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THE IMPACT OF MALE MIGRATION FROM MOROCCO TO EUROPE ON WOMEN: A GENDER APPROACH

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Abstract – This paper offers a gender approach to the impact of male migration from Morocco to Europe on women left behind. The pertinence of the topic stems from the fact that very few studies have been conducted on the subject. It is believed that such studies will help in the understanding of the phenomenon of migration and help to find solutions for some of the problems it poses. More and more Moroccan women suffer as a result of the migration of their husbands, sons, fathers, etc. Their suffering is not only due to separation from the loved ones but also to the dire economic and social conditions that a heavily patriarchal context does not help to alleviate.

Key words : Effects of immigration upon sending countries, Moroccan women, gender

Resumo – IMPACTES DA IMIGRAÇÃO MASCULINA DE MARROCOS PARA A EUROPA NAS MULHERES QUE FICAM: UMA ABORDAGEM DE GÊNERO. Este artigo efectua uma abordagem de género à questão do impacto da emigração masculina de Marrocos para a Europa sobre as mulheres que permanecem no país de origem. A pertinência desta questão resulta directamente da escassez de estudos sobre o tema. Considera-se que tais estudos poderão contribuir para a compreensão do fenómeno das migrações e ajudar a conceber soluções adequadas para alguns dos problemas por elas suscitados. São cada vez mais as mulheres marroquinas que sofrem em resultado da emigração dos seus maridos, pais, filhos, etc. Esse sofrimento deve-se não só à separação dos seus entes queridos, como também às duras condições económicas e sociais em que se encontram – e que um contexto acentuadamente patriarcal não contribui para atenuar.

Palavras-chave : Efeitos de imigração nos países de origem, mulheres marroquinas, género.

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INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of migration in Morocco is relatively thriving, yet research on the impact of this migration on women is still very scarce. Male migration has made a great impact on the women left behind. In order to understand the extent of this impact we need to be informed about the profile of the migrant, the situation of women and the way their survival is seen within the overall Moroccan socio-cultural context. Moroccan women constitute a complex category where various variables, such as social class and level of education, are at stake. In order to understand this impact we need to understand the nature of Moroccan migration. In this paper, we have surveyed the major impacts of migration on women, while hoping that this work will attract more research in the field.

I. MOROCCAN MIGRATION

1. A Brief Review of the Literature

In theory, migration is the movement of human beings from one region to another or from one country to another. As such, migration may be voluntary or compulsory, internal or external (international), individual or collective, and legal or illegal. Migration has been attested to throughout the history of human kind and has developed in extent and nature with the evolution of human communities. According to the mainstream literature on migration (THOMAS, 1961; APPELYARD, 1988; ANTHIAS, 1998), migration always engenders complex consequences, especially for the host countries. This literature shows that, although migration concerns a relatively small portion of the overall population of a country, it has an everlasting impact on the environment in which migrants settle. After the Second World War, migration has greatly increased and, currently, it remains on the rise (CASTLES and MILLER, 2003).

There are many theories of migration but hardly any global explicative ones. There are only partial, mainly classificatory, theories of migration, the main reason being the sociological nature of migration. Indeed, the particular sociological conditions of various waves of migrants makes it difficult, if not impossible, to offer a unique universal explicative theory of migration. In this respect, of interest is the social science approach to migration (MASSEY *et al.*, 1998; SASSEN, 1988; FAIST, 1997; ARANGO, 2000). These studies explain international migration in global terms by stressing the role of economy, sociology and geography. Progress in the understanding of migration is said to largely depend on empirical sociological research.

However, in the present state of affairs, most of this research seems to be located in the host countries (Europe and Canada) and very little is produced in the countries from which migration originates (i.e. Morocco, Algeria and

Tunisia). In dealing with the impact of migration on Moroccans left behind, the present paper is an attempt to partially fill this gap, open paths for further research, and help in better understanding the diversity and complexity of migration as a concept. It is high time that views of researchers belonging to both host countries and countries of origin be exchanged and synthesised especially in present times when migration is becoming one of the key international issues, not only culturally but also economically and politically.

