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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## The Humanities in the Age of STEM: Moroccan High School Students' Perceptions

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**| ABSTRACT**

As global attention increasingly privileges STEM disciplines, the Arts and Humanities face escalating marginalization and devaluation. In Morocco, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced: these fields are not only dismissed as less valuable but are also frequently treated with overt condescension. The prevailing social discourse surrounding the Arts and Humanities remains predominantly negative, a perception that exerts tangible effects on their academic status and societal reputation. This study investigates the extent to which Moroccan high school students internalize and reproduce these negative narratives, while also seeking to uncover the underlying causes of such attitudes. To this end, a mixed-methods survey was administered to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from a representative sample of Moroccan high school students. The findings reveal that most respondents share the dominant negative perceptions of the Humanities, primarily grounded in the belief that these disciplines provide limited professional prospects and economic value. Moreover, the results highlight a persistent stereotype portraying students who pursue the Arts and Humanities as less intelligent and academically underperforming compared to their peers in scientific fields.

**| KEYWORDS**

Arts and Humanities, STEM, high school students, Morocco, education, social perception

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### 1. Introduction

In 1958, two years after Morocco gained independence from French and Spanish colonial rule, the country established its first modern university in the capital, Rabat. Mohammed V University initially comprised only the Faculty of Letters and Humanities and was primarily founded to train Moroccan teachers to replace the French instructors who had dominated the educational system (Bahmad, 2020). This initiative was a pressing national necessity at the time. Subsequently, additional universities were founded across the country, encompassing faculties in science, technology, medicine, law, and the humanities. From its inception, however, the humanities in Morocco became closely associated with Language Studies and teacher training.

Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed remarkable technological and scientific advancement, which, particularly in capitalist societies, has been accompanied by significant economic growth. In this context of rapid technological progress, the humanities have been gradually relegated to the margins. Today, the dominant educational and policy discourse privileges the STEM fields—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics—as the primary drivers of national development and modernization.

Furthermore, the humanities have increasingly become a discipline that many view with skepticism. Parents, in particular, often express concern when their children show an interest in the liberal arts, preferring instead that they pursue academic paths perceived as more stable, lucrative, and conducive to professional success. Within this prevailing mindset, a

degree in the humanities is frequently regarded as valuable only for teaching—or, in more dismissive terms, as largely impractical or even useless. Many question the relevance of theoretical frameworks such as Critical Theory, Postcolonialism, and Postmodernism to their children's future in the so-called "real world." Likewise, they struggle to see how studying extensive volumes of history or engaging with literary analysis could lead to meaningful employment in a competitive market.

This perception is particularly pronounced in Morocco, a developing nation where education is predominantly framed as a vehicle for preparing individuals to enter the labor market and, by extension, to contribute to economic growth. Such a utilitarian conception of education further entrenches the marginalization of the Arts and Humanities, perpetuating the negative discourse that continues to shape public perceptions of these disciplines and of the students who choose to pursue them.

The future of the Arts and Humanities in Morocco, given their current status, appears increasingly uncertain. In an article published in *Morocco World News* in 2013, Maruan explicitly calls for the further marginalization of these disciplines, advocating for a reduction in both the number of their faculties and enrolled students. The article goes so far as to suggest that the so-called "futile" subjects taught within the Arts and Humanities would be better confined to personal study at home, treated merely as hobbies for students in scientific fields rather than as legitimate areas of academic pursuit (Maruan, 2013).

The author acknowledges the intrinsic value of the Arts and Humanities; however, he maintains that society should prioritize the sciences as professional disciplines, relegating the humanities to the status of leisure activities. In his view, cultivating the habit of reading literary works is sufficient engagement with the humanities. This argument, however, is neither logically sound nor intellectually defensible. Just as reading a book on neuroscience may provide a general understanding of the subject but does not confer the expertise necessary to perform brain surgery, so too the humanities require systematic study, critical analysis, and methodological rigor—capacities that extend far beyond casual reading or personal interest.

