

Article

Building a More Inclusive Workplace for Religious Minorities

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Abstract: The current secular models are putting strain on religious diversity in the context of the workplace. With religious diversity growing in European societies and the visible expression of religious beliefs and behaviors, tensions have arisen linked to the rise of xenophobia. The scientific literature shows that religious minorities are discriminated in the workplace, especially Muslim women that wear Islamic veils. Nonetheless, the people pertaining to these religious minorities have agency, and they can overcome this discrimination. This paper presents the results of a systematic literature review of scientific articles published in SCOPUS and Web of Science using the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA). The review focuses on the management of religious diversity in labor contexts, especially regarding Muslim women wearing Islamic veils. The results identify some successfully implemented actions that contribute to more inclusive workplaces for religious minorities, especially for Muslim women wearing Islamic veils. Some of these actions are implemented from the employee perspective and include networking and mentoring, while others are implemented from a company perspective and are related to the creation of management styles that place people in the center. The crucial role that politics plays is also briefly discussed.

Keywords: religion diversity; discrimination; inclusion; workplace; Muslim women; Islamic veil



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1. Introduction

Akbar, a Muslim emperor of India from 1556 to 1605, is attributed with great advances in religious tolerance and secularism. This religious tolerance and secularism is especially remarkable if we consider the situation in Europe during that time, and even the situation of Europe and the world nowadays. According to Amartya Sen, Akbar championed tolerance and inter-faith dialogues; Akbar had pluralist ideals and designed a secular legal structure and delimited the principle of neutrality of the state between different religions, including a sort of freedom of religion and belief that ‘no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him’ (Sen 2012, p. 18). Nowadays, globalization and international migration have made our societies multicultural again, and events such as the 2001 attack against the World Trade Center in New York have fueled new conflicts and worldwide rejection of the visible expression of religious beliefs and behaviors, especially against Muslims.

In this context, it is necessary to recover examples of actions and ideas that can improve the management of religious diversity in our current heterogeneous societies. That is why examples such as Akbar and ideas such as multicultural secularism (Flecha 2004)—which advocates for the equality of differences between religions for a political and societal framework in which all religious beliefs and traditions would be treated equally (Pulido Rodríguez and de Botton Fernández 2013), and for interreligious dialogue (Malović and

Vujica 2021; Campdepadrós-Cullell et al. 2021; Khalfaoui et al. 2021a; Pulido et al. 2021)—are very important. Other scholars, such as André Delbecq, have contributed through their practice, advocacy, and writings to emphasize the value of principles such as hospitality, listening and including the minority voices, or welcoming and honoring others of other faiths or non-faiths (Williams and Allen 2020).

In Europe, contrary to the United States, one of the ideas that gained most terrain in the management of religious diversity has been the French approach to secularism reflected in the approval of the 2004 prohibitive law regarding la question du foulard (or Islamic veil), an idea based on the separation between the Church and State generating the exclusion of any legal and political recognition of religion and aiming at the homogenization of those who live in the same territory (Aubert et al. 2013). The consequences of this secularism in Europe affect all aspects of society, including employment. Muslim women, as diverse as any other cultural or ethnic group, are among the groups that are most discriminated in the workplace, especially if they choose to wear an Islamic veil (Garcia Yeste et al. 2020; Singh and Babbar 2021). The objective of this paper is to identify in the scientific literature those elements and actions that can prepare the grounds for building more inclusive workplaces for religious minorities. More precisely, we look for actions that can lead towards multicultural secularism (Flecha 2004) or pluralist policies, such as 16th Century India ruled by Akbar, but in a 21st-century context.

1.1. Religion-Based Discrimination in the Workplace

Freedom of religion and belief has been addressed in different laws—most notably, under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States or Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union—with the aim of ensuring it is upheld and finding mechanisms that contribute to its fulfillment. The issue of religious diversity is embedded in the foundations of the European Union, such as the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 17, which recognizes the States' setting their own policy with regard to relations with religious and non-religious denominations, by regulating that the Union does not prejudice the status recognized in national law with respect to churches, religious communities, and philosophical and non-denominational organizations in member states, and will maintain an open dialogue (Roda 2016). Moreover, Article 21 includes religion or belief as specific factors in which any discrimination is prohibited. In the specific case of employment, these articles materialize in the Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 on establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. Thus, with this Directive, the European Union requires Member States to combat discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in employment, occupation, and vocational training (Vickers 2007).

