GENDER STEREOTYPES AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN MENA

By Marwa Shalaby

Female underrepresentation in politics in the MENA has often been attributed to traditional socio-cultural norms that tend to favor male candidates; yet, few studies have systematically investigated the structure as well as the impact of such norms on female candidates' electability. While gender stereotypes may not be unique to the MENA region, I argue that understanding the way they shape voters' decisions is particularly relevant in less democratic contexts with weak or no political party support for female politicians. To bridge the aforementioned gap and better understand the implications of citizens' gender attitudes– especially those relating to gender stereotypes– this short paper explicates the relationship between gender stereotypes and voters' behavior using original survey data from Morocco (n=1200). The results show that voters are three times more likely to support female candidates who demonstrate competence in male-dominated policy areas, mainly the economy and terrorism. Female policy stereotypes also matter; women who are perceived as competent in areas of health and education are more likely to garner voters' support. Moreover, female candidates who exhibit male traits, such as assertiveness and ambition, are two times more likely to be supported by both male and female voters.

This memo is organized as follows. The first section provides a comparative lens on extant work on gender stereotypes in established democracies as well as the MENA region. The findings of the analysis are presented in the second section of the memo. It concludes with implications for female representation in MENA and direction for future research.

Why Do Gender Stereotypes Matter? A Comparative Perspective

Research on gender-based stereotypes in established democracies has flourished to better understand women's underrepresentation in politics.[152] Scholars have differentiated between the role played by gender-trait (i.e., gender-linked personality traits) and gender-belief stereotypes (i.e., policy/issue stereotypes) on female candidates' electability.[153] According to this line of research, voters' perceptions of the feminine qualities of female candidates (i.e., compassion, affection, warmth) may negatively impact their electability as they may be deemed incongruent with the leadership traits most valued by voters.[154] Gender policy/issue stereotypes can also shape voters' choice as women are commonly perceived as more liberal, competent in family-related domains such as: education, health and welfare while males are more competent in issues pertinent to agriculture, economy, foreign policy, and defense. Thus, gender stereotypes can shape voters' behavior mainly through the negative and positive feelings that voters may have about the specific traits and issue competence of their candidates.[155] Party affiliation can also intersect with voters' gender stereotypes to determine vote choice.[156] Finally, gender stereotypes can be particularly important for activating preferences for female candidates in low information electoral settings.[157]

Work on political gender stereotypes and their effect on citizens' voting decisions in non-democratic settings has been scarce. Despite the low numbers of women in MENA politics, only few studies have investigated voters' traits and issues' stereotypes toward male and female politicians and/or discerned the way political gender stereotypes shape citizens' voting behavior toward female candidates in transitioning contexts.

This is beginning to change, however. A recent study exploring the link between gender, religion and electability using a survey experiment in post-transitional Tunisia depicts significant gender biases against female candidates as religious voters–both males and females– tend to vote for religious female candidates. [158] Other work shows a significant gender gap in Libya, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia in the electability of female candidates engaged in business-related careers compared to those engaged in civil-society organizations.[159] The authors attribute these variations to the fact that gender-based stereotypes always associate women as caring and "community oriented" that is more congruent to their roles within civil society organizations. Research also investigated the effect of gender- and leadership- congruent political platforms on support for female candidates in post-transitional Tunisia using survey experiments and find prevailing voters' bias against female candidates, especially among those with patriarchal norms.[160] Voters also tend to favor candidates who emphasize issues congruent with stereotypes of political leadership, such as security. Finally, work explicating the link between mass attitudes toward female representation and perceived corruption in Lebanon demonstrate that support for women in politics is positively associated with citizens' perceptions of corruption.[161] The study confirms previous findings on the important role played by gender stereotypes as it shows that citizens who view female politicians as more trustworthy and 'clean' are more likely to express higher levels of support for women in politics.

