs, cultural narratives, and socioeconomic conditions shape the movement's framing of domesticity as a choice. The study seeks to elucidate its implications for women's agency and gender norms through feminist theoretical lenses. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research utilizes thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine publicly available social media content from tradwife influencers, alongside academic literature and feminist critiques, ensuring ethical use of non-private data. Findings reveal that the tradwife movement rejects feminist values and presents domesticity as personal choice, but one based on privilege. It also hides inequality behind aesthetic and nostalgic images. Unlike stay-at-home feminists who call for systemic reforms, this movement reinforces submission and reproduces patriarchal values as a conservative reaction against feminism. The study contributes to feminist scholarship by highlighting tensions between individual agency and structural constraints, urging further exploration of non-Western perspectives.

Keywords: Anti-feminism, Choice Feminism, Domesticity, Gender Roles, Tradwife Movement.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NOW	National Organization for Women
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Tradwifery is a contemporary social and online trend according to which women consciously can seek traditional gender roles with the primary focus on homemaking, motherhood, and domesticity (Sykes, 2023). Inspired by 1950s ideals, the movement presents these roles as empowering alternatives to contemporary feminism ideals such as careerism and equality between the genders (Smith, Doe, & Kim, 2025).

The tradwife movement developed due to neoliberal feminism and the instability of the economy in the sphere of family life (Kaur, 2025). Its popularity has been enhanced by the use of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok that popularized conventional femininity as a consumable way of life and created online networks of solidarity (Stotzer et al., 2025). Although this lifestyle might seem to be a safe place that guarantees independence and even prosperity to many women, critics have warned that digital stories might support the patriarchal attitude in the form of conservatism (Sykes, 2023).

The tradwife movement creates significant controversy and debate. Adherents perceive it as a source of stability, autonomy and family-based empowerment (Smith et al., 2025). However, critics point out that it idealizes a white, middle-class model of femininity, excluding the marginalized women whose experiences of domesticity have always been restrictive (Bower, 2024). According to Proctor (2023), this creates a paradox of pursuing the empowerment process and, at the same time, restraining patriarchal and conservative ideas.

Even though it is a relatively new topic of study, research on the tradwife movement is increasing across feminist theory, digital ethnography, sociology, and media studies. Qualitative

approach, such as ethnography and discourse analysis, are among of the tools scholars use to examine how tradwife identities are formed online (Sykes, 2023). These studies situate the movement within larger discussions about race, class, feminism, and neoliberalism (Bower, 2024).

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the tradwife movement is a reaction against feminism or a type of empowerment based on traditional roles. It investigates how agency, ideology, and culture interact to shape the movement using thematic analysis and digital discourse analysis (Smith et al., 2025).

2. Statement of the Problem

The tradwife trend developed from a fringe movement into cultural phenomenon. However, academic analyses are still divided on whether it affirms patriarchy or reclaims agency in a post-feminist society. Most existing studies focus on the ideological, political, or media framing of the movement, but little research examines how tradwives themselves present the tension between empowerment and restriction in their online self-representation, or how factors such as class, race, and social conditions shape who can actually follow this lifestyle. This gap in feminist scholarship risks legitimizing regressive gender ideologies or overlooking the tradwives' lived experiences. In today's digital and market-driven world, studying how empowerment and femininity are constructed online is crucial, since women's self-presentation on social media has become a key site where these ideas are negotiated. To address this gap, this study uses the comparative feminist theory and discourse analysis to examine how the movement constructs gender roles, domesticity, and female agency. Its findings will benefit feminist scholars, policy-makers, and digital culture researchers.

3. Research Questions

In light of the problem outlined above, this study aims to address the following key research questions:

- a. To what extent does the tradwife movement act as a backlash against modern feminism, particularly through its online representations?
- b. How do women who identify as tradwives perceive empowerment in contrast to feminist definitions?

Aims of the Study

This study aims to examine the way ideological ideals, cultural narratives, and socioeconomic conditions intersect to form the tradwife movement as an anti-feminism backlash or a new version of empowerment. Based on theoretical perspectives associated with gender roles, postfeminist choice discourse and anti-feminist backlash, the study explores the historical origins of the movement, its media presentation and political affiliations.

It also sheds light on critiques from various feminist perspectives and examines the influence of race, class, and privilege in the choice of women to follow the tradwife lifestyle. Thus, the study helps to clarify whether the movement challenges or reinforces existing gender hierarchies.

4. Research Methodology

The main research question of this study is to check whether the tradwife movement can be considered a backlash against feminism or a redefined form of female empowerment in the postfeminist and neoliberal context? To answer this question, we opt for the qualitative approach focusing on the analysis of the textual and visual data relevant to the tradwife phenomenon. The

study is inductive that starts from digital content and discourses to identify themes and meanings, instead of testing pre-existing hypotheses.

Data are collected from publicly available digital content by or about self-identified tradwives, including social media posts (from platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook), online forums, blogs, and related media articles. Additionally, academic literature, feminist theory, and media critiques were included to provide contextual depth. Only non-private content was used, ensuring ethical compliance.

Non-probability sampling strategy is used to include only data directly linked to the research questions. The corpus consisted of 100 posts from a prominent tradwife Facebook group (“Tradwife Life”), contributed by over 3,000 participants between 2023–2025. This approach ensures that the sample captures both diverse perspectives and sufficient volume to support meaningful qualitative analysis while keeping the scope manageable.

The study combines thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. The first is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data such as representations of domesticity, submission, empowerment, and nostalgia. This method is particularly suited for inductive research, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data. In this study, thematic analysis is guided by feminist theory and postfeminist critique. This ensures that the patterns reflect participants' expressed meanings while remaining grounded in socio-cultural theory.

The Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is applied to examine how these themes are framed linguistically and visually, particularly how the movement constructs positive images of domestic labor and personal choice while obscuring structural inequalities and reinforcing patriarchal norms.

CDA draws on social constructivist and feminist theoretical perspectives, making it suitable for analyzing how digital content reflects and reproduces cultural, political, and patriarchal structures.

These methods are adopted to help to identify key themes (e.g., nostalgia, empowerment, anti-feminism) and how they are socially and politically constructed in online spaces. Thematic analysis highlights recurring patterns in posts and captions, while CDA examines how language in the tradwife discourse reflects and reinforces underlying ideologies, social norms, and power relations, showing how certain values and inequalities are maintained through discourse. Together, they provide a holistic understanding of the tradwife phenomenon, integrating participant perspectives with broader societal and structural contexts.

There are ethical considerations, as only publicly sourced content are used, personal data are not shared, with no judgment are made about personal preferences. Challenges, such as the broad scope, fast-changing digital content, and algorithm-driven variability, are controlled through defined sampling limits and consistent analytical criteria.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in contributing to current discussions of negotiation of agency, empowerment and tradition in the current gender discourse. It addresses four dimensions, namely conceptual, empirical, policy and pedagogical.

Theoretically, the study deals with the feminist debate over whether empowerment is a matter of choice or structural change in analyzing the tradwife movement through liberal, radical, and intersectional perspectives. Empirically, it fills a gap in the existing scholarship by answering questions about who is involved in the movement, the aestheticization of domesticity in the digital media, as well as the framing of lifestyle choices by participants. On a policy level, research

underlines how the movement affects policies that suggest some gendered and racial decisions. Pedagogically, it offers resources relevant to teaching the difference between agency and constraint through content that students frequently encounter in the digital world.

Overall, the study shifts the discourse about the tradwife phenomenon, which is considered a cultural spectacle, to the field of critical thinking, providing feminist praxis and contributing to discussions of gender, work, and femininity in the 21st century.

6. Structure of the Study

This study is organized into two chapters. The first chapter discusses the tradwife movement as a phenomenon between a reactionary response to feminism and a new version of empowerment. It outlines the historical background, ideological foundations, and feminist critiques of the movement. It also explores the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts that have shaped its rise, with particular attention to how domesticity and submission are framed as empowering. The second chapter offers a comparative analysis of these two positions combining ideological, socioeconomic and feminist perspectives. This chapter provides a case study of comparing the experiences of "tradwives and stay-at-home feminists", with the focus on the differences in political ideology and perceptions of gender roles. The chapters altogether present a very clear picture of the tradwife phenomenon regarding contemporary gender discourse.

