



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE WORKPLACE EQUALITY AUDIT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL INQUIRY BETWEEN FRANCE
AND MOROCCO

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ABSTRACT

In the professional sphere, women still face multiple inequalities. By detecting, evaluating and removing it, the audit is the key to a real workplace equality. This article analyzes the correlation between the audit approach and the implementation of workplace equality and assesses the situation of equality at work and firm practices promoting it. 375 women and men working in private enterprises of all sectors responded to our empirical comparative investigation of the Moroccan and French contexts.

Key words:

Inequalities, Audit, Workplace equality,
Comparative analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Following a very long-term evolution, equal treatment between men and women in companies is no longer a subject of debate, it is anchored in the law and generates programs of action and specific policies. It also has been integrated into the issue of diversity and, in some countries, has been a dimension of Human Resources Management policies. However, it should be noted that while equality exists in theory, it is far from being a reality. Even today, inequalities between women and men at the workplace persist, they concern the entire "HR process", "the right to professional equality has remained a dead letter" Maruani (2011, p.37). In order to achieve the workplace equality, we advocate the use of an audit approach and this research, mainly, aims to explore the correlation between the two. As a first step, we are developing an audit approach targeting the workplace equality, the strategies in which it operates, and the measures it supports. Secondly, we assess the status of equality in the labor market and examine the policies adopted by companies to break the glass ceiling and allow women to progress and advance their careers.

Audit of equal opportunities

Beyond the legal obligation and in order to respond to both economic and ethical challenges, companies have committed themselves to the development and promotion of equality between women and men. It is a question of putting in place measures of awareness, prevention and care in case of direct and indirect discrimination. The measures envisaged concern the process of Human Resources Management and development policies: recruitment, promotion, training, remuneration and the work-life balance. All these measures illustrate different modalities and different levels of implementation of professional equality (Laufer and Silvera, 2006; Laufer, 2008). We are mainly concerned with two ways of implementing equality measures. On the one hand, equality of treatment: Through a preventive audit carried out ex-ante (Stankiewicz, 2007), the aim is to ensure that career prospects are the same for men and women. In the case of discrepancies, it is necessary to carry out a general review of the methods of selection, whether for recruitment, promotions or access to training. As well as a review of remuneration methods. The aim is to have a gender neutral professional assessment. This implies respecting the principle of non-discrimination and that the only determining factor in the hiring and career development of women and men is merit. Merit translated by skills. On the other hand, equality of opportunity: It is a question of formalizing and quantifying the gaps and

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introducing measures of rebalancing through positive actions. The goal, through a curative audit carried out ex-post (Stankiewicz, 2007), is to catch up with the inequalities observed. This implies that objective, punctual and specific actions must be taken for women to fix the inequalities affecting their chances and thus leading to real equality. Measures taken in this direction include the elimination of wage gap, the introduction of quotas to rebalance the distribution between women and men regarding recruitment, presence in traditionally male jobs or presence in the high Spheres of power and decision-making, as well as the implementation of long training courses aimed at catching up on career delays as a result of interruptions and segregations.

Concerning actions to reconcile professional and private life, they focus mainly on three dimensions:

- Creation of an enabling environment encompassing a set of arrangements for the flexibilisation of working time. This by diversifying access to resources in terms of childcare and modulation of schedules.
- Encouraging fathers involvement by relaxing paternity leave norms and certain enterprises have even maintained their remuneration (existence of supplementary wages paid by the employer for paternity leave, maternity leave, adoption).
- Protection of pregnant women: Adjustment of working time and workstation during pregnancy. Neutralization of the period of maternity leave on career progress by protecting and preserving the rights of pregnant women (access to increases, training, promotions ...).

Moreover, more and more companies are tackling stereotypes through information and awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of equality and diversity, as well as measures to enhance skills and feminine predominant jobs. The aim is to "lead to a different perception of women's skills, their value and their role, breaking with a traditional model of apprehension of women's work as" naturally "confined to low-skilled, non-mobile jobs and With little technical content or without managerial responsibility." Laufer (2008, 39). In addition, it is also important to combat stereotypical perceptions of women themselves, which result in self-censorship. And encourage them to break their isolation, mainly, through sponsorship and monitoring programs. The measures taken by the company, in order to ensure their continuity and guarantee their corrective power, must, in our view, be accompanied by practices whose aim is not to renew the causes of the inequalities and disparities observed and on the other hand must take ownership of the vigilance and the will of the hierarchy to apply them in a sustainable way.

