YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER STEREOTYPES AND GENDER JUSTICE IN MOROCCO

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FOREWORD

This study, initiated by KVINFO, the Danish Center for Gender and Equality, constitutes the first step of a project, “Youth Inclusion in Gender Just Law Reform in Morocco”, which is a collaborative endeavor between KVINFO, the Association Munathara, EuroMed Rights and Youth Policy Center (YPC). The project was initiated in November 2023 and forms part of the Danish Arab Partnership Programme, 2022 – 2027. The project aims to accelerate youth inclusion by empowering and amplifying the perspectives of young people in Morocco by means of knowledge production, dialogue and media debates around gender just law reform. Thus, the results of the study is intended to sustain planned activities in the project, in order to enable and expand the inclusion of Moroccan youths in the processes and recommendations leading to gender just law reform.

The project seeks to open opportunities for youth to convey their views more forcefully by basing it on research, capacity sharing, and by organizing dialogue meetings and media encounters with ministries, judges and lawyers. The aim is to push for gender just law reform while engaging youth in the project itself. Youth members of YPC were actively involved in the research process of this study, including in the formulation of interview questions, in selection of respondents, and in interviewing approximately 50% of the 60 respondents of the study (peer-to-peer interviewing). Two consultants, main authors of the report, interviewed the remaining 50%.

The perspectives on gender stereotypes as they are presented by Moroccan youth in the report at hand could be divided into two categories. One category takes gender stereotypes for granted as an expression of a natural state of affairs, in which two genders, mutually exclusive, exist. Consequently, there is no need to question them. Another category of perspectives are constituted by an analytical view, in which gender stereotypes are represented as a belief that the majority of Moroccans cling to, signifying an external and objectifying, usually critical, gaze on them.
While this distinction is crucial in a transformative perspective, the study also clarifies that the two categories are often blurred; the relation between gender stereotypes and social reality is complex; gender stereotypes form reality and reality are under impression of gender stereotypes.

Another study, also initiated by KVINFO, called *“Impact of gender stereotypes on legislative texts and practices in Morocco”,* assesses the impact of gender stereotypes on existing legislation and ongoing legislative reforms in Morocco. The latter study is a supplement to this one, and equally sustains the activities of the project on more youth inclusion.

KVINFO extends its gratitude to all involved in the study, to the two consultants, and to Youth Policy Center, for their collaborative spirit and great effort in the elaboration of the study at hand, and to the youths and stakeholders who accepted to participate in the interviews collected during fieldwork. It is essential to note that the views and information presented in this publication do not necessarily align with the official stance of KVINFO or any other partners. The responsibility for the contents and views articulated herein rests solely with the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

In Morocco, a new liberal government took seat in late 2021 and after pressure from civil society and international agencies, a process towards legislative reform of the family code, penal code and other legislation that is gender discriminative has been initiated. This process was accelerated by a speech of King Mohammed VI in July 2022, in which he - in accordance with the new development plan for Morocco - pointed at the women of the country as an untapped resource who needed equal rights within the framework of Islam.

This political shift in Morocco represents an opportunity for public debates and discussions regarding citizen priorities, fostering a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process. Various groups, including youth, need to grab this opportunity for influencing the new code, e.g. by entering into dialogue with relevant duty bearers, and based on knowledge about how gender stereotypes influence law making, ensure that the family code mirrors youth priorities of gender just legislation.

In September 2023, the King announced the reform process towards a new Family Code. Subsequently, the King appointed a commission counting core ministries (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Solidarity and the Family, Ministry of Public), the National Council for Human Rights, and the League of Mohammedan Scholars of Rabat to elaborate a new proposal for the Family Code. During November and December 2023, the commission held 130 consultative meetings in which civil society coalitions, political parties and unions participated, meaning that these actors entered into a dialogue with the commission and argued for their own recommendations.
A few coalitions of youth Civil society organization (CSOs) participated in the consultative meetings along with other CSO coalitions, meaning that the views and perspectives of youths on the Family Code were communicated to the royal commission. It remains to be confirmed how these views are represented in the proposal for a revised Family Code, not yet revealed to the public.

YOUTH INCLUSION

Youth in Morocco face high rates of unemployment, and limited opportunities for political participation, including influence on legislative change. Around 40% of the population of Morocco is under the age of 25. Especially in rural areas, access to education is limited. Youth unemployment, for those aged 15-24 years, is at 23.4% (World Bank, 2023), and according to data from 2016, young women, more than men, face unemployment after graduation from tertiary education (OECD, 2021).

The constitution of 2011 guarantees the access of youth to social, cultural, economic and political influence. In 2017, Morocco adopted for the first time a national youth strategy and an action plan. A number of initiatives have followed (including the establishment of Youth centers, *Dar Chabab* across the country, under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication. They offer socio-cultural activities such as theater and cinema, but also training and workshops). The government has initiated steps towards establishing a youth council of Morocco, *Conseil consultatif de la jeunesse et de l'action associative* (CCJAA), as prescribed by law 89.15 of 2017. The council was intended to be a consultative entity in the areas of protection of youth and promotion of associative life, but has not yet been activated. Even before functioning, the council is under critique for being exclusive (Les Inspirations Éco, 2023).

Other legislation intended to include youth in political representation in localization processes etc. exist, but firm implementation of these laws is yet to be seen (OECD, 2021).

The generational differences may lead to different positions vis-á-vis legislative reform. The women's rights movement is welcoming the reform of the Moudawana as an opportunity for extending women's rights in the family and eradicating elements that violate women's rights, such as polygamy, marital rape and underage marriages. Other parts of the movement, likely to be represented by younger, intersectional feminists, are less consolidated and therefore less vocal. These youths may also be less keen to push for reforming a law, which establishes the family as a natural unit in society that enjoys the protection of the state. To ensure the views of the youths in the debate, the extent and scale of youth involvement needs acceleration.

According to a survey published by Youth Policy Center (2021), Moroccan youth is interested in participating in politics if given the opportunity: 81.1% of youth are "interested in politics but do not find a suitable environment within parties," which nudges them towards alternative activism, mainly through social media. 60.2% of the surveyed youths think that the culture of dialogue is "weak" or "absent" in Moroccan society. There are wide gender disparities in formal political participation; in the current parliament, constituted after the elections of 2021, women occupy 24,3% of the seats in the lower house, the Chamber of Representatives, and 11,7% of the seats in the upper house, the Chamber of Councillors (International Parliamentarian Union, 2024). For women, civil society activism represents an alternative opportunity for political influence, as exemplified by the consultative meetings held by the commission in charge of the reform of the Moudawana with civil society coalitions, and by the fact that women's rights organizations push for elective laws benefiting the political representation of women. Finally, political parties in Morocco have not yet taken any initiatives to increase women's position and career opportunities within their ranks (Benbeilli, 2023).

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

This study aims to explore how youth in Morocco relate to gender stereotypes as they present themselves in daily life based on an assessment of the relationship between gender stereotypes and support for gender hierarchies in popular perceptions and daily interactions.

A widely acclaimed understanding of a gender stereotype may be that it is "a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men" (OHCHR, 2014, p.1). While it is widely accepted that a gender stereotype "is harmful when it limits women's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional career and make choices about their lives and life plans" (ibid, p. 1), it is our hypothesis that these dynamics sustain structural gender inequality, such as legislation. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring gender stereotypes as they present themselves in daily life in Morocco.

According to anthropological research, "gender stereotypes reflect general expectations about members of particular social groups" (Ellemers, 2018, p.276). Gender stereotypes are often constructed in binary pairs, thus, "gender stereotypes reflect the primary importance we attach to task performance when judging men and to social relationships when considering women.

Assertiveness and performance are seen as indicators of greater agency in men, and warmth and care for others are viewed as signs of greater communality in women" (Ellemers, 2018, p. 277). For this study, we define *youth* as those between the ages of 18 and 29. Broadly speaking, youth as a demographic is socially constructed, with boundaries evolving according to socio-cultural contexts (Arnett, 2004). The UN uses the age range 15-24 for global indicators while the EU Youth Strategy spans between the ages of 13-30 years (European Commission, 2018). Legally, the age of 18 marks the transition to adulthood when youth gain voting rights and full autonomy in many settings.

The age range of 18-29 used in this study acknowledges increasing self-determination from 18 years onward while encompassing those transitioning to complete independence through their late twenties. This aligns the study's youth focus with regional standards while remaining relevant to the local Moroccan context.

The study will be divided into two parts, which explore:

1. existing literature on gender stereotypes (in media, school settings, in the family, in workplaces, etc.)

2. current youth perspectives on the gender stereotypes they encounter in daily life

We aim to understand the complex, multi-dimensional relationship between gender stereotypes, everyday lived experiences, and Moroccan family law/policy. Specifically, we seek to explore how prevalent gender stereotypes are manifest in and shape youth's daily lived experiences, interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of appropriate social/cultural norms. We also aim to explore whether and how customary conventions around gender norms/expectations, as practiced in communities, may be at odds with or reinforce certain provisions of the 2004 Family Code (*Moudawana*), youth perspectives on the (de)evolution of stereotypes and norms governing gender relations since the Code's propagation, and any remaining gaps between laws and socio-cultural mindsets. Findings provide insight into Moroccan youth's views around family dynamics, autonomy, equity, and justice and whether these views align with law and policy.

KVINFO intends this research to support advocacy by youth groups, civil society and lawmakers on potential legislative and programmatic reforms addressing the root causes perpetuating gender gaps in rights, opportunities, and well-being both de jure and de facto.

The conclusion will discuss the *key question* guiding the research: How do Moroccan youth relate to gender stereotypes as they present themselves in daily life?

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The status of women and the persistence of gender stereotypes have been long-standing issues in Moroccan society and recurrent issues in research. Despite significant progress in recent decades, deeply entrenched cultural and social norms continue to shape and constrain gendered roles and opportunities. This research explores the complex interplay between gender norms, the public/private divide, the feminist movement, legal reforms, and ongoing efforts toward greater gender equality in Morocco.

Feminist scholars have long grappled with the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, and how this divide has reinforced patriarchal structures and gender inequalities (Pateman 1988; Landes 1995). According to these and other researchers, in the Moroccan context, this dichotomy has been particularly pronounced, with the public sphere being dominated by men and associated with power, authority, and decision-making, while the private sphere was seen as the domain of women, focused on domestic and familial responsibilities (Mernissi 1975; Sadiqi 1997).
This rigid separation of spheres has been deeply embedded in Moroccan culture and social norms, perpetuating gender stereotypes and limiting women's agency in the public realm.

However, this divide has been challenged and renegotiated in recent decades, driven in part by socioeconomic changes, urbanization, and the growing, although still limited, participation of women in the workforce. The Moroccan feminist movement, comprising both feminist writings and grassroots activism, has played a pivotal role in pushing for greater gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms (Sadiqi & Ennaji 2006). Through their tireless efforts, feminist associations have brought women's issues to the forefront of public discourse and shaped legal and social reforms.

One of the most significant achievements of the Moroccan feminist movement has been the 2004 reforms to the Family Law, which introduced substantial changes to the legal status of women within the family (Sadiqi 2008). The implications of these reforms extend far beyond the legal realm, as they have contributed to the politicization of women's issues and the democratization of public space in Morocco (Ennaji 2016). However, the implementation of these reforms has also faced challenges and limitations, highlighting the ongoing need for sustained efforts to combat deeply rooted gender stereotypes and forms of violence against women (Skalli, 2021; Darhour, 2019).

MOROCCAN YOUTH AND GENDER NORMS

Across the literature, a prominent theme emerges: the coexistence of both continuity and change in Moroccan youth's attitudes towards gender roles and expectations. On one hand, many young Moroccans, particularly those from urban areas and with higher levels of education, exhibit a greater propensity for challenging gender stereotypes and advocating for relationships that are more egalitarian. These youth are often influenced by exposure to global media, access to education, and interactions with diverse social networks, which can foster more progressive views on gender equality and male-female dynamics (Benharrousse 2020; Chahbane & Alalaoui 2023; El Kandoussi, 2023).

However, other scholars have documented the persistence of gender ideologies and the enduring influence of hegemonic masculinity among segments of Moroccan youth, particularly those from rural areas or with lower socioeconomic status. These young individuals often exhibit greater adherence to conservative cultural norms and religious interpretations that reinforce patriarchal power structures and distinct gender roles (Nidaazzi & Allah, 2023). The literature also sheds light on the complex interplay of factors that shape Moroccan youth's gender attitudes, such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and exposure to globalization (Bennani-Chraibi, 2014; Phipps & Therrien, 2023).

According to Arab Barometer, Moroccan youth show strong support for equal education rights, with only 12% believing university education is more important for men. Yet, a significant 31% of youth believe men are better suited for political leadership roles; 38% of Moroccan youth think husbands should have the final say in family matters, indicating a mix of patriarchal and progressive views; there is less support for equal inheritance rights, with a minority advocating for women to receive the same as men (Arab Barometer, 2019).

Furthermore, scholars have explored the role of religion and cultural traditions in shaping gender attitudes among Moroccan youth. While some young individuals interpret religious teachings in a more progressive and inclusive manner, aligning with principles of gender equality (El Haitami, 2023), others may adopt more conservative interpretations that reinforce patriarchal structures and gender-based hierarchies (Chafai, 2021). This is confirmed by the fact that urban youth, particularly those with access to higher education and exposure to global media, tend to exhibit more progressive views, while youth from rural areas or lower socioeconomic backgrounds often adhere more closely to patriarchal gender norms and expectations (Camozzi et al., 2019).

THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPACE DICHOTOMY IN MOROCCAN CULTURE

Theoretical background: Feminist perspectives on public/private spheres

The theoretical conceptualization of the public/private spheres has been a cornerstone of feminist thought, providing a critical lens through which to examine the gendered power dynamics and structural inequalities that permeate societies across the globe. Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1988) challenged the notion of a universal social contract by highlighting the inherent gender bias embedded within it. Pateman argued that the purportedly neutral public sphere is predicated upon the subordination of women within the private realm of the household, where their labor and reproductive capacities are exploited for the benefit of the patriarchal order.