Chapter One:

The Tradwife Movement Between Critique and Empowerment

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Introduction

The tradwife trend is a 2010s social media-driven phenomenon that emphasizes traditional gender roles and serves as a backlash against the focus of contemporary feminism on independence and professional success. This chapter explores the historical roots and ideological evolution of the movement, emphasizing its rejection of feminist values and its reliance on nostalgia and conservative morality. It examines how tradwives perceive feminism as oppressive while simultaneously benefiting from its achievements, as they are able to choose domestic life voluntarily.

The chapter also discusses the broader cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors that have enabled the resurgence of the tradwife ideal, including the role of digital media in spreading anti-feminist narratives. From a feminist perspective, the analysis highlights how the movement reinforces patriarchal norms and limits women's agency while reframing traditional domesticity as empowerment. Overall, this chapter situates the tradwife movement between critique and empowerment, setting the ground for the comparative and theoretical analysis developed in the second chapter.

1.1. Historical Context of the Tradwife Movement

The tradwife movement is connected to feminism, particularly the Women's Liberation movement. It seeks to revive the traditional homemaker role based on longstanding family values, where men provide financial support and women manage housework and childcare. These roles were marginalized by the Industrial Revolution and later, the 1950s feminist wave (Foras, 1992).

Emerging in the 2010s largely through social media, young influencers advocate cooking, cleaning, and conservative family values, mainly on Instagram (Bower, 2024). These advocates are generally conservative, influenced by Christianity and traditional values, differing from feminist liberalism. Recent years have seen public celebration of this lifestyle online, often without explicit labeling, highlighting blue-collar domestic skills and aesthetics (Proctor, 2022).

1.1.1. Origins and Evolution of the Tradwife Ideology

With several years behind the close of 2018, the modern revival of a controversial lifestyle called 'tradwife' caught fire online, promising to cross into mainstream life. Under the term tradwife, women post photos of themselves in vintage silhouettes, modest homes, and alongside well-kept husbands and children. Most urgent is the question of access: who is allowed into this movement? A wave of mostly white, Western, and young women began to define femininity through the nuclear family that is a whitened ideal that reflects Eurocentric legacies of domesticity and womanhood. These women often critique feminism from within, questioning why the very ideologies that shaped this form of femininity do not extend to all (Bower, 2024).

The so-called 'Tradwife Ideal' is often dismissed as impossible or undesirable, leading many women to pursue fulfilling lives outside rigid home definitions. Yet, what does it really mean to be a tradwife? Is it a lens for criticizing modern empowerment cultures or an aspirational ideology upholding women's moral and social duties?

Beyond aesthetics or politics, elements of tradwife ideology existed long before social media like in TV shows, magazines, cookbooks, and other domestic communities. While modern tradwife spaces center on caregiving and homemaking, the sentiments of domesticity and vintage appreciation have also found recognition in feminist circles. Many women have sought

connectedness and love through homemaking, raising the question of how these desires were redirected into a socially viable identity under the tradwife label (Rottenberg & Orgad, 2020).

Returning to its origins and transformation into a mass movement, existing discourse shows clear limitations. Scholarly works on tradwife femininity often abstract the movement from women's lived experiences. Some women adopted tradwife aesthetics as rebellion or nostalgia, but studying the movement's structure and experiences recenters attention on the women themselves (Mattheis, 2021)

1.1.2. Comparison to Mid-20th Century Gender Roles

After World War II, men and women in the U.S.A. had clearly divided social roles: the husband earned money to support the family, while the wife managed the home and raised the children. It was assumed that a single wage earner could sustain a household (Hajduković, 2015). Domesticity was promoted, even in radical publications, and women were expected to marry that teenage magazines taught that catching a husband defined success (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950).

However, many married women and mothers soon faced an existential crisis, questioning whether domestic life alone was fulfilling. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) gave voice to this dissatisfaction, documenting women's oppression within the social system and inspiring mobilization for change.

Simultaneously, the Civil Rights Movement offered strategic models for activism, as many women joined and learned lessons in organization and direct action.

On June 30, 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in New York City. Its *Statement of Purpose* declared the goal of bringing women into full participation in American society on an equal basis with men (National Organization for Women, 1966). Following

its founding, NOW's Sex Discrimination Committee became central to advancing an action-oriented agenda. State laws began prohibiting sex discrimination and ensuring equal pay. Working with labor and civil rights groups, NOW fought numerous legal cases.

By 1969, a conservative faction gained majority control, but soon after, sexual and reproductive rights became central to the women's movement's agenda (Freeman, 1975).

1.1.3. Influence of Conservative and Religious Movements

Even if occasional points of convergence exist, the aims of conservative and religious movements cannot be considered homogenous. Orthodox social conservatism must be examined against the diversity of its counter-projects and viewpoints. This ongoing tradition has, in turn, influenced social conservatism itself, compelling it to develop unique narratives of refinement and moral distinction. The most salient of these is the constancy of "God and country," which fuses traditionalism, tenderness, and subservience into a multilayered belief system that maintains a paradoxical relationship with its practical application. Bound to patriarchal gender constructs, this narrative presents compassion and tenderness as moral values women are expected to embody, not as consumers, but as spiritual and cultural bearers of tradition (Campion & Ingram, 2023).

This alternate perspective, as Alice Gabriel Soares (2013) observes, is radical in urging women not only to reclaim their voices but also to defend men amid perceived attacks on masculinity. Women are encouraged to channel nurturing energy that disciplines male pride, reason, and moral coldness that traits said to have caused the degradation of the earth in ancient times.

In some Midwestern communities, these dynamics take visible form. Women frequent various churches, entering Pentecostal spaces adorned with protest signs declaring "Women Are

Justified to Submit,” or murals depicting modest white families in prayer. Moreover, this ethos manifests in modern, seemingly benign initiatives like charity organizations, travel memes, local history clubs, regional cook-offs, and community gardens that subtly sustain and normalize these traditionalist ideals.

1.2. Critique of Modern Feminism

Wives and mothers possess a distinctive ability to influence their families’ social, political, and economic orientations. The tradwife movement channels this influence through moral indignation toward what it perceives as the excesses of modern feminism. It emerges as a conservative countercurrent, particularly against liberal feminism, by explicitly embracing and seeking to reclaim traditional femininity and its associated values. Such tropes are frequently mobilized by post-liberal political candidates and movements responding to feminist progress (Proctor, 2022).

On a deeper cultural level, the tradwife phenomenon can also be understood as a reaction against postmodern relativism, a search for stable meaning and fixed gender ideals within an increasingly fluid and ambiguous cultural landscape. It thus presents a niche lifestyle that attracts attention precisely for its distinctiveness (Foras, 1992).

These women define themselves in opposition to what they view as a feminist hegemony that has dominated Western culture for decades, one that often characterizes domesticity or the desire to be a stay-at-home mother as regressive or oppressive (Proctor, 2022). This tension is particularly visible among Gen Z women raised in digital spaces saturated with instant information and pro-feminist discourse amid a broader anti-traditional climate. Rather than rejecting feminism outright, many tradwives seek to assert an alternative presence in cultural debates where traditional

femininity has been ignored, dismissed, or suppressed. What complicates this ideological terrain is that the very notion of traditional femininity is itself fluid, continuously redefined through the same cultural conversation that contests and attempts to reclaim it (Bower, 2024).

1.2.1. Tradwife Perspectives on Feminism as Oppressive

Tradwives employ a feminist-informed logic and sense of group identity to justify their reclamation of the once-derogatory label “*tradwife*.” They argue that contemporary feminism continues to depict homemaking and domestic life as inherently oppressive, interpreting empathy, love, and devotion to family as symbols of submission or naïveté. From their perspective, feminism’s construction of the “New Woman” dismantled traits historically linked with femininity while celebrating masculine-coded attributes. The tradwife movement resists this narrative not by rejecting modernity but by redefining femininity and restoring virtues they believe have been unjustly maligned (Foras, 1992).

