



Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar

Middle Eastern Studies Student Association

Article

OPEN ACCESS

Exploring the Systemic Struggles of Moroccan Women in a Changing Environment: Redefining their Role within the Family, their Position in the Labor Force and their Access to Reproductive Healthcare

Andrea Cristina Quevedo Acuña

Abstract

With the coming to power of King Mohamed VI, the feminist movement in Morocco has aided the process of democratization as well as the politicization of women's issues in the country. A key success in the acknowledgment of women's rights and a significant attempt to empower women and increase their agency in both the public and private spheres has been the enactment of the new Family Code of 2004. This paper aims at exploring the ways in which the Family Code has increased women's freedom within the family despite the persistence of tradition, and has enhanced their voice in regards to reproductive health, and the number and spacing of their children. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the limitations that women face within the labor force, giving emphasis to the problems of mobility and the two-fold effect of economic globalization on women in Export Processing Zones.

Georgetown University School of
Foreign Service in Qatar, Doha,
Email: aq38@georgetown.edu

[http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/
messa.2015.8](http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/messa.2015.8)

Accepted: 1 March 2015
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Cite this article as: Acuña ACQ, Exploring the Systemic Struggles of Moroccan Women in a Changing Environment: Redefining their Role within the Family, their Position in the Labor Force and their Access to Reproductive Healthcare, Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association 2015:8 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/messa.2015.8>

Introduction

Individuals are “the intersection of biography and history”—the culture, characteristics, and experiences that define their identity at a given time and space.¹ An individual’s life is “situated in specific social and historical environments” that shape the individual’s experiences and reactions to such experiences.² In this sense, when trying to understand a human being or a group of people, it becomes important to delve into the ways in which social structures “generate the patterns of everyday life.”³ In order to better understand the experience of Moroccan women, this paper aims to explore their daily struggles by focusing on their role within the family, their reproductive rights, and their position within the labor force.

The Road towards Mohamed VI’s Reforms and the Moroccan Feminist Movement

The Kingdom of Morocco has Mediterranean and Atlantic coastlines, a mountainous terrain, and “a history of independence not shared by its neighbors” given its strategic location.⁴ In the seventh century, Arab forces began occupying Morocco, bringing their civilization along with the religion of Islam into the country.⁵ Furthermore, Morocco’s location and resources led to competition among European powers during the 1800s and, in 1912, the country became a French Protectorate, a status that lasted until independence in 1956.⁶ In addition, being at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco has served as one of the main trading points between Europe and Africa for several centuries. The country enjoys the advantage of a skilled but cheap labor force, and its geographical proximity to Western Europe has led to substantial foreign investment in the labor-intensive industries.

Following independence in 1956, Sultan Mohammed became King of Morocco. He was succeeded in 1961 by his son, Hassan II, who ruled for 38 years and played a prominent role in the search for peace in the Middle East.⁷ King Hassan II is also known for suppressing domestic opposition, with nearly 10,000 cases of human rights violations being reported during his reign, ranging from death in detention to forced exile.⁸ In 1999, his son Mohammed VI, the current ruler of the country, succeeded him. Throughout his rule, Mohammed VI has introduced economic and social liberalization policies and, in 2011, he revised the constitution as a response to Arab Spring protests and appointed a new government in January 2012.⁹ The macroeconomic and structural reforms carried out by Mohammed VI resulted in a more diversified economy, stronger public finances, and a sound financial sector.

In the context of legal reform, national and international development, and rising Islamism, numerous initiatives have aimed to promote women’s empowerment—the individual and collective processes “that develop women’s capacities to increase their ability to make choices and have control over their lives, take action, and mobilize to impact the world around them.”¹⁰ More particularly, the Moroccan feminist movement greatly feminized and democratized the public sphere in the country. An example of such feminization are the 2004 Family Code reforms, which constituted the culmination of a long trajectory during which

¹C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 230.

²Margaret L. Andresen and Dana Hysock Witham. *Thinking about Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender* (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson, 2011), 8.

³Ibid, 8.

⁴BBC News, “Morocco Country Profile”, last modified November 14, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14121438>

⁵Country Watch, “Morocco”, http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.aspx?vcountry=119

⁶Ibid.

⁷BBC News, “Morocco Country Profile”.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Country Watch, “Morocco”.

