

Cultural legitimation and evaluation in Moroccan media discourse

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Abstract

This paper endeavors to investigate the discourse of women who endured marital violence in Moroccan media, with a particular focus on the cultural context. Specifically, we aim to explore how these women employed legitimation to justify their discourse, constructing arguments that depict them as victims and condemn their abusive husbands. Our analysis focused on content from the talk show "Qeset Nnass" on the Moroccan TV channel MEDI 1TV. In this show, women expressed their views by using legitimation strategies, conveying messages that necessitate a nuanced understanding of the cultural backdrop for interpretation. Another objective of this paper is to provide a cultural evaluation of the discourse of women subjected to marital violence. Our research is grounded in the recognition of the intricate and significant interaction between media and society in our search to evaluate the modality of women's persuasive efforts within the framework of the show. We employed a qualitative method to analyze the discourse of women impacted by violence through direct observation. This methodological approach enables us to delve into the relationship between media content and culture, shedding light on the extent of its mutual and direct nature.

Keywords

legitimation, discourse, gender violence, cultural evaluation, media, Morocco.

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Introduction

This study aims to investigate the portrayal of women subjected to marital violence (WSMV) as depicted in Moroccan media, particularly focusing on how these women construct narratives of victimization while casting their abusive spouses in a negative light. The analysis will primarily concentrate on content sourced from the Moroccan channel Medi 1TV, namely the talk show "Qesset Nnass" (the story of people), where women articulated their perspectives using various techniques of legitimation. It seeks to understand how language and discourse shape power relations, ideologies, and social practices related to violence against women within the Moroccan context. We chose this particular show for its wide viewership within and outside Morocco, as well as for the easy accessibility of archived episodes on the Medi 1 TV website and YouTube.

The term WSMV refers to women who experience physical, emotional, sexual, or economic abuse perpetrated by their spouses within the context of marriage. This form of violence can manifest in various ways, including but not limited to physical assault, verbal threats, psychological manipulation, sexual coercion, and financial control. Marital violence is a violation of human rights and often occurs within a dynamic of unequal power relations, where the perpetrator seeks to assert dominance and control over the victim. In the Moroccan cultural context, the issue of marital violence is deeply entrenched within societal norms, traditions, and gender roles. Despite legal reforms and efforts to address gender inequality, traditional patriarchal values still prevail in many aspects of Moroccan society. Women are often expected to fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers, with limited autonomy and agency within the household. Additionally, cultural norms may perpetuate the belief that marital disputes should be resolved within the confines of the family, leading to underreporting and normalization of violence against women. Furthermore, the prevalence of marital violence in Morocco can be attributed to various socio-economic factors, including poverty, lack of education, and limited access to resources and support services for survivors. Women may face significant barriers to seeking help or escaping abusive situations due to social stigma, economic dependence on their spouses, and inadequate legal protections. In this cultural context, addressing marital violence requires comprehensive strategies that challenge traditional gender norms, empower women to assert their rights, and provide accessible support services for survivors. It also necessitates efforts to change societal attitudes and perceptions surrounding gender-based violence, promoting gender equality, and fostering a culture of respect and non-violence within intimate relationships.

Our research emphasizes the need for further exploration in this area because of the scarcity of scholarly research on the image of WSMV in Moroccan media. By analyzing media narratives as discursive practices, the study aims to shed light on gender constructs, power dynamics, and societal norms perpetuated in Moroccan media representations of WSMV. It also underscores the importance of challenging stereotypes, promoting gender equality, and empowering marginalized voices through critical analysis of media language and discourse. The study acknowledges limitations such as focusing on one TV show and excluding others due to the complexity of the topic and time and space constraints. It also recognizes the influence of contextual factors, methodological limitations, and intersectionality on research findings. Despite these limitations, this research may provide valuable insights into the representation and construction of women's identities in Moroccan media narratives, contributing to broader efforts to address violence against women and promote gender equality.

1. Gender violence in Morocco

In her analysis of theoretical discourse on domestic violence, Sadiqi (2010-2011) observes a significant gap in North African scholarship, despite the region's notable activism and legal efforts. She attributes domestic violence to entrenched patriarchal family structures and emphasizes the pivotal roles of media and civil society in raising awareness. Nevertheless, she critiques mainstream media for often neglecting to highlight advances in women's rights. Conversely, Ennaji (2012) underscores the importance of mass media, particularly television, in raising awareness and mobilizing women to combat violence. This is confirmed by Skalli (2006), who commends journalists for their courageous efforts in exposing the realities faced by women, despite the challenges of censorship and threats. Oubou (2013), on the other hand, takes a critical stance on how women are portrayed in the media, suggesting that these representations may reinforce gender inequalities.

Naciri (2017) identifies societal and socio-economic factors contributing to gender-based violence, including substance abuse and financial dependence. She emphasizes the legislative, religious, and awareness-raising solutions to combat violence and its psychological effects on victims and children. In the same spirit, Jalal and Sadiqi (2018) provide an in-depth analysis of the prevalence and consequences of violence against women in Morocco. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, the authors examine various forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and intimate partner violence. They also discuss the socio-cultural factors contributing to gender violence and analyze the effectiveness of existing legal and policy frameworks in addressing the issue. Similarly, El Khoumssi (2019) explores the dynamics of domestic violence in Morocco, focusing on the experiences of survivors and the barriers they face in seeking help and accessing support services. The report includes case studies, interviews with survivors, and analysis of legal and policy responses to domestic violence. It also highlights the role of cultural norms and societal attitudes in perpetuating violence against women.

The findings mentioned above confirm Human Rights Watch report in 2020, which examines the prevalence of gender-based violence in Morocco and assesses the government's response to the issue. The report documents cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination against women, and calls for legal reforms to strengthen protections for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. It also highlights the importance of raising awareness and changing societal attitudes to combat gender violence effectively. The findings also confirm Amnesty International publication in 2017, which provides an overview of women's rights in Morocco, with a focus on gender-based violence and legal reforms. This report examines the impact of Morocco's Family Code and Penal Code on the rights of women, particularly in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, and discusses the role of civil society organizations and advocacy efforts in promoting women's rights and combating gender violence.

Zarrugh (2016), in an anthology she edited, exposes personal narratives and testimonies from Moroccan women who have experienced gender-based violence. The book sheds light on the diverse experiences of survivors and their strategies for resistance and resilience in the face of violence. It also addresses broader issues such as cultural norms, patriarchy, and social inequality, offering insights into the complexities of gender violence in Morocco. All the sources mentioned provide valuable insights into the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of gender violence in Morocco, as well as the efforts to address the issue through legal reform,

advocacy, and support services. They contribute to our understanding of the socio-cultural context of gender violence and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to promote women's rights and ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals affected by violence. In summary, while efforts are being made to address violence against women in Morocco, challenges remain in changing societal attitudes and providing support to victims.

