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THE STATUS OF RECRUITMENT RETENTION AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN IN THE ARAB MENA: LEBANON REPORT

Country Focus: Lebanon

Organization: CRTD.A

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Executive Summary

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has the largest gender gap of all regions worldwide, and it is estimated it would take 150 years for it to close. As the economic situation in the region deteriorates due to the political instability and the decline in oil prices, it is expected that women, who are already at a disadvantage, will be disproportionately affected. Matters are further complicated by the scarcity of widely-available locally-generated data on the experiences and contributions of women in the MENA region to the formal economy.

To this end, the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership (CIBL) for Women conducted a multi-national study across 11 MENA countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, and Iraq. The purpose of the project is to develop a comprehensive data-driven index, the KIP Index, to provide economic stakeholders with knowledge and recommendations on improving women's recruitment, retention, and promotion in the formal economies of the Arab MENA. In Lebanon, CIBL for Women partnered with the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD.A) to collect data for the project.

Methodology:

As the Lebanese country partner for the KIP Index project, CRTD.A collected:

- 110 online surveys with male and female employers from private, local, regional companies along with NGOs and public administrations.
- 5 focus group discussions with economic stakeholders in women's empowerment
- 50 interviews with female national employees.

To fill the surveys, businesses were contacted via e-mail invitations, LimeSurvey invitations, phone calls, and in-person field visits. All focus group discussions with economic stakeholders were conducted via ZOOM. The interviews with the formally employed women were conducted in person and over the phone or via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The quantitative data derived from the employer survey was stored on LimeSurvey and then extracted as excel sheets, merged, cleaned, and analyzed using STATA 12.1. The employer interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, translated, and analyzed through thematic analysis by the researchers.

Ethical Considerations:

The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants involved in this study were safeguarded at every level of the data collection and data analysis process. All research personnel abided by the core principles of ethical research practice. Verbal and/or oral informed consent was obtained from all participants who were informed about the context of the study, their rights as contributors to the data, and the ultimate usage of the collected data.

Reflections on the Data Collection Process

CRTD.A's field research team encountered multiple external challenges that complicated the data collection process and called for creative and flexible outreach methods. The data collection in Lebanon took place during very turbulent times as a result of uprisings, political instability, rapidly deteriorating economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its subsequent lockdown and social distancing measures, and, finally, the Beirut Blast of August 4. These challenges were most palpable in the data collection of employer surveys where over 500 Lebanese businesses were contacted on numerous occasions, and only 229 clicked on the survey link, and only 110 completed the survey. The most recurrent complaints were the length of the survey (which was initially 15 pages) and the timing of the study, which was deemed inappropriate by certain organizations. This is because as the economic situation in the country continued to deteriorate, the interest in talking to the researchers dwindled as many businesses were suffering greatly, and some had already downsized or closed down permanently.

Results:

Employer Survey:

110 Lebanese organizations filled the employer survey; most of them (58.18%) were located in Beirut. The majority of surveyed organizations (85%) identified as "for-profit"; however, more than half of them refused to disclose their average revenue for the 2-year period of 2017-2018. More than half of the respondents had less than 14 employees, and most of them only hired nationals. When it comes to recruitment, the overwhelming majority (96.36%) of the organizations reported that they do not have specific policies that support hiring individuals belonging to minority groups. Data showed that 1 in 3 companies reported that women constituted 50% of the pool of



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applicants; however, 15.45% reported that no women had applied to their company. At the level of retention, the survey data showed that one third (34%) of the personnel that left the surveyed organizations were women. The most recurrent reasons for leaving a job were finding better opportunities elsewhere as well as personal life events. More than half of the organizations (56%) do not have policies for the wellbeing of the employees. Less than half of the surveyed organizations reported having anti-harassment policies for sexual harassment (42%), bullying (41%), and threats and insults against employees (37%). Only 45 out of 110 organizations reported having a formal system in place to report harassment in the workplace. Finally, only 1 in 4 organizations had a woman as its chief executive officer (CEO), and just 14.55% of organizations had a woman as a chairperson for their board. Only 4.55% of organizations reported that their employees declined a promotion offer in the 2 years of 2017 and 2018.

Women Employee Interviews:

Female employees from different sectors, age groups, and levels were interviewed on their work experiences in Lebanon's formal economy. Regarding recruitment, the most common means to find out about job vacancies was through connections and friends who work in the recruiting companies, followed by job posting websites. The organization's reputation, empowering work culture, and growth potential were some of the factors listed by participants as motivators to apply for a job. Regarding retention, limited career growth, harsh working conditions, unprofessional and abusive behavior from supervisors and coworkers, gender discrimination, and gender bias were the most cited reasons to quit a job. The majority of respondents reported struggling to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Most participants did not know if they earned less than their male counterparts as discussing salary openly is not encouraged; however, many participants said that they received negative differential treatment by management because of their gender that can range from condescending attitudes to sexual harassment. A few participants also stated that although there are systems in place to report harassment in the workplace, they feel discouraged to do as they fear being doubted or not taken seriously. Finally, vertical mobility in companies is sometimes impeded because the majority of businesses are small and/or family businesses that leave little room for promotion. However, some participants believe that even when the promotion is possible, women face more obstacles to get it.



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Economic Stakeholders Discussions:

Five focus group discussions were held by different economic stakeholders in Lebanon, including CEOs of small companies, HR professionals of larger ones, accountants, academics, economic experts, and corporate training coaches. One important finding from the focus group discussions is that child care services were a common challenge for women at every level: recruitment, retention, and promotion. Thus, family-friendly policies could go a long way in helping women by providing affordable public or government-subsidized child care services. Other suggestions included longer paid maternity leaves, early leaves, more flexible working hours with the possibility of working from home. Another recurrent finding is that the socio-cultural gender norms are limiting the capacity of women at the level of education and in the marketplace. Thus, empowering women economically cannot be achieved without a holistic approach that works on shifting societal attitudes and raising awareness about women's economic rights. In the absence of laws that protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace, Lebanese businesses need to develop and implement anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies in the workplace to ensure fair recruitment and selection, better retention rates, and more promotion of women to decision-making positions.



Introduction:

Economic conditions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have deteriorated significantly in recent years due to political and security challenges, declining prices of oil, protracted regional conflicts, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown measures which have substantially impeded economic activity¹. The recession has already enhanced poverty worldwide, especially in the MENA region where pre-COVID-19, 53% of the population was living on \$4.00 a day or less². According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020³, MENA continues to score the lowest (61.1%) of all regions that it is estimated it would take 150 years to close its gender gap. Because of low participation rates and discrimination against women, the economic gender gap remains significant and is likely to have been worsened as a result of what economic experts called the global “pink-collar recession”⁴.