Gender Stereotypes and Female Politicians in Morocco

To better understand the structure and the relationship between gender stereotypes and voters' behavior, I conducted an original face-to-face survey of 1,200 respondents in Morocco. The survey was fielded in October 2017 with a nationally representative sample; a stratified multi-stage probability sample was implemented based on the 2014 housing and population census.

Morocco is a valuable case for this analysis given its progressive policies toward women, uninterrupted female political inclusion since early 2000s, and the long history of women's movements as masterfully explicated in Tripp's contribution to this volume. Morocco is also characterized by relatively strong political parties that have participated in relatively competitive national and local elections since independence from the French occupation.[162] Parties compete for national seats under closed-list, proportional representation (PR) electoral system while local elections are administered using a combination of PR and single-member (SMD) systems. Yet, Moroccan women continue to be underrepresented in politics and face challenges to gain seats beyond the mandated quota system on both national and local levels.

Relatedly, deep-rooted gender biases continue to exist. For instance, more than 40 percent of the survey respondents either strongly agree or agree that men are better political leaders. However, our knowledge is limited when it comes to the determinants of mass attitudes toward women in politics, and particularly the effect of gender stereotypes on shaping voters' decisions. To bridge this gap, the survey included questions that directly measure citizens' gender stereotypes and their relationship to voting decisions.

Furthermore, to allow comparability with more democratic contexts, the questions used in this analysis are adapted from Dolan (2010) study on the effect of gender stereotypes on support for female candidates in the United States.[163] The results will not only allow us to gauge the structure and impact of stereotypes on voting behavior, but will also offer important comparative insights on variations across democratic and non-democratic contexts.

Table 1 presents the frequencies of the political gender stereotypes in Morocco. Respondents were asked whether they think that female/male in elected office would be better in handling education, terrorism, healthcare or the economy. To measure trait stereotypes, respondents were asked to evaluate male (i.e., assertiveness and ambition) and female (i.e., compassion and consensus-building) traits.

Table 1. Frequencies of Political Gender Stereotypes

In general, do you think men or women in elected office are better at: (n=1200)			
Policy Stereotype	Men %	No Difference	Women %
Education	25.11%	41.9%	33.7%
Terrorism	63.8%	28.1%	8.1%
Healthcare	13.9%	40.4%	45.7%
Economy	33.7%	49.4%	16.8%
When you think about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women would tend to have more…? (n=1200)			
Trait Stereotype	Men %	No Difference	Women %
Assertiveness	57.3%	28.2%	14.5%
Compassion	8.8%	16%	75.1%
Consensus building	30.4%	49.3%	20.3%
Ambition	20.8%	48.7%	30.5%

Starting with respondents' policy/issue stereotypes, data show that female politicians are perceived to be most competent in issues relating to healthcare while men are deemed better at handling terrorism. Yet, most respondents express no gender difference in handling education and the economy. Moreover, there are interesting variations in respondents' trait stereotypes for both male and female politicians/candidates. While the majority of respondents in Morocco perceive men as predominantly assertive, women are perceived as compassionate. Most respondents stated no gender difference in trait stereotype, such as consensus-building and ambition.

In the U.S. context, Dolan (2010) found that citizens perceive female politicians as better at education and healthcare, males as competent in issues relating to terrorism, and no gender difference in issues pertaining to the economy. Furthermore, consistent with data from Morocco, female politicians are mostly stereotyped as compassionate. However, most respondents stated no gender differences relating to assertiveness, consensus-building and ambition. What is remarkable about these results is the major commonalities between the two contexts when it comes to the personal characteristics and policy competencies expected from political leaders. Despite operating under autocratic rule, voters hold fairly similar expectations for their political leaders. I argue that these perceptions/expectations are particularly important in the MENA given the weak presence –and even absence – of political parties from the electoral arena in many parts of the region. Furthermore, as shown in a recent study, MENA has the highest percentage of countries with female candidates running as independents.[164] Thus, understanding these perceptions and the way

they shape voters' decisions are crucial for female political advancement in the MENA.