In order to meet these objectives, these dispositions must be made within the framework of three main audit strategies:

- Reactive: the analysis of the gaps and the identification of their nature, allows the company to react accordingly.
- Preactive: the detection of opportunities for the development of workplace equality, allows the company to adopt preparatory measures.
- Proactive: through voluntary actions dedicated to implement workplace equality and eliminate discriminatory practices.

The fundamental challenge for the enterprise should be to integrate professional equality at all levels of reflection and action in all its processes. The main objective is to make it a strategic approach capable of eliminating both the effects and the causes of inequalities, by mobilizing all the actors concerned. As with any strategic approach, the question arises of the steps required for its implementation. Ours takes place mainly in three stages. In the first place, the diagnosis is made through an audit of the situation of professional equality which makes it possible to identify gaps and obstacles to the advancement of women. Diagnosis leads to recommendations aimed at influencing the context, reducing gaps (Guillot-Soulez, 2015) and ensuring equality. Finally, the recommendations came to fruition thanks to the action that mobilizes energies towards reaching the goal, beyond the obstacles (Peretti and Vachette, 1986, Vazier, 1988, Peretti and Igalens 2008). The first step is the diagnosis of the situation of women and men in the workplace. It is based on quantified indicators that provide an inventory of the situation of equality and allow to follow up and represent its evolution in the HR process. The diagnosis makes visible the inequalities, but also the opportunities for advancing professional equality. Hence the importance of this step. The aim is to identify possible discrepancies and discriminations but also to detect opportunities for the progress of professional equality. The second step is to define measures to address the discrepancies in the form of recommendations. These measures are part of an action plan negotiated with the social partners or initiated by the company. It must be based on progression objectives, with quantified indicators and deadlines.

Finally, the third stage consists in the realization of the actions and the modalities of the implementation of workplace equality. Actions must be precise, clear and encompass all HR process.

Through the action plan, the aim is to:

- Reduce existing gaps through measures adapted to the objectives pursued and thus ensure the same career prospects for both men and women.
- Avoid further widening gaps by setting up monitoring indicators and sensitizing managers to direct and indirect discrimination against women as well as to measures promoting equality.

After unveiling the correlation between the audit approach and the implementation of workplace equality. In the next section we aim to audit the situation of men and women in the labor market and to audit the commitment of companies to promote professional equality.

Audit of the situation of equality in the professional sphere: cases of France and Morocco

This second part is dedicated to expose and analyze the results of our empirical investigation. We begin by presenting the methodology adopted. We then focus on analyzing our results.

Methodology

The purpose of this survey is to carry out a factual analysis, within the professional sphere, of the situation of men and women, as well as the commitment of companies to eliminate the gender gap. In order to meet this objective, we have

adopted a qualitative approach using a semi-directive questionnaire, which is part of a comparative approach on a transnational scale. Whether in France or Morocco, our sample is randomly determined. We've chosen not to limit ourselves to a particular sector of activity, in order to seek the diversity of companies and, in this case, of those interviewed. For the size of the enterprises, we have targeted small, medium and large ones, because professional equality is a common necessity to all categories. We targeted the private sector only, because the public one, is governed by different standards. Otherwise, in order to get a representative sample and to target companies of all sizes and sectors, we opted for an online administration of the questionnaire. A method that facilitates obtaining answers and guarantees a multiplicity and a variability of the results. It also preserves the anonymity of the respondents. This is mainly linked to the sensitive nature of the subject we are addressing; which requires identifying possible discriminatory practices. Finally, we have used "Google documents" to obtain the data to be processed. These data were then integrated into the "XLstat" software that was used for the extraction and analysis.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section is devoted to the analysis of the results of the empirical study. Our aim here is to make visible the inequalities experienced by women within the professional sphere. We rely on a comparison, intra and inter-country, of the professional situations of men and women in France and Morocco. After the data purification process has been performed, our total sample size is 375, of whom 36% are men and 64% are women.

