

What Does Security Mean for Moroccan Women? The Regions of Fez and Tetuan

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Executive Summary

In this paper I investigate the meaning of security for Moroccan women in the cities of Fez and Tetuan, as well as their surrounding areas.

Six social variables are used: geographical origin (rural/urban), class (upper, middle, lower, and destitute), level of education (educated, non-educated, illiterate), job opportunity (forma/informal), Linguistic skills (monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual), and social status (married/unmarried), etc.

The methodology consists of interviews, a working session with a women's NGO, a questionnaire, and discussions with two focus groups.

The findings may be summarized as:

- We need more conceptualization of security because women's sense of security and its breach are different from men's.
- To do so, a deeper understanding of the social variables that define gender constructions and meanings is needed.
- More fieldwork to strengthen the concepts is also needed.

Abstract

In this paper I investigate the meaning of security for Moroccan women in the cities of Fez and Tetuan, as well as their surrounding areas. I focus on these two regions for a reason: I have lived, taught, and conducted individual and

collective research in Fez for over three decades; and a sizeable part of informal economy in Fez is based on the women's smuggled goods from the Spanish-occupied Ceuta to Tetuan and from Tetuan to Fez, more precisely the Medina of Fez. In Tetuan, I focused on smugglers, and in Fez, in addition to smugglers, I included women from a high middle-class (teachers/students, women holding average-income "feminine" jobs like hairdresser, masseuses), as well poorer women (hammam tenders, women artisans, and waiters).

Overall I took into consideration 6 social variables: geographical origin (rural/urban), class (upper, middle, lower, and destitute), level of education (educated, non-educated, illiterate), job opportunity (formal/informal), Linguistic skills (monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual), and social status (married/unmarried, with the latter category covering: "spinsters", "widows," and "divorcees." The women's age varies between 15 and 75.

In terms of methodology, I conducted 6 in-depth interviews in Fez and Tetuan, I had a working session with a women's NGO in Tetuan which works for the promotion of women in the region. I also distributed a questionnaire to 50 female students at the University of Fez, as well as to 20 working women in various jobs. Finally, I conducted two focus groups: one in Fez and one in Tetuan.

Methodology

I collected security stories from these women, transliterated and translated them. I built the meaning of security on the stories. I used these stories to conceptualize women's security needs in the regions of Fez and Tetuan and I hope to examine the feasibility and need of women at the national level.

1. Interviews (6 Qs)

1. 49 years old female smuggler

2. 52 years old female smuggler – poorer, widow, harassment also in Fez
3. 16 years old Maid
4. 39 years old Hairdresser
5. 21 Female student
6. 43 years old Middle class housewife

2. Two Focus Groups(1h 40 mns – Jan and June, Old Medina, Ville Nouvelle, and the north -Signed consent, Recorded& transcribed)
-Everyday Security Indicators, Facilitator Guide, Recruitment Survey Questions

Findings

I have read all of my data carefully and woven all of the threads of the stories together. I have connected the dots and intermeshed the stories by locating some common themes. I have collected some quotes from here and there which are in the report.

I gathered 25 stories.

To glean women's sense of security and its breach, I reviewed the literature, carried out some fieldwork, and conceptualized my findings.

Quotes

I feel insecure when I cannot think, when I have to execute. I am in this humiliating position when a man is around. In the presence of a man I feel insecure because I automatically think he will ridicule me if I say or do something. I was married at the age of 16 and I started to feel this way whenever my husband is at home. I feel a sense of liberation when he leaves home. In the first years of our marriage he would question everything I do

or say; I became inhibited and a war started inside me. I used to watch him leave from our upper floor bedroom and every time I saw him leave I felt liberated from something.... My aql (source of thinking) is a like a big bird; the bird is in a cage when a man is around... It is in its element only when it soars high in the sky spreading its big wings. My security is my aql (mind)

I feel secure when I am not stopped at the customs and searched. But this is a long story I started smuggling goods from Ceuta to Tetuan three years after the birth of my eldest daughter. My husband was hit by a lorry and lost a leg and an eye. I was twenty-six at the time and was encouraged by the fact that three women in my husband's family (two older widowed sisters and an aunt) made a living by smuggling goods. This also encouraged my husband to let me do the job. I am fifty-two now and still smuggling goods. I am called a « muharriba » (smuggler). Everyday I buy 20 meters of hard cord, go through the customs of Ceuta, walk five blocks, find a Spanish man in front of his shop. The latter and his son put some 60 kgs worth of good on my back and use the cord to attach it. When I re-cross the customs I find a Moroccan man who takes me to his shop. I help him unload. I wear three trousers because when I walk with my load men pinch my buttocks all the time, sometimes they shove things... I was raped many times. Every trip is for 50s and if I am raped they add a pack of cheese or chocolate from what I smuggle. I sometimes do 5 trips a day.

