

## The Current Status of Moroccan Working Women in Healthcare Services: A Comparative Study between Public and Private Sectors, Kenitra as a case study

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the current status of working women in healthcare services in Kenitra through a comparative analysis between private and public sectors. Since ‘the current status’ is wide and blurred phrase, the present study based its general deductions on various variables, namely, feminist consciousness, working conditions, gender equality and domestic support. Making use of various data collection instruments, this study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The aim behind this triangulation is to elicit reliable deductions about the socioeconomic status of working women in health services, in addition to determining the cultural obstacles that still block the advancement of Moroccan women. The questionnaire includes quantitative items used to elicit respondents’ attitudes and perceptions towards different issues related to their public and private spheres. The semi-structured interview makes use of qualitative items in the form of open-ended questions designed to figure out the professional and familial circumstances that shape their lives. In the quantitative part, the job of the researcher holds mostly on statistical data. The target population is defined as the working women in health services in kenitra from both sectors. Since respondents exercise different professions, which definitely effect respondents’ answers and attitudes due to the variances of circumstances, it is worth using Stratified random sampling which refers to the procedure of targeting population which is divided into strata (or subgroups). The study concluded that the current status of Moroccan working women in healthcare services is below the average.

**Keywords: Moroccan Feminism, Working Women, Gender Equality, Health Sector**

## 1. Introduction

This article discusses the current status of Moroccan working women in healthcare services through making comparisons between public and private sectors. The main and foremost concern of this project is to discern and appraise the major springs of the obstacles lying in the path of women's progress in Moroccan society (health sector as a case study).

The Kingdom of Morocco has taken numerous measures to promote the participation of women in all fields through the revision of civil charter and electoral laws and the adoption of quota system reserved for women by establishing the national list and the additional list. The noted achievements in favor of strengthening the political and economic participation of women were made possible thanks to the awareness-raising policy that engaged all stakeholders, including government, parliament, political parties, and civil society. The successive politicians on power seemed aware that the time of morality and justice has arrived, and Morocco should open the gates widely for women in order to build a civilized community.

However, the findings of this study showed that working conditions in health sector are below the average. The colossal shortage of HR and deficiency of materials are the main characteristics of the public sector. Participants accused governmental officials for their misleading political discourse that claim the satisfaction of healthcare services' needs. Yet, the governmental workers admitted their static and clear status due to the inflexible framework they work in. The governmental censorship on public sector leaves no chance for any gender inequalities in terms of salary, working hours, promotion and so on. The immense labor code violation exists in the private sector since the majority, except physicians, suffers from indefinite working hours, absence of promotion system, low salaries and no regard for women's special needs as laborers and housewives at the same time. Contrary, private hospitals guarantee the availability of medical materials for the sake of patients' comfort. This intricate and paradoxical situation creates negative environment that promote feelings of insecurity and non-belonging among working women in private sector. Besides, the results suggest a significant relationship between wage work and domestic zone.

## 2. Literature Review

The process of generating feminist knowledge does not include only the physical and biological differences between "woman" and "man", but socioeconomic inequalities as well. The social formation of gender values is affected mostly by power relationship between "man" and "woman". Since the difference is not exclusively natural, feminists are struggling for social justice and equality, thus, masculinity and femininity are different but also valued socially

(Diquinzio, 1993). Women are raised in different cultural and social contexts which results in different concerns. Differences that touch upon ethnicity, educational level, language, and social bonds are crucial in the process of forming a “personality”. Therefore, Feminism makes use of the notion of diversity and change that leads automatically to different directions and forms. Throughout the different movements, feminist intellectuals have kept changing and developing their ideas. Generally speaking, Feminism as a whole includes theories such as: Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Modern Feminism, Islamic Feminism and so on. This research project is categorized under Islamic/Moroccan Feminism.

Women in the Islamic countries, like all women in the world, are struggling for equality and social justice. In order to free themselves from the secularist tendency of the majority of feminist theories, they have resorted to Islam itself to criticize patriarchy. Soroush (1998) defined the difference between religion and religious knowledge and argued that, whereas the first is holy and unchallengeable, the second—including Islamic law—is human and changes in time because of forces external to religion itself. This assumption is considered to be a savior of women in the Islamic world in the sense that it allowed them to struggle for their feminist goals and keep their Islamic faith at the same time.

