

Employability of Young Women Graduates in Côte D'ivoire: Conditions For Access To A Salaried Employment

NADO Chiaba Alida Gisèle, KOUTOU N'Guessan Claude

*Département de Sociologie, Université Félix Houphouët Boigny, UFR de l'Homme et de la Société, Institut
d'Ethno-Sociologie, 22 BP 535 Abidjan 22, Côte d'Ivoire*

Abstract: This study analyzes the conditions of access of young women graduates to salaried job in Côte d'Ivoire. The integration of women graduates into the labor market has become increasingly difficult in recent decades. Several factors, including the method of prospecting, initial training and school level, have a particular influence on the quest for job in Côte d'Ivoire. So, what about young women graduates? Our study shows that young women are more interested in literary training than in scientific training. Also, the general school level of these women is lower than that of young men; the largest proportion are the bachelor's degree. Indeed, the number of young women in the workforce is reduced as the school level increases. In addition, young women use recruitment agencies more than social capital to find employment. This study suggests that women should be interested in all scientific and literary training (being versatile), take their studies seriously and extend their time in school in order to reach at least Master in order to facilitate their professional integration. Also, young women graduates must learn to be more professional and competent.

Keywords: women graduates, training, study level, job search mode, professional insertion.

Date of Submission: 06-12-2019

Date of Acceptance: 23-12-2019

I. CONTEXT

In Côte d'Ivoire, the enrolment rate of young girls has increased considerably with the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (MDGs). Thus, of the 5 049 496 students in the Ivorian education system, 2 277 026 are girls i.e. 45.1% (DSPS 2014-2015). Indeed, these gains in school attendance have been particularly beneficial to women. Thus, before independence, only 13% of girls were enrolled in school and this rate was approximately multiplied by six to reach 74.3% in 2015 (INS, 2015). Increasingly, the labor market is welcoming young women with both diplomas and young men, who are trying to integrate themselves in the same way as the latter.

However, the labor market is not always favorable to their offers. In fact, the issue of the employment of young graduates remains a key issue in the world. Also, in Côte d'Ivoire as elsewhere in West Africa, young people are disadvantaged in the labor market for various reasons (level of education, specialization, mismatch between training and employment, age, gender). The employability of young graduates in general and young girls in particular remains undermined by several realities. In addition, it is noted that in our country employment data are not regular and often not available. As a result, existing information is limited and therefore unable to help analyze the situation of young people on the labor market. Nevertheless, statistics show that young people represent the population most affected by unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity in Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, the informal sector, particularly domestic work, is the one that employs the majority of young people (BIT, 2014; Kouakou and Koba, 2015).

In Côte d'Ivoire, salaried employment occupies about three-quarters (73.2%) of men, including 60.2% of young people aged 14-35. Unemployment has an urban character. It is higher in Abidjan (13.4%) and more focused on women (10.0%), especially in the younger age groups (12.8% for the 14 -24 years and 8.0% for 25-35 year olds). As a result, the largest number of unemployed people are found in Abidjan (46.4% of the unemployed) and women represent 57.8% of this population (INS, 2015). Young women are the most vulnerable in the Ivorian labor market. Faced with the youthful and feminine character of unemployment, the Ivorian government has put in place many initiatives to remedy it.

This essentially consisted in the implementation of a few platforms and programs such as: the National Agency for Vocational Formation (AGEFOP), the Agency for Studies and Promotion of Employment (AGEPE), now known as the Youth Employment Agency (AEJ), the National Youth Foundation (FNJ), the National Solidarity Fund for the Promotion of Youth Employment (FNS), the Youth Training and Vocational Integration Program (PFIJ), the Service Platform (PFS), the Socio-economic Integration Project (PRISE), the Pilot Program for the Development of Employment Generation Initiatives (PRODIGE). The government has

also implemented a National Development Plan (NDP) 2012-2015 aimed at placing Côte d'Ivoire on a path of vigorous, sustained and inclusive growth, in order to make it an emerging country by 2020 (N'Gom D. et Kouadio, 2015). The objective is to achieve a double-digit growth rate from 2014. These different programs and funds have contributed to the decrease in the unemployment rate in Côte d'Ivoire. In fact, the unemployment rate, which was 9.4% at the end of 2012 (FAD, 2013; MPG, 2019), fell to 5.03% in 2015 (AGEPE, 2015). However, despite this drop in the unemployment rate, young women graduates are still increasingly affected by this reality in employment. In other words, despite the fall in the unemployment rate, young female graduates are the most affected by the unemployment situation, underemployment and job insecurity, than young male graduates.

What is it that promotes this imbalance in the labor market? Why do young men graduates fit in more easily than young women graduates? What are the real causes that hinder the professional insertion of young women graduates? To this end, what is the correlation between school education and the way young women graduates prospect on the job market?

The main objective of this study is to analyze the conditions of access of young women graduates to salaried employment in Côte d'Ivoire.

