

The Causes of Domestic Violence against Women in Morocco: El Jadida as a Case Study

Mohammed Derdar
Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco

Abstract: *The aim of this study is to reflect on the issue of domestic violence against women in Morocco. It particularly presents and analyses data on the causes of domestic violence in both its physical and psychological forms. To provide both quantitative and qualitative data, this study opts for the questionnaire and the interview methods. The questionnaire targeted a sample size of 200 women respondents (married, divorced or widows) from both rural and urban areas in the El Jadida region. Concerning qualitative data, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with women who had experienced domestic violence in their marital life. Some of the causes of domestic violence found in this study include the husband's use of alcohol and drugs, financial issues, domestic work, jealousy, sexual matters, the interference of the mother-in-law, and arguing against the husband's view.*

Key words: Domestic violence - root causes - culture - women- feminism - patriarchy- Morocco

Introduction

Domestic violence is the most pervasive yet least recognized form of violence against women in the world. Despite the spreading of human rights culture, it continues to be a universal problem that has been a persistent obstacle to the promotion and advancement of women's emancipation. Domestic violence has been given serious attention by a range of women's NGOs and human rights activists across the world, because it is pernicious not only to women, but to society as a whole.

Domestic violence refers to any act of physical, psychological or sexual violence perpetrated by the husband on his wife in the family. Though some social science theories refer to domestic violence in a broader sense by associating it to any physical, psychological or sexual form of abuse which takes place within the domestic sphere of the home by family members on one another, or by intimate partners on each other, this study will be concerned with the first definition that is common ground in the analysis of most domestic violence researchers.

This study's conceptualization of domestic violence falls within a narrow definition, and yet a most common one that is patterned upon the work of Russell P. Dobash and R. Emerson Dobash. These English researchers restrict the definition to acts of physical and psychological assault inflicted upon married women (Dobash and Dobash, 1996, p.194-195). This form of violence is frequently referred to as "spousal violence," (USA, State Department, 2000, p.26) or as "violence against women in the family" (Benninger and Lacroix, 1994, p.26). Overall, domestic violence can be physical, including wife-beating, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, strangling,

burning, stabbing, shooting and other forms of physical assault categorizing 'wife-battering'. It can also be psychological, involving wife-insulting, scolding, debasing, humiliating, belittling, forcing, threatening, preventing, depriving, confining, harassing and other similar forms of 'bad treatment', or verbal abuse. Moreover, domestic violence can have a sexual form, which embodies rape in marriage, or what is called "non-consensual sex in marriage." As Purna Sen puts it, "a woman is subject to non-consensual sex in marriage by her husband if she is involved in sexual activity either without her consent or where her consent is obtained under coercive conditions" (Sen, 1999, p.2). This form is, however, often included within the physical category, since it also engenders physical torture.

Domestic violence, in its physical and psychological forms, is now given tremendous importance by many feminists and social scientists that provide distinct explanations to account for this phenomenon. Social, individual, institutional, cultural and ideological forces have been proposed as main factors behind married women's oppression. In many of these perspectives, male power, domination and control are emphasized to varying degrees. Historical, anthropological and contemporary research studies consistently reveal that domestic conflicts and clashes associated with the use of violence typically include male concerns about power and authority, about jealousy and sexual possessiveness, and about the domestic labour of women.

Many cultures hold that men have the right to control their wives' behaviour and that women who challenge that right - even by asking for household money or by expressing the needs of children- may be punished. In countries as different

as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, studies find out that violence is frequently viewed as physical chastisement - the husband's right to "correct" his erring wife (Center for Health and Gender Equity, 1999, p. 6).

Domestic violence, especially in its physical form, remains seriously under-reported, but available statistics hint at the magnitude of the problem. According to an international survey, carried by Julie Mertus, 70% of all crimes reported to the police in Peru are of women beaten by their husbands or partners. In Japan, wife-beating is the second most frequent cause of divorce initiated by women. In Brazil, until 1991 wife killings were considered to be non-criminal (honour killings); in just one year, nearly 800 husbands killed their wives. Similarly, in Colombia, until 1980 a husband legally could kill his wife for committing adultery. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has estimated that a woman is beaten every eighteen seconds. And in most regions of the world, husbands are free to rape their wives without fear of legal penalty or reprisal (Mertus, 1995, pp. 140-141).

Actually, domestic violence is a serious social problem that "cuts across all lines of class, race, family background, religion, and sexuality" (Jones, 1997, p.13). It has simultaneously involved researchers, social activists and policy makers, who have introduced the problem into the public agenda, secured its definition within a social context and engaged the state in the process of policy making. Researchers have added systematic insights into domestic violence, and policy makers have engaged in efforts to respond with measures intended to reduce or eliminate the problem, or to provide support to its victims. Women's NGOs have also played a vital role in recognizing and sensitizing the public to the danger of the problem, providing the major response in the form of refuge or shelter for domestic violence victims and their children, and engaging the government in seeking reforms in laws and social systems.

There is now a climate of change in law and law enforcement in some countries. In this respect, the United Nations reported that many states have adopted legislation recognizing that "violence by a husband should be treated in the same way as violence by a stranger" (United Nations, 2000, p. fact sheet 4). Within a Moroccan context, domestic violence is regarded as the most prevailing type of violence against women. Mr. Said Saadi, the ex-Secretary of State in Charge of Social Protection, the Family and Childhood, said during a national campaign against violence against women, organized by the Moroccan government from 24 November to 10 December, 1998 that domestic violence is a serious and complicated social problem, resulting from different socio- economic, educational and cultural factors (Bnouhachem,

1998, p.1). He estimated that his Secretary of State in Charge of Social Protection, the Family and Childhood recorded 28000 cases of violence against women in 1998. More than half of these cases were concerned with domestic violence, especially with wife-battering (l'Opinion, 14 Aout, 2000, p.5). It is, however, not surprising to say that the number of the recorded cases does not really reflect the real extent of domestic violence in Morocco, for most victims choose not to report their violent husbands.