In the Moroccan context, feminist movement coincided with the pick of the national resistance against the French colonization (1912-1956). The first public appearance of the movement is traced back to 1946, when many eager middle and upper class women gathered in feminist Association under the name of “Sisters of Purity” (Akhawat Al-Safaa). They published a document which contained several feminist demands among which: eradication of polygamy and the right for more participation in public life. The first feminist demands in Morocco were made possible due to the intellectual renaissance that many male thinkers had already started. Feminist topics became many intellectuals’ main concerns which pushed many political leaders, journalists and even modern religious men to address the social and economic structures that abolish the possibilities for women to reach their basic rights. Both men and women engaged in knowledgeable dialogues in the birth of Moroccan Feminism (Ennaji & Sadiki, 2012 p.2).

The *Moudawana* (family code) of 2004 is commonly viewed as a liberal family law in comparison with the family codes of other Arab states. Legally, women were then considered equal to men in marriage and no longer submitted to guardianship requirement which makes the choice of getting married only-woman’s-decision. The new family law (*Moudawana*) fixes the marriage age for women and men at 18 years old and defines more strict conditions for

polygamy. In addition, it improves the situation of women in case of divorce and custody of children (Kelly et al, 2010).

The application of the new *Moudawana* law has roughly enhanced the social status of Moroccan women. However, Ennaji (2008) evaluated the general economic situation of women through his condensed article: *Steps to the Integration of Moroccan Women in Development*. Ennaji considered that the economic liberalization and free trade that Morocco has noticed since Mohamed VI took the throne reduced state feminism. The partial withdrawal of the state from the economy has devalued its commitment to gender equality. Recently, non-governmental organizations have taken the initiative to encourage women to fully participate in development and to take part in modern change. With regard to employment, the unemployment rate of women remains much higher than that of men and continued to increase during the 1990s. Despite the negative attitudes of Islamists toward working women, women remain attached to the job market especially in the last decade. Although they usually work for a low wage, they are aware of their social responsibilities toward their family. Official surveys showed that couples prefer two salaries to face the hardship of modern life (p. 340-341).

In general, economic change and privatization reforms had undesirable outcomes on working and middle-class women. Structural adjustments and economic liberalization were not followed by official assessments to evaluate its direct impact on female emancipation and gender equality. Contrarily, capitalism stressed gender inequality through covering women's exploitation with libertarian features. This weak position maintains women's dependence on state interference to protect their rights and enhance their general status. Despite the modernists' aspects that Moroccan family has adopted and the increasing emancipation of women in all fields, there are still obstacles that limit their job opportunities.

### **3. The study**

This research project stems its importance from the belief that gender studies in Morocco still in need to comprehensive studies with intensive fieldworks. The research attempted to present a scientific reading of the socioeconomic status of working women in Morocco (health sector as a case study). The main hypothesis of this project is centered on the premise that working women in health services in public and private sectors still have a lot to 'trespass', despite the efforts of the successive governments since the Independence. Although women in Morocco participate in the national economy, their socio-economic situation has slightly improved.

The scope of the present study was based on the following vision: the influence of the stated variables (**feminist consciousness, working conditions, gender equality and domestic support**) on the socioeconomic status of working women. By definition, this was an exploratory study that aimed at examining these variables as governing factors in shaping working women's lives in public and private spheres. Creswell (2003) explains that exploratory studies are most valuable when "*not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied*" (p.30), which was the case of the present study. The available literature on women integration into job market is characterized by the scarcity of documented research on this topic, except for some articles and a few academic studies.

Therefore, the main thrust of this study was not only exploratory but also procedural, as it answers questions about the influence of the stated variables on the general status of working women in health services through eliciting participants' perceptions and attitudes toward issues related to their wage work and domestic sphere.

### **3.1 Methodology**

The vision of the present study entailed the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods; defined in the literature of research by different names such as multi-methods (Brannen, 1992), multi-strategy (Bryman, 2004), mixed methods (Creswell, 2003), or mixed methodology research (Tashakkori & Taddlie, 1998). Besides, the exploratory nature of the study which necessitates a mixed methodology, Creswell et al. (2003) argue that multi-strategy research can be helpful to researchers and writers in clarifying the nature of their intentions or their accomplishments. Also, making use of both methods allow the researcher to bring together a more comprehensive account of this area of inquiry, namely, the socioeconomic status of working women. In terms of structure, employing mixed methodology helps strongly in deploying each to answer different research questions of the study. Furthermore, 'context' is given much importance in the present study; hence the combination of research methods is rationalized to provide contextualized understanding paired with generalizable valid findings or in times broad relationships among the existing variables.