Building upon this critique, feminist theorists have further deconstructed the public/private dichotomy, revealing how this artificial separation has served to reinforce and perpetuate gender inequalities (Rendall, 1999; Landes, 1995). They contend that the relegation of women to the private sphere, where their roles are confined to unpaid domestic labor and caregiving, effectively excludes them from the spheres of power, decision-making, and public participation, thereby undermining their full citizenship and autonomy (Baker, 1999; Sima, 2016).

Feminist perspectives on the public/private spheres have also illuminated how this dichotomy is intrinsically linked to the construction of gender identities and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes (Rosicki, 2012). The association of masculinity with the public realm of work, politics,

and economic activity, while femininity is relegated to the private domain of domesticity and caregiving, reinforces and naturalizes these socially constructed roles, limiting the potential for gender equality and self-determination (Arnot et al., 2000).

Moreover, feminist scholars have highlighted the permeability and interconnectedness of the public and private spheres, challenging the notion that they are distinct and impermeable domains. They argue that the private sphere is deeply influenced by the public sphere, as laws, policies, and societal norms shape the dynamics and power relations within households and intimate relationships (Duncan, 1996; Collins, 2017). Conversely, the private sphere also shapes and influences the public realm, as the inequalities and gendered divisions of labor within households have far-reaching implications for women's participation in the public sphere (Lišková & Holubec, 2020).

Furthermore, feminist perspectives have underscored the intersectionality of gender with other axes of power, such as race, class, and sexuality, and how these intersections shape the experiences of women within the public and private spheres (Crenshaw, 1989; Miraftab, 2004; Milroy & Wismer, 2007).

The Separation of Public and Private Spaces in Morocco

Historically, Moroccan society has structured public space as an exclusively masculine territory, where men exercise their authority, engage in economic and political activities, and assert their dominance over the social order (Abartal & Boutkhil, 2023). The conceptualization of the private sphere as the "women's domain" has been deeply ingrained in cultural narratives, reinforced by religious interpretations, and perpetuated through socialization processes (Graiouid, 2004; Sadiqi, 2002). Women identities have been, and continue to be epistemically defined by their ability to perform these duties and conform to societal expectations of femininity, which often prioritize traits such as obedience, modesty, and self-sacrifice (Rassam, 1980).

Patriarchal structures granted men authority over the household and its members; however, this authority has always been challenged as it is not impermeable (Ennaji, 2008; Mernissi, 1975). Women's mobility, access to resources, and personal choices have been subject to the dictates of male authority figures, such as husbands, fathers, or male relatives. The relegation of women to the private sphere is a patriarchal discourse, which does not hold in reality, since the private sphere informs and is informed by the public sphere. Regional, socioeconomic, and cultural variations have existed, with some women, particularly in rural areas or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, having greater involvement in economic activities and public spaces out of necessity (El Fettah, 2022). However, the overarching patriarchal structures and gender norms have persisted, shaping the lived experiences of Moroccan women across diverse contexts.

The Impact of Women's Employment and Socioeconomic Changes

The entry of Moroccan women into the labor market, driven by a combination of economic necessity, educational attainment, and shifting societal attitudes, further establish the interconnectedness between the public and private spheres. As women have ventured into the public realm to pursue employment opportunities, they have effectively challenged the notion of the public space as an exclusively male domain (Kapchan, 1996). It should also be noted that

women’s workforce participation in Morocco remains low; in 2022, only 21% of women were participating in the labor force (ILO, 2025).

While women's entry into the workforce has been a significant step toward greater gender equality and empowerment, it has also presented a myriad of challenges that working women in Morocco must navigate (Naïr & El-Khamlichi, 2016). These challenges stem from the persistent influence of patriarchal structures, cultural stereotypes, and the lack of adequate support systems to facilitate the seamless integration of women into the public sphere (Mansuy & Warquin, 2018).

Despite legal provisions prohibiting discrimination, women often face barriers to equal pay and opportunities for advancement, perpetuating economic inequalities and limiting their potential for upward mobility. Working women in Morocco, like women elsewhere, frequently confront the double burden of balancing professional responsibilities with the unrelenting demands of unpaid domestic labor and caregiving (Hallward & Stewart, 2018). The lack of affordable and accessible childcare facilities, coupled with deeply ingrained societal expectations regarding women's domestic roles, has placed a disproportionate burden on working mothers, leading to increased stress, burnout, and potential career compromises.

THE 2004 FAMILY LAW REFORMS

Historical Overview of the Moroccan Feminist Movement(s)

The Moroccan feminist movement has been a powerful force in challenging patriarchal structures, advocating for gender equality, and reclaiming women's rightful place in the public sphere.

The origins of the Moroccan feminist movement can be traced back to the early 20th century, when a handful of pioneering women, inspired by the principles of the Nahda (Arab Renaissance) and the broader global feminist currents, began to question the patriarchal gender roles and inequalities that permeated Moroccan society (Sadiqi, 2003). These early feminists, including figures such as Malika El Fassi, challenged the patriarchal interpretations of Islam that had long been used to justify women's subordination and advocated for women's rights to education, employment, and participation in public life (Baker, 1998). The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a surge in feminist activism, with the establishment of numerous women's rights organizations and the proliferation of feminist literature and discourse (Ennaji, 2016). This period saw the rise of influential feminist thinkers and activists, such as Leila Abouzeid, whose work challenged the deeply entrenched patriarchal narratives and advocated for a reinterpretation of religious texts through a gender-sensitive lens (Hunter 2006; Khannous 2010). The 1990s marked a significant turning point for the Moroccan feminist movement, as it coalesced around the demand for comprehensive reforms to the Moudawana, the family law code that had long been a source of gender discrimination and inequality. The latter paved the way to initiation of national women’s rights NGOs to demand change, notably *Féderation des ligues des droits des femmes* (FLDF), *L’Union de l’Action Féminine* (UAF or Union of Women’s Action) and *Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc* (ADFM or the Association of Democratic Women of Morocco).

The early 2000s witnessed the culmination of these efforts, with the adoption of the Moudawana reforms in 2004, which significantly improved women's rights within the family, including provisions related to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance (Wuerth 2005; Hanafi & Pratt, 2012).

This landmark achievement not only demonstrated the power of the feminist movement but also signaled a broader shift in societal attitudes and the recognition of women's rights as a national priority.

Background and Context of the 2004 Reform

As the feminist movement gained momentum in the latter half of the 20th century, the calls for reforming the Moudawana grew louder and more organized. Influential feminist thinkers and activists, such as Fatima Mernissi (Rhouni 2010; Cheref 2017), played a pivotal role in challenging the patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law and advocating for a reinterpretation that aligned with the principles of gender equality and justice. The 1990s witnessed a significant shift in the socio-political landscape of Morocco, with the ascension of King Mohammed VI to the throne in 1999.

The new monarch signaled a commitment to modernization and reform, including efforts to enhance women's rights and promote gender equality (Olick-Gibson, 2020). This shift in the political climate provided a window of opportunity for the feminist movement to intensify its advocacy efforts and leverage the support of the monarchy. Moreover, the broader global context of the late 20th and early 21st centuries saw an increasing emphasis on women's rights and gender equality as a priority within the international human rights agenda. Influential international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Morocco ratified in 1993, provided a normative framework and added pressure for legal reforms to align with international standards (Darhour, 2019; Gagliardi, 2017). It was within this context of sustained feminist activism, shifting political dynamics, and global normative pressures that the stage was set for the Moudawana reforms of 2004. The successful mobilization of the feminist and islamist movements, coupled with the support of the monarchy and the engagement of various stakeholders, including religious scholars and civil society organizations, paved the way for the comprehensive overhaul of the family law code.

Key Provisions and Changes in Moudawana

The 2004 Moudawana reforms ushered in a transformative shift in Morocco's legal framework governing family relations and gender dynamics. These reforms introduced a comprehensive set of provisions aimed at promoting gender equality, enhancing women's rights within the family, and dismantling long-standing discriminatory practices. First, one of the most significant changes introduced by the reforms was the abolition of the requirement for a woman to have a male guardian (*wali*) to contract her marriage. This provision recognized women's legal capacity and autonomy in the decision to marry, effectively eliminating a longstanding source of gender discrimination and subjugation (March, 2019). Second, while not outright prohibited, the reforms placed stringent restrictions on the practice of polygamy. Men were required to obtain the consent of their existing wife or wives before taking an additional spouse, as well as obtaining judicial approval based on specific legal criteria. This provision aimed to curb the widespread practice of polygamy and protect women's rights within the marital union. Third, the reforms introduced the concept of "mutual consent divorce," allowing couples to dissolve their marriage through a mutual agreement, without the need to establish fault or grounds for divorce. Additionally, women were granted the right to initiate and file for divorce of their own volition, without the need for a male guardian or representative (Storms & Bartles, 2017). Fourth, the reforms established the principle of joint responsibility for child custody and guardianship, recognizing the equal rights and responsibilities of both parents.

In cases of divorce, the mother was granted custodial rights over minor children, a significant departure from the previous law that automatically granted custody to the father (Schlumpf, 2016). Fifth, to combat the widespread practice of child marriages, the reforms established 18 as the minimum legal age for both men and women to marry. This provision aimed to protect the rights and well-being of minors and promote greater gender equality in the formation of marital unions. However, underage marriages continue to be practiced nowadays which puts into perspective customary law, especially since Article 20 gives discretionary power to judges to grant an exception to the rule. Sixth, the reforms recognized women's rights to family planning and reproductive health services, affirming their autonomy over decisions related to their bodies and reproductive choices.

In the two decades following the 2004 reform, criticism from women's organizations and scholars has pointed to the fact that although the Moudawana reforms were widely celebrated and Morocco is often championed internationally as a trendsetter in the realm of legal reform to support women's rights in the MENA region. Many of these legal changes are merely 'ink on paper' which have not been enacted by authorities or accepted by the population, and have failed to bring about real attitude change. This reputation is based on a thin veneer of paper-based reforms, which may not accurately reflect the reality on the ground, or the opinion of the general population (Elliott, 2009).

Feminist Activism in Advocating for Reforms

Feminist activists and organizations were instrumental in mobilizing the collective voices of Moroccan women from diverse backgrounds and amplifying their demands for reform.

Through grassroots organizing, public demonstrations, and awareness campaigns, they created a powerful movement that transcended socio-economic, geographic, and ideological boundaries (Ross 2022). They also engaged in a relentless battle against the patriarchal narratives and interpretations of Islamic law that had long been used to justify the discriminatory provisions of the existing family law code (El Haitami, 2016; Sadiqi, 2006). Recognizing the intersectionality of gender inequality with other forms of oppression and marginalization, feminist activists forged strategic alliances with various civil society organizations, human rights groups, and progressive political movements. These coalitions strengthened their collective voice and broadened the base of support for the reform agenda.

Feminist organizations and activists engaged in sustained advocacy efforts, lobbying policymakers, legislators, and other key decision-makers to prioritize the reform of the Moudawana (Wuerth, 2005, Sadiqi, 2008). They leveraged their expertise, research, and the power of their collective voices to influence the policy-making process and ensure that the demands for gender equality were firmly on the national agenda. The feminist movement recognized the shifting political landscape in Morocco with the ascension of King Mohammed VI and the monarchy's stated commitment to modernization and reform. Feminist activists seized this window of opportunity, strategically engaging with the monarchy and leveraging its support to advance their agenda for comprehensive family law reform.

Throughout the decades-long struggle for reform, feminist activists and organizations exhibited unwavering commitment and resilience in the face of opposition, backlash, and setbacks (Moghadam, 2013). Their persistence, coupled with their ability to adapt their tactics and

strategies, was instrumental in keeping the reform agenda at the forefront of national discourse and ultimately achieving their goals.

Public Debates and the 20th February Movement

The primary agenda of the 20th February Movement was to appeal the constitution and to introduce liberal and democratic views, and thus not explicitly to focus on gender equality or women's rights (Badran, 2022). The movement created a broader political and social environment that facilitated and amplified the demands for reforms. The calls for greater democratization, transparency, and respect for human rights resonated with the aspirations of feminist activists and organizations, who saw an opportunity to leverage the momentum for their struggles (Lambert, 2017).

Through the use of social media, such as Facebook, and websites, mainly *Mamfakinch*, Moroccan youth continued to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. The rallying and organization of the march across Morocco on 20th February 2011 gave birth to the 20th February Movement, which was a significant grassroots protest movement, inspired by the broader wave of popular uprisings and demands for democratic reform that swept across the Arab world, collectively known as the Arab Spring. Female activists and protesters played a vital role in the movement, challenging patriarchal gender roles and stereotypes by taking it to the streets and demanding their rightful place in the political discourse (Salime, 2012).

The 20th February Movement's demands for constitutional reforms and the strengthening of democratic institutions created an environment conducive to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. As the Moroccan government responded to the mounting pressure for change, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the long-standing calls for reforms in areas such as family law and women's empowerment (Abadi, 2014). In this context, the 2004 Moudawana reforms were again questioned and scrutinized. The reforms, which addressed issues such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and gender equality within the family, were seen as needing to address the broader societal and political challenges highlighted by the 20th February Movement (Touati, 2013).

The movement's emphasis on inclusivity and participation resonated with the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment, further bolstering the case for legal and institutional reforms that would help dismantle patriarchal structures and promote a more equitable society (Laouni, 2020).

GENDER STEREOTYPES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Prevalent gender stereotypes in Moroccan society

Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained and pervasive in Moroccan society, reflecting long-standing cultural and social norms that have perpetuated gender inequality and discrimination against women (Sadiqi, 2011; El Feki et al 2017). These stereotypes, rooted in patriarchal structures and patriarchal gender roles, have had profound implications for the status and treatment of women in various spheres of life (Sadiqi, 2011). One of the most prevalent gender stereotypes in Morocco is the notion of women's expected primary role and natural propensity towards being caregivers and homemakers. This stereotype positions women as the sole

custodians of domestic responsibilities, child rearing, and the maintaining of the household. It reinforces the idea that a woman's worth and value are intrinsically tied to her ability to fulfill these patriarchal roles, often at the expense of her personal aspirations, education, and career opportunities (Díaz & Sellami, 2014).