The Cultural Soil of Domestic Violence

Statistics that are available demonstrate that domestic violence is a widespread problem in Morocco. A 2011 national study on the prevalence of violence against women found that 62, 8 per cent of Moroccan women, aged 18-64 had been victims of some form of violence. This same study found that 55 per cent of these acts of violence were perpetrated by the victim's husband, and the violence was reported by the wife in only 3 per cent of such cases. (Moroccan Haut Commissaire au Plan, 2011). Another 2011 report identified that in cases of violence against women, the perpetrator is the husband in 8 out of 10 cases (US Department of State, 2011). In addition, there is an overall acceptance of domestic violence and a distrust of the justice system that make it unlikely that a victim will report domestic violence. A study found that 33 per cent of respondents believed that a man is sometimes justified to beat his wife (UN Women, 2012).

Being aware of the prevalence of domestic violence, Morocco's social development minister, Bassima Hakkaoui said that she would try to push forward a law protecting women that has been stuck in parliament for eight years. "Despite all efforts, violence against women is still widespread," she said at the opening of a regional conference on the subject (Alakhbar, 2012). Hakkaoui, a member of a moderate Islamist party that dominated the country's election in November, has been criticized for not doing enough to protect women, including changing the law allowing rapists to be exonerated if they marry their victim. While the official marriage age is 18, judges can approve much younger unions, which are common in rural areas that are poor and deeply traditional. Morocco updated its family code in 2004 to improve the situation of women, but activists say more still needs to be done. Khadija Ryadi, president of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights, expressed doubts about Hakkaoui's commitment to finally pass the law protecting women. Ryadi said that the law had been stuck since 2004 and Bassima Hakkaoui was the third minister speaking about it without a result (Alkahbar, 2012).

Indeed, it is important to stress that laws alone will not solve the problem of violence against women in general and domestic violence in

particular without considering cultural factors which seem to condone and justify wife abuse. Women respondents reported that beating could be justified under certain circumstances, including not doing domestic chores, not hosting the husband's parents or relatives as it should be, refusing to copulate, speaking back, and arguing about financial matters. Wife beating may find fertile soil in a set of popular culture practices. In the region of Dukkala, for example, the mother of a bride is supposed to give words of advice to her daughter. She would remind her of her domestic duties, her absolute obedience to her husband, and her undying respect to her in-laws. More importantly, she would tell her to bear in mind as long as she lives that a woman's appropriate place is her husband's home, and that no matter how violent her husband is, she must endure in due silence and docility. The mother would end up her long speech of advice by addressing the women attendees, asking them thus: "is there any one among you who hasn't been beaten by her husband since her marriage day?" Only silence would fill the room. Then, the mother would have a deep look at her daughter and utter her last words of the so-called wise advice: "look my daughter! no woman has ever escaped man's beating. You know, all these good women have been beaten, and yet they still keep their husbands and families. So be one of them, may God bless you."

It is also known in the Dukkali culture that when a battered woman comes to her parents' home in a state of 'rhadba' (a short stay of the battered wife in her parents' house), she will be blamed for having left her husband and children whatever the reasons are. The whole family will shower her with routine questions such as: what have you done to him? Are you sure you did not disobey his words? Why didn't you tolerate his temper? Don't you know that a woman's right place is her husband's house? They will try to remind her that it is shameful for a woman to leave her own home for something that is considered inescapable by most women. They will also remind her of the myth that it is only out of love and care that a husband beats his wife and that "a man who does not beat his wife is not a real man." Having listened to all these, the battered wife will desire to go back to her husband as soon as possible. She may stay for a few days in her parents' house, waiting impatiently for the husband to come and ask her to return home. In this way, she will find her parents' reprimand worse than her husband's beating. In this regard, a respondent said: "a bloody hit is less painful than a venomous word" (Allahoma darba bi demha ola kalma bi semha).

Generally, the assumption that a wife has certain obligations and duties that must be fulfilled or she deserves to get chastised is a major reason behind the continuation of wife-battering. Under the power of this myth, a woman is exposed in a way or another to be dominated by such a

misogynist patriarchal culture to an extent that would force her to blame herself for provoking her husband and to feel guilty because his behaviour seems to be a stark indication that she is not living up to her wifely duties. In this way, she becomes almost convinced that her husband has the right to 'correct' (beat) her.

Wife-battering or what becomes known as the husband's right to 'correct' his erring wife is, furthermore, given religious justification. In the Qur'an, there is a verse that refers to beating the wife who rebels against her husband's authority in the family. Thus if she rebels, the husband is instructed to scold her, then stop having sexual intercourse with her, and finally if these two measures fail to correct her, he is allowed to beat her gently: "As for those from whom ye fear rebellion [nushuz], admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them" (Dawood 1974: Surah 4, Verse 34). This verse is misinterpreted by some Muslims who believe that the Qur'an recommends wife-beating wherever and whenever the wife disobeys her husband.

In his outstanding work on women's liberation in Islamic law, doctor Idriss Hammadi, a Moroccan professor at the department of Islamic studies, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Fes, argues that "al qawama" (men's authority over women in the family) has economic and symbolic measures. So, it is only if a man is capable economically and mentally that he is endowed with the privilege to rule over the family. And if the wife's economic and intellectual levels surpass the husband's, she is then granted the right to run the household (Hammadi, 2001, p. 32-33). Unfortunately, this is something that many people ignore or tend to deny. They consider any attempt on the part of women to replace the position of men, or at least to participate in the family management as an insult to their "qawama" (authority), and therefore resort to wife-beating, a thing that is abhorred by the prophet (PBUH) who said: "Do not beat women" (Qtd. in Mernissi, 1991, p.156). He also added on another occasion: "only the worst ones among you will have recourse to such methods [wife-beating]" (Qtd. in Mernissi, 1991, p.157). The prophet (PBUH) was, indeed, a paradigm of kindness to women, a thing that was revealed by his beloved wife Aicha on a number of occasions. Ibn Sa'd who was one of the prominent religious scholars reported that "the prophet never raised his hand against one of his wives, nor against a slave, nor against any person at al." (Qtd. in Mernissi, 1991, p.156). Still in this vein, the prophet (PBUH) said: "how can you beat your wife like a slave and later make love to her in the evening?" and added "do not beat your wife the way you beat a slave" (Qtd in Hasan, 2011).