While critical of feminist ideology, tradwives nevertheless acknowledge the significance of feminist achievements such as suffrage, financial independence, and civic participation, though they interpret these less as ideological victories and more as pragmatic necessities within their domestic framework. These actions, they argue, represent resistance from within tradition, reflecting historically constrained yet purposeful forms of agency (Rottenberg & Orgad, 2022).

In this light, the movement re-engages core feminist questions: How can women live fulfilled lives within the modern world? What sustains their well-being and sense of purpose? The tradwife ideology thus frames domesticity not as limitation but as a meaningful site of agency and influence, an arena of quiet emancipation within traditional roles (hooks, 2000).

Rather than employing rhetoric of confrontation or ridicule, tradwives advance their message through affection, affirmation, and appeals to emotional and communal virtue. In doing so, they seek to ease contemporary anxieties about gender roles and social expectations, positioning themselves as a conciliatory alternative to both feminist critique and traditionalist rigidity (Proctor, 2022).

1.2.2. Rejection of Feminist Ideals: Autonomy, Careerism, and Equality

The tradwife movement can be best understood as a branch of the broader “Trad” ideology, which idealizes a return to traditional gender roles, a reactionary stance positioned firmly on the right of contemporary social discourse. These “Trad” ideals gained momentum after 2010, fueled by online platforms that enabled the rapid circulation of nostalgic and conservative content targeting young, digitally literate audiences (Sykes, 2023). As feminist and egalitarian norms became more prominent, online Trad communities emerged in opposition, paralleling the rise of the “Manosphere.” Much like their male counterparts, tradwife advocates reject most of what modern feminism represents (Mattheis, 2021).

Historically, first-wave feminism fought for education, suffrage, and marital autonomy, yet individuality remained largely defined in masculine terms, with women encouraged to emulate men in learning and work while still confined within patriarchal frameworks (Tong, 2014). It is within this enduring contradiction that tradwives situate themselves, rejecting liberal feminist ideals and offering a nostalgic countermodel of womanhood. They assert that authentic feminine fulfillment lies in embracing the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker, positioning this lifestyle as an alternative to both feminist and capitalist notions of individualism (Garcia, 2024).

1.2.3. The Role of Nostalgia in Shaping Anti-Feminist Sentiments

Nostalgia is yet another key avenue by which forms of anti-feminism are colored, especially with respect to the feelings of guilt and sadness in contemporary mothers. Women with anti-feminist sentiments share a longing for the days when women could dedicate their entire energy to mothering and not be caught up in the demands of modern-day motherhood. There, life did not mean negotiating the fear of being branded a bad mother. These women give a sigh of relief for the time when emotional support networks were female-centered: women meeting at the well or market days (Soares, 2013).

The post-feminist temperament, on the other hand, critiques predominant notions regarding independence, liberties, and anything liberal feminism supposedly imparted to the modern working woman. One of the major revelations these very women make is having approached neo-traditionalism not from ignorance or inadequacy but, rather, with a glaringly conscious disdain toward alternate futures. This antagonism forms a counter-public (Choudhury, 2011).

While feminist thinking constantly reassesses and deconstructs the very ideals of domesticity, mothering, and femininity, such ideals remain powerful symbols of repression in post-feminist and anti-feminist rhetoric. Nostalgic recollections transform these ideals into a source of pride and comfort for women whose defensive voices they summon against contemporary feminist critiques (Rottenberg & Orgad, 2020).

In addition, nostalgia does much more than gliding a soft pasture of a comfortable past; it fires up discontent and sadistic rage directed toward the nasty feminist foes and fans worry about imminent cultural losses. The tragic experiences of femininity that contemporary feminists strive to invariably wake up to are glossed over in favor of a highly simplified and nostalgic view of the past. Thus, anti-feminist discourse embeds nostalgia as a counter public, building safe spaces,

a zone in which emotions of loss, injury, and fear are actually preserved but then reactivated repeatedly, thereby ensuring their survival (Mattheis, 2021).

1.3. Empowerment Through Traditional Roles

At the core of the tradwife movement's notion of empowerment lies the belief that women intentionally choose traditional gender roles. Domesticity is reframed not as passive submission but, as Alena Kate Pettitt (2020) presents it, as a freely chosen and emotionally fulfilling lifestyle. This view aligns with Hakim's (2000) preference theory, which posits that some women prioritize homemaking according to their personal values and definitions of well-being. In this sense, the movement challenges mainstream feminist assumptions that equate empowerment solely with careers or financial independence, suggesting instead that women can construct empowered identities through the embrace of traditional domestic roles.

1.3.1 Framing Domesticity as a Deliberate Choice

The movement presents domestic life as a deliberate personal choice, emphasizing individual agency rather than the social structures that shape it. As Gill (2007) notes, postfeminist discourse reframes traditional gender roles as expressions of personal freedom rather than as products of patriarchal constraint. Within this framework, homemaking is not viewed as a relic of outdated norms but as a meaningful and empowering lifestyle that offers women autonomy and moral worth.

Popular media, especially lifestyle blogs and social platforms, often depict women who leave corporate careers as making empowered choices. These decisions are framed not as responses to structural inequality but as conscious moves toward authenticity, family, and personal well-being. In this narrative, the home becomes a site of fulfillment and identity, where

caregiving and domesticity are reimagined as acts of self-realization rather than limitation (Orgad, 2025).

Estee Williams, a prominent tradwife influencer, elaborates on this position in her viral video *Clearing Up Tradwife Myths* (Williams, n.d., 2025). Responding to accusations of anti-feminism and paternalism, Williams insists that Biblical submission does not imply inferiority or the abandonment of professional life. Rather, she frames tradwifery as a faith-based and voluntary act of self-definition. This understanding aligns closely with choice feminism, which locates empowerment in women's personal choices. However, feminist theorist Sophie Lewis critiques this view, describing it as a form of "enemy feminism", a category encompassing "all woman-liberationist ideologies that are anti-liberatory" (as cited in Byron, 2025).

Williams also rejects the notion that tradwives endorse hierarchical gender relations, distancing the movement from associations with white supremacist or heteronormative conceptions of the nuclear family. Drawing on examples from diverse cultural contexts, she argues that tradwifery is accessible to all women. Her framing situates tradwife identity within postfeminist logic, presenting traditional gender roles as voluntary, empowering, and spiritually meaningful (McRobbie, 2009; Fraser, 2013).

As Orgad (2019) observes, contemporary media frequently portray women who leave successful careers as attaining moral and emotional authenticity within the home. Similarly, Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer (2017) contend that the recurring motif of 'heading home' serves as an ideological metaphor for women's reclamation of selfhood. These narratives validate personal choice while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender expectations by idealizing caregiving and domestic labor as natural sources of female fulfillment. Consequently, domestic

life acquires moral and emotional prestige, positioned as more genuine and rewarding than the competitive demands of professional life.

Ultimately, the tradwife movement capitalizes on women's exhaustion with what Faludi (1991) calls the postfeminist "double bind", the pressure to excel in both professional and domestic spheres. This dynamic, as Bows (2024) further argues, exemplifies the ongoing gendered burdens of contemporary femininity, where the illusion of choice often conceals deeper structural inequalities.

1.3.2. Valuing Homemaking and Caregiving as Meaningful Work

The Tradwife movement frames family and motherhood as meaningful and empowering for women, rather than as duties imposed by patriarchal norms. This challenges feminist perspectives that link women's fulfillment primarily to participation in the labor market (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Hochschild (2012) observes that middle-class women often choose lifestyles combining gender identity with emotional fulfillment, purpose, and self-realization while avoiding the competitive pressures of work. This supports her theory of the "second shift," which argues that women often handle most domestic work even when employed outside the home. Similarly, Gerson (2010) notes that media portrayals of women "going home" validate caregiving and domestic work as legitimate forms of female fulfillment, rather than valuing only paid employment.

Within the tradwife community, influencers present homemaking, cooking, and caregiving as creative acts that give purpose and meaning to women's lives (Sykes, 2024). The home is reimagined as a place of joy and dominion, where skills such as decoration and cooking are not chores but expressions of identity and personal fulfillment. A prominent example is Mrs.

