



**The Role of Gender Studies in Instilling Democracy and Gender Equality
The Case of Cultural Studies Master Students at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah
University-Fez**

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MOROCCO



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OUTLINE

- Background of the study
- Research design
- Results
- Conclusion



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Background of the Study



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- For democracy to be set up, a state has to disallow any form of marginalization or discrimination on the basis of gender or race and treat all its citizens as free and equal citizens providing them with capabilities, equal opportunities and empowerment agency (Ruíz, 2017)
- Democracy and gender
 - A democracy has to ensure women full access to their citizenship rights which should allow them to have a say in their society and bring about changes and to reinforce women's agency as a core concern (Piccone, 2017)
- Gender equality and democracy:
 - Gender equality and democracy are mutually dependent and closely intertwined which means that a democratic society is a society that works towards the empowerment of women who are often politically and economically marginalized and aspires to their inclusion in the democratic institutions.
 - Gender relations in democratic regimes should be equal excluding any forms of marginalization or subordination, which are often culturally and religiously reinforced and normalized.



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- Gender studies, gender equality and democracy
 - Gender studies tend to explore power relations within gender systems
 - Gender studies promote progressive liberal values, including democracy and gender equality (Maloutas, 2007).
 - Beers (2009) claims that the field of gender studies is responsible for raising the awareness of women about their rights and, hence, making them aware that no democracy is valid without their full integration in the whole societal fields.
 - Gender studies help women to understand the term democracy and then re-describe it to serve their agendas (op.cit)
 - Within the context of education, democracy education has an essential role in balancing gender issues.
 - If properly taught, democratic principles and ideals would saturate the culture in such a way that gender dominance one way or the other would not be tolerated (Chilambo, 2007).



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The case of Morocco

- At the political level

Since 1999, which marked the succession to the throne by king Mohammed the sixth, Morocco started its democratization phase through the 2004 family code and the 2011 constitution, which was initialized with the late King Hassan the Second in the 1980's and 1990's. **Yet, no genuine gender equality or democracy have been achieved.**

- At the level of academia

Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah Ben Abdellah University was among the first universities in Morocco to democratize the academic field by launching:

- The first Gender Studies Programme in Morocco
- The so called Undergraduate Research and Training Unit (referred to as URF), which produced the first PhD cohorts in Gender Studies in Morocco
- The first Center for Studies and Research on Women (called CERF) in April 1997 (created by Prof. Fatima Sadiqi)
- More recently: the Gest Project at USMBA

Impacts?????



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Research objectives

Since gender equality is viewed as a significant component in the development process and the growth of any country, and since equality between women and men is an essential component for democracy

- Investigate the extent to which the introduction of some gender courses in the Moroccan University can help inculcate the culture of democracy and gender equality among young university students
- Investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Cultural Studies MA students towards gender democracy and equality after being subjected to gender studies courses



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RESEARCH DESIGN



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RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS & QUESTIONS

The main hypothesis underlying this study suggests that the teaching of gender studies can raise awareness among Moroccan students whether males or females about democracy and gender equality

This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

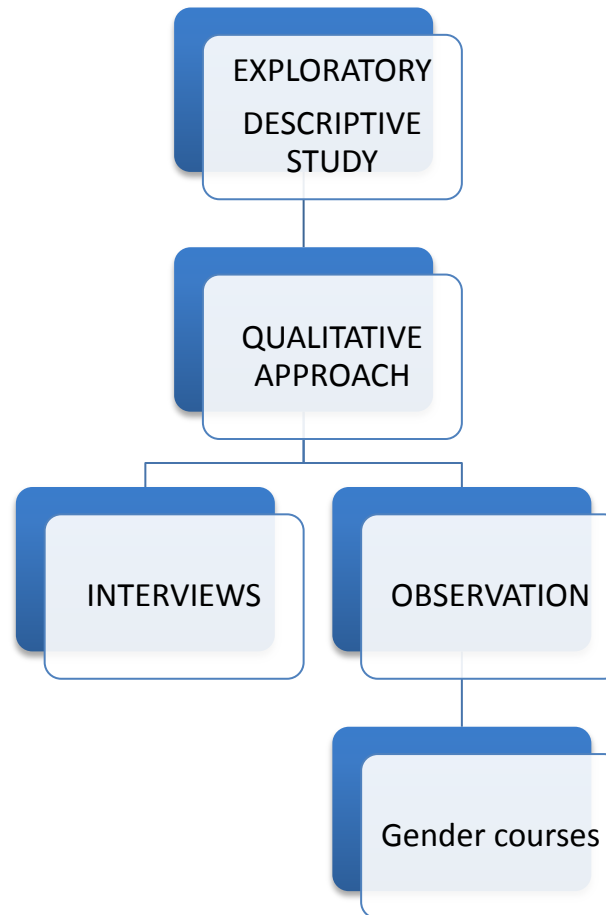
- To what extent are Gender equality and democracy achieved in Morocco?
- Does Gender equality have any role in achieving democracy in Morocco?
- How does the teaching of Gender Courses affect Gender Equality and Democracy ?



