

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MOROCCO: A CASE STUDY OF AL NOUR MARRAKECH

L'AUTONOMISATION DES FEMMES À TRAVERS L'ENTREPRENEURIAT SOCIAL AU MAROC : ETUDE DE CAS AL NOUR MARRAKECH

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To enrich the existing research about the dynamics of women empowerment and social enterprises in Morocco, specifically, the women involved in the social enterprise named Al Nour Marrakech.

relevance: The mechanisms that enable disabled women to succeed and be empowered in the workplace are explored in this research as a contribution to the growing body of literature on social entrepreneurship.

Key methodological aspects: This paper follows a case study methodology through the use of qualitative methods mainly through 10 in-depth interviews.

Key considerations: The Al Nour company has prospered and seen an improvement in its overall well-being thanks to the development of empowering mechanisms within the social enterprise. Since the organization gave women the chance to work, encouraging them to become independent, and transforming the prevalent culture towards a more egalitarian society. Women's willingness to engage in decision-making has improved with greater control over their source of income, encouraging more women in the community to work at the organization.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship, Social enterprise, Women empowerment*

1.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Two schools of thought on social entrepreneurship are frequently distinguished in the literature: on the one hand, there are businesses that pursue their financial objectives while also addressing their moral, social, and environmental obligations (Persais, 2012). On the other hand, organizations that accept a reduction in profits in order to advance a social cause. The latter are true examples of social entrepreneurship (Pigé, 2008). The first idea translates the "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)" movement that has emerged within large corporations, whereas the second approach is more focused on businesses or entrepreneurs who specifically set up businesses to address societal issues. Profit, according to the latter, is a tool to be reinvested in order to ensure the enterprise's long-term viability and the creation of social value. Despite their contradictory nature, profit and social impact go hand in hand for the latter. Our study focuses on the second type, which we believe is the typical model of social enterprise.

We distinguish two main schools of thought that define social enterprise based on the concept's origins. According to the first school of thought, a social enterprise is a Non-Profit Organization that seeks funding (Skloot, 1987; Young and Salamon, 2002), or it is simply a for-profit or not-for-profit organization that engages in market activity to achieve a social goal (Austin et al., 2006). The concept falls under the domain of social innovation in the second school. According to this notion, the entrepreneur is a change agent. As a result, the entrepreneur occupies a position at the center of the business, and invention is the key to his or her success. In Europe, the social enterprise is described as "an organization with a clear goal of serving the community, founded by a group of citizens, and in which investors' material interests are limited " (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006).

The definition proposed by Bacq and Janssen (2008) appears to synthesize the multiple schools of thought already mentioned. «The social entrepreneur is a visionary individual, whose primary objective is not to make a profit, but to create social value, capable of seizing and exploiting the opportunities that present themselves, by gathering the resources necessary to carry out their social mission, and by finding creative solutions to the social problems of their community that are not addressed by the system in place.” Bacq and Janssen (2008). This social form of entrepreneurship is a component of what has been referred to as the Social and Solidarity Economy since the turn of the past century (SSE).

1.2. EMPOWERMENT

According to The World Bank (2011), empowerment is the process of giving people or groups more power to make decisions and translate those decisions into the desired actions and results. One of the primary characteristics of social entrepreneurship that distinguishes it from other industries appears to be the empowerment of the subjects both inside and beyond organizational boundaries.

Types of empowerment:

Ninacs (2002) made a distinction between three types of empowerment in the field of social work, namely: individual empowerment, financial empowerment, and relational empowerment.

Empowerment is the process of acquiring various forms of authority. Thus, empowerment is both a means to and a goal of power (Calvès, 2009). Rowlands (1995) distinguished three types of power: internal power, external power, and internal power to. Her work has inspired the feminist movement to introduce a fourth form of power called "power with." The understanding of one's own power dynamics is referred to as having "inner power." It reflects how the individual views himself/herself in terms of his/her self-worth, self-assurance, and respect (Rowlands, 1995).

1.3. EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES DYNAMICS

Empowerment as a result of social entrepreneurship: Internal empowerment

According to Guerin (2003), social enterprises, economic initiatives and practices are very important for women as livelihood strategies. Primarily, these themes serve as privacy and justice. Second, in the social and solidarity economy, an organization is a space for sharing and discussing the taboos and problems of the marginalized. Third, these actors help redefine the relationship between family, government, mayor, and civil society. In this section, we will analyze how social cooperative economy actors participate in the individual and collective empowerment of female members.