Specifically, it will be to:

- highlight the initiatives (programs, plans, policies) put in place by the Ivorian government for the benefit of young graduates;
- show the job search instructions for young women graduates;
- highlight the factors that impact access to employment for young women graduates in Côte d'Ivoire.

II. METHODOLOGY

The survey method used in this study is a set of quantitative and qualitative surveys. There are two fundamental reasons for this methodological choice. As a bonus, the analysis of the conditions of access of young women graduates to salaried employment requires us to seek statistical data for a better understanding of the phenomenon. The quantitative approach will focus on studying the characteristics of young women graduates, methods of seeking paid employment, opinions on the causes that hinder the professional insertion of young women graduates in Côte d'Ivoire. Secondly, the anthropological approach to the subject requires us to use qualitative surveys to better understand the perceptions of business leaders and recruiters about the employability of young women graduates in Côte d'Ivoire. This research combines both the quantitative and qualitative approaches generally used in this type of work. With regard to the qualitative aspect, the search for information made it possible to meet with resource persons to obtain relevant information on the subject. As for the quantitative component, it made it possible to collect quantitative data from young women graduates seeking employment. Our study was carried out at two University sites and four Human Resources Departments (HRDs).

To achieve the objectives of this study, the methodological approach consisted first of a major literature review on the issue of youth employment in Côte d'Ivoire and in particular on the employment situation of young women graduates, then of a literature search on projects and programs, followed by an analysis of the documents collected.

2.1. Study site

Our study was conducted in an urban areas. The city of Abidjan (the Economic Capital City of Côte d'Ivoire) was chosen as the main location for data collection. According to the latest census (INS, 2014), the urban population is mainly concentrated in Abidjan, where 4 395 243 inhabitants live, or nearly 4 out of 10 urban dwellers (38.7%). In addition, in Abidjan we note a feminization rate of 50.4%. And given that unemployment in Côte d'Ivoire is much more focused in urban areas, on young people, better on young women, the city of Abidjan is the most appropriate for the scope of our study.

In addition, data on youth employment are non-exhaustive and not widely available in Côte d'Ivoire; we have focused on public and private Universities. The various structures have been selected according to selection criteria, including the recognition of diplomas by CAMES. These include the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University of Cocody, PIGIER-Côte d'Ivoire.

* **Félix Houphouët-Boigny University of Cocody:** an Ivorian public University located in the heart of the municipality of Cocody, in Abidjan. In the 1970s and 1980s, this University was very well known in French-speaking West Africa for its many faculties. These general missions are: Initial and Continuing Formation in Scientific, Cultural and Professional Fields; Scientific and Technological Research and the Exploitation of its Results. It is currently headed by Professor Abou Karamoko, assisted by two Vice-Presidents and a Secretary General. A key player in the socio-economic and cultural development of Côte d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny University carries out teaching and research missions within thirteen Formation and Research Units (FRU), two Autonomous Research Centres, a Continuing Formation School and Institutes.

* **PIGIER-Côte d'Ivoire:** Located in Abidjan Plateau, PIGIER-Côte d'Ivoire was created in 1956. It is a reference school, a University of trades that provides formation adapted to employment and possess 48 classrooms. It has more than 300 computers all connected to the internet, a Digital Documentation Centre (DDC), and employment agency approved by the development fund for vocational training (FDFP). Several trainings are represented in this establishment. The diplomas awarded are recognized by the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES). With regard to the other structures where qualitative surveys were carried out, we can mention among others:

- the Ivorian Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (**FIPME**), is an Employers' Organization which was created in 1995 to be the sole contact for SMEs and SMIs in Côte d'Ivoire. It is now twenty-two (22) years old. It is an experienced ridge that is currently maturing;

- the Ivorian Electricity Company (CIE), is a private operator in charge of supplying electricity in Cote d'Ivoire since 1990;

- the Compendium of Women's Competencies in Côte d'Ivoire (COCOFCI), is a structure set up following a request from the Ivorian government to develop a directory to make Ivorian women's competencies visible in order to enhance their participation in public life;

- the Mutual Credit and SME Financing (MCF-SME), is an innovative financing mechanism, created at the initiative of the Ivorian Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (FIPME). Its mission is to remove the constraints related to the financing of SMEs through an adapted financial services offer and to assist managers of SMEs in managing and building managerial capacities.

2.2. Sampling process

The concern to minimize the risks of error, led us to the construction of a typical sample or by reasoned choice (N'da, 2002). This made it possible to interview female students at the end of their cycle at each university. This method involves the choice of the persons participating in the study according to criteria of relevance in relation to the question and purpose of the research.

2.3. Data collection tools

We developed a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions with sub-questions to collect our data. It included open questions, closed questions, and semi-open questions. This questionnaire was administered to young women graduates seeking employment. This questionnaire was administered to 100 young women who graduated from our Universities. Then, we developed an interview guide that allowed us to conduct our interviews with business leaders. The surveys took place in the month of January to March 2017.