2. Method

2.1. CDA as a theory and a method

Our examination of media texts is primarily based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of text-interaction-context. Fairclough's model draws heavily from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and critical linguistics, as articulated by Roger Fowler in the 1970s. This synthesis critiques approaches that treat language in isolation from its use and those that separate meaning and style or expression (Coffin, 2001; Sheyholislami, 2001). Fairclough argues against the limitations of critical linguistics, which emphasizes the text as a product while neglecting its production and interpretation processes, and underscores the importance of understanding the social context in which these processes occur. He contends that language use in society is a social practice rather than an individual activity (1992: 63). Fairclough's framework incorporates the textual and linguistic tier, which highlights the necessity of close analysis of the text through an examination of linguistic features such as grammar and cohesion, the Macrosociological analysis of social practice within its broader social structures, and the interpretivist perspective that views social practice as actively constructed and interpreted by individuals based on shared common-sense procedures (1992: 72). The connection between texts and social practice is mediated by discursive practice, which involves the production and interpretation of the text shaped by social contexts (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

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As far as textual analysis is concerned, our approach to analyzing the corpus of media texts begins with a close textual examination to identify key participants in the texts and to identify semantic macrostructures prevalent in WSMV discourse to uncover the central propositions articulated by these women. The goal is to identify common themes that unite their discourse and discern the overarching structure of this category of discourse. Concerning discursive practice, our study delves into the features of narratives across texts dealing with WSMV, focusing on how narratives construct social identities through various strategies and mechanisms. We pay particular attention to the discourse inherent in the selected texts, the nature of emerging narratives, the significance of features in terms of social practices and conventions, and their representation of WSMV where legitimation techniques play a dominant role. Specifically, we examine how women legitimize their discourse by employing Van Leeuwen's (2007) four categories of legitimation. Finally, at the level of socio-cultural Context, we attempt to explain the narratives in terms of the prevailing culture. Integrating Fairclough's third dimension with discursive practice allows for a deeper exploration of how ideological positions are reflected in media texts regarding WSMV. This analysis considers how producers establish, legitimize, or delegitimize social practices within the Moroccan socio-cultural context.

2.2. Research design and analytical procedure

Our study focused on analyzing the discourse of WSMV in a program called "Qesset Nnass" (the story of people), which aired on the Moroccan television channel, Medi 1 TV from 2013 to 2016. This program covered various social and personal issues thematically. Specifically, we examined episodes addressing marital violence. These episodes are the following:

Show one <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbJzIMk6o5c>

Title: I live in violence

First story: Fatima

Second story: Rabia

Third Story: Habiba

Show Two <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAnt-XuwRmQ>

Title: My husband beats me in front of my children

First Story: Ouafae

Second Story: Aicha

Third story: Mina

Show Three <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UaiTOAV4F4>

Title: My relation with my husband led me to attempt suicide

First story: Fatna

Second Story: Zhor

Show Four https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ac_wCm4mLY

Title: I got married at an early age.

Story: Ghizlane

To evaluate the persuasive techniques used by WSMV in "Qesset Nnass," we collected data from YouTube, which hosts 41 episodes of the show (Medi 1 TV, 2013-2016). Texts on violence against women were selected from four shows. Video recordings of the WSMV accounts detailing their experiences served as primary data for our analysis, focusing on the macrostructures within their narratives and the legitimation techniques adopted in line with Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation strategies.

To do this, we used "happyscribe" to transcribe the dialogues by converting the audiovisual content of the selected videos into a textual format to facilitate systematic analysis and identification of key themes and patterns related to violence against women. A total of four YouTube videos were selected based on their relevance to the topic of violence against women. Keywords such as "domestic violence," "gender violence," and "women's rights" were used to identify pertinent videos focusing on the experiences of women subjected to various forms of violence, particularly within the Moroccan context. Each selected YouTube video was carefully screened to assess its suitability for transcription. Criteria for inclusion included relevance to the research topic, clarity of the audio, and availability of subtitles or captions.

Happyscribe was utilized for the transcription process due to its advanced features for audiovisual transcription and analysis. The software allows for efficient transcription of audio content while also providing tools for timestamping and annotation. The audio content of each

selected YouTube video was transcribed verbatim, capturing both spoken dialogue and any textual elements such as subtitles or captions, and translated from Moroccan Arabic into English. Timestamps were added to the transcription to facilitate reference to specific segments during our analysis. Transcribed content was carefully reviewed and edited for accuracy, ensuring that all spoken words and non-verbal cues were accurately captured in the textual format and translated properly. Any unclear or ambiguous segments were flagged for further review.

Transcribed content was organized and stored within the happyscribe platform, allowing for easy access and retrieval during the subsequent analysis phase. Each transcription was labeled with metadata including video title, URL, and date of transcription for reference purposes. The transcription process of YouTube videos on violence against women using happyscribe was completed successfully. The conversion of audiovisual content into textual format lays the foundation for subsequent thematic analysis, enabling us to systematically identify and analyze key themes and patterns related to violence against women within the Moroccan context. The transcribed data served as a valuable resource for gaining insights into the experiences of WSMV.

The four main categories or themes, which are the four legitimation strategies (Authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis) adopted by WSMV, were predefined prior to coding. The rationale behind the selection of these categories is based on existing theoretical frameworks, research objectives, and our prior knowledge of the topic. We identified these overarching themes as key dimensions for analyzing the experiences of women depicted in the videos and understanding the socio-cultural context of marital violence in Morocco. We recognized the significance of capturing diverse aspects of women's experiences, including the types of violence they endured, socio-cultural factors shaping their experiences, barriers to seeking help, and resilience and coping strategies employed in the face of adversity. As such, these four thematic categories served as the guiding framework for our analysis, allowing us to systematically code and analyze the content of the YouTube videos comprehensively.

We watched each video multiple times to become familiar with its content and context, and we took notes on key themes, narratives, and visual elements observed in the videos. Then we started thematic coding by creating a coding scheme based on thematic categories relevant to women's experiences of marital violence in Morocco. In our case, the main themes were the legitimation strategies themselves. To enhance our analysis of YouTube videos on WSMV, we expanded the main thematic categories into detailed categories and subcategories, aiming to include as many relevant subthemes as possible within our four primary legitimation themes and their main categories. For instance, under the category of types of violence, we incorporated subthemes such as physical violence, which refers to the direct physical harm inflicted on women by their spouses, and psychological/emotional abuse, encompassing verbal insults, threats, intimidation, and manipulation aimed at undermining women's self-esteem and autonomy. Another example is the category of socio-cultural factors, which we further divided into subthemes like gender norms and expectations. This subtheme includes societal attitudes and beliefs regarding gender roles, masculinity, and femininity that perpetuate patriarchal power dynamics, traditional gender roles in Moroccan society, and the expectations placed on women within marriage. Additionally, we considered cultural stigma and shame, as well as religious interpretations, focusing on how religious teachings and texts might be used to justify or condone violence against women. This, in turn, includes subcategories like religious justifications for male authority and control over women within marriage.

We then applied the coding scheme to the transcribed content by systematically identifying and labeling segments that correspond to each thematic category and subcategory. To simplify the process and save time, we utilized the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to facilitate coding and organization of data. We adopted an iterative coding process by conducting an initial round of coding, focusing on identifying broad themes and patterns in the data. Then, we reviewed the coded segments to ensure consistency and accuracy in the application of the coding scheme under the pre-determined four legitimation themes. Finally, we refined the coding scheme as necessary based on emerging themes, subthemes and insights from the data. As far as data analysis is concerned, we dealt with the coded data to identify recurring themes, narratives, and discursive patterns related to women's experiences of marital violence in Morocco.

We explored relationships between themes and subthemes and examined how they intersect with socio-cultural, political, and economic factors.

The last methodological step was interpretation and reporting. First, we interpreted the findings within the broader socio-cultural and political context of Morocco, considering factors such as gender norms, legal frameworks, and access to support services. We then wrote a report summarizing the thematic analysis, highlighting key findings, and providing insights into the dynamics of marital violence against women in Morocco by including direct quotes or excerpts from the coded data to support the analysis and illustrate key themes. By following this step-by-step procedure, we systematically coded and analyzed YouTube videos on WSMV, providing valuable insights into their experiences and the broader socio-cultural context in which gender violence occurs.

