

**THE SITUATION OF MOROCCAN WOMEN AND THEIR SOCIAL PROBLEMS
BETWEEN CULTURAL SPECIFICITY AND UNIVERSAL VALUES
COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**LA SITUATION DES FEMMES MAROCAINES ET LEURS PROBLÈMES SOCIAUX
ENTRE SPÉCIFICITÉ CULTURELLE ET VALEURS UNIVERSELLES
ÉTUDE COMPARATIVE**

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Abstract

This article is a comparative study that attempts to shed light on global sociological approaches that have focused on gender issues. It also sought to raise the problem of addressing the women's issue in Morocco within the framework of the ideological conflict, between the current that believes that the solution to women's social problems must be in accordance with the cultural specificity of Moroccan society, and the other modernist current that believes in universal values, which believes that this specificity is what hinders the progress of women in Morocco and their liberation from The legacy of backward traditional culture. Between the two conflicting currents, we tried to monitor and criticize the academic scientific position of social scientists in Morocco, especially in the face of the acceleration of this controversy, which threatens societal cohesion.

Keywords: gender, ideological conflict, cultural specificity, universal values.

Résumé

Cet article est une étude comparative qui tente de mettre en lumière les approches sociologiques mondiales qui se sont concentrées sur les questions du genre. Il a cherché également à soulever la problématique liée aux questions des femmes au Maroc dans le cadre du conflit idéologique, entre le courant qui estime que la solution aux problèmes sociaux des femmes doit être conforme à la spécificité culturelle de la société marocaine, et l'autre courant moderniste qui croit aux valeurs universelles, et considère que cette spécificité entrave le progrès des femmes au Maroc et leur libération de l'héritage de la culture traditionnelle archaïque. Entre les deux courants conflictuels, nous avons essayé d'examiner et de critiquer la position scientifique académique des scientifiques sociaux au Maroc, en particulier face à l'accélération de cette controverse, qui menace la cohésion sociale.

Mots-clés : genre ; conflit idéologique ; spécificité culturelle ; valeurs universelles

INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty years, Morocco has witnessed major developments on multiple levels: political: (transition from a presidential monarchy to a parliamentary democratic constitutional monarchy), economic: (transformation from an agricultural state to a state that depends on industry and services for its development), and social: (through the revolution brought about by the Family Code on Moroccan Women's Rights, which was ratified in 2006. The moment of developing a plan in this regard witnessed a strong ideological conflict between the conservative and the modernist current, as is the case today with the call for The Moroccan monarch to develop this blog. During these developments, this article comes to offer a critique of Moroccan sociology, which has aligned itself in this battle with a certain current, forgetting that its main role is to monitor and reveal the crisis that society is experiencing, some of which have been

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manifested in the extremist discourses issued by the two conflicting currents about Moroccan women.

This article proceeds in the process of criticism from its awareness that sociology is the science of the crisis par excellence. Born in the crisis, he grew up and built his paradigms and theories within the crisis, which is a turning point that takes the character of anxiety about the present and the future. Any transformation is greater than what the Industrial Revolution brought about at the levels of technical modernization, production, and division of labor, breaking social, family, local and rural structures, and reformulating them because of individualism, expediency and the separation of religion and state. The Industrial Revolution marked the rupture between two times: One time when society lived within the automatic solidarity, and another time when this community moved to organic solidarity. Whatever the type of solidarity, social problems have also developed their forms, penetrated new social patterns, and spread to other fields and organizations, with the language of modernity and modernization processes.

Social problems are a thorny issue, because they are a common theme between different fields of knowledge and related to society in its various classes and categories. Herein lies the difficulty, as the researcher in sociology needs to go beyond the ready-made statements that explain the problems, without neglecting their social and cultural meanings. These meanings that ordinary people give to societal issues constitute methodological, epistemological, and ideological obstacles to a conscious understanding of what these problems are, and from providing a scientific and objective explanation of social phenomena. Problems have become the subject of ideological conflict. Between different currents, they triumph not so much for scientific logic as for their dogmatic perceptions, either in the name of modernity or in the name of specificity. The phenomenon of child marriage is among those problems, which have become an area of conflict between the current of privacy and the current of universalism or modernity. What is dangerous is that sociology falls hostage to ideology and its influences, and even more dangerous is that the sociologist builds his intellectual conception from closed ideas and theoretical formats, produced in a social environment completely different from his social reality and cultural specificity.