Gender Political Stereotypes and Voting Behavior

While it is imperative to understand how citizens perceive male and female candidates and politicians, it is equally important to discern the effect of stereotypes on voting decisions and whether such evaluations further contribute to female marginalization in politics. There is considerable debate among gender and politics scholars on the extent to which gender stereotypes affect voter decision-making.[165] In the U.S. context, research has shown that trait stereotypes play a marginal role in shaping mass support for female politicians. Contrastingly, views on policy stereotypes are essential for understanding mass support for female candidates, especially views relating to stereotypically male issues.[166] Furthermore, emphasizing traits that align with leadership tend to provide female candidates with a boost on masculine issues and promote their electability.[167]

To better gauge the role of political gender stereotypes in shaping citizens' preference for female candidates in autocratic settings; I conduct a baseline logistic regression analysis model as well as a fully estimated model that includes the four different stereotypes: **Female Policy, Female Trait, Male Policy** and **Male Trait**. The dependent variable in both models is the likelihood of voting for a female candidate.[168]

The baseline model includes respondents' ideological orientation (left/right scale), age, gender, education, marital status, and region. The full model includes the previous variables as well as the four political gender stereotypes constructed based on extant research on gender stereotypes. Female

policy variable is the combination of both education and healthcare issue areas; female traits are compassion and consensus-building; male policy areas are terrorism and economy while male traits are assertiveness and ambition.[169] Each stereotype is coded as 1 if the respondent perceives men as better in the issue or more likely to uphold the trait; 2 if they think there is no difference between men and women; and 3 if they think women are better at the issue or more likely to have the trait. The results of the logit model show that female policy, male policy, as well as male traits stereotypes, play a strong role in shaping voters' preferences for a female candidate. Respondents' gender and ideological orientation are also significant.[170] Expectedly, females as well as unmarried and more liberal respondents are more likely to support female candidates compared to more conservative ones. Female traits stereotypes, age, education and region (i.e., urban or rural) play a less significant role when it comes to respondents' voting decisions.

Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities of citizens' preference for a female candidate as a function of their stereotypes evaluations. It shows the probabilities for political gender stereotypes: female policy, male policy and male trait. Starting with female policy, respondents who see men as better at female policy issues (education and health care) are .20 more likely to prefer the woman over the man. However, for those who see women as better at female policy areas, the probability of supporting the woman increases to .52

Male trait stereotypes (often associated with male leadership qualities) are also important for female electability. Respondents who believe that women possess the male traits (assertiveness and ambition) are .57 more likely to support the female candidate compared to only .21 among those who believe that males possess these traits.

Importantly, respondents who see women as better in male policy stereotypes (economy and terrorism) are .67 more likely to support a female over male candidate. The probability of supporting a woman if males are perceived as better in the male policy areas is merely .22. Support for female candidates almost triples when citizens' perceive them as more competent in handling the economy and terrorism.

Figure 1. The Probability of Support for Female Candidates and Gender Stereotypes
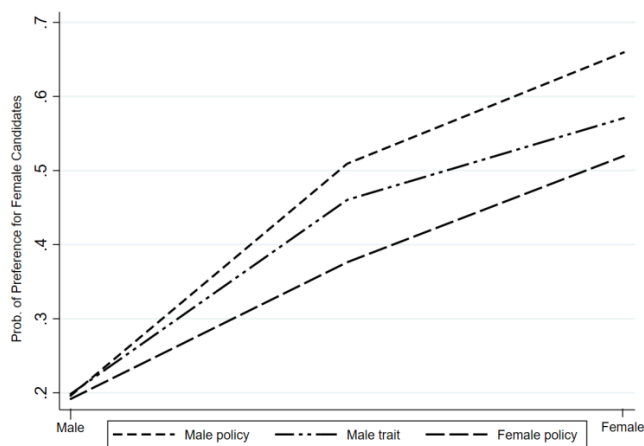
Summary and Future Direction