According to Usama Hasan’s study, which draws on religious and historical approaches to provide insights into the above mentioned verse which seems to condone wife beating, a holistic reading of the Qur’an, Sunnah and Hadiths, taking into account the socio-historical context of the revelation of the Qur’an and of the Prophetic guidance preserved in authentic Hadiths, shows clearly that God and Muhammad (PBUH) wished to ban wife-beating and domestic violence completely. As a temporary measure, and as a step on the way, an extremely limited, reluctant concession was given that only allowed minimal violence as a symbolic gesture of displeasure on a husband’s part. This was in a strongly patriarchal society that used to bury baby girls alive because of their gender and where sons would inherit their fathers’ wives. Such practices were outlawed by Islam, which also granted rights to women in 7th-century Arabia that were only achieved by European women in the 19th century, such as the independent right to own their property upon marriage (Hasan, 2011).

Methodology

This study opts for both quantitative and qualitative methods of gleaning data. It particularly uses the questionnaire and the interview. The questionnaire was filled out by 200 women respondents from the El Jadida region; 150 questionnaires in rural areas and 50 questionnaires in urban areas. This is because the El Jadida population is 75 per cent rural and 25 per cent urban. As for qualitative data, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and asked open-ended questions related to the study’s hypotheses. To guarantee

representativeness, 15 interviews were conducted with women from rural areas and 5 interviews with women from urban areas. The interviews I conducted lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. Most of the interviewees kindly allowed me to record their speech using my smart phone. Those who declined my request to record agreed to let me write down their answers. In any case, I am deeply grateful to all the respondents for their help and cooperation without which this work would not come into being.

When the data was collected, I began to translate it from Moroccan vernacular into English. I had to be selective in order not to include irrelevant data. I did not have to stick to verbatim transcription. That is to say, I did not have to transcribe all the recorded speech, but only the parts of speech which were pertinent to the research questions. This method is quite widely adopted by social science researchers like Judith C. Lepadat who maintains that “the researcher chooses what talk to write down, and how to present it...the researcher’s challenge is to reduce the data selectively while still preserving the potential for ‘rich interpretations’” (Lepadat, 2000, p.205).

The Causes of Domestic Violence

Alcohol and Drugs

Question 1 asks the respondents if they believe that men’s use of alcohol and drugs can be a root cause of wife-battering. 94% answered with yes, while only 6% answered with no. This means that the high majority has no doubt that alcohol and drugs can cause domestic violence.

Table 1: Women’s Opinion on Men’s Use of Alcohol and Drugs

Question 1: Do you think that men’s use of alcohol and drugs is a main cause behind wife-battering?	N°	%
Yes	188	94
No	12	6
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

As for question 2, it asks the respondents whether they experienced wife-battering as a result of their husbands’ use of alcohol and drugs. 34% responded that they had been battered due to their husbands’ use of alcohol and drugs. 31% answered that they had been subjected to violence for other reasons, while 35% were not concerned with answering this question (this category of respondents did not experience wife-battering).

Table 2: Women Battered Due to Their Husbands’ Use of Alcohol and Drugs

Question 2: Have you ever been battered due to your husband’s use of alcohol or drugs?	N°	%
Yes	68	34
No	62	31
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

As table 2 shows, men's use of alcohol or drugs is one of the key causes behind violence against women, since 68 out of 130 battered women related the violence they experienced to alcohol or drugs. Such a conclusion was also reported by Annajda centers (Markaz Annajda, 1998).

Interviews with the women victims demonstrated that most violent episodes occurred late at night when the husband would come intoxicated:

My husband usually comes late at night intoxicated. He'll stumble into the bedroom and awake me with a sharp punch if he finds me fast asleep.

He used to come home very late at night when he was drunk. He would start shouting at me, smashing the dishes and beating me in front of the children.

One night he came drunk. It was around 1:00 a.m. He stumbled into the bedroom with a dagger in hand. I was fast asleep and he prodded me with the dagger. I got up. When I saw the dagger, I jumped to my feet and ran out almost naked.

Where did you go?

I went to the police to complain about what had happened. The police called him down and urged him to sign a legal promise not to beat me again. However, he went on beating me whenever he was drunk.

The violence perpetrated on the respondents was both physical and psychological. Psychological violence was reported by many women who experienced a range of bad treatments due to their husbands' drinking. Such treatments entailed the husband's drinking before the children's eyes, forcing the wife to serve and drink with him, using taboo words, coming too late at night (sometimes with a mistress), coming in torn clothes, stinking the house out with the smell of wine.

Some respondents reported that their drunk husbands would not come back home till they were fetched from their whereabouts. A case in point is the following account:

I was every so often obliged to go out at night to look for him. I would find him fighting with someone, covered with blood, or without some of his clothes. I would sometimes find him stumbling and roaring like an angry animal. It would take me much time and effort to collect him back home. Sometimes, I would take him on my back as he was too weak to walk.

This woman admitted that her husband was nice when he was not intoxicated. Like many other respondents, she put the blame on alcohol: "he is

violent only when he takes his 'belya' (drinks and hashish). It is this which makes him aggressive." In effect, men tend to absolve from the accountability of using force by coercing their wives to believe that violent attacks are against their control when they are intoxicated:

My husband is a wino. He often tends to absolve himself from the responsibility of using violence by saying that he isn't conscious of what he does when he is drunk.

After each violent incident, he would express his remorse and contrition as he returned to his normal state. He would say; "sorry my dear, I didn't mean to beat you. It was because of the drink, you know."

Such findings were also reported by international studies on domestic violence. For instance, a victim told R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash: "he would say, look, this isn't me. It's the drink that is making me act this way" (Dobash and Dobash, 1980, p.118). Dobash and Dobash have argued that men who have only had a small amount of drink and could in no way be considered drunk also use alcohol as an excuse. Women, too, may use their husbands' drinking as a means of making sense of the violent behaviour and of "placing blame upon something 'outside' the marital relationship" (Dobash and Dobash, 1980, p. 118).