2.4. Data Processing

The data processing was carried out in two phases. The first phase consisted of transcribing the written questionnaires and interviews for content analysis. Then the second phase allowed us to optimize the crossings made.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Age group of women graduates looking for job

The population of women graduates seeking employment is essentially a young population. Only 12% of this population is between 28 and 33 years old. Young women seeking employment between the ages of 23 and 28 are the most numerous with a rate of 56% of the total population. Next come the youngest 18 to 23 years old with a percentage of 32% (Figure 1). This reflects the fact that women have increasing access to school from an early age and have almost identical levels of education. Moreover, this suggests that supply is much higher than demand on the labor market in Côte d'Ivoire. Also, the young age groups do not have control over the labor market and employment realities, as most of them are new to the labor market.

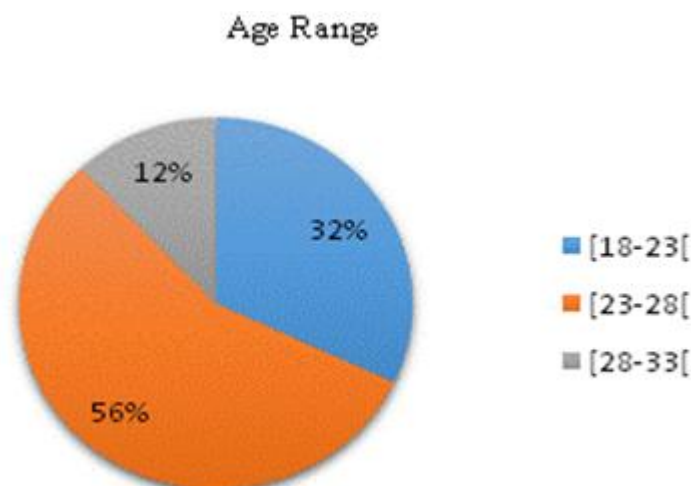


Figure 1. Age range of women graduates

3.2. Study level of women surveyed

A small proportion of young women graduates reach the bachelor (BAC) + 5-year, representing 18% of the total population. The largest proportion of our sample is the BAC+2-year, i.e. 38%. Then comes the BAC+3-year with 24% of the population, followed by the BAC+4-year which make 20% of the total population (Figure 2). It can be seen here that the rate per level drops as the level of study increases. Most young women graduates are limited to the BAC+2-year level. The downward trend in the school level of these women graduates in Cote d'Ivoire is explained by social and economic factors. Indeed, the economic and social conditions of young women are often obstacles to their further study.

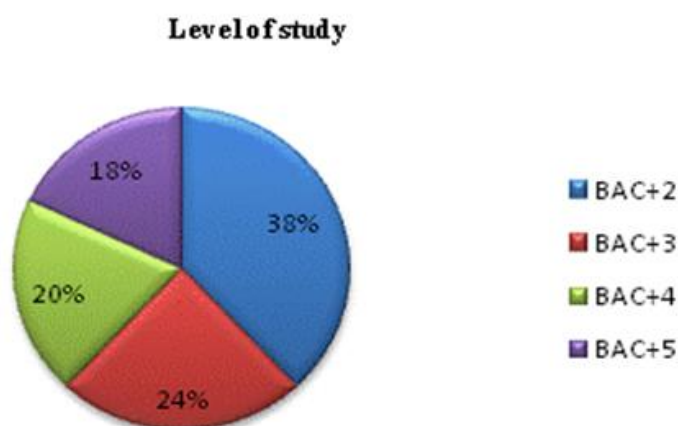


Figure 2. Women study level

3.3. Basic formation of women graduates

According to our study, the most frequented formation for young women graduates is "Right", which accounts for 13% of the respondents. Follow-up of Commercial Management, i.e. 12%, followed by Modern Literature 9% of respondents. On the other hand, we have 6% for Finance and Accounting, and 3% for Physics, Chemistry and Economics (Figure 3). Our survey reveals that young women have a vocation for Literary Formation as well as Scientific Formation. This gendered differentiation of higher education sectors persists, with "at the extremes a literary pole dominated by women and a scientific and technological pole dominated by men" (Bereni *et al.*, 2012). This preference for literary formation is also a barrier to their employability. Indeed, through basic formation plays an important role in the professional integration of graduates. Thus, the choice of formation trainings limits the professional insertion of young graduates. In addition, it is also important for these young people to check the adequacy of formation and employment before starting a career. In a context of competitiveness, which is that of seeking employment, women graduates would benefit more from being versatile in their basic formation.