Another pervasive stereotype is the perception of women as inferior to men, both intellectually and physically. This belief stems from deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes that view men as inherently stronger, more rational, and better suited for leadership and decision-making roles. Such stereotypes contribute to the marginalization of women in spheres of power, education, and public life, perpetuating gender-based discrimination and limiting women's access to opportunities (Rassam, 1980). Furthermore, stereotypes surrounding female sexuality and virtue have had a profound impact on the lives of Moroccan women; for instance, women cannot control their sexual desires and want to have continuous intercourse, which necessitates the man to limit her sexual desires with law and order. The notion of female purity and chastity has been used to justify restrictive societal norms, limiting women's autonomy, freedom of movement, and personal choices.
These stereotypes often manifest in the form of honor-based violence, victim-blaming, and the policing of women's behavior and attire, are effectively curtailing their fundamental rights and freedoms (Pourmehdi, 2015; Obermeyer, 2000).

In the realm of employment and economic participation, gender stereotypes have perpetuated the belief that certain occupations and industries are inherently "masculine" or "feminine." This has led to occupational segregation, with women often confined to traditionally "feminine" roles, such as teaching, nursing, and domestic work, while facing barriers to entry and advancement in male-dominated fields like science, technology, and leadership positions (Gray & Finley-Hervey, 2005). Additionally, stereotypes surrounding women's decision-making capabilities and leadership potential have contributed to their underrepresentation in political and public spheres (Gray, 2001). The perception that women are emotional, irrational, and ill-equipped for leadership roles has hindered their participation in decision-making processes and their ascension to positions of power within government, civil society, and other influential domains. These gender stereotypes are not only pervasive but also deeply ingrained, reinforced through socialization processes, cultural narratives, and media representations (Razkane, 2021). They are often internalized by both men and women, perpetuating a cycle of self-limiting beliefs and behaviors that perpetuate gender inequality. The latter is grounded further on social media and the internet, which sustain prevalent gender stereotypes. However, some youth are challenging these stereotypes in online communities, and in this way contribute to their deconstruction (Chahbane & Alaoui, 2023).

Forms of violence against women

One of the most prevalent forms of violence against women in Morocco is domestic violence. Often shrouded in secrecy and societal stigma, domestic violence can take many forms, including physical assault, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. Within the confines of the home, where stereotypical gender roles and power dynamics are deeply entrenched, women are particularly vulnerable to violence at the hands of intimate partners, family members, or other household members (Sadiqi, 2010). The normalization of such violence and the lack of effective legal and social support systems perpetuate a cycle of abuse, leaving countless women trapped in abusive situations with limited options for escape or recourse (Boughima et al. 2018).

Sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment, is another harrowing form of violence that Moroccan women face. The first and only national survey carried out by the Moroccan High Commission for Planning on VAW found that nearly two thirds of women had experienced physical, psychological, sexual, or economic violence in the one-year period preceding the survey. The 2018 USAID Gender Analysis for Morocco reported that nearly one quarter of women had experienced sexual violence during their lifetime (Haut Commissariat du Plan, 2018; USAID, 2018).

The stigma surrounding discussions of sexuality and the victim-blaming attitudes prevalent in many communities create an environment where perpetrators are emboldened, and survivors are often silenced or shamed into silence (Aissa, 2021). Sexual violence not only inflicts immense physical and psychological trauma but also represents a profound violation of bodily autonomy and human dignity. Harassment, both in public spaces and in the workplace, is a pervasive issue that contributes to the broader climate of violence and insecurity for women in Morocco.
Verbal harassment, catcalling, and unwanted advances create an environment of intimidation and fear, limiting women's freedom of movement and access to public spaces (Chafai, 2017; 2020). In the workplace, sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination can impede women's professional advancement, perpetuate wage gaps, and foster a hostile environment that undermines their economic empowerment.

Violence against women in Morocco is also deeply intertwined with harmful patriarchal practices and societal norms. Honor-based violence stems from the belief that a woman's perceived transgressions against cultural or religious norms bring dishonor to her family (Ennaji, 2011). Such violence is a tragic manifestation of the patriarchal values that view women as property and commodities, denying them autonomy and agency over their own lives. Moreover, the prevalence of gender-based violence is exacerbated by intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination (Naciri, 2018). Women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, rural areas, or those facing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, such as ethnic or religious minorities, are often at heightened risk of violence and face greater barriers to accessing support services and legal recourse.

Addressing violence against women in Morocco requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes of gender inequality and patriarchal attitudes. This includes legal reforms that criminalize and effectively prosecute acts of violence against women, the establishment of comprehensive support services for survivors, and extensive public awareness campaigns that challenge societal norms and promote zero tolerance for violence (Sedrine, 2022; Dennerlein, 2012).

Additionally, empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and political representation is crucial to dismantling the power imbalances that enable and perpetuate violence against them. Ending violence against women is not only a moral imperative but also a critical component of achieving gender equality, promoting human rights, and fostering a more just and equitable society in Morocco (Tahiri, 2021). It requires a sustained and collective effort from all segments of society, including government, civil society, religious leaders, and individuals, to challenge the deeply entrenched attitudes and practices that perpetuate this egregious violation of women's fundamental rights and human dignity.

Efforts to Address and Combat Gender-Based Violence

Addressing and combating gender-based violence in Morocco has been an ongoing struggle that has seen concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners (Skalli, 2021). While progress has been made, significant challenges persist, and a comprehensive and sustained approach is necessary to tackle the deep-rooted causes and manifestations of this pervasive issue.

On the legal front, Morocco has taken steps to strengthen its legislative framework to address gender-based violence. The 2018 Law on Violence Against Women, also known as Law 103-13, criminalized various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, psychological abuse and online gender-based violence. This law represented a significant milestone, as it established a comprehensive definition of violence against women and mandated the creation of support services and protection measures for survivors (Abourabi & Lubaale, 2022). Civil society organizations and women's rights groups, including the Féderation des ligues des droits des femmes (FLDF), Droit et Justice (D&J) and Association Tahadi pour l'Egalité et la Citoyenneté (ATEC), in partnership with KVINFO, have played a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for legal reforms, and providing direct support services to survivors of gender-based violence. These organizations offer helplines, shelters, counseling services, and legal aid to women and girls who have experienced abuse.

They also engage in community outreach programs, public education campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives to challenge harmful gender norms and promote a culture of zero tolerance for violence against women (Dennerlein, 2012). This collaborative effort aims to provide comprehensive and coordinated support services to survivors, while also addressing the root causes of gender-based violence through prevention and awareness-raising initiatives.

Educational institutions have become key partners in efforts to combat gender-based violence, as they play a vital role in shaping attitudes and promoting gender equality from an early age. Initiatives such as gender-sensitive curricula, awareness campaigns within schools and universities, and the integration of gender-based violence prevention into teacher training programs have been implemented to challenge harmful stereotypes and foster a culture of respect and non-violence (Elliott, 2020). International organizations and development partners, including KVINFO, have also contributed to the efforts to address gender-based violence in Morocco. Through technical assistance, funding, and capacity-building programs, these entities have supported government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities in their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women. Societal attitudes and deeply entrenched gender stereotypes continue to perpetuate a culture of victim-blaming and silence, deterring many survivors from reporting incidents of violence or seeking support. Limited resources, insufficient training for law enforcement and judicial officials, and a lack of comprehensive data collection and monitoring systems hinder the effective implementation of existing laws and policies (Rignall, 2019). Addressing gender-based violence in Morocco requires a sustained and multi-pronged approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequality, empowers women and girls, and fosters a societal transformation toward a culture of respect, non-violence, and equal rights.

This necessitates continued legal reforms, robust implementation and enforcement mechanisms,

comprehensive support services for survivors, and long-term investments in education, awareness-raising, and community engagement.

MOUDAWANA, REALITY, AND STEREOTYPES ARE FRAGMENTED

The existing body of literature on gender equality and women's empowerment in Morocco has predominantly focused on examining the legal frameworks, implementation challenges, and public opinion at a national or general population level. However, there is a notable gap in understanding the nuanced perspectives and attitudes of specific demographic segments, particularly the youth population. This oversight is significant, as the younger generation represents the future of Moroccan society and their views on gender roles, stereotypes, and equality could shape the trajectory of progress in this realm. Through focus groups and interviews in the Fez region, stakeholders perceived a shift toward a critical approach to gender stereotypes compared to previous generations. They observed a growing recognition of the need for gender equality, suggesting a gradual evolution in societal attitudes. Further, stakeholders believe that Moroccan youth do not expect authorities or politicians to listen to their concerns regarding gender issues, leading to a sense of disempowerment and apathy. As a result, they perceived a decrease in political activism among youth, particularly on gender-related matters, as they viewed such activism as potentially dangerous or futile.

Our research aims to contribute to filling this gap by delving into the perspectives and lived experiences of Moroccan youth. Largely, this influential cohort has been overlooked in previous studies. We seek to uncover potential disconnects or alignments between the progressive legal frameworks, customary practices rooted in patriarchal norms, and the evolving gender perceptions of the younger generation. By doing so, we can better understand the generational dynamics at play and the potential for youth to serve as agents of change in accelerating progress toward genuine gender equality.

By highlighting youth perspectives, our findings can guide the development of targeted strategies that resonate with their aspirations, address their specific challenges, and harness their potential as catalysts for transformative change. Our study serves as a crucial step towards bridging the gap between legal frameworks, customary practices, and evolving societal attitudes, particularly among the youth demographic. By shedding light on this disconnect, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding that can inform more effective and inclusive approaches to achieving gender equality and women's rights in Morocco, ensuring that no segment of society is left behind in this critical endeavor.

METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in a feminist approach. Although feminist methodologies are not univocal, at the heart of feminist epistemology lie several common principles aimed at amplifying voices otherwise marginalized from research while mitigating inherent biases. Reflexivity plays a crucial role, with researchers acknowledging social locations and how these shape research (Haraway, 1988). This includes the recognition of unequal power relations present between the researcher and participants throughout the process of knowledge production. This self-awareness encourages critical examination of power dynamics and assumptions at all stages.

Participatory and collaborative designs position participants as equal knowledge creators rather than passive objects of study (Maguire, 1987). Feminist methodologies have moved beyond focusing on women as a category and emphasizing women's commonalities, which risks suppressing important differences existing among women and the diversity of experiences, in particular, silencing or erasing the voices and realities of non-Western women.
Employing intersectionality acknowledges how gender intersects with other identities like race, class, and ability, prioritizing those at the margins (Crenshaw, 1989).

Rejecting the myth of scientific knowledge being the result of objective, complete, and detached processes of experimentation, feminist epistemologies recognize and celebrate the importance of relationship, interaction, and intersubjective knowledge building when it comes to researching the social world. Feminist research therefore focuses on lived experiences and the subjective, aiming to produce situated knowledge that encompasses partiality, lived experience, and intersectionality in the process of knowledge production (Saeidzadeh, 2023).

Feminist research is a political project that seeks to challenge patriarchal inequalities by focusing on intersectionally marginalized and silenced individuals. Research outcomes aim to be transformational, directly addressing inequities rather than solely understanding issues (Lather, 1991). Feminist research therefore engages participants and stakeholders as collaborative partners through designs like participatory action research (Maguire, 1987). Feminist scholarship aims to dismantle gendered biases and produce knowledge that benefits women and gender-diverse peoples.

The research design was created collaboratively with the input of Moroccan youth members of the YPC in an attempt to include youth perspectives at each step of the project. The methods employed include semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In her seminal chapter, Ann Oakley (1981), argued for the value of the in-depth qualitative interview for feminist research. Oakley challenged the framing of the interview as an "objective" and natural scientific process, in which data were elicited from participants who told the truth of their lives, and instead set up the interview as the exemplar feminist method, locating it within feminist research, scholarship, and practice. Oakley argued that rather than viewing women respondents as objects of the researcher's gaze, feminists should develop ways of conceptualizing the interview as an encounter between women with common interests, who would share knowledge.

Feminist research has since advocated the use of in-depth interviews because they are assumed to promote a more egalitarian and less objectifying relationship between the researcher and the participants than quantitative methods (Montell, 1999). For this reason, feminist researchers tend to give priority to the practice of open-ended, semi-structured interviewing. The practice of the feminist interview centers around specific values and aims, as set out by Oakley (1981) and further elaborated by other researchers including Marjorie DeVault (1990). These values include the empowerment of research participants; voicing silenced experiences and perspectives; minimizing the power hierarchy between researcher and participant; encouraging the participant to lead research; and equal sharing of opinions, thoughts, and ideas to minimize the exploitation of the participant; and honest, open discussion of the messy, subjective nature of research when writing it up.

Central to the feminist interview has been the concept of rapport building. In Oakley's work, rapport is intended to be of a particular kind: created through mutual sharing, minimal power hierarchies, and a feeling of genuine trust between interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981).
Rapport is set up in Oakley's argument as something natural, coming from the shared trust built between women, and as something good, honest, and open. More recent scholarship however, has complicated this understanding of rapport building in the feminist interview, calling for scholars to reflect more upon the possibility of building rapport in the interview process.

Thus, Thwaites (2017) has complicated the idea of rapport building, arguing that rapport is often a performance by the researcher, which involves minimizing personally held viewpoints, controlling one's emotions to ensure they do not reveal true thoughts, or suggesting an attitude of trust and mutual understanding that may be disingenuous. Rapport in this sense can be a performance which is 'faked' for the good of the research. Duncombe and Jessop (2002) have called this "doing rapport."

Rapport as a performance by the researcher can complicate the intended goals of feminist research as an open and honest process, thus posing a challenge to genuinely following a feminist approach in the research interview. The exploitative nature of a faked rapport can put the power balance firmly back in favor of the researcher. Thwaites (2017) therefore argues that rapport has the potential to be exploitative and conflict with the widely accepted feminist research aim of equitable power sharing in interviews.

Strategic disclosure on the part of the interviewer is one way that scholars have suggested we can ensure that the interview is a more collaborative and less exploitative process. Rosalind Edwards (1990) suggests that the researcher share with the interviewee the concerns and aims that guide the research, so that the interview can unfold as a collaborative moment of making knowledge.