Nevertheless, the humanities in Morocco remain marginalized, in part because students perceive them as having limited value. Many students consider these fields practically worthless, given the scarcity of career opportunities directly related to the humanities. Moreover, there persists a widespread assumption that students who pursue humanities disciplines are less academically capable than their peers in the sciences.

In light of this context, and considering the prevailing discourse surrounding the Arts and Humanities, this study examines the extent to which negative societal perceptions influence the academic choices of high school students in Morocco. It seeks to identify the factors that drive students away from the humanities and toward STEM disciplines. Given that high school students are still minors, the study also considers how parents might respond if their children opted to pursue the humanities. Key questions include: Do Moroccan high school students perceive the humanities as valuable, both intellectually and in terms of career preparation? How do they view society's attitudes toward these disciplines? Addressing these questions requires a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research. In addition to a review of the existing literature, the study employs questionnaires designed to capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights.

To ensure reliability and precision, the data were collected from students across both public and private schools and from a diverse range of academic disciplines. The same questionnaire was administered to the entire target population to enhance the representativeness of the sample.

## 2. Literature Review

The humanities encompass fields of inquiry that explore the cultural, intellectual, and artistic dimensions of human experience. Disciplines such as philosophy, history, comparative religion, the arts, and literature fall under this broad definition. The roots of the humanities, however, can be traced back to the fifth century BCE, when the Greek Sophists offered courses designed to train responsible citizens of the polis. A comparable educational model was later exemplified by Cicero's *Humanitas* program, which aimed to cultivate skilled orators and civic-minded individuals (Britannica, 2021).

During the late Middle Ages, the humanities in Europe—then commonly referred to as the liberal arts—encompassed subjects such as grammar, rhetoric, music, astronomy, logic, and arithmetic. At that time, there was no clear distinction between the humanities and the sciences as they are understood today. Despite the modern separation of these fields, Bod and Kursell (2015) argue that the sciences and the humanities have historically shared epistemic objects, virtues, values, methods, and practices. They further note that the further back one examines history, the more blurred the boundaries between the two domains become: "It is generally accepted that the histories of, say, biology and history overlap in such a field as natural history" (Bod & Kursell, 2015, pp. 337–340). This point is illustrated by the example of Hermann von Helmholtz, whose fascination with

the composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina prompted him to explore the concept of “distortion,” ultimately leading him to investigate the physiological mechanisms of hearing.

The further we trace back in history, the hazier the distinctions between the sciences and the humanities appear. For scholars and philosophers such as Abu Bakr al-Razi (864 or 865–925 or 935 CE), who was both an alchemist and a physician; Albertus Magnus (1200–1280), who served as both bishop and scientist; and Al-Ghazali (1058–1111), whose work spanned mysticism and early scientific inquiry, a clear-cut separation between these fields did not exist. Moreover, from an Islamic perspective, the humanities encompass not only poetry, history, and rhetoric but also lexicography and grammar, highlighting a broader conception of humanistic knowledge beyond the Western framework (Makdisi, 1990).

The bodies of knowledge produced by the humanities and the natural sciences often develop in parallel. As Wordsworth (1800) observes in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, the “Man of science” is invariably accompanied by the Poet—here broadly representing the artist—highlighting the intertwined nature of scientific and artistic inquiry. Wordsworth further asserts that:

The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet’s art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings Wordsworth (1800, as cited in McLeish, 2016, p. 15).

Numerous works of art and literature demonstrate a clear influence of science. Joseph Wright of Derby’s *The Alchemist Discovering Phosphorus* provides a striking example. Similarly, the intertwining of the natural sciences and the arts is evident in the journals of Sir Humphry Davy, which contain both detailed notes on his chemical experiments and his poetry. One might also argue that the entire plot of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* exemplifies the deep interconnection between scientific inquiry and the humanities, illustrating how scientific themes can inspire and shape literary creation.