¹⁰Stephanie William Bordat, Susan Schaefer Davis, and Saida Kouzzi, “Women as Agents of Grassroots Change: Illustrating Micro-Empowerment in Morocco.” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7, no.1 (2011): 90. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/821698761?accountid=11091>

decision-makers, political parties, and other public actors made important contributions that led to the reforms. As explained, the feminist movement was not the sole actor behind Mohamed VI's legal reforms, but it was "the major pooling force behind [them]."¹¹ Women's involvement in the debates preceding, accompanying, and following the enactment of the new Family Code incorporated public actors ranging from social, to economic, religious, and political actors and, along with the Family Code itself, showed that women's feminist ideas and associations were inserting themselves in the public sphere, changing the terms of participation in this sphere, and making women and gender issues a matter of national dialogue and contention for the first time in Morocco's history.

To properly understand the role of the Moroccan feminist movements in the "feminization of public space," it becomes important to analyze the cultural background and the ways in which the Family Code reforms have been instrumental in the democratization process and the politicization of women's issues in Morocco. In an attempt to address these points, this paper aims to tackle the public/private space dichotomy in Moroccan culture, the new Family Code and its effects on women's position within the family (in terms of marriage and reproductive health), and the changes in women's dual role in society (within the family and the labor force).

Moroccan Culture and the Public/Private Space

According to Sadiqi, the public/private dichotomy is rooted in the Greek legend in which "human actions take place in a space divided into the public, or the visible male world called Hermean (the Greek god of communication), and private, or the invisible feminine world called Hestian (the Greek goddess of the home)."¹² This view associates the public space with the outside/exterior and the private space with the inside/interior, implying that "the outside is the place of power where the social constraints are produced and the inside is the place where this power is exercised."¹³

Sadiqi argues that this view of space is in accordance with the Arab-Muslim patriarchy, which is based on strict gender-based space dichotomy. When applying this approach to the Moroccan context, Sadiqi finds that the public space is the men's space that dictates the social norms, while the private space is women's. She explains that it is in this interaction that gender identities are constructed and power negotiated, with the private space being culturally associated with powerless people (women and children) and being subordinated to the public space, which is culturally associated with men - who dictate the law, lead business, manage the state, and control the economy, both national and domestic.¹⁴

But such strict public/private space dichotomy was disrupted significantly when women started to take jobs outside the home in the 1960s. This significant change in women's lives was reflected in poverty and education "as poor women worked as domestics or in low-paid sectors of industry and educated women secured the jobs their education allowed."¹⁵

The first cause of the reorganization of space was the transition "from the tribal mode of production to a structure of dependence," which was brought about by colonialism and, later, modernism.¹⁶ Thus, the family structure shrank from one including extended family members such as cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, to a nucleus of only parents and children. Before, and right after the independence of Morocco, only women from lower social backgrounds and whose husbands had poor incomes were actually interested

¹¹Sadiqi, Fatima, and Moha Ennaji, "The Feminization of Public Space: Women's Activism, The Family Law, and Social Change in Morocco", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2, no.2 (2006): 86.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/222383082?accountid=11091>

¹²Ibid, 88.

¹³Sadiqi, 88.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid, 89.

¹⁶Ibid.

in working in the public space.¹⁷ This was the case in the 1950s and 1960s since education, although being encouraged for women in the upper and middle classes, was meant to produce good housekeepers and child-rearers and, thus, money made by women was considered a dishonor to the family.

Recently, the reorganization of space has been enhanced greatly by continuous changes in the economic and educational levels of families, but great differences are still seen when comparing rural and urban women. For instance, on the one hand, rural women are present in the private sphere by either participating in the fields or in the marketplace. On the other hand, urban women's access to jobs has individualized them in the sense that it has offered them a space where "they are called by their own names and not associated with their fathers, husbands, or sons."¹⁸

As a whole, the shift from the private sphere can be seen by observing the way certain indicators change over time. When looking at female labor force participation rates, one can see an increase from around 23% in 1980 to 44% in 2010, as seen in Figure 1, which shows an upward trend in the number of women that decide to work.¹⁹

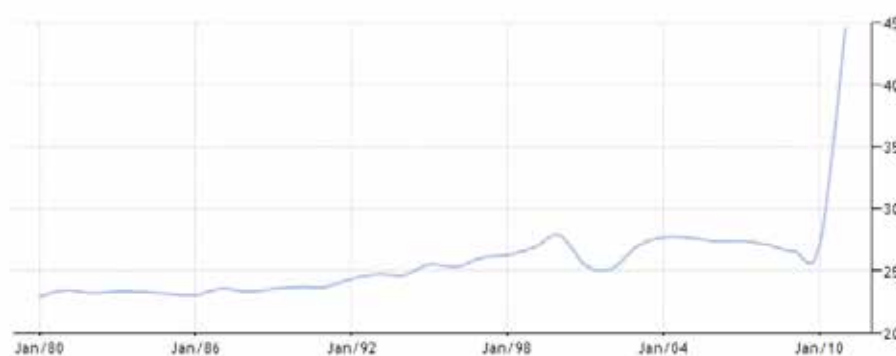


Figure 1: Females as a percentage of total labor force in Morocco

But we must bear in mind that women's involvement in the public sphere does not include a shift out of the private sphere.