The targeted population was identified as the working women in health services in Kenitra which includes all categories (physicians, nurses and administrative staff). The questionnaire was designed into four broad sections. The first section is background information meant to collect personal and professional information on the respondents. This second section of the questionnaire aimed to measure respondents' feminist awareness before engaging them into more specific topics. This section is inspired by Conscious Rising (CR)

group (the backbone of the feminist movement in its second wave which is conceived as its main organizational tool). The third section was designed to explore women's working conditions in health services within both public and private sectors. The last section investigated the impact of job market on gender equality through evaluating the professional and domestic circumstances that shape working women's lives. The questionnaire was formulated in a simple and direct way and concluded in six pages to save time and energy, particularly for those very busy respondents with respect to the sensitiveness of health services as places of emergency.

Thus, the focus had been placed on the questionnaire as the central data collection instrument for its efficient and time-saving characteristics. The questionnaire was translated into French since it is the main spoken language among workers in health services. Regarding the adaptation procedure, back-translation was applied by professionals in both languages to ensure validity. A pilot study was also conducted to test consistency between the research questions and the items of the questionnaire designed so far as to answer them. Therefore, the first version of the questionnaire was administered to a sample of eight participants from both sectors in order to get feedback regarding consistency and validity.

The interview was of a semi-structured nature led by a set of guiding questions. It started with pre-defined questions and often accompanied by follow-up why and how questions until the aim of the researcher is reached. Given its flexibility, the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to probe the attitudes, feelings, and motives of the respondents. In the research literature, this kind of interviews is proved to offer a pragmatic approach to balance the need for information as shaped and articulated by the respondents and the need for the pertinent data that can be coded, compared, and analyzed. This argument is discussed by (Patton, 2002) who puts the case as follows: "the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology, and to capture their complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences" (p. 348).

## **3.2 Main Findings**

### **3.2.1 Qualitative Data**

It is evidently clear that the discussion about the theme 'feminist awareness' leads to deviant categories and patterns. Participants' attitudes were perceived with mixture of caution, rejection and approval. Generally, participants expressed differential levels of feminist awareness with a great tendency to conservativeness toward feminist theories. Thus, respondents who presented themselves as feminists are regarded as a small minority, despite believing in equality which was obvious through the manipulation of feminist discourse. Even

when respondents attempted to distance themselves from feminist thought, they unconsciously used feminist discourse to demand for their rights. This paradoxical situation confirms the existence of implicit feminist consciousness among the majority of respondents.

On the one hand, participants refused the official commitment to the basic essence of equality since men and women have different needs. Respondents' reactions direct us to a very controversial subject among feminists which is the preference between the concepts of *Equality* and *Equity*. Equality promotes social justice, but it can be efficient only if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. According to respondents, these conditions are not satisfied to adopt the concept of *Equality*. Unfortunately, the status of working women in private sector is very disappointing as respondents described their daily sufferings because of the non-application of job code in this sector. This illegal situation puts the governmental responsibility under question.

Based on the elicited data, working conditions in governmental hospitals are marked by the huge shortage of human resources and inadequacy of materials. Governmental workers did not hesitate to put the whole blame on officials because of their fake intentions to offer good healthcare services for citizens. Respondents pointed out to the dangerous consequences of this situation on them physically and psychologically as well. As the moral responsibility is shifted from the governing politicians to workers, governmental workers suffer from social blame daily to the extent that patients can react aggressively. This official betrayal has decreased violence against medical staff. On the other side, participants from private sector were quite satisfied with their working conditions especially in the plethora of workforce and adequacy of medical materials. However, the situation tends to be very disappointing when worker rights come to discussion.

As to the final theme 'Domestic Support', participants confirmed that social roles are still distributed on gender basis. Although Moroccan women participate vastly in the national economy in all fields, they still perform domestic chores in the same way and with the same intensity. Moroccan male mentality still considers domestic chores as women's duty. As a result, the heavy burden of double task becomes the main cause of conflicts coming from private spheres. Unfortunately, the majority of participants revealed that they have a difficult and unstable life because of the limited support they receive at home.

