


Towards Sexual Education: Moroccan Youth's Perception Between Globality and Islam

Hacia la educación sexual: La percepción de la juventud marroquí entre la globalidad y el Islam

 **Rachid Benharrouse**
The University of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah - Morocco
Fez, Morocco
rachid.benharrouse@usmba.ac.ma

ABSTRACT

In this research, the nation-state forces certain archaic cultural forms and practices on the current youth population. This is a result of the lack of adequate communication between the state and the Moroccan youth. Thus, Morocco continues to press on teaching abstinence-only sex programs since 2005. This research attempts to Bridge the gap of communication through articulating Moroccan youth's perceptions and their relation with globalization and religion. The first part of the Analysis argues that globalization shapes sexual education is received. The positive perception of sexual education is due to glocality since the individual youth identifies with the western culture he or she witnesses on media and the internet. This leads to an urge to experiencing sex outside of marriage. The negative perception of sexual education is due to globality, yet this is a minority within the sample. In the second part, participants perceive Islam to be for sexual education. Then, there is a need for sexual safety especially since youth are already engaging in premarital intercourses. Sexual education would keep them away from STDs and pregnancies out of wedlock. Thus, the Moroccan youth's perception favors sexual education and seeks to implement it as a means of dealing with premarital relationships.

Keywords: sexuality, Morocco, youth, Islam, globalization, sexual education

RESUMEN

En esta investigación, el Estado-nación impone ciertas formas y prácticas culturales arcaicas a la actual población juvenil. Esto es el resultado de la falta de comunicación adecuada entre el estado y la juventud marroquí. Así pues, Marruecos sigue presionando para que se enseñen programas de sexo sólo por abstinencia desde 2005. Nuestra investigación intenta salvar la brecha de la comunicación mediante la articulación de las percepciones de los jóvenes marroquíes y su relación con la globalización y la religión. En la primera parte del análisis se argumenta que la globalización da forma a la educación sexual que se recibe. La percepción positiva de la educación sexual se debe a la glocalidad, ya que el joven se identifica con la cultura occidental de la que es testigo en los medios de comunicación e Internet. Esto lleva a un impulso de experimentar el sexo fuera del matrimonio. La percepción negativa de la educación sexual se debe a la globalidad, sin embargo, esta es una minoría dentro de nuestra muestra. En la segunda parte, los participantes perciben que el Islam es para la educación sexual. Luego, la necesidad de seguridad sexual, especialmente que los jóvenes ya están participando en relaciones prematrimoniales. La educación sexual los mantendría alejados de las ETS y de los embarazos fuera del matrimonio. Así, la percepción de los jóvenes marroquíes favorece la educación sexual y trata de implementarla como un medio para tratar las relaciones prematrimoniales.

Palabras clave: sexualidad, Marruecos, juventud, Islam, globalización, educación sexual

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual education has different meanings for different people. It might imply immorality or development. Yet, of course, it relates to a broad variety of topics about sex and sexuality. For Clearance W. Hahn, “[t]he subject matter of sex instruction and manner of presentation are wholly dependent upon the standards of moral purity which it is desirable to maintain in the minds of young people” (1914, p. 54). One perceives sexual education through their surroundings and based on his lived-experiences. Thus, the youth have been exposed to sexual education through their home community, or on the internet. The latter has been vital in circulating false notions and perception, oftentimes overly exaggerated. Sexuality and sex are part of one’s natural physiology, so libido is inevitable. Hence, an understanding of sexuality for the youth from professionals and educators would ease the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. In the Moroccan context, it is believed that ‘Sexual Abstinence’ is the only medically safe and morally responsible choice for unmarried adolescents. Abstinence aims to keep one asexual until marriage because it is the only responsible and acceptable sexual behavior; therefore, only abstinence should be taught in schools. Sexual education programs that encourage abstinence until marriage is seen as the most effective protection from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). But, this paper aims to foreground the realities of sexual practices and behaviors among youth which seem to be contradictory to the dominant discourse.

Ideally, schools have a responsibility to teach the younger generation about sexuality, yet neither the youth nor the educators are comfortable discussing sexual issues with their students. In Morocco, then, adolescents’ sexuality is enmeshed in ambiguity and undecidability. Their perception accordingly changes because of their exposure to pornography and graphic websites on the internet. Unlike the internet, education programs educate about contraception, sex before marriage, sexuality, emotional stability, well-being, STDs, and so on. Also, it aims to lower the rates of unwanted pregnancy and preserve the sanctity of marriage. Thus, this paper argues that the Moroccan youth became open to sexual education because of Globalization, in general, although they have not had any education in this matter. I aim to explain how Globalization affects the Moroccan youth’s perception of a ‘taboo’ topic in the Moroccan context. I also aim to argue that religion is not against any kind of education which promotes health care and disease prevention such as sexual education and the major role that sexual education could have in decreasing the cases of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The debate on the inclusion of sexual education in the Moroccan educational system has been heated and ground for many controversial ideas. The nation-state considers carefully a sexual education that would adhere to the Islamic tradition and morality. Thus, the debate has birthed the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam (CRII). Morocco as part of the latter has signed the covenant; yet, it has a vague and obscure language. In article Twelve titled Education and Culture, the third section states “[f]or the right of the child approaching puberty to receive proper sexual education distinguishing between the lawful and the unlawful” (2005, 12.3). It states that Morocco agrees to educate individuals about sexuality, sex, and by the recognition, yet through a moral perspective which has created ambiguity. Students will be taught sexual morality and religious ethics about relationships in the classroom. The CRII in 2005 is an outcome of long activism that has begun from the 1993 Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Both have sparked an interest in how men and women treat each other which has led to activism for a better understanding of the emotional relationship. This understanding would help in seizing domestic violence, in women’s betterment, and the betterment of society in general. Also, the bombing of 2003 has furthered the “progressive” activism which was awarded by recognition of sexual education as an official in the Moroccan government.