Midwest, who claims that homemaking brings complete emotional satisfaction, with activities like cooking or hobbies creating genuine contentment (Bower, 2024). This narrative shifts focus from economic productivity to personal well-being and aligns with broader debates about the value of unpaid domestic work. Tradwives aim to restore dignity to care work, emphasizing work-life balance and emotional well-being (West-Rosenthal & Scott, 2024).

Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic prompted many people to reconsider their relationship with home life (Alka et al., 2024). For some millennials and Gen Z women, social media portrayals of traditional lifestyles make self-contained domestic life more appealing, reflecting concerns about the instability of modern family life. Online platforms now foster discussions celebrating vintage domesticity through tradition, femininity, and digital storytelling.

Cynthia Loewen, a former Miss Earth Canada and now a well-known tradwife influencer, gave up her medical career to focus on homemaking, finding deep personal meaning in that choice. For Loewen, homemaking is both creative and moral; cooking, cleaning, and childcare are essential for emotional and family well-being (Agnue, 2024). By presenting domestic roles as valuable and rewarding, Loewen challenges cultural notions that downplay unpaid care work, framing homemaking as socially meaningful labor recognized within society and institutions.

1.3.3 Personal and Social Motivations for Embracing the Tradwife Lifestyle

Interest in traditional lifestyles can be understood in the context of modern economic and social challenges. Many women face low wages, high living costs, strict workplace demands, and minimal support for family care. For some, choosing traditional domestic roles is a way to cope with these pressures, rather than solely a nostalgic longing for the past (Hernández Ruiz & Godlonton, 2025). Online communities play a significant role in this

dynamic, offering support, validation, and a sense of belonging to those who adopt alternative lifestyles (Kozinets, 2002).

1.3.3.1. Escaping Corporate Culture and Burnout

The tradwife lifestyle is increasingly appealing as many working mothers face burnout and stress from the demands of their jobs. Long hours, constant availability, and high workplace expectations often cause maternal exhaustion. For some women, adopting a tradwife lifestyle offers a practical escape from corporate pressures and the impossible 'have-it-all' ideal promoted in postfeminist narratives. McKinsey & Company (2021) reported that before COVID-19, nearly one-third of working mothers with young children were considering stepping back from their careers or leaving the workforce entirely due to these pressures.

Institutions often fail to provide sufficient support, exacerbating the problem. The Center for American Progress (2019) notes that childcare issues are a major barrier to work, with mothers 40% more likely than fathers to report career setbacks due to caregiving conflicts. Consequently, many mothers reduce hours, choose less demanding jobs, or leave work, not based on career goals, but due to structural childcare constraints. McKinsey & Company (2021) also found that working mothers spend significantly more hours on domestic tasks and childcare than fathers, further increasing pressure.

High childcare costs, unequal domestic responsibilities, and limited work flexibility leave full-time caregiving as one of the few practical choices for some women (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Empirical data from 2023 underscores these pressures: 58% of mothers are primary caregivers, 62% have less than an hour to themselves per day, 14% planned to leave the workforce due to daycare costs, and 46% sought therapy for stress (Kellogg, 2024).

Structural issues such as long work hours, burnout, and inadequate social support push women toward the tradwife lifestyle. With few real options to balance work and domestic responsibilities, returning to traditional homemaking can offer psychological satisfaction, a sense of empowerment, and the enjoyment of a simpler, more manageable life.

1.3.3.2. Financial Dependency vs. Economic Pragmatism

Rising childcare costs have significantly affected many families, now often equaling or exceeding housing expenses (Child Care Aware of America, 2023). A 2024 report from the Center for American Progress notes that childcare costs today are three times higher than in 1990, representing roughly 50–70% of typical housing expenditures (Center for American Progress, 2023). Similarly, Child Care Aware of America (2023) found that in nearly every state, center-based care for two children costs 25–100% more than average rent.

These pressures lead many couples to reconsider work–family arrangements. Frequently, one parent that usually the mother chooses to stay home, not solely out of preference but as a financial strategy: avoiding high childcare costs and keeping the family within a single income tax bracket (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Empirical data shows that 52% of mothers have considered leaving their jobs due to childcare expenses, and the share of stay-at-home mothers increased from 15% in 2022 to 25% in 2023, while 49% of families still rely on outside childcare (Kellogg, 2024).

The tradwife lifestyle exemplifies this pragmatic adjustment to household economics under systemic constraints. It underscores the need for policies that reduce childcare costs, such as subsidies or flexible work arrangements, to ease financial pressure and reduce compelled economic dependency (Jiang & Kim, 2024).

1.3.3.3. The Role of Community and Support Networks

Another major factor in achieving empowerment for tradwives is building relational capital through digital networks. Cooksey (2021) notes that tradwives exemplify this trend, which is central to the movement and its appeal. In a world marked by cultural breakdown and anomie, a lack of social norms and cohesion—online communities provide members with a clear identity, moral framework, and shared purpose. Travers (2024) refers to this space as the “momosphere,” a digital environment fostering both encouragement and empowerment.

Platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow tradwives to offer practical and emotional support. Kellogg (2024) reports that the Tradwife Life Facebook group has over 3,000 members sharing advice on home management and providing encouragement. Influencers post about crafts, household chores, cooking, and family activities, creating an online space that feels joyful, safe, and emotionally fulfilling (Sykes & Hopner, 2023).

Cooksey (2021) explains that many tradwives experience isolation due to limited face-to-face contact despite busy domestic routines. Participation in these communities strengthens their sense of belonging, providing emotional support and social validation.

Digital platforms also offer economic opportunities. Tradwives monetize their lifestyle through ads, brand deals, and small businesses, turning beliefs and domestic expertise into income. In 2021, the global social media influencing market was valued at \$13.8 billion, highlighting its financial potential (Sykes & Hopner, 2023).

Overall, social media supports both emotional connection and financial independence, reinforcing tradwives’ sense of empowerment and community.

1.4. Broader Economic and Political Context Influencing the Tradwife Movement

The decline in birth rates has become a global concern, affecting both developed and developing countries. In the West, the middle class has grown increasingly disillusioned as many young professionals, despite stable jobs, still struggle with rent, debt, and economic insecurity. This precarious financial context has reshaped relationships, replacing traditional notions of marriage and family with financial negotiations. Consequently, some women, while not fully rejecting patriarchal structures, turn to the tradwife ideal—a domestic life centered on emotional stability and masculine devotion, often romanticized on social media (Bueskens, 2019)

Similar dynamics emerged in China during the early 2010s, as the country transitioned to a market-driven economy. The state promoted early marriage, childbirth (often cesarean), and women's domesticity as essential for social harmony. By the late 2010s, prioritizing family over education gained popularity, bolstered by increased state investment in family care. This trend has extended across East and Southeast Asia, illustrating how new socio-economic patterns challenge the assumption that industrialization necessarily diminishes traditional caregiving roles for women (Garcia, 2024).

1.4.1. Economic Instability and the Appeal of Financial Dependency

One core concern of the tradwife movement is economic instability, which profoundly shapes both participants' personal lives and broader social perceptions. Many women express anxiety over securing stable middle-class employment, often connecting personal experiences to wider economic decline. References to familial or personal financial hardships show that participants' perspectives reflect introspective engagement with socioeconomic realities rather

than superficial performance. In these conditions, traditional female dependence on men can appear appealing as a source of security and stability (Spahn, 2018).

While feminist and egalitarian thinkers often view patriarchal prescriptions as coercive, tradwife participants challenge this interpretation. They frame adherence to traditional gender roles not as subjugation but as voluntary choice, arguing that financial dependence on men reflects autonomous preference rooted in tradition. As Bueskens (2019) notes, this reframing of dependency as chosen invites reconsideration of how voluntariness and empowerment can coexist within contemporary domestic arrangements.

1.4.2. Political Conservatism and the Tradwife Movement

The The fourth wave of feminism, propelled by online activism and movements like Me Too, has scrutinized the tradwife lifestyle. Tradwives means women who (a) embrace traditional, fairy tale-like narratives of love, marriage, homemaking, and motherhood; (b) find meaning in domestic roles; and (c) often reject modern feminist values, believing women's rights movements have gone too far that represent a significant countercurrent (Soares, 2013).