### 3.2.2 Quantitative data

#### 3.2.2.1 Feminist awareness

To investigate more deeply the respondents' feminist awareness, the questionnaire invited the participants to evaluate four statements that tend to explain why some Moroccan women choose not to adopt feminist identity. The items were administered using a scale that probe how strongly the respondents support or oppose the proposed justifications. The scale was employed to rate the intensity of the responses as the following:

	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of feminist perspectives are against Moroccan culture and traditions					
I do not have feminist concerns because there is a lack of sensitization about feminist issues					
I want to take part in feminist groups but the lack of female association and women's organization locally is an obstacle					
I am not feminist because the ideas and purposes of feminism are not clear enough for me					

In order to analyze the answers, I grade respondents' attitudes as the number 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The meaning of each score is:

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly disagree, 4 =disagree, 5 =undecided

Results show that 42% agreed that “*the majority of feminist perspectives are against Moroccan culture and traditions*”, whereas 26, 5% strongly agreed with the statement. Respondents judge feminist ideas from radical perspectives of the feminist thought which explains the high rates of agreement with the first statement. The total sum of the agreed voices constitute 68, 5% of the respondents. However, 23, 2% expressed their disagreement with the statement. The small minority (8, 3%) stressed their strong disagreement with the statement. The different perceptions of respondents reflect negative attitudes towards feminist thought in general. By way of percentage, it is very clear that even respondents who declare their feminist identities hold negative attitudes toward feminism. These contradictory attitudes are attributed

to respondents' hesitation to fully adopt feminist identities because of the enormous ideas of the feminist thought; some of which are clearly anti-religion. It is very obvious that those who identified themselves as Islamic feminists agreed that the majority of feminist perspectives are against Moroccan culture and traditions.

Respondents' attitudes toward the second statement marked high agreement to the idea that there is a lack of sensitization about feminist issues among working women in health services (57, 10%). Besides, 12, 60% strongly agreed with the proposed justification. 20, 30% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, whereas 9, 90% expressed their moderate disagreement. These high agreement percentages imply to a kind of consensus on the proposed statement. It is worth mentioning that the available data about the number of feminist associations in Morocco is inaccurate, however; the *Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development* indicates that the estimated number is more than 40, 000 associations that have partly or fully feminist concerns. This inaccuracy is due to the diversity of the activities of Moroccan associations. It has become a modern fashion for associations to adopt feminist projects even if their primary concerns are not feminist in order to cope with the actual concerns of society. But respondents confirmed the lack of feminist sensitization. Respondents' attitudes can be attributed: firstly, to working women's availability to engage themselves with feminist associations. Working women are doing a double job that makes the possibility to save some time for social activities very difficult. Secondly, Moroccan women may not find locally the suitable association identical to their perspectives. The statistical results of the third statement proved this claim to be true. 30, 48 % of respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 39, 57 % express their moderate agreement. The total sum of the agreed respondents constitutes 70% of the respondents. 19, 25% voiced their strong disagreement with the statement, whereas 10, 70% simply disagreed with the statement. Recently, there has been a wave of alliance between women's associations, which often combine associations that share the same goals and principles. Therefore, we find associations with left-wing tendencies united in one entity. The national scene marked the rise of Islamic-oriented associations as an automatic reaction to the left-wing feminist alliance. Actually, we find Madame Somaya Ben Khaldoun, who belongs to the conservative-Islamic *Party of Justice and Development*, at the head of *Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development* for the second term after the government of Abdelilah Benkirane.

Even with this diversity of feminist associations, the majority of respondents still believe that there is a lack of women organizations in big cities like Kenitra. From my personal observation, I believe that the general political reluctance in Morocco has negatively affected women's participation in feminist associations. Unfortunately, as I have noticed from my modest experience, most of Moroccans associate political parties, syndicates and social organizations with corruption. Moroccans tend to give negative connotation to any socio-political organization due to the limited benefits that society gets from non/governmental organizations. Then, the questionnaire invited respondents to assess the fourth and the last statement of the second section (**I am not feminist because the ideas and purposes of feminism are not clear enough for me**).

