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**WORK-FAMILY BALANCE:  
AN EMERGING ISSUE IN MOROCCO**

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**Déclaration de divulgation** : L'auteur n'a pas connaissance de quelconque financement qui pourrait affecter l'objectivité de cette étude.

**Conflit d'intérêts** : L'auteur ne signale aucun conflit d'intérêts.

**Pour citer cet article** : FARAH. A (2021) « WORK-FAMILY BALANCE : AN EMERGING ISSUE IN MOROCCO », African Scientific Journal « Volume 03, Numéro 8 » pp: 001-020.

**Date de soumission** : Septembre 2021

**Date de publication** : Octobre 2021



DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.5675241

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**Abstract :**

The interest in work-life interface is due to several sociodemographic changes in the world : feminization of work, increase in homogamy, struggle for gender equality. During last years, generational expectations confirm this interest. The Generation Y employees ask for more than linear and hierarchical progression within the organization, they want to have a lifestyle allowing them to balance their existence between work, family,leisure ... Work seems to be less central to their lives ! (Jean M. Twenge ,2013)

In Morocco, many of those changes took place in last decades. In this context we thought that it is important to understand the place of work-family interface in Morocco. Our study has the aim to understand the societal changes which impact the work-life interface and to explore if companies take this issue in consideration. By this paper we are exploring the situation of the work-family interface through an analysis of the organizational and societal changes.

Since the aim of this study is comprehensive, an inductive and interpretative approach is appropriate (Yin 2003). The study was based in a qualitative design and interpretative approach (Sandberg, 2005) through semi-structured interviews with experts : human resources directors, HR consultant, sociologists and psychologists. This paper gives a descriptive overview about the societal level and organisational level .

The results shows that many changes affects the work-family interface which is rather conflictual in Morocco specially for women. The companies has some practices which are informal in the majority.

**Keywords:** Work-family balance,Family Friendly Practices, HR Practices, HRM, Morocco **JEL Classification:** M12 Personnel Management, Executives. Executive Compensation

## 1. Introduction :

Work-family balance is a social construct. French, Canadian and American researchers working on this issue have tried to provide contextualized answers to this question (some of these researchers include, Tremblay in Canada, Fusulier in Belgium, Ollier Malaterre in France...).

Our aim is to investigate the issue in the Moroccan context. The objective of this paper is to answer two main questions : *What are the social changes that can impact the nature of the work family interface? And do companies take this issue into account by implenting family-friendly practices?*

The rise in interest in this issue is due to several socio-demographic changes that have taken place in the world : feminization of work, increase in homogamy, struggle for gender equality, etc.

Morocco has not remained impervious to these changes. The emancipation of women and their struggle for equality is now a daily debate. Women are thus faced with new responsibilities that require time and energy that they previously devoted only to their traditional role as housewives. Faced with such a situation, the couple's management has also changed. Years before, the roles were shared : the woman managing the home and the man taking care of the household's financial needs. Today, both women and men are employees and caretakers of the home.

In large countries, companies have introduced "Family Friendly" measures due to the awareness of these changes and the importance of work and family balance.

The interest of working on the articulation between professional and family life in different from the fact that this issue gets problematical increasingly in societies in general and in companies (for HRDs and HRMs and also for the employees concerned) more particularly.

Since the aim of this study is comprehensive, an inductive and interpretative approach is appropriate (Yin 2003). The study was based in a qualitative design and interpretative approach (Sandberg, 2005) through semi-structured interviews with experts : human resources directors, HR consultant, sociologists and psychologists. This paper gives a descriptive overview about the societal level and organisational level .

From this point, it is essential to understand the changes that society has undergone which impacted the organizational context in giving rise to this issue.

## 2- Theoretical Concepts

The work of sociologist R. Sainsaulieu (1997) on identity in workplace showed that investment in business and career was not everyone's objective. Rather, multiple personal projects coexisted. He further points out that the analysis of the professional and personal projects of workers has become essential. The social system of relationships between these two aspects is at the heart of the company's development, and that the management of HR must take into account the complexity of human resources.

It appears then, that companies would benefit from taking into consideration how individuals manage the constraints and opportunities related to their marital and family situation rather than suffering the consequences (Challiol Jean-Blanc 2006).