In fact, most women who work have not given up their domestic duties. Moroccan women are conscious that housework valorizes them inside the house, that is, in the eyes of their husbands and children; they generally cling to their status as "homemakers" even when they are wealthy and have domestics.²⁰ For instance, Sadiqi explains that working women usually avoid praising their domestics in front of their husbands out of fear of losing moral control over the household.

The constant changes in women's roles both in the public and the private sphere allowed the rise of the Moroccan feminist movement. The movement itself constitutes two main components: "the feminist writings that empower women as individuals, and women's activism in feminist associations."²¹ Sadiqi explains that the movement is characterized by overall chronological continuity and "constant dialectic interaction with coexisting democratic and powerful political actors" such as the monarchs, political parties, human rights NGOs, youth NGOs, and international NGOs and governments.²² The beginning of the movement goes back to 1946, when the Akhawwat Al-Safaa (Sisters of Purity) Association issued a document

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Sadiqi, 91.

¹⁹Trading Economics. "Labor Force- Female (% of Total Labor Force) in Morocco".

<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/morocco/labor-force-female-percent-of-total-labor-force-wb-data.html>

²⁰Sadiqi, 91.

²¹Ibid, 86.

²²Ibid, 87.

with a number of legal demands that included the abolition of polygamy and an increase in women's presence in the public sphere.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Moroccan feminist movement started to become very visible in the public sphere of power. By the end of the 1990s, the Moroccan feminist movement successfully advocated against social and family oppression, political oppression, and legal oppression, ensuring continuity throughout time. With the coming to power of the new king, "the feminist movement in Morocco has increasingly become a political actor, an indispensable tool of democratization."²³ For instance, one month into his reign, the monarch stated, "How can society achieve progress, while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence, and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted them by our glorious religion?"²⁴

Marriage and Family: Freedoms and the Persistence of Tradition

As a result of reform measures imposed by the King in 2004, the situation for women in Morocco has improved significantly.²⁵ The new Family Code grants women greater rights within the family "although some discrimination still exists."²⁶ For instance, the legal minimum age for marriage is now 18 years for both men and women while it was previously 15 for women. Now, marriage under the age of 18 requires permission from a judge. As of 2004, a United Nations report estimated that 13% of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced, or widowed, but the reform is expected to limit the practice.²⁷ In addition, the new Family Code does not explicitly prohibit polygamy, but includes measures that make it very complicated; that is, husbands who want to marry another woman must obtain a judge's permission and provide documentary evidence of their financial situation. They must also attest that all their spouses will be treated equally. This increases the transaction costs of marrying more than one woman and, thus, discourages polygamy. "The number of polygamous marriages has decreased rapidly since the reform."²⁸

Under Morocco's new Family Code, mothers and fathers share parental authority and have the same rights and responsibilities, enhancing women's agency within the household. Furthermore, the code eradicated the concept of repudiation and gave Moroccan women the right to divorce on the same grounds as men, boosting their voice within the legal system. Additionally, it states that divorce can no longer be authorized by a notary public but must be granted by a court and only after a conciliation process. This indicates aspects regarding the meanings attached to the institution of marriage, within which women were generally associated with their husbands and represented a source of honor to him.

The Family Code did not remove the inequality present in inheritance rights in the country. For instance, Moroccan women in rural areas can still be excluded from inheriting land and, throughout the country, "daughters still inherit only half the share passed on to sons."²⁹ Moreover, if there are no sons, daughters do not inherit all of their parents' estate, as part of it is distributed amongst uncles, as stated in Sharia' law. This demonstrates the importance of the institution of religion within the country given its non-secularity and the meaning of irrefutable power and authority attached to religious texts within society.

Apart from the benefits acquired from the 2004 Family Code and the enhancement of women's conditions in the working environment, many attitudes have remained unchanged regarding the role of women within the family, with equality not yet being achieved on the

²³Sadiqi, 104.

²⁴Ibid, 105.

