

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE: UNDERSTANDING THE  
IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATORY HR PRACTICES

by  
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Farah Yusuf Musa for Master of Human Resources Management  
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For women, some of the most harmful gender inequalities are enacted within HR practices. The purpose of the study is to provide new insights about gender discrimination in the Middle East and Lebanon in specific. It will shed light on HR discriminatory practices at the workplace and their impact on the female workforce, the organization as a whole, and the economy. This will contribute to the existing literature of gender inequality in the middle east and raise awareness partly for HR professionals to eliminate/avoid such practices and partly for employees to clearly identify which practices fall under discrimination and speak up/challenge such actions. A survey was conducted with 100 females who participated in sharing their perception and experience with relevance to gender discrimination. In addition, 15 HR professionals were interviewed to tackle how gender discrimination can be encouraged or avoided through various HR practices. The results have shown how gender discrimination infiltrates through the organizational system and impacts HR practices, leading to biases in recruitment & selection, and limiting training opportunities. Such practices have shown negative effects on individuals, their families, the organization, and the economy.

*Keywords:* Gender discrimination, Women, Human Resources, Qualitative research, Inequality, Middle East

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*To*  
*My Beloved Family*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Research globally has tackled various issues related to gender inequality, focusing on female gender discrimination in a variety of organizational and national contexts. The literature tackles a range of topics such as pay gaps, barriers to women development, limited training opportunities, and its impact on the female workforce, the organization, and the economy as a whole. Gender inequality in organizations is a complex phenomenon that can be seen in HR practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their enactment) that affects the hiring, training, pay, and promotion of women (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). This project aims to provide new insights about gender discrimination in the Middle East and Lebanon in specific. It sheds light on HR discriminatory practices at the workplace and its impact on the female workforce, the organization, and the economy as a whole.

In general, discrimination occurs when employment decisions such as selection, evaluation, promotion, or reward allocation are based on an individual's immutable characteristics such as age, appearance, sex, or skin color, rather than on productivity or qualifications (Gutek *et al.*, 1996). Workplace discrimination has often been conceptualized as a social stressor, or the perception of having (or observing) negative, personally depleting social interactions (Sonnetag & Frese, 2003). An evolution in the HR responsibilities has been witnessed lately. A transformational journey from the conventional role of 'administrative expert' (Ulrich, 1997 cited in Reilly, 2006, p. 8) to the evolving and fostering function of strategic HR partner critically describes the value contribution of HR function. Nevertheless, this progress

has been slower in the Middle East, with most HR activities such as selection and recruitment, training and development, and reward and compensation systems, being designed and practiced in effective sub-optimal way, leading often to HR's misalignment with business strategy (Naznin, & Hussain, 2016). This often leads to gender inequalities within the workplace. In line with this, Cooke argues how organizations in China are developing, yet HR policies in the Chinese firms are incomplete and informal with relation to equality due to the underdeveloped nature of HR competencies in general (Cooke, & Xiao, 2014). Similarly, Afiouni & Nakhle (2016) highlight the underdevelopment of the HR function in Lebanon. The authors mentioned the fact that there are no professional HR bodies regulating the HR profession to ensure the standardization of practices and the dissemination of best practices. Moreover, certifications are not required for entry into the profession, and HR jobs are often occupied by employees who have never had any sort of formal HR education.

Gender discrimination is defined as all decisions that are made within an organization that are based on gender instead of individual's productivity or qualifications (Guttek *et al.*, 1996). Results have shown that gender discrimination adversely affects employees (men and women alike) across the world. Thus, reducing gender inequities and preventing gender discrimination from occurring should be on the agenda of country leaders (Triana *et al.*, 2018). Focusing on organizations, Institutional discrimination against women can occur in each type of HR policy from the recruitment and selection of an individual into an organization, through his/her role assignments, training, pay, performance evaluations, promotion, and termination (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). As the primary stage of HR, employee recruitment is an important step because it affects organization HR distribution and development to a certain degree. Hence,