Nevertheless, the separation of the humanities and the sciences was not seriously discussed until the late eighteenth century, and it was only in the nineteenth century that this distinction became more firmly established (Bod & Maat, 2010). Scholars and philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Heinrich Rickert were among those who engaged in this debate. Dilthey, in particular, distinguished between the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*), which he described as the “spiritual sciences,” and the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*).

At the international level, STEM fields and the humanities are often perceived as being in competition, a notion that is counterproductive (Richards, 2016). This divide and its consequences were famously addressed by C. P. Snow in his lectures, later published as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. Snow, who was both a novelist and a scientist, argued that the separation between the “scientist” and the “intellectual” stems from a lack of understanding between the two groups. He described the academic world as polarized:

Literary intellectuals at one pole—at the other scientists, and as the most representative, the physical scientists. Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension—sometimes (particularly among the young) hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding. They have a curious distorted image of each other” (Snow, 1961, p. 4).

This separation is also evident in the Moroccan context, although its nature differs. In Morocco, the humanities are often regarded as secondary, if not entirely expendable, with limited perceived value compared to the STEM fields.

### **3. Research Methodology**

As discussed above, the status of the Arts and Humanities in Morocco has been declining, largely due to prevailing social discourse surrounding these disciplines. High school students who pursue the Arts and Humanities are not only marginalized but often looked down upon. Arguably as a consequence of this attitude, many private high schools currently exclude the Arts and Humanities from their curricula, instead emphasizing science and economics. This curricular bias, coupled with a lack of guidance for students, is likely to further undermine the status of these disciplines. According to data from the Moroccan Department of Statistics, Strategy, and Planning, in 2019 there were over 170,000 high school students in the private sector. Most of these students were not offered the opportunity to pursue an Arts and Humanities Baccalaureate—a limitation

likely detrimental both to the field itself and to students who might have had an interest in pursuing it but were unaware that such a pathway existed.

For these reasons, this study seeks to address several key questions. To what extent does the negative discourse surrounding the humanities influence the academic choices of high school students? What factors drive these students away from the Arts and Humanities and toward STEM disciplines? Given that high school students are still minors, how might their parents respond if their children chose to pursue a humanities education? Do Moroccan high school students perceive the humanities as valuable and capable of preparing them for the labor market? Finally, what are their views on how society regards the Arts and Humanities?

For this purpose, the study adopts a deductive approach. Having established the historical context and the declining status of the humanities internationally, the deductive method is employed to test whether Moroccan students, influenced by prevailing social discourse, avoid the Arts and Humanities because they perceive these fields as offering limited value in the job market and, by extension, to society. The data collected are designed to evaluate this hypothesis through an explanatory research framework. By combining insights from the literature review with empirical data, this strategy allows for an in-depth exploration of the factors underlying the observed trends and the validity of the proposed hypothesis.

*A. The data collection for this study employs a mixed-methods strategy. Quantitative data are gathered to provide a foundational numerical basis for testing the proposed hypothesis. Simultaneously, qualitative data are collected to gain a deeper understanding of the factors underlying the quantitative findings and to contextualize them. Moreover, the qualitative component allows participants to engage more interactively with the survey questions, providing richer insights into their perceptions and attitudes.*

### **3.1 Research Sample and Participants**

High school students represent, potentially, Morocco's future responsible adult citizens. For this reason, this study considers it essential to begin with them, particularly given the scarcity of literature on this topic. Establishing a foundational understanding of students' perceptions and attitudes is a necessary first step, and high school students provide the most appropriate starting point for such an inquiry.

Of the 463 survey responses, approximately 84% came from the public sector, while roughly 16% were from the private sector. Although this difference may initially seem substantial, it aligns reasonably with the distribution of students across these sectors in Morocco. According to the latest government data, high school students in the private sector constitute around 10% of all high school students. Therefore, the sample—despite a slightly higher proportion of private-sector respondents—still provides meaningful insights from both public and private school students, allowing perspectives from both sectors to be represented in the data.