In principle, Moroccan migration may be internal (from rural to urban areas) or external (from Morocco to Western countries, especially European ones). It is often the case that external migration is an extension of internal migration (see CHATTOU, 1998; NOIN, 1970; PASCON, 1986). In this paper, only external migration is considered. Moroccan migration is predominantly male, at least in its initial phases. The dynamic of this migration has always responded to national and international socio-economic and political imperatives. The genesis of Moroccan migration shows that it is a relatively recent phenomenon (CHATTOU, 1998; HAMDOUCH *et al.*, 1981). It is characterised by a steady historical evolution and a diversity of destinations. This migration may be broadly categorised into four major phases: (i) pre-Second World War, (ii) post-Second World War, (iii) the 1960s and 1970s, and (iv) the 1980s to the present time.

2. Pre-Second World War migration

Migration started in Morocco at the time of the First World War. This first recorded migration was the result of a specific geo-political and economic context: most migrants of this period originated from the south of Morocco and targeted France to take up jobs that either French men left in order to serve in the army or that were unwanted by the French. No reliable statistics on these migrants are available. All that has been mentioned is that this migration was temporary and most migrants came back to Morocco after the war (CHATTOU, 1998). The economy of Europe during this period was not flourishing. Many of the migrants who targeted Algeria settled there. Most of these migrants were forced to return to Morocco following Algeria's aggressive policy with Moroccan residents in Algeria after the conflict between Morocco and Algeria over the Western Sahara. The expelled Moroccan migrants were reintegrated in Moroccan society by the Moroccan government.

3. Post-Second World War migration

Before the Second World War, in the 1930s and 1940s, Moroccan migrants targeted the Maghreb (especially Algeria) and Western Africa (especially Senegal and the Ivory Coast) (AMIN, 1974; AMSELLE, 1976; AZAM, 1951; BAROUDI, 1978). According to CHATTOU (1998), most of these migrants originated from Eastern Morocco (i.e. Oujda, Berkane), were tradesmen in the great majority of cases, and were not very young (35 years of age or more). However, like migration before the Second World War, this migration was temporary.

4. The 1960s and 1970s

Moroccan migration witnessed a period of stagnation from 1954 to 1962. However, this migration started to gradually take on larger proportions in the 1960s and 1970s. Pre- and post-Second World War migration changed from being temporary to being permanent in this period, and involved all social categories, not only tradesmen. A great wave of migrants from both the south and the north of Morocco targeted Europe, mainly France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Most of these migrants originated from the Rif region and spoke Berber as their mother tongue. The migrants of the 1960s and 1970s were younger and more rural in origin. As most of these migrants were single, family reunification drew more migrants. Migration started to be both permanent and illegal. In fact, in prior waves of migration, migrants left Morocco both legally and illegally, and the host countries were tolerant, as Europe needed manpower and jobs were available.

It is worthy to note that, in the 1960s, important waves of Moroccan migrants targeted Libya, following bilateral accords between Morocco and Libya.

5. The 1980s to the Present Times

From the 1980s onward, migration has been characterised by a spectacular increase in the number of migrants and a diversity of destinations. In addition to France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, migrants target Spain and Italy. Economic crises worldwide have resulted in soaring unemployment in Morocco. According to recent official statistics, the overall unemployment rate in Morocco in 2001 was 14.5 per cent. Despite Morocco's overall economic progress, poverty is on the rise as a result of globalisation. In the eyes of migrants, the proximity of a prosperous Europe² makes the dream of overcoming poverty possible to realise. On the other hand, dramatic international events such as the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of fundamentalism in both Europe and the Maghreb have increased both migration and feelings of insecurity, hostility, and xenophobia. In spite of this, Moroccan migration has never ceased to increase. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1984), no less than 73.9 per cent of Moroccan migrants targeted Europe. Likewise, according to the ministry responsible for Moroccans living in Europe (1992), this percentage reached 77.5 per cent. These figures do not take into consideration illegal migrants and Moroccans who became European citizens by virtue of being born in one of the Europe countries or by acquisition of citizenship in one of them. The latter two types of Moroccan migrants are considered to be 'Moroccan' by Moroccan officials.

² There is a wide discrepancy between the income of the inhabitants of the southern part and those of the northern part of the Mediterranean. The income per capita in Morocco is 19 times less than in Western Europe.

