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Moroccan Youth' Impact on Decision Making Process Youth Specificities

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ABSTRACT

The political engagement of Moroccan youth has always been the focus of research as this age category plays a vital role in the development of the political life. In this study, the focus is to address youth cultural specificities within the political sphere. To attain this objective, an analytical and theoretical framework is adopted to explore the different cultural, social and political constituents of youth and to see how impactful the role of youth

can be in the field of politics in general and decision making in particular. In fact, the problematic issue is to find out whether cultural youth specificities are taken into account or marginalized in what concerns the political area.

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Decision making process, Youth and culture, Moroccan youth and identity, Youth's specificities*

AUTORE

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1. Introduction

The presence of Moroccan youth within DMP requires an investigation into the relationship that associates this social segment with their social belonging. By other terms, the way Moroccan political scene defines political actors and their impact throughout history has neglected important details that distinguish the individual and qualify his/her specificities. The presence of youth in such places is being determined by a set of criteria that, unfortunately, makes reference to only the oldest noticeable figures neglecting other young actors' specificities. The impact of youth on political decision is to be seen in relation to the characteristics that young segment is known with. It is worth here mentioning theories that help understand the way some philosophers, thinkers and even researchers in history have developed this relationship.

1.1. Research problem

Looking at the political participation behaviors of youth in the contemporary Morocco is deemed necessary in the field of research; this article provides the reader with a map of different terminologies and logics that are used to discuss youth political participation and the cultural specificities of youth's identity. The existing literature is examined through the lens of five guiding questions: what defines youth political engagement? Are the cultural specificities of youth taken into account in the political life or not? What are the cultural components of youth's identity? For those researching youth political engagement for the first time, this article offers a useful overview of the topic, with reference to the cultural, social, and political specificities of youth's identity. At the same time, it gives researchers who are already well-informed the opportunity to reflect on the current state of research in this field. Finally, the article presents the possible positive outcomes of having good cultural specificities of youth's political identity.

1.2. The Aim of the Study

This study has the objective to shed light and describe the major cultural, social and political constituents of Moroccan youth; therefore, evaluate their impact on the process of decision-making. In this sense, all these aspects do not only distinguish youth from other social components, but they try also to inform the Moroccan political field that there is a young segment whose aspects, if well addressed, will contribute in the development of the rest of realms. Wherever you observe Moroccan youth, you can easily observe a great sense of energy, activity and enthusiasm. Youth are distinguished by their innocent desire for reform and change along with a physical strength to defend their nations especially in moments of tension. Thanks to their flexible nature, youth are able to get accustomed to different circumstances;

their readiness to contribute in solving problems and find solutions to different situations is inspired from their kinetic character which is always seeking a sense of belonging and identification. Hence, all these characteristics can push the state that once valorized youth participation, to re-question these factors within a political system which finds it difficult to understand the specificities of this period of life.

2. The Cultural Components of Moroccan Youth Identity

Moroccan Youth's identity is an outcome of various factors that contribute in shaping its aspects. The examination of youth cannot be disassociated from the cultural and political domains in which youth's presence is to be viewed from different perspectives. One of the major reasons that create feelings of intellectual turmoil and anxiety among Moroccan youth is the struggle for asserting the self. Therefore, building a balanced identity is one of the most important objectives that youth seek to realize, especially in places where they can contribute actively to change different facts, design decisions and impact public policies.

Moroccan Youth' need to locate themselves within different fields is inspired from the individual's sense of being and belonging; especially if they are involved in shaping and deciding for decisive matters. In this regard, cultural perceptions of youth have also an impact on youth' personality more particularly in what concerns their attitudes. In order to understand the dimensions of these factors on youth identity, it is important first to determine the concepts related to this category.

The concept of youth cannot be limited to only age numbers; cultural factors are also major components that define the category of youth in relation to their social context. Age indicator is not enough to define the meaning of youth; since this latter has become shaped by a set of social and economic factors. The transition in youth life, in this respect, is no more associated with the notion of fertility; it is an outcome of the social, cultural and political conditions that impact it. Therefore, productivity is a new definition to what it means to be young.