Labor is one of the areas in which the difficulties in managing religious diversity are salient (European Commission 2017). Ensuring proper management of religious freedom in the workplace means ensuring that all people should enjoy the right to religious freedom in a respectful and inclusive context. Thus, increasing diversity and improving its management in work contexts becomes an important challenge for many organizations (Gebert et al. 2014). However, at present, situations of discrimination in the work environment based on religious denomination continue to occur. When talking about discrimination in the workplace, Forstenlechner and Al-Waqfi (2010, p. 769) argue that it encompasses “all types of behaviors, decisions or actions involving different or inferior treatment of people on the basis of their race, the color of skin, ethnic origin or any other grounds not related to their occupational merit”. According to the same authors, discriminatory actions may appear before or during employment, for example, denying members of a specific minority group equal opportunities to obtain employment, and/or after the hiring process; other forms of discrimination include denying members of a specific minority group equal opportunities for promotion, training, payment, dismissal, or termination of the contract (Forstenlechner and Al-Waqfi 2010).

Nowadays, the management of religious diversity in the workplace has become an issue for debate and has received considerable attention from public opinion and the media. Usually, significant cases of dispute between employers and employees in courts over wearing visible religious symbols in the workplace are present in the media. There are several reasons why workplace managers may restrict the use of religious symbols. The European Network Against Racism [European Network Against Racism \(ENAR\) \(2015\)](#) names some, such as the intention to create a “neutral workspace”—especially in the public administration—to maintain a uniform policy, or for health and safety reasons ([European Network Against Racism \(ENAR\) 2015](#)). Moreover, managers can justify that wearing religious symbols can create day-to-day difficulties within the work environment, which may not end in dismissal, but can make employees feel limited or rejected in their workplace ([European Network Against Racism \(ENAR\) 2015](#)).

In order to appreciate the dimensions of this phenomenon, we can look at the data available. According to a study by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)), 31 percent of Muslims that were looking for a job in different countries of the European Union during the 5 years prior to the survey have felt discriminated against due to their religion. Thirteen percent of these people, for their part, state that they have suffered this discrimination during the last year before the survey ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)). The same study by the [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2017\)](#) shows that both men and women who wear traditional or religious clothing in public have suffered more discrimination based on their ethnic or immigrant background during the 12 months prior to the survey (28 percent men and 27 percent women), in relation to those who do not wear this type of clothing (22 percent men and 23 percent women) ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)).

Some of these discriminations are linked to religious practices. For example, about 12 percent of Muslims who have worked for the past 5 years say they were not allowed to ask for a day off to celebrate important religious holidays, services, or ceremonies. Similarly, 9 percent say they have tried to prevent them from expressing religious practices or traditions, such as wearing handkerchiefs or turbans. Among other statements by Muslim people who participated in the survey, 7 percent said that they have received jobs below their grade, 5 percent said that they have been denied promotion because of their condition, 2 percent have been dismissed for this issue, and finally, 1 percent state that they have not been able to join a trade union ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)).

1.2. Workplace Discrimination for Using the Islamic Veil

According to previous research, Muslim women wearing the Islamic veil belong to the sector that suffers the most religious discrimination in the world of work ([Garcia Yeste et al. 2020](#); [Halrynjo and Jonker 2016](#); [Ghumman and Ryan 2013](#)). This is often translated into triple discrimination for being a woman, being Muslim, and being an immigrant. The study by the [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2017\)](#) reports gender differences in the reasons why they suffer discrimination in the workplace, both in the process of job seeking and in the workplace itself. Muslim men report more aspects such as skin color (in the process of job-seeking, 51 percent men and 26 percent women, and in the workplace, 49 percent men and 36 percent women), first and last name (in the process of job-seeking: 50 percent men and 37 percent women, and in the workplace: 36 percent men and 23 percent women), and the accent or way in which they speak the national language of the country (in the workplace: 20 percent, and 9 percent, respectively). While these reasons are relevant for both men and women, clothing is a problem that affects women substantially more in the workplace. Muslim women mention the reason for clothing more than men (in the job search: 35 percent women, and 4 percent men; in the workplace: 22 percent women and 7 percent men) ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)).

In this sense, Muslim women may be in a situation of more vulnerability because they often show visible symbols of their religion in their clothing, as is the case with the hijab or the niqab. The same study ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)) notes,

at the outset, that there are no substantial differences between Muslim women who wear Islamic veil and those who do not, but it also mentions that it may be due to lower exposure to discrimination as a result of a more limited social interaction, such as in the workplace or in the process of job seeking. In this sense, the study points out that Muslim women who wear Islamic veils regularly outside the home have a lower employment rate (29 percent) than those who do not wear one (40 percent) ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)).