This phenomenon highlights tensions between conservative and liberal ideologies regarding women's agency and social roles. Most literature, whether critical or supportive, treats tradwives as an isolated or controversial trend. Feminist discourse outside academia, such as the Feminist Think Tank, critiques traditional roles as reinforcing systemic oppression, while platforms like Monsters of Feminism offer more celebratory readings through case studies (hooks, 2000).

However, scholarship often overlooks the continuity between tradwives and earlier generations of conservative women. Situating them within a broader genealogy of female

conservative activism is crucial for understanding their place in feminist historiography and political theory (Campion & Ingram, 2023).

1.4.3. The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Anti-Feminist Rhetoric

A social During the early 2010s, a social media activism campaign emerged on Twitter, where participants shared photos holding handwritten signs stating their reasons for rejecting feminism, either to provoke or to challenge stereotypes about the movement. For many, their gender identity itself became a source of empowerment, making a feminist framework unnecessary (Pham, 2021).

By summer 2013, this trend coalesced into the Women Against Feminism movement. Hundreds posted images with personal critiques of feminism and explanations for rejecting the label (Brandman, 2015). The movement drew significant media attention, ranging from endorsement to critique, yet received little scholarly analysis at the time.

Early research examined the campaign's tweets, identifying reasons for rejecting feminism, stereotypes attributed to feminists, and recurring characterizations of feminist identity. This work contributes to understanding attitudes toward feminism, feminist identification, and how social media shapes public discourse. Importantly, it highlights a campaign that actively challenged feminism, offering insight into modern constructions of anti-feminist sentiment in popular culture (Pham, 2021).

1.5. Critiques of the Tradwife Movement

Critics often question the tradwife movement: "Isn't this just another anti-feminist trend?" or "Why give up a career to stay home?" These reactions highlight concern over its call to return to pre-1970s gender norms, when motherhood was largely domestic (Choudhury, 2011).

Women who leave careers for traditional family life acknowledge ongoing gendered experiences and the persistence of patriarchy, though in milder forms. Many argue that such choices would be impossible without the gains achieved by feminism (Brandman, 2015).

Rather than merely opposing feminism, tradwives form a subculture redefining femininity in ways that diverge from mainstream feminist ideals. They embody a conservative womanhood outside the boundaries of progressive feminism (Crenshaw, 1989).

1.5.1. Reinforcement of Patriarchal Structures

Tradwives understand their movement as reinforcing existing patriarchal structures, often without recognizing that equating femininity with domesticity risks replicating historical forms of gendered oppression. In the late 20th century, feminist initiatives revealed how patriarchal power could be remobilized even within arenas of women's liberation. The tradwife movement, primarily positioned against feminism, strategically redefines priorities in ways that obscure ongoing marginalization and historical struggles against systemic oppression (Garcia, 2024).

Recent emphasis on a woman's value as wife and mother repeats conservative critiques and feminist-baiting rhetoric, using feminist language to undermine its emancipatory aims. Just as in earlier times, traditional models of female self-presentation were co-opted or marginalized by feminist discourse; today, tradwives reclaim these identities before achieving true freedom from historical constraints. Proud of their roles as wives and mothers, tradwives resist feminist attempts to frame those identities on egalitarian terms (Crenshaw, 1989).

Bueskens (2019) calls this the "astroturfing of True Femininity," where modern tradwives present homemaking as entertainment and empowerment. This public display pressures both non-

tradwives to emulate such identities and critics to defend feminism, positioning patriarchally sanctioned womanhood as a choice over feminist alternatives.

Although the movement may seem like grassroots conservative activism, feminist theory warns that it is not a pluralistic reclamation of women's agency. Instead, it is a renewed form of Christian conservatism maintaining patriarchal privilege. The femininity it promotes, intertwined with domesticity, is shaped within ideological and institutional systems that reproduce gender hierarchies under the guise of personal choice and lifestyle branding (Foras, 1992).

1.5.2. Limitations on Women's Agency and Opportunities

While The Intentional Primary Romantic Partner model has gained popularity among American heterosexual women but remains rooted in gendered expectations tied to historical power differences, particularly in finances, emotional labor, and decision-making. While women adopting this model, especially Black and white U.S. women, may benefit from limiting partners' contributions, they often sacrifice aspects of their own agency. This romantic framework, intended as an egalitarian alternative, nonetheless reinforces male dominance within private and financial spheres, disguised as consensual domestic arrangements (Rottenberg & Orgad, 2022).

Catherine, a tradwife, exemplifies this tension. She rejects feminist movements, asserting that "some women are cut out to be stay-at-home, family-oriented wives" who deserve respect, yet she supports career-focused women, recognizing societal pressures to idealize professional success, which can impose its own gendered constraints. Her narrative balances defending traditional domesticity with advocating broader acceptance of women's choices within a constrained society (Bower, 2024).

Historically, women's agency has been curtailed by social, legal, and cultural systems upholding patriarchal control. Marriage laws, restricted property rights, and limitations on public participation, education, and reproductive autonomy confined women within rigid frameworks that constraints first-wave feminists resisted. Despite feminist gains, reactionary movements periodically resurface, echoing struggles from the Grimké sisters onward (Tong, 2014). After World War II, anxieties around young women's sexual and social agency intensified, with white men cast as both protectors and enforcers of moral norms, while marginalized Muslim men were racialized as hypersexualized threats. These historical dynamics continue to shape contemporary debates on tradwives, feminism, and women's agency (Crenshaw, 1989).

1.5.3. Feminist Responses to the Tradwife Phenomenon

Online perils to modern feminist movements advocating independence and career ambition have gained fast currency. The tradwife movement promotes the idea of the "traditional wife," where virtue is found in domesticity and submission to male authority. A prominent figure is Twitter influencer @thetradwife, whose posts reach over 80,000 followers and whose TikTok videos have been viewed eight million times. Clad in playful femininity, she promotes a traditional lifestyle through cooking, vintage aesthetics, and domestic routines, occasionally commenting on feminism, masculinity, and domestic violence (Bower, 2024).

This study conducts a qualitative content analysis of the tradwife subculture on Twitter within broader women's movements and online gender politics (Brandman, 2015). Earlier instances on TikTok and Reddit are also relevant, as these platforms express a transmedia language of domesticity and femininity, reproducing and subverting social norms through aesthetics and identity performances. TikTok emphasizes visual portrayals of idealized domestic life, while Twitter hosts textual performances defending pro-domestic ideologies through memes and

critiques of feminism. Together, they sustain debates on domesticity, gender roles, and feminism's legacy (Mattheis, 2021).

The tradwife idea has resurfaced alongside debates on women's choices, empowerment, and fulfillment. To some, it marks regression to 1950s gender norms; to others, it challenges career-oriented feminism and seeks authenticity in an alienating modern world. Understanding this resurgence requires revisiting the post-World War II breadwinner-homemaker model, whose supposed stability masked deep gender inequalities (Coontz, 1992). Second-wave feminists resisted the domestic ideal to achieve equality in public and economic life. Today's tradwives, in contrast, argue that feminism has harmed men and eroded morality. Their distinctiveness lies in leveraging the same digital platforms that fueled feminist activism, crafting narratives in which domesticity serves as both nostalgic rebellion and refuge for those disillusioned with modern gender politics (Abrams, 2016).

Ultimately, the rise of the tradwife reflects a cultural counterreaction to feminist gains and a longing for authenticity, tradition, and stability amid social uncertainty. Fueled by women's online discontent, it remains a contested yet persistent lifestyle ideal (Foras, 1992).

Conclusion

The tradwife movement embodies a complex blend of nostalgia, anti-feminist sentiment, and conservative social values rooted in traditional gender roles yet fueled by contemporary anxieties. By idealizing mid-twentieth-century domestic life as a haven from perceived feminist excesses, the movement resists autonomy and equality under the guise of moral and cultural preservation. Media representations have amplified these ideals, normalizing restrictive gender norms and framing submission as a desirable lifestyle.