The results show that voters tend to view candidates from a gendered perspective, and that political gender stereotypes play a major role in shaping citizens' voting decisions in autocratic settings– mainly Morocco. This short paper demonstrates that male policy and trait stereotypes play the most significant roles in shaping citizens' decisions to support female candidates. Female policy stereotypes also matter; women who are perceived as competent in areas of health and education are more likely to garner voters' support. Consistent with extant research in democratic settings, female traits are less significant when it comes to voters' decisions. Voters are less likely to support

women who conform to feminine traits as they view these qualities as incongruent with the most desired leadership traits. In other words, while voters may uphold traditional views regarding the role of women in politics– and society more generally– they tend to penalize female candidates who are unable to demonstrate leadership traits (often associated with male candidates). Consistent with extant work in more established democracies, women in Morocco seem to have more success in garnering voters' support if they place enough emphasis in their electoral campaigns and other interactions with voters on male-dominated policy areas and assuring the public that they are equally qualified to handle the economy and security related domains.

This research has far-reaching implications for the study of gender, politics and electoral politics under authoritarianism and paves the way for further scholarship on the topic. Future work should pay closer attention to the effect of voters' ideology on gender stereotype formation and female electability in MENA. Candidate party affiliation (i.e., party stereotypes) can also intersect with candidates' gender stereotypes in shaping voters' perceptions. But what about contexts in MENA where political parties are banned or fragmented? How would this affect voters' perceptions/evaluations of female candidates? Furthermore, more work is needed on the effect of gender stereotypes across dissimilar electoral contexts (i.e., strong party systems and/or proportional representation rules and single-member voting). Finally, more work is needed to discern the effect of gender stereotypes across different levels of governance (i.e., local versus national elections) with elections' related information asymmetries.

Marwa Shalaby, University of Wisconsin - Madison, marwa.shalaby@wisc.edu

Atlantic Council (2017). http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/women-s-rights-in-morocco-balancing-domestic-and-international-law.

Gamze Cavdar Notes

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[129] Lisa Blaydes. "How Does Islamist Local Governance Affect the Lives of Women?" *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* Vol. 27, Issue 3 (2013), pp.489-509.

[130] Lisa Blaydes and Drew A. Linzer. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalist Islam," *World Politics,* Vol.60, No.4 (2008), pp.576.

[131] Erik Meyersson. "Islamic Rule and the Empowerment of the Poor and Pious". *Econometrica*, Vol: 82, No:1 (2014), pp.267.

[132] Lindsay Benstead. "A Local Islamist Advantage? Toward a Theory of National and Local Service Provision in Algeria," *Local Politics and Islamist Movements* (POMEPS Studies #27). (2017), pp. 41-46.

[133] Janine A. Clark & and Jillian Schwedler. "Who Opened the Window? Women's Activism in Islamist Parties," *Comparative Politics*, Vol.35, No.3 (2003), pp.293-312.

[134] As a recent exception, Morocco's Justice and Development Party (*Hizb Al-Adala wa At-tanmia*) has formed coalitions with two other parties since 2011.

[135] Gamze Çavdar & Yavuz Yaşar. *Women in Turkey: Silent Consensus Between Neoliberalism and Islamic Conservatism.* New York: Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (2019).

[136] Not all conservatives share these ideas. The conservative Islamic ideology expressed by the top leadership are at times criticized, especially by some female columnists, who are connected to the same conservative circles. No such criticism has been expressed by the MPs of the AKP nor by the party's own women's branches.

[137] For a comprehensive analysis of women's economic participation in the MENA, see Valentine Moghadam. "Women's Economic Participation in the Middle East," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005): 110-146.

[138] Marwa Shalaby. "The Paradox of Female Economic Participation in the Middle East and North Africa," *Rice University's Baker Institute Issue Brief* (2014): 1-4.

