Sexual Harassment against Waitresses in Morocco: 
A Case Study of El Jadida

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Abstract
This paper reflects on the growing problem of sexual harassment in 
Morocco. It particularly focuses on the sexual harassment perpetrated 
on waitresses in Moroccan cafés. The findings of this study are 
grounded on qualitative data collected from El Jadida cafés where 25 
informants were interviewed. The respondents included 10 waitresses, 
10 male café clients, and 5 café managers. The major aim of the study 
is to explore the nature and extent of sexual harassment against 
waitresses, delve into the micro and macro socio-economic structures 
which contribute to it, and find about the attitudes of the victims as 
well as of their male harassers. Most importantly, the study addresses 
the frequently taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic 
power relations which reproduce, sustain, and normalize sexual 
harassment against women in the workplace.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, waitresses, cafés, gender-based violence, Moroccan culture

0. Introduction
Sexual harassment is a rampant form of gender-based violence which 
affects women across culture, class, race and geographical region. It is 
defined as any utterance, performance, display of words, or gestures 
that intend to sexually tempt or coerce women into a sexual act. Sexual
harassment includes forms of behavioral patterns such as sexual teasing, jokes, comments or unwanted pressure for sexual favour or date. Yusuf (2010) contends that sexual harassment encompasses intimidation, bullying or coercion which is unsolicited or welcome by a victim. Sheffield (1987) and Stanko (1988) define sexual harassment as deliberate, repeated or unwelcome verbal comments, unwanted pressure for sexual attention imposed by the manager in organizations resulting from work related relationships.

Katharine (2002) observes that sexual harassment occurs in the workplace or in other work-related environments and it is a flagrant violation of the fundamental human rights of women. According to Boland (2005), there are at least two recognized types of workplace sexual harassment. One type is called ‘quid pro quo’, and includes a situation in which employment benefits are conditioned upon certain sexual favors. The second type is called a ‘hostile work environment,’ in which the severe or pervasive conduct causes a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment. Both of these types have psychological effects on women regardless of their age, social background, and disability; therefore, their morale becomes inevitably weak and their productivity shrinks. There is, indeed, a consensus among scholars and gender activists that sexual harassment at work is a “gender expression of power” (Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). In all its dimensions, this form of violence against women threatens women’s mobility, curbs their participation in the public domain and limits the practice of their full citizenship.

As such, sexual harassment falls within the broader framework of gender-based violence which the UN’s Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW) defines as any act of “violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. In this vein, feminists and human rights activists highlight certain ways in which sexual harassment is sustained by a deeply rooted patriarchal gender system that discriminates against women and favors “a dominant normative form of masculinity” (Uggen & Blackstones, 2004).
This paper endeavors to explore sexual harassment in the work place within a Moroccan context. Particularly, the study focuses on the sexual harassment which is perpetrated on waitresses in cafés in El Jadida. The main research questions raised in this study include how do waitresses define sexual harassment? What are the forms of such harassment? Who are the harassers? How do waitresses react to such harassment? How do male clients view sexual harassment against waitresses? The paper is structured into three main sections. The first section provides a review of the literature. The second section presents a description of the methodology used in data collection. And the third section is devoted to the findings and discussion.

1. Review of the Literature

Sexual harassment remains a serious worldwide problem. 42-50% of female workers have been sexually harassed in developed countries, 40-50% in the European Union, 30-40% in Asia-Pacific, and 77% in South Africa (ITUC, 2008). A recent American report on sexual harassment in the restaurant industry found out that 90% of female restaurant workers have experienced sexual harassment on the job. The report found out that 2/3 of women in the field reported being harassed by their managers, 69% faced sexual teasing or lewd comments perpetrated by co-workers, and 78% reported harassment from customers. More than half of the harassed women said it occurred on at least a weekly basis (Marcotte, 2014).

Reporting on the nature of sexual harassment, Benninger and Lacroix (1994) state that sexual harassment:

- May assume the form of physical contacts, remarks and jokes with a sexual connotation, unwelcome invitations, exhibition of pornographic material or physical aggression. For the victim, the physical and psychological consequences are manifold: depression, insomnia, excessive smoking, eating and sleeping disorders. (p. 164)

In many countries, sexual harassment is not legally codified as a criminal offence. It may, however, be regarded as a penal offence when it assumes violations of moral codes, such as indecent exposure in public. Nevertheless, in view of the scope of this cross-geographical phenomenon, an increasing number of governments have adopted laws
explicitly condemning sexual harassment in the work place. Besides, this form of violence is increasingly addressed in some labour codes, laws on sexual discrimination and company regulations.

