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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Internet and sexuality in Morocco, from cyber habits to psychopathology☆

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Summary A large part of Internet users of different ages and from all over the world do use it in order to get and consume pornography, meet sexual partners or plan for intimate relationships. In Morocco, sexuality itself is a great deal since living one's sexuality is dependent on religious and social determinants of individual freedoms, sexual education and empowerment of women. The aim of the study is explore Internet misuses, sexual abuses initiated or totally conducted through Internet in Morocco as well as couple issues and the concept of faithfulness, hypothesizing that Moroccan people use and misuse internet the same way worldwide, but with very few means of protection against potential offenders. We found that nearly a third of people interviewed during the study confirm that they regularly consume pornography on Internet, with an obvious gender difference, that half under-18 years old interviewed teens have for at least once undressed in front of a webcam, or sent naked photos of them to unknown cyber-interlocutors, and finally, that sexual assaults in the Internet are as frequent as sexual assaults happening in the real life, with possible and frequent connections between risky behaviours on line and real life sexual assaults.
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Introduction

The World Wide Web is the most widely shared and spread Internet application, through which Internet became the most accessible, modern and multitasks medium as well as an inexhaustible source of information, pictures and sounds.

Quick, exhaustive and easy to use, Internet has definitely conquered the world. Morocco is far from being an exception to the rule. Indeed, there are 1,5 million Internet Access (ADSL and 3G) and about 13,2 million net surfers identified by January 2011 (www.alexa.com).

Furthermore, these estimations are expected to increase. We notice that the Internet users are ten times more numerous than Internet access. Moroccan Internet surfers tend to get connected in cyber-cafes rather than at home. The average connection fee in a cyber-cafe is about 0.4 to 0,6€ per hour. However, in Morocco Internet as a daily tool is new and there are very few measures (technological, social, as well as legal) which are set to protect the consumer (Fathi, 2011).

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Stern and Handel (2001) specified that a large part of Internet users of different ages do use it in order to get and consume pornography, meet sexual partners or plan for intimate relationships. This dynamic can be facilitated by Internet's own intrinsic properties. Indeed, Internet is ''an every man's land'', a space where limits between virtuality and reality are tenuous, and where being anonymous may provide an impression of safety as it can take out guilt and inhibition. Therefore, intimate and/or sexual issues can be discussed, exchanged or showed more easily (Stern and Handel, 2001).

In Morocco, sexuality itself is a great deal since living one's sexuality is dependent on religious and social determinants of individual freedoms, sexual education and empowerment of women. Restrictions and taboos are still overwhelming (Kadri et al., 2009). Consequently, It was interesting to study for the very first time and far from any moralistic point of view how Internet can house or even more, facilitate what can be considered as ''irrelevant'' and impossible to do in ''real life'' sexuality, and in what ways this limitless freedom area can be related to misuses and risk-taking behaviors.

Aims of the study

Wherever Internet is strongly present in people's daily life, abuses and psychopathological phenomena may be frequent (Stern and Handel, 2001). The number of Internet users in Morocco exceeds ten million people, which represents the equivalent of the third of the whole Moroccan population. Our hypothesis is that Moroccan people misuse Internet in the same way worldwide, however with no protection against the potential offenders.

The aim of the study is explore Internet misuses, sexual abuses initiated or totally conducted through Internet.

Methodology

We conducted a 1-year descriptive, cross-selectional study, from August 2010 to September 2011.

The initial sample was made of 1500 people.

The inclusion criteria were:

- for people over 18 years old: literate subjects able to understand the questionnaire and to give their informed consent;
- for 12—18 years old participants: literate subjects able to understand the questionnaire and to give their informed consent. Agreement was sought of the person responsible of the educational institution.

The used instrument was a self-administrated questionnaire available in two versions.

- first version for subjects over 18 years. It includes 91 items and assesses sociodemographic data, Internet main ways of use, ways of behaving on Internet, intimate and sexual real life, sexual disorders, sexual abuse in real life, sexual activities and sexual violence on Internet, couple and infidelity issues;
- second version for teenagers between 12 and 18 years old. It includes 58 Items and assesses sociodemographic data, Internet main ways of use, ways of behaving on Internet, activities and sexual violence on Internet.

The questionnaire was set up by the authors (N. Kadri, R. Benjelloun, I. Kendili).

Items related to sexual disorders are based on DSM-IV criteria and have already been used in several studies in Morocco exploring Moroccans' sexuality (Kadri et al., 2006).

Both versions of the questionnaire have been first set up in French, which is the research scientific language in Morocco, then, the questionnaires were adapted in Moroccan Arabic dilaect ''Darija''. For that purpose, the translation process was completed (back translation) so that the questionnaire could be validated.

For every person interviewed, both Arab and French versions have been proposed. Moroccan population is mainly Arab speaking. Most of average and educated people speak and understand French.

Field of the study has been chosen on purpose, so that we could maximize the chances of encountering literate and familiar with Internet people.

After having received the necessary agreements, the filling of questionnaires started in different areas:

- people over 18 years: in public and private universities, at hospital, and at the Arab league Park in Casablanca;
- teenagers 12—18 years old: in public and private high schools located in urban, rural and semi rural areas.

Reluctance to fill in the questionnaire was found among 396 interviewed people. Some of them refused to finish answering all items. Moreover, many public high schools refused to receive our interviewers. As explained above, sexuality in Morocco in still a taboo, and that is why we encountered many moral and religious barriers. Other interviewed felt assaulted by some items of the questionnaire. Finally, principals and directors of some educative institutions did not give us the mandatory agreement to have access to their institutions because they were afraid of a potential demonstration protest lead by potential islamist students.

At the end of the process, we got 864 usable questionnaires.

Interviewers randomly selected subjects that accepted to participate to the study and remained available if needed while interviewed people were filling in their questionnaires.

Interviewers were residents in psychiatry and sociologists. They all followed preliminary various training sessions that included:

- a presentation of the study, its objectives and its methodology;
- training on the scales passation;
- how to obtain the second informed consent from the participants, knowing that we had obtained the academic consent.

Furthermore, we set up a pilot study, which included 40 people who filled in the questionnaire in both languages. The

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