[139] Five-year development plans and the party programs are good examples of these plans.

[140] The female labor force participation rate for 2005–2015 increased from about 23 percent to 35 percent while the same rate increased from about 71 percent to 77 percent for males.

[141] An example of this would be working for a family-owned business without pay.

[142] These two categories are typically excluded in typical unemployment calculations; I have included them in the calculation to demonstrate the gendered aspects of the official unemployment numbers.

[143] Time-use surveys typically measure the time males and females spend on unpaid labor on housework and it is well-established that females spend more time on these activities than males across the globe.

[144] As an economic philosophy, neoliberalism refers to the belief that free-market capitalism is the answer to almost all economic and political problems. With respect to employment, neoliberalism advocates such policies as economic liberalization, privatization of public enterprises, entrepreneurship, bigger role for the private sector, and reduction in government expenditures. See David Harvey. A Brief History of Neoliberalism. Oxford University Press (2005).

[145] In the book, we have argued that neoliberalism and Islamic conservatism agree on gender roles not only at the policy-level but also by assuming that 1) men and women are fundamentally different 2) that women's primary domain of activity should be home; and 3) there exist a natural order between men and women, and attempts to change it might be detrimental. The discussion also examined the theoretical origin of neoliberalism, which includes the writings by Francis Y. Edgeworth (1845-1926), Alfred Marshall (1842-1924), and W. Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) and the discourses by the top AKP leadership for Islamic conservatism. These assumptions are shared by many other socially conservative religious groups and by no means unique to Islamic conservatism.

[146] Recommended number varies from "at least three" to "four and beyond".

[147] Women's organizations long demanded that the General Directorate of Woman's Status, founded in 1990, turn into a ministry. The AKP rejected the demand and instead founded the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in 2011.

[148] Quoted in "Aile Üniversitesi Açıldı" *Aile Bülteni* (Publication of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy) Vol.1, No.7 (2013), p.3.

[149] Ibid.

[150] "Cumhurbaskanı Edoğan: 'Çalışmak Kadının Aile İçindeki Önemini Ortadan Kaldırmaz", *Haberler* (Turkish Daily), December 11, 2019, available at https://www.haberler.com/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-calismak-kadinin-aile-12708359-haberi/ (accessed on 9/24/2020)

[151] For the poorest of the population, defined as those whose personal income consisted of more than 50 percent welfare transfers, the percentages of males and females who received public transfers were close to each other in 2003 while the percentage of females grew twice as much compared to that of males by 2016.

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[152] Stereotyping is the assignment of "identical characteristics to any person in a group regardless of the actual variation among members of that group" (Aronson 2004, 244).

[153] Kathleen Dolan. "The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates" *Political Behavior* Vol. 32, Issue 1 *(*2010): pp.69-88; Leonie Huddy and Nayda Terkildsen. "Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates" *American Journal of Political Science Vol.* 37, Issue 1 (1993): pp.119-42; Jennifer Lawless. "Women, War, and Winning Elections: Gender Stereotyping in the Post-September 11th Era." *Political Research Quarterly* Vol.57, Issue.3 (2004): pp.479; and Monica C. Schneider and Angela L. Bos. "Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians: Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians" *Political Psychology* Vol. 35, Issue. 2 (2014): pp. 245-66.

[154] Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau. "Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders." *Psychological Review* Vol.109, Issue 3 (2002): pp.573-98; Anne M. Koenig, Alice H. Eagly, Abigail. A. Mitchell, and Tina Ristikari. "Are Leader Stereotypes Masculine? A Meta-Analysis of Three Research Paradigms" *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 137, Issue 4 (2011): pp. 616-42.

[155] Kathleen Dolan. "Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?" *Political Research Quarterly* Vol.67, Issue 1 (2014): pp. 96-107; and Kira Sanbonmatsu. "Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice." *American Journal of Political Science* Vol.46, Issue 1 (2002): pp.20.