1.3. The Role of Religious Associations in Overcoming Workplace Discrimination

The [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2017\)](#) report considered the role of (not necessarily) religious organizations that could advocate for victims of discrimination. A total of 72 percent of the Muslims who took part in the survey had no information of any organization offering support or advice to victims of discrimination in their European countries of residence. The results vary greatly between different countries. Muslim immigration to Slovenia, for example, has virtually no record of such organizations (98 percent). In contrast, Muslims of Asian descent in Cyprus show less ignorance of these organizations (37 percent). The study also shows that the origin of Muslim immigrants also influences the results. In Belgium, for example, Muslims from North Africa show more knowledge (30 percent) than those from Turkey (21 percent) ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)). The report itself points to this high ignorance as one possible cause of the low percentage of complaints throughout the EU ([European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017](#)).

There are several success stories in the management of religious diversity based on the role of various religious organizations, which demonstrate the importance that such organizations can have in combating possible cases of discrimination in or outside the workplace ([Garcia Yeste et al. 2020](#)). Such organizations can be either group around a particular religious community or groups that foster interreligious dialogue. In a case that makes explicit reference to the workplace, Karimi ([Karimi 2018](#)) describes the role of two Muslim women's entrepreneurship networks in France. These networks are born out of discriminatory experiences they suffered in the workplace, which has led them to self-employment through entrepreneurship. According to [Karimi \(2018\)](#), organizations empower their members in three stages: developing their critical awareness and their ability to act, developing their interpersonal awareness in order to act with or in relation to someone, and developing a social consciousness that involves transforming society as a whole. These three levels of action—self, environment, and society—are informed by a critical consciousness that emerges through the reversal and overcoming of stigmatization, as well as the ethical consciousness that redefines one's own central notions of entrepreneurship.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper is developed in the framework of the project RELIGARE funded by the Religious Affairs Department of the Catalonia Government (Spain). With the objective of identifying actions that can build more inclusive workplaces for religious minorities, we conducted a literature review using the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) to provide further scientific evidence. Systematic reviews have been popular in health care research ([Moher et al. 2009](#)), but social sciences researchers have increasingly used them as well ([Puigvert et al. 2022](#)) due to their potential in gathering and analyzing evidence in an accurate and reliable way ([Liberati et al. 2009](#)). PRISMA guidelines delimitate four stages in the systematic review: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The results in each of these stages are detailed in [Figure 1](#).

First, we have selected Web of Science and SCOPUS databases because these databases include the most prestigious journals in social sciences. The literature review includes all the articles published in these two databases up until July 2020. We have also decided to only include articles, as carried out in other systematic reviews ([Khalifaoui et al. 2021b](#)).

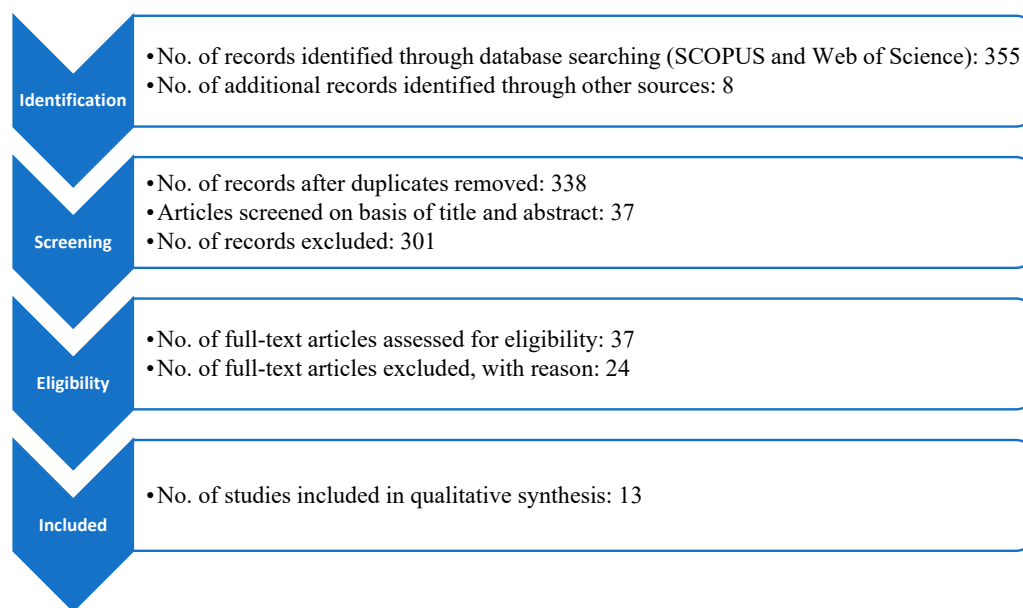


Figure 1. Steps of the systematic review.