We are therefore facing two currents in feminist sociology, the first understands cultural specificities and deals with them according to their social and historical reality (the Indian feminist movement), and the second believes that specificities should be subject to universal values (Western feminism), and between these two currents we will search for the general orientation of Moroccan sociology through a reading of the results of a field research conducted by the Moroccan sociologist Ahmed Al-Shark, and we will frame this critical reading with questions such as: Is it possible to read the problem of child marriage in Morocco, according to a conception that takes into account awareness of the cultural and historical specificity of Moroccan society, away from ready-made theoretical answers? Or does this ambitious project remain elusive, now only consuming ideas and not producing them? Is child marriage in Moroccan culture an even social problem?

I. SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The social problem refers us to two meanings: the first is related to deviant behaviors: (such as crime of all kinds, drug addiction, suicide, and prostitution), while the second meaning is related to social conflict, some of which can be limited to: (ethnic, sectarian, and ideological tensions and domestic violence). It is noted that both concerned in fact result in the disintegration of human societies. The question that arises in this regard is when to talk about the social problem?

Many believe that this is achieved when the social problem becomes an issue of public opinion that occupies the whole society, to which its various groups react by expressing an

opinion either with sympathy or condemnation. Thus, the social problem must be real, affect people negatively and should not be a figment of their imagination. It is "a social situation, attracting the attention and interest of a good number of competent observers within society"² That is, it has a direct and visible impact on society.

The social problem is not only related to individuals, being independent of their closest surroundings, but is the product of relations of influence and influence between these individuals among themselves, and between the individual as an individual and society. Charles Wright Mills therefore distinguishes between "personal experiences as the outcome of the individual's personality, affecting his direct relationship with others, and social issues, which raise questions, beyond the individual and his area of life Interior"³. According to Normandeu A. "As a result of human relations within society, which alone is able to accept or reject them, in accordance with the system of values and rules stipulated. These values and norms, however, can sometimes lead to disruptions and dysfunctions in social relations or in the social system as a whole"⁴.

Therefore, the social problem is basically an inevitable result of a societal crisis, which may affect social structures in general, and can be seen as a problem of values, understanding which requires us first to understand the value system of the society that suffers from the problem and its effects. It is also linked to power relations within this society and its internal contradictions, "that is, society governs power relations and the balance of power between those who suffer from social welfare problems and those who do not have the ability to establish social policies"⁵.

There is no doubt that there is a relationship between the concept of social problems and relativity at the level of time on the one hand, and space on the other. What could be a social problem today may not be the case tomorrow, and what can be considered a problem there in France is not so in Morocco. This idea was defended by R. Landreville, "as he believes that a set of negative phenomena in a certain era, have become desirable phenomena such as birth control policy, in contrast, many phenomena that were seen as a positive thing, within the scope of family and family cooperation and solidarity, have today spread unhealthy phenomena punishable by society, such as the employment of minors. In addition, some social problems have previously become neutral elements, such as conservative clothing and divorce. Finally, we find phenomena that have become permissible, such as homosexuality and abortion"⁶.

In general, we can say that the concept of the social problem is a relative concept at the level of time and place. It can be defined procedurally as an interconnected and overlapping system that includes individual and collective problems, partial and total problems. It is related to sub-issues, and extends to general issues related to public opinion, which require the attention and interest of various institutions and groups within society, as issues and problems that exist in reality, not in imagination, and affect society's values and thinking.