Lebanon has also been grappling with a multitude of issues that wreaked havoc on its economy, like macroeconomic and political challenges, internal turmoil, uprisings, and security problems, devaluation of the Lebanese currency, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the aftermath of the August 4th Beirut Blast. With only 1 in 4 Lebanese women in the labor force and with a country rank of 139th out of 153 countries for economic participation and opportunity for women⁵, Lebanese women were already at a disadvantage. As the crisis-affected sectors like services and commerce where women are overrepresented, they were disproportionately affected. Unfortunately, Lebanon and the MENA region, in general, suffer from a scarcity of widely available and locally generated data on female citizens’ experiences and contributions to formal economies. Even less is known about the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in these countries. The KIP project aims to fill the gap on this topic by developing a comprehensive data-driven index that provides economic stakeholders with knowledge and recommendations on improving women’s recruitment, retention, and promotion in the formal economies.

¹ World Bank. (June 2020). *Global Economic Prospects: Middle East and North Africa*. Retrieved online from <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/950801588788414569/Global-Economic-Prospects-June-2020-Analysis-MENA.pdf>

² The World Bank Annual Report 2016

³ World Economic Forum. “Global Gender Gap Report 2020” http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

⁴ Nancy Wang. “COVID leads to a pink-collar recession”. Forbes. (May 2020)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nancywang/2020/05/24/covid-leads-to-a-pink-collar-recession/#219ea2642bb5>

⁵ World Economic Forum. *op-cit*.



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To this end, the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership (CIBL) for Women at the American University of Beirut (AUB) partnered with the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD.A), a Lebanese non-governmental organization that seeks to contribute to social justice and gender equality. The CRTD.A field research team was tasked to collect data for the KIP project in Lebanon. This report describes the data collection process and synthesizes the findings of these efforts to better understand how women in Lebanon experience waged work, the efforts of employers in terms of recruitment, retention, and promotion, as well as perspectives of the various economic stakeholders.

Sample:

As the Lebanese partner for the KIP project, CRTD.A collected:

- 110 online surveys with male and female employers from private, local, regional companies along with NGOs and public administrations.
- 5 focus group discussions with economic stakeholders in women's empowerment
- 50 interviews with female national employees.

To achieve this, the field research team adopted creative, versatile, and flexible sampling strategies to navigate an increasingly turbulent national climate and to overcome a lot of unforeseeable obstacles.

Survey Sample

As part of the KIP project, each company is expected to fill the KIP index pilot survey either online or through a face-to-face data collection session with the field researchers. To secure the largest number of filled surveys possible, the CRTD.A field research team contacted over 500 Lebanese businesses of different sizes, different locations, and different sectors. The business was either contacted by e-mail, by phone calls, or by in-person visits. Unfortunately, with the high non-response rate and a large number of incomplete surveys, the team was only able to complete 110 surveys with Lebanese employers. The breakdown of the filled surveys per sector is presented in Appendix 2.

Interview Sample

Researchers publicly advertised the study on social media and recruited national female participants to be interviewed using snowballing methods, to recruit more participants and using purposive sampling, to diversify the pool of participants. Around 60 Lebanese women employees expressed interest in participating, and the first 50 participants were selected. The demographic characteristics of the participants are featured in Appendix 3.

Focus Group Sample

For every focus group discussion, the researchers contacted at least 15 economic stakeholders to secure at least 8 participants per focus group. The participants were either CEOs of small companies, HR managers of larger companies, academics, and economic experts. A description of the recruited participants is presented in Appendix 4.

Methods of Data Collection:

Survey Methodology:

The team created an initial list of 200 companies, including businesses of different sizes, and abiding by the sector breakdown by percentage of employment. The list was developed using databases such as 5index.com, lb.kompass.com, and LebanonBusinessDirectory.com. First, an invitation e-mail (Appendix 1) was sent, followed by a LimeSurvey invitation and two subsequent reminders. However, with a low response rate, the research team was advised by Ms. Asmahan Zein to prepare a new list of more than 200 businesses. To ensure that the newly selected businesses were operational, the sampling was done using job posting websites to find which employers are still operating and recruiting. Moreover, because the standard "info@" or "contact@" e-mail addresses were not always active and did not yield successful results, the team used LinkedIn to locate business owners and HR managers and contact them directly. Although it had a lengthy process, this method proved to be more effective. Whenever possible, researchers visited the businesses in person to fill the survey in interview form; however, because of COVID-19, several interviews had to be conducted over the phone, where the length of the survey became an issue. Despite sampling around 500 Lebanese businesses, the team was only able to complete 110 surveys.



Interview Methodology:

The interviews with the national female employees were the least challenging component of the study, as, overall, participants expressed great interest in taking part in the study. Initially, the interviews were taking place in person in the afternoon or at the weekend; however, as the concern around COVID-19 increased, the researchers had to switch to online interviews. Informed consent was obtained verbally and in written form. The vast majority of the participants agreed to be audio-recorded. No other special steps were taken.

Focus Group Methodology:

The focus group discussions had to be conducted online because, at the time of data collection, most Lebanese businesses were closed because of COVID-19 lockdown measures. The invitees were reached through their professional e-mails, LinkedIn profiles, and phone numbers whenever available. When they agreed to participate, invitations were sent via Google Calendar and followed up by reminders. The discussions were held via Zoom, usually in the afternoon on weekdays and in the morning on Saturdays. Non-response and last minute drop-outs were two challenges that the researchers faced with the focus group discussions.

Key Process Reflections:

Key challenges:

First, the length of the survey was a major deterrent for most businesses. Over 500 employers and/or HR managers were contacted; only 229 clicked on the LimeSurvey link, and only 110 completed all 15 pages of the survey. There was only so much that data collectors could do to convince the employers to complete the surveys, and they were often met with frustrated negative comments. The shortened version of the survey, although more effective, was created a bit late in the process and could have generated a higher response rate had it been used before the team had exhausted most of their connections.

Second, a large number of external challenges complicated data collection. Researchers were working against ongoing crises: revolutions, uprisings, public health threats, constantly worsening economic conditions, and political instability. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented researchers from



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reaching employers and target staff members. As many businesses were downsizing, the remaining staff had a bigger workload and did not have time to contribute to our study. As some businesses were working from home, their workplace phone numbers were useless, and the e-mails were easy to miss or ignore. As the economic hardship grew harsher, the interest in the topic began to dwindle. After the Beirut Blast of August 4th, many businesses in Beirut were materially affected and even some of those who were not directly implicated explicitly responded with outright refusal to participate, stating that this was bad timing for such a topic.