Respondents did not agree on one single option as the previous statement. 31, 77% agreed with the statement while 26, 56% expressed their disagreement. Similarly, 21, 88% strongly agreed with the proposed statement, whereas 19, 79 showed their strong disagreement. These close percentages are traced back to the diversity of feminist thought itself, and to the level of respondents' feminist awareness. The majority of respondents declare their limited participation in feminists associations which is obviously reflected in their viewpoints about the fourth statement. However, we cannot neglect the negative reaction to the actual statement. The total sum of the disagreed respondents forms about 46, 50 %. Approximately, half of the respondents consider that the principles and the purposes of feminism are clear enough for them.

### 3.2.2.2 Working Conditions

The survey statistics have proved bad working conditions, especially for the private sector workers. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many socialist thinkers accused Capitalism for lowering the living standards of workers and for exploiting women by making them work long hours in unsafe conditions. In order to examine this socialist accusation in relation to the Moroccan context, the following question attempted to investigate the level of women exploitation in both sectors, participants were asked a very straightforward and simple question: "*Have you ever experienced any kind of exploitation?*" The questionnaire suggests two limited answers. Participants were asked either to confirm the incident of exploitation or deny it completely. This question is related directly with a

conditional phrase: “If *yes, what kind of exploitation?*” the question gives four multiple choices with the possibility to pick up more than one option as illustrated below:

- Yes, I work a lot and paid less
- Yes, I work with unclear status which makes me
- doing many tasks at once
- Yes, I have been a victim of sexual exploitation
- Other (please specify).....

**Table1:** Respondents’ reactions to the possibility of being exploited: public sector vs. private sector

		no	yes, I work a lot and i am paid less	yes, I work with unclear status which makes me doing many tasks at once	yes, I have been a victim of sexual exploitation
public sector	doctor	12	16	0	0
	nurse	39	10	17	0
	administrative staff	28	6	14	0
private sector	doctor	18	6	4	0
	nurse	4	32	26	8
	administrative staff	2	12	12	2

The above figure shows the qualities which apply to the respondents’ current status in health services with regard to the level of exploitation. The table can be analyzed globally or within each subgroup. Generally, half of the respondents emphasized that they have never experienced any incident with features of exploitation (103 participants). A quick look at the table shows that the majority of them are from public sector, while only 24 respondents are from the private sector. The most satisfied subgroup in private sector is medical doctors since eighteen out of twenty-four doctors deny any possibility of being exploited. Governmental nurses and administrative staff represent the majority who respond negatively to the question. The public sector seems safer and protective in terms of morals and gains, which is not the case for doctors. Sixteen medical doctors from public sector stated that the effort they invest at work does not match the salary they get. The balance between the invested efforts and the wages is unsettled against medical doctors’ interest. Nurses and administrative staff from the private sector shared the same attitude with government medical doctors regarding the high percentages of the second option. The table reveals that the second option was selected 32 times by government nurses and 12 times by administrative staff from the same sector.

Based on the figures of the above table, it is quite clear that employers of the private sector take unfair advantage of workers’ vulnerability in order to increase their income. The private sector proves its exploitative nature by raising working hours and lowering wages. In an uncompetitive economy like the Moroccan one, the situation becomes even worse due to the

high rates of unemployment. Thus, employers tend to pay workers far less from the value of what they produce, which violates the concept of mutual benefit between the employer and the employee. Such violation puts the settlement of any state at stake. Mutual benefit is crucial for the well-being of workers and crucial for the advancement of any society as a whole.

The process of exploitation is easily implemented if employees work with unclear administrative status. Again, the private sector is on question according to what the table discloses. The third answer option was selected 26 times by nurses and 12 times by administrative staff. It is worth noting that these results are compatible with the previous statistics related to the respect and application of the labor code. The table echoes workers' anger on employment contract system. This system is supposed to guarantee employees' fundamental rights, which unfortunately does not seem to be the case in the Moroccan context. The contract must precise and define the tasks, while in reality the employee is asked to perform additional work without any compensation. Besides, many nurses and administrative staff from the public sector also complain about performing several tasks at the same time. This situation can be traced back to the shortage of employees in the workplace or the nature of some grades that necessitates the performance of various tasks.

Concerning the possibility of being sexually abused, only eight respondents admit the existence of such incidents. This small number implies that sexual abuse is an isolated situation in the Moroccan context. However, respondents may choose to cover up the incident because of the patriarchal values of conservative societies like the Moroccan one. Thus, it could also be attributed to the unfair social judgment that equalizes the victim with the aggressor if not putting the whole blame on women.