It is this relativism with which we can clearly understand the cultural specificities of human societies, as each society in our estimation has a specificity that must be respected, and its historical and cultural contexts must be understood. On the other hand, every thought that proceeds from the absolute and universal values, is not a condescending, arrogant thought and is unaware of the social reality that it criticizes and seeks to reform. In this context, we present in the second axis two different currents in sociology: the first is Western based on the importance of subjecting religion, local laws and traditions to universal values and legislation, and the second

2 - SRAHAN & ESTEITY, 2012, p. 19.

3 - MAYER & LAFOREST, 1990, p. 16.

4 - Ibidem. p. 16.

5 - Ibidem. p. 17.

6 - Ibidem. p. 18.

current believes that it is important to have compatibility between cultural specificity and universal values.

II. FEMINIST APPROACHES TO ISSUES OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

In the last two centuries, women's issues have been a central theme, on which the thesis of feminist movements in the West and the world was founded. It built its concepts on an ideological conception that links women's social problems to political causes of historical philosophical depth. The idea of this thesis was carried by a feminist movement whose goal was to "challenging and changing women's subordination to men"⁷ away from his presence and independent of his theses, interpretations and even sympathy. If painted These movements of the women of the world are a method that separates social and women's problems. It became their voice that fights for their rights, thinking of their own problems as a social species away from the problems of men, class, poverty, and migration. Talk of women's poverty, women's class, and women's migration has become gender as "a reality that has been socially shaped, as a result of socialization and not just biological differences"⁸

Perhaps the link between gender and concepts such as social reality and socialization is what made sociology interested in this subject, so that a branch of this science was established called the sociology of gender, concerned with studies related to "social relations between the sexes, male domination, patriarchy"⁹. In parallel, as we have emphasized, with the emergence of liberal feminist movements, and radical movements that served as a platform through which the women of the world submitted a "huge complaint"¹⁰ a cry that consciously reflected the depth of the problems suffered by half the world's population under male domination, and the growing inequality and inequality against them.

II.1. Liberal Feminism

These liberal feminist movements can be considered one of the first movements to emerge in the eighteenth century, whose ideas belong to social and political philosophy, and try to establish gender equality. Its goal was to spread liberal values among Western women before these ideas and values spread to the rest of the world. The law of ownership and voting is among the most important rights that this movement has been able to extract. It sought to achieve the same political, economic, and social rights and opportunities as men, including human dignity, considering that dignity was not only about men, but was a common human value that encompassed both sexes. With the passage of time and the growing importance of these movements, which were greatly encouraged by a large part of the European intellectual elite in particular, the frequency of protest increased in quantity and quality against the various manifestations of male domination over women, and they pushed hard for the imposition of gender equality in all areas, from issues related to private life at home to the political field.

Because liberalism has been associated with capitalism, there are many thinkers today such as Rafik SMATI who believe that capitalist values are increasingly enjoyed with feminine values, and that "the future of the economy is in the hands of women"¹¹, thanks to the fairer sex, capitalism was able in light of the successive economic crises from 2007 to the economic recession due to the Corona virus in 2020, to absorb the economic shocks it was exposed to. Women are the most consumers of products, and they have become a significant presence in the health field. It turned out that its economic dominance swept away e-commerce that suits its

7 - FERREE, 2006, pp. 3-23.

8 - LEBARON, 2009, p. 63.

9 - CLAIR, 2012, p. 13.

10 -BARTKOWSKY, 2010, p. 19.

11 -SMATI, 2010, p. 122.

feminine nature, especially in conservative countries. Thus, liberal feminism was able to adapt to the political, economic, and cultural conditions within the countries of the world, and thus contributed to creating some balance between women and men, a balance that radical feminism denies achieve.

II.2. Radical feminism

Founded in the sixties of the last century, this movement emerged from women-led campaigns to expand its access to civil rights. It appeared in New York and then spread to other US states on the idea that "gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex"¹². According to this movement, gender is not linked to biological determinism, but to culture, social contexts and laws that determine the place of women in society. All of this is reflected in " Social roles are associated with particular positions in the social division of labor and provide scripts of femininity and masculinity that are learnt through the process of socialization"¹³. This movement argues that the main cause of sexism and discrimination suffered by women is due to patriarchy, dominance and authority derived from historical cultural factors.