Key Success:

From the perspective of the field research team, getting this far with the data collection is an achievement which we are proud of because, despite the deteriorating situation, we remained optimistic, dedicated a lot of time and efforts, and exhausted all of our connections and strategies leaving no stone unturned, and collect valuable data even when the odds were stacked against us. Moving forward, to make the data collection smoother and more efficient, we recommend:

1. Shortening the employer survey or adding a certain incentive for participation
2. Revisiting the design of the survey to ensure that it could be filled by one staff member only because, as it stands, unless it is a small company, the survey requires different departments to provide the requested information.
3. Offering more assistance to the field research team in terms of connections and contacts with Lebanese business owners and Lebanese public administrations because they were quite unresponsive

Data Analysis Methods:

The project uses a mixed-methods study design encompassing an employer survey, interviews with women employees, and focus group discussions with various economic stakeholders. The main research questions that the preliminary data analysis seeks to answer go as follows:

1. What is known about the recruitment, retention, and promotion of female citizens in your country's formal economy?
2. What is known about the practices, structures, policies, and other local factors shaping recruitment, retention, and promotion of these women in your country?

3. How do women experience recruitment, retention, and promotion?
4. What are the perspectives of economic stakeholders in this regard?

Quantitative Data Analysis:

The completed responses to the employer surveys were exported from Limesurvey on excel sheets. As there were two versions of the survey, the researchers had to merge the two datasets keeping only the shared variables, clean the dataset, de-identify it and analyzed them using STATA 12.1. Simple descriptive statistics were conducted. The purpose of the employer survey is to have a snapshot of what companies in Lebanon's formal economy are doing and what measures they are taking concerning the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

Regarding the interviews with the formally employed Lebanese women, all the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the interviews that were conducted in Arabic were translated into English. All the transcripts were then uploaded to SharePoint. The researchers then conducted a thematic analysis on the 50 transcripts, deriving several codes which they grouped into different sub-themes and themes. The researchers were inspired in their analysis by the indicators and sub-indicators, which were identified in the first white paper submitted by CRTD.A. The five indicators were:

1. Family-friendly policies
2. Fair selection procedures for recruitment and promotion
3. Empowerment of agency and enactment of careers
4. Workplace environment
5. Measurement of the efficacy of policies

A similar process was conducted to analyze the data obtained from the focus group discussions with the economic stakeholders.

Ethical Considerations:



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The confidentiality of participants was protected at every turn by the careful treatment of personal data. During data collection, the provision of information was done confidentially, and the right to privacy was respected. All research personnel abided by the core principles of respect for subjects, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. The employer surveys were anonymous, and on occasion, when an employer accidentally left the name of their institution in the answers, the responses were de-identified. Similarly, women employee interviewees were informed of the context of the study and how the data will be utilized. All interviewees gave informed written and verbal consent; all signed consent forms were uploaded to SharePoint. The interview transcripts were anonymized in a manner that makes both the employee and employer non-identifiable. Regarding the focus group discussions, all economic stakeholders were informed about the purpose of the study and how the data will be used. All participants gave verbal consent to participate in the study and to be audio-recorded. When a focus group discussion participant did not want to share the name of the organization in which they are employed, they had the right to keep that information confidential.

Challenges and Limitations

One of the main limitations of the study is the low response rate for the surveys by employers, the high number of incomplete surveys, and the non-disclosure of information about the average revenue of certain Lebanese companies. Moreover, the survey inquires about the 2 years of 2017 and 2018; however, the last 2 years have been so drastically different because of the fast-deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon, which means that whatever image the collected data portrays is milder and more conservative than the realities of the Lebanese businesses at the time of writing this report. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures that led to the temporary closure of many Lebanese businesses at the time of the data collection, the focus groups and interviews had to be conducted online using Zoom and other videoconferencing platforms. This allowed for the participation of economic stakeholders who would have otherwise declined our invitation due to busy schedules; however, because the data collection took place online, there is a chance that we missed certain details, non-verbal cues, and/or field observations that could have been valuable for the analysis.

Results:

Employer Survey Key Findings

Organizations' Profile

A final sample of n=110 organizations completed the survey. More than half of them (58.18%) were located in Beirut, and 24.5% were located in the Chouf district. The majority of organizations (85.45%) identified as 'for profit' and only 4 out of 110 were in the public sector. This was unsurprising as despite the field researcher team's best efforts and repeated attempts, public administrations were simply unresponsive, with only 2 public sector institutions completing the survey when the target was 20. When asked about their average revenue for the 2 years of 2017 and 2018, 47.3% of the organizations responded with "I don't know", 14.5% did not answer, and only 15,5% said under 50,000 USD.

Table 1-Table representing the locations and the average revenue of surveyed organizations for the 2-year period of

	Freq.	Percent.
District		
Aley	2	1.8%
Baabda	3	2.7%
Beirut	64	58.2%
Chouf	27	24.6%
Keserwan	2	1.8%
Matn	8	7.3%
Saida	1	0.9%
West Bekaa	2	1.8%
Zahle	1	0.9%
Average Revenue		
Under 50,000 USD	17	15.5
Between 50 000 usd and 99 999 USD	4	3.6
Between 100 000 usd and 249 999 USD	4	3.6
Between 250 000 usd and 499 999 USD	2	1.8
Between 500 000 usd and 999 999 USD	2	1.8
Between 1 million and 4.9 million USD	3	2.7
Between 5 million and 9.9 million USD	3	2.7
Between 10 million and 24.9 million USD	2	1.8
Between 25 million and 49.9 million USD	1	0.9
Between 50 million and 99.9 million USD	2	1.8
Between 100 million and 149.9 million USD	1	0.9
150 million USD or above	1	0.9
I don't know	52	47.3
No answer	16	14.5

Staff Demographic

When asked about the average number of employees, both men and women, formally employed for the 2-year period of 2017 and 2018, more than half of the organizations had less than 14 employees, with 25.45% having under 5 employees and 25.45% having between 5 and 14 employees. Most organizations (60.91%) stated that the entirety of their formally employed staff is made up of nationals. Most organizations (63.64%) reported that all the formally employed female staff members are Lebanese nationals. All of the organizations that filled the survey reported that their workplace is mixed and not segregated by gender. The overwhelming majority of respondents (95.45%) said that their organizations did not have any specific policies for female nationals that do not apply to other female employees.

