

EQUITY العدالة GerechtigkeIt إنصاف

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What would life be like if equity prevailed, and everyone felt equal?

To comprehend the concept and practice of equity, it is necessary to first recognize that not everyone begins in the same place and face different barriers. However, Equal access to quality education from preschool to college, healthy food, clean air and water, and safe and dignified jobs paying livable wages is, required.

DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity has been known since ancient times, as it was known in ancient Egypt as "Ma'at," which is the system of justice, in ancient Egyptian religion, the personification of truth, justice, and the cosmic order (Baines, 2023). and there was a deity called -Ma'at¹ to achieve justice, and she was depicted in the form of a woman, with the feather of Al-Ma'at on her head (Benderitter, 2020), which was used in the Osirian court.



Figure 1 Goddess Maat,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maat>

¹ For more information about Maat: https://www.osirisnet.net/dieux/maat/e_maat.htm

In the Osirian court, the feather of Maat was placed on the scale (the balance of justice) in front of the deceased's heart to judge and decide their fate. It is worth noting that the scale of justice is still used as a symbol of the Egyptian court today.



Figure 2: The court of Osiris to judge the dead by weighing his heart in front of the feather of Maat

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%>



Figure 3: The shape of the Egyptian court now uses the same scale as a symbol of justice

<https://www.youm7.com/story/2021/5/16/%D8%A7%D9%84%>

In addition, the Arabic word for Equity means fairness or justice, as stated in the Holy Qur'an in Surah an-Nahl:

“90. **Allah commands justice**, goodness, and generosity towards relatives. And He forbids immorality, injustice, and oppression. He instructs you, so that you may remember.”

”إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ٩٠“

Some people confuse equity and equality. The truth is that equality and equity are not synonymous, and they are not even close in practice (Jackson, 2022), While the terms equity and equality may sound similar, their implementation can result in dramatically different outcomes.

- **Equality:** is Equal sharing and division keep everyone on the same level. It provides the same thing to everyone, regardless of their needs.
- **Equity:** goes a step further. It means fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all people according to their needs.

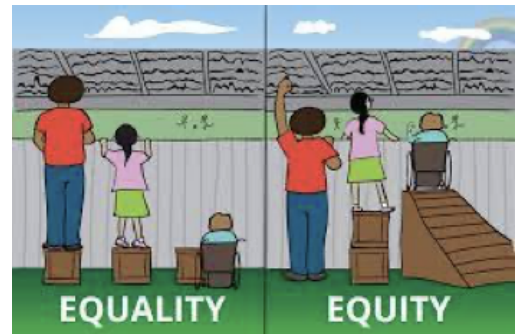


Figure 4: The difference between equity and equality, <https://www.equitytool.org/equity/>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mentioned that:” As such, equity is a process and equality is an outcome of that process. As the Race Matters Institute, “The route to achieving equity will not be accomplished through treating everyone equally. It will be achieved by treating everyone equitably, or justly according to their circumstances.” (School Of Public Health, 2020). Lack of equity is at the heart of many global issues, including race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, education, and economic status. Unilever believes that acting on equity is critical to achieving overall equality. (Paranjpe, 2022).

Museums, as cultural institutions trusted by visitors, can spread equity among people, raise awareness of the fact that "Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures, and development of mutual understanding, cooperation, and peace among peoples." For example, the call of the International Museum Day, the theme "Museums for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion" aims to become a rallying point for both celebrating the diversity of perspectives that make up the communities and personnel of museums, and championing tools for identifying and overcoming bias in what they display and the stories they tell (ICOM, 2020).

The concept of equity in museums refers to the need to make museums accessible for everyone. As previously stated, there are many aspects of equity in museums,

such as gender equity, which is defined as "the absence of gender discrimination in access to rights or opportunities" (Martinez, 2022). Gender equity in museums can be seen in **collections**, according to Guerilla Girls. "Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are females" (Mellon, 2016). Another aspect of equity is **Equity in Race/ Ethnicity – Non-discrimination** it's about Equity in displaying collections of all races and respect them because "Visitors don't want people to "look past" their race; they want most of all, to feel invited". (Heaton, 2014). Moreover, there is an important aspect of equity which is **Equity in providing information and clear interpretation for all** visitors should be able to understand museum interpretation if it is simple, clear, and informative (Jones, 2007).