²⁵OECD, "Morocco", In *Atlas of Gender and Development: How Social Norms Affect Gender Equality in non-OECD Countries*, 159-161, (Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2010), 16, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264077478-77-en>

²⁶Ibid, 160.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸OECD, "Morocco", 160.

²⁹Ibid, 161.

domestic front. As stated by bank clerk Halima Bernoussi, “Women have more responsibility than men. When men come home, they relax, whereas women must cook and take care of the house and children on their own. Women have gained freedom, but attitudes have not kept pace. Equality must come about in the home.”³⁰ At this point, it becomes important to point out that part of the reason why such roles have not changed is due to the fact the women themselves have internalized and accepted their position as caregivers and homemakers, blaming the “hypocrisy of Moroccan society” for their role within the household and not acting to change it.³¹ For instance, Fatima Moustaghfir, a lawyer and Member of Parliament, stated that despite the importance of tradition, women must teach their children that boys and girls are equal in order to start changing societal norms and perceptions from a young age.³² According to her, “In Morocco, it’s still taboo for a man to help his wife with the cooking. Others take a ruthless view on this. Often, even those who help their wives with chores avoid doing so in front of other people.”³³

In response to this, sociologist Hamid Ghoulam explains that Morocco is going through a transitional phase, and that women may feel pressure in their daily lives due to their conservative upbringing. “Many women who work feel deep down that their dual mission is a duty that they must accomplish without batting an eyelid. Moroccans raise their daughters to be good cooks, whereas it is instilled into boys that they must avoid these womanly tasks.”³⁴ But he further states that the current generation is starting to behave differently, seeing a change in norms and the perception of women within the household. For instance, he mentions that an increasing number of young husbands are attempting to counter tradition by helping their wives perform daily tasks. As stated by Rachida Benmasoud, writer and member of the political office of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, change will take time to occur in the home given that society has become more aware of women’s role in development, but the cultural system retains a strong presence with regard to traditional roles.

Reproductive Health and Family Planning

The Moroccan population has seen a growing demographic trend; with almost a threefold increase from less than 12 million people in 1960 to 30 million in 2005.³⁵ The urban/rural distribution within the country has also seen an important change, shifting from a rural dominance (70%) in the 1960s to an urban dominance in 2004 (55%).³⁶ However, reproductive health remains characterized by “inequalities and disparities between urban and rural, rich and poor, developed and developing regions.”³⁷ In terms of health indicators, the rates of total fertility, birth, death, and infant mortality have been decreasing during the last three decades according to the Moroccan Ministry of Health. But, as emphasized by the World Bank’s report *Kingdom of Morocco: Poverty, Adjustment, and Growth*, “in spite of the progress made in reducing income poverty, social indicators in Morocco are well below those of comparable countries and, within the country, there are enormous disparities in access to social services between urban and rural areas.”³⁸

³⁰Sarah Touahri, “In changing times, Moroccan women play dual role”, *Magharebia*, March 14, 2010, http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2010/03/14/feature-01

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Haut Commissariat au Plan, “Recensement Général de la Population et de l’Habitat 2004”, <http://www.hcp.ma>

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Boutayeb Abdesslam, “Social determinants of reproductive health in Morocco”, *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 15, no.2 (2011): 58, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/920756509?accountid=11091>

³⁸The World Bank, “Kingdom of Morocco: Poverty, Adjustment and Growth”, January 1994. http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/1994/01/01/000009265_3961004202520/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf

Resulting from a decrease in fertility (from 6 children in the 1980s to 2.8 in 2010), birth, and infant mortality rates, life expectancy at birth has seen an increase from 65 years in 1980 to 70.4 years in 2005, and the annual population growth rate has decreased from 2.6 in the 1980s to 1.3 in 2005.³⁹ The fertility decline is attributable mainly to factors such as the use of contraception and the delayed age of marriage. For instance, “between 1980 and 2004, the percentage of married women using contraception increased from 19% to 63%; during the same period, the proportion of married women aged 15-19 declined from 21% to 11% and the proportion of married women aged 19-24 also decreased from 64% to 36%.”⁴⁰

It becomes important to note that these factors are interrelated with cultural and socioeconomic factors such as the access of young girls to higher education, unemployment, unaffordable expenses of marriage for men, and high cost of child rearing.⁴¹ For instance, culturally, more and more girls have gained access to higher education and young women are getting jobs with higher levels of responsibility. This has resulted in the delay in the age of marriage and the decrease in the number of pregnancies. Economically, many young men are discouraged from marriage given the high costs associated with the ritual such as paying dowry and incurring the costs of the festivities. Thus, for the couples that manage to get married, the increasing costs of living end up being an important determinant of the number of children a woman wants and can have.