Among the 5 organizations that reported that they do, it was highlighted that these policies apply to salary scales (mentioned 3 times), maternity leave (3 times), leave from work (2 times), hiring (once), and benefits (once). Only 44.55% of sampled organizations reported that they disclose salary brackets as per the specific job level for men and women.

Recruitment

The overwhelming majority of organizations (96.36%) reported that they do not have any specific recruitment policies that support the hiring of individuals identified as belonging to a particular group. Among the 4 (out of 110) organizations that had such policies, 3 reported that they targeted the recruitment of persons with disabilities, 2 targeted women from other Arab and non-Arab countries, and one targeted people with particular dress preferences or traditions. When it comes to the recruitment of women, data shows that in 2017, only 1 in 3 companies reported that women constituted 50% of the pool of applicants, and 15.45% reported that no women had applied to work at their company. The same patterns were observed in 2018 as well. It is important to note here that while only 26.3% of women are working, only 28% of the unemployed are women⁶. This suggests that the low economic activity of women might not stem from discriminatory recruitment policy but from the lack of incentives for women to become economically active. The same patterns were observed in 2018. Data collected from 110 Lebanese organizations shows that in the 2 years of 2017 and 2018, out of 238 newly recruited staff members in the non-management level, 52% of new hires were women. Similarly, out of 43 newly recruited staff members at the management-level, 51% were women.

Retention

According to the data collected from 110 Lebanese organizations, in the 2-year period of 2017 and 2018, the total number of employees who left their respective companies is 456; women constitute one third (34%) of the staff who left the organizations. The most frequently mentioned reasons for leaving a job were finding a better job opportunity (9 times), personal life events (such

⁶ Lara Badre and Najwa Yaacoub. 'The Labour Market in Lebanon' Statistics in Focus, Issue 1 (Central Administration of Statistics, 2011), p.3



as getting married, death of a family member, leaving the country, etc.), and family care responsibilities.

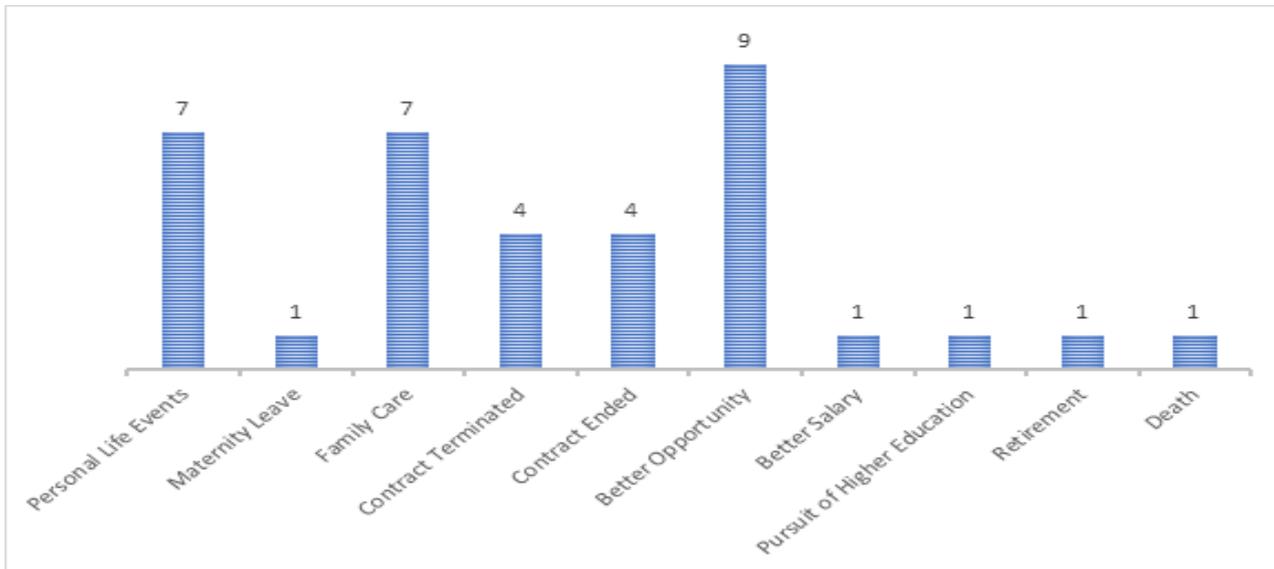


Figure 1- Bar Chart representing the reasons for leaving the organizations and the respective frequencies.

More than half of the organizations (56.36%) reported that they do not have any formal policies that encourage the employee wellbeing of their staff. Of the 48 (out of 110) that reported having such policies, respondents specified that their companies have anti-discrimination policies that protected employees based on the following characteristics: gender (39 times), religion (32 times), ethnicity (20 times), disability (20 times), age (19 times), pregnancy (15 times), clothing whether it is religious or liberal (11 times), foreign citizenship (8 times) and local citizenship (6 times). As for anti-harassment policies, 41.82% of the organizations reported that they had formal policies to protect their employees from sexual harassment, 40.91% had policies to deal with bullying, 37.27% had policies that protect staff members from threats or insults against any employee’s moral or personal reputation. Unfortunately, more than half of the organizations (56.36%) did not disclose if they had a formal process to report discrimination or harassment, and only 2.73% reported that they do not. But, of the 45 (out of 110) companies who stated that they have a reporting mechanism, the following mechanisms were adopted: formal complaint process (mentioned 38 times) and hotline service (mentioned 7 times). Other reporting modalities included speaking directly to the manager, sending an anonymous complaint through the company website,

and reporting to an Ombudsman, an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against a company or organization.

Promotion

Survey results show that among the 110 respondents, only 1 in 4 organizations has a woman as a chief executive officer (CEO) and just 14.55% of organizations have a woman as a chairperson for the board. This is admittedly high for a country that ranks 139th for the economic participation of women on the Global Gender Gap report and which has a gender gap of 90% in managerial positions⁷. These findings paired with the low response rate to the survey suggests that there is a bias in selection and reporting as the companies who chose to contribute to the study were different from those who did not, tended to be more progressive, had taken steps towards or were at least more interested in women's economic empowerment than other Lebanese companies. The data also shows that out of 892 non-management level employees that received a promotion in the 2-year period of 2017-2018, women represented 54% of the personnel that was promoted. Similarly, approximately half of the management personnel (52%) that received a promotion in 2017 and 2018 were women. Moreover, only 4.55% of Lebanese organizations reported that their employees declined a promotion offer during that period.