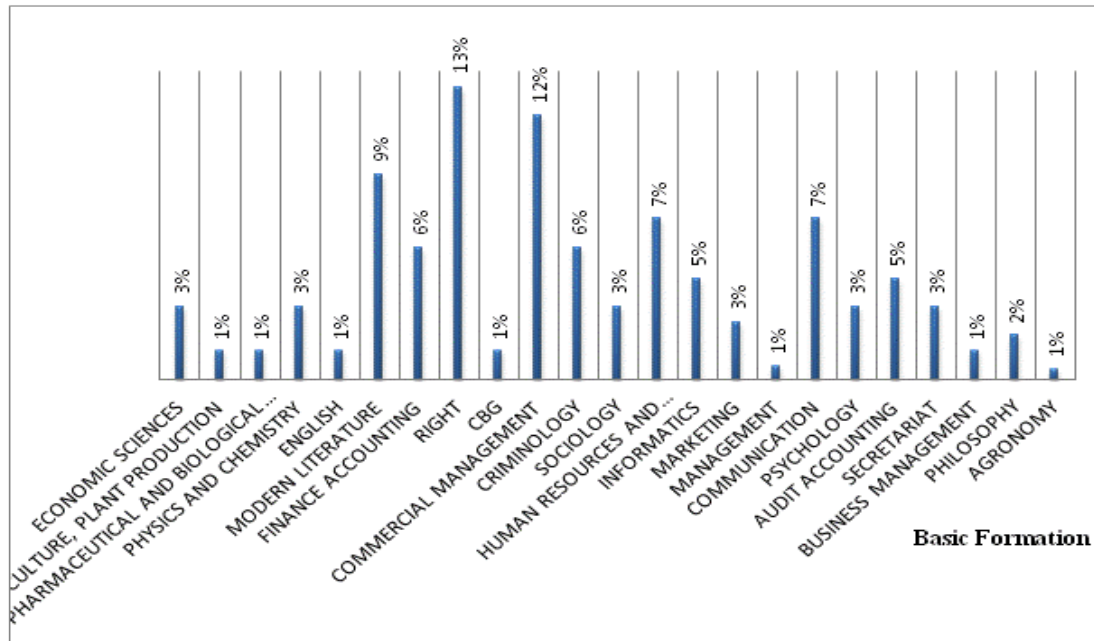


Figure 3: Basic formation of women

3.4. Duration of the job search by women

Approximately, 23% of our study population has been looking for work for at least ten (10) years. Results also note that among this category, the age range of 67% of them varies between 23 and 28 years (Figure 4). We can say that the duration of the quest may be due to this fact. In addition, it should be noted that 20% of them have received formation in modern literature and another 20% in human resources. Beyond that, we can highlight the impact of the professional specialty.

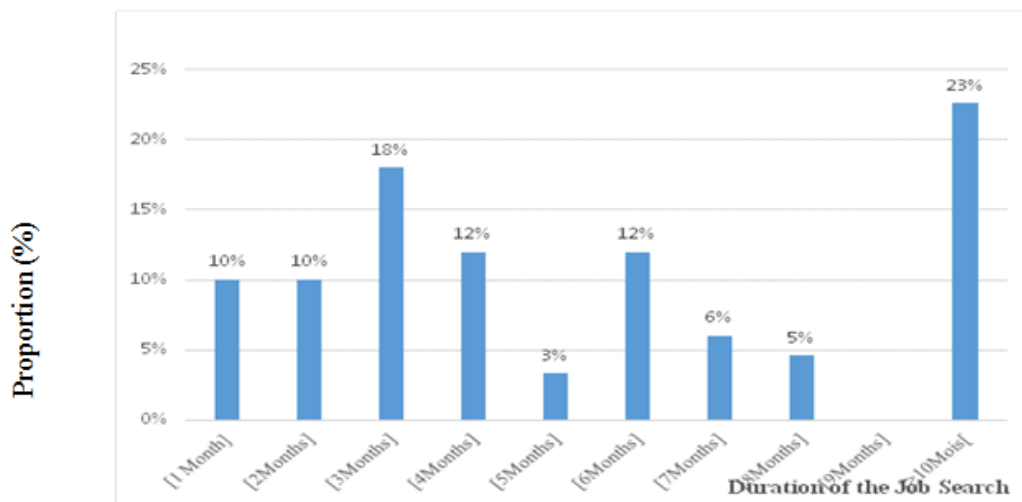


Figure 4: Time to find a job by women

3.5. Study level and duration of the job research by women

The distribution of the study level according to the duration of the job search reveals that BAC+4-year and BAC+5-year have lasted the most in the search for employment (48%). Indeed, 40% of BAC+4-year and 48% of BAC+5-year have been looking for job for at least 10 months (Figure 5). Everything seems to appear as if the young women graduates who have the BAC+2-year and BAC+3-year quickly succeed in entering the job market. This is explained on the one hand by the competence or the value of the diploma obtained. It is certainly important to obtain a Master 2-degree, but graduates must be able to stand up to their diploma and be able to prove that they have the merit. On the other hand, we can list the needs on the labor market. The needs are most acute at the BAC+2-year and BAC+3-year levels. The selection is rough from level BAC+4-year.