However, the number of women who denounce perpetrators of sexual harassment at work is very low. This may be due to the imbalanced professional power relationship between the male perpetrator and the female victim. Indeed, it is known that sexual harassment on the part of a man who is hierarchically superior to the victim is usually not reported for fear of dismissal or other reprisals. Within the Moroccan Penal Code, article 503-1 stipulates that:

Any person who uses threats, means of coercion or any other means, exploiting the powers conferred upon him by his functions for purposes of a sexual nature, shall be punished with imprisonment from one to two years and a fine of five thousand to fifty thousand dirhams.

Morocco’s commitment to fight sexual harassment in public places is also stressed by the enactment of an anti-sexual harassment law on September 12, 2018 after years of efforts to get it passed. This new law guarantees protection for women who report sexual harassment, and imposes fines and even prison sentences (ranging from one to six months) against anyone convicted of sexual harassment in the public sphere. It is the first time that Moroccan women will have legal pathways to seek justice from such behaviour. Commenting on this law, Bassima Hakkaoui, the country’s minister for women’s issues told the official Maghreb Arabe Presse news agency that the new law is “one of the most important texts strengthening the national legal arsenal in the area of equality of the sexes” (as cited in O’Grady, 2018).

However, the problem is that the victims still find it very difficult to provide solid evidence if they opt for suing their harassers. Consequently, the perpetrators are left unpunished in most cases. What adds insult to injury is that women victims are culturally hindered to stand against their harassers; this is because some people tend to put the blame on the harassed rather than on the harasser. If a woman dares to denounce her harasser, she is likely to face some reprimanding questions, such as “why did you speak back? or “what were you wearing at that time?” A survey conducted by Promundo, a gender justice non-profit organization, found that 72% of Moroccan men
surveyed would blame the victim of harassment if she was dressed “provocatively”; 78% of women shared that view, and 71% of men believe that women enjoy being sexual harassed (Selby, 2017). It has also been found that most women believe that disclosure of sexual harassment may jeopardize their honour and reputation, or it may lead them to lose their job (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2000).

According to a field survey on sexual harassment in Morocco, conducted by l’Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), 40 out of 63 women were sexually harassed in public sectors. The perpetrators were employers, senior executives and members of parliament. The study revealed that only 15% of the victims had the courage to denounce their tormentors, transgressing a set of barriers that construct gender (Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, 1994). It is perhaps not surprising to support the view of Malika El-Fekkak, who has pointed out that sexual harassment is an increasing phenomenon which haunts Moroccan women in both public and private spheres (El Fakkak, 1999, p. 4). Such a view is also proved by the Moroccan Association for Women’s Rights, which argued that 56.46% of women employees experienced sexual harassment at work. This percentage concerned married women (56, 26%); single women (37,50%); divorced women (4,16%); and widowed women (2,08%) (Association Marocaine pour les Droits des Femmes, 2000, pp. 42-43). In brief, the sexual harassment plight is suffered by all women regardless of their family status, social stratum, or educational level.

Even mentally disabled women are not immune from sexual abuse; a case in point is the incident of a mentally handicapped young girl who got gang raped on a public bus in Casablanca. The barbaric act went viral on August 20th, 2017 showing four boys (aged 15 to 17 years) forcibly undressing the woman and forcing themselves on her while others cheered them on amid a burst of laughter and shouting. Though the rapists were arrested immediately after the release of the video, the heinous crime reignited a heated public debate on violence against women, occurring in public places and in front of citizens’ eyes without moving a finger. International media condemned the sexual crime and reported that it is exactly these sorts of incidents that anti-immigration hawks in Europe and the United States cite as justification for limiting the flow of young male refugees from predominately Muslim countries
However, we think that gang rape has no specific culture, race or class; it can happen anywhere in the West as well as in the East; therefore, such an orientalist discourse by western media will only fuel racism and Islamophobia.