Kirsch (2005) argues that we need to develop realistic expectations about our interactions with participants, recognizing that they are shaped, like all human interactions, by dynamics of power, gender, generation, education, race, class, and many other factors that can contribute to feelings of misunderstanding, disappointment, and broken trust. Despite our every effort, we will occasionally cause our participants discomfort or emotional pain when we interview them.

Guided by literature on feminist interviewing and rapport building, this research acknowledges that completely erasing unequal power relations and the potential to cause discomfort to participants is an unrealistic expectation for any research design, and instead we adopted measures that attempted to minimize power divisions, and be respectful, supportive and empathic to participants.

FOCUS GROUPS

Frances Montell (1999) argues that feminist qualitative research can be strengthened and broadened through the development of feminist focus group interviews. Focus groups enable examining topics collectively where private experiences intersect with cultural narratives, surfacing dynamics of power, solidarity, and discursive construction of identities.

The interaction among participants in focus groups provides a valuable resource, particularly for studying issues around gender and sexuality. In particular, questions about gender require participants to articulate consciously about what they usually assume that "everybody knows." In a group conversation, participants may feel more comfortable bringing up different ideas without the pressure to provide a definitive answer to vague or difficult questions. Participants can build on the responses of others to spark conversation.

In a group conversation, contradictory ideas are likely to be expressed, serving as prompts for further discussion. Montell (1999) argues that this is of particular value when discussing topics related to gender as often these issues are naturalized or internalized to such an extent that it is difficult to recognize and articulate one's preconceived notions. Points of discussion or disagreement in a group setting can articulate participants' underlying assumptions, and the knowledge produced is more likely to be framed and guided by the understandings of the participants rather than those of the interviewer.

In addition, focus groups can allow for a more egalitarian dynamic than other methods. Focus groups disrupt the rigid dichotomy between interviewer and interviewee, providing the possibility of an equal exchange, which may allow research participants to contribute to a greater extent than one-on-one interviews. Although focus groups still contain a relationship of "researcher" and "researched," and the researcher still asks the questions and frames the issues of the study, this dynamic is mitigated because the main interaction will be among the participants. Each participant cannot only tell her own story, but she can also question and challenge the other participants (Montell, 1999).

Finally, group interviews provide feminists with the opportunity to conduct research that is consciousness-raising and empowering, since participation in the focus group and the opportunity to discuss inherent gender perspectives can be an empowering experience in itself.

We therefore decided to use focus groups in our research design, adopting an experimental approach with both single and mixed gender focus groups.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We aimed to create a research design guided by feminist research methodologies and recruit youth from a variety of different demographic backgrounds. Within the confines of this study, we did not attempt to recruit a representative sample of Moroccan youth, but instead aimed to include voices from different backgrounds to attempt to capture the diversity of viewpoints held by Moroccan youth.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Drawing on the database of Moroccan youth held by the Youth Policy Centre, our research design aimed to recruit youth within four different regions of Morocco - Casablanca, rural Al Haouz, Fes and Demnat - between the ages 18 and 29, from a mixture of urban, semi-rural, and rural backgrounds.

The YPC database contained the basic demographic information and contact details of approximately 800 Moroccan youth profiles collected by YPC from youth who took part in YPC activities during 2023. We intended to review the basic demographic information of profiles including gender, age and current town of residence, and reach out to eligible candidates with a call for participation consisting of a form explaining the research project and aims, the nature of the requested participation, and questions to collect further demographic information including education level, marital status, and socioeconomic status. The latter we sought to capture through questions about government support for university study and experience with travel abroad.

Basic anonymous demographic data of the finalized participant pool was analyzed to ensure sufficient diversity and representativeness across selection measures. This database audit approach aimed to systematically yet flexibly apply criteria to strategically select the most appropriate cross-section of youth voices from the available data while also prioritizing intersectionally marginalized voices, for example rural women.

We faced challenges in this initial recruitment design. This resulted in low response rates to the call for participation. We explained this by the general sensitive nature of a research project on gender issues, which we assumed led to participants being less willing to sign up to participate in the project. In addition, participation was on a voluntary basis and took place over the weekend, which involved participants giving us their time but also bearing the costs of travel to the research location, which may also explain the low response rates.

Based on this, we adapted the process that we used to recruit participants, and instead used the personal networks of the research consultants and research assistants in the different fieldwork locations to reach out more widely within their local networks. The use of personal networks was essential in gaining participant buy-in to the project. By drawing on the personal networks of the consultants and the research assistants of YPC, we included divergent identity dimensions related to religion, meaning that we made sure that we included practicing Muslim youth. However, we do not elaborate further on that dimension.

We aimed to recruit across our demographic criteria to include participants of varying:

- Genders

- Ages
- Educational backgrounds
- Socioeconomic backgrounds
- Self-designated identities (Amazigh, Arab etc.)
- Geographic areas
- Marital status

In particular, we aimed to center the experience of those most impacted by intersecting identities to explore how gender interacts with other identity facets like rurality, socioeconomic disenfranchisement, or educational barriers. We prioritized the inclusion of participants with intersecting disadvantages whose voices have historically been left out of gender and policy research projects, for example uneducated, rural women or unemployed men.
Targeting participants embodying diversified disadvantages centers on feminist commitments to dismantling simultaneous oppressions through knowledge co-created with the most impacted. This approach also recognizes gender as inextricably linked with other power dynamics. It aims toward more equitable representation and understanding through participants' vantage points at the intersecting margins.

At the point of recruitment, we explained the nature of the research project, the stated aims, and the details of what participation would involve, before obtaining the informed consent of participants.

A feminist approach to obtaining informed consent centers on ethics of care and attentiveness to power dynamics between researchers and participants. Consent was framed as an ongoing dialogic process rather than a one-time signature, emphasizing candidates' agency, expertise, and right to withdraw at any time without repercussion. Consent was sought at the point of recruitment, and again during the research process before commencing the interview or focus group.

At times, participants placed conditions on their participation. For example, during the Marrakech fieldwork, some participants in the focus groups requested the focus groups to be divided by gender, so that there was a female-only and male-only female group. During the fieldwork in Ouled Teima, a participant requested to terminate the interview before all questions were asked due to being upset, and this was respected. Our approach aimed to nurture trust, dignity, and equitable, ongoing self-determination for all involved.

We did not initially envisage using a snowballing technique to recruit participants, but this is something that naturally evolved through the process of fieldwork. Often participants would suggest that their friends or neighbors participated in the process, often as this made them feel more confident and comfortable to participate in the research. This was also a valuable tool for participation, as often participants were able to help us in recruiting harder to reach demographics.

We faced challenges in recruiting particular demographics. Working men were often busy and unable to participate. We attempted to mitigate this barrier in some instances by going to their place of work, and one interview was conducted by a YPC research assistant with a male interviewee in his shop where he worked selling vegetables. Female participants from rural areas were often uncomfortable with traveling alone to the research location on public transport, however

using snowballing techniques to recruit their friends, colleagues or neighbors allowed them to travel together and participate in the project.

Recruiting rural youth was also challenging. The fieldwork in Marrakech focused on recruiting youth who had been born and raised in rural regions of Al Haouz and Draa-Tifalet. This was achieved through one research consultant's former employment as a teacher in the region of Al Haouz, which resulted in extensive networks with youth throughout rural Morocco.

Recruiting married women was the most challenging demographic. Often, they did not have the permission of their husbands' to participate in the research or travel to an unknown location. We attempted to mitigate this challenge in Fes by holding a focus group inside a residential building. An older female resident who had existing relationships with the participants allowed us to hold the focus group within her apartment, which meant that female residents of the building were able to come to her apartment without leaving the building. In Ouled Teima, we used a women's association to help facilitate interviews with married women already involved with the association.

Continuous evaluation of the participant selection process allowed us to center the feminist principles of reflexivity, community collaboration, and ethical standards of inclusion and empowerment. Feedback was gathered regularly from participants, YPC assistants, and periodic candidate demographic reviews allowed us to ensure an accurate reflection of community diversity. Continuous evaluation thus fostered an iterative, community-informed approach to participant recruitment upholding feminist aims of equitable knowledge co-creation through situated knowledge.

Breakdown of participants

In total, we recruited 60 Moroccan youth between the ages of 18 and 29. We carried out a total of 30 individual interviews and 8 focus groups. The following infographics represent the demographic characteristics of our participants.