In France and Morocco, the percentage of women responding to the questionnaire exceeded that of men. In France, they are twice as likely as men to have answered our questions. This can be explained by the interest in the subject which, for women, being more concerned, is more important. We also see a contrast in our male population. Contrast represented by a difference of 16% between our percentage of respondents in Morocco which is 46% and that of our respondents in France is limited to 30%. There is no obvious argument to explain rationally this gap but we tend to think that the proliferation of surveys related to the subject of professional equality in France may lead men to be less inclined to respond to them. In our sample, the tertiary sector is the most important in terms of jobs, with an occupancy rate of 65% in France and 71% in Morocco. The vast majority of women are employed in it (66% in France and 74% in Morocco). The secondary sector, which is predominantly male, comes in second, and the primary sector employs the lowest proportion of our study population.

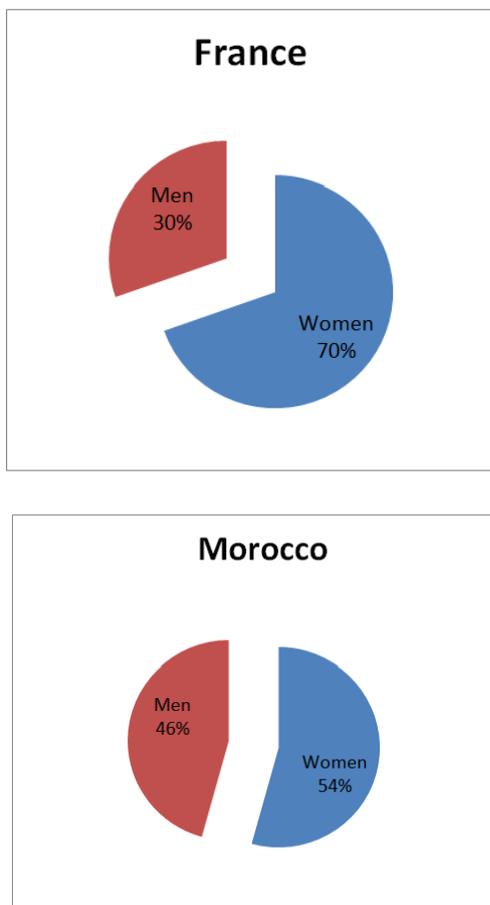


Figure 1. Distribution of the 375 respondents by gender

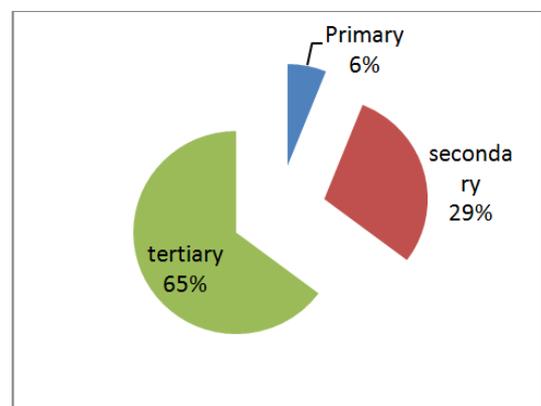


Figure 2. Sector of activity in France

Table 1. Results by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Primary	6	5
Secondary	28	32
Tertiary	66	63

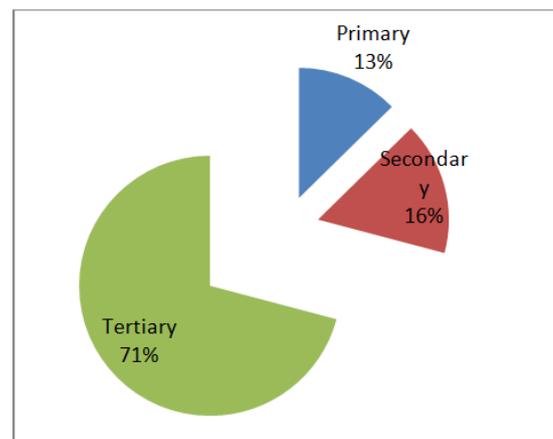


Figure 3. Sector of activity in Morocco

Table 2. Results by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Primary	10	16
Secondary	16	17
Tertiary	74	67

Within your company, would you say that you are subject to discrimination?