Accordingly, cultural understandings of youth are being developed according to the social and political conditions that influence the world; the growing up of young people is constructed through a set of cultural and political discourses. However, the notion of age has transcended its traditional function in distinguishing young people from old ones. Thus, to understand this relation, we have to approach or to analyze the socio-cultural norms which dominate most Moroccan society.

Moroccan youth cannot avoid being influenced by the main cultural stream, which constitutes the dilemma in which they live. Sometimes, youth are desired, but in many other times, are neglected for different reasons. This is what explains the changes that youth are experiencing throughout their journey towards adulthood. Youth are always under social surveillance that limits their freedom and controls it.

The relationship between youth and society expresses the complexity and fragmentation through which youth identity is being built.

2.1. *Cultural identity and its characteristics*

Cultural identity is always in change, it is never fixed; it is shaped by various moments of transformation. This has influenced the way youth consider themselves within a society that is always in a continuous change. Due to these cultural and social factors, it has become difficult for youth to locate themselves within their own society as free members able to act. In the same line of thought, Ravi sees that «it has become commonplace to think of the world's youth as that part of the community who are most receptive, or, alternatively, susceptible to, foreign cultural practices, if childhood means acceptance, and adulthood means conservatism, youth means rebelliousness».¹ This contradictory relationship explains the fact that whenever there is change, there is a problem, because society would like its youth to obey the rules and not to contradict them. The relationship between youth and society is merely derived from the relationship that portrays the colonial and colonized. Youth in this regard, are the colonized which is different from the main cultural stream. According to Young «Colonial discourse does not merely represent the other... so much as simultaneously project and disavow its difference. Its mastery is always asserted, but is also always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete».² This non-completion in identifying the other encourages the colonial discourse to create differences among one nation; it provides the colonized with some moment of visibility and freedom in order to look free. Therefore, society can provide a limited freedom to its youth, but they are obliged to be obedient members to the cultural codes and structures. Identity, in this regard, is never fixed; it is considered as a source of ambivalence and uncertainty, which affects youth' perceptions and reactions to the social and political matters. In approaching youth' identity, we are at the same being getting inspired by the colonial discourse and its political inclinations.

Moroccan society's perception of youth invokes a similarly important understanding to the long process that youth identity undergoes, and interprets it in a way that would suit its policies. Furthermore, cultural interpretations of youth notion might take different aspects such as: human behaviors, dress, life-style, hairdo, language and other cultural aspects. Out of these elements, the description of youth culture can be related to different notions like gender, class, race and ethnicity. The political fragmentation of youth identity reveals the cultural dynamics through which identity is being torn between so many different forces. As we have hinted

¹ A. RAVI, *Managing human resources in global era: Prospects and challenges*, Zenon Academic Press 2014, p. 203.

² R. YOUNG, *White mythologies*, Routledge University Press, Canada 1990, p. 143.

before, identity can never be limited or restricted to a particular time or space; it can take different forms and provoke various meanings out of which concepts are being produced and believed in.

3. *Moroccan Youth and Political Action*

Political action as a whole is a series of programs intentionally created to maintain relations between people; therefore, the disequilibrium in some of these programs may lead to a political aversion on behalf of the marginalized category. Political science should not be looked at as a separated field; it is a realm that touches the cultural, social and political status of individuals. In term with that, MacIver asserts that «these various sciences give the basis of ethics, which must regard man in the total humanity into which the different social relationship enter».³ In this case, the presence of Moroccan youth in the DMP reflects most of the cultural, social and political policies determining youth identity.

The fair notion of political science may seem to include most of the fields which impact the individual in relation to political field. Still, this fact cannot be applied to different policies; especially those which have the power to suggest laws and implement them. The policies that shape youth presence within political decision are condemned of being bias; the implementation of rules does indeed neglect youth' specificities, and shape their way of thinking; the various sub-cultural forms that differentiate youth from the general order may condemn youth presence within these places and make of it irrelevant.