A study conducted in Bolivia by Charlier (2006) found that women's membership of social economy organizations and cooperatives influences women's personal empowerment. By participating in these structures, women were able to overcome loneliness and form social networks. By joining the Task Force, each woman was able to build a positive self-image and learn about her abilities. This is what Rowlands (1995) called "the power of immanence". At the same time, thanks to the work of social economy actors who share responsibilities, women are encouraged to take on the managerial roles in these organizations. Thus, women are empowered by taking on this responsibility.

According to research conducted in West Africa (Ben Lazrak, 2015), women's involvement in social economy groups is predominantly motivated by the desire to support their families, which is a result of economic motives. They do, however, develop skills, knowledge, and abilities, as well as self-esteem and critical awareness, as they operate in groups. As a result, women start to make decisions and realize how crucial their circumstance is as a growth actor.

In Morocco, the cooperative is a means of empowering women. Its dual economic and social function allows for the integration of excluded people, particularly excluded women. Work within these entities promotes the empowerment of women cooperators by allowing them to improve their financial skills as well as their human qualities in terms of awareness and self-esteem. (2018, Gazzar et al.)

Empowerment as a result of social entrepreneurship: Collective empowerment

In addition to the role, they play in the individual empowerment of their female members, as manifested by the development of their critical consciousness and self-image, solidarity organizations also promote the acquisition of collective empowerment.

Collective empowerment is a second level of empowerment that is built in groups and increases the group's collective power. It seeks social and political change through the use of solidarity. In this regard, Charlier's (2006) research demonstrates that social organizations constitute spaces of awareness that gender relations are only a social and cultural construction.

2.METHODOLOGY

This article utilizes an inductive approach and follows the case study research strategy. Research on social companies has been predominantly recorded through case studies (e.g., Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006; Hockerts, 2010) and grounded theory because social entrepreneurship is a new topic in management literature (e.g. Weerawardena & Mort, 2006; Khavul, Bruton, & Wood, 2009). Grounded theory and case studies are the perfect research methodologies to provide significant volumes of knowledge regarding the procedures these companies use because the subject of study is new and largely in the exploratory stages.

The case study method is used as a research strategy in this study for the following reasons:

First, it can be difficult to decontextualize social enterprises without losing important information. Case studies are the most effective method when the subject of study is not easily identifiable from its surrounding context. In order to comprehend indigenous worldviews, qualitative tools such as observation and interviews are preferred to quantitative tools, such as, surveys or databases. Second, researching the lives of women in patriarchal cultures raises issues of power disparities, access to informants, and perceived social desirability of responses that are better managed through in-depth interviews with informants than quantitative research techniques. Finally, the high levels of female illiteracy in Morocco compelled us to collect data verbally. We have employed the single case study method

(Yin, 1994). We used an interpretive research strategy (Patton, 2002) to better understand our informants' social and cultural frames of reference and the nature of their day-to-day realities.

3. CONTEXT

Within the framework of researching the role of social enterprise and its role in Moroccan women's empowerment, the present study was conducted to get a closer look at three types of empowerment; individual, relational and financial empowerment, through the process of interviewing the members of Al Nour Marrakech.

3.1. AL NOUR MARRAKECH: CORE ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVE

Patricia Kahane established Al Nour Marrakech in 2013. Its goal is to give disadvantaged people the chance to live a life anchored in dignity and independence via the traditional embroidery of Morocco. The company offers health insurance and a retirement pension as well as other benefits to help ensure that its employees have a great quality of life.

Alnour currently employs 40 people, 32 of whom have a disability and 38 of whom are women.

The women who work at Al Nour create hand embroidery for garments, accessories, and household textiles. As everything for the home may be produced to order, the products are sold online, through pop-up events in Europe, and in their Marrakech store.

Al Nour's main goal is to give its employees, who all earn incomes above the minimum wage, financial independence. Al Nour provides its employees with free child daycare, free meals, wheelchair-accessible transportation to and from work, as well as technical, medical, and psychological support. As a result, the staff developed a strong sense of affection towards the organization.

3.2. PRE-STUDY PREPARATION

Contacting the company and confirming the visit

We first contacted the company's assistant through email, in which we explained the objectives of the visit and then we defined a convenient day and time and obtained a confirmation for the visit from both the company and the faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, Aïn Sebâa for a visit permission. The visit took place on the 16th of September 2022 in Al Nour premises.

Preparing interview questions:

As previously stated, the goal is to study the impact that the social enterprise Al Nour has on its members, to be more specific, we were aiming to gain an overview of the changes that occurred in women's lives with regards to these three points after integrating the company:

- Financial empowerment
- Relational empowerment
- Individual empowerment

An initial draft of interview questions was written and then thoughtfully reviewed by my supervisor Pr. Haoucha Malika.