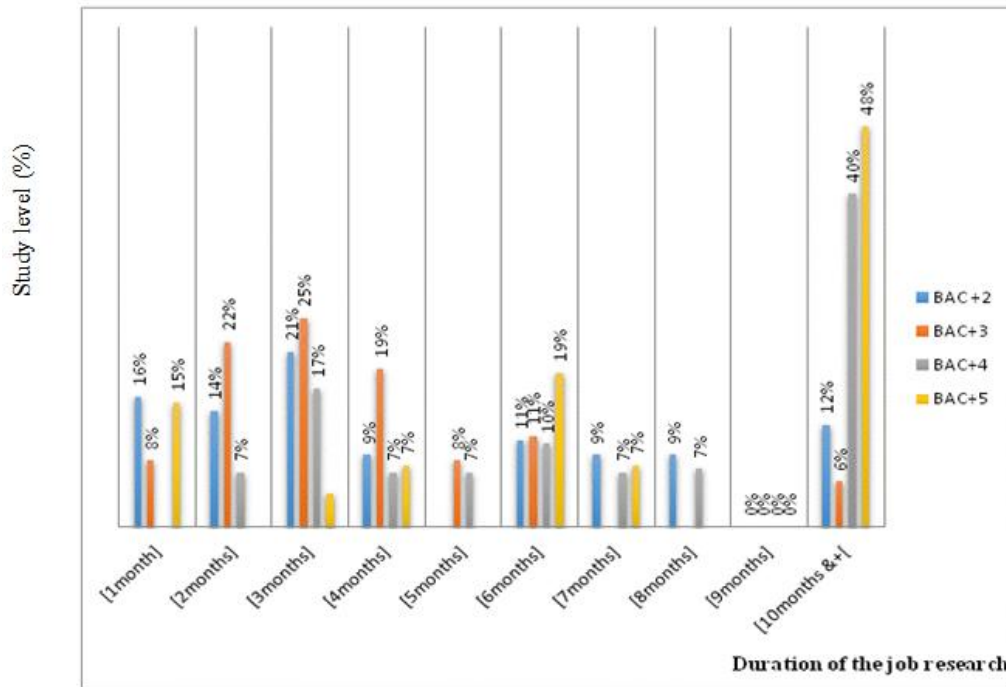


Figure 5: Study level and job duration research by women

3.6. Perception of women surveyed on causes of unemployment

The results show that 49% of our respondents attest that they do not master the job market and lack professional experience, which are important criteria for professional integration. As a result, this is a disadvantage for these young women graduates on the labor market. In addition, 29% of respondents mentioned the lack of networking that could help them integrate professionally (Figure 6). Then 26% of the respondents find that their professional situation is due to their initial training. Next come 5% of young women graduates whose situations are linked to discrimination based on gender.

We note that the lack of knowledge of the labor market and the acquisition of professional experience are very decisive factors for the integration of the labor market. It should also be stressed that the importance of the existence of a powerful network (relative, friend, acquaintance) for the professional insertion of graduates should not be overlooked. Moreover, the importance of the initial training of women graduates on their professional insertion should not be overlooked (ref. fig 3).

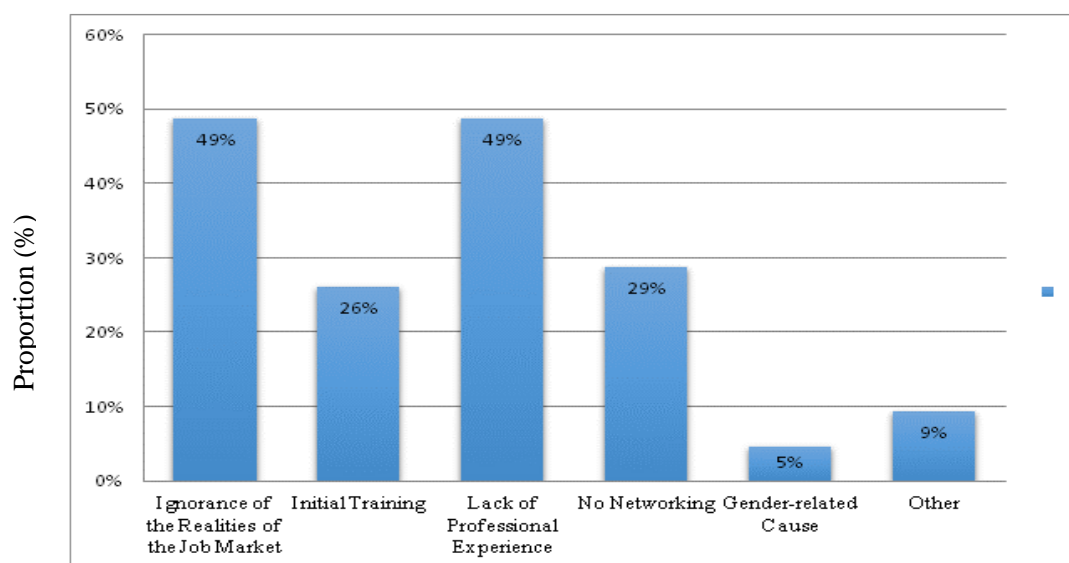


Figure 6: Causes of women unemployment

3.7. Job search mode

The most common method used by our respondents in their job search is to submit curriculum (CV) online or directly to companies. This way is used at 79%. Next, we have the use of the parent-friend-acquaintance network (PAC), i.e. 37%. Followed by the use of recruitment agencies, or 27% (Figure 7). The call for tenders remains the least used because it refers to only a certain category of employment.