Furthermore, interviewees with the women whose husbands were addicted drinkers or drug-takers demonstrated that violence would erupt after a verbal altercation when the husband could not afford money to buy alcohol or drugs:

When he runs out of money and asks me for some so that he can buy kif, I know then that a violent attack will take place.

The problem with my husband Kassem is when he becomes penniless. He'll want to have money through whatever means. Once he wanted to sell the furniture. I interfered to stop him, and he gave me a good deal of beating.

Addicted husbands may opt for other ways to get money. These ways include taking money from the wife by force, stealing from the household, and borrowing money to spend on alcohol and drugs while the family is not catered for. Such delinquent acts were also reported to be serious forms of domestic violence suffered by women of addicted husbands.

The Mother-in-Law's Interference

In addition to alcohol and drugs which are undoubtedly main causes behind domestic violence, there is another root cause that concerns the tightened and restive relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law who may

live under the same roof. This relationship is in most cases based on domination, tyranny and unjust supervision on the part of the mother-in-law over the son's wife.

This imbalanced power-relation between the mother-in-law and the wife has enthralled the attention of national as well as international researchers on women's studies. Nationally, Fatima Mernissi writes in her illuminating study, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, that "in a traditional marriage, the mother-in-law is one of the greatest obstacles to conjugal intimacy" (Mernissi, 1987, p. 121). Internationally, Susan S. Davis reported in *Patience and Power: Women's lives in a Moroccan Village*:

I was surprised to see the harsh manner in which one ordinarily jovial friend treated a new daughter-in-law, ordering her about constantly and never praising but always criticizing her. One wonders if some of this behaviour is motivated by a feeling of retribution for hardships ... The daughter-in-law is

expected to endure everything patiently, attempting to do the best she can to prove her worth to the household (Davis, 1989, p. 131)

In the mother-in-law / daughter-in-law relationship, the mother-in-law is supposed to chaperon, supervise and even overwork the daughter-in-law, who is expected to do most or all of the household work and silently execute her mother-in-law's commands. Actually, the wife's submission is required by tradition, which obliges the daughter-in-law to show deference towards the family of the husband. The wife is also obliged to live with her-in-laws if the husband cannot afford a house of his own. Even when he owns a house, it is preferable by tradition and custom for the newly married couple to live in the husband's family home at least during the first days of the marital life. Most of the respondents (68,5%) reported that they had lived with their in-laws after their marriage, whereas only 31,5% stated they had not shared their in-laws' dwelling. (see table 3):

Table 3: Wives Living with Their in-laws

Question 3: Did you live with your-in-laws after your marriage?	N°	%
Yes	137	68,5
No	63	31,5
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

When asked about their relationship with their mothers-in-law, a few respondents (8%) described this relationship as good, 15% described it as ordinary, 41% said it was bad, while 36% were not concerned with answering question 18 (this category of women either did not live with their mothers-in-law, or they do not have mothers-in-law):

Table 4: Daughter-in-Law / Mother-in-Law Relationship

Question 4: How was your relationship with your mother-in-law?	N°	%
Good	16	8
Ordinary	30	15
Bad	82	41
Not concerned	72	36
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

The mother-in-law's interference, as described by the respondents, takes various forms, which all instigate the husband's use of violence. Some of these forms may be illustrated in the following accounts:

My mother-in-law ('duzti) would tell her son invented stories. She would, for instance, tell him that I was outside the home, or that I spent all the day sleeping around while she was doing housework. She would sometimes act foolishly. One day she came in the kitchen behind my back and added much salt to the dish I was cooking. The dish was terribly spoilt and my husband, who was expecting some guests, got enraged and beat me virtually to death.

The problem is not with my husband, but with his mother. In the house we are like cat and mouse. I don't know why she hates me so much although we are relatives. She usually provokes her son into beating me. She has recently sowed dissension between us by telling him that I was out without taking permission. "look, you have got to correct her, or you're not my son," she said. I received a great deal of violence that day.

I squabbled with my mother-in-law one day and she got very angry. When her son came home, she told him a completely distorted story. She informed him that I had been sleeping all the day and that I hadn't done my domestic tasks. That wasn't true. As usual, I cleaned the house, baked the bread, cooked the lunch meal, did the laundry, milked the

cows, fed the bulls and dusted the stables. I did all these alone, while she [the mother-in-law] and her daughter Halima were watching my toiling. After lunch, I felt exhausted and took a short nap. You see, just a short nap. But she made a mountain out of a molehill (dart men lhaba quba) ; she told her son I had been sleeping all the day. I tried to defend myself by telling him the truth, but he was already too fiery to listen. He grabbed me by the throat and started to hit me as hard as he could, meanwhile la'duza (the mother-in-law) was watching.

Violent incidents of this type were recounted by many wives, who connected their aggression with the existence of the mother-in-law in their marital life. Some cases indicated that even when a wife lives independently, she cannot escape the mother-in-law's troubles: "when we are without her, everything goes all right. But once she comes for a visit, quarrels with my husband will start." Conjugal quarrels will also arise when the couple goes to spend a holiday with the husband's parents. A woman, who came from the city to spend her summer holiday with her-in-laws in the country, said: "my husband and I always come to spend the summer holiday here. But, to tell you the truth, I don't enjoy staying here due to my mother-in-law's constant brutal treatment." I asked this woman about her husband's reaction and she replied thus:

I'm always the one to blame for any dispute. Even when sometimes he has no scruples about my innocence, he takes sides with his mother. If I protest, he will thump me and say, "what shall I do? She is my mother, I must venerate her anyway; religion says so"

The mother-in-law's harsh treatment may reach its peak if the wife is supposed to be a "sag'a" (omen of bad luck). A bride is deemed "sag'a" if some mishap befall the in-laws after the arrival of the bride. Among the things the mother-in-law must do to stop other future misfortunes are forcing the son to divorce and using witchcraft:

My mother-in-law calls me "sag'a." She thinks I'm the cause of all the misfortunes that struck the family after my wedding. One day she said to her son: "look at her feet! How big they are! They can't be a good woman's feet. They are the source of bad luck." I've been suffering because of my feet. Is it true that big feet bring about bad luck? I may be divorced if my mother-in-law keeps complaining about my feet.