From the 1980s onward, the increase in migration was counterbalanced by the implementation of the visa-waiver and the Schengen agreement that reinforced control over migrants coming from Morocco to Europe. This resulted in a spectacular spread of new forms of illegal migration that rendered migration more complex. For example, illegal or clandestine migration is encouraged by clandestine European and Maghrebian traffickers and is so widespread that it is difficult to measure, given its illegality and a total absence of statistics.

From the 1980s onward, migrants are characteristically single (see CHATTOU, 1998; HAMDOUCH, 1981), young (60 per cent are less than 25 years of age (CHATTOU, 1998), poor and/or unemployed.

This period of migration has also witnessed significant changes: whereas migrants of the 1960s and 1970s stayed longer in the host countries, those of the 1980s onward stay for shorter periods of time, given the lack of availability of full-time jobs (CHATTOU, 1998). This has resulted in more frequent visits to the country of origin. This fact reveals the non-integration of these migrants in the European environment and their attachment to their country of origin. This is in concordance with the fact that migrants tend to leave their families behind.³

At the present, Moroccan migration is the most widely spread throughout Europe, following Turkish migration. For example, Algerian and Portuguese migrations have targeted France as their main destinations. Moroccan migration is also one of the most sociologically varied; it includes (i) poor migrants, (ii) middle and upper class unemployed migrants, and (iii) professionals.

So far as facilities offered by the host countries are involved, there are important differences. For example, in the Netherlands, the State's highly-developed social policies are often misunderstood by the Moroccan migrants who capitalise on a socialisation of children based on strict behaviour where corporal punishment is not banned. These migrants are often very reluctant to allow for the State's immersion in their private lives or that of their children who, because they have Dutch nationality, have to abide by a specific code of social conduct vis-à-vis the host population. France is more familiar to migrants because of the language and the presence of relatives and friends who happen to be there already, but suburbs are not always an ideal place in which to live. As for Spain, it figures last in the hierarchy of imaginative representations for migrants because of the prevailing negative stereotypes: Moroccans remain *los moros*, relegated to the poorest housing and to the lowest paying jobs. Italy is often considered by migrants as a land of tolerance and opportunity.

At the end of this review on Moroccan migration, a quick note on female migration (in the sense of women migrating on their own) is in order. Female migration must have always existed alongside male migration although no official figures relating to it are available. It is important to note in this respect that

³ There are migrants who are educated and are professionals, some of whom are well-off but migrate because they find Morocco rather underdeveloped and difficult in which to live because it lacks facilities and prospects for the future are dim. These will not be considered in the paper.

the Moroccan national media (i.e. television, newspapers, etc.) occasionally report that one or more young Moroccan women are among the dead when small boats carrying clandestine migrants from Morocco to Spain sink. These women are, in general, very young, unemployed and single. Furthermore, the media also report on the abominable conditions in which clandestine migrants live and shows pictures of young men and women living in shantytowns around agricultural areas in Spain. The women who spoke to the reporters often said that they migrated because they wanted to support their ageing parents and younger siblings. Research in this particular area is sorely needed.

II. THE GENERAL PROFILE OF THE MOROCCAN MIGRANT

The profile of the Moroccan migrant may be described by taking into account the variables of age, geographic origin, class, level of instruction, marital status, socio-economic situation before migration, skills, size of household, and duration of migration.

Available studies show that, so far as age is concerned, migrants are usually young: their average age is 28.5 years, with 75 per cent of them being between 20 and 39 years old. As for their geographic origin, migrants may originate from rural or urban areas: 60 per cent were born in rural areas and only came to the city on their way to Europe. Concerning class, most migrants belong to the poorest sections of Moroccan society, coming from slums and medinas⁴. A great portion of migrants lives in traditional houses. The average rate of migration per family is 1.72 in cities, 1.12 in slums, and 1.00 in medinas (CHATTOU, 1998).

Concerning the marital status of migrants, some marry before migrating. So far as migrants' level of education is concerned, it is weak before migration in comparison to the total population of the same age in Morocco. Urban migrants tend to have a better level of education than rural ones. As for the professional activities of migrants, they come from backgrounds in the agricultural sector, commerce, services, construction, industry, and traditional skills. The level of education and the degree of skill have improved in the last decades.