Finally, several national and international standards provide specific guidelines to improve the engagement of women in the workplace, such as the sustainable development goals, the Millennium development goals, the national gender action plan among others. Data shows that out of 110 surveyed organizations, the management and/or personnel of only 8 organizations received gender diversity training in the 2 years of 2017-2017. Moreover, only 10% of organizations provide training on the standards of improving the status of women and increasing their engagement in the workplace, and 9% participate in such seminars and training. Merely 2 out of 110 respondents reported having received funding to improve the situation of women in the workplace. One out of 3 surveyed Lebanese organizations reported attempting to implement Lebanon's National Action

⁷ World Economic Forum, *ibid*



Plan regarding women in the workplace, and one out of 5 surveyed organizations stated that they have plans to implement these in the future but that they have not done so as of yet.

Women Employee Interviews

Recruitment

When asked about what motivated them to apply for their current positions, the majority of women employees stated that they wanted to build their resumes and gain more experience in their respective fields. Other motivating factors included financial incentives, such as a good salary and job perks like transportation and health insurance. This has become increasingly important as the economic situation in Lebanon continued to worsen. When asked about how they found out about the vacancies, the most recurrent answers were having connections with company personnel, followed by job postings on recruitment websites. As multiple participants explain, having previous work experience with a company or personally knowing staff members encouraged them to apply for work in these organizations. The companies' characteristics that were most appealing to participants were its reputation, its positive and empowering work culture, the fairness of the recruitment process, and the growth potential.

Thinking back about the time they applied for work at their current organizations, the majority of the participants highlighted the smoothness, flexibility, and time-efficiency of the recruitment and selection (R&S) process as positives. A few participants were also satisfied with recruiters who gave them room to make their case through fair, field-relevant, and job-specific questions. On the other hand, interviewees were dissatisfied with the R&S process when the recruiter was unprofessional, did not give a clear description of the position they are considering them for, focused on their previous work experience, and disregarded their potential and skills. LBN36 explains that this is particularly the case of larger companies which adopt a more traditional approach to recruitment that fails to consider the character, attitude, and potential of the applicant; *"it isn't very creative; [it doesn't consider] what you can offer outside of your degree and experience."* Other raised issues include the lack of transparency in the selection criteria, religious bias, and gender bias.



Retention

Most female employees who were interviewed reported that their current realities at work did not match their expectations when they were hired and/or how they envisioned their careers upon graduating. Limited career growth, harsh corporate environments, long working hours, problematic and unprofessional treatment from coworkers and supervisors, and gender bias were among the most frequently mentioned drawbacks. When asked to reflect on their previous work experiences and the factors that drove them to quit, participants mentioned the lack of fixed schedules, exploitation from employers, inappropriate behavior and blatant disrespect from coworkers and supervisors, and toxic and ruthlessly competitive work environments. A couple of participants cited the lack of paid maternity leaves and the denial of sick leaves as instrumental factors for their resignation. On the other hand, interviewees stated that forming healthy professional relationships with their managers and coworkers, honesty, mutual respect, healthy communication, and fair pay encouraged them to stay in their current companies. When asked if they can maintain a healthy work-life balance, the majority of interviewees indicated that their jobs leave them with little to no time for social activities. It is particularly challenging for mothers with children under the age of 5, as LBN01 explains: *"I have my daughter now. I leave her with my mom and go to work and come back. If I want to keep her at a nursery, I will have to use all my income, especially now since we're working half our usual hours and getting half the pay."* A few participants reported being able to strike the right balance between their professional life and personal life through better family support and time management skills; however, the majority of participants prioritized their jobs over their social lives. As LBN08 puts it, *"in Lebanon, you face a dilemma. If you don't work, you don't have the money to enjoy your personal life."* According to the vast majority of participants, the psychosocial support provided by friends and family members is crucial in helping them cope with the pressures of the jobs.

The majority of interviewees were unaware if they were remunerated differently than their male counterparts; this is because most workplace cultures do not encourage personnel to discuss their salaries openly. Some participants said that they felt appreciated, respected, and empowered on the job; this generally stemmed from the positive attitude of management and progressive leadership who believes in the importance of women empowerment; *"the work environment that I am working at is all about women and women empowerment, so I think that gives me a bit of*



privilege because they prefer female employees here” (LBN11). However, many interviewees expressed, either explicitly or through anecdotes, that they receive negative differential treatment because of their gender that ranges from insidious “mansplaining” to sexual harassment. For example, despite being qualified and capable, LBN32 was constantly undermined by her previous boss; “he would assign male interns to accompany to meetings because he was not comfortable leaving me alone in the meetings as a woman”. Another participant who works in the foodservice industry (LBN04) admits that her manager openly and explicitly asks the women personnel to flirt with customers which undermines their safety. As per her account, “we have a briefing every Sunday morning, and the manager looks at the girls only and tells us to smile more and be more feminine. My coworkers get asked a lot for their phone numbers [by customers]. Sometimes, they wait for them, and it’s creepy. I don’t want that.” Another example of inappropriate behavior is recounted by LBN26; “sometimes, my [boss] would ask “who will give me a massage? But don’t go and complain about me to [HR]. These kinds of uncomfortable remarks are not cool.” Several participants said that they do not feel protected or empowered enough to report harassment when it takes place at work. Even when a formal reporting mechanism is put in place, the fear of not being believed and the fear of their complaint not being taken seriously are huge deterrents.

Promotion

When it comes to vertical mobility within their organizations, it was the view of several interviewees that gender-based discrimination is not the culprit in preventing them from moving up the ladder. Rather, because the majority of Lebanese businesses are small- and micro-sized enterprises and/or family businesses, there is generally little to no room for promotions. However, among the participants who work in larger organizations where promotions are possible, the majority of the participants explained that there are no clear and transparent criteria for the promotion process with some alleging the existence of gender bias among their senior managers who select the potential candidates for promotion. In some instances, employees are promised promotions that they never receive or receive after very long periods. LBN05 relates: “you never understand what is going on and what is taking so long. [...] I would always be promised that [I would get the promotion] by the end of this month and that month.”. When asked about the factors that come into play when managers decide who deserves a promotion, some stated that they believe



it is merit-based and a testament of the skills, the time spent in a specific position, and the productivity of the employee. On the other hand, others allege that it is a consequence of better negotiation skills, better connections, and in some cases, nepotism and favoritism. Some interviewees reported having rejected promotions in the past because they were not fairly compensated for all the added pressures and responsibilities that would come with the promotion.