Another newly-married woman related:

In this village, people seem to relate bad luck and good luck to the bride. If she brings with her good luck, she is considered 'mabruka' (omen of good luck). By contrast, she is regarded "sag'a" if some bad luck strikes her in-laws. I've been called the latter name since the death of my brother-in-law Bouchaib, who died young in a road accident. Since then, my mother-in-law Rhanou has been

venting her rage on me. She thinks I'm a bad omen in the family. One Friday evening, she tore off a piece of cloth from my dress and put it on fire. She thought it would send bad luck (sgu'iya) out of me.

Some respondents reported that the mother-in-law's resort to witchcraft was not only meant to shoo bad luck out of the wife, but also to sow hatred between the couple so that they would get divorced:

My mother-in-law was a very wicked woman. She would do her best to cause problems to me so that I would be repudiated because, to her, I was a herald of mishaps. One day, I found her putting some sort of witchcraft in my bedroom. I asked her: "what are you doing? Do you want to ruin my life?" She answered calmly: "this is my house and I've the right to do whatever I want. If you don't like it, go to where you came from."

My mother-in-law is the bane of my life. She is a very experienced witch. She uses all her evil powers to invoke hatred and dissension between me and my husband. I think she has succeeded in doing so, since we're now at the point of divorce, which is why I'm here [at Dar Al Qadi].

All in all, the mother-in-law / daughter-in-law social interaction remains for most of the women a poignant experience that tugs at the heart strings. This experience may find expression in the famous saying which was reiterated by many respondents: "ila kant la'duza hbiba htta lef'a tkun tbiba" (if the mother-in-law were a dear, even the snake would be a doctor). Such a saying is very telling in the sense that the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law is most of the time restive and fraught with hatred, dissension, wickedness and rivalry, which is why the wife will crave for separation. In fact, many respondents said that they began to lead a peaceful conjugal life immediately after settling in their own houses. Therefore, a suggested remedy to this form of violence where the mother-in-law is involved as a cause may lie in the couple's agreement to live independently before they decide on marriage.

Domestic Work

Apart from men's use of alcohol and drugs, and the mother-in-law's interference in the couple's day-to-day social interactions, findings have proved that violent episodes are also due to the daily activities of the men and women who live together. Indeed, arguments preceding most first attacks are primarily linked with the husband's possessiveness and his expectations towards his wife's duties within the domestic sphere of the home. One of these duties that a wife is supposed to fulfill with care, devotion and responsibility is housework. Thus, any supposed failure to comply with this duty may lead to violent attacks. Of all the respondents, 55% answered that they had been beaten by their husbands for reasons related to domestic work, 10% had been beaten for other

reasons, while 35% were not concerned (see table 27 below):

Table 5: Women Battered for Domestic Work

Question5: Did your husband ever beat you for domestic work?	N°	%
Yes	110	55
No	20	10
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

The respondents who were battered due to matters related to domestic activities reported that their husbands had instigated arguments regarding a variety of household tasks. As these accounts depict:

He would come in and ask: “have you done this room today?” I’d reply: “yes.” He’d ask: “did you dust?” I’d reply: “of course I did.” He’d ask: “did you do such-and-such?” I’d say: “no.” And that’s what would start a violent episode.

He beats me for the least of things. For example, when I break a glass, spoil a dish or when I can’t make my baby stop crying.

Many interviewees who suffered violence due to reasons connected with domestic work related accounts where their husbands’ expectations concerning the preparation and serving of food engendered confrontations:

The problem with my husband was that he often complained about the food. Sometimes he would say it was too cold. Other times he would say it was stale. Once he threw a dish at me when we were at the table. My head and face were covered with broth. He then grabbed my arm and pulled my hair. I was screaming, but he couldn’t keep his hands off me.

One night I burnt the dinner meal. My husband came to the kitchen and asked what had made me careless about my cooking duty. I told him that I had been saying my prayers. He said: “I don’t care, but you’ve to mind your cooking affairs.” He then vented his rage on me, hitting me so viciously as if I had been responsible for a crime or a disaster.

Physical violence is, in fact, likely to be meted out to a wife even when she is not responsible for a failure in meeting the husband’s expectations as far as the preparation of food is concerned. In some cases, for example, the husband will punish his wife for not preparing a lavish meal although he knows that the fridge is empty.

In addition to the husband’s expectations as to the preparation of food, interviews showed that expectations regarding children minding also triggered men’s violence:

I was beaten many times because of my children’s crying. My husband said they cried because they needed some care that I had failed to give them.

While my little son was crawling, he attempted to pick up a crumb of bread that the dog was eating. The dog bit him in his hand and he was slightly hurt. My husband got very hungry and beat me to bleeding. “You don’t mind the child as you should,” he said.

I asked this woman whether or not she deserved a beating over this incident, and she responded with an emphatic no. She explained that there were other verbal strategies to use rather than violence. This view, however, is not shared by most women, notably those with a lower or no level of education. In fact, some respondents gave failure to meet domestic chores as a justification for the husband’s right to chastise the wife, as this illiterate rural woman reports:

Some women look for being battered. How do you want a husband to be nice and friendly to his wife when she spends her day sleeping around, or sitting in front of the mirror while her housework duties are neglected? How do you expect him to control his temper when he comes from work tired and angry, and yet finds neither comfort nor what to eat? Some women deserve punishment if they are of this type.