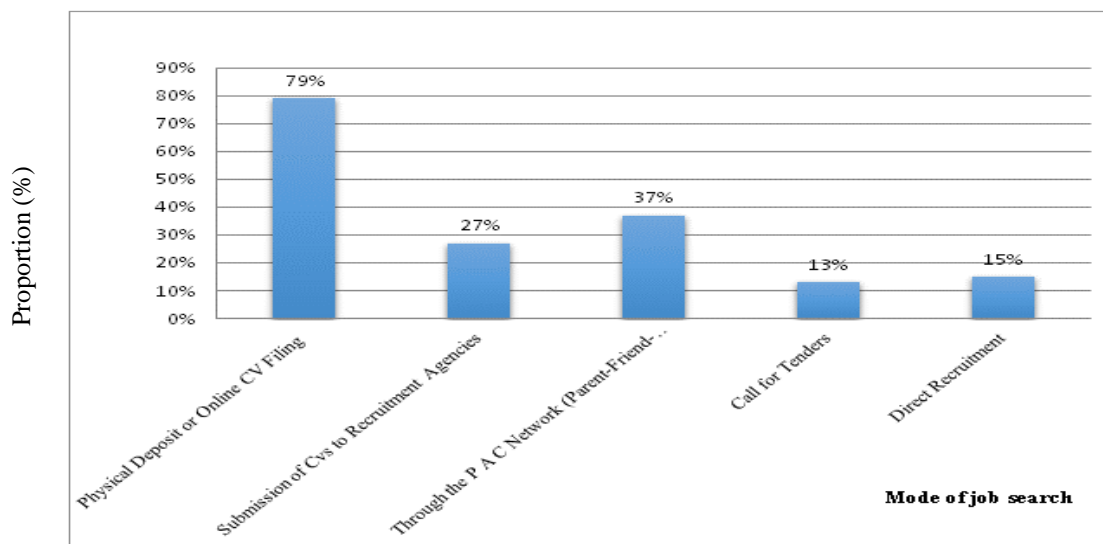


Figure 7: Percentage of job search method by women graduates

The search mode plays a decisive role in the search for a job. The more one focuses and orientates his research the more he benefits from the results of his efforts. Here, given the gap between the rate of respondents who apply through a CV and those who rely on PCAs and recruitment agencies, we deduce that respondents use their search mode in a cumbersome way.

3.8. Access to the job interview

When asked if they had ever taken part in an interview, 56% of respondents answered “Yes” (Figure 8). Overall, the rate of access to an interview is middling. This brings us back once again to the increase in supply versus demand. Nevertheless, in an attempt to understand the reasons why the 56% who had participated in an interview were not selected; some of our respondents mentioned reasons such as lack of professional experience, the failure of the PAC network. However, we found that 36% had access to an internship that was not renewed.

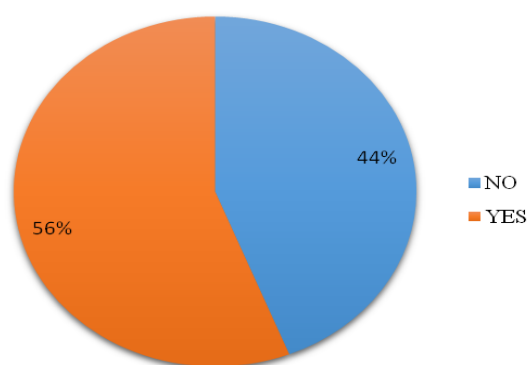


Figure 8: Percentage of women graduates access to a job interview

3.9. Acceptance of employment outside Abidjan

When asked if the respondents were willing to accept a job or internship outside the city of Abidjan, economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, 77% answered "Yes" (Figure 9). In fact, according to them, they need a real job and are in search of socio-economic stability. In the same context, some have mentioned the fact that the city of Abidjan would be saturated from an employment point of view, so they are ready to accept the job as soon as it is paid. Also, reasons such as the love of the challenge, the desire to discover the country and experience other

realities, but above all the desire to save better and avoid transport problems were highlighted. On the other hand, we have 23% of the respondents who indicated that they were not interested in an adventure outside the city of Abidjan. This can be justified for the following reasons: the existence of small entrepreneurial activities, the fact of continuing the courses in Abidjan. Finally, some respondents reported that they have some admiration for the city of Abidjan, which means that they cannot move away from it.