These young political leaders enter into the traditional image of political scene which does not allow differences. This fact is supported by the idea which indicates that «the organized state must contain two classes, ruler and subject, governor and governed the ideal of self-government can never be so realized as to break down this division, and even if it could, even if ruler and ruled were actually identical, the two aspects would still remain».⁴ The subordination of the subject youth demonstrates the effects of policies through which young political agents experience different moments of tension; it also defines the cultural and social status of youth throughout history. Nevertheless, the policies that impact the presence of youth within DMP result from cultural, social and political factors where these internal and external forces intersect. The ways political policies are exercised are reflected in how the government operates at different levels to encourage youth participation, and to determine their effectiveness in the implementation of these policies on real grounds. Thus, these factors shape political scene in most developed countries. Most of the

³ R. MACLVER, *Politics and society*, Aldinetransaction, New Brunswick and London 2005, p. 65.

⁴ Ivi, p. 66.

aspects especially those related to social policy-making in all its stages, and elements describing policy formulation have a mutual influence between youth and decision-making zones. The cultural perception of youth and the way these agents are perceived within political action can either valorize or marginalize youth' roles.

4. *Gender and Political Engagement in Morocco*

In term of these policies, it is important also here to consider the presence of gender within Moroccan decision places; not to quantify their presence, but to qualify their effectiveness within DMP. A pivotal position within the basic human rights has determined the engagement of women within political life; therefore, showed the extent to which women were much more interested in defending national causes than focusing on particular positions. As a matter of fact, «women worked for the cause more than for jobs».⁵ Political empowerment of women is mainly related to determining the self in relation to social and political contexts. By strengthening women's skills, their effectiveness in different fields can be noticeable; be it at the level of civil society, political parties or at the heart of decision-making.

There is no doubt that different societies would like to consolidate their image in asserting democratic values. Still, practices on real grounds may differ from one context to another. The engagement of women in DMP may question the various policies that, first shape gender participation in such positions, and then formulate society's mind to consider their presence in a certain way. It is of the utmost importance political representation of women in Morocco is; hence, this issue can be interpreted from two major perspectives; theoretical and practical one. As for the moment, we are interested in covering this topic from a theoretical perspective. For the practical side, it will be dealt with later on in this study.

The issue of women as political leaders has been brought up in the discussion between academic researchers and politicians; concerning the same issue, by referring to the history of struggle in Egypt especially where women constituted a great part of this process, theorists have focused on the deluded role Egyptian women have been performed during nationalist movements. In this case «women had simply been used by a group of men in the nationalist movement to mislead the civilized nations into believing in the maturity and advancement of the Egyptian nation».⁶ The participation of women in political life constitutes an urgent need for the process of development; the effectiveness of women in such zones requires the valorization and support to their own capabilities. By so doing, women can prove their

⁵ M. HOOK, S. CHILDS, *Women, Gender and Politics: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010.

⁶ M. BADRAN, *Feminists, Islam, and nation: Gender and the making of modern Egypt*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1995, p. 87.

own capability in many fields, especially those addressing public issues, and represent the values of democracy.

5. *The Cultural Notion of Politics*

If culture is an everyday practice, politics is a well-planned mode of life programmed to establish orders, and guide society towards certain objectives. In this regard, citizens' perception of politics becomes already shaped. Political culture can be defined as a set of ideas, attitudes and beliefs established by any society; it is about how citizens ought to act and react towards the government. The cultural attitudes about any political system describe the relationship that links between community and the ruling system; it is mostly characterized by power relations; the ruled community always feels the sense of ambiguity in what concerns the way regulations are imposed. In this case, political attitudes can be transmitted through the educational system; in how society would like its youth to considerate their own participation in the political field.

The necessity of considering cultural diversity is justified in Plato's words as being an important element in shaping democratic states that respect different values. For him «governments vary as the dispositions of men vary, and there must be as many of the one as there are of the other, for cannot suppose that states are made of 'oak and rock' and not cut of the human natures which are in them».⁷ With respect to this diversity, political culture can take different forms as far as the cultural specificities of each country are concerned. This fact can also motivate youth to participate politically if their specificities are addressed.

In addition, culture is known with fluidity and diversity; cultural attitudes may differ from one cultural context to another. Youth' views towards political field may not be the same in other contexts, and also the way government shapes its own laws can vary within different contexts. This is what explains the differences found among developed-and under-developed countries. Accordingly, for a country to gain its people's trust, it needs a long process that engages them in all the factors which constitute the political scene, and makes of them essential contributors in the construction of a democratic nation. Political culture provides a set of other influential elements needed in the construction of a strong relationship that links between citizens and the government.