Having identified the cause of gender inequality, this movement has campaigned against the violence and coercion that men inflict on women, especially sexual violence linked to rape and harassment, which also affects children, and all associated with domestic violence. This physical and sexual violence against women is no less symbolic than that spoken of by Pierre Bourdieu and other sociologists, who view this type of violence as a form of "symbolic domination that is constantly reinforced by an ideological background." Complete, it assumes the belief that there are multiple differences between women and men"¹⁴.

These are among the justifications that led the radical feminist movement to launch a scathing attack on men who benefited from women's subordination to their power, and they are also the reasons why this radical trend went so far as to consider any relationship between men and women to be an unbalanced relationship governed by exploitation and male domination, even if this relationship is marriage, which this movement considers as formalizing the oppression of women. The goal of these radical feminist movements has been and still is "the liberation of women for women's sake, they do not have to have anything to do with men at all"¹⁵.

But why such a hostile attitude towards men? The answer comes from Marie O'Brien, a feminist activist and researcher who believes that "male sovereignty stems from the influence of men's desire to transcend their alienation from the means of reproducing the human race. Generations continue to renew the priority of fatherhood and obscure the real effort and social reality related to women's work in the birth of children"¹⁶.

It is the bitter feeling of women than men ignore the great roles they play, and that they are cunningly tricked to conceal all the services that women provide for the survival of humanity, so that they do not dare to demand equality in rights as well as in duties. They believe that this threatens the interests of men and their dominant position in the social hierarchy within society. Thus, the feminist movement is the Scholar Bill Hawkes." A commitment to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture at different levels: race, and class"¹⁷.

12 - BUTLER, 1990, p. 43.

13 - SCOTT, 2006. p. 72.

14 - DURU-BELLAT, 2017, p. 129.

15 - BARTKOWSKY, 2010, p. 19.

16 - SADA, 2015, p. 42.

17 - BARTKOWSKY, 2010, p. 21.

It is a real attempt " towards creating a society in which women can live a free life, as Mary McNamara asserts. It is a philosophy based on the recognition that, we live in a male-dominated culture, where women remain unrecognized, and where women are forced to exercise sex roles that require them to be subordinate, passive, and suspicious¹⁸".

II.3. Indian Feminism

From the above, it seems that the liberal and radical feminist movement is trying to globalize its project and theories related to linking the various social, economic, and political problems of women to the domination of men and their material and symbolic power. For the liberal and radical feminist movement, women in the world are a united and cohesive group, and what happens to some of them in Spain is the same as what happens to others in Morocco, India, China, and in the rest of the world. These movements therefore believe that the solutions that can be offered to women to overcome their problems in Spain or Morocco are the same as those needed by women in China, Gabon or elsewhere.

However, pushing the relationship between the issue of women with universal values, ignoring the cultural, social and historical specificities of human societies and interfering in the internal affairs of these societies, and imposing their philosophical and intellectual perceptions of what the relationship between women and men should be, has caused a dislocation in the structures of a group of these countries, and constituted a factor in the ideological conflict between modernist and identity societal currents, which made some strongly criticize this domination and cultural domination that these feminist movements seek to impose on the rest of other societies. Among them is Susie Ling, who says, "I don't believe that men are the ones who created problems in society, I believe that men and women should work together to solve problems in society"¹⁹. The same position opposing feminist theses in their definition and diagnosis of the causes of the social problem related to women, will be renewed and rise strongly in India after the publication of the book *Mother India* (Katherine Mayo) The American historian and writer who criticized the deplorable and degrading conditions experienced by Indian women under the domination of Hindu patriarchal culture and teachings, such as the marriage of female children in childhood and early motherhood. Indian circles will consider this book an insult to India and Indian women.