employment gender discrimination will have great impact on female HRD (Yan, Yan & Zhang, 2009). Things then drag to discrimination at the workplace reflected in wage differences, promotions, recruitment, and sexual harassment that is extensively practiced worldwide. Stereotypes of women as less invested workers, views of women as sexual objects, and notions of women's traits as incompatible with specific jobs connect with gender discrimination in a variety of organizational contexts (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Female employees around the world have been facing issues at the workplace with colleagues, managers, and recruiters. They encounter various obstacles and experience disadvantages that hinder their access to employment as well as their career advancement (Cooke & Xiao, 2014). Some females might be forced to accept and adapt to discrimination practices as they can't afford losing their jobs. Others might resign and move to other organizations due to such cases or prefer to stay unemployed. Thus, in organizations with a less supportive diversity climate, women are more likely to leave the organization, which contributes to the underrepresentation of women in already male-dominated arenas (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). These are unfortunately affecting the labor market, increasing the rate of educated, unemployed females. Gender gaps in employment appear to have an increasing effect on economic growth differences between regions, and these gaps are particularly wide in Northern Africa and the Arab States, where women are twice as likely to be unemployed as men. This is particularly notable in Northern Africa, Arab States and Southern Asia, where the gender gap in participation rates stands at over 50 percentage points, which is nearly double the global average. Such wide gaps in participation are driven by extremely low rates of female participation, which is lowest in global terms in the Arab States (at 18.9 per cent) which attributes to multiple socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, which

limit women's participation in the labour market (ILO, 2018). Metcalfe (2008) addressed how the role of women in the Middle East region in general is under-represented highlighting on how Arab women have been absent or given limited access to positions in legal affairs, politics, senior management roles, and public administration.

For women, some of the most harmful gender inequalities are enacted with in HR practices. This is because HR practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their enactment) affect the hiring, training, pay, and promotion of women (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). The current project aims to provide new insights about gender discrimination in the Middle East and Lebanon in specific. It will shed light on HR discriminatory practices at the workplace and the impact it has on the female workforce, the organization, and the economy as a whole. This will contribute to the existing literature of gender inequality in the Middle East and raise awareness partly for HR professionals to eliminate/avoid such practices and partly for employees to clearly identify which practices fall under discrimination and speak up/challenge such actions.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Some authors study the consequences of gender discrimination while others focus on the antecedents. Hence, I will combine both perspectives and focus on both reasons and implications of such discrimination. Foley *et al.* (2015) had tested the relation between gender identification and discrimination, which resulted that the strength of gender identification was positively associated with the employees' perceptions of gender discrimination. In addition, they found that women perceived more gender discrimination partly because they make gender comparisons and partly because they perceived systematic bias against women as a group in their organizations. These two factors are likely to provide more information about gender differences at work and trigger women's sensitivity to the unfair treatment and outcomes they receive (Foley *et al.* 2015).

#### **HR Discriminatory Practices**

##### **Pay Gap**

Earlier studies of gender discrimination have demonstrated unequivocally the existence and persistence of gender-based wage differences in the labor market (e.g., Rosenfeld & Kalleberg, 1990; Blau & Kahn, 1992). Some societies exclude women from work. Across the world, 49 percent of women over the age of 15 are employed, compared with 75 percent of men. Gender imbalances persist in positions of power where in less than a fifth of firms is a woman the top manager (The World Bank, 2019). Are men paid more than women because they are better educated, or because they have

other observable characteristics or attributes that are associated with higher labour productivity? The ILO report finds that, on average, education and other labour market attributes explain relatively little of the gender pay gap at different points of the wage distribution. The unexplained part of the gender pay gap generally dominates almost all countries, irrespective of income group (ILO, 2018-2019). The most recent estimates by the World Economic Forum indicate that the global economic gender gap will take 217 years to close, and that this gap widened in 2017 (Lancet, 2018). The pooled wage structure identifies a) the employer's average discrimination coefficient across differing types of workers defined by non-gender personal characteristics, and b) the employer's average nepotism (favoring male workers) and discrimination (dis-favoring female workers) components of the wage differential across different worker types (Oaxaca & Ransom, 1994). The World Economic Forum shared how gender-based differences in occupational wage gaps persisted throughout increases in women's educational participation and labour market exposure. Put another way, studies have found that when women enter a profession in large numbers, the pay-related benefits of participating in the profession depreciate.