The primary disciplines offered in most high schools include the sciences (in all their subfields), the humanities, and economics. The results indicate the overwhelming dominance of the sciences—an observation noted earlier and explored further in the data analysis section. Participants were also given the opportunity to identify additional fields of study not commonly offered in all high schools, allowing for a broader understanding of student preferences and exposure.

### **3.2 Data Introduction and Analysis**

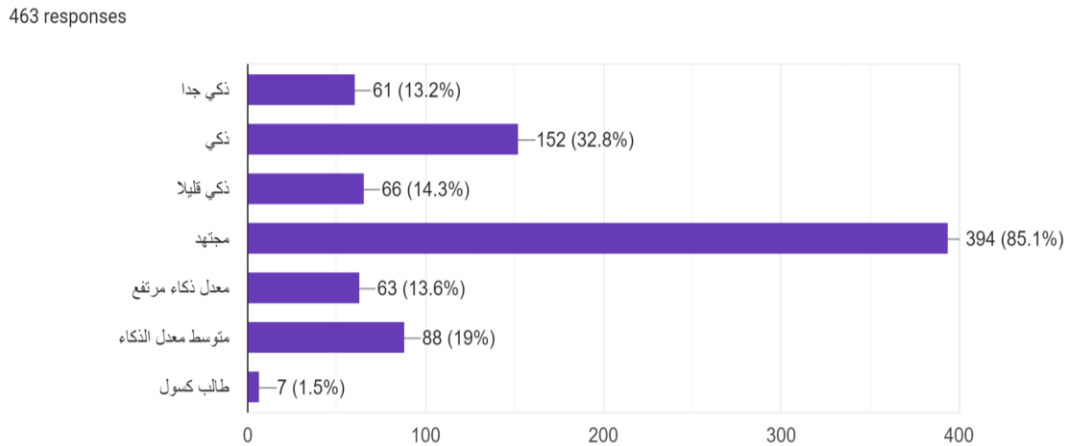
A key aspect examined in this study is whether Moroccan high school students recognize the negative discourse surrounding the humanities in their society. In response to the survey question on this issue, approximately 56% answered affirmatively, around 36% responded "maybe," and the remainder answered negatively. These findings suggest that the negative connotations associated with the Arts and Humanities are widely acknowledged, even within the educational environment. Moroccan high school students appear to be aware of the low social status of these disciplines, a perception that is likely to influence their academic choices, as explored in the following sections.

#### **3.2.1 The Arts and Humanities Students**

Before examining how Moroccan high school students perceive the Arts and Humanities and the reasons behind these perceptions, it is important to consider how students of these disciplines are themselves viewed. Observations of social media portrayals suggest that Arts and Humanities students in Morocco are often characterized as less intelligent and less capable in the natural sciences. Numerous Facebook and Instagram pages post content that undermines the intellectual abilities of

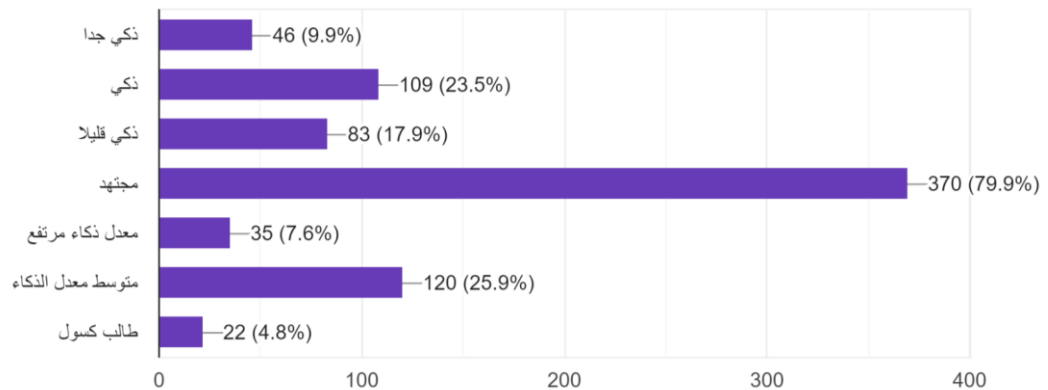
students pursuing the humanities. To explore these perceptions empirically, survey participants were asked to compare characteristics typically attributed to students in STEM fields with those associated with students in the Arts and Humanities.