In response, Uma Nehru, one of India's most powerful advocates of women's rights at the time, came forward through a translated introduction to Catherine's book, asserting, "We use the book that aims to insult us, to instill pride in ourselves among ourselves {...} Sarojini Naidu supported this idea "saw the book as an incentive for Indian men to abandon their misogyny and begin educating their wives, mothers and sisters if they really wanted to nullify Catherine Mayo's book"²⁰. This reaction will result in legislation against female marriage in childhood without entering into the battles of Don Quixote through which the latter fought windmills, the intelligence of the Indian feminist movement spared her having to Ramshouri Nehru, an activist in the campaign to legislate against female marriage in childhood, saw herself as an advocate for women's rights rather than gender equality within the home, she wrote, "I don't believe in the idea of the home becoming a battleground for women"²¹.

The women's movements in India were adult movements aware of the specificity of their society, controlling their real goals of emancipation and eliminating their social problems, without creating alternative problems. Its philosophy was to motivate Indian men and elites to

18 - Ibid., p. 21.

19 - Ibid., p. 20.

20 - SADA, 2015, pp. 81-82.

21 - Ibid., p. 90.

participate in finding solutions to the problems of half of Indian society, taking advantage of the sensitivity of those elites, who are mostly men, to any direct foreign interference. Or indirectly in the social and cultural affairs of the country. If the Indian feminist movement, coming from various scientific and academic fields such as sociology, has been able to build a consensus among Indian societal currents to reform the status of women, a large part of the modernist feminist movement in Morocco, supported by Moroccan sociologists, has not been able to achieve what the feminist movement in India has achieved, but on the contrary, they entered into a conflict over identity that hindered the reform of the status of Moroccan women.

III. THE PROBLEM OF UNDERAGE MARRIAGE BETWEEN PRIVACY AND UNIVERSALITY

Our judgment on the experience of the women's movement in Morocco stems from a set of historical data, the latest of which is the strong struggle between conservative and modernist currents over Moroccan women's issues, which has extended since the adoption of the Family Code Law in 2004. It is a conflict whose effects continue in the relations of the two currents, making the reform of women's conditions difficult to achieve. It seems that sociologists failed to bring the views of the two parties closer, but rather participated in deepening this conflict and trying to serve and support an intellectual orientation against the other, as is the case in a series of works by Fatima Mernissi, Abdessamad Dialmi and Ahmed Al-Shrak, the latter of whom presented us with a study entitled "Child marriage in Morocco that included some villages in the cities of Fez and Meknes.

In his study of underage marriage, Al-Shrak starts from basic points through which he tries to dismantle the problem and define concepts in a precise manner, and here he poses some critical questions such as: Are the social structures that are being studied a sample of which are characterized by a solid stability that is difficult to shake and change? Is the problem only at the heart of structures and mentalities? Or are there social and economic constraints that perpetuate the problem? Is it possible to say with certainty that there are breaks that want to retreat away from progress and development? In other words, is society still subject to a centuries-old traditional structure that is difficult to overcome towards a modern, egalitarian, and democratic society between men and women?

These questions constituted the road map that enabled the traps to reach a set of results, so that it was considered that the marriage of minors:

- He does not stray far from sexual and social rape.
- It also does not shy away from pedophilia, which takes on the character of social legitimacy in the rural world.
- Child marriage is also not far from school dropout.
- He does not stay away from the prostitution market after the daughter has married and lost her hymen.
- Child marriage is a product of economic and social disadvantages (unemployment - poverty - and fragility).
- It is symbolic violence practiced by society towards girls and women, within the framework of a patriarchal culture and its associations at the level of representations and perceptions.
- Child marriage is a social problem because the state and Moroccan society recognize its existence.

This was one of the most important conclusions reached by the traps, but the fundamental question is how did the traps conclude that the marriage of minors is a real problem? Is the state and society's acknowledgment of the existence of this problem real or imagined in the mind of the modernist current? How do we measure that child marriage is a social problem? Isn't democracy and the possibilities it offers us among the most prominent tools by which to measure

the validity of what the traps have pointed out? Didn't the number of demonstrators in the march of modernist feminist movements in Rabat, which did not exceed hundreds to support the draft family law before its adoption in 2006, reflect that this movement represents only a minority, in contrast to another march in Casablanca for the current of identity and cultural specificity, in which thousands came out, to democratically confirm that the majority of the people do not consider the family code and its change as the real issue of Moroccan women?