Morocco has adopted an abstinence-only sexual education which is considered halal and Islamic. Also, because premarital sexual intercourse is prohibited in Islam, abstinence-only education is about teaching how sex is forbidden out of wedlock, also the relationship between a girl and a boy are prohibited. Thus, The CRII proposes this ‘lawful’ mannerism of teaching sexuality and relationships which is concerned with after marriage only. The abstinence-only seem to have failed to stop the ‘unlawful’ phenomena to occur. INSAF Association supports the demand for sexual education with shocking statistics. Between 2003 and 2009, more than 210,000 unmarried mothers were recorded in Morocco, according to INSAF in

2010. Throughout this period, 24 children were abandoned per day. Between 2004 and 2014 in Casablanca alone, INSAF estimates the existence of 44,211 children born out of wedlock. Also, 9,400 children were abandoned in the same region which is approximate 3 abandonment per day (INSAF, 2010, pp. 200-10). This presents the failure of sexual education which the government has implemented because the Moroccan youth does engage in sexual intercourse without prior knowledge.

Hence, the Moroccan youth has more than a way to learn about sexuality, sex, and relationships. According to Monia Bennani-Chraïbi, 70% of young city-dwellers fill their time by watching TV. Through this medium, the youth become disengaged from the cultural norms of the Moroccan community (Bennani-Chraïbi, 1996, pp. 36-40). Of course, the internet is much impactful than TV nowadays, yet the argument still holds. The internet and TV are ways through which the youth disengage with the spaces in which they live. This results in sexual intercourses outside of wedlock. Abdessamad Dialmy argues:

The consumption of sex movies does not signify the acquisition of cinematographic culture. Youngsters pay attention neither to the name of the director nor to main actors. They do not even recall the title of the film they watched and cannot summarize it. For them, what is important in those movies is that they constitute a visual introduction to the ways of making love (2014).

The phenomena have increased due to the internet which has made it much easier to access these movies. Also, without an ample sexual education program, the youth would continue to seek information from these pornographic movies. The Moroccan youth, then, is already engaged with a harmful kind of sexual education that encourages sex outside of wedlock. Also, the silence of the educational institution on these matters adds to the enlargement of the problems that arise from it. The youth, as INSAF statistics show, are already engaged in sexual intercourses and acts of penetration which result in unwanted children. The representation of relationships in sex movies is flawed because it is nothing like reality, yet clueless children would not understand their superficiality. The Moroccan young child's imaginary becomes a site of false assumptions about relationships, sexuality, and so on. These assumptions further their curiosity and their willingness to do the 'unlawful' act of sex outside of wedlock. As Moulay Driss Jaidi argues "[t]he operation and maintenance of [this] mechanism for importing cultural products, traditionally imposed and consumed without any discussion, constitutes a sort of permanent cultural aggression which finds its justification in the logic of the cash register, validating the supremacy of a minority which profits from it and [which] structures demand to satisfy its interests (2000, p. 21). Hence, Moroccan youth perceptions about sexuality have already been shaped through the discourses of immorality within the Moroccan culture and the cultural forms introduced through media. Even though sexual education has been introduced 'officially' in 2005, it had no impact whatsoever because of its limitedness to marriage.

Dialmy raises awareness about another issue concerning rural girls who migrate to urban space. "The virgins of the countryside are nowadays initiated into sexuality by prostitutes to teach them how to enjoy their marriage. With the complicity of their family or friends, prostitutes show them what to do with their husbands on the first marriage night" (2014). Thus, girls who come from rural areas are oftentimes initiated into sexuality and relationship through prostitutes which is similar to consulting sex movies. Thus, women and men are most likely clueless about the relationship in general which reflects the silence around sexuality. Sexual education is supposed to be the framework through which individuals evaluate the images and data about sexuality. In the absence of such a framework, the child believes what one is presented with and continues to attempt to practice it. Youness Bermine contends "[a]s part of the research for the author's master's thesis this year, a study found that 40.2% of 366 surveyed Moroccans, aged between 18 and 24, had at least one sexual relationship before marriage" (2019). Accordingly, the Moroccan youth are already not abstaining from sexual intercourses which present two ideas: the failure of abstinence-only sexual education and the circulation of false knowledge of sexuality. Because of the latter the UNESCO as well as local activist association, e.g. Moroccan outlaws, are pressuring the government to implement an accurate sexual education that would educate young Moroccans about the dangers of unsafe sexual intercourses and how one can avoid them. The activism around this issue has been growing lately since the LGBTQ+ communities in Morocco are also voicing themselves and demanding an accurate description

of sexuality as a product of culture. Henceforth, Morocco has signed a sexual education covenant, yet it was implemented in a strict manner that has not stopped the growth of unsafe sexual intercourse. The understanding of Moroccan youth is vital to the safety of the current and future generations.