As a final note, we should refer to the fact that analyzing a TV show that focused on WSMV remains relevant and timely even if it ceased airing since 2016 for several reasons: First, this issue is persistent as violence against women is an enduring and pervasive issue worldwide, including in Morocco. Despite efforts to address it, incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women continue to occur. Therefore, analyzing a TV show that addresses this topic provides insights into the ongoing challenges and complexities surrounding gender-based violence in Moroccan society. Our choice of the show is motivated by its popularity in Morocco and its relevance in the actual situation in the country, and by the absence of a similar show in the media landscape after it ceased airing. The proof is the ongoing number of views and comments on YouTube from Moroccans and people from neighbouring countries. Therefore, research examining how domestic violence is portrayed and addressed in media, even if the media content is from 2013-2016, provides valuable insights into societal attitudes, perceptions, and responses to this issue. Second, media representations have a lasting impact on public perceptions and attitudes. Analyzing a TV show from that period allows researchers to understand how domestic violence was depicted and framed in the past, which can have enduring effects on societal norms and beliefs regarding gender roles, power dynamics, and interpersonal relationships. Within a historical context, The TV show may offer valuable insights into the historical context of gender-based violence in Morocco. Third, in terms of cultural reflections, this analysis can shed light on prevailing societal attitudes towards women, masculinity, and relationships, as well as the portrayal of violence and its impact on victims and survivors, as cultural reflections do not change in a short period like eight years. Overall, while the TV show may no longer be airing, its analysis remains relevant for understanding the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of gender-based violence in Morocco and informing efforts to combat this pervasive issue in contemporary society. The

timely nature of the show is proved by the people who still view and comment on the show on YouTube.

3. Results

The article underscores the significance of analyzing media language within a gendered context for several reasons. Firstly, media language serves as a reflection and reinforcement of societal norms concerning gender roles and identities, crucial for addressing gender disparities and stereotypes. Secondly, media language often mirrors power dynamics within society, including entrenched patriarchal structures that may marginalize women. Finally, media analysis provides a platform for marginalized groups, such as WSMV, to amplify their voices and challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate stereotypes.

3.1. Semantic macrostructures in narratives of marital violence

At the textual level, our analysis focuses on identifying the overarching semantic macrostructures within the discourse of WSMV to discern the primary propositions articulated by them. Van Dijk (2009) has given useful advice to start textual analysis by extracting semantic macrostructures because they provide an overall picture of the global meanings and themes of a text. The main goal is to uncover common themes that unify the discourse of WSMV, thereby revealing the central unifying structure within this category of discourse. An exploration of the semantic macrostructures within media texts unveils a consistent theme of injustice. The following are summaries of the women's narratives that consist of the main macrostructures used.

Fatima endured physical abuse from her husband's brothers and financial neglect, yet she stayed with her violent husband for the sake of their child. Despite facing significant legal and familial challenges, she remained committed to her marriage. Fatima's story underscores the harsh realities faced by women in a patriarchal society, where institutional support is often lacking.

Married at seventeen, Rabiaa suffered from the violence committed by her husband's domineering family. Initially kind, her husband eventually succumbed to his family's influence, resulting in physical violence and neglect. Rabiaa's tolerance of abuse illustrates the normalization of violence in patriarchal systems and the complex power dynamics within family structures.

Habiba's thirteen-year marriage to a man from Casablanca led to physical abuse, financial exploitation, and homelessness. Despite seeking help, she felt trapped in her marriage due to societal pressures and power imbalances. The narrative shows how violence is dealt with within the Moroccan family system.

Ouafae's narrative is a devastating portrayal of an abusive and emotionally turbulent marriage. Even though Ouafae was financially independent, she battled with her identity and societal expectations to escape the cycle of abuse. The story emphasizes the difficulties in leaving abusive relationships, highlighting how commonplace gender-based violence is in Moroccan society.

Aicha's marriage is a tragic tale of betrayal, neglect, and emotional manipulation. In spite of her love for her husband, she discovered his drug addiction, concealed by her religious family. Her

daughter was raped, and her attempts to hold him accountable were met with indifference. Aicha's story highlights the impact of patriarchy on women's lives and gender-based violence in society.

Mina's daughter, aged seventeen, was unable to attend the show due to a disability caused by her husband's accident. This husband, aged sixty, was originally a seller from whom they bought a television set. Despite his inappropriate advances towards her daughter and his abusive behavior, Mina agreed to the marriage. She kept silent about his previous children to avoid additional scrutiny from the host and audience.

Fatna ran away with her partner at the age of nineteen to start a family, but her family disapproved due to his substance abuse. Despite enduring numerous challenges, such as an unplanned pregnancy resulting in a coerced marriage, Fatna faced mistreatment from her husband. She experienced social and legal abandonment, leading her to contemplate suicide multiple times. Her intense focus on her husband's unlawful second marriage indicates her deep-seated desire for justice, despite efforts by the show host to encourage her to look ahead. Zhor faced numerous hardships in her marriage, including her husband's concealment of having two daughters and violent behavior. Her mental health deteriorated, leading her to contemplate suicide. She attempted to seek justice, but faced challenges. Her story highlights the struggles faced by women, exacerbated by societal and judicial failures.

Ghizlane, a young girl, faced hardship from a young age as she was forced into domestic work and marriage without proper legal documents. She was abandoned as a pregnant girl with twins when she was thirteen years old. She was forced into a cycle of abuse and neglect. Her story reflects the grim realities faced by young girls in underdeveloped countries and the devastating results of child marriage.

The complete narratives in the TV show, accessible from the YouTube links, consistently reveal a recurring pattern of experiences, indicating a master structure that applies to many TV narratives of WSMV. Women facing post-marriage violence often share common backgrounds of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and divorced households. These predisposing conditions intersect with internal triggers like spousal addiction and external triggers such as limited job prospects or financial dependency on the wife. This leads to violent behavior that forces wives to either leave without financial support or endure the abuse. Seeking help from authorities often proves futile due to unjust laws, logistical challenges, or corruption. The lack of viable solutions traps women in a cycle of abuse, with some enduring violence for their children or due to misguided notions of love for their abusive spouses.

3.2. Discursive legitimation strategies in narratives of WSMV

At the discursive practice level, we illustrate how women validated their discourse by employing Van Leeuwen's (2007) four legitimation categories. The concept of legitimation elucidates how social order is established. Van Leeuwen outlines four categories of legitimation:

- Authorization: Legitimizing actions or practices by invoking tradition, custom, law, or authoritative individuals.

- Moral evaluation: Conferring legitimation through implicit references to value systems.

- Rationalization: Achieving legitimation by referring to the goals and functions of institutionalized social action, supported by cognitive validity derived from societal knowledge.

-Mythopoesis: Conveying legitimation through narratives rewarding legitimate actions and penalizing non-legitimate ones.

While numerous studies have explored these categories, our study fills the research gap by examining the role of narratives in legitimizing practices, particularly in shaping the portrayal of WSMV in Moroccan television talk shows—a topic hitherto unexplored.