If museum does not provide a good interpretation or concept, it will lose visitors, especially given today's fierce competition among museums. For example, according to the questionnaires, visitors to the Kom Ushim Museum in Fayoum-Egypt (My Masters Project²) were unable to comprehend the museum's content or scenario, as well as its message. As a result, the number of visitors to the museum is gradually decreasing. which contradicts the International Council of Museums' assertion that the museum is an institution for all. Everyone should be able to understand and use it. According to the call of "museums for all", accessibility is an important aspect of equity, and it is a multifaceted concept which has many dimensions: physical, intellectual, financial, social, emotional, attitudinal, and so on. Barriers preventing people from taking advantage of the cultural services provided by museums (Sani, 2018).

Egyptian museums

Regional museums in Egypt are among the most important museums displaying the local history of Egypt (Essam, 2018). Since 2015, the museum sector in Egypt has developed a plan to revitalize the regional museums in Egypt through

² For more information on the role of interpretation in the visitor experience: [10.21608/iguuaa2.2021.98450.1081](https://doi.org/10.21608/iguuaa2.2021.98450.1081)

awareness-raising and community participation programs (Essam, 2018). The state believes in the mission of museums, its educational role, and its mission to preserve the memory of the nation (أبو بكر، 2014). Dr Mahmoud Al-Halouji (The former director of regional museum) pointed out that the aim of the regional museums is to educate citizens about the importance of each region, its history, monuments and civilization. This is how citizens will be aware of the region, the historical and archaeological periods that have occurred and the most important events that have taken place there (عبد الستار، 2019). Since the 1960s, the term regional museum has been used to refer to museums that display and interpret objects and cultural aspects particularly natural or cultural history of a specific geographical location, or in a specific scope. This type of museum houses the antiquities discovered in the same location (راشد، 2020). There is no clear and specific concept of regional museums, in Egypt, regional museums are known as museums which are held in the regions of Egypt (نور الدين، 2009). Eissa has defined regional museums as museums that are located in the capital of the region and typically have archaeological collections that have been found in these regions or connected to them (Eissa & el-Senussi, 2020). Some researchers define regional museums as museums which are located in the regions and have historical and archaeological significance. This type usually includes antiques discovered in the region, sometimes enriched by artefacts from main museums (علي، 2013).

I also believe it is **equity** to have museums in every city where people from all over Egypt can go. If this type of museum (regional museums) does not exist in Egypt, and museums are only found in tourist areas and Greater Cairo, how can people from villages and small towns visit museums?

Not everyone has the means or the time to travel such long distances to see the museum. However, regional museums provided everyone with the opportunity to visit the museum, and regional museums are distinguished by a distinct feature that expresses the city and its people, and what can most attract local visitors is their sense that the museum speaks to them regardless of their educational levels.

According to studies of museum visitors, the Coptic Museum and the Nubian Museum are the most visited by locals because the museum addresses them: for example, the Nuba Museum is the most visited by the Nubian people because of their sense of belonging, and the museum tells them about themselves, telling their story, customs, and traditions. Building and developing regional museums is the most **equitable** thing that the Egyptian authorities do to give everyone the opportunity to visit their museums and see their heritage and customs.

The reason for selecting the term equity in my field of experience is the importance of this term even in daily dealings, particularly at work, by treating all employees equally without discrimination and providing equal opportunities for all employees, which creates a successful work environment and a healthy climate for employees. Because providing some opportunities for a certain category of employees without others, regardless of the reasons for discrimination, creates hatred among employees, which affects the productivity of work in the place. What makes the term unique in my experience with it in the Sawa program is that it is different and diverse. It welcomes people of all nationalities and countries. The fact that those in charge of the program treated all participants fairly, without favoring one nationality over another, drew me to the term equity. My experience in Berlin was unique, and I can relate it to the term in a few ways.

First and foremost, I'd like to start with the Egyptian Sculpture Hall. I can't express how I felt when I saw this massive collection of Egyptian antiquities. At the same time, I was stunned and shocked. It is worth noting that it is one of the best Egyptian antiquities I have seen in museums, and it is in excellent condition. The first thought that came to mind was: How did they transport so many Egyptian antiquities outside of Egypt? What does the presence of so many Egyptian antiquities suggest?

The fascination increased when I saw the statue of Nefertiti, my heart broke and I wanted to cry. It's the most incredible feeling I've ever had in front of a monument!! I felt **fascinated, greatness, pride, sadness, and sorry**; Fascination with Egyptian history, the precision of its sculptures, and the great spirit that emanates from the monument, as if it were about to speak.