- *What qualities do you think a person should have to get a degree from a Science University (Medicine, Math, Engineering, Physics...Etc.)? \*You can select more than one answer.*



**Figure 6. Traits Associated with Science Students**

- *What qualities do you think a person should have to get a degree from an Arts and Humanities University? (Literature, Arts, Music, Philosophy, etc.) \*You can select more than one answer.*

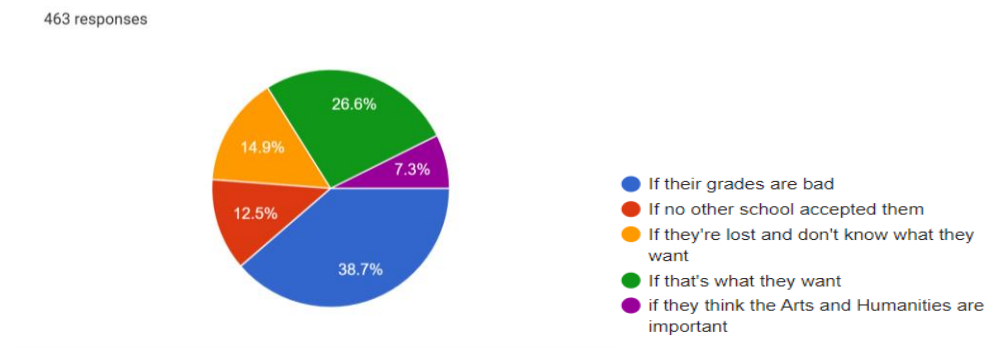


**Figure 7. Traits Associated with Humanities Students**

The comparison reveals largely similar perceptions, suggesting a general mutual respect among students. However, a small but noticeable difference emerges: students pursuing humanities degrees are slightly more often associated with negative traits and slightly less with positive ones. While these differences are modest overall, they are more pronounced at the extremes. One participant noted that their mother described the humanities as “only for stupid people.”

Further data support this perspective. While respondents generally avoid labeling others as “stupid” or “lazy,” the results were more negative when participants were asked to identify factors influencing a student’s decision to pursue an Arts and

Humanities degree. This suggests that, although personal judgments may be tempered, broader perceptions of the humanities remain less favorable.



**Figure 8. Factors Influencing Students to Choose Humanities**

These findings indicate that Arts and Humanities students in Morocco are often associated with low academic performance, uncertainty, and a sense of aimlessness. Many appear to choose these fields due to lower grades, limited access to more “prestigious” programs, or uncertainty about their academic path. The relatively small proportion of students who recognize the intrinsic value of the Arts and Humanities underscores the marginalization and devaluation of these disciplines, a topic explored in the following section.

### 3.2.2 The Hierarchy of Disciplines

The dominance of STEM disciplines is also evident in the Moroccan context. Among the 463 participants in this study, roughly four out of five are currently enrolled in scientific fields at their high schools. Similarly, when asked about their preferred fields of study after high school, most students favored STEM disciplines, with fewer than 3% expressing interest in the Arts and Humanities.

The next survey question sought to identify the reasons behind students’ chosen fields of study. Specifically, it asked why students were interested in the disciplines they selected for their future education. As noted earlier, this question was designed to yield both quantitative and qualitative data. Responses were manually reviewed and categorized, as some students either did not respond or provided answers that could not be classified meaningfully for the study. For analysis, the data were divided into three main categories based on the fields selected by participants: (1) STEM—including Medicine, for consistency in data analysis, (2) Business, Economics, Law, and Politics, and (3) the Arts and Humanities.