In our discussion on violence against women in Moroccan society, it has been found that authorization plays a crucial role in legitimizing discourse, drawing from tradition, law, expert opinion, and institutional figures. The TV program under scrutiny addressed this issue by employing various tactics to legitimize its discourse, including the use of statistical data, expert insights, personal narratives, and cultural references. Despite these efforts, challenges persist in translating the show's narratives and recommendations into effective solutions.

As far as moral evaluation is concerned, all the women in the show tried to justify their experiences by emphasizing moral values ingrained within their cultural and religious framework, critiquing societal norms that contributed to their suffering; hence, they positioned themselves as morally justified victims. They appealed to shared values and religious teachings to seek support and challenge oppressive norms.

Rationalization was also employed by WSMV to justify their actions and situations. WSMV portrayed themselves as victims of past mistreatment and condemned their oppressors logically. They rationalized discourse on domestic violence through coping mechanisms such as self-blame, minimization, normalization, hope, fear, and cultural or religious justifications.

Finally, by using mythopoesis, which involves justifying actions through narratives that reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate ones, women employed storytelling techniques such as comparing past and present situations, dramatization, and exaggeration to evoke sympathy and condemn their oppressors. These narratives reinforce social norms and values surrounding gender roles, marriage, and family life.

4. Discussion

4.1. Authorization

Before dealing with authorization as a legitimation technique used by WSMV, it should be mentioned that the initial segment of the first show, where the presenter said that over 50 percent of Moroccan women suffer from violence, exemplifies authorization as a legitimation strategy. This is done to bolster the argument by citing statistics from reputable sources, thus lending credibility to the statements made at the outset of the program. The aim is to emphasize the pervasive and systematic nature of the issue within Moroccan society, which shows the urgency of the debate and the audience's investment in it.

The stories shared by WSMV offer profound insights into the exploitation of authority. Fatima, in particular, serves as an ideal user of victimization discourse. Following a period of marital tranquility, Fatima faced brutal violence from her husband, leading to her eviction and loss of custody of their child. Despite her attempts to sue him, the authorities dismissed her complaints, which highlights systemic failures in protecting women. The disparity between official rhetoric and lived experiences proves the systemic disregard for women's rights and their pervasive vulnerability. Following her complaints, authorities relocated Fatima to a small Moroccan town

called Bejaad while she was still legally married. Although she obtained medical certificates that indicated her injuries, which did not exceed eighteen days of disability, her action was legally inconsequential (in Morocco, you need a twenty-one days disability certificate to have a legal effect). She explicitly stated that the issuance of such certificates indirectly enables perpetrators to commit further violence. This passivity from the court in response to medical documentation effectively condones violence, thus sending a message that perpetrators can continue their abusive behavior without serious repercussions.

Fatima's attempts to seek help from authorities were met with a deaf ear, leaving her with no recourse. Desperate for help, she even reached out to the former prime minister stating, "My solution is you."; this being said, she could not locate her husband who evaded with their child. False accusations of adultery further exacerbated her ordeal, a thing that led to emotional distress and reliance on sleeping pills. The authorities merely instructed her to continue her search despite the risks involved. Fatima boldly accused the judicial system of corruption, which highlights how bribery obstructs justice in Morocco. This systemic failure traps women in a cycle of violence, with institutions meant to protect them siding with the highest bidder. Materially disadvantaged and devoid of support, women like Fatima feel hopeless and contemplate drastic measures for escape like committing suicide. Even complaints to human rights organizations yielded no results. This left her struggling to find shelter even within her own family. Her actions aimed to legitimize her measures, albeit with disappointing outcomes. The whole endeavor critiques the judicial system and reinforces the discourse of victimization in total harmony with human rights advocacy.

To understand the above situation, it is important to refer to the concept of patriarchy as it is a very important concept that helps in understanding the power relations established in society (Pillay, 2008). This key term in feminist studies is referred to as a means to account for the social and static inequality of women in terms of rights. This confirms the literature about the grim outlook of women living in a patriarchal system. Kate Millett, for example, in her book *Sexual Politics* (1969: 25) made it clear that "... our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance – in short, every avenue of power ... including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands". Similarly, Johnson (2005: 9) sees that patriarchy prevails where positions of authority are appropriated by men in all walks of life: the economy, the law, religion, education, etc.

Ouafae, another victim of domestic violence, recounted harrowing experiences that included her husband's brutality and disregard for the law as he used to tell her, "I am above the law." She described how he broke her nose and showed no regard for her safety. Before her daughter's death, she confided in her by revealing disturbing details about her father's intentions and claiming that he wanted to marry her and even have a child with her. This revelation, laden with shock and disbelief, served to discredit the father's character and moral standing in the eyes of the audience. By saying, "I can swear in the mosque or on the Koran.", she attempted to bolster her credibility and strengthen her argument by recognizing the difficulty of persuading a Moroccan audience to believe her claims. The use of religious invocation as an authoritative tactic added weight to her testimony and reinforced her narrative against her adversary, a thing that highlights the power dynamics at play. The woman concluded by expressing her precautionary measures of informing the police (another authority) before attending the show, which aimed at ensuring her safety and preempting potential misconduct from her husband. This action, an attempt to hold all Moroccan viewers accountable, transformed personal issues into public matters. Ouafae's recourse to legal authorities and compelling her husband to

commit to non-violence, despite his subsequent violations, was meant to reference legal authorities to legitimize her stance through authoritative endorsement. After seeing her mental state, an expert on the show advocated for addressing violence through therapeutic measures, and taxonomized violence into different types for which he proposed legal solutions. The expert also promoted collaboration with governmental initiatives like "Tamkine", a governmental program to combat violence against women. The expert—as an authority—drew attention to legal violence, a problem for which women frequently have no effective remedy. He attributed this difficulty to the existing social mentality that placed a high premium on patience, which frequently silences victims. He also made mention of cultural elements, such as the patriarchal impact on women's aggression against other women.

Aicha, another WSMV, talked about a tragic incident involving her daughter's rape. She highlighted the doctor's reaction as a testament to the severity of the situation; thus, she invoked authorization through a medical opinion. In her case, Toussi, an academic expert, commented on societal neglect of women and children by attributing their plight to societal practices, lending weight to his assertions with his academic authority. Aicha focused on her husband's drug use, unbeknownst to her due to her family's religiousness, and highlighted the rapidity of their marriage, which led to their eventual estrangement. Her nine-year-old daughter was raped by a forty-six man who seemed to be a respected man in the neighborhood as "he was a religious man who goes regularly to the mosque.", she said. Her qualification of the rapist as someone trustworthy is a tactic on her part to tell us that she was not responsible by using a bandwagon logical fallacy "Everybody thinks he is a good man, why can't I"? The physician's shock at her daughter's condition, expressing a call for capital punishment, underscored the severity of the situation and emphasized Aicha's isolation in dealing with the ordeal. Her husband remained passive and criticized her for working late instead as a result of failing to intervene in the catastrophic situation.

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Habiba shared her experience of extensive physical abuse by vividly describing her injuries, which forced her to seek help from the police. Her husband promised to stop and he even wrote a commitment, but his violence continued. This highlights the reality of domestic settings in Morocco where abuse is tolerated. The home, meant to be a refuge, became a prison for her. Her inability to seek divorce due to her fear of losing custody of her children stresses the complexity of the situation within the Moroccan patriarchal system. She said, "He told me, 'If you don't want this, go and ask for a divorce,' but I can't because if I do, I will not be able to see my children". Her reference to the police and the legal system reflects her attempt to legitimize her ordeal through authorization. This portrayal exposes the vast disparity between the treatment of domestic abuse in Moroccan society as a reality and the principles of democracy.