Thus, the importance of the research is in bridging the gap in understanding the Moroccan youth and to voice the silenced opinions. Then, the Moroccan youth as would be presented are for sexual education, yet the nation-state silences their needs because of their ideology. The underlying religious agenda seem to legitimize their dismissal of the youth's oppositionality. Driss Maghraoui argues "The PJD has been able to establish a moral basis and religious legitimacy that resonate with many voters. Although formally detached from the party, the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR)—an Islamic movement—is an important factor in the PJD's popularity" (2018, p. 2). The religious reason for the party's popularity in the 2016 elections is, simultaneously, the reason for its unpopularity. The gap is one of understanding and epistemic break since the nation-state still perceives the youth as conservative individuals which is why no 'real' changes have occurred to the abstinence-only sexual education since 2005. During these 15 years, youth has been voicing their needs for sexual education so that they can protect themselves and help future generations as well. This is due to the *mélange* between Islam and politics; as Abdellatif Hissouf argues "The PJD must explicitly define the fine line between religion and politics in Morocco, because neither political successes nor failures should be justified by religion or piety" (2016, p. 54). This *mélange* evokes further problems within the process of policy-making itself. The research problematic is that Morocco has a gap in communicating with the youth's concerns and needs. This result in archaic procedures pushed to fit the current context wherein youth are less religious due to globalization. The research, then, foregrounds the lack of communication through investigating Moroccan youth's perceptions.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Hypothesis and objective

In this study, I argue that Moroccan youth perceptions on sexual educations, negative or positive, are shaped through globalization. Also, the majority of Moroccan youth want sexual education because they believe that it does not go against religious teachings. Both ideas go hand in hand because globalization has introduced new discourses through which the youth perceive religion.

The objective is to investigate the Moroccan youth's perception of sexual education to reinforce the need for the implementation of a sexual education that helps in decreasing infections of STDs and pregnancies out of wedlock because the current abstinence-only education is wanting.

2.2 Research Questions

- What is your gender?
- What is your age?
- What does Sexual Education mean to you?
- Do you think it is important? If yes, why? If no, why?
- Do you agree that it would be beneficial to the Moroccan youth?
- Should Sexual Education be included in all curriculums?
- Do you see that the people would be ready for this implementation?
- Do you think religion is against Sexual Education?
- Would Sexual Education decrease the cases of sexually transmitted diseases?
- Would Sexual Education decrease the cases of pregnancy out of wedlock?
- What is your personal opinion on Sexual Education in Morocco?

2.3 Research Variables

The dependent variable of our research is the Moroccan youth's perception of/on sexual education and its institutionalization. The independent variables are globalization, religion, cultural forms; thus, to what extent would English speaking Moroccan youth agree on the inclusion of sexual education in curriculums. In our research, the confounding variable is the ideology and political affiliation of our participants.

2.4 Sample Population

Due to the COVID-19, I have used Convenience sampling since not all the Moroccan youth can be accessible, and since not all Moroccan youth has access to the internet. Our sampling method is a non-probability sampling method chosen because of the accessibility of the participants and their virtual proximity to the researcher. I have not opted for other samples because the Moroccan youth is a huge population to cover and because COVID-19 has made an ideal probability or non-probability sampling method near impossible.

2.5 Research Approaches

The research approach is both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative method is the Open-Ended questions which necessitate that the participants write their own opinions and ideas about sexual education. The quantitative method is the Multiple Dichotomous questions that go beyond the yes or no answer to a range: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. I have used the latter to generate percentages and bar-charts that would describe the Moroccan youth's acceptance of sexual education and, in general, their perception of it. The use of both methods aims to investigate the diverse perceptions of sexual education from the participants' lived-experience while generating percentages based on their shared perception.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

The Questionnaire approach aims to produce contextual knowledge about the cultural norms, social structures, and shared beliefs of a specific group of people on which the research focalizes; it aims, also, to produce circulating knowledge about the cultural perceptions of a phenomenon for a certain group. Thus, I have utilized the questionnaire as an approach to investigate and under-researched topic, especially in the Moroccan context. Sexual education is enmeshed in immorality which furthers its silence. I seek to investigate Moroccan youth's perceptions of sexual education about religion, sexual illnesses, and education. Due to the COVID-19, the focus group I have scheduled was delayed and eventually canceled because of time constraints, and participant internet issues.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Sexual education through Glocality and Grobality

Globalization and Localization are two concepts that have permeated interdisciplinary studies. Their dominance became paramount in the early 2000s, but the theoretical limitations of these concepts became more apparent. Historically, the global has always been in opposition to the local because both were perceived as pure and ideal. That is, the global has always wanted to dominate the local through modes of production, media, colonialism, and so on; the local, on the other hand, has resisted such domination to attain its specific cultural norms and practices. Of course, the limitations are numerous, yet two are most dominant. The first is the clear-cut top-down model of power relations which does not do justice to circulating discourses of locality and globality alike. This model separates them into two entities that are always in opposition. The second forwards the first. Both are assumed to be pure from the stains of the other. Yet, Roland Robertson argues for a treatment of the two concepts through monism. The global exists within the local not otherwise. Thus, I do not have single, isolated realities; rather, I have one reality within which people live. "Sociological usage of glocalization highlights the simultaneity or co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in globalization; that is, the commonly interconnected processes of homogenization and heterogenization" (2007, p. 143). That is, the universal always has

the particular and vice versa which results in the idea of glocality. The latter becomes, for Robertson, an amalgam of particular universalities.