I told the respondents who shared such a view that some men spend their day sleeping around, gambling, drinking or just wandering while their wives labour inside and outside the home to feed the family. “Do these men deserve to be punished physically by their wives?” I asked. This question made some informants laugh before they answered with an emphatic no. Hence, if women are to be punished for domestic tasks, men will also, to my mind, deserve beating for failing to fulfill their economic responsibilities as heads of families. This is justice. But in our culture, violence against men by women is out of question. So why can we not be sincere and honest to ourselves and admit that violence against women is basically a patriarchal construct which must be deconstructed and a more viable system reconstructed in its place, a system that is based on equality and justice in all domains of human life?

Financial Matters

Another major source of disputes leading to attacks is money. Money was found to be a key cause behind most of the violent incidents between

the couple. To question 21 (did your husband ever beat you for arguing with him about financial matters?), the majority of the respondents (56,5%) answered with yes, while only 8,5% responded with no:

Table 6: Women Battered Due to Financial Matters

Question 6: Did your husband ever beat you for arguing with him about financial matters?	N°	%
Yes	113	56,5
No	17	8,5
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

As table 6 illustrates, the respondents (56,5 %) who were battered because of reasons linked with financial reasons was higher, taking into account that 35% did not answer question 6 because they did not experience wife-battering in their marital life. The husbands who resorted to beating were the ones who failed to meet their so-called masculine accountability to provide for the family. As the following accounts demonstrate, when women wanted their husbands to buy something, they only reacted violently because they could not fulfill their masculine role. For these husbands, violence would be an effective way to silence such 'rebellious' wives:

My disputes with him about economic issues always end with violence. The last time we quarreled was about the shopping expenses. I asked him to give me some money, but instead of giving me money, he gave me a sharp slap that knocked me to the ground.

"Why do you keep on beating me?" I asked. "Well," he said, "you keep on asking for money." I said, " well, your children and I need it. We can't live on anything."

He sometimes gets violent when I tell him that we run out of some staples such as sugar, oil or flour. He will shout at me, saying that he has no money and that I'm too querulous.

When I gave birth to my son Mustapha, I stayed in bed for a couple of days, waiting for him to buy me 'nafaqa' (a traditional practice whereby the husband is supposed to buy gifts to his in childbed wife), but he didn't. I insisted on my demand and he beat me very severely, breaking one of my fingers.

Whenever an argument about money is raised, I know that violence will follow this argument. I still remember the last time he beat me. It was on the eve of the sacrifice feast ('id Al Adha). I told him

to buy a sheep to celebrate the religious event. He said that he didn't have any money. I said to him: "you spend a lot of money on wine and gambling, and now you say you don't have any money." Upon hearing these words, he got enraged and started to beat me in front of the children.

There are indeed countless accounts of this type. I listed only the ones which seemed more common among the respondents. Such accounts reflect the idea that some men opt for violence when they feel a loss of control in situations where their wives keep demanding of them to live-up to their economic duty. The use of violence is meant to regain the view that these men have control and power.

Men's loss of control over their economic accountability is, however, clearly noticed in their request for money from their wives. Many women recounted that their refusal to meet the husband's demand for money had led to violent episodes. In describing the last time her husband used violence, one informant recalled the specific verbal exchange about money that led to the attack:

He came to me one Sunday evening and asked me to lend him a hundred dirhams. I told him that I wouldn't lend him any money. He then asked for fifty dirhams only. I said, "I won't lend you a coin this time. You never give back what you take from me." On hearing this, he got angry and slapped me across the face.

Jealousy

Jealousy was found to be another major cause behind domestic violence. Question 7 of the questionnaire is concerned with this variable. It asks, "Did your husband ever beat you out of jealousy?" While the majority (42%) answered with yes, 23% answered with no, and 35% were not concerned with the question:

Table 7 Women Battered out of Jealousy

Question 7: Did your husband ever beat you out of jealousy?	N°	%
Yes	84	42
No	46	23
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

The women who responded with yes, reported countless situations where sexual jealousy, be it on the part of the husband or wife, was the source of physical aggression. One victim recounted:

My husband Brahim assaulted me on innumerable occasions because of sexual jealousy. He started beating me after only one month of marriage. One day, he became so enraged over my talking to a male ex-classmate whom I happened to run across in the street.

Many respondents recounted similar reactions from their husbands. One woman reported how her husband, like Brahim, was jealous from the very beginning of their marriage:

He showed extreme jealousy. If he saw me even speaking to a neighbour or a relative who happened to be male, he would vent his rage on me and give me a good deal of beating.

Other informants related that going outside the home without being accompanied by a family member was a substantial ground for the husband's use of violence, as these accounts demonstrate:

He was very dubious about my going out without being accompanied by his mother or one of his sisters. He was so jealous that he accused me of infidelity.

He is a jealous husband. He never allows me to go out alone. And if I happen to go out without an escort (usually his mother or sister), he gets very angry and doesn't hesitate to use violence.

Whenever I'm out, quarrels are very likely to occur. "Where have you been?" "What have you done?" "Did you talk to men?" These are routine questions he will start showering me with when I come back home.

He was always sceptical about my being out. For example, when I stay in the hammam for more than one hour and a half, he will start accusing me of going somewhere and often ends up in beating me.

Men's doubt about their wives may result in serious violent confrontations if these women make themselves up before going out. Many women and especially those in rural areas stated that their husbands did not like them to wear cosmetics or ornament when they were going out. To these husbands, make up would make women more appealing and vulnerable to seduction. Besides, they believed that only immoral and indecent women would put on cosmetics.

In this way, women's freedom as to personal concerns is constrained, whereas men are free to do whatever they desire. They may spend a night somewhere with another woman or even bring in a mistress. Such behaviour engenders burning jealousy on the part of the wife:

My husband rarely spends the night at home. He has a mistress with whom he spends most of his time. When he is back, he treats me like a stranger. He hardly ever chats with me. And even when he does so, his tone is violent and quite injurious. One day I told him: "I know everything about your new mistress." On hearing this, he took a stick and set to beat me, saying I was spying on him.

He used to bring other women to my house. I had to see and keep silent because I know that protesting would cost me a broken jaw. But one day I felt a burning jealousy and couldn't help complaining. I told him that what he was doing was a disgusting insult to me and the children. We bickered for a while, and then he beat me very severely. He even threatened to divorce me if I 'opened' my mouth again.