In the identification stage, we have used the following combination of keywords both for SCOPUS and Web of Science: labor inclusion AND hijab OR religion; work OR employment AND inclusion AND hijab; labor market OR companies AND management AND religion diversity; labor AND faith-based organization; work OR employment AND faith-based organization; work OR employment AND inclusion AND faith-based organization. To ensure uniformity in the search criteria, the search was carried out using the option Article Title, Abstract, Keywords in SCOPUS, and Topic in Web of Science. Because there were few results retrieved from Web of Science, we added two different combinations in Topic: companies AND management AND religion diversity and work OR employment AND inclusion AND religion. The total number of articles that we retrieved in this stage was 355, to which we added 8 more articles that complemented 2 articles already retrieved from our search because they were part of the same Special Issue. After these steps, we were left with 363 articles in our sample.

In the screening stage, we have checked for duplicates and removed them from the list. In total, 25 articles were removed in this step. Then, we screened the rest of the articles based on the title and abstract. We excluded articles that were too general in scope (for example, articles focusing on religion and migration), those that did not deal with religion and employment, and articles from health-related disciplines which were not suited for the objective of this paper. In total, we excluded 301 articles, and we were left with 37 articles in the sample.

The last two stages delimited the final number of articles included in the sample of our review. Considering the objective of our paper, in the eligibility stage, we excluded articles that studied the relationship between religion and work; articles that dealt with religion and international development studies, articles that dealt with religion-based discrimination in the workplace—especially the phenomenon of faith-based organizations that discriminate on the grounds of religion but did not include any action that could overcome it—or articles that dealt with religion-based discrimination, but not in the workplace. In total, 24 articles passed through the inclusion stage. In the sample, we only included articles that dealt with actions that overcame religion-based discrimination in the workplace and articles that explored the phenomenon of religion-based discrimination in the workplace and made recommendations on how to overcome this, but had not yet been tested in real-world situations.

3. Results

One remark that stands out when analyzing Table 1 is that all the countries represented in the sample are secular, although the degree of secularism varies between these countries. The 13 articles that we included in the sample focus on Western countries, especially on the European Union (most studies focused on France) and the United States, plus Turkey and Lebanon. The second important remark is that most of these articles are conceptual or theoretical (10) and there are only 3 empirical articles. The conceptual articles use sociological, legal, or historical analysis. On the other hand, there is only one article that includes the voice of Muslim women who have suffered religion-based discrimination in the workplace, while the other two empirical articles focus on the companies' perspective, involving human relations (HR) professionals.

The results of those 13 articles are subdivided into employees' perspectives and companies' perspectives to overcome discrimination.

3.1. How to Overcome Discrimination? Employees' Perspective

As we have pointed out above, the voices of people who have suffered religion-based discrimination in the workplace are present in just one article. [Tariq and Syed \(2017\)](#) interview Muslim women from South Asian heritage that achieved a managerial or leadership position in the United Kingdom and identified several actions that have the potential to overcome religion-based discrimination in the workplace: networking (ethnic, social, professional), mentorships, taking training courses, going to court, and another element that had proven useful was family support ([Tariq and Syed 2017](#)). The last element mentioned in these interviews pertains to the attitude in the workplace. Thus, it is suggested that being confident, outspoken, and assertive could protect women from religion-based discrimination in the workplace ([Tariq and Syed 2017](#)). This study is important and paves the way for more studies of this kind because it focuses on successful cases, which suggests that the actions described there have already been successful in real-world situations, and thus, it may be transferred to other contexts.

[Itxaso \(2019\)](#) studied a 2015 Decision of the German Constitutional Court that defended the use of the Islamic veil by two German schoolteachers in North Rhine-Westphalia state. The Court ruled in favor of the two teachers and this decision contributes to fighting the discrimination against German Muslim women who want to use veils while performing their duties in public educational centers ([Itxaso 2019](#)). However, [Tariq and Syed \(2017\)](#) report a case of a Muslim woman that presented a case to the court because she had been discriminated against for not wearing a veil by her Muslim employer. Eventually, the authors mention that the Court ruled in favor of the woman on the account of religion-based discrimination and on the account of gender-based discrimination for a comment that the employer had previously made.