4. DATA COLLECTION:

At the Al Nour Marrakech workshop, ten members agreed to participate in the interviews and were given questions about their reasons for joining Al Nour, how they managed their jobs, and how they spent their earnings.

Women were generally more inclined than men to open up to strangers, and particularly to other women, about their experiences and emotions, according to Dindia and Allen (1992) and Snell, Miller, Belk, Garcia-Falconi, and Hernandez Sanchez (1989). As females, we were directly involved in the process of collecting data. The visit was

arranged with a key informant, the administrative assistant of Al Nour Marrakech with the agreement that we would be examining how the enterprise affected its intended beneficiaries.

To collect the data in a simple, fast and efficient way, the interview questions were made into a questionnaire using the tool google forms. As I was asking the interviewees, I was personally filling in the forms.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS:

5.1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES:

- 70% of the participants are above 45 years old. The age of the remaining percentage varies between 35 and 40 years old. Out of ten participants, 30 % have not received an education, 20% are equally dispersed over women who benefited from Koranic studies, primary education and secondary school education. The remaining 10% obtained a graduate degree. Half of the interviewees have declared that they are single, 30% are married and the remaining percentage represents the women who have been through a divorce. Six out of ten women do not have children and the rest of the women have given birth to one to four children.
- The job opportunity offered by Al Nour represents the first professional experience for 40% of the participants. The remaining women left their previous jobs for the following reasons:
 - Inconsistent and low revenue
 - Inability to take care of their children after giving birth while maintaining their jobs.
 - Lack of basic rights, such as, health insurance and retirement plans.
 - Absence of a friendly space for people with special needs (disability): One woman who uses crutches, to be able to walk, declared that in her previous job, she had to go up the stairs to reach the workshop located on the 4th floor of a building which takes her roughly 40 minutes. It's important to note that the time spent going up and down the stairs affects her productivity time, hence, her earnings decreased. She also developed a urologic condition due to the lack of standard bathrooms for people with disabilities.
 - Absence of suitable Transportation: Many women reported that taxis refuse to offer their services to people with disabilities often due to not having enough space to load their assistive devices to promote mobility, such as, wheelchairs, and because of the time spent loading and unloading the equipment, they often spend around an hour to take a taxi. Taking the bus is no different than the previous case, many women stated that it's almost impossible to get on the bus on rush hours and usually the assigned seats for disabled people are not respected. These women were not able to assure their presence, according to the company time policy, hence, they often lost their jobs.

5.2. JOURNEY TO AL NOUR:

- The women who left their previous jobs to join Al Nour or who were recruited for the first time discovered the company through a friend or a family member, the rest have previously joined organizations for people with special needs which then referred them to Al Nour. Half of the women have been working for Al Nour for 7 to 9 years, 20% have worked for 4 to 7 years and the remaining 30% spent 1 to 4 years at the company.
- The women were then asked about the obstacles they had to face after making the decision to join the company.
- The number one constraint that 70% of the participants had to face after joining Al Nour was the long trajectory between their homes and their workplace; half of the women, mainly those who have other members to take care of, stated that it was hard to maintain a balance between their professional life and their personal life. Most of the women confirmed that their families, including parents and husbands, were encouraging their decision to start working. One out of ten women were obliged to enter the work field after getting a divorce and having to be financially responsible for herself and her three kids. One out of ten women had to leave her hometown to be able to work because her parents were "ashamed" of her disability and did not want her to be "exposed".

- The women were then asked if they knew a person who could not join the company due to family constraints and 40% of the responses were positive.

5.3. INTERNAL PERCEPTION: INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT

- Nine out of ten people view their jobs as A source of income, a space for learning and self-development and a space for autonomy.
- One out of ten participants consider their job as a source of income and health care benefits and a duty towards their close family.
- All the women confirmed that they have gained a new skill since their arrival to the company. Al Nour is always on the lookout for new projects that require different embroidery designs which explains why they are constantly learning new skills in their field. The ladies of Al Nour have also stated that they gained confidence to do certain activities which they were not able to do before on their own, such as: traveling alone, handling administrative paperwork, going to traditional Turkish baths “hammam” and beauty salons. Moreover, the ladies of Al Nour stated an increase in their self-esteem, confidence capacity to take actions and initiative.

5.4. EXTERNAL PERCEPTION: RELATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

After starting their professional occupation, the ladies of Alnour noticed that they hold more value in their household, their entourage became more considerate of their opinion when making important decisions.