The data for this section indicate two primary reasons behind students’ choices of discipline: personal interest in the subjects and perceived career opportunities. Among the 253 participants who provided reasons for pursuing STEM fields, approximately 88% cited genuine interest, ranging from a passion for specific subjects to aspirations for a particular career. The remaining roughly 12% indicated that their choices were motivated primarily by the expectation of a secure and profitable future, reflecting a belief that STEM fields offer greater opportunities in the job market. One participant justified her interest in medicine by noting, “In our society, it seems like there are no unemployed doctors”<sup>1</sup>.

As the previous figures indicate, students’ primary motivations for pursuing STEM fields appear to be a combination of personal interest and the security these disciplines provide in terms of future employment. Many students express passion for specific subjects or career paths, while others are influenced by the perceived stability and profitability associated with STEM professions. However, these interests may be shaped, at least in part, by the social perception of STEM fields as fashionable, prestigious, and highly sought-after in the job market, suggesting that societal trends and external pressures contribute alongside individual aspirations.

<sup>1</sup> This case concerns a high school student who intends to pursue a career in medicine after graduation.

Another participant stated that they were interested in biology because “it allows people to know the truth of the world they live in”<sup>2</sup>. This observation points to another factor contributing to the declining interest in the Arts and Humanities: the highly subjective nature of these disciplines. Unlike the natural sciences, which are often perceived as tangible and capable of producing immediate, measurable results, the Arts and Humanities are frequently criticized as less practical or even a waste of time. In these fields, notions of truth and objectivity are frequently approached with skepticism, particularly in the postmodern era. Postmodernists argue that all texts are open to an infinite number of interpretations, asserting that “the author enters into his own death, writing begins” (Barthes, 1986, p. 49). In contrast, critics such as T.S. Eliot maintained that the author retains a degree of authority over their work (Eliot, 1919). Others contend that the postmodern perspective aligns closely with the rapidly changing and complex nature of the contemporary world (Ivanova & Elkina, 2016). These debates are particularly relevant in the Moroccan context, as postmodern ideas continue to influence perceptions within the humanities.

The policies promoting the advancement of STEM disciplines inevitably contribute to the further marginalization of the Arts and Humanities. Moreover, when political and social discourse consistently portrays STEM as the sole path to a secure and prosperous future, it implicitly conveys that degrees in the Arts and Humanities hold little relevance to the job market. Governmental statements often reinforce this perception by emphasizing the need to align universities—particularly faculties of humanities—with market demands, and successive educational reforms have sought to operationalize this objective.

Fields such as Law and Economics consistently attract the highest rates of student enrollment in Moroccan higher education. According to available data from the 2020–2021 academic year, approximately 50,000 students were enrolled in these disciplines. Although these figures should be interpreted with caution, they nonetheless indicate a clear preference among students for fields perceived as both prestigious and professionally promising. The growing popularity of these disciplines<sup>3</sup> among high school graduates thus warrants closer examination to better understand the motivations underlying such choices.

The responses in this section of the survey, provided by students who selected these disciplines as their intended fields of study, were categorized along the same two dimensions as before. Of the 114 participants who expressed interest in these areas, approximately 77.8% stated that their choice was driven by genuine interest in the subject matter and personal aspirations. The remaining 22.2% indicated that their decision was primarily influenced by the perceived prestige of these fields and their association with greater employability. As one participant succinctly remarked, “Economy rules the world”<sup>4</sup>, an observation that is, in essence, not inaccurate. We live in an era fundamentally driven by economic growth, where prosperity is widely equated with financial expansion and productivity. It is commonly assumed—and supported by a considerable body of literature—that stronger economies tend to yield higher standards of living. Consequently, it is unsurprising that an increasing number of students are drawn to disciplines such as economics and business, perceiving them as gateways to both personal stability and social advancement.

The Arts and Humanities emerged as the least preferred fields among the main academic disciplines suggested in the survey. Only a small fraction of participants—approximately 1.3%—expressed an intention to pursue university studies in these areas after high school. Although the exact percentage should be interpreted with caution, this tendency nonetheless reflects a broader issue: the limited recognition and articulation of the value that the humanities contribute to society.