Minority groups, including religious, are prone to suffering different types of discrimination. ([Hassan 2019](#); [Tanyeri-Erdemir et al. 2013](#)) studied the specific challenges for fighting religion-based discrimination in (secular) Turkey, where the State claim that 99 percent of the citizens are Muslims to mask religious diversity. Under these circumstances, in addition to the fact that Turkey predominates a non-litigate culture, people who have different religions have to abstain from exposing themselves in order to avoid workplace discrimination. [Tanyeri-Erdemir et al. \(2013\)](#) specify some of the actions used by these people from 'minority' religions to avoid workplace discrimination in Turkey: not to change the religion on their national ID cards if they convert from Muslim to another religion; use a less distinctive name without sectarian or religious identity markers; not to use their mother language; avoid using symbols that may reveal their identity to the public; or to not enter certain workplaces. In the literature review, we have come across studies carried out in Europe where faith-based organizations that deliver welfare services discriminate against atheists, people of a 'wrong' religion, or those who do not live according to the Church's worldview, for instance, in Germany ([Hien 2017](#); [Doerflinger et al. 2021](#); [Hien and Kneip 2020](#)), or being a female minister in the Church of Sweden ([Styhre 2014](#)).

Table 1. Articles included in the sample.

Reference	Context	Methodology	Participants	Outcomes to Overcome Discrimination	Policy Implications
Tariq and Syed (2017)	The United Kingdom	Semi-structured interviews	20 Muslim women from South Asian heritage who were in a managerial or a leadership position such as chief executive officer, company director, entrepreneur, or senior manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of networking and mentoring opportunities, which they tend to do in their own time. - Going to court. - Engaging in ethnic and social networks and training courses. - Family support. - Being confident, outspoken, and assertive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisations need to place greater priority on goals and indicators when it comes to diversity. - Strategic networks may be set up to mentor, monitor, and advise ethnic minority women in their careers, preferably by female role models of their own ethnic background. - Providing diversity training schemes, particularly at a board level, may help to reduce negative attitudes toward Muslim and other ethnic minority women. - Offering governmental incentives for enabling and promoting ethnic minorities, particularly women at the board level.
Foblets (2013)	England, The Netherlands, Denmark, Bulgaria, France and Turkey	Conceptual	Socio-legal analysis	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A European policy that is committed resolutely to an effective protection of religious freedom. - Consultation with churches, religious associations, communities, and philosophical and non-confessional organisations that are recognised as such, and (compulsory) impact assessment before introducing any new legislative or judicial measure—whether at an EU or domestic level that directly or indirectly affects religion in the broadest sense.
Al Ariss and Sidani (2016)	Lebanon, France	Conceptual	Historical analysis	-	<p>Legislators and policy makers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R1: legislators in France need to consider the HR management implications of their religious diversity interventions; • R2: policy makers in Lebanon need to integrate religious diversity awareness into the school and university curriculum to ensure early attentiveness regarding the importance of such diversity; • R3: explicit legislation in Lebanon should be passed to outlaw religious discrimination in both the private and public sectors; • R4: in both France and Lebanon, legislators need to entertain the idea of an affirmative action scheme that cuts across diversity lines and could extend to intersectional forms of diversity (e.g., religious, disabilities, gender, among others). <p>Organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R5: organizations in Lebanon need to consider the possibility of collecting data and reporting on religious diversity to reflect positive organizational efforts in that direction; • R6: organizations in both France and Lebanon need to work on fostering corporate cultures that are tolerant of various religious affiliations and religious practices; • R7: organizations in both France and Lebanon need to run recurring tolerance training programs on diversity, where differences in religious affiliation are deemed an integral and important aspect of diversity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French policy makers need to work out a system whereby respect for individual liberties and loyalties is safeguarded, and at the same time, make sure that the immigrant population is able to adopt what it needs of these values to share with its fellow citizens. - Religious diversity schemes and measures need to be continuously updated.

Table 1. Cont.