From the observation during the interviews, the ladies of Alnour seem to be very close in fact, all of the participants consider their colleagues as friends and that their relationship extends past work hours. They declared that they are present for each through thick and thin, which had greatly impacted their mental health.

5.5. FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

- At Al Nour, 90% of the participants confirmed that their salary is sufficient enough for them to be financially independent. Usually, the salary decreases when the productivity of a person drops due to an unexpected health emergency.
- The ladies were asked about how they spend their earnings. The earned income is spent in a descending order on the following elements:
 - Food and clothing
 - Rental fees / loan for purchasing a home.
 - School fees for family members
 - Water and electricity
 - Other: Gas and family allowance
- When it comes to loans, 30% of the respondents have taken one mainly to purchase a house.

The interviewees stated that the founder of Al Nour is an amazing attentive lady, who always listens to their needs and works to the best of her ability to meet them. She established a disability-inclusive transport, which picks up each and every participant from their homes to the workplace in the mornings and brings them back after their shifts end. The workshop is designed to ease mobility within the company. The embroiderers do not have to go up and down the stairs, the provided chairs and tables are designed to be at a comfortable level, the bathrooms are also special needs friendly and easily accessible. The women work in teams which creates a warm environment, suitable for making long lasting friendships.

Al Nour encourages its members to develop multiple skills which are not solely related to their core activity such as learning new languages and soft skills, the company provides trainings for Arabic, French, English and communication classes. If a member wishes to learn a language or a skill which is not provided by the company, the latter handles finding and financing the suitable training.

Moreover, the company also cares about the well-being of its members and offers therapy for the ladies who are struggling with mental health. In order to help the women achieve a work life balance, Al Nour provides breakfast and

lunch for the members and babysitting services for their children. The women who cannot afford rent, especially, the new joiners from different cities are offered housing in a Riad which belongs to the owner of the company. The ladies of Al Nour showed a great appreciation for the efforts of the owner, and they expressed how they tend to forget their disability within the company and declared that the latter positively impacted their life quality.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present case study match perfectly the theories and the studies previously mentioned. Firstly, during the interviews, the main schemes of empowerment that were discussed and confirmed by the ladies of Al Nour were: individual empowerment, financial empowerment, and relational empowerment which were distinguished in the field of social work by Ninacs (2002). Secondly, Al Nour Marrakech is more than just a social company, it is considered to be a solid community of people who share the same values and strive to be the best version of themselves by developing their skills and being present for each other. For the women of Al Nour, the workplace is a safe environment, where they can share their thoughts, opinions and emotions. Most of them declared that they prefer to spend extra time at work to overcome loneliness and fully benefit from social networking. During the interviews, it was clear that the relational aspect is of a huge importance to the women which supports the work of Guerin (2003).

By joining Alnour Marrakech, women were able to develop their embroidery skills, learn new languages, and work on their mental health through therapy which ultimately led to higher self-esteem and confidence. These results confirm the statements of Rowlands (1995) of achieving individual empowerment through social entrepreneurship.

Lastly, Gazzar et al (2018) previously talked about developing the financial skills of the members of a social enterprise which was perfectly demonstrated through the answers of the interviewees, multiple women were able to purchase their own homes, take out loans, pay for their personal expenses and support their family's needs.

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The following part contains the interview questions that were asked to 10 of the members of ALNOUR company on the 16/09/2022 from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM, the answers were collected and will be analysed and used for an upcoming research article

ALNOUR MARRAKECH

CE QUESTIONNAIRE EST DESTINÉ AUX EMPLOYÉS DE L'ENTREPRISE ALNOUR MARRAKECH ET SERVIRA À L'ÉLABORATION D'UNE ÉTUDE DANS LE CADRE D'UN PROJET DE THÈSE DE DOCTORAT INTITULÉ "SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND ITS ROLE IN MOROCCAN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT".

1. QUEL ÂGE AVEZ-VOUS ?

- ENTRE 20 - 25 ANS
- ENTRE 25 - 30 ANS
- ENTRE 30 - 35 ANS
- ENTRE 35 - 40 ANS PLUS QUE 45 ANS

2. QUEL EST VOTRE NIVEAU D'INSTRUCTION ?

- ETUDES CORANIQUES
- PRIMAIRE
- SECONDAIRE
- SUPÉRIEUR
- NON SCOLARISÉE

3. QUELLE EST VOTRE SITUATION FAMILIALE ? *

- CÉLIBATAIRE
- MARIÉE
- DIVORCÉE
- VEUVE

4. COMBIEN D'ENFANTS AVEZ-VOUS ?

- AUCUN
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- PLUS QUE 4

5. Avez-vous travaillé auparavant ?

- Oui
- Non

6. Si Oui, Quel était votre métier précédent et pourquoi l'avez-vous quitté ?

7. Comment avez-vous connu l'entreprise ALNOUR ?

- Par un moteur de recherche.
- Par un organisme de conseil ou d'accompagnement. Par la presse.
- Par un ami ou un membre de famille.
- Autre :

8. Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous chez l'entreprise ALNOUR ?