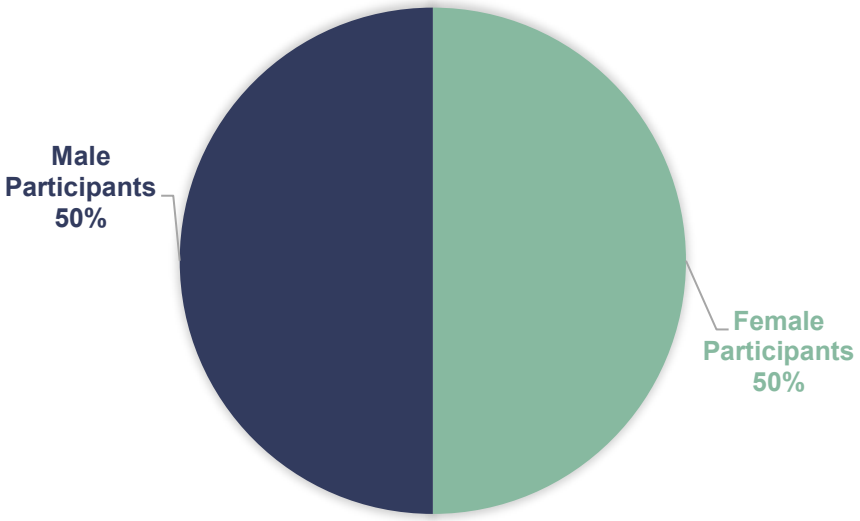


Figure 1.1 - Gender breakdown of participants

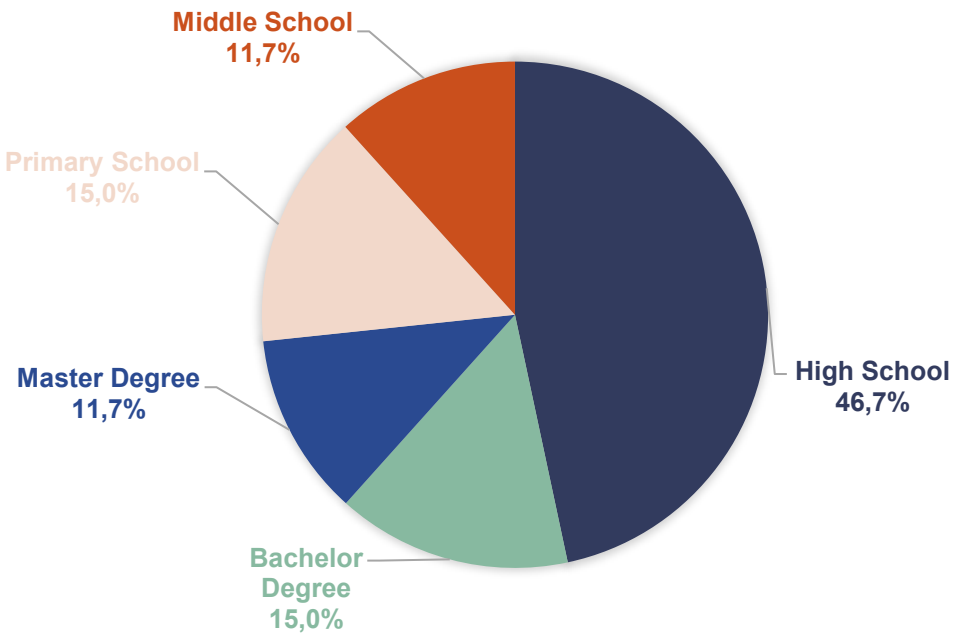


Figure 1.2 - Highest educational level achieved

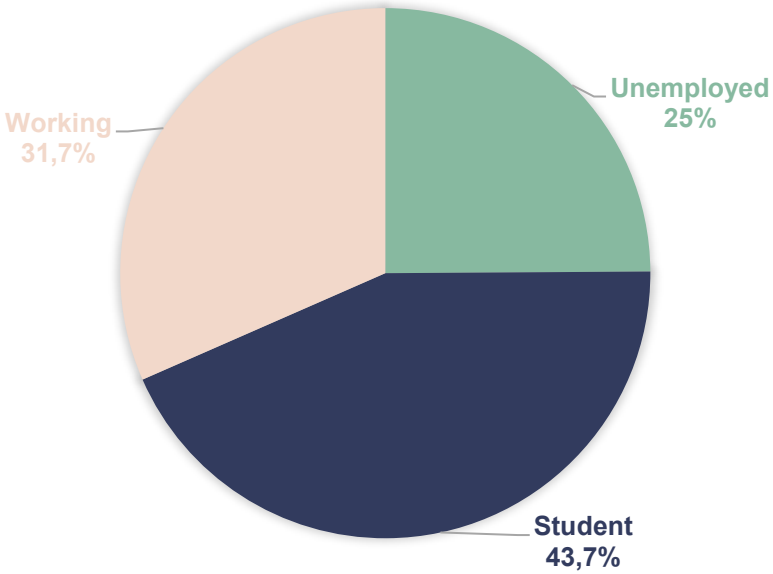


Figure 1.3 - Employment status of participants

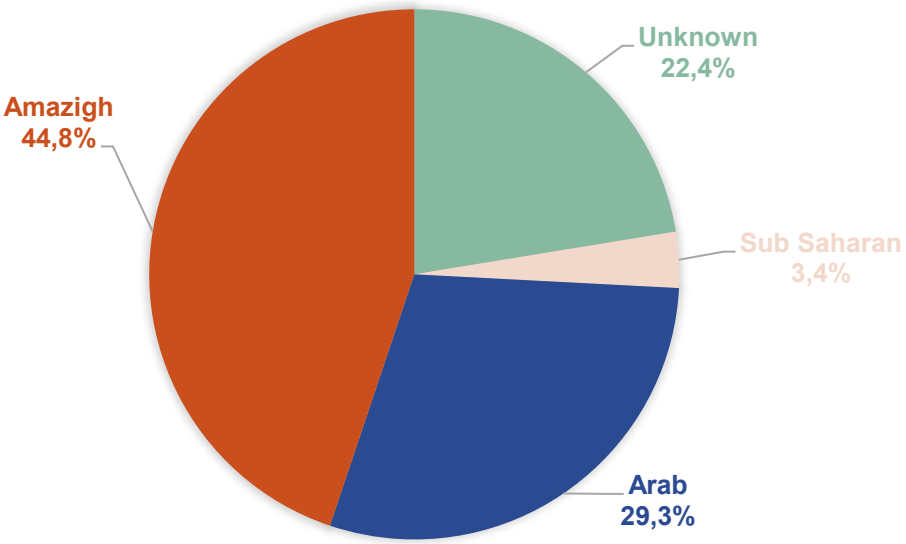


Figure 1.4 - Participants' self-declared identity

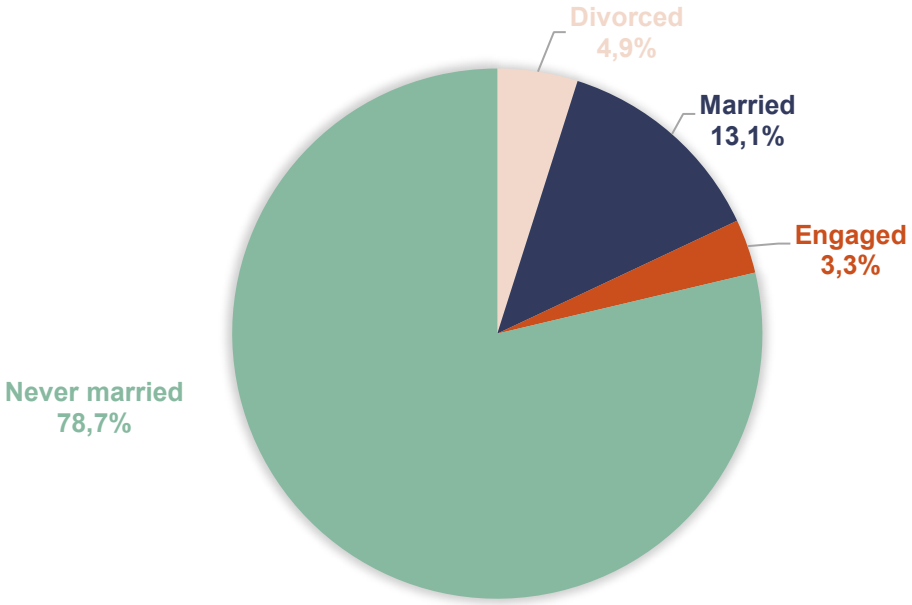


Figure 1.5 - Marital status of participants

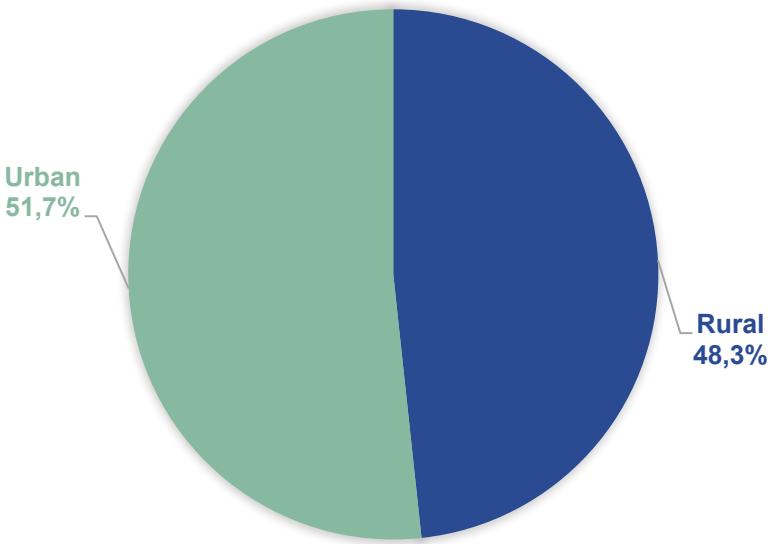


Figure 1.6 - Breakdown of youth with a rural vs. urban background

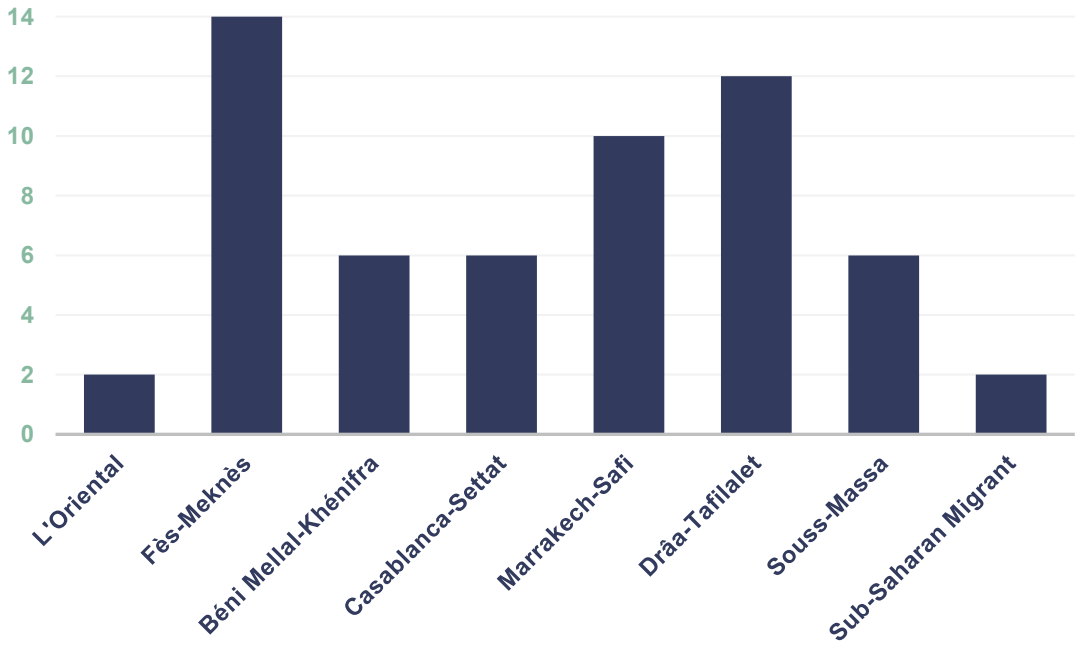
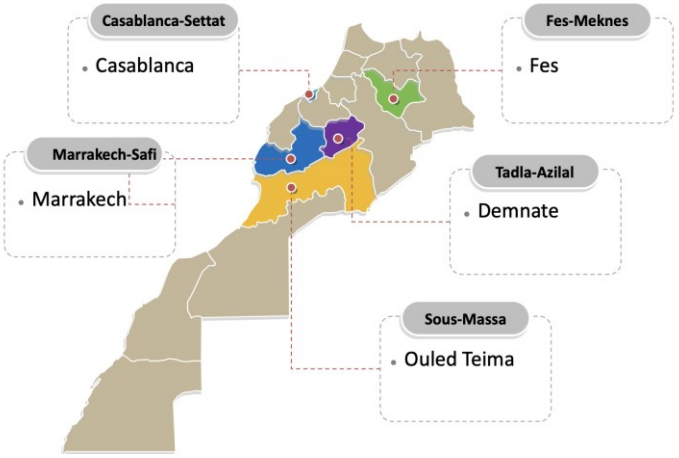


Figure 1.7 - Participant region of origin

FIELD TRIPS

We conducted fieldwork in 2024 in five different locations:

1. Casablanca on 2nd - 4th February
2. Marrakech on 9th - 11th February
3. Fes on 16th - 18th February
4. Demnat on 1st - 3rd March
5. Ouled Teima on 14th - 15th March



Through interviews and focus groups, we focused on collecting stereotypes that are prevalent in contemporary Moroccan society, participants' views on these stereotypes, personal experiences of stereotypes or gender biases, and ideas around the concept of gender equality and the promotion of women's rights.

Field trips were attended by both research consultants, with the exception of Demnat, where only one research consultant was present, and the interviews, which were carried out in Ouled Teima by an association employee, with the presence of one research assistant outside of the interview space.

Between one and three YPC research assistants attended each field trip, with the exception of Ouled Teima where no research assistants were present.

Individual Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour and were conducted by both research consultants and research assistants, with the exception of Ouled Teima where they were conducted by the director's assistant of the Federation of Ahl Rml at the request of participants. The Federation works primarily in literacy programs for women started by the state while being active in women's rights activism in the region.

The semi-structured interviews focused on exploring participants' views around gender stereotypes and gender norms in contemporary Moroccan society, their personal experiences with gender stereotypes, as well as their views on gender law reform and the concept of gender equality.

To ensure a feminist approach to interviews, YPC research assistants who conducted interviews were trained in the guiding principles of feminist interviewing. Particular focus was placed on paying attention to power dynamics, participant safety and comfort, reflexivity, and empowerment.

- **Power dynamics:** At the request of KVINFO and inspired by feminist interviewing methods, “matching” of interviewer and interviewee was carried out in a number of interviews which were conducted by YPC research assistants. By using research assistants from YPC, who are peers of interview participants, we aimed to create rapport and minimize perceived hierarchy and power imbalances between interviewer and interviewee. In the case of certain demographics, for example rural female youth, interviews were conducted with a research consultant who had a previous relationship with the participant, as this familiarity ensured their comfort and agreement to participate in the research process.

- **Safety and comfort:** Separate private rooms where others would not hear participants were used to conduct the interviews in a one-to-one setting in an attempt to make participants feel more comfortable about opening up freely about personal experiences with gender stereotypes and views on sensitive topics like law reform without fear of judgment from others.

- **Reflexivity:** Both research consultants and assistants were encouraged to reflect critically on how their social locations and biases may subtly shape interview interactions and interpretations.

- **Empowerment:** A feminist approach aimed to make the process of the research empowering for participants. Interviews were an opportunity for youth voices to inform directly evolving understandings of gender issues in their society. We hoped that participants felt their perspectives were respected and contributed meaningfully to the project, especially since the project wants to contribute meaningfully to changes in the Family Code.

In the first fieldwork in Casablanca, research assistants sat in and observed interviews conducted by the research consultants to learn from the process of watching a more experienced interviewer. We sought prior consent from participants before introducing an additional person into the interview process. Although informed consent was given, feedback from the participants after the research process was that they would have felt more comfortable without the presence of an additional person in the room, and therefore in the next fieldwork trip interviews were conducted exclusively on a one-to-one basis.

We experimented with different gender combinations in the interview process. There were instances, particularly with the rural youth during the Marrakech research trip, where participants requested to be interviewed by an interviewer of the same gender, or participants requested a single-gender focus group, and this was always respected. In general, men preferred to be interviewed by a male interviewer as they expressed they felt less judgment about their views, and a natural ‘understanding’ between male participant and male interviewer. Male participants who requested a male interviewer overall expressed more conservative or patriarchal attitudes around gender.

We provided interviewers, both research consultants and research assistants, with a series of suggested questions, grouped by topic, to guide the interview process. However, we intended the

interview to be semi-structured and interviewers were encouraged to ask questions beyond the suggested list, which followed the natural flow of the conversation and continued to explore interesting ideas expressed by the participant.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted by a moderator, who was in some fieldwork trips also accompanied by an assistant moderator, who sat with the participants around the table with the role of helping to guide the conversation, if it was deemed necessary.

The general structure of the focus groups included:

- A description of the research project, its aims, and how the focus group would unfold, as well as the discussion of certain 'ground rules,' such as respecting others' opinions and not passing judgment.
- Icebreakers aimed to create a safe space and a certain form of comfort for the participants.
- The first section of the focus group involved a discussion of phrases/idioms capturing gender stereotypes. Moderators sparked discussion with a suggested set of questions.
- The next section of the focus group involved presenting participants with memes, social media posts, and public figures to discuss participants' views and perspectives around gender dynamics. We used these examples from social media and the media as a starting point to open up the debate more broadly.
- The next section included a role-play exercise, which aimed to gather stereotypical attitudes around men and women in society.
- Finally, we concluded the session with asking participants for any final comments, or questions about the focus group or research project more generally.

In the second fieldwork trip to Marrakech, participants for the focus group arrived whilst the research team were still eating lunch. The participants were invited to sit down with the team, and this sparked conversation before the focus group occurred. We observed that having this informal conversation with the moderator and amongst participants before the focus group, was effective in helping participants feel comfortable and willing to share, so this is a model which we adopted in future fieldwork trips.

The suggested interview questions and focus group guide can be found in the Appendix.

Research assistants

This research involved research assistants from YPC in both the fieldwork and data analysis. Involving Moroccan youth in the research aimed to:

- Reduce the power imbalance between researcher and research participants through the use of peers in some of the interviews, thus creating a more dialectical exchange in line with our research methodology.
- Create a research environment that leads to better-yielded data.
- Provide an opportunity for young Moroccans to take part in qualitative research and gain skills in leading interviews and focus groups.

YPC research assistants took part in conducting fieldwork interviews, moderating focus groups and the transcription and translation of interviews and focus group discussions.

Training for research participants was carried out through a series of online sessions by both KVINFO and the research consultants, which included:

- Guiding principles of feminist interviewing
- Pilot interview practice
- How to run a focus group discussion
- Reflections on reflexivity and positionality

STRENGTHS

The strengths of our youth selection and recruitment are that we succeeded in recruiting youth from a wide range of demographics, in particular representing the voices of rural Amazigh youth who are often excluded from similar studies. Through accessing networks of youth from the rural Draa-Tafilalet region living in Marrakech, we were able to represent youth from this marginalized region.

Interviewed youth expressed that they enjoyed and valued the opportunity to participate in the project and felt that the experience was meaningful. For rural and uneducated youth, a number of participants expressed that they had never before been asked about their opinion on these topics or had somebody value or listen to their ideas.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to acknowledge several limitations inherent in this qualitative study examining gender stereotypes among Moroccan youth. Firstly, the nature of the subject matter itself presents challenges. Exploring deeply ingrained societal norms, beliefs, and perceptions surrounding gender roles and stereotypes is a complex endeavor. These notions are often deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and historical contexts, making it difficult to capture their nuances and complexities fully within the scope of a single study, which is why this is the starting point for a larger, multifaceted project.