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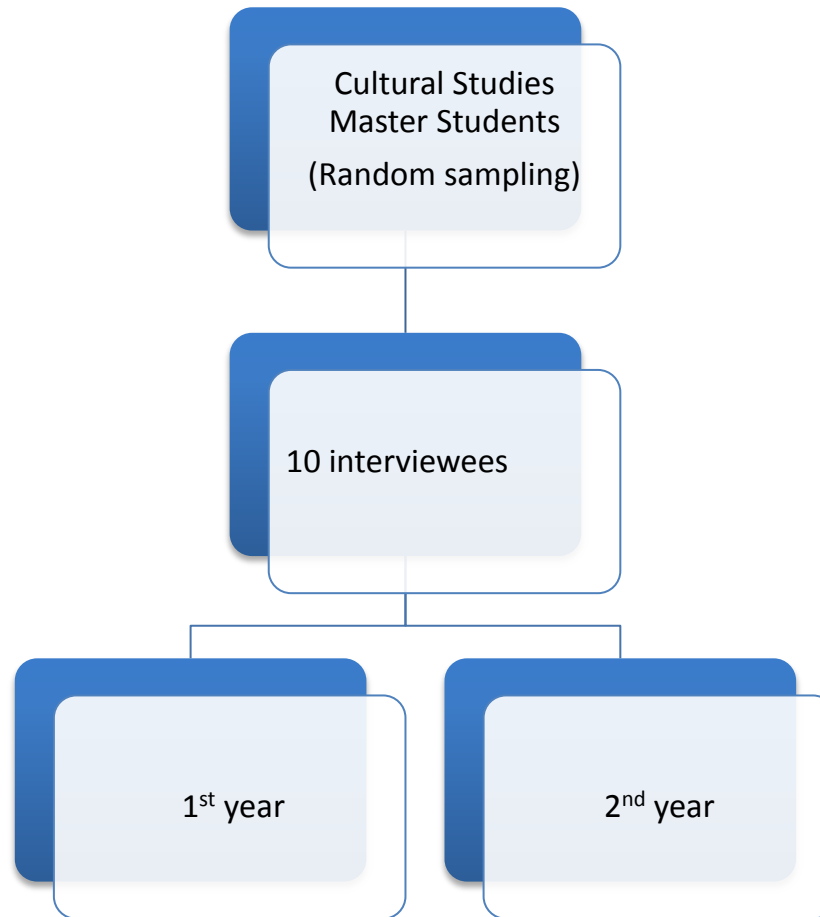
RESEARCH APPROACH & DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS



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SAMPLE POPULATION



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RESULTS



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Gender Equality in Morocco

- The majority of interviewees agree that there is a certain percentage in the achievement of gender equality
 - None of them denies the existence of gender equality in the Moroccan society



- Most of them provide **STRESSED ON** the non-existence of a genuine gender equality in Morocco.

- Achieving gender equality is a long process that needs a lot of work

M.I: “ full achievement of gender equality is a long process that needs time, hard work and perseverance”

- Women need to get/be given influential and decision making positions

F.I: “Women need to reach higher positions where they can have more influence and make decisions of great impact. Their presence should not be limited to fulfilling the quota or to show that there is gender equality in politics. Their presence should bear fruits and bring about change in Morocco.”

- Stereotypical perception of women’s ability to perform well in decision making positions

F.I: “society jobs and work positions are gendered since we do have some positions where women cannot be trusted in, and some positions that men believe that women are too feminine to enroll in.



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- Gender equality is not achieved in all domains

POLITICS= MALE DOMINATED

M.I: “politics is a domain where gender equality has been achieved thanks to the positive discrimination of the Quota System and also human rights projects”

F.I: “women’s presence in politics [thanks to (sic)] to the quota system is inadequate”.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The absence of women: legislative challenges, limited access to capital through laws denying their rights, difficulties in accessing credit

MILITARY FORCES



Moroccan society has known progress as far as Gender equality is concerned as shown through a number of political, legislative reforms , international conventions

HOWEVER, the extent to which those students view the concretization of gender equality remains a matter of controversy **depending on the patriarchal mindset, the way gender equality is perceived and the attitudes held towards this concept.**



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Democracy in Morocco

- Democracy in the Moroccan society encounters various obstacles
 - **Corruption and the monopoly of powers.**

M.I: *“the main challenge in my view are the centralization or the monopoly of all the significant powers in the hands of the king and his surroundings. That is, monarchy exercises a kind of monopoly over who rules in Morocco.”*

- **Gender segregation**

F.I: *“I strongly believe that social stratification and gender segregation are the two key factors challenging the achievement of democracy in Morocco.”*

This premise calls into question the process of gender equality, and it confirms the close cause-effect relationship between gender issues, gender equality and democracy and the role both gender issues and gender equality have in achieving democracy.