- Moins d'un an
- Entre 1-4 ans
- Entre 4-7 ans
- Entre 7 -9 ans
- Plus de 9 ans

9. Quel est précisément votre travail au sein de l'entreprise ALNOUR ?

- Textiles de maison
- Accessoires divers
- Vêtements pour femmes, hommes et enfants
- Autre:

10. Vous travaillez combien d'heure par jour ?

- 2 heures
- 4 heures
- 6 heures
- 8 heures
- Autre:

11. Quelles sont les contraintes que vous avez rencontrées suite à votre décision d'intégrer cette entreprise ?

- Epoux opposé
- Milieu culturel défavorisant
- Long trajet domicile-travail.
- Difficulté d'équilibrer entre le travail familial et professionnel
- Autre:

12. Connaissez-vous une femme qui n'a pas pu intégrer l'entreprise à cause * des raisons mentionnées ci-dessus ?

- Oui
- Non

13. Vous considérez votre travail comme :

- Une source de revenu
- Une source de revenu, un espace d'apprentissage et de développement de soi,
- Une source de revenu, un espace d'apprentissage et de développement de soi et un espace d'autonomie
- Autre: _____

14. Avez-vous acquis de nouvelles connaissances ou compétences après votre arrivée à ALNOUR ?

- Oui
- Non

15. Si oui, lesquelles ? _____

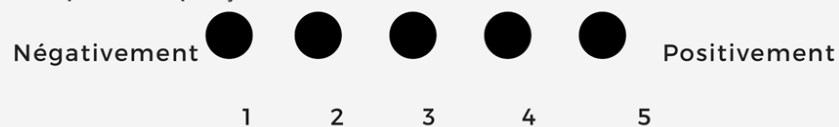
16. Quels sont les changements comportementaux que vous avez remarqués après votre arrivée à l'entreprise ?

- Estime de soi
- Confiance en soi
- Capacité d'action
- Prise de Parole
- Prise d'initiative

17. Avez-vous des objectifs que vous avez réalisés ou que vous souhaitez réaliser par votre activité actuelle ?

- Création de votre propre projet
- Acquisition d'un bien
- Apprentissage de nouvelles techniques de broderie
- Autre: _____

18. Comment vos proches perçoivent votre travail actuel?




19. Quels sont les changements comportementaux de votre voisinage que vous avez remarqués ?

- Ils sollicitent votre aide avant la prise d'une décision
- Ils accordent plus d'attention à votre opinion
- Ils partagent les tâches ménagères avec vous
- Autre :

20. Quel type de relation avez-vous avec vos collègues ?

- Aucune
- Connaissances
- Amitié

21. Est-ce que les conversations personnelles que vous avez avec vos collègues ont un impact positif sur vous ?

Pas du tout d'accord  Tout à fait d'accord
1 2 3 4 5

22. Pensez-vous que le revenu généré est suffisant pour être financièrement indépendante ?

- Oui
- Non

23. Est-ce que vous utilisez votre revenu pour financer :

- Nourriture
- Vêtement
- Fournitures scolaires
- Frais médicaux
- Loyer
- Autre :

24. Avez-vous demandé un crédit ?

- Oui
- Non

25. Si oui, pourquoi ?

- Pour acheter un bien
 - Pour financer les études d'un membre de famille
 - Pour lancer un projet personnel
 - Autre :
-

26. Avez-vous bénéficié des avantages suivants ?

- Les moyens de transport offerts par l'entreprise
 - Le petit déjeuner et le déjeuner offerts par l'entreprise
 - Les formations de langues et du développement des compétences professionnelles
 - Les services à la petite enfance
 - Autre :
-

27. Les avantages ci-dessus ont-ils eu un impact positif sur l'équilibre entre votre vie professionnelle et votre vie privée ?

Pas du tout d'accord

Tout à fait d'accord



28. Après votre intégration à l'entreprise ALNOUR, votre qualité de vie s'est-elle améliorée ?

Pas du tout d'accord

Tout à fait d'accord