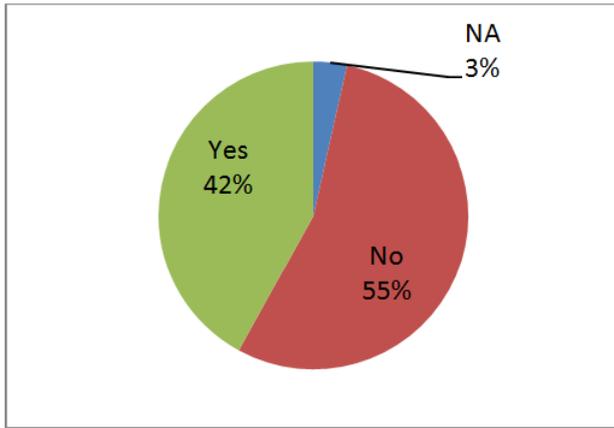


Table 3. Results by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
NA	3	4
No	45	64
Yes	52	32

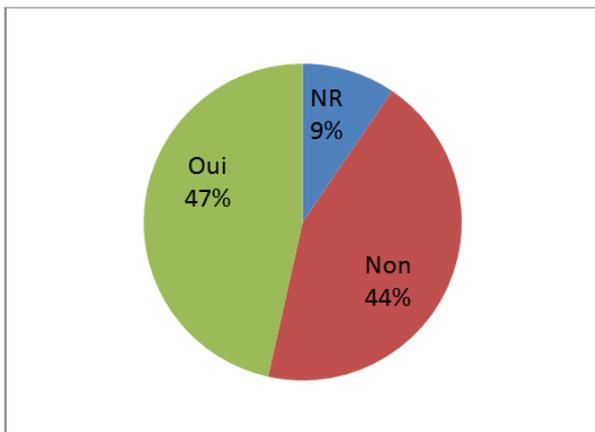


Figure 5. Proportion of respondents subjected to discrimination in Morocco

Table 4. Responses by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
NA	0	19
No	40	48
Yes	60	33

55% of our French sample say they are not discriminated at work, compared to 42% who claim to face discriminations. In Morocco, 47% of our workforce is discriminated and 44% not. In both countries, the majority of the female population suffers from discrimination within the company (52% in France and 60% in Morocco). Men, state, for the most part, that they are not subjected to discrimination (64% in France, 48% in Morocco).

Does the labor market offer equal opportunities for men and women to succeed in a career?

The female and male populations of the two countries consider that the labor market offers only partially the same

opportunities for men and women to succeed in a career (respectively in France 51%, 51%, Morocco 56% 42%).

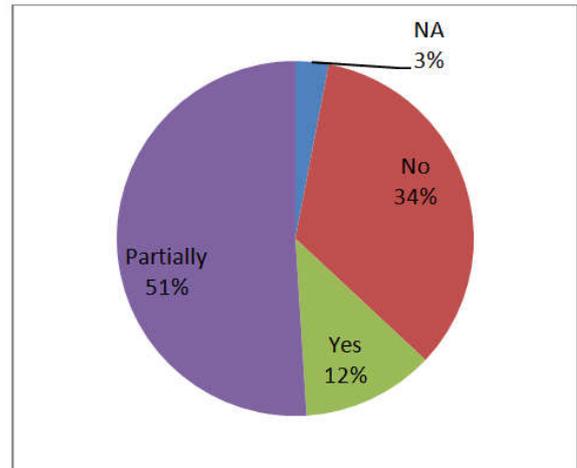


Figure 6. Equal opportunities in the French labor market?

Table 5. Responses by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
NA	3	3
No	39	29
Yes	7	17
Partially	51	51

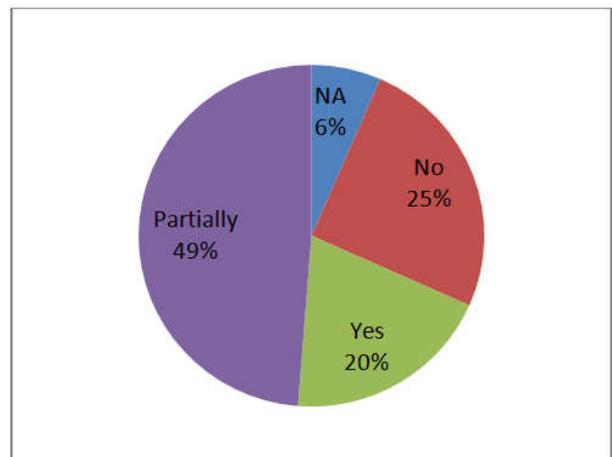


Figure 7. Equal opportunities in the Moroccan labor market?