This section of the study shifts the focus from the quantitative to the qualitative dimension. All participants who selected the Arts and Humanities as their intended fields of study did so out of genuine personal interest and intellectual curiosity. However, despite their positive attitudes toward these disciplines, they nevertheless shared the prevailing societal view that a humanities degree holds limited value in the job market. The data indicate that students interested in the Arts and Humanities are primarily motivated by passion for the field rather than by professional or economic considerations. Moreover, when asked directly whether they believed that a degree in the Arts and Humanities adequately prepares graduates for employment, a majority—approximately 56.8%—responded negatively.

As previously discussed, the issue in Morocco extends beyond mere neglect of the Arts and Humanities to their active devaluation. In his *Morocco World News* article, Aziz Maruan contends that by further marginalizing the humanities, “the

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<sup>2</sup> This case pertains to a high school student who intends to study biology after graduation.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Enseignement Supérieur en Chiffres 2020–2021*. Royaume du Maroc, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Formation Professionnelle, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, Département de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique.

<sup>4</sup> This case pertains to a participant who intends to pursue a degree in economics after high school.

Moroccan government would set the basic foundations for a potential active, creative and developed society.” Nearly a decade after the publication of that article, the findings of this study suggest that such a view persists and continues to shape not only Moroccan social attitudes but also the country’s educational policies. When participants were asked which disciplines should receive greater emphasis, approximately 79.5% favored the sciences. While this preference is understandable—given that scientific advancement is indispensable for national development—these results also underscore the persistent undervaluation of the Arts and Humanities within Moroccan society.

### 3.2.3. Why Not the Humanities?

The data thus far indicate that the Arts and Humanities in Morocco—and the students who pursue them—are consistently viewed in a negative light. These disciplines are marginalized and devalued within public discourse, and their students are often perceived as less intelligent and academically underperforming. Consequently, many students consciously distance themselves from the Arts and Humanities, reflecting the profound impact of societal perceptions on educational choices.

The findings align with previous research, yet it remains essential to investigate the reasons that lead students to avoid the humanities, in order to determine whether Moroccan high school students devalue these disciplines primarily because they perceive them as irrelevant to the job market. To explore this, participants were asked to articulate their reasons for not considering the Arts and Humanities.

For the purpose of obtaining a robust quantitative and qualitative assessment, only responses that could be meaningfully categorized were included in a separate, manual analysis. This approach allowed the researchers to establish distinct categories of responses, of which two primary categories emerged, with one of them further divided into subcategories.

The responses were grouped into two primary categories: first, a lack of personal interest in the fields, and second, a misunderstanding of the disciplines and their potential contributions. Given that the first category reflects largely individual preferences, this section of the study focuses on the second category, which was further divided into two subcategories. Both subcategories share a common theme: a fundamental misunderstanding of what the humanities entail and the purpose they serve in society.

One of the principal misunderstandings revealed by the data is that some Moroccan high school students perceive the Arts and Humanities as disciplines primarily focused on rote memorization. Among the students who expressed disinterest in these fields—excluding those whose choices were based solely on personal preference—many associated humanities topics with what they referred to as *hifd*, the act of memorizing and reproducing information on exams. One participant, explaining why they had not considered pursuing the humanities, remarked, “I hate memorizing and love thinking and solving problems”.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, approximately 40% of participants within this subcategory share the misconception that the humanities primarily involve memorization. The remaining students, while also holding some misapprehensions about the Arts and Humanities, differ in their reasoning: they perceive these disciplines as inherently limited and constraining in scope. To illustrate this perspective, several responses from the participants are presented below;

- *“Unfortunately, there is no secure future for the Humanities in Morocco.”*
- *“It won’t get me anywhere.”*
- *“This field doesn’t keep up with the scientific development.”*
- *“I thought about it at first but my parents refused because I had good grades that gave me access to scientific subjects. They think that a better future is guaranteed through science and not literature.”*

<sup>5</sup> This example illustrates a participant who chose not to pursue an Arts and Humanities program.