Education also contributes in raising youth attention towards political terms in general; and enables them to be acquainted with cultural specificities of political jargon. As has been mentioned earlier in the first chapter, developed countries have re-directed the traditional role of education which consists mainly in learning the basic

⁷ J. BENJAMIN, *The Dialogues of Plato: Republic*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017.

skills like reading, writing, and speaking; they were able to re-consider the role of education by focusing on different skills this field can develop among youth such as: mental capacities mainly those related to developing critical thinking, reasoning, considering differences in terms of attitudes and perspectives, self-management, participation in finding solutions, and impacting decision-making.

All these competencies have the power to guide the energy within youth, and help them to act within the frames of political action as effective political leaders. This issue has been raised in Euben's thought especially when addressing the role education can perform vis-à-vis youth identity. Euben sees that «unless "classic" texts can speak to contemporary political and theoretical issue they will wither, and our students will have a more impoverished sense of political and intellectual possibilities than they would have had otherwise».⁸ For a prudent and efficient practice of political action, youth ought to acquire the necessary values of leadership and responsibility; these notions are what encourage youth to impact and influence the process of decisions. All these programmed notions have the ability to shape the political agenda of any country. On the one hand, by considering the political orientations of political leaders, different political terms that are embedded within the political style become at the disposal of common people regardless of their own political affiliation; thus, can impact their political behavior. On the other hand, political terms become also more explicit and practiced by every citizen.

Political participation can take place only with citizens being acquainted with political terminology; therefore, they can have an impact on the process in which decisions are being constructed. Citizens become interested in following up political programs, attending conferences and more particularly expressing their own attitudes towards political issues in general.

Being characterized by diversity at different levels, political scene in Morocco is determined by a set of historical, social and cultural dominant aspects. For youth to be engaged in this process, we should get closer to the various discourses that contribute in shaping youth political identity, and therefore, determine their own impact on the political life. According to Entelis, the various discourses that shape Moroccan culture have a direct impact on youth engagement in politics. For him, Moroccan youth seem to be reluctant towards a full participation in the political action; this justifies the relative absence of youth from the center of decision making. Entelis explains this fact through the type of attitudes youth have vis-à-vis political system that are inspired from the political upbringing they have been through. For youth,

⁸ P. EUBEN *Corrupting youth: Political education, democratic culture, and political theory*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1997, p. XIII.

political scene is mainly characterized by personal benefits, favoritism and the inheritance policy.⁹

In fact, the complementarily that political culture can achieve in parallel with political action can motivate youth to be engaged in the political scene through various modes of participation. Another important fact that determines this participation is the relationship between youth and the political process. In term of political thought, this notion has been reflected in the study of many thinkers. In approaching this notion, the debatable relationship between youth and the political process questions the necessity of the subject portrayed through youth and the regulations implemented mainly by the state. The political participation of youth may seem irrelevant in some contexts due to the cultural stereotypes that reduce the effectiveness of this social segment. Having this in mind, Fahmy confirms that «despite the dominant stereotype of young people as largely apathetic and self-interested, it is nonetheless evident that many young people have strong views on what matters in society».¹⁰ This explains that youth have to submit to their sense of belonging, and the desire to decide on political action. Despite these attempts, policies addressing youth have a common perception of the political action and the procedures of subjugating youth to the state, the elite that governs the participation of youth and their roles in politics.

Conclusion

Young people often find themselves marginalized from mainstream politics and decision making. They struggle to gain the respect of public officials and are seen as lacking the skills and experience to engage in political activity and lead positive change in their communities. This exclusion, combined with limited educational and economic opportunities, can leave young people both idle and frustrated with the status quo. Today's youth need real opportunities to participate in political processes and contribute to practical solutions that advance development. When given an opportunity to organize, voice their opinions and play a meaningful role in political decision making, young people consistently demonstrate their willingness and ability to foster positive, lasting change. They also become more likely to demand and defend democracy, and gain a greater sense of belonging.

⁹ J. ENTELIS, *Culture and counterculture in Moroccan politics*, University Press of America, Boston 1997, pp. 45-47.

¹⁰ E. FAHMI, *Young Citizens: Young people's involvement in politics and decision making*, Ashgate, U.K 2006, p. 16.