### **3.2.2.3 Gender Equality**

This section investigated the impact of job market on gender equality through evaluating the professional and the domestic circumstances that shape working women's lives. To explore respondents' attitudes towards several issues related to domesticity, the questionnaire invited participants to evaluate ten statements. The statements were administered using a scale that probed how strongly respondents supported or opposed the raised issues. In order to analyze the answers, I graded respondents' attitudes as following SA, A, UC, D and SD. The meaning of each score is: SA = strongly agree, A= agree, US= uncertain about the statement D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree,

The following table presents the suggested statements with results in percentages.

**Table 2:** Respondents' view points towards the distribution and performance of household duties

	SA	A	US	D	SD
Domestic chores should be recognized as a wage job that requires clear salary	41.7%	36.3%	15.2%	14%	0%
The government should pay women for their domestic chores because they hold a heavy burden in raising generations	40.7%	41.7%	13.7%	3.9%	0%
Working women are ready to adopt part-time system and to give up some of their salary to get enough time for their domestic obligations in return	18.1%	15.2%	25.5%	26.5%	14.7%
Husbands should share domestic chores equally with their wives	50.5%	39.2%	4.9%	5.4%	0%
It is up to husbands to choose whether to help their wives in domestic chores or not	4.9%	11.8%	11.8%	38.2%	33.3%
Domestic chores are women's duties, and they are obliged to do it	6.4%	9.3%	10.8%	31.9%	41.7%
Domestic chores should be organized by legislative laws to ease the burden on working women	23.5%	28.9%	32.4%	6.4%	8.8%
Wives should choose between marital life and professional career	4.9%	7.8%	5.9%	30.9%	50.5%
In general, the professional advancement of women in Morocco is negatively affected by male control over woman.	12.7%	32.4%	33.8%	18.1%	2.9%
Moroccan society continues to connect women with family and marital life and men with the professional careers.	29.4%	46.6%	8.8%	10.3%	4.9%

The issues discussed in the above table are inspired by the contributions of Margaret Benston (1969), who is the first theorist to clarify the convergence between productive labor and reproductive labor. She points out that domestic work contributes socially and economically in the sustenance of capitalism. For Benston (1969), domestic work produces labor force (workers) which is essential for the Capital. Without workers there will be no capital (Benston, p: 15). Benston's thoughts pave the ground for Dalla Costa and James (1972) who believe that house wives indirectly take part in the capitalist mode of production without any kind of social or financial recognition. Their theoretical analysis is based on the premise that domestic work generates "surplus value" through upraising future workers. The ordinary domestic activities like clothing, feeding, cleaning, cooking and emotional care are necessary conditions for the accumulation of wealth. Therefore, employers should pay housewives for their contribution in the capitalist mode of production (Hennessy-Fiske, 2006, pages. 11-12).

With regard to the first statement, the table reads that the majority of participants (78%) either agreed or strongly agreed that domestic chores should be recognized as a paid job that necessitates a fixed salary. This high degree of agreement reflects respondents' suffering from the double task. They ultimately supported the theoretical justifications of Maria Dalla Costa and Selma James who emphasize the recognition of domestic work as paid work. Domestic chores consume long time and big efforts on a daily basis. According to the respondents, this big investment should not be done for free.

On the other hand, 82.4% of respondents either strongly agreed or just agreed that Moroccan government is required to compensate them for performing domestic chores. They welcome the proposed reasoning that emphasizes the production of labor force. At the final stage, it is the society as whole which benefits from the long journey of upraising future doctors, teachers, and active workers in general.

However, respondents did not agree on one prevailing attitude toward the third statement. They show their reluctance to adopt part-time system and give up some part of their salary to get enough time for their domestic obligations in return. The highest percentage goes to the category which disagreed with the statement (26.5%). The rest of percentages are distributed between strongly agree (18.1%), agree (15.2%), strongly disagree (14.7), and uncertain about the statement (25.5%). This proves that the willingness to give up part of the salary to ease the burden of domestic chores is not possible because of the financial engagements of working women. Women do not only hold the social responsibility of domestic chores, but also take a big part of the financial support. For these respondents, the best solution