Robertson's conceptualization is deemed as one of the early theorizations of glocalization, yet it has core limitations. Robertson seems to be oblivious to temporality and how it shapes the power relations between locality and globalism. Smitha Radhakrishnan questions Robertson's claims "How are 'local' and 'global' cultures to be identified as analytically separate if they are completely enmeshed in one another, as the same theories claim?" (2010, p. 27). Through her questioning and criticism, one notices that Robertson's theorization is valid only for timeless snapshots in space without a time consideration and a proper consideration of the continuation of the power axis. Accordingly, without time, I cannot separate the two theories since they exist simultaneously in space. The locals as a depository of communal and social concerns, the global as transnational capitalism is redressing the binary into one of exploitation and resistance. Yet, an understanding of this latter binary would not be possible without tracing the power relation between them throughout time. Glocalization, with the increase in criticism and interest, became an alternative to the concept of globalization. Because globalization had meant cultural imperialism, the tendencies to theorize beyond such rigidity arise. Glocality became the consequence of such criticism.

George Ritzer criticizes further Robertson's focus on the positive account of globalization as heterogeneous. Ritzer shifts the focus toward the negative aspect of globalization concerning capitalism. He nevertheless understands the importance of Robertson's claims because the theory of glocalization has to have two sides. He argues:

Globalization tends to be associated with the proliferation of nothing (e.g. the shopping mall), while glocalization tends to be tied to something (e.g., the farmers' market) and therefore stands opposed, along with the local itself, to the spread of nothing. These two processes co-exist under the broad heading of globalization, and because they are, to some degree, in conflict, globalization as a whole does not have a unidirectional effect on the spread of nothingness (2003, p. 193).

Glocalization is a concept which Ritzer theorized to stop the unidirectional and positive line of thought that dominated globalization studies. He defines it as "imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas" (2006, p. 73). Thus, glocalization values cultural heterogeneity and the continuous dialogue between local culture, media, transnationalism, etc., while glocalization focalizes on how transnational corporations and nations enforce their cultures unto others. That is, Globalization is a broad process that entails and encompasses other minor cultural processes. Of course, these processes constitute glocalization and glocalization, yet the latter threatens the former because transnational capitalism and imperialism would hegemonize for the sake of consumerism rather than for heterogeneity. Globalization, then, lies between these two conceptualizations because both of them are not rigid categories with which I can label phenomena. Ritzer's perception of globalization is dualist, unlike Robertson's monistic perception. He does not contend with the idea that one can exist within the other. That is when local becomes incorporated or submerged within the global, the glocal emerges because of the cultural heterogeneity. Yet, the glocal can never be *another* local because in that dialogue between the local and global, a break had occurred which resulted in a loss of cultural forms and practices and simultaneously a gain of new ones.

About sexuality in Morocco, the local is characterized with rooted traditions. Women are perceived and thought of as having less *aql* (reason) and more *nafs* (emotions/empathy). Amal Rassam argues "[t]he stereotypes of the female is that of a weak, capricious and untrustworthy creature, one who tends to be ruled by her "instincts" and whose powerful sexuality, if left uncontrolled, can cause disruption and social chaos, or *fitna*" (1980, p. 172). Yet, the women are supposed to remain virgins until marriage and have no interest in sexual intercourse until then. Traditionally, this double image of the righteous woman and the alluring temptress is amplified through the Moroccan tradition. The Moroccan imagery has the Prophet's daughter Fatima to personify the former while Aisha Qandisha, a mythical Moroccan creature who tempts

men with sex and enslaves them, represents the latter. Both images reinforce how a woman should behave around men. The ambiguity surrounding women's sexual and emotional responsibilities is furthered because of the double imaginary.

Men also have an ambiguous perception of emotional and sexual relationships. Love and conjugal sexual intercourses are separated. That is, men who are attached to their wives are viewed and thought to be bewitched; those who are caring and loving are thought to be weak, feminine, and under a spell. Thus, men do not show their affection or love to their wives because of the cultural stigma surrounding such a practice. Contradictorily, men portray their romantic love towards "free women" who are unlike their wives. Deporah Kapchan, in her study about *Shikhat*, female Moroccan dancers, portrays how men appreciate and care about *Shikha* precisely because they are free. She argues:

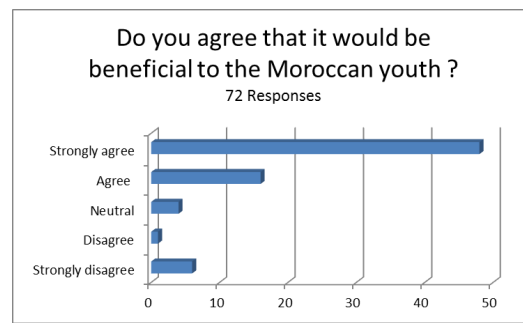
Women who are *matluqat* are fun; they are garrulous and outgoing, and they can dance. Someone who is *matluq*, is also often *nasht*, an adjective that carries connotations of becoming intoxicated. If one is *nasht*, one is "lively, animated, spirited," but if one is *nasht* (often pronounced drawing out the vowel), then one is really in the spirit of things, high on wine or dance or love. A common comment made about a *shikha* is that she is *nashta m'a ras-ha*, (spirited in her head), celebrating, and jubilant (1994, p. 94).

The ambiguity surrounding sexual and emotional relationships that are entangled with morality and an Islamic ethical discourse forwards a negative connotation of talking about these matters. That is, Moroccan culture has grown to associate immorality with emotional and sexual relationships because being silent about these matters is supposed to be part of morality.