A large number of concepts are used to explain the relationships between these two areas of life : compromise, compensation, segmentation, facilitation, work-family conflict, enrichment or work-family integration.

### 2-1 The Facets Of The Work-Family Interaction

Work-family interaction has two main aspects that we will present bellows:

#### 2-1-1 Work-Family Conflict

The most apparent face of work-family interaction is conflict. The researches on conflict are based on the theory of scarcity of resources : individuals have limited resources (time and energy) that needs to be shared between these two (work and family) spheres. Thus, each resource deployed in one sphere cannot be deployed in the other.

This concept of work-family conflict was defined by Higgins and Duxbury (1992) as "*a form of conflicting roles in the individual, arising when the demands of work and the demands of family are mutually incompatible*".

Family-work conflict can also be defined as a kind of interrole conflict in which family and work responsibilities are not compatible (Greenhaus, Beutell, 1985). These authors highlight three forms of conflict :

- Time-based conflict, which refers to the time spent on activities pertaining to a particular role. Time conflict arises when time spent in one role makes it difficult to invest in another role.

- The strain-based conflict explains that the pressure felt in one role influences the way demands are met in another role.
- Behaviour-based conflict aims to identify potentially conflicting behaviours (Normand and Tremblay, 2005).

### **2-1-2 Work-family Enrichment**

The theoretical approach to work family enrichment is in line with the current of positive psychology, described as the psychology of happiness and well-being, developed by *Csikszentmihalyi*.

Greenhaus & Powell (2006) define work-family enrichment as "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another role". For *Carlson et al* (2006), work-family enrichment is a construct representing how work and family benefit from each other.

While the work on enrichment remains recent, Kirchmeyer (1992) is one of the first authors to have developed and empirically used the concept of resource enrichment based on the theory of resource expansion, as opposed to the theory of scarcity.

He was interested in the relationship between the implications in both the work and non-work spheres.

In this sense, Gannon and Nothorn (1971) explain that the family bond can support the individual and create useful energy to achieve performance in other roles. For these authors, there is no limit to the energy and effort of individuals.

## **2.2 Family Friendly Practices**

Practices to balance family and work have flourished in the United States under the names of "family friendly practices" or "work-life" programs.

De Bry and Ollier-Malaterre (2006) define family friendly practices as organizational practices, ranging from formal policies to informal arrangements. They enable employees to fulfil their roles and pursue their interests in life as global people, involved in work and life.

Ollier Malaterre (2005) divided this practices to five different categories :

1- Acting on work : measures to make work organisation more flexible, and to reduce the pressure that work puts on people's lives outside work ;

2-Supporting employees : measures to provide employees with information and training useful for their lives outside of work ;

3- Make everyday life easier : measures to find all kinds of services and activities on the company's site (nurseries, clinics, sports halls, shops, etc.)

4- Creating a sense of community: implementing measures to create belonging and valuing what employees do outside the workplace;

5- Complement compensation: financial or in-kind benefits.

In the same sens, Chrétien and Létourneau (2006) have identified the needed practices of working parents according to a systemic approach. A model was established making it possible to understand the interactions between different components of the employee's environment: the sphere of work, the family sphere, the sphere of the community and the governmental sphere. Presented below is a table summarizing the practices that we can establish to help the employee articulate between these two lives.

**Table 1:** Work-family coordination actions to be implemented by all spheres

<b><u>SPHERE</u></b>	<b><u>PRACTICES OR ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u></b>
<b>Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assistance for family members</li> <li>- Vacations and benefits</li> <li>- Planning of working time</li> <li>- Career management</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased presence of the spouse with the children and their participation to ensure a more egalitarian division of household tasks.</li> <li>- The ex-spouses acknowledging their parental obligations with children and participating more actively in taking care of them</li> <li>- Children's ability to develop a greater autonomy</li> <li>- Adolescents and youth taking charge and acting more responsibly</li> <li>- Decrease in life detail requirements of elders for whom the employee is responsible</li> <li>- Living close to extended family members</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting up daycare services</li> <li>- Have school committees and help outside of school</li> <li>- Health care and social services</li> <li>- Improvement of transport services for teenagers and seniors</li> <li>- Increase the visibility of community organizations</li> <li>- Extending the opening hours of some companies such as banks,</li> <li>- Access to services such as catering, housekeeping, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase government commitment</li> <li>- Financial assistance measures directly targeted at families</li> </ul>