The duration of migration depends on whether migrants originate from rural or urban areas, whether the migrant is a head of a household, literate or illiterate, etc. Migrants originating from rural areas stay twice as long in Europe than those originating from urban areas because they can do hard labour. The level of education is pertinent here, as illiterate migrants stay longer than literate ones. Furthermore, agricultural workers do not stay long in comparison with migrants who have other qualifications because they are strongly attracted to their homeland.

⁴ Medinas are the old, traditional parts of Moroccans cities, characterised by dense settlement, commerce and labyrinthine streets. They exist in contrast to the new parts of the cities that were oftentimes planned and constructed by the French during the time of the Protectorate, parts characterised by wider streets and more 'western' layouts.

The composition of the household is subject to change in comparison with non-migrant households in the sense that they contain fewer nuclear families. In migrant households, mothers seem to have children at a later age because with late marriages. A study of the employment rates of those living in migrant households shows that 3 per cent of women in both migrant and non-migrant households work.

The decision to migrate from Morocco to Europe may be a matter of individual motivation. In principle, males migrate from regions that are variably rich or poor, and where production factors (i.e. work, capital, natural resources) are not distributed equally (AMIN, 1974). Natural resources (land) are stable, but work and capital are mobile as a result of the adopted development policy. On the other hand, the decision to migrate may not depend on individual will; migrants may neither choose to migrate nor choose the place where they migrate.

III. THE OVERALL SITUATION OF MOROCCAN WOMEN

Moroccan women may be classified into two large categories: rural and urban. According to the most recent official statistics⁵, women constitute 51 per cent of the Moroccan population, 65 per cent of whom are illiterate and 74 per cent are young. Women constitute 35 per cent of the employed population, and 35 per cent of the unemployed. Widows comprise 11 per cent of women and 4 per cent are divorced. Women-headed households are on the rise.

Rural and urban women share a common denominator: poverty. The dichotomy 'rural/urban women' is useful as it reflects two categories of women that are affected differently, given that they do not stand the same chances of having a proper education, claiming their rights, benefiting from modernisation, etc. Additionally, the rural environment does not allow for the adoption of the same types of strategies in the face of migration.

Although rural women participate in agricultural production, they are still considered 'housewives' or 'family helpers'. It is only very recently that these women are listed in statistical accounts as 'workers' or 'producers'. This illustrates the extent to which rural women's work is underestimated. This attitude still holds nowadays, as several types of goods and services produced or offered by women are badly-paid activities.

The impact of migration on women is directly related to the overall socio-cultural context as well the development status of both the countries of origin and the host countries. In order to assess this impact, we need first to have a view of the overall situation of Moroccan women.

⁵ See Bureau des Statistiques, Rabat, 1999.

Moroccan women do not constitute a homogeneous group. They may be socially categorised along six parameters (SADIQI, 2002): geographic origin (urban vs. rural), class (rich vs. poor), education (educated vs. uneducated), job opportunity (working vs. non-working), language skills (multilingual vs. monolingual), and marital status (married vs. non-married). These social categories are not clear-cut or easily discernable; they may be best qualified as loose 'bundles' of social 'traits' that may themselves be subject to further sub-categorisation. In fact, the two poles of each social category constitute extremities of a spectrum of 'social states' and the area between the extremities is filled with relative 'nuances' of either pole. For example, the boundaries between urban and rural areas in Morocco are not always discernable in a straightforward way by virtue of the fact that semi-rural and semi-urban areas, which combine characteristics of both, exist and are operative. Furthermore, the difference between women that qualify as 'rich' and the ones that qualify as 'poor' is relative given the existence of the categories 'less rich than...' and 'less poor than...'. The same degree of flexibility is attested in the oppositions 'educated/non-educated', 'working/non-working', 'multilingual/monolingual', and 'married/non-married'.