Sexual Education seems to have grown in importance because of globalization; thus, different platforms in social media began campaigns to raise awareness about the aforementioned ambiguities. Then, the local, characterized through the cultural relations between Moroccan men and women, and the global, characterized through the media, products, internet, etc., coalesce and merge into a Moroccan glocal cultural perception of sexuality. The glocal about sexuality in Morocco means that the notion of marriage in which sexual intercourse is allowed is no longer applicable since the youth are increasingly exposed to the global perception of dating and sexuality outside of wedlock. Relationships, sexual or romantic, are no longer subject to a code of honor and pride, but rather to a novel code of love, dating, and sexuality. As Carla Obermeyer argues, "[t]he current marriage system is thus in flux, with some young people exercising their choice of mate, some parents selecting or at least approving their children's mates, an increasing permissiveness concerning premarital sex, but continuing accommodation to tradition" (2010, p. 247). Glocalization affects how Moroccan youth perceive sexual and emotional relationships through/via the introduction of the notion of sexual education as such. The idea of an education which can teach people about their genitals, behaviors, and relationships with the other gender became dominant because of, dominantly, the western movies and products. In this sense, Moroccan culture has merged with the transnational which has resulted in the birth of new cultural forms and practices. Accordingly, the youth no longer endorses the cultural stereotypes that have permeated the gendered relationships.

In our survey, 74 Moroccan youth have participated and answered different questions. Interestingly, the vast majority seem to understand what sexual education means and how it would affect their lives. Figure 1 presents Moroccan youth thinks that having a sexual education course would be beneficial to them since 64.9% strongly agree and 21.6% agree. Thus, the 9% who have disagreed seem to think of sexual education as a cultural parasite that might destroy the Moroccan local culture. In this sense, there are two perspectives: those who agree to think of sexual education as a product of glocalization and want a diverse culture; yet, those who disagree think of it as globalization. Sexual education is a means to forward a transnational capitalist system that would efface Moroccan culture for the sake of consumerism.

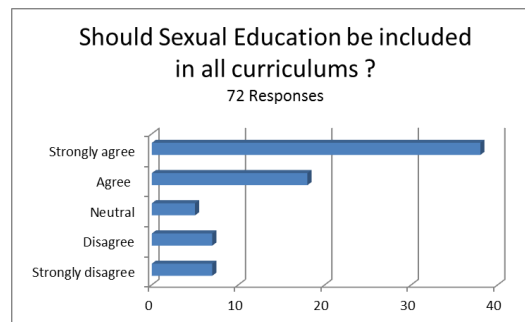
Figure 1. Question 1



Source: Elaborated by the author for this research.

As I have aforementioned, globalization and glocalization are both constituents of globalization although that both are contradictory. The second figure presents confirmation of the matter at hand. The percentages of those that disagree have gone upwards from 9% to 19% which is a huge shift; also, the numbers of those who agree have gone downwards from 86.5% to 75.7%.

Figure 2. Question 2



Source: Elaborated by the author for this research.

The shift in focus and change of mind is telling of the deeply-rooted traditions which view sexual education as taboo. The latter is telling of the populace view that any foreign culture is a global culture that seeks to dominate. Thus, the majority is still skeptical of the change which would occur if it was introduced although they agree to its benefits. The Moroccan youth is split between glocality and globality since both reflect their perception of sexual education.

One important aspect of our survey is the English language. I have deliberately used English solely as a means to specify our recipients from Moroccan youth in general to Moroccan youth who are exposed to globalization and western culture. Interestingly, all answers were in English which presents that young Moroccans have already embraced a globalized system within their daily lives. For this reason, the majority of the definitions of sexual education that our participants have written claim that sexual intercourses are already occurring. That is, they wrote that the government should teach it so that people can know more about their gender and sexuality. The use of English solely has reinforced implicitly the idea that Moroccan youth who speak English have already adapted certain cultural forms and practices. Dating, Sexuality, Gendered perception, and so on, are local discourses but rather they have been introduced through French and English. These glocal cultural forms have forwarded the idea of sexual education to be considered for all curriculums which is certainly a bold claim. Thus, the participant of this study is 'more' glocal than those who do speak only Moroccan Darija.

The contradiction in our survey seems to be apparent between the participant's perception of themselves and the Moroccans. As I have aforementioned, the vast majority agrees with implementing sexual education in all curriculums, yet they also believe that the general populace would not accept this implementation. This mannerism of perceiving oneself as separate from the general public is telling of their glocal identities. Most of the participants use words such as 'conservative,' 'taboo,' and 'close-minded' to describe the Moroccan populace. Thus, the youth who are exposed to western culture and have a glocal identity assume and claim that the others would think of sexual education as glocalization. They exclude Moroccan society although they are a product of it; they exclude of course older people. Yet, our survey has only people who are older than 18 years old which stresses that the 'old' people are for sexual education. The paradox is existent even in popular culture; that is, Moroccans always address other Moroccans as being from a different society. This is the local aspect of the perception of sexual education while the global perception comes from westernization.