Sexual Matters

Matters related to sexual intercourse were found to lead to physical assault. 18 per cent of the battered women stated that they had been battered for reasons connected with sexual intercourse. These reasons included mainly women's refusal to copulate, and their rejection to have anal sex:

Table 8 Wives Battered Due to Sexual Matters

Question 8: Did your husband beat you for reasons related to sexual intercourse?	N°	%
Yes	36	18
No	94	47
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

The number of women who answered with yes (18%) is perhaps higher if we take into account the nature of question 8. Some respondents might not have said the truth, since talking about such a topic remains a taboo anywhere, let alone among illiterate rural women. However, this result

coincides with the findings reported by Annajda Center in Casablanca (Markaz Annajda, 1998)

Dispute over sexual acts is, in fact, a worldwide phenomenon, but research studies have found out that this problem is more serious in developing

countries. According to a study conducted by the US National Academy of Science (N.A.S), sexual relations involve significant risks for women in developing states where the prevalence of sexual conjugal violence stands between 20% to 60% (Morocco, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 1998, p.9). Even in the societies, as Purna Sen has put it, “with apparently enlightened educational systems, liberal legislation, and judicial systems,” (Sen, 1999, p.6)

violence resulting from non-consensual sex in marriage remains a woman’s plight. Catherine A. Mackinnon has, furthermore, expounded on this issue and concluded that men’s violence due to women’s non-compliance with certain sexual acts could lead even to murder in bedrooms (Mackinnon, 1998, p. 500-501).

In my interviews with victims, I found out that women may suffer battering as a consequence of their refusal to copulate when they feel tired, sick or merely when they are not psychologically ready for sex:

Did he ever beat you for a reason related to the marital bed? (wash sbaq lih darbk lisabab ‘andu ‘alaqa befrash zawjiya?)

I sometimes withhold myself from him when I don’t feel like it. He gets riled and hits me. Men, you know, think that you’re a property of their own that must be available to their use whenever they wish.

Another victim answered to the same question thus:

One night he wanted me for the bed (lafrash). I was so tired from work that I refused his proposal. He then got enraged and, in a fierce manner, hitched my clothes up and forced me to have it [sex].

Even when they do not refuse to copulate, women may not succeed in eschewing punishment, as this case reveals: “when he felt that I wasn’t responding to him in ‘lafrash’, he got angry and thumped me in my stomach.”

Another reason which explains men’s resort to violence is women’s refusal to obey the perverted act of anal sex:

He wanted me for something cursed by God and His Messenger.

Something like what?

Something like [she hesitates for a while] having sex from behind.

My husband attempted to sodomize me one night. I stopped him. He got very angry and slapped me.

He desired me from behind (meaning her husband wanted her for anal sex). He said that he would love me more than ever if I obeyed him. I couldn’t let him do what he wanted, which made him hit me.

Some respondents, on the other hand, admitted that they obeyed their husbands’ sexual acts in all circumstances in order to avoid battering. To the question: “did your husband ever beat you for reasons related to sexual intercourse? ” a woman replied thus: “no, why would he beat me? I obey him in whatever he wants from me.” The phrase ‘whatever he wants from me’ refers to the sexual act in the manner the husband desires. Like this woman, other victims hinted at their consent to the husband’s sexual drives by using expressions such as “I obey him” (ana kanti‘u), “I pander to his desire” (ana mbar‘ah), “I don’t disobey him” (ana manarfad lih talab), “his bed is always ready” (frashu dima wajed).

Arguing against the Husband’s View

Opposing the husband’s opinion was also found to be a prominent cause behind domestic violence. Question 9 asks the respondents whether they experienced wife-battering because of arguing against the husband’s opinion on certain matters. 52,5% answered with yes, 12,5% answered with no, and 35% were not concerned with the question (see table 31 below):

Table 9: Wives Battered Due to Opposing the Husband’s Opinion

Question 9: Did your husband ever beat you for just arguing against his opinion?	N°	%
Yes	105	52,5
No	25	12,5
Not concerned	70	35
Total	200	100

Source: The Fieldwork

Interviews with the women who were battered as a result of contrasting the husband’s view showed that men believe strongly that their wishes, concerns, suggestions and opinions come first. The fact that they are males and heads of families underpins the notion that they have certain prerogatives and rights that supersede those of

women. According to these men, a wife should not argue with her husband or show rebellion against his orders no matter what the reason is. A husband is to be accorded reverence and obedience due to his superior position and authority. Even if a wife may have a discreet opinion, a legitimate demand or complaint, she cannot go too much about it,

since this is considered a challenge to the husband's authority in the family. She must always plead, cajole and even beguile her man into changing his views and accepting hers.

Women, therefore, are required to agree with men and accept their position of power regardless of its merit. If they do not do so, they may be silenced through the use of violence:

I've been slapped and hit for saying anything against his view, for having a different opinion on a certain matter or person. I've been beaten for protesting against his staying out until late at night.

I most of the time get a punch or a slap when I say no to his suggestions or decisions. It's out of question to contest or argue against what is in his stubborn head.

My husband is the type who expects you to get sulky when he shouts out his 'military' orders. If even I give my opinion on a certain matter, which turns to oppose his view, he gets upset and beats me with whatever he has in his hand or finds nearby.

Squabbling over an issue where my view on a matter opposes his often led to a violent episode. I had to show that I was with him in all that he said to avoid violence.

Opposing the husband's view on certain matters may involve different forms and practices. For instance, if the wife does not wear the veil in front of male guests, if she does not wear her djellaba when she goes out, or if she makes herself up in a manner the husband considers obscene or indecent. As the following examples illustrate:

He used to beat me when I didn't cover my hair in front of male strangers.

He sometimes beats me if I go out without wearing my djellaba.

My husband doesn't like me to make up. But on certain occasions I wear cosmetics. And if he sees me, he gets angry and beats me.