resides in the fourth statement. 89.7% of the respondents either strongly agreed or just agreed that husbands should equally share domestic chores with their wives. Instead of the system of working less and get paid less, respondents tend either to get paid for the domestic chores or to make these chores a common responsibility between wives and husbands. This proposition is welcomed by 71.5% of respondents who either strongly disagreed or just disagreed with the idea that it is up to husbands to choose whether to help their wives in domestic chores or not. Similarly, 73.6% refused the traditional judgment that domestic chores are women's duties. Working women in health services adopt a modern insight toward private realm. Since working women contribute with a big part in the financial disbursement, husbands should involve themselves in the household chores as well. With respect to the above account, the question that imposes itself here is: how can we reconstruct these social roles? More than half respondents believe that the government should set clear bills to clarify the mutual involvement in household chores between husbands and wives. 23.5% strongly agreed that domestic chores should be organized by legislative regulations to ease the burden on working women, while 28.9% simply agreed with the idea. Notably, 32.4% of respondents expressed their uncertainty about the legislative procedures. This is due mainly to the applicability of this kind of laws. Household is part of the private and intimate life and not every working woman can demand equal sharing of these routinely activities, especially in a traditionalist society like the Moroccan one. However, the majority of respondents refused the idea that women should choose between marital life and professional career. This idea seems archaic and trespassed for participants as (50.5%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 30.9% just disagreed.

The last two statements aim to investigate the cultural barriers that might block the improvement of working women within the constraints of Moroccan society which is patriarchal by nature. These statements tend to evaluate the validity of such claims. The first statement says that: *the professional advancement of women in Morocco is negatively affected by male control over woman*. Only (12.7%) of respondents showed their strong agreement with this claim and (32.4%) expressed their moderate disagreement. The highest percentage belongs to the category which remains uncertain about the statement with (33.8%). The rest of respondents, however, strongly disagreed (18.1%) or just disagreed (2.9%) with the proposed idea. This means that Moroccan society adopt prejudicial attitudes toward women. Respondents' answers revolve between agreement and state of uncertainty. Reflectively, Moroccans are in the middle road between patriarchy and equality. However, *Moroccan society still connects women with family and marital life and men with the professional careers*.

Respondents welcomed largely this last statement. 46.6% of participants agreed with the statement, while 29.4% strongly agreed that the old traditional image of women as mothers and housewives still exists in the collective consciousness.

#### **4. Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to probe the current socioeconomic status of working women in healthcare services that are still active workers in both public and private hospitals in Kenitra. To capture a broader image of their current socioeconomic status, qualitative methods were also employed along with the survey. The interviews and questionnaires helped to grasp a deep understanding of the different variables that generate the current situation. The picture of the nature of the relationship that exists between woman's professional career and her private life is also obtained after a long process of correlating the descriptive statistics with the related variables; an examination that allows the deduction of the current status on different levels. The systematic deconstruction of the current status of working women in healthcare services generates positive evaluations on certain levels and negative assessments on other levels.

The thematic analysis starts from the perception that feminist consciousness has often depended on feminist self-identification as an indicator of women's group consciousness. Feminist consciousness and changing status of women is a social aspect fascinates those women who wanted the strong equal status in their life. Results of the present study show that the level feminist consciousness depends on participants' attitudes and feelings towards the cultural background of feminism in general. There is a direct relationship between participants' attitudes and the historical background of feminism as a western product. Besides, the degree of acceptance among participants is clearly linked to the nature of participants' attitudes. Generally, participants expressed differential levels of feminist awareness with a great deal of conservativeness toward feminist theories. This foggy image is partly explained by the diversity of feminist thought itself. Respondents judged feminism from the images of radical feminists that media keep broadcasting. Images like flashing boobs and protesting lesbians in the streets of Europe and USA. Like these images have surely shaped negative attitudes in Moroccan women's consciousness.

Respondents who expressed implicitly their feminist identities imply to their state of mind of being cautious about feminism. This big part of participants did not consider ideological background of feminism as a condition to enter the feminist club. These participants do not perceive feminist background as a necessity for demanding their rights. Thus, explicit

reference to feminism in a conservative country like Morocco will hinder their efforts to achieve liberation. As a tactical resolution, the findings of current study suggest a selective approach to feminism through being open and flexible to adopt any feminist concept in condition this concept is not against the common sense, according to some participants. This suggests a cultural compromise between modernity and tradition with cultural conditions. It is very important to mention that some external variables influence the level of feminist awareness among working women. The collected data gives unique explanation to women's ignorance about feminist thought by relating their unawareness with the current political climate in Morocco which is obviously discouraging. These negative attitudes have generated a status of distrust that discourages women's participation in feminist organizations. On the other hand, positive attitudes give hope for enabling future feminist. The findings suggest that participants who enjoy high feminist consciousness are more interactive with their private and public spheres and, thus, more capable to defend their rights.