Only a minority of participants reported receiving learning and development opportunities from their employers in the shape of employer-reimbursed certificates, online courses, and in-house training. Even employees who formerly had those perks started to lose as the economic situation started impacting local businesses; *"in the first two years, they covered all the expenses from exam registration to fees of courses; now, because of the situation, they only cover the exam registration fees"* (LBN13). Feedback is also a big part of learning and development; there was a consensus among all participants that constructive feedback is valuable, critical, and formative in helping them evolve and advance in their careers. Most participants reported receiving regular feedback from their supervisors with some organizations having official and structured appraisal systems with monetary rewards. However, a few participants stated that they often have to ask for it and that they generally only get negative remarks when they do something wrong rather than praise and encouragement when they do something well; *"I get a lot of negative feedback from the management, and there is this team leader who only comments on things that went wrong. If they hear a positive comment from clients, they brush it off as 'yes, it is your job. It's nothing to be applauded for or praised for. It's your job'."* The lack of positive reinforcement was cited as a source of demotivation for many participants, like LBN20 who tells: *"they crushed my confidence and at that point, I was not able to work properly. I was demotivated and didn't want to work properly because I was like 'what's the point?' All I am getting is negative feedback!"*

Economic Stakeholders Discussions

Recruitment

In all 5 FGDs, there was a consensus among participants that one of the main reasons for low levels of recruitment of women in the formal sector was the lack of family-friendly policies. A big issue that was raised is the lack of affordable childcare services that keep mothers from being recruited or from deciding not to apply for jobs. Participant LBNF04 from FGD2 explains that it is



necessary to find a solution for childcare services in Lebanon as part of the holistic plan to economically empower women because as it stands, *"there are so many problems for her to get to the workforce that it becomes violent to push her into the workforce when you don't have free kindergarten and when you have very low wages"* (LBNF04 from FGD2). Some participants talked about how maternal leaves are perceived by employers as a burden and how hiring women is perceived as more expensive than hiring men. As said by LBNM06 in FGD2, *"I think that the employer prefers a man to woman for many reasons. Normally, women have a commitment to the family, maternity leave, etc. because it's more expensive, they prefer to take the man."* In FGD1, economic stakeholder LBNF04 expressed her frustration with such attitudes from employers, stating: *"When they give you a two month leave to stay with your child when you give birth, they act like you owe them something even though it is your right."* This is indeed a woman's right as the Lebanese law prohibits dismissal during maternity leave and guarantees all formally employed women a 10-week paid leave at two-thirds their salary. Another reason for low recruitment levels is the unfair selection due to gender bias and social norms that men are better in certain jobs, and women won't be up to their expectations. This was elaborated by participant LBNF07 in FGD2: *"the main reason they think that they're not recruited to work in formal sectors is because of the stereotypes that women are not capable, or they're not up to the males' expectations"*.

When talking about initiatives that improve women's recruitment on the national and organizational level, participants agreed on the importance of implementing family-friendly policies as the first step towards economically empowering women. Suggestions ranged from extending parental leaves, creating on-site childcare facilities or breastfeeding rooms, early leave, to the possibility of working from home. One participant (LBNF03 in FGD2) spoke about an initiative conducted by her organization that aims towards extending parental leaves beyond what is legally required. Several participants also emphasized the importance of empowering women entrepreneurs as well as training women on establishing a work-life balance. LBNF04 in FGD5 talked about one of her NGO goals: *"I have an NGO that empowers women to know their worth through setting up their businesses, mentoring them and all that."* Even though the majority of economic stakeholders agreed that hiring should be based on merit, skills, experience, potential, and attitude, it is still important to be mindful of discriminatory practices that can take place at the level of recruitment, retention, and promotion. A few economic stakeholders spoke about their companies'



goals to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal Nb. 5 on gender equality, how they monitor the demographic characteristics of their staff to ensure that they have a fair R&S process and a fair promotion system. Most economic stakeholders talked about giving the same opportunity for men and women to prove themselves, and a few emphasized the importance of equal participation in learning opportunities and training sessions.

Retention

When asked about low retention rates among women employees, most participants attributed it to work and family life imbalance. According to the majority of participants, women often face a dilemma and feel pressured to choose between their career and their family. They are mostly resigning from their jobs when they become too demanding. LBNM02 in FGD3 talked about an initiative done by their organization to accommodate the schedules of working mothers; *"the institution was able to create for [working mothers] a certain modified contract, which is less demanding in terms of time in terms of schedule."* They adopted this strategy to keep the innovative and creative women they had. One participant talked about the importance of investing in employees, which would cost the employer less than hiring a new one. At the same time, it empowers employees and gives them a sense of dedication since they feel safe and appreciated in their work environment. LBNF05 talked about this idea in FGD5, where she explains that *"it's important to feel a family atmosphere and a feeling of belonging to this second family that he has on a professional basis. It's very important for retention."* Another interesting suggestion by LBNF01 in FGD4 on improving the level of retention of women in the workplace is educating the younger generation, boys and girls, to think of gender equality. The idea is to teach young girls to have a free choice when deciding their career path even in male-dominated fields. Two participants talked about their learning academies, in which they teach children computer science, coding, and game development, actively try to get young girls to join and simultaneously to teach them skills that would empower them economically in the future and to change the perception that these fields are exclusively for men.

Furthermore, an important aspect of retention is safe work environments. When participants were asked about how employers can create safe spaces for their employees, most participants talked about the necessity of developing and effectively implementing anti-harassment policies. With



a formal reporting system in place, employees would know exactly what to do and whom to turn to when they are subjected to workplace harassment or abuse. LBNF01 in FGD2 discussed the importance of having HR policies that tackle this issue: “*HR policies should start by specifying what it is and what to do in case one of the employees faced sexual harassment, whom to report to, and the consequences that the perpetrator would face in case they call it harassment.*” This is particularly important in the absence of a law that prohibits or specifically targets sexual harassment in the workplace. Other participants spoke about establishing a complaints office and a specific email address that victims of abuse or harassment can report to anonymously. Other suggestions included installing security cameras and providing transportation for late shift employees to ensure their safety inside and outside of the workplace. Some employers like LBNM02 in FGD4 even talked about adopting office layouts like open-plan offices and glass-divider walls to ensure transparency of work operations in the literal and metaphorical sense.