3.2 Sexuality and Religion: Between Shame and Necessity

Sexual education has long been a source of anxiety for parents, especially in a conservative environment with strong religious beliefs such as the Moroccan society. This created a heated debate whenever sexuality is mentioned; many parents avoid discussing these matters with their kids because it is a taboo that cannot be discussed. Morocco is perceived as a conservative community that often resists comprehensive sexual education in schools. The Justice and Development Party (PJD) as the reigning executive branch of the government supports this conservatism and orthodoxy. The Moroccan ethical and moral systems have contextualized the educational system; that is, the parents, the government, and the teachers are against sexual education. It is perceived as unethical because it tackles sexuality which is taboo in Morocco. This conservative, rightist focus is not surprising especially since the maintenance of conservatism is an agenda of the PJD. The latter is exemplified directly in Abd al-Ilah Benkirane's Discourse as the party's central figure in its development. Based on an interview with Benkirane, Ashraf Nabih El Sherif argues:

His self-declared mission is three-pronged: to sustain the legal and material existence of the party and its power, which can be only achieved through downplaying any contention with the monarchy and avoiding any fearsome muscle over-stretching; to champion public morality against his main adversaries in the secularist liberal and leftist currents keen on defaming and excluding the PJD from the political process; and to resuscitate the fortunes of the party in participating in governing coalitions (2012, p. 665).

Then, the PJD alongside the Moroccan cultural and discursive structures champions morality against secularists or leftists. Although this mission is not completely transparent because Benkirane does allow the monarchy to interfere in the party, the focus on conservatism and Islam would privilege Islamic education over sexual education. I am not arguing against Islamic education, but I am against its *sole* inclusion. In a globalized Morocco, sexuality within and without marriage is a continuous possibility for the Moroccan youth. Yet, the phenomena would have sexual and cultural effects without an education that could regulate these global, and indeed, American cultural forms.

From the participant's point of view, sexuality should be taught to the youth according to their age. Sexual education should commensurate with their ability of understanding and not undermine their moral and religious views. This process should be done by both the parents and the school. In December 2012, the debate over sexual relations in Morocco has increased its intensity when numerous feminist organizations called to repeal Article 490 of the penal code, which prohibits sexual relations outside of marriage in Morocco. In response to these demands, former Moroccan Minister of Justice and Liberties, El Mostafa Ramid, from the Justice and Development Party, declared his opposition, saying that these sexual relationships undermine the foundations of our society. In this one perceives the difference between Islamic education, which perceives the relationship between male and female as sexual, and sexual education, which perceives that relationship as psychological, cultural, and sexual. The focus of the latter is wider

and suitable in a society in which men and women are increasingly in contact out of wedlock. The religiosity which frames education dismisses the cultural and discursive changes which are occurring to the youth's perception of gender relationships. According to the Moroccan Health Ministry's study in 2007, "36 percent of young Moroccan men have had sex outside marriage, while the number of unmarried young women who have lost their virginity is much lower, at 15 percent" (2018). The actual percentage of people having premarital relationships is undoubtedly higher than the reality which PJD orates. I would argue, then, that the educational system denies the Moroccan current globalized status, especially since the rates exemplify a discourse contrary to that of the government. That is, the latter understands the urgency of the matter and responds through the criminalization of these acts.

The criminalization of premarital sexual intercourses and relations is mainly based on Islamic law, which bans unmarried people from engaging in sexual activity. So, the PJD, as Benkirane envisions, situates their rightist responses to global phenomena within Islam. It becomes a means of legitimizing their 'mission' as Islamic to which people should comply; otherwise, their ideology is undermining and belittling the *Islamic* rule of the PJD and the monarch. Sexual education becomes, following the same reasoning of Benkirane's missions, a leftist ideology which weakens the society's morality. Thence, there is a disparity between the youth and the government since our survey shows that the youth favor sexual education. Sana Sakale contends that "The perceptions here are indicative of learners' readiness to actively engage in and be responsible for their learning by either choosing the topics and/or contributing to providing the material that can be used in class" (2020, p. 58). This becomes similar to our study; the youth wants to be responsible and choose the topics which they would study.

In the survey conducted, about sexuality and religion, the participants were asked if they think that religion is against sexual education: 55% of the participants said that religion is not against sexual education, nearly half of these youth gave a simple no as an answer while others gave different justifications such as 'There is no shame in religion.' The latter is a prophetic hadith that would be explained below. Others said that there is nothing prohibited about sexual education, and the thing that is prohibited is premarital relationships. 16% answered yes without justifications. The rest did not give a clear answer either because they are irreligious or because of their lack of knowledge. The recurrence of the statement 'There is no shame in religion' is of utmost importance because even Islam does not criminalize this act. According to the exegesis and interpretation, it means that there should be no shame or shyness in seeking knowledge because God favors the knowledgeable (Abu Ai'sha, 2013). Historically, people have asked the prophet, Mohammed, about their different affairs including sexual intercourse and interrelationships.

The criminalization and the avoidance of sexual education were perceived as a legitimate response from the government because of its rootedness in religiosity. Yet, Islam does not advocate for the silencing of new cultural forms. The government's response is political because of its rightist agenda. Religion becomes a means of legitimization although the youth are demanding and are in favor of this form of education. Through the survey, Islam is not the basis of the problem; rather, the PJD's political interpretations of it since the majority of participants have favored the inclusion of sexual education. Nabil Morchid explains that "A large part of Morocco's history with educational reforms was committed to the eradication of adult literacy. Although adult literacy is still hard to disappear, it is worth mentioning that the two-decade period of educational reforms caused the expansion of adult basic literacy" (2020, p. 58). Then, the government is still focused on illiteracy and ways to minimize it in Morocco. This takes away from the resources which could enhance the educational system in globalized Morocco. One derives disengagement between the emergent cultural forms and the perceived ideal Islamic country PJD orates in their public speeches. The emergence of premarital relationships leads to cultural atrocities without adequate education which could minimize its consequences. Unwanted pregnancies and STDs are the reality of the Moroccan populace.