So far as geographic origin is concerned, rural and urban women relate differently to language, space, traditions, household economy, and education. Rural women are more associated with orality and illiteracy in the wider Moroccan socio-cultural context that favours modernisation, literacy, and multilingualism. Furthermore, unlike in urban areas, rural communities are often organised in simpler but larger sizes. Consequently, large families often result in everyone knowing everyone else within local communities. It is this social organisation that explains the fact that women in rural areas are more 'watched' but, on the other hand, less subject to public sexual harassment, than urban women. The rural social organisation is also characterised by less anonymity in public space, a fact that strengthens the grip of patriarchy as women often fall under the 'protection' of any male member of their community. Likewise, generally speaking, rural women in Morocco are more often victims of traditional customs, rigid kinship relations, and a strong code of honour than urban women. For example, these women are more affected by early marriages, multiple pregnancies (especially in the absence of a son), polygamy, and accountability to the larger family and community units. Moroccan rural women as a group rely less on their men's (fathers', husbands', sons') income and participate more in their household economy than urban women. In Moroccan rural areas, there is a sex-based division of labour as men and women are separated in daily tasks (BELARBI *et al.*, 1995; BOURQUIA *et al.*, 1996; CHLEBOWSKA, 1990). Rural women's labour includes domestic chores, work in the fields, buying and selling in the *suqs* (local markets), smuggling goods across borders, and working as maids in urban areas.

A consideration of the types of activities that Moroccan rural women perform reveals that these women are excluded from the benefits of modernisation, as modernisation is essentially urban. For example, investments in the health care and education sectors have benefited urban women more than rural

ones. The bulk of economic activities is set up in cities and it is through these activities that women have had access to paid work. Rural areas have been neglected and are still based on the traditional economy. This has resulted in relegating rural women to the fringes of society. Lower class rural women are doubly oppressed and exploited by poverty and a rigid gender dichotomy. The ones that are most hit are peasant women and women in densely populated poor urban districts which emerged as a result of rural exodus and constitute an extension of rural areas. Both rural areas and poor urban districts lack sanitary facilities and basic infrastructure. Women in these areas represent the majority of Moroccan women. They survive in painful conditions and suffer most from lack of means and deterioration of the environment.

In spite of all these disempowering factors, rural women in Morocco are not passive; they fight exclusion by forcing their way into the male-dominated public spaces and assert themselves as breadwinners by supporting their households, sometimes single-handedly. The overall status of Moroccan rural women as a group makes them negotiate gender and power relations in a way that is congruent with their socio-cultural environment. Their endeavours are indeed very courageous in a context that is characterised by widespread illiteracy, strong patriarchal dogmas, and a strict gender dichotomy.

Whereas rural areas symbolise tradition in Morocco, urban areas symbolise modernity, social opportunity, and social mobility. Modernity has been concomitant with urban migration in Morocco. It has not benefited all urban Moroccan women. While it allowed relatively well-off women to become educated and functional in the State's modern institutions, poor urban women have not benefited from independence in the same way. Whereas upper and middle class women generally worked outside the home as a result of years of education and felt proud of their work, poor women worked outside the home out of necessity and were not generally proud of this work. The former's work was officially recognised and even encouraged because these women constituted part of the elite. Whatever the motives for Moroccan women's work outside home, their work has always been widely considered instrumental as a token of modernity in Morocco.

Moroccan urban women started to participate in the household economy in the 1930s. Their work was not an act of militancy but rather a result of poverty, because most of these women worked as maids in the French or upper class Moroccan households or were recruited as low-paid workers doing menial jobs in fields or factories. However, a few Moroccan urban women managed to create their own enterprises in the 1930s and 1940s in cities (see BELARBI, 2001). After Morocco's independence, a growing number of Moroccan urban women were incorporated into the 'official' labour market. Women's employment rates in urban areas increased steadily – 5.6 per cent in 1960, 10.8 per cent in 1971, 14.7 per cent in 1982, and 17.3 per cent in 1994, according to the general statistics of the Ministry of Population and Housing. Furthermore, the rate of feminisation of the labour force (15 years of age and more) grew during independence

and reached 33 per cent in 1990. Women's work in industry greatly helped Morocco's development. The greatest majority of salaried women has and still constitutes the lower and middle rungs of the job ladder. Very few women have managed to reach top positions in their jobs.

In addition to salaried jobs, personal and domestic services have been highly feminised in urban areas. The more urban women take jobs outside the home, the more domestic services they need in households to keep the balance between outside work and daily domestic chores. According to MERNISSI (1982), in 1971, a quarter of maids were children (under 15 of age). In 1993, this percentage went down by about 10 per cent. Maids receive small salaries that differ per family. Maids are not only economically marginalised, they are also marginalised by the law, as they are neither included in the work legislation nor in social security. Most very young domestics are not paid directly; the money they earn goes directly to their parents.