Reference	Context	Methodology	Participants	Outcomes to Overcome Discrimination	Policy Implications
Rodríguez Moya (2014)	Spain	Conceptual	Analysis	-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a welcoming environment devoid of strong religious identities. 2. Offer religious diversity seminars that allow employees to learn about different faiths, their history, and geographical location. 3. Explain the legal framework of religious freedom as a fundamental right. Content and limits. 4. Allow the expression of religious symbols of a personal nature. 5. Making the working hours as flexible as possible, to allow for fulfilment of religious duties. 6. Encourage a variety of menus in company canteens, if any. 7. Provide places for prayer. 8. Create a handbook on good practice of religious matters.
Christoffersen and Vinding (2013)	Denmark	Conceptual	Socio-legal analysis	-	It is necessary to ensure that a balance is maintained between the rights of the individual religious employee and the rights of the secular employer.
Elóstequi Itxaso (2019)	Germany	Conceptual	Legal analysis	- Going to court.	-
Pio and Syed (2018)	The West	Conceptual	Poetics perspective	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness sessions for policy makers, top management, and employees to create enhanced awareness of the international heterogeneity of Muslims in terms of sect and cultural backgrounds; engagement with diverse Muslim groups within and outside the workplace; information about the rich history of Islam and its contribution to astronomy, mathematics, architecture, and medicine; employee newsletters showcasing positive stories of Muslim employees. - An attention to heterogeneity of Muslims during recruitment to understand their sect and ethnic backgrounds, and ideas about extremism, takfirism (apostatizing) or jihadism, which may affect their tolerance towards non-Muslims and Muslims of diverse sects; engaging Muslims in their heterogeneity in a dialogic process to promote values of tolerance, inclusion, and pluralism. - Diversity sessions and training programmes that highlight the egalitarian interpretations and practice of Islam—such programmes could focus on Muslim employees and ‘western’ employees who can enhance their knowledge regarding the potential for Islamic teaching to address patriarchal and heteronormative beliefs and practices; factual information presented aesthetically about Muslims’ source countries, working age population, positive role models of Muslims in business and philanthropic community activities.
Allen et al. (2018)	The United States	Delphi Study	16 highly experienced professionals in HR practice, research, and teaching	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competencies HR professionals (HRPs) need to work in religiously and spiritually diverse organizations: cultural and religious literacy; legal knowledge; organizational and operational knowledge; developing inclusive organizational cultures; conflict resolution; strategic planning and support; adaptation and innovation; cross-cultural communication and relationship-building; interpersonal demeanor; training, coaching, and education; policy development and implementation; employee well-being. - Curriculum design for specific programs must always consider the triumvirate of teacher, student, and topic in their context.

Table 1. Cont.

Reference	Context	Methodology	Participants	Outcomes to Overcome Discrimination	Policy Implications
Sekerka and Yacobian (2018)	The United States	Conceptual	Analysis of representative Equal Employment Opportunity Commission cases	-	Managers need to foster organizational learning that tackles emerging forms of discrimination, such as Islamophobia. A sustained focus on moral development becomes imperative toward establishing an ethical climate and a workplace that fosters respect for all organizational members.
Miller et al. (2017)	The United States	Interviews	10 with HR personnel ranging from chief HR officers to middle managers and their assistants	- Chaplains contribute to a positive organizational culture through employee care and contributions to diversity and inclusion.	-
Tanyeri-Erdemir et al. (2013)	Turkey	Conceptual	Socio-legal analysis	- Not to change the space for 'religion' on their national ID cards in order to avoid discrimination. - Use a less distinctive name without sectarian or religious identity markers, not speak in their mother language or consciously avoid using symbols that may reveal their identity to the public. - Not entering certain workplaces out of fear of being exposed.	-
Frégosi and Kosulu (2013)	France	Conceptual	Socio-legal analysis	-	- Accept some reasonable accommodations through, notably, collective negotiations. Either the arrangements are set through a company-wide agreement, or the accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis. - Adapt charters on diversity or edit practical guides that enable them to manage religious demands and respect the rules of law and the imperatives of business, while preventing the risks of conflict and the appeal for discrimination.
Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj (2013)	The Netherlands	Conceptual	Socio-legal analysis	- Reasonable accommodation is relatively easily achieved with and without the CGB.	-

3.2. How to Overcome Discrimination? Companies' Perspective

This section presents two types of actions aimed at overcoming religion-based discrimination in the workplace. The first type of action that we will present in this section is those actions that have already been implemented and proven successful in overcoming religion-based discrimination in the workplace. The second type of action that we will present in this section are proposals and recommendations suggested in the studies that we have selected in our systematic review, in order to overcome religion-based discrimination in the workplace. Some of these recommendations come from the experience and practice of actions that have been successful in overcoming religion-based workplace discrimination, while other recommendations come from exploration or socio-legal or historical analysis of the phenomenon of religion-based workplace discrimination.

The first actions that are based on experience and practice that have been successful are the inclusion of chaplains in the organization in the United States, and the application of reasonable accommodation through the Dutch Equal Treatment Commission (CGB), a commission in charge of promoting and monitoring the implementation of equality of treatment laws in The Netherlands (Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013). In the first case, Miller et al. (2017, p. 1) studied the benefits of including chaplains (i.e., Christian officials that are responsible for the religious needs within an organization) in the workplace, and they find several positive impacts for the organization:

They offer support and enhance a positive organizational culture; they complement or serve as an alternative to employee assistance programs; they provide psychosocial and pastoral care support to employees; they help to bridge cultural divides, and they enhance HR's efforts in religious diversity and accommodation.