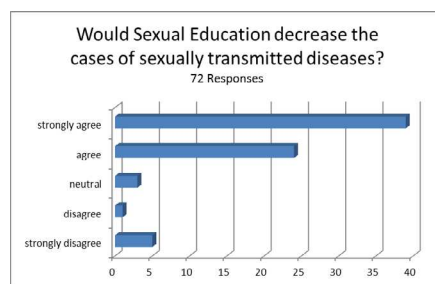
3.3 Premarital Relationships: The Road to Unwanted Pregnancies and STDs

As I aforementioned, sexual relationships between the Moroccan youth are a continuation of globalization, but it also could lead to serious, "unethical" consequences such as pregnancy out of wedlock or increasing the cases of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) especially among adolescents. Adolescents are not ready for mature relationships that include sexual intercourse because of the inadequacy of ed-

ucation in this regard. The exclusion of sexual education materializes in the ignorance of the youth of the consequences of their sexual acts. Accordingly, the teenager’s pregnancy and the possibility of STDs affect their lives across Morocco. Sexual education could educate and highlight the gravity of premarital sexual intercourse culturally, economically, and politically. To avoid the latter, the youth should have an accurate sexual education that will be relevant to current globalized Morocco. This will lead the youth to develop their capacity for moral discernment and freely informed conscience.

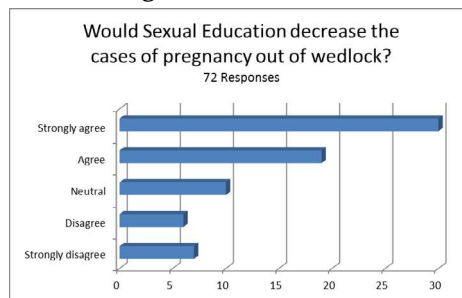
In the survey, I have conducted, regarding the question of sexual education, and the decrease in the cases of STDs (Figure 3), 54% of the participants strongly agree that sexual education would minify the cases of sexually transmitted diseases, 33.3% agree, 6.9% strongly disagree, and 1.3% disagree. The figure presents the youth’s understanding of these societal issues and sexual education as a means of decreasing it. Then, Moroccan youth already favors sexual education. The majority of the participants understand the viability of sexual education especially within contemporary Morocco, yet the government and the youth seem to have oppositional understandings and views.

Figure 3. Question 3



Source: Elaborated by the author for this research.

Figure 4. Question 4



Source: Elaborated by the author for this research.

By moving to the question of sexual education and the decrease in the cases of pregnancy out of wedlock as shown in figure 4, the responses were nearly similar to the ones on the previous question, 41.6% strongly agree, 26.3% agree, 8.3% disagree, and 9.7% strongly disagree. The people who see that sexual education will not be beneficial in decreasing the cases of pregnancy and STDs believe that ‘abstinence’ is the only solution to avoid these problems. The oppositionality in perspective arises from the PJDs stress on abstinence-only taught in Islamic education and the youth’s need for sexual education. This results in dissatisfaction expressed by the majority of participants.

Regarding premarital relationships, the Moroccan youth know of the abstinence-only method, yet they perceive it as inadequate and ineffective. The deficiency of abstinence was explained by David J. Ley, a clinical psychologist interested in treating sexuality issues:

Abstinence-only education, where students are taught that abstinence, and choosing not to be sexual, is the best, safest option is only one aspect. Abstinence-only sexual education has been largely discredited and shown to have the potential to increase problems and risk of engaging in sex without condoms or preparation (2017).

People who support the principle of abstinence think that it is the best protection from exposure to STDs and unplanned pregnancy. This principle is rooted in the Moroccan society because they believe in morality. But, as I already said, premarital relationships are inevitable due to globalization, yet they could even be increased if one focuses on Islamic education or abstinence-only policies. Sexual education, then, could replace this education which does not hinder the negative cultural consequences. Hence, the Moroccan government should understand and notice the rise of the question of abortion in Morocco as another consequence of unwanted pregnancies. Besides participants' favoritism, social activists are calling for the recognition of premarital relationships as a "natural" phenomenon. For instance, The Moroccan Outlaws have been the vanguard of bridging the gap in communication between the youth's needs and the government's policies. They opted for social media to criticize and seek the abolition of article 453, 490, and 454. Yahia Hatim reports that "the manifesto has been signed by 490 Moroccans, mostly public intellectuals and women's rights advocates, who agreed to publicly declare that they are "outlaws," and will remain "outlaws until the law changes." About three-quarters of the signatories are women" (2019). This petition has hoarded more than 10,000 signatures. The enormous number of signatures is suggestive of globality similar to the participants of this study. Their activism engages the PJD to question their 'mission.' The need for this questioning is paramount, especially since the government has been notorious in dismissing any oppositional reasoning as leftist and threatening to society's morality. Sexual education should be implemented because of the youth's demand for it.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Sexual education is a means of teaching and approaching emotional relationships, sexual anatomy, sexual activity, reproductive health, birth control, and sexual abstinence. The debate about sexual education as abstinence-only has proved to be lacking adequate knowledge. The latter became even more obvious as globalization, in all its varied forms, accrues in the Moroccan society. The participants of this study have shown a major interest in the inclusion of sexual education, first, because it does not go against Islam although PJD stresses the latter. I argue, thence, that the PJD is politically interpreting the Islamic teaching to marginalize the leftist and secularist demands in/by the Moroccan society. Second, the Moroccan youth calls for the implementation of sexual education as a means of combating STDs and unwanted pregnancies. Then, sexual education should be implemented in the school's curriculums while, at the same time, it should foreground unwanted pregnancies and STDs and manners of avoidance. This implementation is crucial to help to decrease the cases of adolescents pregnancy and STDs. This paper has proved that Moroccan society is a global, glocal, and global society. As the survey shows, the majority of the participants are for the inclusion of sexual education curriculums. The younger generation is more inclusive of global cultural forms and discursive structures. Their denial of abstinence-only education, or Islamic education, is also implying the shift towards sexual education. The inclusion of sexual education in the Moroccan curriculum would have various implications politically and culturally. Because of the limitedness of time and space, they were not all discussed; thus, future research should investigate the link between these global cultural forms and the local political response. The dialogue and activism that could emerge from such an intervention are worthy of research.