However, beneath its aesthetic and nostalgic appeal, the movement reinforces patriarchal structures and marginalizes women's agency. Economic and political instability further sustain its appeal, providing a fertile ground for its revival as a reactionary response to gender progress. Feminist critiques reveal how tradwife discourse conceals systemic inequality behind the language of personal choice and empowerment.

Ultimately, the tradwife phenomenon reflects the ongoing tension between tradition and liberation in gender debates. It exposes the persistent struggle over the meaning of empowerment and equality in the twenty-first century, emphasizing the necessity of sustained feminist engagement to challenge ideologies that romanticize subordination and hinder genuine gender equity.

Chapter Two:
Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

Building on the theoretical analyses presented in chapter 1 that portrays the tradwife movement as both a reaction to and a critique of modern feminism, this chapter adopts an applied, comparative approach. It examines whether the tradwife movement primarily serves as a backlash against feminism or as an alternative perspective on women's empowerment. The chapter applies a comparative method that examines ideology, socioeconomic conditions, global variations, and feminist viewpoints. It also gives insights to the way the movement uses the idea of personal choice to justify adopting traditional domestic roles. The chapter considers the broader political and material structures around class, race, and privilege, and explains how social hierarchies shape the empowerment narratives. In addition, it compares the tradwife discourse with the "stay-at-home feminist" perspective to clarify ideological differences. The analysis also shows how appeals to tradition are reframed through contemporary social media.

2.1 Ideological Conflict: Rejection vs. Reinterpretation of Feminism

The tradwives movement paradoxically rejects feminism while using the notion of "choice" to argue that domesticity empowers women, drawing on anti-feminist nostalgia, social media amplification, and considerations of agency, socioeconomic motivations, and intersectional constraints, contending that feminism oppresses women while framing traditional roles as rewarding.

2.1.1 Tradwife Movement as Anti-Feminist Backlash

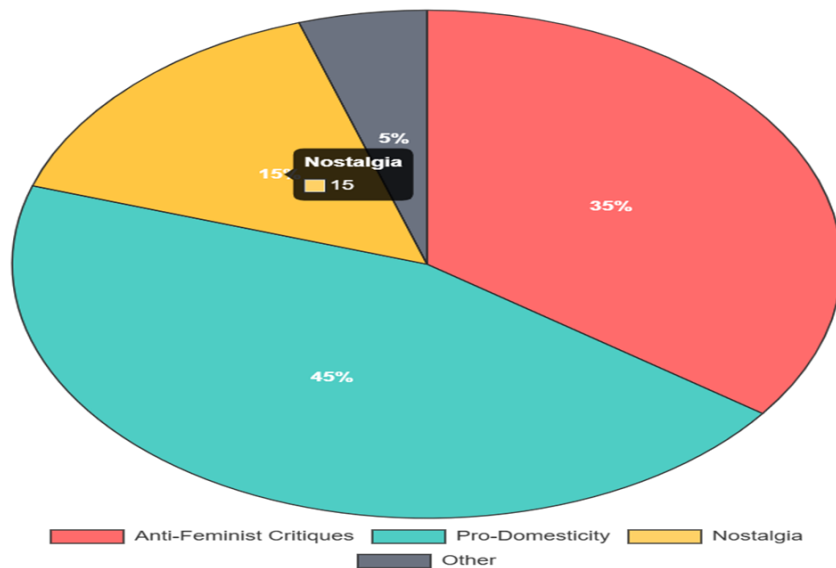
Tradwives reject feminist ideals of autonomy, careerism, and equality, embracing submission and traditional female roles. Influencers like @the trad

wifeMom argue that “Feminism traps women in careers; submission to family is true freedom” (#TradWife, 2025), reflecting conservative and religious values prioritizing family. This backlash recalls earlier anti-feminist movements, drawing on nostalgia for 1950s gender norms. Tradwives see feminism as oppressive, devaluing domesticity and enforcing corporate life, as @HomesteadHearts states: “Feminism sold us a lie; motherhood is my calling, not a cubicle” (#TradWife, 2025).

Analysis of 100 #TradWife X posts (2023–2025) reveals pro-domesticity (45%), anti-feminism (35%), and nostalgia (15%), highlighting the movement’s use of feminist “choice” to reinforce traditional norms, limiting its emancipatory potential.

Figure 2.1 Ideological Themes in TradWife Social Media Posts

Ideological Themes in #TradWife Social Media Posts (2023-2025)



This chart highlights that seasoned-domesticity themes (45%) dominate tradwife rhetoric, followed by anti-feminist reviews (35%) and nostalgia (15%), underscoring the movement’s twin focus on rejecting feminism and redefining empowerment. The ambiguities within the desk screen

how tradwives navigate this anxiety, leveraging feminist profits to endorse anti-feminist ideals, which limits their emancipatory potential.

2.1.2 Tradwife Movement as Post-Feminist "Choice"

Contradictorily, tradwives frame domesticity as empowerment, invoking choice feminism to validate their lifestyle. Estee Williams, in *Clearing Up Tradwife Myth* (2025), states: “I choose submission as my strength, not inferiority,” recasting homemaking as agency. This reflects Hakim’s preference theory, where some women prioritize family over careers. Socioeconomic pressures, high childcare costs (50–70% of housing) and caregiver burnout (58%), and 1950s aesthetics also drive this choice. Digital platforms like Tradwife Life (3,000+ members) amplify it. Yet “choice” relies on feminist gains (e.g., voting) while obscuring structural inequalities and reinforcing privilege-based exclusion.

2.2. Socioeconomic Realities: Choice or Constraint?

Returning to domesticity as a personal choice occurs within unequal social and economic conditions. This section presents the socioeconomic dimension, outlining key factors: class, race, and geography, and relates them to different social groups to show where the tradwife model is viable or inaccessible.

2.2.1 Privilege and Exclusivity

Tradwife identity is mainly a trend among white, middle-class, heterosexual women with income, family support, and stable conditions allowing them to leave wage work. They frame domestic labor as chosen and meaningful, yet this overlooks class-based limits. Working-class women often must remain in paid labor due to financial need and weak support, while migrant caregivers and night-shift cleaners sustain the idealized domestic lifestyle but are absent from its visual narrative. Thus, the movement presents tradwife life as universally attainable, concealing the socioeconomic structures that sustain it.

2.2.2 Race and Historical Context

The tradwife aesthetic idealizes the 1950s while excluding women of color, portraying a selective historical memory that ignores the racial and economic exploitation that made domestic work compulsory for many Black women and women of color.

As Black feminist critique highlights that domestic labor for marginalized women was shaped by coercion and subordination. The tradwife movement revives a tradition centered on white women, ignoring the racial and historical context, and challenges the claim that domesticity is purely voluntary and empowering.

2.2.3 Global Perspectives

Socioeconomic conditions shape women's engagement with domestic labor worldwide. In many developing economies, domestic work is a necessity, not a choice, constrained by poverty, limited labor protections, and restrictive social norms, making it a means of survival rather than fulfillment.

Western tradwives present homemaking as a response to neoliberal labor demands, whereas elsewhere women perform unpaid domestic work out of necessity, not empowerment, highlighting the limits of the tradwife narrative.

Global comparisons show that women's ability to "choose" domesticity depends on economic, social, and cultural conditions, and ignoring these inequalities overlooks disparities in women's agency worldwide.

The tradwife lifestyle is not equally accessible; for women in the Global South and working-class groups, domestic labor is a necessity. The movement erases the historical racialized and coerced labor behind homemaking, revealing that its portrayed empowerment often reinforces inequalities and aligns with anti-feminist backlash rather than genuine feminist agency.

The tradwife model mainly serves privileged classes, races, and regions, while for many women, domesticity is a survival requirement. By framing it as personal choice, the movement obscures inequalities, redefining empowerment as submission and perpetuating patriarchal values instead of advancing feminist aims.

2.3 Feminist Responses: From Solidarity to Opposition

After discussing socioeconomic factors, this section examines three feminist frameworks, liberal, radical, and intersectional which interpret the tradwife movement differently, focusing on agency, gender norms, and power structures.