Other instances where the wife is battered for opposing the husband's view include squabbling over housework, the children, expenses, and other day-to-day family duties. While talking about these, some respondents over and above mentioned that they were occasionally beaten for reasons they ignored. In this vein, a woman said:

One evening, I was in the kitchen when my husband came in and hit me in the face. "Why did you hit me?" I asked him. "Ask yourself," he said.

Another one said:

Sometimes he beats me for reasons I don't know. He simply says, "You deserve it and you know why I have beaten you."

Interviews also showed that women got hit especially when they raised their voice, disobeying their husbands, especially in the presence of relatives. Most respondents explained this by saying that men often felt underestimated when their words were not heard or views were not embraced by their women. "They [husbands] want you to say yes to whatever they say", a respondent concluded.

Conclusion

To conclude, domestic violence against women remains a serious plight that saps women's physical and psychological well-being, and hence deprives society of their social and economic contribution. The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

68% of the respondents were battered because of their husbands' use of alcohol and/or drugs.

82% were battered because of the interference of the mother-in-law

55% were beaten due to reasons related to housework

56,5% were beaten due to reasons related to economic reasons

42% were abused due to reasons related to jealousy

18% were abused as a result of sexual issues.

52% were beaten due to simply arguing against the husband's view.

The worse side of the problem lies in the fact that such violence is deeply rooted in the overall apparatus of Moroccan culture. Thus ending domestic violence requires changing the community norms and all cultural attitudes and beliefs which give rise to men's abusive behaviour towards women and which allow it to prevail and persist. Actually, a multiplicity of patriarchal norms and beliefs are considerably powerful in upholding, fostering and perpetuating violence against wives. These embrace patriarchal views such as men are inherently superior to women, husbands have the right to supervise and rule over their wives, beating is an appropriate way to discipline or "correct" rebellious women, a man's honour is inextricably tied to women's sexual behaviour, women are deficient in reason, and hence should be rejected from participating in certain social, economic or political areas. Such misogynist attitudes are systematically present in a range of predominant components of Moroccan popular culture.

Hence, any action plan to fight domestic violence must take into account combatting all the biased attitudes and constructed representations which contribute very considerably to the production of a Moroccan popular culture. Special efforts to achieve this goal should essentially focus on the role of the media, education, the law, women's NGO's, human rights activists, and notably the family which is deemed the first school where children should be taught the fundamental grounds of gender equity.

References

- Alakhbar English (September 24, 2012) available at <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/12587>.
- Benninger-Budel, Carin and Anne-Laurence Lacroix (1994) *Violence against Women: a Report*. Geneva: World Organisation against Torture.
- Bnouhachem, A. "Campagne contre la violence à l'Encontre des Femmes." *L'Opinion*, Nov. 25, 1998.
- Centre for Health and Gender Equity (1980) *Population Reports: Ending Violence against Women*. Maryland: Center for Health and Gender Equity.
- Davis, Susan Schaefer and Douglas A. Davis (1989) *Adolescence in a Moroccan Town*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press.
- Dawood, N. J. 1974. *The Quran*. Trans. England: Penguin Books.
- Dobash, R. Emerson and Russel Dobash (1980) *Violence against Wives: a Case against the Patriarchy*. London: Open Books.
- (1996) "Domestic Violence." In *The Social Science Encyclopedia*. 2nd Ed. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hammadi, Dris (2001) *Afaq tahrir Almara Almaghribia fi Asharia Alislamia (The Future of Moroccan Woman's Liberation in Islamic law)*. Rabat: Dar Abi Raqraq.
- Hasan, Usama (2011) "Have You Stopped Beating Your Wife?: the Plain Truth about Domestic Violence and the ' Wife-beating' Verse of the Quor'an, including a Holistic Study of Important but Rarely- Quoted Hadiths on the Subject." Available at <http://unity1.wordprocess.com>
- Jones, Kathleen B (1997) "The Politics of Responsibility and Perspectives on Violence against Women." In *Feminism and the New Democracy: Resisting the Political*. Ed. Jodi Dean.
- Lepadat, Judith C. " Problematizing Trabscription: Purpose, Paradigm and Quality." In *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, N3 (2000), pp.203-209. London: Thousands Oaks and Delhi: Sage Publications.
- L'Opinion* (14Aout, 2000) "Les Femmes Victimes de la Violence et de la Pauvreté."
- Mackinnon, Catherine A.(1998) "Rape: On Coercion and Consent." In *Contemporary Moral Issues in a Diverse Society*. Ed. Julie M. Mc Donald. Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Markaz Annajda (1998) *Report on Violence against Women in Casablanca 1998*
- Mernissi, Fatima (1987) *Beyond the Veil : Male-Female Dynamics in Moroccan Muslim Society*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- (1991) *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland: Cambridge and Massachusettes. Perseus Books.
- Moroccan Haut Commissaire au Plan (2001) 'Principaux Resaut de L'Enquête Nationale sur la Prévalence de la Violence à L' Egard des Femmes.' Available at http://www.hcp.ma/Conference-debat-consacree-a-l-etude-de-la-violence-a-l-egard-de-femmes-au-Maroc_a66html.
- Morocco. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (1998) *Exaequo*. N°. 7. Rabat : IFD
- Mertus, Julie. (1995) "State Discriminatory Family Law and Customary Abuses." In *Women's Rights Human Rights: International Feminists Perspectives* Ed. Julie Peters and Andrea Wolper. New York and London: Rutledge.
- Sen, Purna. "Change Programme on Non-Consensual Sex in Marriage: Briefing Paper-Ending the Presumption of Consent." *Change*, April 1999
- USA. State Department. 1999 *State Department Human Rights Report on Morocco*, April 2000.
- U.S. Department of State (2011) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2010 Human Rights Practices: Morocco*. Available at <http://www.State.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154468.htm>
- United Nations (2000) "Violence against Women." In *Women 2000*. New York: Department of Public Information.
- U.N Women (2000), " 2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women, Fact Sheet: Middle East and North Africa." Available at <http://progress.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/En-Factsheet-MENA-progress-of-the-worlds-Women.pdf>