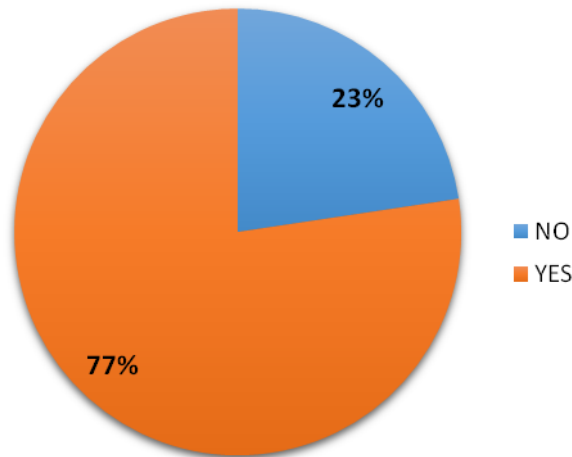


Figure 9: Percentage of women acceptance for employment outside Abidjan

3.10. Determination to work away from family

The results show that 73% said that they were determined to go to work away from the family because the need was felt (Figure 10). In fact, according to this could be beneficial for the development of their career profile, to be more autonomous and responsible. On the other hand, 27% of the respondents found that they could not get away from their parents, they also mentioned safety issues.

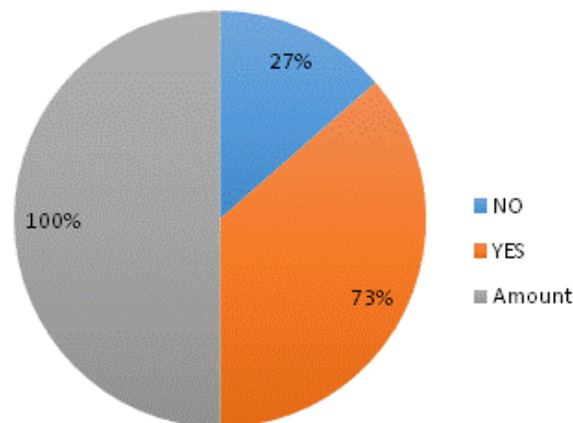


Figure 10: Response of female graduates to work away from family

3.11. Access to the world of employment

Moreover, as far as the duration of the occupation is concerned, 27% of the respondents answered: "3 months". Then we have the 6 month wave, which corresponds to 15%. In addition, 15% have already signed a fixed-term contract(Figure 11). For the "Other" category, it is worth noting that it includes women who have carried out promotion actions on behalf of certain structures. As well as those who claim to have been a servant.

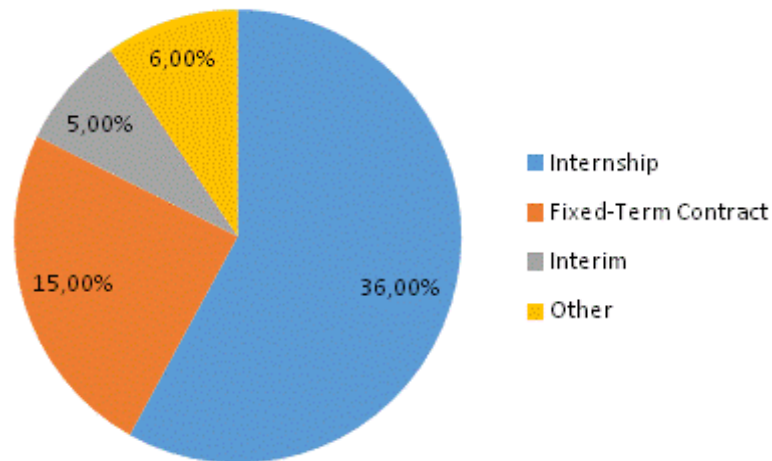


Figure 11: Percentage of women graduates access to the world of employment

3.12. Employment discrimination

With regard to the issue of discrimination in employment, the large proportion of respondents found that their situation is in no way related to any discrimination. However, a rate of 21% of the total population mentioned the existence of discrimination towards them. In fact, according to these 21% of the total population, gender equality is not yet real in our society. Thus, some domains of specialization remain dominated by men, who do not always accept the idea that a woman occupies certain positions and functions. As a result, men are more employed than women in these domains. Some respondents also highlighted discrimination related to the complexion. In addition, we have those for whom age is an object of discrimination, because they are considered too young for certain positions. Finally, a few respondents raised the problem of a physical disability, which would be detrimental to their ability to obtain employment.