Furthermore, while valuable for generating rich qualitative data, the research instruments employed, primarily focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews may be subject to certain inadequacies. Social desirability bias could influence participants' responses, where they provide answers perceived as more socially acceptable than their true beliefs. Additionally, the dynamics of focus group settings may lead to groupthink or hesitancy in expressing divergent views, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives captured.

It is also essential to recognize the limitations inherent in the qualitative research approach itself. While qualitative methods excel at providing in-depth insights and nuanced understandings, they may lack the generalizability and representativeness of quantitative studies with larger sample sizes. The researchers' personal biases and perspectives, despite efforts to maintain objectivity, can potentially influence the data collection and analysis processes.

Turning to the specific limitations related to participant selection and recruitment, this study was constrained by time and resource factors, limiting the research cohort to 60 youth from seven

different regions of Morocco. Future studies on gender stereotypes among Moroccan youth would benefit from working with a larger participant group and including perspectives from a wider range of geographic and demographic locations. Within the existing time and funding constraints, the researchers could not engage with youth from all 12 regions of Morocco.

Moreover, the study acknowledges the limited representation of married and divorced participants, who constitute an important segment of Moroccan youth. While 18% of the participants fell into this category, future research should prioritize the voices of married and divorced individuals, as reforms to the Family Code significantly affect the rights of married women. The lessons learned during this study's recruitment process can guide future efforts to engage with these demographics more effectively.

Despite these limitations, the researchers have taken steps to mitigate their impact and ensure the rigor and quality of the study. We employed triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and reflexive practices to address potential biases and enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Additionally, the limitations identified in this study can serve as valuable insights for future research endeavors, guiding the refinement of research instruments, participant recruitment strategies, and methodological approaches to explore this complex and multifaceted topic comprehensively.

KEY FINDINGS

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

During our fieldwork in Fes, the research team was joined by the two KVINFO researchers collaborating on the project, who carried out three focus groups and one interview in Fes with stakeholders involved with youth or youth policy within the Fes region.

SFG1: The first stakeholder focus group included two university professors, two secondary school teachers and one imam.

SFG2: The second stakeholder focus group included one university professor and two secondary school teachers.

SFG3: The third stakeholder focus group included two members of Citoyen de Rue, an NGO that works towards the reintegration of street children, and a member of the Youth Policy Center (YPC) who is also a member of the Youth Sounding Board of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP).

SI1: The individual interview was conducted with a female head of the Gender Studies Program at the Université Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Fez.

During the stakeholder focus groups, three key themes came through:

1. Stakeholders perceived there to be movement occurring regarding gender stereotypes and believed that youth today approach gender stereotypes in a more critical way than previous

generations. They also perceived there to be more recognition of the need for gender equality.

2. Stakeholders emphasized that the approach among youth varies according to social class and geographical area. They perceived that the upper middle classes and the well-educated are leaning more towards a critical stance and support for gender equality.
3. Stakeholders believed that youth do not expect authorities or politicians to listen to them regarding gender issues and/so they find activism too risky. Therefore, they perceived that apathy has increased among youths – or at least political activism has decreased.

The individual interview was conducted with a female professor who was employed to initiate the Gender Studies Program at Université Mohammed Ben Abdallah and has been working at the university for almost 18 years. She reflected on student attitudes towards gender equality, dividing her time at the university into three broad phases. The first phase was from 2006-2010, in the years following the 2004 reform of the Moudawana. She characterized this as a period of resistance and conflict from the students, where they did declared themselves in opposition to the idea of gender equality. The second phase was from 2010-2011, which she characterized as a period of listening and questions. This gave way to the third and current phase, which she described as a period of change and openness towards gender and gender equality. However, students within the department and wider university are not homogeneous and hold varying views on gender stereotypes. Male students who identify as feminists exist alongside female students who hold a conservative approach to masculinity.

Based on the discussions held with stakeholders involved in the youth and gender space, we expected that the youth we interviewed might express critical views on the existence of gender stereotypes within contemporary Moroccan society, with youth supporting the concept of gender equality. At the same time, we expected that youth coming from different geographic, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds would express varying views on gender stereotypes, with rural and less-educated youth holding more patriarchal or conservative views.

YOUTH INTERVIEWS

Guide to Interview Codes

Interviews were coded to retain the anonymity of participants and were assigned a letter code based on location, and number code based on participant number at each location.

- C coded interviews represent Casablanca
- M coded interviews represent Marrakech
- F coded interviews represent Fes
- D coded interviews represent Demnat
- OT coded interviews represent Ouled Teima

Deeply Entrenched Gender Expectations

Across all locations, participants agreed that there is a strong prevalence of deeply entrenched gender roles and rigid expectations for men and women in Moroccan society.

The participants consistently highlight that men are expected to be the primary breadwinners, decision-makers, and authority figures, while women's roles are largely confined to domestic responsibilities, childcare, and maintaining the household. This patriarchal ideology underpins societal norms and shapes gender dynamics within families, which grounds the deeply-rooted societal expectations. Hence, these patriarchal discourses continue to be pervasive in today's Morocco.

Interviews and focus groups reveal deeply entrenched and persistent gender norms and expectations that permeate Moroccan society. These societal norms dictate distinct spheres of responsibility and behavior for men and women, rooted in patriarchal discourses and cultural traditions.

As a response to the question of "how does Moroccan society define a 'real' man?" the most common ideas expressed around men and masculinity were that men should be strong command respect and authority and be harsh (expressed in Moroccan Arabic as *hrash* and Amazigh as *ichqa*).

Men were seen to be defined by their job and their ability to provide financially and expected to exhibit emotional restraint, suppress vulnerabilities, and project an image of control and leadership. According to interviewees, deviations from these masculine ideals are often met with societal judgment and labeling of men as "feminine" or lacking in masculinity. The participants reveal a pervasive and narrowly defined ideal of masculinity that is deeply ingrained in Moroccan society.

Note that quotes in this section represent participants from differing demographic backgrounds; Casablanca participants quoted here (C-coded) were students or youth already holding Bachelor or Master degrees, from urban backgrounds, and Marrakech participants quoted in this section (M-coded) were from rural areas of Drâa-Tafilalet and Al Haouz with limited educational experience. Despite this, participants expressed similar views on masculinity reflecting the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes across demographics.

> *C_01: "usually man is considered a man that is strong, is demanding and demands respect a lot and has a lot of money in a really good job and status."*
>
> *C_04: "apart from keeping his word, we can say that the characteristics of a man are strength, behavior, attitude and personality, he is stronger."*
>
> *C_05: " a man is someone who is reliable, someone who does the hard work, someone who will provide."*
>
> *C_08: "in society, men are known for being tough and leading their families."*
>
> *M_03: "boys need to be strong. You don't have to cry in front of any girl, you always need to be strong. And he's responsible for everything. Every*

hard work, the man is responsible. They are more powerful than girls, if they say something, you have to do it directly."

M_01: "the man should be the one taking care of the expenses. That's one of the masculine roles I told you women shouldn't occupy."

M_04: "a real man works. He has his house, his car, he has his family and he is married."

Participants highlight the expectation for men to maintain a stoic demeanor, uphold their word, and exhibit strength without overt displays of emotion or vulnerability. Emotional expression is often perceived as a sign of weakness, contradicting the idealized notion of masculinity.

The participants also underscore the belief that men should embody dominance, authority, and decision-making power within the family and society.

M_06: "he should be harsh, it is a necessity for the man to be tough."

M_01: "to be masculine means to be strong."

M_02: "a man is someone who can protect his family and kids, the shield for them, who is reliable and the problem solver."

M_07: men are defined by "work, hard work, and not just sitting down like women. Women are meant to sit down but men are supposed to work and go out to look for work. If he works, then he is a man."

F_01: masculinity "is providing, being the head of the house, being the man of the house. How the males define it, you're the one in charge, taking over like in the household."

M_04: "if men in Morocco say something, it means this is the truth. We don't have to judge them. Normally in Morocco men are so harsh, if he says something it means he is right. So the stereotype is that men are so harsh (ich9a) and if he says something, he is in control, he is the boss."

As a response to "how does Moroccan society define a 'real' woman?" participants' expectations of women is that they embody gentleness, physical limitations, and a focus on maintaining their appearance and respectability within the domestic realm. Women were defined as weaker, both physically and emotionally, and a good woman was portrayed as obedient, a good mother and cook, and one who supported their husband. According to participants, women's behavior, dress, and interactions in public spaces are often subject to scrutiny and judgment based on societal expectations of modesty and propriety. There emerges a pervasive idealization of femininity that is intrinsically linked to notions of modesty, nurturing, and domesticity. These ideals shape societal expectations and dictate appropriate behaviors, appearances, and roles for women within Moroccan society.

> *M_01: a woman is defined by "her way of speaking and her gentle nature. Additionally, she may not be able to engage in physically demanding tasks, like lifting heavy objects."*
>
> *M_03: "they [men] prefer the girl to stay just at home and to look after her children, her husband and the house. She shouldn't have to do something difficult because the husband will take the responsibility of money."*
>
> *M_06: "femininity is when a married woman takes good care of her house and her husband. And she should be obeying her husband and his family."*

Participants illustrate the expectation of modest dress and behavior for women, as well as restrictions on their mobility and interactions with men, based on interpretations of gender stereotypes, customary law, and cultural norms.

Women are perceived as gentle, nurturing figures who are better suited to domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles within the family. Their value is often defined by their ability to maintain the household and provide emotional support, rather than their potential for professional or leadership roles. Furthermore, the transcripts highlight the societal expectation of women prioritizing their domestic roles over career aspirations or financial independence. This is exemplified in statements such as:

> "A capable woman is defined by her adept management of family affairs in her husband's absence, attentiveness to childcare, and dignified presentation. Conversely, the perception of masculinity in women may stem from sartorial choices resembling male attire, adopting a confident vocal demeanor, or engaging in traditionally male-dominated professions such as cafe work. It's crucial to recognize that these stereotypes and judgments may vary across different locales, with nuances observed between urban centers and smaller communities. In cafes, you find women who want to quit their jobs because of their difficult situations, and I sympathize with them. However, some women are judged or involved in less reputable occupations, perpetuating harmful stereotypes." (D_06)
>
> "Usually they are defined as a woman who is obeying her husband, or obeying whoever she is in front of, and then a woman that knows how to cook and clean." (C_01)

Interviews also revealed the pervasive belief that men should have authority and control within the household and society, while women's rights and choices are often restricted or violated by these patriarchal norms. This is exemplified in statements such as:

> "There's also another belief, not exactly a proverb, but one often heard: since the day women started taking charge of families, society has worsened. I often hear this discourse in working-class neighborhoods,

where women typically take care of the children, given that the father is absent. My parents are teachers in one of these neighborhoods, and when a problem arises at school, the mother always believes her son is the victim and thus spoils him. People fail to see that these women struggle to raise their children; they don't even have stable jobs. They believe that without a man, children will be poorly educated. However, in the absence of the woman, we don't hear such comments. They place the blame only on the woman." (C_06)

"We live in a society where men believe they know everything and have the right to do as they please, while women's rights are violated." (OT_6)

A logical vs. emotional binary when describing male vs. female characteristics was common. This was seen by respondents as a biological difference between women and men that made women less suited to certain roles and professions. Women's supposed emotional nature was also used as justification for why men were better suited to being the decision makers and problem solvers within the household.

C_06: men are defined by "rationality, because they won't use their emotions 100%. For femininity, it's about being empathetic and using emotions".

C_05: "the woman is the emotional side. The emotional support because if you're doing the hard work, you need something to calm your nervous system."

C_07: "manhood is … having a sense of initiative to solve problems, not being emotional in the problem."

C_08: "women are recognized for their emotional sensitivity."

M_03: "women are so emotional, and when there is a difficult situation, they think with their hearts more than with their mind."

M_02: "womanhood is being emotional and soft."
M_04: "women are emotional, and men are harsh."

F_02: "women speak from emotions more, they have logic of course! - but they speak with emotions more than logic, but men are the opposite."

Participant in Casablanca focus group: "men make more sense and the women are more emotional."

There is a prevalent belief that women's primary responsibilities lie within the domestic sphere and that their financial independence or professional aspirations are secondary to their roles as obedient wives and homemakers. While some participants acknowledged the potential for women

to transcend these patriarchal gender roles, the overwhelming narrative across the transcripts reinforces the idealization of femininity as embodying modesty, nurturing qualities, and a primary focus on domestic responsibilities. This narrow idealization of femininity is deeply rooted in religious interpretations, cultural traditions, and patriarchal power structures that have historically confined women's roles to the private sphere. It contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequalities, limiting women's opportunities and reinforcing their subordinate status within Moroccan society.

Our findings regarding the continued existence of gender roles and norms within society and the nature of these norms as described by participants was largely in line with our expectations based on the literature.

Generational Shifts and Changing Gender Dynamics

While gender roles and expectations remain deeply entrenched, the participants also reveal generational shifts and evolving attitudes among younger generations. There is a recognition of women's increasing participation in education and the workforce, as well as a gradual embracing of more egalitarian perspectives. However, these shifts are often met with resistance and societal reservations, highlighting the tensions between patriarchal and changing gender dynamics.

While the participants reveal the deep-rooted nature of patriarchal gender roles and rigid masculinity/femininity ideals in Moroccan society, they also capture an undercurrent of generational shifts and evolving perspectives, particularly among younger participants. This theme highlights the tensions and complex negotiations surrounding changing gender dynamics and the gradual embracing of more egalitarian values.

Several transcripts feature voices that challenge or critique the restrictive nature of gender norms and expectations. For instance, a 20-year-old female participant expresses disagreement with the notion of women being inherently emotional or unsuited for leadership roles:

> “I handled it by trying to reason with him first...if women are emotional and can't live in positions of power in society, why are there a lot of girls in this class who study, who got good grades in their baccalaureate, and do attend now preparatory classes?” (C_02)

This quote reflects a more progressive perspective that questions the patriarchal gender stereotypes and advocates for recognizing women's capabilities and potential beyond the domestic sphere.