In regards to infant mortality, the country has seen a decrease from 140 deaths per 1,000 births in 1980 to 37 in 2005.⁴² Here, it becomes essential to note that social status is a major determining factor of the survival of Moroccan children as well as in women’s reproductive choice, as discussed previously.⁴³ This can be seen, for instance, given the fact that post-natal mortality is due mainly to factors such as food, primary health care, and hygiene.⁴⁴ Abdesslam further illustrates this point by explaining that “children belonging to the poorest quintile are five times more likely to die than children living in the richest quintile, a child of an illiterate woman is three times more likely to die than a child of a woman with secondary or higher level of education, and postnatal mortality is 2.5 times greater in rural areas than in urban cities.”⁴⁵

In terms of family planning, noticeable results were achieved in the country following the Moroccan family planning program launched in the early 1960s along with the legalization of contraception.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, the number of women utilizing any type of contraceptive method increased significantly from 19% in 1980 to 42% in 1992, reaching a level of 63% by 2003 (UN data). Among modern contraception methods, the pill is the most used (40.1%), followed by IUD (5.4%), MAM (2.8%), female sterilization (2.7%), injections (2.1%), and condom (1.5%).⁴⁷ But there is still room to improve the diversification of contraceptive methods and reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies, “especially among young women who are behind the estimated 150,000 illegal abortions performed annually.”⁴⁸

Work & Labor: Limitations for Moroccan Women in the Labor Force

The economic situation of Moroccan women is limited by several factors, including low levels of education and literacy, which restrict entry to the labor market, inadequate access to money or credit, and problems with getting products to the market (Bordat & Davis).

³⁹ Abdesslam, 58.

⁴⁰ Ibid..

⁴¹ Abdesslam, 61.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Shawn Meghan Burn, *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 42.

⁴⁴ Abdesslam, 61.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Abdesslam, 64.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

In 2008, women comprised 24.9% of the Moroccan labor force, with 28.7% of women and 83.6% of men being active participants in the economy.⁴⁹

Regardless of the fact that women frequently tend to participate in microcredit programs, the amount of money available to them is generally very small, and does not allow women to make significant investments and subsequent profits.⁵⁰ In order for women to access larger loan amounts in traditional banking institutions, they would require collateral such as land or a house, which they usually lack given the patriarchal system in which they live. In addition, even when women operate small-scale enterprises based on limited credit, they face obstacles getting their products to the market because of household duties and limited mobility, “the result of both inadequate and relatively expensive public transportation and social constraints on women traveling alone.”⁵¹

In order to enhance women’s position within the labor force, several Islamist groups in the country have started grass-root level mobilization programs that aim at empowering women through the generation of a strong support network. For instance, they emphasize welfare work that focuses on poor women’s economic marginalization. To do so, they provide social services including literacy classes, jobs for the unemployed, food, clothing, and money, particularly on religious holidays and family occasions.⁵² In addition, they provide women with religious education along with matchmaking activities that aim to find “respectable Muslim husbands for single women.”⁵³ Here, once again, one can see the important and powerful role played by the institution of religion as well as the meanings attached to both marriage and religion within society, where women are associated with men and their status generally depends on finding a respectable Muslim husband.

Moroccan women play an essential role in sustaining the export-led industries within the country. As stated previously, Morocco possesses a highly skilled labor force that works at relatively cheap prices and, given the geographical proximity to Western Europe, sees large amounts of exports and international investments annually. In fact, women comprise up to 90% of the workers in Export Processing Zones,⁵⁴ where many light manufacturing plants are located and labor protection may not apply.⁵⁵ This is relevant not only in the case of Morocco, but at a global scale, where the vast majority of employees in EPZs are women given their high levels of patience, their passive behavior, and their cheaper labor, and these women tend to be poorly treated while working in such EPZs. Furthermore, EPZs and Free Economic Zones (FEZs) are essential for countries to promote trade and growth given that they promote foreign investment (increase in capital inflows), promote exports and foreign exchange earnings, provide employment opportunities to the population, and promote technology transfers into the domestic economy.⁵⁶ In Morocco, EPZs tend to focus on the manufacturing and textile sector, and the working conditions for women in such factories is “precarious” and involves “low wages, long, unpredictable hours, and the lack of possibility for upward mobility”, conditions that “often keep workers within a vicious cycle of poverty.”⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the garment sector is highly profitable, but the wealth generated from the industry is rarely used to increase the salaries of factory workers, improve safety conditions, or foster a better work environment.