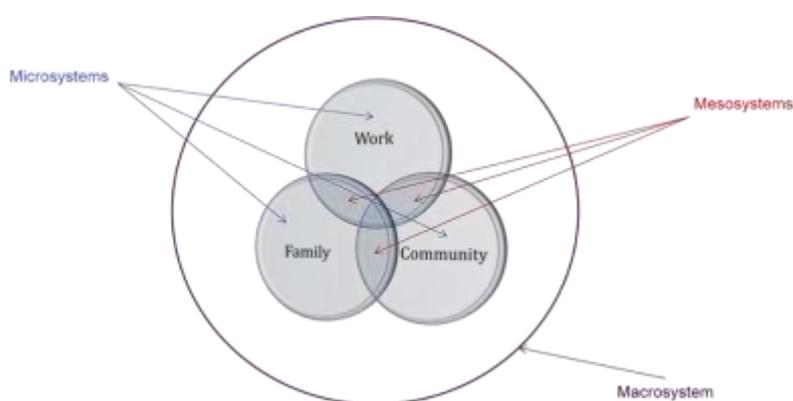
*Source : Adapted from Chrétien and Létourneau, (2006)*

Many studies shows that the problem of work-life balance (WLB) is a "social transaction" that varies according to societies (Fusulier and Marquis, 2008). It depends on the characteristics and attitudes of companies and organizations, hence it appears differently according to personal situations.

To answer this question it's important to highlight the systemic approach of this issue, The research of two main authors shows that the work family interface is an interaction between many systems

The Ecological model below was created by Williams and al (2009) draws on Voydanoff's 2007 adaption of Bronfenbrenners 1979 ecological systems model

Figure 1: An ecological systems model of work, family and community



Source: Williams et al, 2009

We will follow this model to understand the moroccan context by trying to understand different level ( society, family and work).

After this outline the methodology used in conducting this study will be presented below.

### **3- Methodology :**

Before expaling our methodology it's important to explain our epistemology position. We can define epistemology as the theory of knowledge and deals with how knowledge is gathered and from which sources. Our position is the interprtivism.

For an interpretivist, there is multiple and relative (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Carson et al., 2001).

We adopted a qualitative methodology to do our empirical research. The nature of the subject requires a strong understanding of the nature of the research subject, which interacts with other disciplinary fields such as sociology and psychology.

A methodology based on the path of exploration seemed to be the most appropriate for conducting our research insofar as it allows us to deepen previous research on our theme by going back and forth between theoretical foundations and our empirical results.

To conduct our empirical study, we had to go through two phases ; A documentary analysis phase and an empirical phase based on the semi-directive interview.

The purpose being, to highlight those aspects of the phenomenon that the researcher cannot think of spontaneously, and to complete the lines of work suggested by its readings (Blanchet, 1994). Interviewing is indeed one of the preferred tools for qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) that can be used with other approaches such as observation and literature review.

The interviews we conducted were then subjected to a thematic discourse analysis that allowed us to structure the analysis of the results.

These interviews were enriched and supplemented by secondary data collection based on a literature review of studies related to our theme.

After developing our interview guide, we administered it to the following experts : Two sociologists, two psychologists, ten HRDs and HR consultants.

The choice of experts stems from the objectives of our exploratory study, which are: first, to study the changes that work and family have undergone . Second, to understand the interaction that takes place between them today. Indeed, the main axes of our interview guide are: Family situation, Developments in the couple's relationship in Morocco, Consideration of the issue by the company.

#### **4- Results:**

Our study of the Moroccan context aims to explore issues related to the work-life balance: specificities of the Moroccan family, nature of conjugal relations and state of interaction between work and family. As explained before we will present our results by trying to present them in many level : macrosystem, mesosystem and microsystem.

#### **4-1 The emergence of Work-Life Conflict Issue In Morocco**

We will start this section with an overview of the main changes that Moroccan society has experienced and that are related to our research.

Morocco is socially and culturally diverse. There are two main kinds of discourse who coexist : the first one is traditional and conservative and the second is modernist and progressive.