This research project proves the existence of implicit feminist consciousness among the majority of respondents. Negative attitudes were accompanied with the manipulation of feminist discourse in demanding the improvement of women's socioeconomic status. Feminist terminology is a representative feature of feminist identity. This result has already been supported by the studies of Parelius (1975), Welch (1975), Mason and Bumpas (1975), and Mason et al., (1976) wherein they point out that feminist consciousness is not a solid knowledge to be evaluated through making general assessments, but it is a changing paradigm through emergent themes. An individual may adopt feminist opinion toward certain issues and express nonfeminist attitudes about other concerns. These studies prove that women supported feminist issues without defining themselves as 'feminists'.

I believe that there is an intellectual responsibility on Moroccan feminists to simplify and communicate the principles of feminist thought. The struggle for women's rights should not confront with Moroccan norms as much as possible. Vice versa, feminist intellectuals must clarify the imported ideas that underestimate the position of women; ideas which are not Moroccan non Islamic. I believe that there is an urgent need to garble the traditions that prevent women from fighting for their natural rights. This process of garbling should target tradition and modernism as well.

The findings of the present study pose that working conditions in health sector are below the average. The colossal shortage of HR and deficiency of materials are the main characteristics of the public sector. Participants accused governmental officials for their

misleading political discourse that claim the satisfaction of healthcare services 'needs. Yet, the governmental workers admitted their static and clear status due to the inflexible framework they work in. the governmental censorship on public sector leaves no chance for any gender inequalities in terms of salary, working hours, and promotion and so on. The immense labor code violation exists in the private sector since the majority, except physicians, suffers from: indefinite working hours, absence of promotion system, low salaries and no regard for women's special needs as laborers and housewives at the same time. Contrary, private hospitals guarantee the availability of medical materials for the sake of patients' comfort. This intricate and paradoxical situation creates negative environment that promote feelings of insecurity and non-belonging among working women in private sector.

Noble (2003) thinks that more attention should be paid in recognizing and managing working condition because when workers have negative assessments about their environment they usually suffer chronic stress. Basically, the existing working conditions that characterize the general environment affect the psychological and physical wellbeing of employees and the level of productivity at the workplace. There are international organizations which continuously discuss the rights of workers. Most people spend fifty percent of their lives at workplace, which significantly influence their psychology, activities, capacities and production (Sundstrom, 1994). The available literature indicates that the issues such as dissatisfaction and the physical environment are playing a major role in the loss of employees' productivity.

Nezameddin Faghih (2019) analyzed World Bank reports to deduce that there is a big preference for public sector jobs throughout MENA region, although it is considered against the sustainable goals of the third millennium. The system of contractual employment is meant to protect workers' rights and raise state's income through taxes. However, the author resumed his evaluation since this system has led to undesirable results. Employment contract reinforced abuse and exploitation in private sector (p. 77-78). In relation to present study, the big part of responsibility for this disappointing situation is placed not only on government but also on civil social associations, especially feminist ones. Although the capitalist exploitation of women in private sector is quite common in Morocco, there is a suspicious absence of public reactions to stop these inhuman practices. This explains why respondents conceive private sector as their first choice. To name but a few, unpaid overtime job becomes a regular hobbit in private clinics, since state officials and workers as well have normalized such practices. Code labor violation harms the trust bond between the employer and the employee which can lead to immoral

problems such as larceny and absenteeism as forms of revenge. Depriving employees of their basic rights diminishes job satisfaction and limits their productivity rate.

## **5. Conclusion**

The discussion about the socioeconomic status of working women tends to be universal and mandatory as it has been agreed among intellectuals from all academic branches that no society can reach satisfactory rates of development, while a big proportion of working women experience several plights. The collected data through the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview implies that participants from private sector, except physicians, are the most affected category. Working women from private sector are more vulnerable to different forms of exploitation. Unlimited working hours, absence of promotion system, low salaries and workplace sexual harassment are common features of private sector in Morocco. On the opposite side, public sector seems a little bit relaxing for women in terms of basic rights. However, bad working conditions are the major obstacle for female employees with regard to big shortage of necessary medical materials and human resources.

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