Fatna shared her story of falling in love and eloping with a man when she was nineteen. However, her partner's history of alcohol and drug use led to their rejection by her family, perpetuating patriarchal norms where she was blamed for the unsuitable choice. This rejection left her financially vulnerable and trapped in a cycle of problems, with both her family and a husband who faulted her for their disapproval. Notwithstanding the sacrifices she made, including clandestinely cohabiting with him, her husband failed to appreciate her efforts. Subsequently, he physically abused her as he used to harbor hate due to her family's previous rejection. She later discovered his secret marriage to another woman without her consent, which is illegal in Morocco. Faced with overwhelming despair, she attempted suicide multiple times but she was prevented from doing so by bystanders. The narrative depicts her as feeling already dead due to her grim circumstances, with suicide representing only the culmination of her tragic

situation. Wives like her are metaphorically living dead due to systemic failures and injustice. This narrative, like the other ones, exposes the consequences of gender inequality and patriarchal norms on women's lives that lead to the financial vulnerability and mistreatment they endure.

Zhor, a pregnant woman, sought refuge at her parents' home and confronted her husband, who callously advised her to take legal action. With no viable solutions, she contemplated suicide to escape her turmoil, but she could not because of her fear of divine consequences and because of her son. She worked in a café to be independent, but her psychological distress worsened due to deteriorating eyesight from harsh cleaning products. The struggle to make ends meet and the threat of eviction felt like a form of death. Her final step of resorting to the court proved ineffective. In this story, it is clear that the themes of justice system inefficiency and inadequate sexual education leading to unplanned pregnancies in unstable relationships are evident. As far as authorization is concerned, Zhor used both religion and the law to legitimize her arguments. Ghizlane narrated her childhood struggles and the consequences of early marriage. She was forced to work in a house and was often beaten and exploited by her father. At twelve, she married her fiancé without a contract, and at thirteen she became pregnant with twins. Her husband kicked her out and her family abandoned her. She used her experience to challenge the legal system that does not protect children from early marriage and sought a medical argument to back her claim by referring to the doctor who was appalled when he saw a thirteen-year-old child pregnant with twins.

All the stories highlight a prevalent theme that underscores the flawed nature of the legal system, particularly concerning the plight of women who become victims. They emphasize how husbands can exploit loopholes in regulations without facing consequences. Even when prosecuted for abuse, they often receive lenient sentences. This failure of justice is portrayed as a condemnation of Moroccan judicial authority. Despite efforts to seek legal recourse that includes reporting abuse to the police, the victim experiences prolonged suffering with no tangible legal impact, a situation which leads to severe psychological distress.

Psychologists on the show, who constitute an authority in the field, acknowledged the complexity of addressing violence intertwined with psychology and pointed to educational shortcomings in fostering psychological resilience. While advocating for victims to take control of their future, they recognized the existence of implementation challenges and limitations in offering concrete solutions. In summary, various strategies, including statistical citation, legal recourse, expert endorsement, personal narratives, reference to religion and morality, and psychological insights, were utilized to legitimize arguments and experiences regarding violence against women, a phenomenon that reflects the multifaceted nature of the issue and the challenges in addressing it effectively.

4.2. Moral legitimation

Ouafae employed moralization to condemn her husband's infidelity. She coupled her story with a poignant narrative about her handicapped daughter's mistreatment that invoked emotional elements to question her husband's integrity and portray herself as a victim. This manipulation of emotions aimed to criticize past practices to garner sympathy. Aicha, on the other hand, morally condemned her husband's drug addiction and the man who raped her daughter by challenging societal norms that allowed seemingly respectable individuals to commit such atrocities. Likewise, Fatima justified her actions by invoking patience as the ultimate solution

and moralizing her behavior, influenced by factors such as familial obligations and societal norms that frown upon divorce in conservative settings like Morocco. Thus, referencing values and providing moral justification is evident in her discourse. She justified her decisions by emphasizing patience and moral values, and citing her responsibilities as a mother and as a person who adheres to family orders. She criticized the corrupt system and her sister's refusal to help her and framed her suffering as morally justified. She criticized both the system that she explicitly accused of corruption and her sister's refusal to provide shelter. These accusations depict a strong criticism of practices, characteristic of moral legitimation of suffering and delegitimization of perceived wrongdoers. It should be emphasized that the theme of patience to avoid divorce is prevalent among all women under scrutiny, with moral values serving as a basis for both legitimation and criticism. These narratives, though not exhaustive, demonstrate a pattern of moral justification and critique among the women in the show.

Generally, women who experienced violence framed their ordeals within the moral framework of Islam. This emphasizes concepts like justice, compassion, and human dignity and depicts their husbands' abusive actions as violations of Islamic ethics and societal values; hence, the moral reprehensibility of domestic violence was accentuated. By appealing to shared religious and social values, these women aimed to provoke moral outrage and condemnation from the media audience to position themselves as innocent victims deserving of protection and redress. Fatima's peaceful marriage turned tumultuous after the birth of their child, with her husband's brothers moving in and subjecting her to physical abuse. She pointed to the values of Islam, which stipulates the obligation to take care of children, and condemned both her husband and his brothers as being Muslims just by name. She overtly stated that God would certainly punish them in the afterlife as they were liars, inconsiderate and inhumane.

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Moreover, women emphasized Islamic principles of compassion, mercy, and justice to show the injustice and cruelty of the violence they endured, thus asserting their right to dignity and respect regardless of gender or marital status. They made it clear that violence violates their fundamental rights and dignity as individuals, and advocated for non-violent conflict resolution within marital relationships, aligning with Islamic teachings of peace and fairness.

WSMV used moral principles inherent in Islamic teachings and Moroccan culture to frame their narratives to search for validation and support from the audience. They asserted their agency and dignity while challenging attitudes that perpetuate violence. Their appeal to shared values like compassion and kindness implies that abuse violated these values. For instance, some contrasted their husbands' behavior with the support they received from neighbors or benefactors. Aicha, for example, said, "After marriage, he closed the door leaving me there with a loaf of bread and only neighbors, May Allah bless them, used to give me food.". She escaped from him, but she returned home because her sister told her, "We don't have girls who get divorced in the family and remember that divorce is the worst Halal for God". This embedded evaluation demonstrates the complex interplay between cultural norms, religious teachings, and personal agency in women's experiences of violence. Similarly, Habiba said that after her husband rented a house for her and her four children, he extremely battered her and left her there with nothing. Only neighbors interfered to stop him when he was squeezing her head against the floor and the wall. "Have a look at my head and my two broken ribs.", she told the show host. Referring on different occasions to her benevolent neighbors who used to help her out and her recurrent supplication for them is another instance of religious reference, without forgetting her recollection of her begging next to a mosque and the generosity of Muslim benefactors.

According to Skalli (2001: 76), women [like WSMV] are "vulnerable", a term used by the author to refer to 'economic insecurity', which she attributes to patriarchy. For her, "Patriarchal ideology and systematic gender biases have denied women not only equal educational, and employment opportunities and treatment before the law, but also equal access to and control over resources, adequate health services, housing, social welfare, and support. These are important social indicators that have a direct bearing on the incidence of female poverty and reflect the different levels at which social exclusion is produced, justified, and perpetuated".