On the other hand, reasonable accommodation was coined in the United States for religious employment discrimination (Alidadi 2012), and it is being used for resolving the tensions that may emerge between religious and non-religious employees and employers. Thus, reasonable accommodation consists of 'even-handed solutions for requests by religious employees to conduct their work in line with their religious beliefs' (Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013, p. 114). One of the examples presented by the authors is that of a Muslim woman who wore an Islamic veil; she presented a complaint to the CGB because she was denied employment at a call center on the grounds that the veil would prevent her from communicating properly via the telephone because of the fabric of the veil (Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013). This case was solved satisfactorily for all parties with an 'out of the box' solution presented by a member of the CGB who suggested placing the telephone headset under the veil (Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013). The second type of action that we mentioned before are proposals and recommendations suggested in the different studies that we selected in our sample following the systematic review process. These recommendations are directed both to policymakers and to HR managers and, more broadly, to companies and organizations. These recommendations can be divided into three main areas: raising awareness and fighting religion-based workplace discrimination, education, and training in relation to religious diversity, and extending the use of reasonable accommodation measures in the life of the organizations.

The first set of recommendations is aimed at increasing awareness (Pio and Syed 2018) and fighting religion-based discrimination in the workplace. At the European Union's level, (Foblets 2013) demands a European policy committed to the effective protection of religious freedom. Then, she continues at the European and state level, demanding consultation and impacts assessment together with legally recognized churches, religious associations or communities, and philosophical and non-confessional organizations before introducing any new legislative or judicial measures that affect religion (Foblets 2013). On their part, Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) propose raising awareness of religious diversity throughout school and university curriculums. Other recommendations by Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) are that religious diversity schemes and measures should be updated all the time and that policymakers should consider the use of affirmative actions to encourage religious diversity

and even extend to other forms of diversity, such as those related to disabilities and gender. Similarly to the previous recommendation, (Tariq and Syed 2017) recommend that states offer incentives for enabling and promoting ethnic minorities, particularly women at the board level. Rodríguez Moya (2014) proposes to create a welcoming environment without strong and predominant religious identities in the organizations. Furthermore, Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) and (Tariq and Syed 2017) insist on organizations setting goals and collecting and reporting data related to diversity. Finally, the last recommendations in this set are enhancing networks for mentoring, monitoring, and advising ethnic minority women by female role models of their own ethnic background (Tariq and Syed 2017), and fostering corporate cultures tolerant towards various religious affiliations (Al Ariss and Sidani 2016).

The second set of recommendations is related to education and training in relation to religious diversity, both for organizations and policymakers. The actions included here are as follows: create diversity sessions and training programs (Pio and Syed 2018); foster organizational learning that tackles emerging forms of discrimination (Sekerka and Yacobian 2018); specific-competency HR professionals need to work in religiously and spiritually diverse organizations (Allen et al. 2018); create charters on diversity or edit practical guides (Frégosi and Kosulu 2013); provide diversity training schemes (Tariq and Syed 2017); carry out tolerance training programs (Al Ariss and Sidani 2016); offer seminars on religious diversity; explain the legal context of freedom of religion and belief; create a manual of best practices related to religion in the workplace (Rodríguez Moya 2014).

The third set of recommendations includes measures of reasonable accommodation at the organizational level. Thus, Rodríguez Moya (2014) recommends: allowing personal displays of religious symbols, offering flexibility in the work schedules for the employees in order to carry out religious duties, providing diversity in the meals available at the company's canteen; facilitating places for worship at the workplace. Similarly, Frégosi and Kosulu (2013) note the possibility of negotiating reasonable accommodation either through collective negotiations or considering the specificity of each case, at the individual level. These actions and recommendations should be implemented to ensure that the rights of both secular and religious employees and employers are always respected (Christoffersen and Vinding 2013).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to identify those actions, collected in the scientific literature, that can build more inclusive workplaces for religious minorities. In the research, various examples of religion-based discrimination in the workplace against Muslim women who wear Islamic veil were found (Itxaso 2019; Tariq and Syed 2017; Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013). This finding supports previous research and the data available (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017) which indicate that Muslim women who wear Islamic veils suffer more discrimination than other sectors of society (Garcia Yeste et al. 2020; Ghumman and Ryan 2013; Halrynjo and Jonker 2016), but they also act to overcome this discrimination. Therefore, these individuals have agency, and they can overcome this discrimination in the workplace as they are achieving in other contexts (de Botton et al. 2021b; Gurbés-Peco et al. 2019; Khalfaoui et al. 2020).