Greatness and pride in being Egyptian, and because the entire world values this wonderful piece of antiquity, which I am almost certain is the best piece of antiquity in the world, not only for the accuracy of its carving,



Figure5: Illustrates how it charms everyone who sees it, <https://www.albawabhnews.com/4708308>

but for the spirit that it carries, which makes you feel as if it is addressing you as if it is alive. I felt silence when I saw her, as if the entire world had stopped. I didn't hear or see anything around me. I only saw the soul of that great queen, as if she were looking at me and addressing me. I'll never forget how I felt in front of her. Sadness and sorry for denying the Egyptian people the opportunity to see this one-of-a-kind piece that will not be repeated. I felt sorry for it because it was still away from its homeland and its people. I had the impression that my country was still under occupation! . I remember approaching the statue to photograph it, and the guard stopped me, so I said spontaneously and innocently that I am Egyptian, thinking that this will give me a privilege, and as Egyptians, we should have the right to see and photograph our property and get close to it. I was enraged because all of those antiquities are our legacy and property. But he smiled at me and said, "I apologize, it's rules". Any rules that require us to travel across continents and pay money to see what belongs to us without even getting close! How difficult is this feeling?

And I realized why the German authorities are so opposed to returning this masterpiece to Egypt: it is the soul of the museum, and I am not exaggerating when I say it is the soul of Berlin. My attention was drawn to the way this rare piece of Queen Nefertiti was displayed, as it was displayed in the middle of a large hall with four guards surrounding it. I believe it is based on ancient Egyptian beliefs about the "four protector deities," who provided protection for kings' bodies or statues.

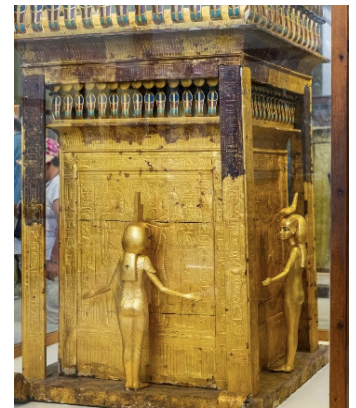


Figure 6: The protective deities protect the Naos.
<https://www.timetrovelturtle.com/egyptian-museum-cairo-egypt/>

On the other side, there is equity in the display of Egyptian antiquities, as statues of kings were displayed alongside statues of ordinary people and unknown people, which does not happen in Egyptian exhibitions inside Egypt, so I felt that it was a kind of equity that everyone is equal. Then when I saw a head in the middle of the hall, "the head of Berlin," I felt inequity.



Figure 7: The Egyptian Hall illustrates the Berlin green head in the middle of the hall. Photographed by SAWA team.

In the Humboldt forum, Ethnographic department. The experience in it and the way the antiquities of African countries were displayed in a remarkable way, where the halls of antiquities were displayed as if they were stores crowded with various antiquities without order, as if they were a sign of domination, with "Berlin antiquities" written on labels without defining and caring for these peoples' civilizations. The experience drew my attention to the fact that the power of museums; museum displays, presentation methods, and methods of interpreting exhibits can make you feel equity or inequity, the dominance of one country over

another, the marginalization of one race over another, or discrimination between peoples.



Figure 8: The Humboldt forum, the display of Ethnographic department, photographed by the researcher.

When I speak about equity in the museum, I refer to equity for all visitors, including disabled. The museum should meet their needs. People with physical disabilities are a part of the community that museums represent. As a result, it is critical to make museums accessible to those people by meeting their needs in terms of disabilities within the museum's boundaries (Brulé, 2020). Therefore, museums can make you feel welcome or excluded. I believe that museums play an important role in promoting equity among people, races, and peoples. In addition to museum staff play an important role in sharing information and helping the museum visitors. However, some Museum employees exhibit discriminatory behavior when communicating with the visually impaired, or people with disabilities. This implies that training for museum curators and staff in general on serving disabled visitors is essential. The museum's reputation as a public institution open to all suffers when it treats the visually impaired or anyone with a disability with contempt. (Poria, et al., 2008).

Conclusion:

Based on the call of "museums for all," the museum's efforts must collaborate with the community, educational institutions, and cultural institutions to provide the

best service to ordinary and disabled museum visitors, so that the museum fulfils its mission as a cultural and educational institution to serve the community, and its development is open and welcomes all. since museums are regarded as the most trustworthy source of information, we should use them to spread culture, education, justice, and equity among all people. Consolidate relations between races, raise the flag of humanity, and enhance the idea of equality that all humans are equal, and that the museum is a welcoming place for all.

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