Given the prevalence of such attitudes among Moroccan high school students, this study identifies a central factor underlying the negative discourse surrounding the humanities: a fundamental misunderstanding of their purpose. Many students perceive the humanities as a waste of time, believing that the only tangible outcome is a degree that prepares them to teach the very subjects they have studied, thereby trapping them in a repetitive cycle. Historically, Arts and Humanities faculties in Morocco were established primarily to train teachers to replace French instructors following independence (Bahmad, 2020). This study suggests that, despite the broader potential of these fields, this narrow perception continues to shape public discourse and student attitudes today.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Moroccan high school students largely internalize the prevailing social discourse that frames the Arts and Humanities as disciplines of limited value. Many perceive pursuing a degree in these fields as unlikely to lead to a secure or profitable future. In addition, students are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their peers who choose the humanities, often characterizing them as less intelligent or unambitious. This perception contributes to the continued stigmatization and marginalization of the Arts and Humanities within both educational and societal contexts.

The findings of this study suggest that the negative attitudes of Moroccan high school students toward the Arts and Humanities largely stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of these disciplines and their purpose. Accordingly, the study underscores the importance of clearly communicating the aims of the Arts and Humanities and highlighting the value they contribute to society.

It is a fundamental mistake to compare the STEM disciplines—or any other scientific fields—to the Humanities on the basis of which produces a greater number of workers. Education has increasingly been reduced to a mechanism for economic growth; however, it is essential to reflect on whether the true purpose of the Humanities is, in fact, to produce workers at all.

The Humanities, by their very nature, are not disciplines primarily designed to produce workers whose contribution to society is measured solely in economic terms—though they are perfectly capable of doing so. Rather, they cultivate writers, thinkers, historians, and philosophers whose principal task is to examine and question the very structures that constitute society. The Arts and Humanities exist to nurture thinkers, not mere laborers. They teach students that through the study and interpretation of history, one may gain a deeper understanding of the present and envision a more informed future. They also encourage critical engagement with the human condition, fostering analytical reading, articulate expression, and reasoned debate—skills that enable individuals to ensure their voices are not only heard but respected within their societies. Yet, in an era dominated by rapid economic growth, the role of such thinkers—whose vocation is to question and reflect upon this very progress—appears increasingly marginalized, as their inquiries may be perceived as impediments to unrestrained development.

There is some truth to the anecdotal definition of the role of the Humanities that claims, “The sciences teach us how to clone a dinosaur. The Humanities teach us why that might be a bad idea<sup>6</sup>”. However, if cloning dinosaurs were to become profitable, the insights of the Humanities would hold little value in a context where discourse surrounding these disciplines remains negative. The future may indeed be profoundly technological, yet it will inevitably remain inhabited by people and their cultures — and it is precisely this human dimension that the Humanities seek to study, preserve, and understand.

Unfortunately, for many Moroccan high school students, the Humanities are perceived as disciplines in which critical thinking is neither fostered nor required. This study, however, may serve as a preliminary step toward a deeper investigation into the underlying causes of these perceptions and the potential strategies for addressing them in the future.

During the course of this study, several limitations were encountered. The primary challenge lay in the scarcity of literature addressing this specific research topic within the Moroccan context. Nevertheless, this very limitation enhances the significance of the present study, as it contributes to laying the groundwork for future research in the field. As outlined in the methodology, the decision to focus exclusively on high school students—rather than including university students—necessitated adjustments in both data collection and methodological design. Additionally, some participants failed to fully grasp the research objective, rendering their responses unsuitable for analysis and thereby complicating the data interpretation process.

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<sup>6</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion on the value, defence, and future of the Humanities, see Zhang, Longxi, “The Humanities: Their Value, Defence, Crisis, and Future,” *Diogenes*, 58(1–2), 64–74 (2011).

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