It is commonly the housewife who pays the maid. In this way, housework primarily remains the responsibility of women: it is shared by women of different social classes (the housewife and the maid) who sometimes belong to different age groups (housewives are usually older than domestic servants). It is as if urban women's participation in the household economy and their integration in official development depends on the exclusion of other women who come from rural or poor urban areas to work as maids. However, paradoxically, it is urban women in various political parties and civil society that fight to improve the social status of maids by incorporating the maid status in the Work Code (*Code du Travail*). These militants also call for a strict application of the work law that forbids recruiting children under 12 years old and under 14 years old without the consent of their parents. Indeed, as maids are hired on the basis of 'minimal wages for maximum service', service relations between women is nowadays characterised by an emerging struggle for independence and identity in the labour force for both maids and their employers. This is also a struggle for social recognition of rights in the face of gender and class prejudice (see MERNISSI, 1982).

Given these facts, urban and rural women are not given the same choices in the economy (see FOLBRE, 1994) and, hence, resist patriarchy differently. Economically well-off urban women often exploit economically-weak rural women. Furthermore, as a social group, urban women are offered more chances to acquire an education than rural women, and hence, the former have more access to language skills and job opportunities than the latter. It is on the basis of this asymmetry in chances that rural women are socially categorised as 'subordinate' to urban women.

As a social category, class is based on social and personal network ties (see MILROY and MILROY, 1992). It is through these network ties that interactions create class. Like geographic origin, class is a social variable along which Moroccan women are categorised into groups. Class is, thus, a social factor that explains the heterogeneity of Moroccan women. The modern capitalist system

created the 'modern' Moroccan type of class system (upper, middle, and lower classes). The impact of class varies from urban to rural areas. In the former case, class is often manifested in the quality of the houses, outward appearance, and the extensive use of French as a sign of literacy, whereas in the latter case, class is manifested in the amount of land, livestock, and property. In the post-colonial Moroccan system, urban, middle and upper class girls acquired an education, and sometimes a profession, which they exercised more out of social prestige than out of necessity. However, although belonging to upper and middle classes gave more opportunities to women to assert themselves in the public sphere, these women remained locked into the capitalist class patriarchy, as men continued to control the key institutions of power. In this patriarchal context, labour and class differences that accompanied modernisation materialised in two different and incompatible worlds: the world of men and the world of women. Whereas the world of women was characterised by 'introverted-ness' as it was turned towards 'inward' domains such as the home, the world of men was 'extroverted' as it was turned 'outwards' towards the public domains that guaranteed prestige and power. The new order that was adopted by the Moroccan upper and middle classes was meant to serve the elite's purposes and, by excluding the larger 'non-elite' portions of the Moroccan society, it re-established the sexual dichotomy and pushed women, once again, to second position.

Although in principle, class is subject to change as women from low classes may get more education or marry into wealthier families, the class system is still very strong in the Moroccan context and women are often first socially categorised as 'rich' or 'poor'. The social variable of class is a strong indicator of heterogeneity among Moroccan women. Class disparities between Moroccan women influence the ways in which these women resist patriarchy and social oppression. Each group of women uses the choices that their class offers them: upper and middle class women use education and sometimes the social position of their husbands, and lower class women often use family ties and the social position of their sons. Educated women are from the outset more socially privileged than uneducated ones; they have more job opportunities, more chances to achieve independence, self-promotion, and self-satisfaction, as well as more freedom to influence the course of events in their lives.

Job opportunity is another social variable that attests to Moroccan women's heterogeneity. Women's jobs vary from menial, to low-paid, to relatively well-paid. However, women are not often found in top positions of the job ladder. In spite of this, the opposition 'working/non-working' divides Moroccan women and, everything being equal, puts the non-working category at a disadvantage. Women's financial contributions to the household often trigger mixed attitudes, being on the one hand, welcomed as a supplementary source of income and, on the other hand, clashing with the traditional view of women as primarily 'housekeepers'. The idea that Moroccan women work outside their homes clashes with Moroccan socio-cultural values, affects Moroccan women's external image, as well as their inner psychological selves. Moroccan women are generally brought