[156] Danny Hayes. "When Gender and Party Collide: Stereotyping in Candidate Trait Attribution." *Politics & Gender* Vol.7, Issue 2 (2011): pp.133-65; see also Dolan, "Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?"; and Kira Sanbonmatsu and Kathleen Dolan. "Do Gender Stereotypes Transcend Party?" *Political Research Quarterly* Vol. 62, Issue 3 (2009): pp. 485-94.

[157] Monika L. McDermott. "Voting Cues in Low-Information Elections: Candidate Gender as a Social Information Variable in Contemporary United States Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* Vol.41, Issue 1 (1997): pp. 270.

[158] Lindsay J. Benstead, Amaney A. Jamal, and Ellen Lust. "Is It Gender, Religiosity or Both? A Role Congruity Theory of Candidate Electability in Transitional Tunisia" *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 13, Issue 1 (2015): pp. 74–94.

[159] Lindsay J. Benstead and Ellen Lust. "Why Do Some Voters Prefer Female Candidates? The Role of Perceived Incorruptibility in Arab Elections." in H. Stensöta & L. Wängnerud (Eds.) *Gender and Corruption* Palgrave Macmillan (2018): pp. 83-104.

[160] Alexandra D. Blackman and Marlette Jackson. "Gender Stereotypes, Political Leadership, and Voting Behavior in Tunisia." *Political Behavior* (2019). Forthcoming.

[161] Marwa Shalaby. (2019). "Support for Gender Quotas and Perceived Corruption in Developing Democracies: Evidence from Lebanon." In *Corruption and Informal Practices in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Ina Kubbe and Aiysha Varriach, *Routledge Corruption and Anti-Corruption Studies.*

[162] Morocco introduced a voluntary party quota in the lower chamber since 2002. The number of women hovered at around 11 percent in 2007. In 2012, the number of reserved seats for women increased to 60, or about 17 percent as a result of the constitutional amendments in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Women currently constitute about 20 percent of the lower chamber.

[163] Dolan, "The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates."

[164] Bozena Welborne. "On Their Own? Women Running as Independent Candidates in the Middle East," *Middle East Law and Governance* (2020). Forthcoming

[165] Yoshikuni Ono and Masahiro Yamada. "Do Voters Prefer Gender Stereotypic Candidates? Evidence from a Conjoint Survey Experiment in Japan." *Political Science Research and Methods* Vol. 8, Issue 3 (2020): pp. 477–92.

[166] Dolan, "The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates."

[167] Nichole M. Bauer. "The Effects of Counterstereotypic Gender Strategies on Candidate Evaluations: Counterstereotypic Gender Strategies." Political Psychology Vol. 38, Issue 2 (2017): pp. 279–95.

[168] Exact question is "If two equally qualified candidates are running for office, one a man and the other a woman, do you think you would be more likely to vote for a man or a woman?"

[169] Deborah Alexander and Kristi Andersen. "Gender as a Factor in the Attribution of Leadership Traits." *Political Research Quarterly* Vol. 46, Issue 3 (1993): pp.527; see also Huddy and Terkildsen, "Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates."

[170] These variables are statistically significant at the *0.01 level.*

Lindsay J. Benstead Notes

[171] Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[172] Michael Ross, "Oil, Islam and Women," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 1 (2008): 107-123.

[173] USAID, "Middle East," accessed March 11, 2014, http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/middle-east.

[174] Lindsay J. Benstead, "Explaining Egalitarian Attitudes: The Role of Interests and Exposure," in *Empowering Women after the Arab Spring*, ed. Marwa Shalaby and Valentine Moghadam (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 119-146.

[175] "Arab Barometer," Wave I, accessed August 29, 2020, http://www.arabbarometer.org/.

[176] Zakia Salime, *Between Feminism and Islam: Human Rights and Sharia Law in Morocco* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).