Promotion

When asked about the reason why women are less represented in higher-level jobs, there was a consensus among the participants that it is mostly related to socio-cultural norms and gender stereotypes. Participants explained that people are more prone to accepting negative comments from men more than women and perceive the male leader as assertive and the woman leader as a threat. LBNF07 in FGD2 states: “*everyone knows that a strong female is considered a threat...they would rather keep them in lower positions and sort of enforcing that stereotype and the gap between males and females in the workplace.*” Also, in traditional business settings in Lebanon, women continue to not be perceived as leaders; some employers are concerned that they would not take her seriously or judge her too harshly. However, different participants urged for a more nuanced take, explaining how it depended on the field and the domain. As one economic stakeholder from the banking sector explains: “*At my organization, **we do not have any issue with women being in high positions.** In the banking sector, that issue is not common. We have 4 high-management positions, three of them are men and one is a woman. Last year, it was 2 by 2. In my specific case, it's a supply issue more than a demand issue*” (LBNM02 in FGD4). Besides, as previously discussed by the employees, more often than not, higher positions required longer working hours and more tasks, which made these promotions unappealing to many women candidates. Finally, another



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hindrance to promotion is the large number of small-sized family businesses in which opportunities to be promoted are limited and sometimes unavailable; as per LBNF05 in FGD2, *“The problem is that [Lebanese women] are facing a very small economy where you have 90% of enterprises hiring less than five people. So, your economy doesn't grow.”*

When asked about effective steps to improve the promotion of women, most participants emphasized the empowerment of agency and the enactment of careers. They talked about setting a quota for women's representation on boards and in the public sector. One participant suggested adding a governmental incentive for companies who meet certain quotas to encourage more companies to do so. Unfortunately, with an indebted and nearly bankrupt government, such initiative appears to be, at least for the time being, far-fetched; *“You need a government with resources. In our poor nation, don't even think about it. Let us be realistic guys!”* (LBNM02 from FGD3.) Other participants discussed promoting women into higher-level positions and electing women in governmental positions, as it would not only empower women but also place them in decision-making positions where they can advocate, develop and implement policy changes that would benefit all women. LBNM06 in FGD1 justifies this by explaining that *“it is more likely that women would draft these laws and would introduce into parliament, these more inclusive laws that include [women's] perspectives... This can translate into the main economy. Helping women in politics can translate into helping women in organizations.”* Another suggested legal amendment is adding more provisions and protections for part-time employees in the labor law. Lastly, a few participants suggested creating national campaigns that target men and that aim to create an attitude and behavioral change vis-a-vis the presence of women in the workplace and other key issues such as breastfeeding, sexual harassment, and maternity leaves.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Email Script for KIP Survey Employers

This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study for Dr. Charlotte Karam at AUB. *It is not an official message from AUB*

Kindly note that this email/message is on behalf of Dr. Charlotte Karam, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior and Director of the KIP Project at the American University of Beirut.

Thank you for your kind attention.

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study that will involve data collection across 11 countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, and Iraq. The study aims to develop a comprehensive data-driven index that provides economic stakeholders with knowledge and recommendations on improving women's recruitment, retention, and promotion in the formal economies in the Arab MENA. This study will shed light on the dynamics that contribute to the status of women in the MENA economies and will thus create and sustain a regional dialogue on promoting policy change towards the effective recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the workforce. You have been invited to participate in this survey since you are an employer operating in the formal economy in one of the 11-targeted countries.

Participation in this study will last around 45 minutes and is in the form of an online survey.

If interested in participating, kindly contact me back so that I can provide you with the survey link that you can then complete at your own time...

Please note that this study is purely for research purposes, and approval has been secured by the institutional review board at AUB.

If you have any questions before proceeding, feel free to contact me, the principal investigator, by email: Ck16@aub.edu.lb or by phone: 01-374374 ext. 3764.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can also contact the Institutional Review Board at the American University of Beirut:

PO BOX: 11-0236 F15 Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020 Lebanon

Tel: 00961 1 374374, ext.: 5445. Email: irb@aub.edu.lb

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Charlotte Karam
Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior
Olayan School of Business
American University of Beirut.



Appendix 2 – Number of organizations who completed the KIP index survey, sorted by sector

Sector	Expected # of Surveys	Filled Surveys
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	18	8
Manufacturing	14	11
Utilities	1	1
Construction	17	18
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	28	28
Transport, Storage, and Information & Communication	10	7
Accommodation, and Food Services Activities	5	5
Financial and Insurance Activities	3	3
Real estate	6	0
Public Administration and Defense	20	2
Education	14	14
Human Health and Social Work Activities	6	5
Other Services	8	8
Total	150	110

Appendix 3- Demographic Characteristics of Lebanese Female Interviewees

Participant CODE	Consent to be part of the study	Consent to be audio-recorded	Consent to be quoted	Age	Marital Status	Age at Marriage	# of children	Husband Education	Husband Occupation	Highest Degree earned	Country where highest degree was earned	Age Upon Graduation	# of years since first employment	Occupation	Sector	Number of years in current Position
LBN1	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Married	26	1	University	Insurance Broker	PharmD	Lebanon	25	4	Pharmacist	Health	2
LBN2	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	<1	Teacher	Education	<1
LBN3	Yes	Yes	No	36	Married	34	1	BT3 electric	Luthier	MA	Lebanon	24	14	Sales Recruiter	Financial services	1
LBN4	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	<1	Waitress	Food Service	<1
LB5	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	4	Waitress	Food Service	<1
LBN6	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	23	<1	Social Media Content Creator	Retail Trade	<1
LBN7	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	<1	Web Developer	Technology/IT	<1
LBN8	Yes	Yes	Yes	26	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	23	2	Quality Control	Food production	<1
LBN9	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	3	Project Officer	Human Health and social work activities	2.5
LBN10	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	High School	Lebanon	-	3	Teacher	Education	2
LBN11	Yes	Yes	Yes	21	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	2	Teacher	Education	<1
LBN12	Yes	No	No	48	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	High School	Lebanon	22	26	Store Manager	Retail Trade	15
LBN 13	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	23	4	Insurance Officer	Financial services	1
LBN14	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	22	18	Ad Agency Officer	Advertisement and media	1
LBN15	Yes	Yes	Yes	28	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	28	6	Researcher	Arts and Culture	4
LBN16	Yes	Yes	Yes	45	Married	25	2	High School	Construction Worker	BP Nursing	Lebanon	24	22	Nursing	Health	22
LBN17	Yes	Yes	Yes	30	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	25	10	Sales	Health	1
LBN18	Yes	Yes	Yes	36	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MBA	Lebanon	27	14	Management	Social Work	2
LBN19	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	22	7	Architecture	Engineering	1
LBN20	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	2	Marketing	Technology/IT	<1
LBN21	Yes	Yes	Yes	22	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	<1	Media Planning	Advertisement and Media	<1
LB22	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	23	<1	Research Assistant	Higher Education	<1
LB23	Yes	Yes	Yes	22	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	3	Engagement Officer	Social Work	<1
LB24	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	22	3	Software Developer	Technology/IT	<1