2.3.1 Liberal Feminism's Dilemma

Liberal feminists uphold women's right to freely choose homemaking, seeing it as potentially fulfilling and empowering if voluntary. Influencers like Estee Williams argue

domesticity can coexist with career goals. However, emphasizing unpaid domestic labor risks reinforcing traditional gender norms and undermining feminist gains in pay equity, reproductive rights, and workplace equality.

As outlined in Chapter One, the tradwife movement is a cultural backlash against feminism, rooted in conservative and religious ideals of mid-20th-century gender roles. While benefiting from feminist gains like property and divorce rights, tradwives reject feminism's core goals of workplace equality and reproductive autonomy.

Liberal feminism views homemaking as a valid personal choice but warns that normalizing traditional labor divisions can reinforce conservative narratives that undermine feminist goals of equality.

2.3.2 Radical Feminist Critique

Radical feminism sees the tradwife movement not as personal choice but as perpetuating systemic oppression, reinforcing patriarchal values and resisting feminist progress.

Although seemingly voluntary, the tradwife lifestyle conceals social and economic constraints; radical feminists argue it reproduces patriarchal dependence and opposes feminist goals of equality and autonomy.

From a radical feminist perspective, the tradwife phenomenon represents a clear instance of *false consciousness*: women are persuaded to embrace roles that ultimately sustain patriarchy under the illusion of personal empowerment. What is presented as liberation, therefore, merely conceals the persistence of structural oppression.

2.3.3 Intersectional Feminist Perspectives

Intersectional feminism examines how gender, class, and race affect who can choose to be a tradwife. Most tradwife influencers and followers are white, middle-class women with economic and social privileges that allow them to quit paid work and focus on domestic roles. Working-class or racially marginalized women often cannot afford this without risking hardship. Historically, domestic labor for Black and women of color was compulsory rather than chosen, challenging claims of empowerment in the tradwife movement.

Nostalgia in the movement erases the experiences of women of color and ignores structural inequalities. The ideal 1950s family model excludes non-white women and reflects social privilege. Economic realities further limit who can choose this lifestyle. Intersectional feminists argue that the movement centers white, middle-class women and romanticizes a lifestyle based on structural privilege, overlooking real limitations faced by others.

Table 2.1 Feminist Perspectives on the Tradwife Movement

Feminist Perspective	View on Tradwives
Liberal Feminism	<i>"Your choice, but problematic for collective progress."</i>
Radical Feminism	<i>"False consciousness, you're being exploited."</i>
Intersectional Feminism	<i>"Privileged white women romanticizing oppression."</i>

The tradwife movement can be interpreted through various feminist standpoints, highlighting the tension between individual choice and structural constraints. Comparative analysis shows it is neither a simple reaction to feminism nor genuine empowerment, raising

questions about how voluntary traditionalism aligns, or fails to align, with feminist goals and persistent gendered power.

Liberal feminism sees tradwife “choice” as shaped by nostalgia for traditional roles while undermining feminist achievements; radical feminism interprets voluntary submission as reinforcing male dominance; intersectional feminism exposes how racial and class hierarchies are concealed, reframing structural oppression as personal freedom.

These frameworks collectively reject the coexistence of voluntary tradwifery and feminist agency: liberal feminism warns that detached individual freedom reinforces systemic inequality, radical feminism denies authentic empowerment under patriarchy, and intersectional feminism shows such choices are accessible only to the privileged. Ultimately, the tradwife movement represents a multilayered backlash against feminism rather than a feminist alternative.

3.4 Case Study: Tradwives vs. Stay-at-Home Feminists

This case examines contrasts between tradwives and stay-at-home feminists to assess claims of empowerment versus anti-feminist backlash. Drawing on discussions of nostalgia, anti-feminism, organization, socioeconomic motivations, and intersectional factors, tradwives reject feminism and embody submission, while stay-at-home feminists advocate equality within caregiving, highlighting divergent approaches to structural inequality.

Tradwives oppose feminist values of autonomy, careerism, and equality, promoting submission within conservative frameworks. Influencers such as @thetradwife post, “My husband leads, I nurture, submission is my strength. #TradWife” (2025), embracing 1950s aesthetics and nostalgia. Socioeconomic pressures, including high childcare costs and caregiver burnout, reinforce this “choice,” while digital communities like Tradwife Life provide social validation and

economic opportunities. Hannah Neeleman exemplifies homemaking framed as creative empowerment.

Stay-at-home feminists embrace caregiving while advocating equality and systemic reforms, such as affordable childcare and wage fairness. Posts like @FeministMom's, "I'm a stay-at-home mother fighting for equal pay and childcare. #FeministMom" (2025), reflect second-wave feminist ideals, critiquing patriarchal norms and seeking structural change, in contrast to tradwives' acceptance of conventional roles.

Tradwives' conservative alignment and nostalgia reinforce patriarchal norms, ignoring structural inequalities. @HomesteadHearts' post, "Feminism destroys families, homemaking builds them. #TradWife" (2025), exemplifies anti-feminist rhetoric, while stay-at-home feminists pursue reforms aligned with feminist goals of equity. Romanticizing 1950s roles positions tradwives as a backlash against feminist gains, co-opting "choice" to frame domesticity as empowerment. Figures (e.g., 45% pro-domesticity, 35% anti-feminism) illustrate this divide, showing how choice feminism neglects structural constraints, reinforcing patriarchy rather than collective progress.

3.5 Discussion of the Results

This section is devoted to the discussion of the results in relation to the research questions and the analyzing of how the Tradwife movement engages with feminist ideals, perceptions of empowerment, and social media portrayals.

This comparative analysis shows that the Tradwife movement functions mainly as a reactionary response to modern feminism. It explicitly rejects of the core principles of feminism like gender equality, economic independence, and reproductive autonomy. However, it strategically

appropriates the feminist rhetoric of choice as a strategic to justify a return to traditional domestic roles. Such paradox is fundamental, has its roots deep in the process of reconfiguration of empowerment that aligns more with conservative nostalgia than feminist agency.

3.5.1 Backlash Against Feminist Ideals: Rejection and Reappropriation

The tradwife phenomenon expresses a distinct ideological rejection of feminism. Online discourse frequently criticizes autonomy, professional ambition, and reproductive rights, reframing them as threats to true feminine virtue. Instead, submission, housewifery, and gender complementarity are central ideals, rooted in conservative and religious traditions, reviving 1950s norms targeted by second-wave feminism.

Simultaneously, the movement appropriates feminist language, notably the rhetoric of choice, to present domesticity as personal fulfillment rather than oppression, while concealing the ongoing presence of patriarchal structures behind a post-feminist image.

Thus, although the movement uses some feminist concepts, it mainly supports a conservative resistance to feminist progress, aligning more with a romanticized past than with structural emancipation.

3.5.2 Empowerment in Domesticity: Personal Choice and Feminist Critique

Tradwives use a post-feminist lens of personal choice to define empowerment as freely choosing domestic roles. Domesticity is framed as a deliberate lifestyle grounded in moral, religious, or aesthetic values, offering fulfillment and pride through caregiving and homemaking rather than financial independence. Influencers actively promote this vision as virtuous and desirable.

This shifts the meaning of empowerment moving away from structural emancipation towards a conservative reinterpretation that rooted in nostalgia. Thus, instead of offering a genuine alternative, the movement relies on feminist language to legitimize traditional hierarchies digital space

However, this model of empowerment is highly dependent on class and race privilege. Most self-identified Tradwives are white, middle- or upper-middle-class women who can leave the workforce due to their financial security, while this choice is structurally unavailable to many working-class women and women of color. Thus, the tradwife model of empowerment is both exclusionary and structurally constrained.

Feminist theories, especially radical and intersectional, challenge the tradwife model, focusing on collective emancipation, patriarchal structures, and unpaid domestic labor. The movement's version of empowerment lacks inclusivity and transformative potential, and framing it as individual choice obscures structural limits, weakening feminist goals and sustaining inequalities.

3.5.3 Social Media Narratives: Between Aesthetic Freedom and Structural Limits

Social media drive the tradwife narrative. Analysis of 100 posts (2023–2025) shows 45% support homemaking, 35% use anti-feminist rhetoric, and 15% invoke 1950s nostalgia. These portrayals idealize the past and symbolically undermine feminist gains, suggesting online “choice” may be more performative than structural.