The dimensions of individualism and collectivism defined by Hofstede (1987) applied poorly to most Moroccans. Being situated between individualism and collectivism in the sense of Hofstede (1987), the Moroccan is overwhelmed by his family interests. The family comes first.. In this context, Allali (2013) considers that in Morocco it is a dimension he calls "familism". The unit of the Moroccan social organization is the family.

The Moroccan society is built on clear role assignments for men and women based on a patriarchal vision. Therefore, in last decades this situation start changing due to the feminization of work.

##### **4-1-1 Major Changes in Macrosystem Level :**

Morocco has experienced many changes over the past decades. In 2004, the Family Code established the equality and co - responsibility between spouses. This position was confirmed by the Moroccan Constitution in Article 19 . This article established equality between man and woman. More recently, in 2016 , Morocco launched strategy for parity in the public sector.

However, “women do not evolve in a satisfying way, and even decline in some areas” according to the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE). The women's activity rate decreased from 27,1% in 2011 to 22,2% in 2018 and around 19% in 2020.

The most important is that the country has made considerable progress in the feminization of work and the fight for equality. Women are now working in various positions and sectors.

##### **4-1-2 Changes In Community Level**

Feminization of work in the 70's creates a reorganization of space with the advent of women's salaried work. As a consequence, the public space versus private space dichotomy started to appear.

This new situation which is the new role played by women has had an impact on the family and particularly on the relationship between couples. New social representations of women in society emerged because « *basically, women's education is aimed at producing good housekeepers and child rearers, not money-earners* » Sociologist 2.

All this create a complex duality of structures and cultural practices. A Psychologist said « *our society becomes schizophrenic* » !

Our experts states that Moroccan society is characterized by a complex duality of structures, and cultural practices. Today, the Moroccan navigates between modernity and tradition. "*The Moroccan society has changed a lot. We are experiencing a whole new challenge to patriarchal society,*" explains the first psychologist.

The new family code- introduced in 2004 - had a major impact on marital relationships by encouraging them to be based on equality, consent, global exchange, consultation, and reciprocity of feelings. One of the objectives of this new code is to replace the obedience model with that of consultation by placing the family "under the joint responsibility of both spouses" and not just the husband.

In such a context where women are responsible for their families and their work, the challenges of balancing family and work become major and the objectives pursued are complex.

#### 4-1-3 **Family System : The Past And The Present**

Since independence, women have gained access to education. This has opened many windows of opportunity to labour market. From then, they start having the opportunity to experience work life and gain independence. The usual custom has been challenged, creating disruptions in the gender relationship.

This situation is of course quite new. The sociologist insists that "*men are educated by women who have anchored the idea of the inferiority of the girl: the sister should serve her brother and father, the opposite hardly happens* ».

These same men growing up expect to find the same behaviour from their wives in the family structure. However, they are confronted with a change in the behaviour of women who no longer want to keep the role expected by the society.

The relationship where men have absolute power over women in society is called into question. "*Women are in a fight : where they are trying to create a status and men are trying to keep their place*" explains Sociologist 1.

Bourquia (2010) explained that the binary relation of obedience and traditional authority is being conquered by dialogue.

With the same vision, the second sociologist explains that "*there is almost a destruction of the traditional model which was characterized by the absolute authority of the father and by the distribution of roles between the two sexes: the man works and accesses the public space, the woman must give birth to the children and remain in private space. This duality of roles has broken down since women left to 'the world of home' and began to earn an income and participate in the family's economies.* »

- *Marital Relationship*

In the actual context, one of our experts consider that "*there is a common denominator for all couples: the relationship within the couple is in general conflictual. The man is trying to keep the privileges and the woman is trying to break them! Thus, at a time when women dream of mutual respect, freedom and equality, men kept a patriarchal expectation.*" -Sociologist 1.

For our experts, the demands of man have evolved but without changing in depth. He always keeps the same perception of power sharing.

The traditional image of the submissive mother is being replaced by an image of an educated, more modern woman (while retaining some fundamental traditional values). This takes time and raises the issue of equality within the matrimonial structure (sharing responsibilities and tasks) and in society more generally .