The fact that no woman is immune from sexual harassment is empirically testified by Nidal Chebbak who conducted a qualitative study on sexual harassment in Moroccan streets in 2013. Chebbak concluded that all women are susceptible victims, including those wearing the ‘niqab’. A woman informant told Chebbak (2013) about her experience with street sexual harassment:

At first I was harassed every time I went out; sometimes it was awful and just too much to bear. Then I wore the hijab and thought now that I’m a bit covered and more modest in the way I dressed, harassment would stop or at least diminish, but it didn’t. Then, I felt all guilty about it and was wondering maybe it’s me I’m not well covered and maybe I’m a source of fitna (sedition) and felt very bad about it. I decided to wear the full niqab, no more colors, and no more clothes that show the figure. I felt and still feel very good at peace with my decision, but I would lie if I say that harassment stopped. I still get the harassing gazes and the harassing words about my eyes (though my face was covered). But at least, I feel that it isn’t my fault.

Sexual harassment in public sectors aims to systematically hinder working women from competing with men in the workforce. As Rosemary Pringle puts it, “sexual harassment functions particularly to keep women out of non-traditional occupations and to reinforce their secondary status in the workplace” (Pringle, 1993, p. 283). As such, it betrays one of the many prejudices and stereotypes upon which patriarchal ideology is based. In other words, by using sexual harassment as a weapon, men tend to redeem for some defects and weaknesses in their ability for competition.

In effect, many victims, particularly those who are not armed adequately with a special awareness of their rights as workers find themselves forced to leave their work, especially when their tormentors are in higher positions such as a boss, a director or a manager. A case in point is K.L., who reported to Al-Bayane newspaper:
I used to work in a big textile company. I had worked there for many years, but I was obliged to leave my job because of my boss’s nonstop sexual harassment. He had been treating me like a bitch, using all coercive means to make me succumb to his beastly sexual drives …. He had caused so much pain to me with continual indecent behaviours that I’m ashamed to tell you. (Naji, 1998, p. 2)

Whether it occurs in public or private places, sexual harassment remains a serious violation of women’s rights that has its physical and psychological outcomes. Being quite aware of this, women’s NGO’s and human rights associations work cross-culturally to fight the plague. Within the Moroccan context, for instance, centers of women’s legal and psychological orientations have been opened in Rabat and Casablanca for this purpose. These centers not only receive, assist and orient women victims of sexual harassment and other forms of violence, but they also carry out field studies, convene conferences and organize workshops on violence against women and how to eliminate it. The concluding idea was that reinforcing the law alone against the perpetrators would not be an effective measure to whittle away sexual abuse. Indeed, priority should be given to citizens’ consciousness raising on the danger of those negative ‘representations’ and other stereotypically fossilized attitudes which sexualize any relationship between men and women.

One form of public sexual harassment which is growing rapidly in Morocco is the one perpetrated on waitresses. The latter are usually sexually harassed by male clients, co-workers, managers or café owners. What is worse is that waitresses often put up with this phenomenon because they feel obliged to safeguard their job. If they complain, they are more likely to get fired. Café owners often take sides with a client rather than a waitress. In her study on sexual harassment against waitresses, Laila Amzir concludes that the number of women who work in Moroccan cafés is increasing year after year. Those women are always working with a smile even if they are facing harassment attitudes during their work. According to Amzir, these women are sexually harassed because, in the public view, they have broken a social taboo in search of decent work. They have no other option better than bearing harassment because they know they will lose their job if they complain (Amzir, 2014).
Amzir’s study finds out that café owners often hire beautiful young women as an effective marketing strategy to attract male customers. For Amzir, some café owners decorate their cafés with luxurious furniture and recruit young girls to boost profit. However, Amzir confirms that these low-paid waitresses are sexually harassed on a daily basis. Male clients often give them tips and flirt with them. One of Amzir’s informants stated that waitresses “are only seen as a body for customers to look at.” Another respondent added that “most café owners are aware of the sexual harassment their waitresses face daily, but these owners remain silent as long as business is running well”\(^1\).

2. Methodology

This study is based on qualitative data collected through the method of semi-structured interviewing. 25 respondents were interviewed during a period that lasted up to 1 hour 30 minutes. 10 respondents were waitresses, 10 were male customers, and 5 were café managers. We preferred to include different variables to get a holistic data that would allow us to better understand the problem of sexual harassment form different perspectives, and hence steer clear of biased data.