WSMV emphasized the importance of integrity, self-worth, and dignity to criticize the behavior of their husbands and their families, and appealed to the ethical dimensions of their experiences. Many women recalled instances where they supported their husbands as a religious duty to exemplify their commitment to marital responsibilities. Rabiaa, for example, reiterated her support for her husband when he was sick as normal behavior of a Muslim woman who should stand with her spouse and contradicted this state with his quotation during her sickness, "You have no right to be sick." She added, "He became crazy in the wedding because of demons, but I didn't abandon him till he became fine as our religion forces us to take care of our sick husbands; his sisters didn't like us to get along, though". She put forward this evaluative remark, which is culturally grounded as Moroccans ascribe many mental disorders to paranormal phenomena, to contrast her support to him in a very disastrous case with his rejection: this contrasts her loyalty in challenging circumstances with his abandonment to highlight the discrepancy between their actions and the ethical implications thereof. Likewise, Habiba recounted being marginalized by her husband's family, who controlled finances and restricted her movements within their home.

Generally, Walby (1989) looked at patriarchy from six perspectives in an interconnected system: patriarchy as a mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Of particular importance for us is the perspective of the violence exercised on women on a regular and systematic basis as the WSMV we scrutinize are helpless and need alternatives at all levels.

Some narratives of WSMV also reveal a disturbing reference to superstition as part of the Moroccan cultural system. Habiba referred to social superstition that blamed her for misfortunes in her marriage as she was held responsible and accountable for the death of her husband's father in the wedding since her in-laws judged her as a cursed bride; hence, cultural beliefs have a huge impact on women's lives in Morocco. Similarly, Mina's daughter, disabled from an accident caused by her husband, was coerced into marriage with a much older man due to financial debts. Despite recognizing the man's aggressive behavior, Mina struggled to understand how she agreed to the marriage; she finally attributed it to supernatural influences. This narrative is a result of the impact of superstition on women's decisions and experiences within Moroccan society.

Through references to prevailing social norms and expectations, women implicitly critiqued the broader cultural context that perpetuated violence against them. They drew attention to societal attitudes that condone or normalize abusive behavior and indirectly challenged these norms and advocated for change. They also appealed to the empathy and understanding of their audience by including religion in their discourse to emphasize the emotional and psychological toll of violence on themselves and their families to garner support and validation for their experiences.

4.3. Rationalization

Rationalization, the third category, pertains to "the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity" (Van Leeuwen, 2007: 91). This category justifies decisions "by reference to their goals, uses, and effects", often articulated in a cause-effect relationship. According to Lavrusheva (2013: 48), its features include reference to the utility/function of an action, common sense as a basis, and rational explanations. Methods of application include an examination of past practices' consequences, critique of previously applied actions, presentation of implemented beneficial practices, forecasting potential future benefits, and opposition to various parties' attitudes.

The narratives of WSMV often involve the rationalization of their actions based on the utility or function they serve. For instance, Fatima's patience amid financial neglect from her husband was justified by her care for their child. Her narrative, detailing her declining health due to her experiences leading to sleeping pills use, exemplifies this tactic. "I thought about the child who, if I die, will not find a piece of bread; even his stepmother won't accept him.", she said. Additionally, her appeal to the Prime Minister reflects a rational assessment of her dire circumstances and a critique of past actions. Fatima's experiences also highlight the complexities of familial dynamics in Moroccan culture, where husbands' families are depicted as complicit in inflicting suffering upon wives and their children. A man is expected to prioritize his birth family over his wife, who is often viewed as an outsider—an usurper stealing the husband away from his mother, sisters, and brothers. In this mindset, a man who supports his wife, for any reason, is often deemed "unmanly", a man accused of being under the control of his wife's purportedly nefarious influence. This recurring theme sheds light on the blurred boundaries between personal and familial spheres within Moroccan society. In this sense, her recollection of these incidents is an attempt to rationalize the present state of affairs.

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After enduring four instances of abuse, the last involving an attack with a construction tool, Fatima pardoned her husband at the police station. Initially, her aunt advised her to forgive him because it was his first offence, but his violence escalated thereafter. Encouraged by her family to be patient, she found no respite. The judge dismissed theft allegations between spouses as illegitimate under Moroccan law. Subsequently, he seized both the child and their belongings. She said, "My thoughts revolve solely around my child, not money". This quoted statement succinctly rationalizes her motive for enduring: her child. However, under current family law, custody should rightfully be hers. Yet, the challenge lies in the enforcement of these laws in Morocco, prompting the need for public discourse to swiftly address this issue if the country aspires to true democracy. Fatima's story showcases the theme of endurance and patience in the face of adversity. Her main motivation for enduring the hardships was her child. On many occasions, she repeated her prioritization of her child's well-being over material concerns. However, her rightful claim to custody under Moroccan law was challenged by a lack of enforcement and implementation.

Rabiah's experience of entering into marriage at seventeen and facing dominance and violence within her husband's family shed light on the erratic behavior of the husband's family. The extended family's influence is a determining factor that contributes to the breakdown of marriages in Morocco where patriarchal norms prevail. Her husband's failure to follow her when she left with their child is an instance of the dysfunction perpetuated by patriarchy. Men in Morocco face criticism for supporting their wives as they are often labelled as "unmanly" if they oppose their family's directives. This societal pressure, combined with false accusations

and religious concepts like the supremacy of men's decisions, leads husbands to abandon their children under the influence of their families. The narrative portrays the husband's transformation from kindness to cruelty under his family's influence, which is yet another example of the destructive impact of patriarchal norms on marital relationships and the treatment of women within Moroccan society. This typical situation unveils the essence of patriarchy in Moroccan society, where hierarchical structures dictate dominance and control, particularly within familial relationships. Even though feminist theories advocate for solidarity among individuals of the same gender, the reality in patriarchal societies like Morocco is one of domination and control where the husband, his mother and his sisters exert power over the wife.

Blaming the family as a structural unit in Morocco is undoubtedly a criticism of patriarchy as it is perceived as a principal ideological, social, and cultural power that places gendered expectations on both sexes, a notion backed up strongly by conservatism or traditional trends that supports social and cultural differences between the sexes. To understand the above problem, we have to dissect the concept of gender itself. Conceptualizing gender by categorizing it in institutionalized gender, gender as constrained choice, gender roles, gender identity (including masculinities and femininities), gender relations, and gender as performance (embodied gender) is important to understand the dynamics that underlie the concept (Johnson and Repta, 2012).

Rabiah's loyalty to her husband during a difficult situation, contrasted with his subsequent abandonment, highlights the cultural belief in supernatural causes of mental disorders to rationalize her arguments. Establishing cause-effect relationships between past actions and current situations reinforces this rationalization and constitutes an intertextual extension of Habiba's narrative, who was rejected by her husband's family for paranormal reasons, leading to her begging near a mosque after childbirth.

Habiba said, "When he beat me, my son used to watch him. When he saw him doing that, he left for his grandma's house. After, my husband left for good and took the children, leaving me very sick. I made a huge effort to come here." She also told the show host, "He told me, 'If you don't want this, go and ask for divorce', but I can't because if I do, I will not be able to see my children". Referring to past practices and establishing a cause-effect bond between previous experience and present outcomes is a means to rationalize her discourse.