To these findings, this paper adds some specific actions Muslim women use to overcome discrimination in the workplace: the use of networking and mentoring opportunities, engaging in ethnic and social networks, taking training courses to advance in their careers, or going to the court to denounce discrimination. Other factors that are important to fight religion-based workplace discrimination for Muslim women were having the support of their families, developing a self-confident attitude, and being outspoken and assertive (Tariq and Syed 2017). The other individual actions that we found were avoiding their religious identities (Tanyeri-Erdemir et al. 2013); although these actions may be needed for survival, especially in less democratic societies, these actions do not contribute to building a more inclusive workplace for minority religions. These actions mask the lack of inclusivity in those contexts, and they favor the reproduction of discrimination. Needless to say, that

those individuals who must hide their religious identities are not to be blamed for these situations.

At the same time, we identified actions and strategies that different organizations and companies are implementing successfully (Miller et al. 2017; Vermeulen and El Morabet Belhaj 2013). There are various actions and strategies available for companies and organizations that want to build new management styles, for example, by adding humanism and focusing on the people who constitute their company (Vila Porras and Toro-Jaramillo 2020). In the Results, there are listed proposals and recommendations that managers and policymakers can implement in order to build a more inclusive workplace for all. Implementing these actions in more workplace contexts is vital and they could help societies advance towards multicultural secularism (Flecha 2004; Pulido Rodríguez and de Botton Fernández 2013). Multicultural secularism can and should be achieved both from a top-down approach through public policies and laws and bottom-up approach through pioneer organizations and institutions; in addition, the people in the organization work to create inclusive workplace environments.

These elements and actions that were identified in this literature review and others that will be identified in the future do not represent a one-size-fits-all solution. We are aware that their implementation can vary according to the political climate, legislation, and socio-economic factors. However, our objective in this paper was to prepare the ground for building inclusive workplaces for all, and we consider that we have achieved this objective by identifying some elements and actions that can be used for this purpose. Nonetheless, these actions or elements must be implemented by societal actors and the contribution of this paper is to identify the gap in the literature and starting to carry out this research to offer solid evidence for those societal actors that decide to take action on what works for creating inclusive workplaces for all. Thus, this and future research on the topic have a potentially strong impact on HR policies and managerial practices, as other authors have demanded (Hambler 2016).

This study has some limitations, mainly due to the small number of articles that we could include in our sample. Searching the scientific articles that specifically report actions and strategies building a more inclusive workplace for religious minorities, and specifically, Muslim women wearing Islamic veils, substantially reduced the articles which could be analyzed. For example, the results did not find articles reporting on how religious associations or NGOs helped individuals to overcome religion-based workplace discrimination (Garcia Yeste et al. 2020; Karimi 2018). Instead, we found faith-based organizations which discriminated people of the 'wrong' religion, those who do not live according to the Church's worldview (Doerflinger et al. 2021; Hien 2017; Hien and Kneip 2020), or women (Styhre 2014) in the workplace. This phenomenon further highlights the need for research on inter-faith (de Botton et al. 2021a; Pulido Rodríguez and de Botton Fernández 2013; Flecha 2004) and state, churches, religious communities, and philosophical and non-denominational organizations dialogue (Foblets 2013). Moreover, the studies that directly included the voice of the individuals that suffered from religion-based discrimination were very limited. This is a key limitation that opens possibilities for further research by including the voices of the vulnerable groups (Redondo-Sama et al. 2020; Soler and Gómez 2020). Previous research has been developed successfully including vulnerable groups, and specifically women from cultural minorities (Bryant 2016; Gómez et al. 2019; Puigvert et al. 2012; Sánchez et al. 2013). Another limitation is the provenience of the studies that we finally included in the sample; most studies came from the EU and the United States of America, with notable exceptions of Turkey and Lebanon. This means that we need more studies to be carried out in this area and from different parts of the world. These results corroborate Heliot et al.'s (2020) findings, who found religion brings more benefits to organizations and more of them can be enhanced by favoring inclusion as opposed to focus on the potential conflicts and tensions. This systematic review is focused on the period before July 2020, when the systematic review was finalized, but more research was developed later (Garcia-Yeste et al.

2021). Further scientific literature reviews could identify more actions and strategies that have a positive impact on building more inclusive workplaces for all.

Finally, these results have political and practical implications in the necessity of creating the framework needed for authentic egalitarian interreligious dialogue (Campdepadrós-Cullell et al. 2021; de Botton et al. 2021a; Pulido et al. 2021; Khalfaoui et al. 2021a; Malović and Vujica 2021) to reach a consensus on the norms that should regulate individual actions and society as a whole (Aubert et al. 2013) through an open and egalitarian dialogue with all stakeholders (Torrás-Gómez et al. 2019). This way, democracy would be strengthened by building more inclusive workplaces for all by embracing religious diversity.

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