This participant was from an urban background, studying for a Master’s degree. This fit within a general pattern where critical perspectives on gender stereotypes were expressed most frequently by urban, educated participants from more affluent socioeconomic backgrounds.
Similarly, a 20-year-old male participant challenges the expectation of men suppressing their emotions, recognizing the psychological harm caused by such rigid masculinity norms:

> “Men are often perceived as being tougher than women. For example, when there's a problem in the family, women may express their emotions by crying. This is often seen as women being controlled by their emotions and femininity, while men are thought to be controlled by their masculinity.” (M_01)

This statement illustrates a more nuanced understanding of the detrimental effects of forcing men and boys to conform to narrow definitions of masculinity, suggesting a willingness to embrace a broader range of emotional expressions.

However, these progressive voices are often met with resistance and skepticism from participants who hold more patriarchal views. For example, when challenged about limiting women's opportunities, one participant responds:

> “I believe in the law, in tradition, women and men are not considered the same, therefore, they cannot be equal, you can't say a lock is equal to water?” (C_01)

This participant reflects the belief in distinct and unequal gender roles, rooted in cultural traditions and laws, highlighting the resistance to embracing gender equality and changing dynamics. Despite this resistance, they capture a gradual recognition of women's increasing participation in education and the workforce, as well as their potential to contribute beyond the domestic sphere. This is evident in statements such as this one, which came from a 19-year-old male participant from the rural South East who had never been to school:

> “Yes, it’s possible, the woman works too, so can the man cook and do the dishes, I know how to cook and do the house chores. If she works I’d stay home and take care of the house until she comes and I go to work as well.” (M_07)

While this quote still frames women's value within the context of family and caregiving roles, it acknowledges their importance and suggests a shift towards granting them more respect and recognition.

The participants also reveal generational differences in attitudes towards gender equality and power dynamics within relationships. Younger participants seem more open to the idea of shared decision-making and equal rights, while older generations express concerns about disrupting patriarchal power structures:

> “I believe it creates better relations because now you are considered equal in all domains. Now you don't have to use the things that you have to manipulate someone else to do what you like.” (C_01)

> “If they are not equal, they are always going to be someone higher and someone lower. Or they cannot be in the same equation. It's like the master and the slave.” (C_01)

These contrasting quotes highlight the tensions and diverging perspectives across generations, with younger individuals more receptive to egalitarian relationships and shared power dynamics, while older participants fear the potential erosion of patriarchal hierarchies and male authority. While patriarchal gender roles and expectations remain deeply entrenched, there is an undercurrent of generational shifts, particularly among younger participants, who are more willing to challenge regressive norms and embrace more progressive values surrounding gender equality and fluid gender expression. However, this process of change is met with resistance and tensions, reflecting the deep-rooted nature of patriarchal ideologies and the complexities involved in negotiating evolving societal attitudes.

Gender stereotypes as positive or negative influences on youths' lives

Participants held mixed opinions on whether these stereotypes were positive or negative in their own lives. Overall, men expressed more criticism of gender stereotypes and the negative impact they have on their lives. This was an unexpected result of the study, since the majority of research around gender stereotypes in Morocco and the wider MENA region has focused on the negative impact they have on women's lives.

Both men and women from urban and rural backgrounds expressed that men's inability to express their emotions due to the perceived stereotype that this would make them appear weak was something harmful.

> C_02, a female participant, expressed*: “my cousin [male] who I saw being taught that he shouldn't cry and stuff. It's very harmful. He will grow up always bottling up stuff, it's bound to break at some point. It's something that shouldn't be taught at all. If you want to cry, you should cry.”*
>
> She later went on to say that we should *“get rid of all those internalized beliefs that are limiting them [men] internalized anger, internalized sadness. Which will not let them flourish in their life.”*
>
> M_03, a female participant from rural Al Haouz said: *“they can cry. They are all human and have all have tough times. So for me it's okay. They can cry. I won't say he's weak. Because I cry every day. Normal. If he has a hard time and pressure, you can't control the time that you cry. It's normal.”*
>
> F_01, a male participant who migrated to Morocco from Nigeria: *“I see it wrong. Men are required to not feel too emotional in certain cases of tragedy. You feel the pain of the loss. It's not only females that are feeling the hearts of the person that has been lost. Men you are required not to cry. Not to mourn.*

This is a harmful thing for men, they tell us men don't cry, you don't show some sort of weakness, they see you showing emotion as weakness. Talking about your own problems, it's seen as weakness, you're supposed to just put your head up, you know, do the job, you're not supposed to show any form of like, they call it weakness, you know?"

Men also expressed feeling a pressure to do, or not do, certain things in order to be considered 'a man.' Men felt that women expected them to be 'harsh' and in control, and this was not always in line with their personality.

D_03, a female participant: *"women love hearing "no" from their man even if they still do whatever they want."*

This interaction happened with a female participant from rural Al Haouz:

Interviewer: *"what happens if in the relationship the man doesn't have power, what would people say about him?*

M_03: *the girl would say he's not a man.*

Interviewer: *So even if it's her own husband, and he's not being harsh with her?*

M_03: *yes. We have this idea that boys need to be harsh.*

If in a couple a girl tells him, I'm going out with my friends who are boys, and he always says yes, yes, yes, even if they are happy together and happy in their relationship, people will say her boyfriend is like a girl. He's not harsh.

If boys are so nice and like a girl, he will feel sad about it and not good when other people judge him saying 'oh, you need to be harsh,' but he's not harsh in his personality."

At times, men expressed they may wish to do certain things, for example be a stay at home father, or allow their partner to take on more financial responsibilities, but they felt unable to do this due to the anticipated negative reaction of society.

F_01, a male participant, talked about a scenario in a café where a woman attempted to pay for him: *"it's a very awkward situation to be in, because society, it's not about my opinion, I think there's this pressure from society on certain genders. It's really no matter what my opinion is or what I believe, anytime I see a lady trying to do that, I feel like everyone around me is looking at me to stop her from doing that. I may be okay with it. But that pressure just stops me from doing what I want to do.*

The norms, the ideology of the society has made it difficult for people to voice out their opinions and be like, I'm okay with this. So I might be okay with it, but I don't think the environment I'm in would allow me to voice my opinion and say, okay, I'm okay with this. So I am forced to stop her."

In particular, men talked about the burden they feel, when women expect them to be the financial provider - which they felt was not in line with the economic reality in Morocco. Men at times described women as materialistic and motivated by money in a marriage.

C_08: *"women can be materialistic and gravitate towards wealthier men. In human society, financial security often symbolizes protection, but I don't agree with this concept. The pursuit of wealth can undermine family ties and reduce financial relationships."*

C_01: *"no matter what you do, what you know, what your skills are, they always have one fixed expectation, is that men should find a really good job, and they pay for the whole family."*

C_05: *"the woman has to be able to provide for herself and not truly rely on the man. But I guess it's how they grew up. They see the image of their father and they try to look for that."*

M_06: *"women often have this greed as their eyes get opened and bigger. I think it's because women have a lot of desires and are too demanding when it comes to men. They try to look more appealing to men that are rich, to attract rich men with cars. The girl chooses the material stuff such as clothes, brunch, makeup, a phone, someone to provide for her. That's why she ends up putting on makeup and all to attract men with money."*

Female participants from rural backgrounds voiced more support for gender stereotypes, in particular the expectation that a man would provide, do the hard work, and take on burdens and responsibilities, which were seen as something positive.

When asked if gender stereotypes had a negative influence on her life, M_03, a female rural participant replied:

"no actually I think positive more than negative. Because when you are a girl, when you have a heavy thing, boys will say 'let me help you.' Not because you can't take it, because you are a girl, so it's a good thing to help.

And also on the bus, when a girl comes in the bus, without even thinking about it a boy will say take this seat.

And also when you have a problem, if you just say to a boy 'I need your help,' they will help you directly because you are a girl but if a boy asked

him the same he won't help him because they think that, we are like princesses, they respect us."

Other female participants, particularly urban women, expressed the negative impact that gender stereotypes had on their own lives. They expressed disagreement with what they considered to be restrictive ideas, highlighting the unfairness of limiting women's opportunities and the emotional and psychological toll of repressing emotions in men and boys.

These participants highlighted the pervasive societal judgments and rigid expectations surrounding gender roles and behaviors. Women who deviate from patriarchal norms, such as pursuing careers or exhibiting assertive behaviors, are frequently labeled as "masculine" and face scrutiny. They expressed the intense societal pressure women face to adhere to strict standards of modesty, domesticity, and nurturing roles, and that failure to conform to these expectations can result in harsh judgments and criticism.

Interviews revealed the pervasive scrutiny and policing of women's behavior, dress, and interactions with men, based on societal notions of propriety and *hchouma* (shame). This is exemplified in statements such as:

> "I struggled with *hchouma*[1] with my own family. I was not allowed to do many things such as going out without my mom; I was not allowed to stay with my friends." (OT_3)

Women who pursue educational or professional aspirations beyond the domestic sphere may face resistance, dismissal, or even disrespect from those upholding patriarchal gender roles and expectations. The pervasive societal judgments and rigid expectations surrounding gender roles and behaviors create a climate of pressure and scrutiny for both men and women in Moroccan society. These rigid norms dictate appropriate conduct, appearance, and interactions, and deviations from these prescribed roles are often met with criticism, labeling, and even harassment.

This culture of judgment and rigid expectations contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequalities and the suppression of individual expression and autonomy. It reinforces the patriarchal power structures and patriarchal gender ideologies that have historically confined women's roles and limited the range of acceptable behaviors for men. While there are glimpses of resistance and challenges to these rigid norms, particularly from younger generations, the transcripts reveal the deeply entrenched nature of societal judgments and expectations surrounding gender roles in Moroccan society. Breaking free from these restrictive norms and embracing a more inclusive and fluid understanding of gender expression remains an ongoing challenge.

Gender norms that stick

A particular gender norm that received widespread support from both male/female and urban/rural participants was that the woman should stay home after giving birth for at least a couple of years.

[1] Arabic for shaming

Interestingly, even participants that expressed support for both men and women having equal rights to work outside the home expressed agreement with this norm, with very few exceptions. This indicated that although there is norm change occurring around women working outside the home, these norms reverted back to more patriarchal models when the idea of children was introduced to the family.

It should be noted that the statements below were given by participants who were not yet married.

C_05, an urban male participant expressed*: "I don't want her to stay home. I prefer that she does something."*

However, when asked about if his wife gave birth, he qualified: *"that's the tricky thing, because especially in the early stage, someone has to take care of them."*

M_01, who also expressed support for women working outside the home said: *"it's better for the mother to stay at home during the early years of childhood."*

M_02, a male participant said*: "after giving birth, a woman should stay at home and take care of her kid because her body would be exhausted as well, so her going to work and the husband staying home does not make any sense, it's actually less manly for him to do that in this case, but when the kid grows up, you both can help each other and take care of the household together."*

M_07*: "if there are kids, yes it's better for her to stay at home and take care of the kids of course. The man would work for her and provide for her.*

Interviewer: what if she prefers work over staying at home taking care of children?

M_07: of course, the kids come first of course. She stays at home."
F_02, a male participant, said*: "I don't care if she chooses work or to stay at home, that's her choice.*

When asked: if you had a newborn, would you rather she stays at the house or you?

He replied: *for me I prefer she stays at home. As they say the mother is the first school, so of course she will be the one to raise them."*

A male participant in Casablanca Focus Group 1 said: *"I don't mind my wife working however I think raising children comes first and that there things that way better for my wife to do than her job like raising our children."*

Religion in gender stereotypes

Religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and social conditioning are significant in shaping and reinforcing gender norms and expectations in Moroccan society. Participants approached the topic of religion in different ways. Those from rural areas were more likely to draw on religious texts, and cite Islamic teachings and practices to explain, and provide support for, the existence of gender stereotypes and to justify or reinforce their beliefs about masculinity, femininity, and appropriate behaviors for men and women.

They for example explained women's space as be limited to the home or restrictions on women's dress, for example, as rooted in religious teachings that aimed to protect the value of women and spare them from the suffering of hard work outside the home, rather than erode it.

Note that the majority of quotes in this section come from participants interviewed in Marrakech who came from rural backgrounds.

> M_04: *"in Islam we have that it's better for a woman to stay home. But it's not because a man doesn't respect her, it's the opposite, it's because he doesn't want her to suffer. He will say it's better for you to stay home. Men are strong. They will do the hard work."*

> M_01: *"when it comes to women and in Islam, women are expected to dress modestly in public, covering their bodies appropriately. Ultimately, it's essential that both men and women understand their limits and act accordingly, as a lack of respect can result from not respecting these cultural and religious norms."*

> Female participant in Marrakech Focus Group 1: *"...it is even forbidden in Islam for a woman to even go out and be in the same space with men, and even in certain circumstances she doesn't need to work because she has a man why would she need to work."*

Religious teachings were also seen in this sense as providing protection for women from exploitation and harassment.

> M_01: *"in a Muslim country like ours, relationships should adhere to legal frameworks to ensure women's rights are protected. Otherwise, entering into relationships without legal recognition can lead to exploitation, where the man may take advantage of the girl."*

Some participants saw religion as significant for promoting negative or harmful gender stereotypes, but explained this as misguided interpretations of religious texts or males subverting religious teachings as a way to oppress women.

> M_04: *"there is one hadith which says 'Naqis-ul-Aqal And Naqis-ud-din.' And they have this stereotype of women in the region. That when a woman's husband says something to her, it means that he is right more than her. So if he says something, she needs to do it. like this.*

Men understand it wrong. 'Naqis-ul-Aqal And Naqis-ud-din' means that girls are emotional, in some situations, they think with their hearts and not with their minds. It doesn't mean that men are more intelligent than women, and it also doesn't mean that whatever they say is true. We are also intelligent, in a different way. Men understand this hadith wrong.

There is another hadith: 'al-rijal qawwamun 'ala al-nisa.' It is like 'the man is more powerful than the woman.' But men understand it in the wrong way. They use it to mean that the place of the woman is in the house."