The emergence of new rules in parallel with a traditional model has resulted in three models of conjugal relationships, according to the experts:

1-**The traditional model** : the man who provides money and the woman in charge of household affairs,

2-**The "rather egalitarian" transitional model**: the sharing of rights and responsibilities but not those related to the household and precisely household tasks

3- **The modernist model**: a total sharing: household tasks, childcare, expenses...

While the distribution of responsibilities and financial burdens is increasingly present within couples, the distribution of domestic tasks does not yet exist in a balanced way. According to the latest HCP survey, an average of 95% of Moroccan women contribute to domestic activities, spending 5 hours a day on them<sup>2</sup>.

However, we cannot generalize. The second sociologist explains that we can find some couples who share household affairs equally.

#### **4-1-4 Work-family : Place in the Moroccan's lives**

There is a close relationship between family and work at the economic, social and legal levels. This relationship has changed over time. Before, the family took up much more space and time in the individual life. Today ,work takes over the family both in terms of time and energy.

This explains why today there is a rise in stress among Moroccans. *"The concept of stress has appeared in social vocabulary. Thus showing the degree of impact that work has on individuals. This is due to the fact that individuals no longer reserve space for themselves" says the second sociologist. He also points out, "A long time ago, work occupied a lesser place in the construction of the individual's identity"*

It was in the urban area where it began to occupy more and more time. Today in large cities, professional life occupies more time than private life. One of the variables that influences this relationship is the nature of the work. Each job has its own requirements, which requires a different degree of commitment.

The arrival of a child makes the situation more complex. It reduces the time that couples have for themselves because they are divided between: work, family responsibility and the education of children.

In such a context, it is important to see to what extent the issue of articulation is taken into account by companies.

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## 4-2 The Work-Family Balance (WFB) Within The Company

### 4-2-1 WFB: A Concern For Moroccan companies?

Addressing the issue of work-family balance with Moroccan HRDs was not an easy task. Those who agreed to meet us were intrigued by the nature of our research .

When we asked about the implementation of this issue in HR policy, the answers obtained were divided into two categories : Most of the interviewees answered with a firm "no" while the other half answered with an obvious "yes".

The HRD of company 5 explains that there should be a separation between the two spheres: « *With the company we normally have a provider-customer relationship. The company does not have to take on the individual concerns of everyone. It is up to us to put a barrier between private and professional life.* »

Thus HRD 6 told us: « *our sector of activity is going through a period of crisis today, it would be a lie to tell you that we are now thinking about the private lives of our employees! In more prosperous times this was better taken into account*''.

The work-family balance is not a priority today, but it is an emerging issue that will probably be more important in the future given the social and economic changes that the country is undergoing.

Taking into account the management of non-work depends partially on the HR department and its sensitivity to this issue. The organizational characteristics has also an influence : the size of the company and its financial resources, the company's culture, etc. For example, membership of a multinational company with an HR policy that includes the issue of work-life balance could encourage the Moroccan subsidiary to implement family-friendly practices.

### 4-2-2 Existence of Family-Friendly Practices:

Family friendly practices are organizational practices, ranging from formal policies to informal arrangements, that enable employees to fulfil their roles and pursue their interests in life as global people, involved in the spheres of work and non-work. De Bry and Ollier-Malaterre (2006) by this definition have made it clear that some practices are informal.

Taking this into account, we asked our interlocutors to talk about the two categories: formal and informal practices. Not surprisingly, we obtained that the majority of actions are informal. The HR consultant 1 explains: *"In the majority of Moroccan companies there is a pure and strict application of the legislation. When we want to do social actions for the benefit of our employees, we do not include them in the internal regulations or in a collective agreement. They are not formalized so that the company has no obligation ».*

Work-family balance practices (informal ones) do exist in some companies and we divide them into two main categories: family and work supports.

### 1- **Family support :**

- Family leave (longer than the current regulations)
- Financial assistance and benefits
- Childcare (nursery)<sup>3</sup>

### 2- **Work support :**

- Support from the supervisor
- Individualised management of the problems that women working in the company may encounter, especially after maternity leave or those with young children
- Work organization
- Flexible hours

A good planification of working hours was cited as a practice that could potentially help employees to reconcile work and family, but which, would be difficult to implement.