Participant ID	Yes	Yes	Yes	Age	Marital Status	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Education	Country	Experience (Years)	Years of Experience	Profession	Industry	Score
LB25	Yes	Yes	Yes	28	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	24	6	Electrical Engineering	Construction	4
LB26	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	22	1	Project Coordinator	Education	1
LB27	Yes	Yes	Yes	35	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	LT2	Lebanon	26	11	Graphic Design	Arts and Culture	11
LB28	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	2	Teaching	Education	2
LB29	Yes	Yes	Yes	37	Married	23	3	BS	Sales Manager	MPH	Lebanon	35	15	Dietitian	Health	7
LB30	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Married	24	1	BS	Lebanese Red Cross	MA	Lebanon	25	16	Toxicologist	Health and Education	5
LB31	Yes	Yes	Yes	36	Married	26	3	BA	Media and Sales	MA	England	2006	13	Media Planning	Media Advertising	2
LB32	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	England	22	3	Management Consulting	Consultancy Services	2
LB33	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	England	23	2	Development Consulting	Consultancy Services	2
LB34	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	22	<1	Media Planning	Advertisement and Media	<1
LB35	Yes	Yes	Yes	25	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	4	Communications	Social Work	<1
LB36	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	England	25	2	Media Production	Journalism and Media	2
LB37	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Teaching Diploma	Lebanon	21	3	Digital Solution/E-learning	Education	3
LB38	Yes	Yes	Yes	20	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	High School Diploma	Lebanon	21	2	English and Drama Teacher	Education	1
LB39	Yes	Yes	Yes	26	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	6	Management	Media and Technology	1
LB40	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	3	Advertising	Advertising	2
LB41	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	single	Not Applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	21	3	Education	Education	3
LB42	Yes	Yes	Yes	30	Married	30	Not applicable	BA	Procurement Engineer	MBA	Lebanon	25	12	Management	Education	4
LB43	Yes	Yes	Yes	38	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BS	Lebanon	23	15	Communication and Social Media	Banking and Finance	7.5
LB44	Yes	Yes	Yes	23	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Barcelona	23	<1	Graphic Design	Arts and Advertising	<1
LB45	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	24	6	Management & Teaching	Health & Education	1
LB46	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	MA	Lebanon	25	3	Research	Health	1
LB47	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BS	Lebanon	22	5	Software Engineer	Technology/IT	5
LB48	Yes	Yes	Yes	27	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	6.5	Content Producer	Advertisement & Media	<1
LB49	Yes	Yes	Yes	43	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	20	12	Banking	Banking and Finance	10
LB50	Yes	Yes	Yes	29	Single	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	BA	Lebanon	22	7	Architecture	Construction	5

Appendix 4- Focus Group Discussion Attendees

FDG #	Time and Date	Participants' Codes	Sectors Represented
FDG 1	May 8, 6 PM	LBNF01	Public administration and defense sector represented by LBNF01 by a researcher/consultant from a Lebanese Ministry
		LBNF02	Human Health and Social Work Sector represented by LBNF02 as private sector engagement officer in humanitarian organization
		LBNF03	Education Sector represented by LBNF03 as educator and education consultant
		LBNF04	Financial and Insurance Sector represented by LBNF04 as recruiter for insurance companies
		LBNF05	Development sector represented by LBNF05 as head of department at research institute
		LBNM06	Legal Sector by LBNM06 as non-governmental organization staff
		LBNM07	Marketing and Advertisement by LBNM07 as Graphic Designer
FGD 2	May 15, 5 PM	LBNF01	Development sector represented by LBNF01 as human resources professional at an international non-governmental organization
		LBNF02	Food and Drink Production sector represented by LBNF02 as CEO of a wine production company
		LBNF03	Education sector represented by LBNF03 as economic expert and researcher at an academic institution
		LBNF04	Legal Sector represented by LBNF04 as lawyer and parliamentary advisor
		LBNF05	Development sector represented by LBNF05 as labor researcher at a research institute
		LBNM06	Education Sector by LBNM06 as associate professor and dean of a business department at a private Lebanese university
		LBNF07	Human Health Sector represented by LBNF07 as Human Resources professional at a health institution
FGD3	May 16, 11 AM	LBNM01	Wholesale distribution sector represented by LBNM01 as human resources professional at a large Lebanese company
		LBNM02	Education sector represented by LBNM02 as dean of business and management faculty at a private Lebanese university

 MEPI		LBNF03	Education sector represented by LBNF03 as HR manager and anti-discrimination professional at a Lebanese private university
		LBNF04	Banking sector represented by LBNF04 as HR manager at a private Lebanese Bank
		LBNF05	Tech sector represented by LBNF05 as CEO of a video game production company
		LBNF06	Tech sector by LBNF06 as CEO of a small tech academy
		LBNF07	Agriculture and Food Production Sector represented by LBNF07 as project coordinator for a marketing cooperative
FGD4	May 23, 11 AM	LBNM01	Education sector represented by LBNM01 as associate professor and the chairperson of the Management department at a private Lebanese university
		LBNM02	Financial services sector represented by LBNM02 as founder and CEO of a financial technology (fintech) company
		LBNM03	Retail sales represented by LBNM03 as sales associate at a retail gaming store
		LBNM04	Construction sector represented by LBNM04 as product manager and co-founder of a construction company
FGD5	May 29, 5 PM	LBNM01	Manufacturing sector represented by LBNM01 as human resources professional at a large Lebanese company
		LBNM02	Agriculture and Food Production sector represented by LBNM02 as commercial director for an organic food and sustainable farming company
		LBNF03	Education sector represented by LBNF03 as associate professor and CEO of an educational center that teaches STEM subjects for children
		LBNF04	Advertising and event planning sector represented by LBNF04 as founder and CEO of an event planning and advertisement company
		LBNF05	Professional coaching and training industry represented by LBNF05 as founder and CEO of a professional coaching and training company
		LBNF06	Advertising sector by LBNF06 as junior accountant at an advertising company
		LBNF07	Wholesale and retail sales sector represented by LBNF07 as Human Resources professional at a wholesale and retail sales company