All the respondents were from El Jadida city and were interviewed in 10 cafés. Some waitresses were interviewed after work and others during the short breaks when they were not on service. I targeted only the cafés where there was at least one waitress. I had to sit as a customer and after getting served I explained to the waitresses my real objective behind my being in the café. Those who accepted to cooperate were asked to choose the suitable time to start the interview. Some of them told me to come another day. As for the male clients and café owners, they accepted to cooperate on the spot. I think this is because they did not see sexual harassment as a sensitive issue for them.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Defining sexual harassment

All the 10 interviewed waitresses defined sexual harassment (taharrush al jinsi) as the act of imposing certain behavior upon them. This behavior included, winking, catcalling, touching, pinching, stroking, leering, gazing and other more sexually inviting conducts, such as

\(^1\) For more information, visit this page: https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/features
inviting the waitress to sit with the client, asking for her phone number or a date. The phrase ‘they come to flirt’ (kayjio bash itfellawo) was mentioned by almost all the waitresses in their attempt to give a brief definition to sexual harassment. One waitress said, “some men come to cafés to flirt with us.” She added that men’s flirting (tfelya) could take a verbal form (lohan lhadra), or a physical form like touching or fondling.

Abdellatif, 56 years old, a café manager said that sexual harassment against waitresses is indeed a growing phenomenon. He revealed that over the 10 years of working as a café manager, he had witnessed various forms of sexual harassment against his waitresses. The most common of all these was asking the waitress to give her phone number after receiving the tip. Sometimes, Abdellatif added, the tip reaches up to MAD 200. Boujama, another café manager told me that sexual harassment against waitresses “has become a common practice” (had shi wella ‘adi). He explained that there are at least three forms of sexual harassment against waitresses: direct harassment, indirect harassment, and go-between harassment. The first form is a face-to-face practice when the harasser speaks directly to the harassed; the second form happens when the harasser leaves his phone number along with a good tip on the table; the third form occurs when the harasser employs another person to reach the victim. In most cases, the go-between is a woman co-worker.

The male clients I interviewed gave a variety of answers to the question “how would you define sexual harassment against waitresses?” Some of the definitions entail asking the waitress (serbaya) for her phone number, asking her for a date, touching her, winking at her, asking for her name or other personal information, saying that she is beautiful or other flirting words. Brahim, a 25 year-old man and a regular café-goer, said that he had never sexually harassed a waitress in his life, but he stressed that he preferred to go to cafés where there were waitresses. When I asked about the reason for his preference, he replied that the service of the girls was better and “one can gaze at their beauty” (lwahed isqi ‘winatu). Brahim’s last sentence is in fact a stark verbal harassment that he was not quite aware of.

Ahmed, Reda and Youssef maintained that some waitresses contributed to their harassment. The three men thought that “the tight jeans the waitresses wear, the make-up they use, and the way they talk do
encourage us to flirt with them; the more inviting and flirtatious they are, the more tips they get.” To confirm the validity of what Ahmed, Reda and Youssef said to me, I asked the two waitresses Amal and Imane why they wore tight jeans and thick make-up at work; they responded that they did so because they wanted to gain more tips. The fact that waitresses, compared to their male partners, get more tips was confirmed to me by some café owners who explained that the weekly wage of a waiter is (MAD 250-500), while a waitress gets a wage of MAD 200-400 a week. The lower wage of the waitress is justified by the fact that she gets more tips than the waiter.

3.2. Most pervading forms of sexual harassment

The informant waitresses were asked about which type of sexual harassment they encountered most frequently at work. The majority responded that they faced verbal sexual harassment almost on a daily basis. Some examples of the harassment they experienced entailed the fact that some male customers (harassers) left their phone numbers on the table along with a good tip. A waitress told me that one client left his cell phone number written on a note of MAD 200. Other examples of verbal/psychological harassment included the fact that some clients forced the waitresses into talking about things out of the working context. Another prominent example was asking them for their cell phone numbers. The most prominent form was when the customer tried to flirt by smiling at the waitresses or ‘throwing words’ (luhan lhadra) about their physical appearance. Words and phrases such as how are you my beautiful? (fin a zin), can’t we have a rendez-vous? (manshufuksh), can I have your phone number? (mat ‘tinash namra?), etc.

Zineb, who left school 5 years ago and started working as a waitress, told me that verbal harassment was the most prevailing form in cafés. She added that the waitress should know how to deal with it, or she would face a problem with the café owner. “The café owner”, Zineb stressed, “will always take sides with the customer so as not to lose him.” This finding was confirmed by most waitresses and even some café managers who explained that “if an incident of this kind takes place in the café, we need to handle the problem wisely to please both the customer and the waitress.” Jelloul, who has been running a café in
Hay Essalam in El Jadida for 15 years, told me that he would always defend the waitress if a client harassed her (tbassel ‘liha).