⁴⁹The World Bank, “Data: Morocco”, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/morocco>

⁵⁰Bordat, “Women as Agents of Grassroots Change: Illustrating Micro-Empowerment in Morocco”, 96.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Bordat, 97.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Instituted by Law 19-94 (Dahir No. 1-95-1 dated January 26, 1995), export processing zones are identified areas of the customs territory where they are authorized, exempted from customs regulations, foreign trade and exchange control, all industrial and commercial export activities as well as linked service activities. Each zone is created and defined by a decree which stipulates the nature and activities of the companies that can operate in the zone” (Moroccan Investment Development Agency).

⁵⁵Jordyn Elizabeth Arndt, “*Contending With Change: Moroccan Women’s Participation in the Textile and Clothing Manufacturing Industry*”, Fulbright U.S. Student Program (2013): 9. <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Morocco.Contending-with-Change-report-on-women-in-textile-industry.9.13.pdf>

⁵⁶Jamil Tahir, “An Assessment of Free Economic Zones (FEZs) in Arab Countries: Performance and Main Features”, *Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation*, 1999:6, <http://www.erf.org/eg/CMS/uploads/pdf/9926.pdf>

⁵⁷Arndt, 31.

In *Contending With Change: Moroccan Women's Participation in the Textile and Clothing Manufacturing Industry*, Jordyn Arndt further explains that most of the country's textile industry has become informalized in response to globalization. Unlike formal, regulated factories, informal factories "escape oversight."⁵⁸ Thus, women have no negotiating power in small, informal factories and are discouraged by their employers to join unions, which would enable them to improve their wages and working conditions. Yet, the report finds that, given that 37% of the population lives below the poverty line, women are often grateful to find work even if it means facing discrimination and mistreatment. According to Arndt, the "feminization of globalization" is especially apparent in these industries given that workers can be vulnerable to random dismissal and long hours with no overtime or unsafe working conditions.

Furthermore, ethnographic research on girls and unmarried women working in the garment industry in Fez, Morocco from 1994 to 1995 by M. Laetitia Cairoli and published in the article *Girl but Not Woman*, explains that women in textile factories generally strive to maintain their cultural values despite their engagement with the factory.⁵⁹ Through participant observation, she claims that workers transform the workshop floor into an interior space, re-cast factory staff into family, and operate in the factory as they would in the household.⁶⁰ She further asserts that the workers and their families strive to ensure that their labor in the factory does not re-order household hierarchies, although she detects how the female participation in factory life begins to introduce changes given that it provides young females with opportunities for increased personal autonomy, it expands the limits of their social environments, and it allows them to transgress certain gender boundaries.⁶¹ Thus, we can see from the accounts of Arndt and Cairoli the two-fold effect that economic globalization - "the integration and rapid interaction of economies through production, trade, and financial transactions by banks and international corporations" - has had on women in Morocco, being a source both of oppression and empowerment.⁶²

Expectations for the Future of Moroccan Women

In terms of reproductive health, the past decades have seen noticeable achievements in Morocco. These achievements, however, remain insufficient compared to other developing countries with a similar level of economic development.⁶³ Regarding family planning and contraception, in order to allow more women to control the number and spacing of their children, the government must ensure that contraception policies reach more women, postnatal and postnatal care must be enhanced, and more skilled medical personnel must be trained to assist women while giving birth. In general, in order for reproductive health in Morocco to become optimal in the short and long run, strategies should be aimed at enhancing "the mean status of the whole population" while also reducing regional disparities between the developed and the developing, the rich and the poor, and the rural and the urban.⁶⁴

Positive changes in women's issues regarding marriage, their role in the family, and their presence in the labor force have been driven largely by royal action (the enactment of the Family Code in 2004), and both demographic and economic changes in the environment. In a way, the Family Code of 2004 managed to demystify the "sacredness" of Sharia' and contribute to the democratization of the public space and the implementation of human

⁵⁸Arndt, 26.

⁵⁹Laetitia M. Cairoli, *Girls of the Factory: A Year with the Garment Workers of Morocco* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Burn, *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective*, 151.

⁶³Abdesslam, 65.

⁶⁴Ibid.

rights on the ground” to a great extent.⁶⁵ In the long run, however, the public debate of once-private family issues will force Moroccan society to face the intricate issue of the role of religion in an increasingly secularized public space where women are increasingly visible as actors.

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