Table 6. Responses by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
NA	6	7
No	28	22
Yes	10	29
Partially	56	42

Moreover, it is interesting to note that among the female population, fewer women responded in the affirmative and more respondents answered in the negative. In France, the proportion of women who answered "no" is five times greater than the proportion who answered "yes". In Morocco, it is almost three times as many.

Concerning initiatives for workplace equality, how would you describe your company?

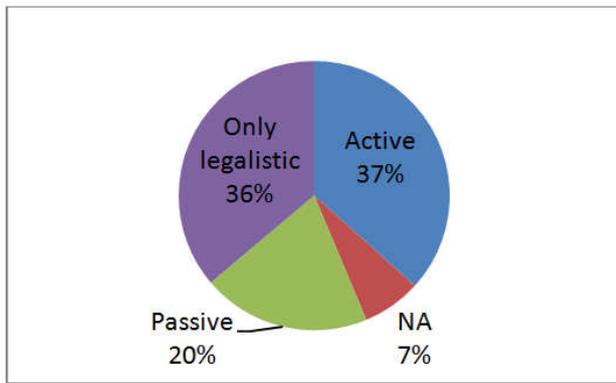


Figure 8. Companies in France and initiatives for professional equality

Table 7. Responses by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Active	26	47
NA	6	8
Passive	27	13
Only legalistic	40	32

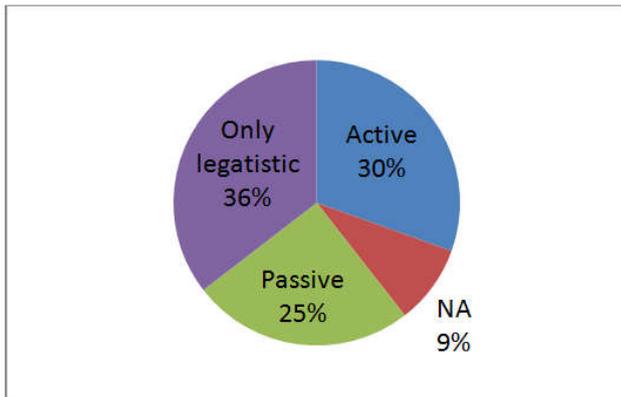


Figure 9. Companies in Morocco and initiatives for professional equality

Table 8. Responses by gender

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Active	20	41
NA	9	9
Passive	26	24
Only legalistic	45	26

Concerning the initiatives taken to promote professional equality, the answers given by men and women to qualify them differ.

While most women believe that companies are only legalistic (40% in France, 45% in Morocco), most men say that they are active (47% in France, 41% in Morocco). We also find that the proportion of women who believe that firms are passive is higher than that of men. On the whole, the results obtained, in addition to make visible the unequal situation experienced by women within the professional sphere, also made it possible to highlight the very mitigated nature of the commitment of companies for the promotion of workplace equality.

Conclusion

Observing the situation of women in the professional sphere shows that it is not equal to that of men, regardless of whether these women are in a low- or high-income country (Morton *et al.*, 2014). Our survey, which covered private companies, in various sectors and sizes, in Morocco and France, confirms this fact. We have also highlighted that corporate engagement varies. Between a passive majority and an active minority, including legalist ones, the degree of investment in promoting workplace equality, differs. Obviously, as mentioned earlier, the dispositions and measures aiming to promote workplace equality in order to ensure their viability and their correctness virtue must, on the one hand, be accompanied by practices whose aim is not to renew causes of the inequalities and disparities observed in the past. On the other hand must take ownership of the vigilance and the will of the hierarchy to apply them in a sustainable way. Preventive and curative policies of the workplace equality audit must be mixed to concretize the latter and transfer it from the register of utopia to that of reality. This combination of policies would simultaneously lead to an awareness of discriminations faced by women and to an evolution of the measures against it. Conducted in a reactive or a preventive strategy, the audit approach aims to integrate workplace equality as a practice of the company and to eliminate the gaps which exist between women and their male counterparts in order to guarantee them the same career opportunities. We, therefore, come to the unequivocal conclusion that any organization that conducts a workplace equality audit in an efficient manner will make the workplace equality a basic rule, an imperative of the present and not an objective to be achieved in the future.

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