A few historical stations have shown that the feminist movement, which carries the values of universalism in Morocco, is not aware of the reality of what women in this country need, it only conveys the experiences of others and tries hard to impose them on society, in which women already suffer from social fragility, poverty and unemployment, and need to be integrated into real projects for social and economic development... These are therefore the issues that the feminist movement and its social scientists must defend, instead of trying to convince us that it is necessary to "shake the mental and cultural structures, which are characterized by stability, stagnation, truth and certainty." to which the jurists of darkness contribute... Fossilized culture contributes to it"²².

It seems clear that this feminist current, to which some sociologists belong among men imbued with universal values, is trying to impose his perception of the social problem and the proposed solutions to it, without considering the social and cultural specificities of society, so that he accuses others of backwardness and obscurantism. It is not only possible to decoy here, but there are some social scientists who are on the same path imbued with the ideology of superiority over others.

Dialmi Abdessamad, for example, criticizes the identity trend and calls for overcoming the most important foundations on which Moroccan society is based, namely jurisprudence (religion) and the law that also draws from this religion, especially regarding the Personal Status Code, where he asks questions such as: Is it necessary to see in the sexual explosion a societal imbalance and disintegration? Why don't we see in the explosion a rebellion against anti-sex morality? Why don't we see in the sexual explosion a transgression of jurisprudence and law that has become transgressive due to evolution? Social and due to the change in perception of sex? Why don't we see in the sexual explosion an objective battle against jurisprudence and against the law?"²³. He tries to impose a battle and a conflict in which women may be victims rather than beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study confirms that the problems facing us today are the extent to which we can define the concept of the social problem. First, because we are facing a relative concept, each of us looks at it from the angle of the ideology to which he belongs and is convinced of its ideas. Here, it is necessary for the sociologist to understand the cultural and religious components of the society he wishes to study. The biggest mistake facing sociology is to bring preconceived value convictions to the society it intends to study, without invoking in its perceptions the peculiarities to which this society is judged.

Returning to Moroccan society, we must warn that we are facing a complex society in which a set of cultural and philosophical patterns coexist, such as modernization and modernity on the one hand, and the tradition and specificity of what is called in Morocco the Tamaghribit, a container that brings together different cultures, traditions and customs, and fuses them into one structure, which is the social and cultural structure that was officially established twelve centuries ago, and unofficially many centuries before that. It is this structure that repairers must

22 - ASHARQ, 2017, p. 71.

23 -AD-DIYALAMI, 2009, p. 177.

invoke during the repair process because it is difficult to break up or crack. Everyone must also be aware that the fundamentalist forces in Morocco that adhere to privacy are real forces in society, and that any reform will only pass through them and with their participation, which forces the modernist forces that claim to want to solve women's problems to stop provoking those forces that they describe as obscurantists.

Women's issues in Morocco today have become hostage to those who claim to be the "guardians of modernist values," who fuel the conflict of values and interests that have produced for us since independence subcultures, either "nihilism" against the state, society and its values, or "Ayachia" that does not hesitate to support the state in all its decisions, some of which are unpopular and harmful to the future generations of women and men. Perhaps all of these nihilists and Ayachi are the product of a double oppression of poverty and ignorance that Morocco strongly seeks to get out of their circle imposed on it by colonialism and the failure of government policies in many cases, but it seems that social problems in their depth are the manifestation of a real authoritarian superiority, hiding behind civil associations, study centers and academic institutions, professional stigmatization and ready-made accusations, dangerous with a commercial record, trading in the problems of the weak, not to solve their problems, but to perpetuate their suffering and surgeries, the end of the tragedy of these weak, means the end of a trade that generates money and social prestige.

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