Fatima, 22 years old, reported that most of the harassment she encountered was verbal; she explained that “those who harass must have problems with their wives, and they come to release their fury and sexual dissatisfaction in us (ifārghu fina)”. She concluded that “because the customer “pays MAD 7 for a cup of coffee, he wants to profit from every moment he spends in the café.” Fatima went on explaining that she oftentimes received harassing calls from unknown men. They asked her for a date; when she refused, they got angry and shouted at her. Some of the harassing callers would come to the café and cause trouble to her. They would for example complain to the manager about the poor quality of the service, make her redo the order, or leave without tipping.

Imane, 28 years old, recounted a painful story that happened to her when she was working in a previous café:

I was kicked out of my job as a result of resisting the sexual harassment of a male client. He was harassing me on a daily basis; he did everything to make me accept his offer; he wanted to have my cell phone number. I always refused to give it to him. When all his attempts failed, he took revenge in a cowardly manner. One day, he complained to the café owner and told him that I didn’t give him his change. He also told him I sometimes charged him more than the normal price.

Imane’s story with verbal sexual harassment leading to grave consequences like losing the job is only one example. Other examples have to do with the harassment of the manager himself. In this situation, the victim has only two choices; she has to endure the manager’s harassment or leave the job. It was found that most of the victims chose to endure rather than lose their job; as one respondent puts it, “We are obliged to tolerate what is happening to us to maintain our or job, our source of living.”

3.3. Who Are the Harassers?

According to the data gleaned from the researched waitresses, the harassers were male clients, co-workers, and managers. The café clients had the lion’s share in harassing. Most respondents underscored that their harassers belonged to different walks of life, age groups, and
marital statuses. Halima, 27 years old, commented on her harassers thus: “all male café goers would flirt with me if they had the opportunity.” She explained that men of all ages would harass her: “even the man with a walking cane” (hta rajel bel’ukkaz kaytharresh). Halima’s last sentence shows that the harassers belong to all age groups, ranging from teenagers, to adults, to old men. However, Fatima and Amal stressed that most of the harassers were adults. This category was more likely to commit sexual harassment because, according to Fatima and Amal, adults were frequent café clients. Sara, a 25 years-old- waitress said that “when a man comes to the café almost every day, he builds up a friendly rapport with me; this encourages him to start flirting with me.”

Amal recounted a sad story about the sexual harassment of her manager who started harassing her from the first day she started work in his café. He went on harassing her till she gave up. He promised that he would marry her once his financial situation was settled. The result was an illegitimate pregnancy that ruined Amal’s life because the manager not only broke his promise, but he fired her as well. Amal concluded her story thus:

My first manager ruined my life and future; I have been working as a waitress since then; no one would marry a woman with an illegitimate son; my relationship with my parents and brothers is very bad because of what happened to me. They say I brought shame and disgrace to the family. No one wanted to understand I was very young at that time. I was like an easy prey for my assaulter.

Amal’s case is indeed one example of those naive girls who drop out of school because of poverty and they start working as waitresses or maids to help their families. The results are often dramatic; these girls are most likely to suffer sexual harassment at work. The fact that working women in general and waitresses in particular are vulnerable to sexual harassment within the working environment was empirically confirmed by the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) in 2008. The ITUC found that sexual harassment can be perpetrated by colleagues, supervisors, managers or clients, and it usually takes the form of suggestive remarks and requests for sexual favours and comprising invitations (ITUC, 2008).
3.4. Waitresses’ reaction to sexual harassment

When asked about their reactions after getting sexually harassed, the waitresses gave various answers:

- I put up with the sexual harassment incidents I face every day.
- I have no choice but tolerate it because I need the job.
- If I react against my harassers, my boss will fire me and find another girl who is willing to allure more clients.
- I once reprimanded a client for forcing me to give him my phone number, but my manager didn’t like the way I defended myself.
- In this job, we have no right to complain against the harassing clients.
- If you ‘open your mouth about it’ (if you complain), the client won’t tip you, and the boss may fire you.
- The customer is always right even when they make you feel uncomfortable.
- Our tips depend on how tight our jeans are and how flirtatious we treat male clients.
- It goes without saying that our first and foremost task is to serve and please male customers in return of a one-dirham tip.