Ouafae's narrative employed rationalization tactics to condemn her husband's actions. She attributed her decision to marry him to a need for affection due to her parent's divorce. She lodged many complaints about his violence, but her pleas went unanswered. She recalled instances of cruelty towards their handicapped child, including withholding food and deliberately exposing him to extreme heat, resulting in his death. Ouafae suggested that his seemingly innocent actions were driven by malicious intent. Besides, the death of her daughter in a psychiatric hospital that followed a suicide attempt and urging her mother to seek a divorce further accentuated the husband's malevolence. Ouafae's response, delivered with rhetorical questions and contrasting statements like "How do you expect me to get divorced? How can I protect myself from him; I'm like a cat and he's like a thunderbolt?" sought to elicit sympathy from the audience. Ouafae's story teems with rationalization about her choice of a violent husband, her decision to sue him, and her decision to come to the show.

The case of Ouafae is different from the other women in the show because she was financially independent; therefore, what is the rationale behind insisting on staying with a violent and mean

husband? For Ogle, Maier-Katkin, and Bernard (1995) (Cited in Hunnicutt, 2009: 562), there exists an entire ideology in situations of domestic violence that both promotes violence toward women and discourages women from escaping as “many women are socialized to regard their relationships as a core element of their identity and self-worth, some women may strive to preserve relationships at any cost, even in abusive situations with economic avenues of escape”. Similar techniques were employed by other women like Mina, whose daughter experienced abuse and depression following earlier mistreatment. This mixture of consequences overview, critique of prior actions, and cause-effect reasoning characterizes her narrative. To conclude, the stories share a common theme where women attribute their suffering and current circumstances to past mistreatment, logically articulated in a cause-effect framework and aiming to rationalize their arguments and portray themselves as victims of gender-based oppression. Generally, rationalization involves legitimizing actions based on their alignment with societal goals or norms. In the case of violence against women, rationalizations may revolve around maintaining social order and stability. For example, perpetrators or bystanders may rationalize abusive behavior as necessary for maintaining marital harmony or preserving traditional gender roles, thereby reinforcing the status quo. In the context of WSMV, rationalization involved emphasizing the negative social consequences of domestic violence, such as the destabilization of families, the erosion of community cohesion, and the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes. Women argued that addressing domestic violence is essential for promoting social harmony, gender equality, and human rights, thereby they framed their victimhood as a matter of collective concern and societal welfare. Women also rationalized their discourse that surrounds domestic violence in various ways, often as a coping mechanism or as a means of navigating complex social dynamics.

In addition to the aforementioned tactics, they had recourse to the following:

Self-Blame: Women internalized societal stigma and blamed themselves for the violence they experienced. They rationalized the abuse by believing that they somehow provoked it or deserved it, especially when feeling inadequate or unworthy by the perpetrator or by societal norms. For example, Fatna’s choice of an addicted husband, Ouafae’s decision to marry a materialistic man, Rabiaa’s overlook of her husband’s poverty, Fatima’s acceptance to live with her husband’s brothers, Mina’s surrender to marry her daughter to an old and pervert man, etc. depict the situation.

Minimization and normalization: Women rationalized the violence they experienced by convincing themselves that it was a normal part of relationships or that it was something they had to endure for the sake of their family or children, a problem we have already detailed. They also justified the abuse by citing cultural or religious norms that condone or minimize domestic violence (by using concepts like patience). Women also downplayed the severity of the abuse they experienced as a way of coping with the trauma or protecting their relationships. They rationalized the violence by telling themselves that it was not as bad as it seemed or that it was just a temporary phase that would eventually improve like when Rabiaa expressed herself by saying, "Now I demand they allow us to raise our children in peace, even if it means enduring physical violence, as we (women) have grown accustomed to it". Like the testimonies of other women, this woman also highlighted a recurring evaluative concept prevalent among abused women: they grew numb to pain, willing to endure it if it meant remaining with their children and husbands. To a European feminist, this perspective may seem disturbing, but in our society, violence is normalized and accepted as an inherent part of life.

According to Hunnicutt (2009: 554-555), five arguments can help explain violence against women like the case of Rabiaa:

-A theory of violence against women has to account for varieties in patriarchal structures—that is a range of different patriarchal manifestations among cultures and clans.

-Men's violence toward women is a product of social structural conditions. To understand male behavior, it is necessary to reveal how men are situated in their scheme of domination.

-A theory of patriarchy must contend with the potential divergence of structure and ideology. Varieties of patriarchal ideology may exist apart from structural conditions. Patriarchal ideology may endure despite structural gains in gender equality.

-The concept of patriarchy must be developed together with other forms of hierarchy and domination in which it is inextricably embedded.

-There are labyrinths of power dynamics in patriarchal systems. Violence against women cannot be understood as a simple formula of "oppressor and oppressed." Patriarchal systems must be envisioned as "terrains of power" in which both men and women wield varying types and amounts of power".

Hope for Change: Women rationalized their discourse by holding onto hope that the perpetrator would change their behavior or seek help. They believed that if they just tried harder or were more patient, the violence would eventually stop, leading them to justify staying in the relationship despite the abuse.

From the stories, we may deduce that WSMV attempted to rationalize their discourse as a way of coping with the trauma, protecting their relationships or families, or navigating the complex social and cultural factors that contribute to their experiences of abuse. Recognizing and challenging these rationalizations is essential for empowering women to seek help, access support, and ultimately break free from abusive situations.

4.4. Mythopoesis

WSMV developed narratives that helped them cope with their experiences and maintain a sense of agency and resilience. These narratives drew upon cultural or personal myths of survival and cast women as heroes overcoming adversity. By reframing their experiences through mythopoesis, women reclaimed their stories and asserted their strength and autonomy in the face of violence through survival narratives. They tried to overcome silencing and stigmatization to enable themselves to challenge cultural myths and taboos surrounding violence against women which could perpetuate silence and stigma, making it difficult for survivors to speak out or seek support. Instead of being afraid of being ostracized or blamed by their communities, thus reinforcing the myth that violence is a private matter to be endured in silence, WSMV decided not to serve to maintain the status quo and prevent meaningful discourse and action to address violence against them.

The narration of their painful stories to Moroccans and the world (through researchers) made mythopoesis a tool for resistance and empowerment among WSMV. The fact that they shared their stories challenged prevailing myths and stereotypes. In this sense, survivors could disrupt the narratives that perpetuate violence and advocate for change. Collective storytelling and activism may make it possible for women to reclaim their agency, demand justice, challenge the myth that they are passive victims without voice or agency, and reach resistance and empowerment. Their use of dramatization, entertainment, and exaggeration through storytelling was meant to serve their objective, which is legitimation.

Habiba's narrative exemplifies this approach as waiting for her child to open the door for her, relying on neighbors to rescue her, and resorting to begging after childbirth showcases dramatization and exaggeration. Habiba was married to her brother's neighbor, who owned a utility car in Casablanca, for thirteen years following her departure from school. Throughout her marriage, she never experienced happiness. "I will never forgive him or his family. I will reveal everything," she declared. This introductory remark is noteworthy for its evaluative nature since it highlights the profound despair the woman endured and her strong desire to share her story by suggesting that appearing on the show might offer a solution to her problems. At this juncture, the explanation likely revolves around the confessional nature of the show, which may be perceived as a platform for catharsis or a means of seeking absolution, potentially leading to psychological relief akin to psychotherapeutic intervention.

She said that her husband used to work and send money, yet his mother and sisters would intercept it; accordingly, this resulted in a lack of basic utilities like water and electricity in the room where she resided with them as she was unable to afford the bills. Whenever she ventured out of the room, they would promptly shut the door behind her. When she voiced her grievances over the phone, he callously instructed her saying, "Go to your room and wait until I come." Consequently, she found herself waiting for her five-year-old child to unlock the door for her. After renting a house for her and her four children, he extremely battered her and left her there with nothing. Only neighbors interfered to stop him when he was squeezing her head against the floor and the wall. She asked the talk host to see her head and she said she had two broken ribs. She continued:

"I tell him: give me food and give me clothes; he beats me; I tell him: stay with me; he beats me;

I tell him: live with me; he beats me".