This hybrid discourse masks conservative views as personal freedom. Unlike feminist empowerment, which seeks social change, tradwife social media frames it as an aesthetic lifestyle, concealing structural inequality and reinforcing patriarchal values through curated images and personal branding.

3.5.4 Stay-at-Home Feminists and Tradwives: Shared Roles, Divergent Ideologies

The Both tradwives and stay-at-home feminists value caregiving, but differ ideologically. Stay-at-home feminists uphold feminist principles, advocate structural reforms, and challenge gender inequalities, whereas tradwives promote submission, reinforce patriarchal and religious values, and do not contest constraints on women's choices.

In sum, this analysis shows that The tradwife movement co-opts feminist ideas but serves as a conservative backlash, framing domesticity as personal choice while upholding patriarchal norms and ignoring structural inequalities, unlike feminism's systemic approach.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the tradwife movement operated primarily as a backlash towards feminism while strategically using the rhetoric of empowerment to legitimize conventional domestic roles. It discovered that the motion's definition of choice depended closely on privilege, nostalgia, and conservative values, instead of on widespread feminist corporation. The findings indicated that class, race, and ancient context restricted the accessibility of this lifestyle, excluding many girls from its idealized photograph. Social media amplified those narratives, framing submission and homemaking as aspirational even as obscuring structural inequalities. Compared to live-at-home feminists, tradwives reinforced patriarchal norms rather than advocating systemic reform. Overall, the effects confirmed that the motion rebranded conventional gender roles below a post-feminist aesthetic instead of providing an emancipatory opportunity.

General Conclusion

This study examined under which ideological pillars, cultural constructs, and economic contexts the tradwife movement was formed, and whether it was seen as reaction against feminism or as a redefinition of empowerment. It also looked at its early development and how feminists criticized it. The study placed the movement in the context of theories on gender roles, postfeminist choice, and resistance to feminism. It also looked at how race, class, and privilege affected women's decision to follow this lifestyle. Furthermore, the study examined how the movement appeared in media and what political ties it had, showing whether the tradwife movement weakened or supported current gender hierarchies

This study focused on two main issues about the tradwife movement: firstly, it examined how far the movement operates as a reactionary force against contemporary feminism, especially as reflected in its digital representations. Secondly, it investigated how women who identify as tradwives see their own sense of empowerment, and how that differs from feminist perspectives of empowerment grounded in autonomy and equality.

To investigate whether the tradwife movement represents a backlash against feminism or a redefined form of female empowerment, this study employed a qualitative methodology. This involved a thematic and critical discourse analysis of publicly available digital content, academic writing, and media critiques. By integrating this digital data with feminist theory, the approach was designed to uncover the hidden messages and social context of the movement, enabling a comparative analysis across ideological and socioeconomic dimensions.

What became apparent was that the tradwife phenomenon clearly rejected the foundational values of feminism. The analysis of online discussions showed that ideas such as autonomy, career

ambition, and reproductive rights were often criticized. Instead, the movement portrayed these as threats to true femininity. The movement promoted submission, housewifery, and complementary gender roles based on conservative and religious traditions. This rhetoric brought back traditional gender norms that second-wave feminists challenged in the mid-20th century. At the same time, the movement used feminist language, mainly the idea of choice, to present domestic life as personal fulfilment instead of oppression. However, this rhetorical strategy concealed the ongoing influence of patriarchal systems behind a post-feminist image. In short, the movement borrowed feminist ideas but mostly reinforced conservative resistance to change.

The results showed that tradwives considered empowerment simply as the choice to live a domestic life based on their personal, moral, or religious beliefs. They valued caregiving and homemaking over financial independence or challenging traditional roles. This changed empowerment from challenging inequality to a conservative and nostalgic view that used feminist terms to justify old social hierarchies. This new version of empowerment mainly depended on race and class privilege, as most tradwives are white, middle- or upper-middle-class women who could afford to leave paid work. For many working-class women and women of color, this choice was not realistic. Feminist theories, especially radical and intersectional ones, saw this view as exclusionary and as hiding the real social and economic limits on women's freedom. They argued that this weakened feminist goals because it allowed systemic inequalities to persist.

The results confirmed also that social media spread and shaped the tradwife movement. Besides, an analysis of 100 posts from 2023 to 2025 showed that 45% promoted homemaking, 35% carried strong anti-feminist messages, and 15% evoked 1950s nostalgia. These posts idealized the past and quietly opposed feminist progress. The movement hid conservative views behind

the language of personal choice and freedom. While feminism sought social change, the movement focused on lifestyle and branding while ignoring inequalities and reinforcing patriarchy.

This study addressed the gap on how class, race, and social conditions shape women's experiences as tradwives through their online self-representations in English-speaking Western contexts. However, its findings may not apply to non-Western societies where cultural, religious, and economic factors may shape the tradwife movement differently. Moreover, it did not include men as participants or audiences, which limited the understanding of male involvement in the movement. In addition, the analysis was qualitative only and did not provide quantitative measures of social media engagement or ideological spread. Furthermore, reliance on publicly available social media data meant that the analysis excluded offline experiences, private groups, or voices of women who do not share their views online. It also did not examine the psychological dimensions of women's self-identification as tradwives. Finally, the binary framing (empowerment vs. backlash) simplified the diverse motivations and identities within the movement, which included mixed factors such as nostalgia, economic necessity, or personal belief. These limitations restricted the generalizability of the findings and highlighted the need for broader research.

Therefore, further studies should delve into non-Western views to remedy the largely Western emphasis of the movement. They should include a more diverse sample beyond the current dataset of 100 publicly available social media posts and the participants represented in them. Future research should include non-Western perspectives, women of color, working-class women, and those not active online to explore lived experiences in real-world settings. Researchers should also consider men's roles and participation to better understand their involvement. Quantitative approaches, including social media engagement metrics, should be used largely alongside qualitative analysis to measure the movement's spread and impact. In addition, offline experiences,

private groups, and women who are not active online should be included. The psychological dimensions of women's self-identification as tradwives should also be investigated to understand the personal and emotional factors behind this lifestyle. Finally, future research should move beyond the binary framing of empowerment versus backlash and adopt approaches that capture the wide range of mixed motivations, such as nostalgia, economic necessity, or personal belief.

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المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة حركة "الزوجة التقليدية" (Tradwife) كظاهرة اجتماعية رقمية نشأت ضمن سياق ما بعد النسوية والنيو ليبرالية، لاستكشاف ما إذا كانت تعبر عن مناهضة للفكر النسوي، أم تمثل إعادة تعريف لدور المرأة وتمكينها ضمن أطر تقليدية. تركز الدراسة على تحليل الكيفية التي يتم بها تأطير الحياة المنزلية كـ "خيار" عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، وتفحص البُعد الأيديولوجي والثقافي والطبقي لهذا الخطاب. توظف الدراسة منهجية نوعية تشمل التحليل الموضوعي وتحليل الخطاب النقدي، من خلال تحليل محتوى المنشورات العلنية من قبل مؤثرات ممثلات للحركة، مع الرجوع إلى الأدبيات النسوية والنقدية. تكشف النتائج أن حركة الزوجة التقليدية ترفض قيم النسوية وتصور البيوتوتية كاختيار فردي لكنه قائم على امتيازات، كما تخفي عدم المساواة عبر صور جمالية ونوستالجية. وعلى عكس النسويات الماكثات في المنزل اللواتي يطالبن بإصلاحات، فهي تكرر الخضوع وتعيد إنتاج القيم الأبوية كرد فعل محافظ ضد النسوية. وتُسهم الدراسة في النقاش النسوي المعاصر من خلال تسليط الضوء على التوتر بين حرية الفرد والقيود الاجتماعية، وتدعو إلى إدماج وجهات نظر غير غربية لفهم أوسع للحركة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: معاداة النسوية، نسوية الاختيار، الحياة المنزلية، النوع الاجتماعي، التقاطعية، حركة

الزوجة التقليدية