The HRD of company 1 explains that employees' failure to comply with the provisions in place does not encourage a switch to other time modes: *"We have tried to improve the schedules to switch to a continuous one. This was motivated by the fact that our employees generally stay at work during the lunch break. But a continuous schedule is not really a solution because people are not serious. We will always have extended lunch breaks, which will impact the work."*

For the motivations behind the implementation of this type of practice, two major points emerged : employee retention and the development of the employer's brand image.

By placing the companies interviewed in Kirchemyer's model, it was found that the majority opted for the separation of work and non-work. Those who are sensitive to the importance of integrating non-work management in their human resources management politics have in the past been confronted with internal problems related to this conflict : refusal of mobility, dissemination of confidential information between spouses, resignation following the birth of a child, etc.

Finally, it must be said that the problem of non-work is not yet widespread in Moroccan companies. Those who experimented with certain practices did so informally.

The presence of more dual-career couples could be the reason for taking this issue into account insofar as they are beginning to raise certain problems related primarily to mobility and especially expatriation. Indeed, companies that have implemented certain practices have done in response to a real need.

We still believe that the interest in employee well-being in the context of corporate social responsibility could become a platform for the implementation of work-life balance practices. In this perspective, it is necessary to know beforehand the employees' experiences regarding this issue, their expectations and the practices that would be the most appropriate in the Moroccan context.

## 5-CONCLUSION

Women's access to work from the 1970s onwards opened windows of opportunity to labour market. Today, women are present in all sectors but particularly as workers in textiles, agriculture and services.

This situation has given women financial autonomy and power within the family. The woman can now live without being dependent on a man. In the light of these changes, gender relations within the couple have also evolved towards more consent. The principle of obedience to the husband is being replaced by dialogue between the spouses, especially with regards to the education of children.

However, the change has not yet reached the level of task distribution. Despite the fact that the *Moudawana* (Family Code) established the principle of co-responsibility of both spouses, society always puts the weight on women for domestic affairs and on men for the financial aspect. This situation burdens the responsibility of Moroccan employed women. The success of the latter from a societal regard, depends on marriage and home management. To remedy this, women nowadays use domestic help and also family support. However, the lack of public infrastructure still makes the task difficult.

In general, the changes that Morocco is undergoing today leave us with a more conflicting interaction. At the organizational level, we can say that there is an awareness of the importance of this issue and the effect that work-life conflict has on employees. This awareness is not necessarily translated into the implementation of practices that help employees to better fulfil their various roles. Indeed, when we move on to practices, two distinct groups emerge: A first group, where the problem does not arise and where there are no actions taken to help the employee. A second group, where the issue of conflict is one of the problems raised by the HRD. In this second group we could not find formal practices but rather informal practices and sometimes these practices were even individualized and gender based (different treatment between women and men).

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**Appendix 1** : Interview Guide (The interview were conducted in French/ Arabic)

**Interveiw Guide 1 :**

**Objective : to understand WLB in firms**

The questions bellows were adressed to HRD and HR Consultant ( )

- Pensez- vous que la problématique de l’articulation travail-famille a une place aujourd’hui dans la réflexion des responsables ressources humaines au sein des entreprises marocaines?
- La culture de l’entreprise marocaine valorise-t-elle les pratiques de la conciliation travail-famille ?
- Comment le conflit travail-famille, pourras-t-il affecter l’entreprise marocaine?
- Quelles sont les pratiques que vous avez et qui peuvent aider les salariés à mieux articuler travail et famille ?
- Pensez-vous que la mise en place de pratiques pour la conciliation travail-famille serait bénéfique pour l’entreprise marocaine?

**Objective : to understand Moroccan society**

The questions bellows were adressed to sociologists and psychologists

- Quels sont les plus grands changements qu’a connus la société marocaine pendant la dernière décennie ?
- Comment ces changements influencent-ils la famille ? Et le couple en particulier ?
- Quelle est la place de la femme aujourd’hui dans la société ? (et en entreprise ?)
- Quels sont les principales valeurs de la culture marocaine ?
- Comment pouvez-vous qualifier la place qu’occupe le travail dans l’identité des marocains ?
- Comment pouvez-vous nous décrire la famille marocaine du 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle ? Et le couple marocain ?
- Quelle est la place de la femme aujourd’hui au sein de la société marocaine ? et quelles sont les rôles qui lui incombent ?

Travail et famille : quelle relation ?