Among the 10 waitresses I interviewed, only two said that they would not allow clients to harass them and that they would ‘fight back’ if someone dared to harass them. Imane, a veiled young waitress, told me that she was facing some incidents of sexual harassment during her first days in the job. As time went on, Imane continued, the clients began to respect her because they had no doubt about her work ethics and moral conduct. Imane concluded that “my experience has taught me that people would respect the waitress who respects herself.” For Imane, a waitress can respect herself by wearing decent clothes and speaking politely with the male clients. More importantly, she should be skillful at handling clients’ misbehaviour. The second interviewee (Fatima, 28 years old) said that she often fought back against her harassers. What helped her to react that way was that her boss was always taking sides with her.
It is clear, therefore, that most waitresses (8 out of 10) put up with sexual harassment incidents because they were afraid of getting expelled from the job. Besides, this category of waitresses knew that if they made the clients unsatisfied, the latter would not tip them. The other category - those who resisted - were supported by their managers, so they were not afraid of losing the job. This leads us to call for all café owners to seriously consider supporting and defending the harassed waitresses, and even call for the police if such mistreatment occurs.

3.5. Men’s attitudes towards waitresses’ sexual harassment

The male respondents in this study gave various answers regarding waitresses’ sexual harassment. Some said “they deserve it because of the way they dress”, some said “they get harassed because they encourage it by smiling at the clients”, others thought that “they shouldn’t talk with the clients about other things apart from their work”, and others stressed that “young beautiful girls shouldn’t work in cafés at all.” According to this category of respondents, the café is a male sphere par excellence. Other negative attitudes towards waitresses include:

- waitresses are responsible for the sexual harassment they get because of the tight sexy clothes they wear;
- waitresses encourage getting harassed for tipping reasons;
- most of them are prostitutes and they use waitressing as a ‘cover story’ (sebba) to sell their body;
- they use the café as a place where to find male clients who are willing to pay for sex;
- sexual harassment becomes a normal behaviour in cafés (wella jari bih l’amal);
- waitresses are expected to just take it, smile, and flirt back.

Nonetheless, the data revealed that some male attitudes were positive and they reflected a sense of empathy and understanding towards waitresses:

- some of these waitresses were driven by poverty;
- they didn’t find better alternatives;
- they are victims of a socio-political and educational system;
many of them dropped out of school or they never went to school;
we should treat them as their male coworkers;
they provide a better service;
wearing a tight dress doesn’t mean the girl is immoral.

It is important to stress as a concluding statement that those who gave positive opinions about the work of waitresses were adult educated men (high school teacher, doctor, company director, pharmacist). On the other hand, negative attitudes came from walks of life, such as a guardian, a grocer, a mason, a taxi driver and a plumber. This leads us to say that in order to fight the plight of sexual harassment, we need first and foremost to fight illiteracy and ignorance, raise awareness of the problem, and reinforce the anti-sexual harassment law. The road is long and arduous, but it is the most effective pathway to fight sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.

4. Conclusion

Most informants responded that fighting sexual harassment against women in general is a difficult task, but it is not an impossible thing to realize. They think that the first and foremost measure to take is to improve the waitresses’ payment. As long as the meager wage (MAD 250 to 300 a week) continues, sexual harassment will continue to be perpetrated. The respondents insisted that the tipping coins they got from some male clients were the reason why they put up with what they called ‘tkarfiss’ (mistreatment). Also, they wanted the café owners to grant them all their rights in terms of a better payment, promotion, social security, and health care facilities. This demand is reflected in the answer the respondents gave to the question on the government’s role to prevent sexual harassment against waitresses. All of them highlighted the fact that the government should punish the café owners who exploit waitresses economically before punishing the perpetrators of sexual harassment.

Other respondents suggested reinforcing the law against those café owners who employ minor girls. As Fatima states, “minor girls should be at school instead of working as waitresses and those who employ them should be punished.” Halima and Zineb shared Fatima’s opinion, but they added that the government should help poor families
financially to help preventing child labour in general. This view is also shared by a number of café goers who explained that sexual harassment can occur in cafés as well as in houses where poor little girls drop out of school and work as maids. So, it is essentially important to stress that any project to fight sexual harassment must take into account a political economy approach.

References


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