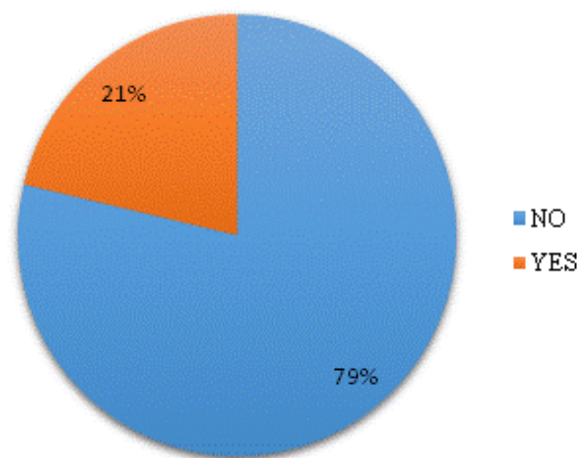


Figure 12: Percentage of women graduates to employment discrimination

3.13. Sexual harassment

The results reveals that 15% of women graduates had been sexually harassed while they were still on the labor market, in the different structures where they were (Figure 13). According to them, harassment was generally done by the direct boss. Some respondents revealed that they had been offered a cooking fee to extend their internship. Also, hiring conditioned by sexual relations. Others claim to have been the victim of touching at work and receiving messages at late hours in excess from their supervisor. In addition, respondents listed some of the social problems to which they are exposed as feminine graduates seeking employment. According to the results obtained, around 80% of the respondents spoke about financial dependence and its consequences. Indeed, financial dependence due to lack of financial autonomy would make them vulnerable to certain situations such as indecent proposals from men. Also, we have the lack of consideration on the part of the family, which is characterized by not having words to say or not being consulted when decisions are made. Beyond the family, we see the neglect or underestimation of others in society. But also, the fact of being unwelcome in the services or firms as a candidate. The situation of unemployment eventually leads them to doubt their skills and animates

in them a feeling of covetousness of the workers. This situation increases the concerns of the next day and the problem of asserting oneself in society.

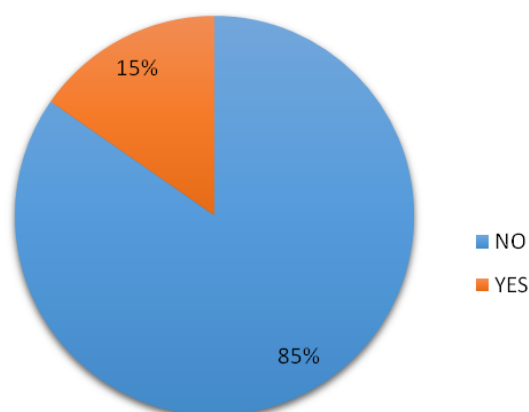


Figure 13: Percentage of women graduates victim of sexual harassment during the job search

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has proposed an analysis of the conditions of access of young women graduates to salaried employment. The results obtained show that several factors have an impact on the professional insertion of young women graduates in Côte d'Ivoire. Among these factors, we can mention: the mode of prospecting, the school level, the initial training, but also the age. In addition, this study shows that the choice of training has a considerable impact on the professional future of young women. Consequently, they must be interested in both literary and scientific formation. Young women graduates must be versatile. In addition, they are invited to be competitive in the labor market by placing their hopes on their professional skills and assets.

While this study reveals the importance for young women to acquire a high school level, they must be able to meet the value of their diploma, hence the question of competence. In addition, young women graduates must banish lack of trust and determination from their behavior. In addition, the preferred method of prospecting is the social capital (the PAC network), instead of recruitment firms, direct recruitment and calls for tenders.

REFERENCES

- [1]. AGEPE (2015). Taux de chômage en Côte d'Ivoire, Chiffres Clés N°2188. <http://news.abidjan.net/cc/2188.html>. Accessed 22 janvier 2019.
- [2]. BAD (2013) : « Côte d'Ivoire : Document de stratégie pays 2013-2017, Département régional ouest-ORWA, Octobre 2013.
- [3]. Bereni J., Chauvin S., Revillard A., Jaunait A. (2012). Introduction aux études sur le genre. De Boeck Supérieur (Ed.), Ouvertures Politiques, 2^{ème} édition, 357p.
- [4]. BIT (2014) : « Profil pays du travail décent en Côte d'Ivoire, octobre 2014 ».
- [5]. FAD (2013). Rapport d'évaluation du Programme d'appui à l'amélioration de l'employabilité et de l'insertion des jeunes (PAAEIJ), Fonds Africain de Développement, Département OSHD, Novembre 2013, 37p.
- [6]. INS (2014a). Résultats globaux, Secrétariat Technique Permanent. www.ins.ci. Accessed 21/12/2018.
- [7]. INS (2015). Enquête sur le niveau de vie des ménage en Côte d'Ivoire (ENV2015), Profil de pauvreté, 91p.
- [8]. Kouakou K.C. et Koba A.T. (2015). L'emploi des jeunes en Côte d'Ivoire : une étude diagnostique, CRDI 2015.
- [9]. MPG (2019). Rapport volontaire d'examen national de la mise en œuvre des objectifs de développement durable en Côte d'Ivoire, Ministère du plan et du développement, 153p.
- [10]. N'da P. (2002). Méthodologie de la recherche, de la problématique à la discussion des résultats, comment réaliser un mémoire, une thèse d'un bout à l'autre. Abidjan, EDUCI.
- [11]. N'Gom D. et Kouadio B.M. (2015). Rapport d'évaluation de la politique nationale de l'emploi (PNE 2012-2015), Mai 2015.

NADO Chiaba Alida Gisèle. " Employability of Young Women Graduates in Côte D'ivoire: Conditions For Access To A Salaried Employment." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 12, 2019, pp. 40-49.