Accordingly, in such situations, fair returns to skills and the availability of deeper talent pools are undermined by existing cultural biases (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). In 1986, Cain reviewed literature on salary gender discrimination and found that most studies divide the salary differences between male and female into two parts: one is legal one, which reflects employee's productivity differences; the other is illegal one, which is based on gender discrimination (Yan, Yan & Zhang, 2009). Noting that women are concentrated at the lower end of the hierarchy and salary grades. (Standing, 2000). Even in the light of a large and growing body of evidence for the gender pay gap, a lack of awareness of the gap still exists. This lack of awareness may



have roots in system-justification beliefs. Such beliefs can be reinforced by a human capital approach, which may appear to rationalize the gender pay gap by attributing it mainly to the choices individuals make, while downplaying the role of discrimination (Lips, 2013).

### **Recruitment & Selection**

The manifestation of gender discrimination is that female applicants are more likely to be denied because of their physiological and social gender characteristics, even though these female applicants are qualified for the job. The latter one is that new female employees are more likely to obtain positions ranking lower than their capabilities (Yan, Yan & Zhang, 2009). Employers seem to possess strong racial and gender preferences in hiring. These preferences are the consequence of enduring stereotypical beliefs, which leads them to set up a racial/ethnic gender ranking of potential hires (Darity Jr & Mason, 2004). Occupational gender segregation has always been a focus in gender discrimination studies, which mainly concerns why females are excluded from some positions representing high prestige, technology requirement and salary (Wang, 2004). Men were requested for positions that included restaurant cooks, managers, assistant managers, auto salesmen, sales in general, accountants and junior accountants, design engineers, detailers, die makers, drivers, and welders. Women were requested for positions that included household and domestic workers, stenographers, secretaries, typists, bookkeepers, occasionally accountants (for "girls good at figures"), and waitresses (Darity Jr & Mason, 2004).

The Arab region doesn't seem to differ in this context; important factors limiting women's progression are the recruitment and HR practices of private sector organizations. There is reluctance by private sector institutions to employ women partly due to social norms and partly due to additional costs that may be incurred for maternity

provisions (Al-Lamki, 2000).

### **Training & Development**

HR-related decisions are critically important because they determine women's pay and opportunities at work (e.g., promotions, training opportunities) (Stamarski, & Hing, 2015). The lack of concern for equal opportunity organization development, limited provisions for women's professional training, combined with patriarchal and religious gender codes provide difficult terrain for both women themselves and HR strategists to navigate (Metcalf, 2007). Yan, Yan & Zhang (2009) had tested the manifestation of gender discrimination in HR, and results showed that female employees with equal position and qualifications as their male peers receive less training opportunities. Such gender stereotyping of the managerial position fosters bias against women in managerial promotion and training decisions (Schein, 2007). In the study published by Metcalfe (2007), women reported that training opportunities in organizations were given to men before women and applications for professional academic qualifications were limited for women. Similarly, Tlaiss & Dirani (2015) mentioned that senior management in Lebanese organizations was more interested in advancing the career development of male managers through providing feedback on performance and periodic meetings. However, when the women managers sought mentoring opportunities or the advice of senior management on how to progress their careers, they were denied similar opportunities.

### **Glass Ceiling**

The concept of glass ceiling, as an important indicator of gender discrimination, was coined in 1986 as a result of a three-year study, which reached a conclusion that glass ceiling is a serious obstacle for the progress of female and that some behaviors are unacceptable to female, while acceptable for male (Inman, 1998).

Hence, the under-representation of women in senior managerial roles – women occupy less than 5% of senior management positions in Lebanon, (Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine 2005) – and their clustering at the lower levels of management is not surprising (Tlaiss & Dirani, 2015). Inman (1998) argued that glass ceiling is an invisible obstacle of preventing female in middle management level from being promoted to top management level. Wright & Baxter (2000) proposed that glass ceiling mainly exists in top management level, that is, glass ceiling means that the female face more disadvantages when they are promoted from lower managerial levels to top ones rather than among low managerial levels (Yan, Yan & Zhang, 2009).