Thus, religion or sacred texts do not provide a unified answer to gender stereotypes.

Gender equality or gender complementarity?

The issue of gender equality and its implications for power dynamics within relationships and society emerges as a complex and contentious topic. In general, there was widespread verbal support from participants – both male and female, urban and rural – for gender equality.

Even demographics that expressed the most conservative views, for example rural, uneducated males, initially agreed when asked if they agreed in gender equality.

M_05, an uneducated male from the rural Draa region said: "*gender equality for men is a great thing, it is fair and good and it reinforces the respect and understanding between the man and the woman."*

Interestingly, when interviewers posed the follow up question of whether gender equality meant that women and men were the same, participants unanimously disagreed. Although gender equality is not understood as women and men being 'the same,' there is a common conception in Morocco that gender equality means women and men being 'kif kif,' (*the same)* in their roles and behaviors, as well as their rights, access and opportunities. We therefore formulated the question in this way to enquire more deeply about participants' opinions and/or reservations regarding the concept of gender equality, or the term 'equality' as opposed to 'justice' or 'rights.'

An interview with M_03, a female youth from rural Al Haouz, is a good example of this:

Interviewer: "when you say you agree with equality, do you mean that women and men are the same?

M_03: actually no. For me, equality it's about respect.

Interviewer: do you think there is a difference between women and men being the same, and women and men respecting each other? Can they respect each other, even if they're not the same?

M_03: I think they are equal, but each one in his way. Men can do the hard things, take the responsibility. And women, they are taking more care. I

think men and women are not the same. But when they understand each other, they try to understand the differences that they have, I think this is the solution to everything. Each one is good in his path. They are not the same but also they are good in their path. And each one can choose what he wants, but they are not the same."

How participants defined gender equality varied. The data reveals a range of perspectives, from those who advocate for women's rights and equal opportunities to those who express concern or resistance toward granting more power and autonomy to women. Overall, understandings amongst youth of all demographics were more in line with concepts of gender complementarity or gender justice.

F_02: "for me the definition of equality is different, I wouldn't call it equality, I would more likely call it justice, gender justice, so everyone gets their rights, but not really in an 'equality' type of way. For example, if we want total equality we will be talking also about equality in some occupations, like in construction work, when we don't see a lot of women there, why don't we go out and protest why women do not take these hard and dangerous jobs like man do? That's why I said everyone has their role and job, and to not interfere with our roles, it's better to call it justice. If we start looking into equality, we will be obligated to make a balance in numbers. 50/50 is not always good."

Overall, youth believed that women and men are not and should not be the same. C_01 is a male student from an urban background, and M_04 is a female student from a rural background. However, these express similar views.

M_04: "I won't say that equality means that men and women are the same, because they are not the same. We can't be equal, because we are not the same."

C_01: "I believe in the law, in tradition, women and men are not considered the same, therefore, they cannot be equal. The laws that apply to them and laws that apply to them are too different, and the traditions that apply to them are too different, two different roles in different sides, you can't say you are the same, you can't measure them among each other, they are just too different."

Men and women were seen as each having defined roles in society and existing in a relationship of responsibilities and rights, with each gender having their own defined roles and rights.

D_03: "women more emotional? Yes, of course men can be emotional but he still thinks logically most of the time, and there shouldn't be equality for this exact reason because we need each other and their own roles."

F_01: "we can never be the same. We're two different beings, our physical structures, how we look, we are both typically different. It's all about

support, gender equality is giving women the same rights, but not the place as men."

Youth across the board generally did not wish to dismantle gender roles and believed each gender should remain within their prescribed roles. However, crucially, they believed these roles had equal value and should command equal respect. These quotes come from across four fieldwork locations but express similar ideas.

C_08, a male medical student from an urban background*: "giving women this equality is not acceptable. Everyone should have their rightful place."*

F_01, a male Nigerian student living in Morocco*: "women should be offered the same opportunities as men. But in the home a woman deciding to be the head of the house. It's not meant to be. A man is supposed to be the head of the house. He makes the decisions. We sit and we discuss, but it should be the man having the final say."*

D_04, a working female from a rural background*: "I think it's a very weird thing for us be [considered the same], we should have equality but women should stay women and stay doing feminine things, But the equality that women should do things that men do and vice versa is not good, they should still be able to do many things but in the context of their own gender, when it comes to inheritance we find that women benefit more than men."*

OT_1, a married female from a rural background *: "females are not supposed to behave like men no matter what she gets to do, whether she works or not she should always keep in mind that she is a female and that she should guard her femininity…."*

Additionally, there were some male participants who believed that gender equality was something negative for women.

D_07: "in my opinion there's no equality between men and women. Should the women should also go and do hard work in construction? Equality is against woman, it will hurt them more than benefit them."

M_01: "regarding gender equality, I think it isn't beneficial for the woman to be equal to the man in everything, lifting heavy weights for example like a gas bottle, she would be suffering more than a man. There are some specific things that are meant only for men, for example some jobs that require a certain physical strength and patience and force. Respectfully to their femininity, they shouldn't go for such jobs that are more suitable for men rather than women, she shouldn't suffer that way or work hard in tough conditions."

Youth and the topic of women's rights

Participants overall, both male and female, voiced support for granting women more rights. There was also widespread agreement that granting rights to women was also good for men.

> M_03, a female participant from a rural background*: "when women have all their rights, it's good for her. And it's good for men. It's helpful."*

> C_01, a male student from an urban background: *"I believe it creates better relations because now you are considered equal in all domains. Now you don't have to use the things that you have to manipulate someone else to do what you like."*

These quotes reflect a recognition of the power imbalances inherent in unequal gender dynamics and a desire for more equitable relationships based on mutual respect and shared decision-making authority. Interestingly, when male participants voiced support for women receiving more rights, this was often grounded in the belief that this would allow women to better support men in their patriarchal role as provider and household head, rather than women's rights being something intrinsically beneficial for women.

> F_01, a male participant*: "it's good for everyone, because it helps the role of men in society, the protectors and all of that. If women are given more rights to be a supportive structure of that, that duty. I think it helps, it helps and eases that pressure on men."*

There was a minority of men who believed that granting women more rights was a 'zero sum game.'

> OT_2: *"I don't think men and women should be equal, because I think that men should always be in charge therefore giving women the authority to have an equal say in the marriage for instance will create problems, I think only men should have that kind of control."*

This quote reveals the social norm of male dominance and the perceived threat of granting women equal decision-making power within relationships, reflecting a concern for maintaining patriarchal power dynamics.

An educated urban participant also expressed concern over women being granted more rights:

> *C_01: "I don't believe that just because women are getting more, men are getting less. But when women are getting more and men are not getting also, it feels like you are losing, when you are not considered equal. When someone gets higher, you feel like you left out, like you are lost, like you are losing a race."*

It is interesting to note that when male participants disagreed with granting women more rights, this was seldom expressed as a fundamental disagreement with the concept of women's rights, but

more often as an anxiety or fear related to increasingly challenging economic conditions. Women gaining more rights such as better paid jobs and equal inheritance would further exacerbate the pressure men feel to provide for their families. Men's objection to the further granting of women's rights was therefore rooted predominantly in economic pressures, which they felt were diminishing their status as males.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Youth held diverse views on the topic of gender relations and gender stereotypes, ranging from conservative to progressive.
- Youth believe that gender stereotypes in Moroccan society are pervasive and deeply entrenched.
- Despite acknowledging the negative impact of gender norms, participants provided a range of perspectives from advocating for egalitarian dynamics and discourse to resisting the disruption of the patriarchal societal order.
- Male participants supported the granting of more rights for women, but this support was usually grounded in the belief, that this would allow women to better support the men in their patriarchal role as provider and household head - rather than women's rights being something intrinsically beneficial for women.
- Further conversations with interviewees revealed that support for gender equality was more in line with the concepts of gender justice or gender complementarity.

Perhaps the most significant findings from this study were around conceptualizations of masculinity. Youth, both male and female, agreed that the persistent idealization of masculinity as embodying dominance, strength, and emotional restraint has far-reaching, negative implications for gender dynamics, power structures, and the emotional well-being of men and boys in Moroccan society. Overall, men expressed more criticism of gender stereotypes and the negative impact they have on their lives than women did. Participants expressed that these gender stereotypes contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies and the suppression of emotional vulnerability, which can have negative psychological consequences. This finding contributes to the emerging field of masculinity studies within the MENA region.

Secondly, men's objection to the further granting of women's rights was mostly rooted predominantly in economic pressures, which they felt were diminishing their status as males, rather than an inherent objection to the concept of gender equality.

Overall, we find that there is more support for gender equality (or gender justice) when youth realize that gender stereotypes confirming inequality also relate to men, and that gender equality also emerges as an advantage for men.

DISCUSSION

Based on our research, the hypothesis that the youth we interviewed would express critical views on the existence of gender stereotypes within contemporary Moroccan society, with youth supporting the concept of gender equality, was partially supported. Interviews revealed a range of perspectives, from those advocating for more egalitarian relationships between men and women and shared decision-making power - to those who expressed concern or resistance towards disrupting patriarchal power structures.

In line with stakeholder predictions, our expectation that youth from different geographic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds would express varying views on gender stereotypes, with rural and less-educated youth holding more patriarchal or conservative views, was also corroborated by the data. Also in line with predictions made in stakeholder interviews, participants revealed an undercurrent of generational shifts and evolving perspectives, particularly among younger participants from urban areas and with higher educational attainment, especially in Casablanca. Some of these participants challenged restrictive gender norms, questioned gender stereotypes, and advocated for recognizing women's capabilities and potential beyond the domestic sphere. However, these progressive voices were often met with resistance and skepticism from participants who held more gender asymmetric views, frequently those from rural areas or with lower educational levels. These participants frequently cited religious teachings and cultural norms to justify and reinforce patriarchal gender roles and expectations. While the findings reveal an undercurrent of changing attitudes and critical perspectives on gender stereotypes among urban and more educated youth, there is also evidence of persistent patriarchal and conservative views, particularly among rural and less-educated participants. This aligns with our hypothesis and highlights the complex interplay of factors such as geography, education, and socioeconomic background in shaping attitudes towards gender roles and stereotypes within contemporary Moroccan society.

Despite instances of critique of gender stereotypes, the overwhelming narrative continued to reinforce and support the idealization of masculinity as characterized by dominance, strength, emotional restraint, and the ability to provide financially for one's family. Men simultaneously reinforced conceptualizations of patriarchal masculinity whilst also expressing the negative impact that hegemonic masculinity had on their own lives and wellbeing. Men, for example, expressed the burden they felt by the expectation that they would be the sole financial provider within the family, yet also did not wish to disrupt this gender norm as they felt it would emasculate them.
What our interviews revealed was a masculinity in flux; both men and women recognized the harmful impacts of hegemonic masculinity but overall did not wish to dismantle or erode these norms.

Hence, the findings of this study illuminate the enduring influence of hegemonic masculinity within Moroccan society, as evident in the persistent belief that men should maintain dominance and authority over societal structures. This belief manifests itself in the concerns expressed by some participants regarding women's increasing rights and opportunities, which are perceived as encroaching upon men's patriarchal roles and undermining their employability prospects.

Equally, the study demonstrates the ability of youths to distance themselves from traditional representation of masculinity and point out the disadvantages it brings to them; male participants, especially in Casablanca, expressed their capability of having emotions and questioned their patriarchal roles as only providers and emotionless. Moreover, participants voiced apprehensions about women's increasing access to employment opportunities, perceiving it as a direct impediment to men's employability prospects. This belief reinforces the notion of hegemonic masculinity, which seeks to preserve men's societal standing and patriarchal breadwinner roles. Importantly, the influence of religious interpretations and cultural traditions cannot be overlooked in sustaining hegemonic masculinity ideologies.

The influence of religious interpretations and cultural traditions further sustains the discourse, as historically they have reinforced and justified unequal gender roles and power dynamics. Such interpretations of religious teachings reinforce men's authority and the perceived patriarchal roles of women as confined to the domestic sphere. Despite the persistent resistance to gender norm change, there was a recognition of women's increasing participation in various spheres, suggesting the potential for gradual shifts in power dynamics and the negotiation of more equitable gender relations, moving beyond patriarchal private/public divide to an understanding that they can belong to both simultaneously.

APPENDIX

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Questions around existing stereotypes in Moroccan society

- Do you think that fixed ideas around women and men, for example, sayings about their characteristics and ideas about how they behave, are accurate?
- What are some sayings/fixed ideas/expectations about women in Morocco? Are these ideas good or bad for you?
- What are some sayings/fixed ideas/expectations about men in Morocco? Are these ideas good or bad for you?

- Are these sayings/fixed ideas/expectations about women and men positive or harmful in our society?
- Do you think that Moroccan society affects women and men equally? If not how so?
- Have you ever been faced with a negative gender stereotype or bias? Explain your situation and how did you handle it?

Questions around ideas about male and female characteristics

- Does society have different expectations for men and women?
- Are men and women created differently in their personalities or does society shape the way they become?
- What do you think people consider hchouma (shameful) for men and women in Moroccan society?
- In Moroccan society, can men talk about their emotions?
- Is this different for young men compared to older men, or is it the same for all men?
- Is this expectation of men a good or bad thing? Do you think men should talk about their emotions, or does this make them weak?

- How does Moroccan society define a ‘real man?’
- What do you think defines a real man?
- How does Moroccan society define a ‘good woman?’
- What do you think defines a ‘good woman’?
- What do you think makes an ideal husband?
- What do you think makes an ideal wife?

Questions around the concept of equality in society and law

- Is the idea that men and women are equal alien to Moroccan traditions and culture?
- Should men and women be equal in society?
- Why/why not?
- (If men and women should not be equal,) how should we instead define or describe the ideal relationship between men and women in our society?
- Does improving women’s rights mean that men lose out? / is the granting of more rights to women creating better or worse relations between men and women in society?

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KVINFO
CHRISTIANS BRYGGE 3
1219 KØBENHAVN K
TEL +45 33 13 50 88
kvinfo@kvinfo.dk
www.kvinfo.dk