REFERENCES

- Abu Aa'isha, A. (2013). Is 'There Is No Shame in the Religion' a Valid Statement?—Shaykh Al-Uthaymeen. <https://cutt.ly/6hRdyI9>
- Association Insaf. (2010). Le maroc des mères célibataires: Ampleur, réalité, actions, représentations, itinéraires et vécus. <https://cutt.ly/ohRdWbJ>
- Bennani-Chraïbi, M. (2000). Youth in Morocco: An Indicator of a Changing Society. In Roel Maijer (Ed.), *Alienation or Integration of Arab Youth: Between Family, State, and Street* (pp. 143-160.). London: Psychology Press.

- Bermime, Y. (2019, September 29). Morocco Needs an Alternative to ‘Halal Sexual education’ That Works. <https://cutt.ly/5hRdCk1>
- Dyalmi, A. (2014). Sexual education in Morocco. http://dialmy.over-blog.com/2014/01/sex-education-in-morocco.html#_ftn48
- El Sherif, A. N. (2012). Institutional and Ideological Re-construction of the Justice and Development Party (PJD): The Question of Democratic Islamism in Morocco. *Middle East Journal*, 66(4), 660-682. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/489426>
- Elouazi, S. (2018, February 13). Sexual Relationship Between Two Consenting Adults Do Not Concern Society. <https://cutt.ly/shRfqk5>
- Giulianotti, R. & Roland, R. (2007). Forms of Glocalization: Globalization and the Migration Strategies of Scottish Football Fans in North America. *Sociology*, 41(1), 133-152. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038038507073044>
- Hahn, W, C. (1914). Sexual education for School Children. *School Science and Mathematics*, 14(1), pp. 54-63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-8594.1914.tb15978.x>
- Hatim, Y. (2019). Moroccan Activists Publish Manifesto Against Penalizing Out of Wedlock Sex and Abortion. *Moroccan World News*. <https://cutt.ly/LhRfahU>
- Hissouf, A. (2016). The Moroccan Monarchy and the Islam-oriented PJD: Pragmatic Cohabitation and the Need for Islamic Political Secularism. *All Azimuth*, 5(1), 43-56. <https://doi.org/10.1525/caa.2020.13.3.79>
- Jaidi, M, D. (2000). *Diffusion et audience des médias audiovisuels*. Almajal.
- Kapchan, D. (1994). Moroccan Female Performers Defining the Social Body. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 107(423), 82-105. <https://doi.org/10.2307/541074>
- Ley, D, J. (2017). Overcoming Religious Sexual Shame. <https://cutt.ly/JhRfJl8>
- Maghraoui, D. (2018). Working Under Constraints: The PJD in the Aftermath of the 2016 Elections. In Yildirim, A. K. (ed). *PJD, Islam, and Governance in Post-2011 Morocco*. (pp. 1-6). Center for the Middle East.
- Morchid, N. (2020). Investigating Quality Education in Moroccan Educational Reforms from 1999 to 2019. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 10(1), 54-61. <https://doi.org/10.9790/7388-1001015461>
- Obermeyer, C. M. (2000). Sexuality in Morocco: Changing context and Contested Domain, culture, Heath & sexuality. *International Journal for Research, intervention and care*, 2(3), 239-254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136910500422232>
- Organization of the Islamic Conference. (2005). Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/44eaf0e4a.html>
- Radhakrishnan, S. (2010). Limiting theory: rethinking approaches to cultures of globalization. In Turner, B. S. (ed.) *Routledge International Handbook of Globalization*. (pp. 23-41). Routledge.
- Rassam, A. (1980). Women and Domestic Power in Morocco. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12(2), 171-179.
- Ritzer, G. (2003). The Globalization of Nothing. *Sais Review*, XXIII(2), 189-200. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F026858090702200208>
- Sakale, S. (2020). Students’ Perceptions of Textbooks in Moroccan High Schools. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(5), 56-59. <https://doi-org/10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.5.6>

AUTHOR

Rachid Benharrouse. Fellow at the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center at the University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdelah, Dhar El Mehraz, Fez. Author of Digital Poetry and The Transcendence of Print Poetry’s Boundaries: Interactivity and the Reader. Also published and is interested in Diaspora, Home, Postcoloniality, Popular Culture, and Memory.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the author.

FUNDING

No financial assistance from parties outside this article

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am deeply grateful to Professor Souad Slaoui and Professor Karima Belghiti whose feedback and insights have bettered this article. I extend my thanks to all the professors at the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center for championing research and innovation.