"He tells me to be patient; patient for which reason? Hunger? Beating? God granted me strength. He beats me and I can bear it! I am used to him! I can't get away from him!", she said. The embedded evaluation in this extract reveals contradictory series of propositions that are entertaining for the audience but very hard to understand and accept from a Westerner because a woman who suffers that much normally should file for divorce and the fact of confessing on a TV show that she could bear all these forms of suffering and that she was even stuck on him is bizarre. We can even assert that she is mentally deranged and that she is in dire need of therapy.

Ouafae's narrative, another example, is characterized by dramatic storytelling that is aimed at eliciting emotional responses from the audience. She painted her husband as a tyrant and described horrific events surrounding her daughter's death and disturbing comments made by her husband. By juxtaposing scenes of violence with the enjoyment of his family, she highlighted the conflict between her family and her husband's family, jeopardizing his legacy. Further drama unfolded as Ouafae revealed her daughter's confession about her father's malevolent intentions which aimed to discredit his fundamental decency and ethical integrity. Invoking religion to swear on the mosque or Koran may have added weight to her allegations. She substantiated her claims with evidence of his misconduct when she said that she discovered messages from his girlfriends. Notwithstanding vilifying him, she shockingly declared her love for him, a contradictory statement that added complexity to her narrative. Her disclosure of his filing for divorce and fear of potential violence added to the complexity of her experiences, which forced one of the experts to suggest the necessity for therapy to navigate her traumas.

Aicha's story also adopted a dramatic tone, with elements like drug abuse, imprisonment with no food, children being abused, and rape, intended to portray her husband as the antagonist deserving of societal punishment. She narrated an interesting and unusual story. She said, "Once, my six-year-old child told his father, "I am hungry"; my husband replied, 'Do you see that I'm not', and started beating him at night. Now the boy lives in the street." We are considering an embedded evaluation where she is quoting her husband and child's own words to dramatize the scene and to send the same message of Ouafae in an intertextual manner from which we, the audience, get the idea that the violent husbands do not distinguish between women and children. When talking about her daughter's rape by an older man, she said that her husband, who was at home when the rape took place, talked to the man and told him "What did you do to the girl?". He answered him, "What do you want me to do to her? Nothing, don't you see that you are just a poor man!". Quoting the husband and the rapist in this form of evaluation renders the scene a black comedy where a father whose girl was raped talks in a friendly manner with a rapist who gives a pseudo explanation for his act, which sounds irrational as he links his innocence from rape with the poverty of the father, a total nonsense. At the same time, she transmitted the message that the husband who was an aggressive lion with her and his children is inoffensive when it comes to real aggressors.

Ghizlane's story stands out for its dramatic impact which questions the concept of family structure and the consequences of parental decisions, particularly her giving birth to twins, which the audience perceived as one of the most poignant narratives in the show. The problem with Morocco is that although Article 19 of the family code adopted in 2004 prevents marriage for girls under 18, child marriages persist, expand, and result in negative social consequences. According to AFP TV, official figures show that the number of child marriages in Morocco rose to more than 35,000 in 2010 up from 30,000 two years before (Arbaoui, 2013).

In the show, all the women utilized the technique of comparing the past to the present to highlight the severity of their current situations. For example, the case of Fatima, who described a peaceful period in her marriage before her husband's brothers arrived and abuse began, illustrates this pattern. Similarly, Habiba contrasted her relationship dynamics before and after her father-in-law's death, noting a drastic change. Ouafae mentioned the initial love in her marriage, which deteriorated due to familial issues and suffering. Aicha recounted the escalation of abuse shortly after her marriage to emphasize the stark contrast. Additionally, all the women projected bleak future outcomes influenced by their experiences through showcasing the impact on their behavior and the urgent need for change. Globally, the narratives of these women used storytelling to justify their actions, condemn their oppressors, and evoke empathy from the audience. These narratives, stories, and myths are potent tools for conveying and reinforcing social norms and values.

The opinions expressed recognized the impact of structural violence which is 'built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as un-equal life chances' (Galtung, 1969: 171). For the author, while individual women experience incidents of interpersonal violence, the prevalence and the high frequency of violence point towards the violence present in inequitable social norms and access to resources, which ultimately underpin individual incidents and experiences.

A look at the stories also confirms the literature prevalent on the topic. For example, Amartya Sen (1999: 9) characterized the effect of restricted freedoms (economic, social, political, and legal) on human development and well-being. For her, the absence of freedoms is directly linked to economic poverty, which takes from people the freedom to satisfy hunger or to obtain

remedies for treatable illnesses, or the opportunity to be adequately clothed or sheltered. Additionally, she underscores the role norms and values play to “undergird inequitable economic and political systems, making them resistant to change”. Galtung included cultural violence in the personal-structural-cultural nexus which ‘preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly -not exploitation) at all’ (1990: 295).

As a final note, WSMV employed narratives and stories that aligned with prevailing cultural myths and stereotypes surrounding gender roles, marriage, and family life. They presented themselves as dutiful wives and devoted mothers who endured suffering and sacrifice for the sake of their families. By invoking these familiar narratives, women sought to evoke empathy and solidarity from the media audience, positioning themselves as heroic figures who courageously confronted adversity, injustice and Morocco!

Conclusion

Cultural legitimation in the discourse of WSMV in Morocco often operates through authorization, a reference to the system, moral evaluation rooted in cultural and religious values, rationalization based on societal goals, and mythopoesis through narratives that reinforce gendered power dynamics. Understanding how these mechanisms intersect with cultural and religious beliefs and interpretations is crucial for comprehending the complexities of violence against women in Moroccan society and devising effective strategies for intervention and prevention.

The narratives of women facing violence in Morocco revealed a complex interplay of patriarchal norms, societal pressures, and institutional failures. WSMV endured various forms of abuse, including physical violence, emotional manipulation, and neglect as they were often trapped in abusive relationships due to societal expectations and legal constraints. Their stories highlighted the pervasive impact of gender-based violence on women's lives, as well as the systemic barriers they face in seeking justice and support. Despite attempts to seek help from authorities and human rights organizations, many women found themselves disillusioned and trapped in cycles of abuse and despair. The narratives also underscored the urgent need for societal change and intervention to address the root causes of violence against women and provide meaningful support to those affected. Experts recommended various actions and initiatives to combat violence against women, including legal reforms, psychological support, and broader societal education and awareness campaigns. However, there is a sense of frustration with the inadequacy of existing programs and initiatives. This stresses the need for immediate and comprehensive action to address the pervasive issues faced by women in Moroccan society.

In the narratives, WSMV were depicted as central characters but also as passive recipients of actions, rather than active participants in their own stories. They were portrayed as vulnerable and problematic, contrasting with their husbands, who were shown as active agents. Our analysis, using legitimation theory, has revealed how media texts project legitimacy in discourse. Identifying this legitimacy has allowed us to uncover justifications and endorsements of certain social practices across the media landscape. Our findings reinforce the idea that the media serves as a battleground where identities, social relationships, and ideas are either positively or negatively represented. Cultural legitimation emerges as a crucial tool employed by women to solidify their narratives and maintain their cognitive validity.

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