A lot of insecurity comes from the family and within the home. For example, violence between brothers. I can give you a personal experience. In our family, my elder

brother is living with us with his wife. One day, my mother was not at home and my other brother was sick and taken to hospital. I was studying that day and I was asked by my elder brother to prepare breakfast before going to my class, but I noticed that tea was not available at home, so I didn't prepare breakfast. Upon his return from hospital, my sick brother started shouting and accusing me of all sorts of things. I told him that he was married and that our mother was always the one to prepare breakfast and not his wife. When I mentioned his wife he lifted his arm and hit me on the face. My upper lip bleeding and my head was spinning... I ran away in shame. I cried all day... Today even though we talk and cross each other all the time at home, I lost trust in him and every time I see him I feel insecure and would automatically take my hand to my upper lip. Indeed, I have a small scar on my lip and the doctor said it won't go because I did not go to hospital on the day I was hit... I was devastated and wanted to die.

I feel that my security is threatened by both men and women. If it is threatened by males it is because of females. They are the ones responsible for their education. I believe in the power of women in raising men in a way to allow them to make me feel insecure because they are not well educated. It is the mother who is responsible in this case. I am a researcher and I constantly move from home to the street, and God knows I experience sexual harassment on the street on a daily basis. I feel lucky because I use the car as it helps me to feel secure. You feel protected in a way or another. Lately, I have gone through an experience in which I didn't feel secure at all. While I was walking, men didn't allow me to feel secure at all because they were looking at me in a strange way. I feel insecure when I am verbally

harassed but I feel in danger when men's looks intimidate me. I experienced these looks even when I have a male family member walking by my side. I feel crippled and I never report for fear of a scandal. I know my male family member will blame it on me. My security is my car.

Literature Review

Conceptualization

Based on women's stories

A linguistic Note

Given my training in linguistics I looked at the various terms for "security" in Arabic and Berber and how the meanings of these terms blur women's own meanings because of the

hegemony of the religious and political meanings as powerful sources of authority. This led me to an investigation of how the needs to feel secure vary according to all these parameters.

“laman”, “as-satr”, etc... all part of women’s everyday language.

But when probed women seem to have specific ideas as to what security means..

The meaning stems from the nature of specific activities that women engage with in the public sphere of authority.

Potential definition for human security as gleaned from the data gathered and analyzed

Given that Morocco is multilingual and multicultural, I based my conceptualization of security on the available literature in English and some Arabic and French literature, as well as on observation.

What does this definition reveal?

First deductions

The preamble of the World Health Organization (WHO) begins with the following definition of health :“Health is a wholistic state of physical, mental, and social well-being, which does not consist only in the absence of illness or disability.”

If we paraphrase this beautiful definition by replacing the word “health” with the word “peace”, each one of us will quickly realize that a culture of peace is in most cases a state of mind or an illusion in today’s realities...

But let's not be negative, or better let's be women. Let's dare

Using various languages, some kind of generalized bilingualism or multilingualism (which succeeded in the Maghrib and which can be an example) is a good sign of mental, cultural, political health of our time, a gage of peace across nations.

An example : Belgium is a federal state which experience an unprecedented cultural and political crisis ever since it missed the opportunity when it chose bilingualism (French-Dutch) and political and cultural federalism to keep its national unity. If we add to this the advent of some extremist Flemish political parties, we can guess the result : the partition of such a beautiful country.

This can happen anywhere in the world today and tomorrow.

Shouldn't we profit from the boon while we have time to accelerate the cultural and civilizational process of the Maghrib ?

Religion is a phenomenon that appears to most Maghribians as closely associated with the cultural and political life of the country.

If religion is costly to the nation (this is a fact), isn't it normal to expect an equivalent benefit of the nation (healthy and practical assimilation of human, mental, and spiritual rules of our time)? When a public sector is not sufficiently profitable, when it scores losses, isn't it necessary to reform it, to liberalize it (French laïcité or Anglo-Saxon secularization as seen fit)...

All heritage is not to take without discussion; notaries know this : sometimes they do not advise to accept a heritage of some deteriorating property in ruin because of the cost of maintenance, unless one is a billionaire. But the average Maghrebian is far from being that rich :he or she

prefer to dress their children during the back to school period to repairing the roof of a saint's shrine in the corner of the village.

Churchill used to say "War is a too serious thing to exclusively leave in the hands of the military..." We can say the same thing about religion. It is difficult to manage a collective efficiency in this domain when the state self-identifies as adhering to a specific religion, even moderate as in the case of Morocco, a model it shares with at least two states (Israel and Greece). In all cases, the question is on the table and we will see what the Arab philosophers of the past wrote on the question (al-Farabi, Averroes... to cite only these two).

Deeper Meanings

Women's stories unveil five broad aspects of Moroccan society and culture that have an impact on how security is defined :the social status, the nature of patriarchy, the sources of authority, and the gender role assignment.

Gender Sociological Variables

Moroccan women are heterogeneous. As the topic focuses on Moroccan women and given my belief in situated knowledge, I included in the conceptualization a glimpse of the heterogeneity of Moroccan women and an assessment of patriarchy and gender dynamics in this country. Six variables.

Space-Based patriarchy

Sources of Patriarchal Authority

Cultural Roots of Gender Role Assignment