Taking the HR department as an example, women are overrepresented in HR generally and in the managerial ranks of HR, yet tend to face a glass ceiling when it comes to reaching top management, despite their being as equally qualified as men (Pichler, Simpson & Stroh, 2008). Finally, harassment toward women when HR policies are enacted can also take the form of offensive comments and denying women promotions due to pregnancy or the chance of pregnancy (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Challenging this, women are determined to break the glass ceiling and oppose both gender discriminatory practices and the idea that women should be perceived as more suited to specific roles and occupations (Murray & Syed, 2010).

### **Consequences of Gender Discrimination**

#### **Women**

The female employees on receiving an unequal treatment from the organization develop a built of frustration and stress which in turn dampens their work dispositions. This reduces their levels of satisfaction and motivation and eventually cast a shadow on their marginal productivity making them sources of inferior human capital (Memon &

Jena, 2017). In addition, results indicated that gender discrimination was negatively associated with job satisfaction and affective commitment and positively associated with turnover intentions and life stress (Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau & Oguz, 2000).

Channar, Abbassi & Ujan (2011) analyzed the correlation between gender discrimination and its effect on employees. Significant conclusions stated that gender discrimination resulted in low job satisfaction and motivation, women showed less commitment and enthusiasm towards their job, and higher levels of stress. Since all women were viewed as potential mothers, their career commitment tended to be suspect. Women were sometimes overlooked for promotion or challenging assignments because they might decide to have children. When women did have children, co-workers and managers perceived the mothers as having reduced commitment to their jobs—even though these women did not substantially reduce their work hours. Women who tried to use existing family-work policies, such as flexible work time, were penalized by low bonuses and apparently resented by co-workers (Lips, 2013). Woodzicka & LaFrance (2005) found that women showed worse performance during a job interview when the interviewer engaged in subtle incidents of harassment compared to women who did not have a harassing interviewer. Rospenda *et al.* (2009) found that experiences of workplace harassment and discrimination predicted problem drinking and mental health detriments and Lapierre *et al.* (2005) reported that non-sexual workplace aggression related to lower job satisfaction; these relationships were particularly pronounced for women (Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016).

### **Organization**

Implications of gender discrimination on an individual level has to subsequently spill over to the organization level. The organization has to bear the outcomes of low performance and commitment levels, high stress, and high turnover

rates. We will tackle this negative impact on women and organizations and how are human resource professionals dealing with it. How are they managing the costs incurred from turnover especially that some companies are restricted by the government or ISO with diversity percentages (sex, disability, religions, etc.) Within the Lebanese context, there are no clear laws that restrict organizations from gender inequality practices. Despite many advantages and acquired rights, Lebanese women continue to face discrimination at numerous levels, keeping gender equality in Lebanon an elusive objective (Avis, 2017). Finding of lower job-specific well-being is disturbing not only in terms of personal costs, but also because it may represent organizational costs, as job satisfaction is related to role withdrawal and other organizationally dysfunctional behaviors (Brief, 1998). Impaired emotional and physical well-being also likely have organizational costs (as well as being personally damaging to the targets), in that they may lead to absenteeism and other withdrawal behaviors (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief & Bradley, 2003). This is a preliminary attempt to address the issue and provide some guidance in how to make human resources policy and planning more gender aware (Standing, 2000).

### **Economy**

The determinants of women's participation in the labor force – an indicator of gender equality as well as an important ingredient for long-run economic growth – and demonstrates that the economic role of women hinges critically on variations in discriminatory social institutions (Drechsler, Dayton-Johnson, Jütting & Morrisson, 2006). Gender equality is a development goal in its own right and – as research has shown – has instrumental value for the long-term growth prospects of countries. Such inequality is found to have an effect on economic growth that is robust to changes in specifications and controls for potential endogeneities (Klasen, 2002). The success with

which developing countries integrate more skilled female workers into the labor force determines in part their level of competitiveness in the global economy (Drechsler, Dayton-Johnson, Jütting & Morrisson, 2006). Conversely, limiting women's access to labour markets is costly, as poor female labour force participation hampers economic growth. As a region, East Asia and the Pacific reportedly loses between US\$42 billion and US\$47 billion annually due to women's limited access to employment opportunities. If female participation rates had been at predicted levels, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates might have been 0.7 percent higher per year during the 1990s. This lost potential is significant when compared with an average per capita income growth of 1.9 percent for the decade (Staff, World Bank, Policy, Group, & World Bank. 2004). Research by the World Bank demonstrates that similar restrictions have also imposed sizable costs throughout the Middle East and North Africa, since at the current rate of progress, the overall global gender gap can be closed in 157 years in the Middle East and North Africa compared to 61 years in Western Europe and 62 years in South Asia (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). Accordingly, the above literature addresses the negative correlation gender discrimination has on the economic level.