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The Role of Gender Issues and Gender equality in Achieving Democracy in Morocco

- **Gender issues have an impact on the achievement of democracy.**
F.I: *“Gender issues are inherently influential in the achievement of democracy. Focusing on gender roles, activities and responsibilities assigned to men and women nullifies gender equality and democratic values”*
- **Gender equality has a fundamental role in attaining democracy.**
M.I: *“Gender equality promotes equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women. It is a developmental goal in its own. It is a critical factor for achieving democracy and sustainable development. In fact, societies need equal participation of men and women to initiate social change.”*
M.I: *“ gender equality can benefit the achievement of democracy or a successful democratic system by being fair and just to the population regardless of its genders.”*
- The process of **gender equality drives social change** which addresses and **encourages equal opportunities of men and women across all sectors** of society, including economic participation and decision-making when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally favored and valued.
- Achieving the goal of shared-decision making between men and women would reflect the composition of society and strengthen the democratic processes of governance.



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Gender Studies and the Promotion of Gender Equality and Democracy in Morocco

- Gender courses were found to generally have a strong impact on students
 - Give women more power to integrate into more domains and become more successful in their lives
 - Believe that both genders have the same power
 - Unveil the unconscious patriarchal mindset, which manifests in several aspects of gender equality: contesting and changing the perception of women within this traditional society and preventing violence and discrimination against them too.

The students' mindsets are highly affected because gender courses change the preset stereotypes bestowed upon women.



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- **Promoting Gender Equality through Teaching Gender Courses**

- All the interviewees' answers unanimously agree on the importance of gender courses for achieving gender equality.
 - Teaching gender is an important source for eradicating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality.
 - Teaching gender will help in understanding gender equality, benefiting from it and sensitizing people about its importance.
 - Teaching gender courses would also tackle gender issues and spread the cultural awareness of equality.



Such awareness can only be achieved through teaching and engraving values that are based on justice, freedom, and equal treatment between genders.



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- **Promoting Democracy through Teaching Gender Courses**

- Different courses on gender in relation to religion, Diaspora, Media and human rights have all analyzed and discussed the challenges and issues that may influence directly or indirectly the process of democracy

F.I: *“I have learnt that democracy is described as self-government of people...it can be said that democracy is directly associated with human rights because human rights are all about the basic principles of democracy. Teaching gender issues definitely aim to protect and improve students' personality and value in all aspects. In all, democracy is the concretized form of freedom.”*

HOWEVER, the interviewees are not convinced that Gender studies would really install democracy in Morocco:

- Democracy is an ongoing process that needs time, perseverance, and resilience to be genuinely implemented.
- “nothing will change in Morocco if dictatorship and injustice are not challenged” = the reasons why gender equality does not exist in the Moroccan society.
- The discrepancy between theory and practice: the role educational system (“we study things, but we never practice them.”)



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➔ MA courses on gender studies cannot help increase democracy in Morocco because democracy needs serious determinations and political activism to be enacted

➔ The need to move to the practical stage of democracy and not stay restricted to theories in academia.

M.I: “When I was an MA I do not think we had any course discussing the relationship between gender issues and democracy, yet in general as I said before, political issues like democracy cannot be easily realized through such courses and the like, but need a serious political will and a determined vision for the future. Also, foreign monopoly and the intervention of the ex-colonized world hinder any real attempts to achieve democracy. The real question is not when or how shall we be democratic or are we going to be democratic, the question for me is ‘is the west ready to have democratic societies in our countries’. I think the question of democracy is a very complex one, and has many nuances that make it necessary to invoke many historical, geopolitical, economic and cultural factors that bear on its meaning and achievement.”



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CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS



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- The two concepts –gender equality and democracy-are closely interconnected as gender equality can positively affect the success of a democratic transition.
- Although the concept of gender equality is to a great extent understood by students, -outside academia- this concept is not applicable in Moroccans' daily routine due to the patriarchal mindset deeply rooted.
- THE NEED TO study gender equality in a more local context- especially, in traditional societies which are characterized by sharply differentiated gender roles.
- THE NEED for the Moroccan government and its officials to take gender issues and gender equality seriously in their resolutions for a genuine democratic endeavor away from corruption and self- serving tendencies, which will make the impacts of teaching gender courses extend outside the realm of academia and reach our everyday life in the Moroccan society.



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