### **Gender Discrimination in the Middle East**

The above global context of inequality at the workplace and its impact on the female workforce is similar to what is happening in the Middle East region as well. Gender equality issues in MENA are usually approached from a social, anthropological, or political angle. But the costs of inequality are also borne at the economic level (Staff, World Bank, Policy, Group, & World Bank. 2004). Despite the improvement we are witnessing in terms of gender equality in the region, we are still standing behind the rest

of the world. As per the Global Gender Gap Report, the Middle East and North Africa region continues its progress from last year—closing more than 60% of its overall gender gap for the second year running. However, the region continues to rank last globally on the overall Index, behind South Asia (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). In the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, negative discrimination concerning women is institutionalized in laws and societal practices that prohibit women from fully participating in public life or fully competing in the labor market (Frederick & Bertsch, 2013).

Exploring the relationship between women, management, and globalization in the Middle East, it was found that women face social and organizational barriers in the labor market and through gendered organization and cultural practices. In addition, women have mobility restrictions placed on them which limit training and career choice options (Metcalf, 2008). Despite the increasing participation of women in the workforce in Middle Eastern countries, women are failing to achieve the same levels of success as men. In addition, women who aspire to managerial positions are also constrained by family and work-related issues. Not only is the status of women in management in the Middle Eastern Arab world at an extreme disadvantage, it has also been neglected in terms of research (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

Al-Lamky (2007) suggests that in the Arabian Gulf societies it is widely believed that women's place is primarily at home, and if professionally inclined their participation is expected to be in the areas of education, health (mainly nurses) and other support or clerical jobs, largely at the lower end of organizational hierarchies, while leadership positions are typically reserved for men (Frederick & Bertsch, 2013). Consistent with their Arab counterparts, the status of Lebanese women managers is analogous and women managers confront similar difficulties to those faced by Arab

women managers in their career progression. Tlaiss & Kauser (2011) shared their findings that clearly point to the fact that women are underrepresented in management at all levels in the Middle East, irrespective of the fact that women may be proportionately better qualified than their male counterparts. Moving on to the Lebanese context, they highlighted how the career advancement of Lebanese women managers has not kept pace with the increase in the number of working women; the fact that women face greater barriers than men within the workplace is more to do with cultural and social traditions rather than the capabilities and skills of women.

In the next sections, and through our empirical work relying on a mixed methods approach, we provide new insights about gender discrimination in Lebanon by investigating the discriminatory HR practices and the impact those have on the female workforce, the organization, and the economy as a whole. This will contribute to the existing literature of gender inequality in the Middle East and raise awareness partly for HR professionals to eliminate/avoid such practices and partly for employees to clearly identify which practices fall under discrimination and speak up/challenge such actions.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the impact of HR discriminatory practices in the Middle East, we focused on collecting data using a mixed method approach. It composed of one quantitative survey component, one qualitative via interview, and secondary data collection from recruiting websites/newspapers. This approach allowed me to merge results together to form a conclusion based on triangulated data. Real life examples such as Al Waseet, Lebanon opportunities or Hire Lebanese were included to demonstrate how discrimination is publicly practiced in job advertisements as well.

#### **Participants**

Fifteen HR professionals from Lebanon and other ME countries were interviewed including both females and males. I used LinkedIn to connect to HR professionals, in addition to referrals and HR colleagues. A recruitment e-mail was sent to each of 25 HR professionals on LinkedIn, of which I received a response rate of 8%. Therefore, referrals were the main source of my sample. The final sample comprised 15 participants, with 10 female HR professionals of which 8 work in Lebanon, 1 in Kuwait, 1 in Dubai, and with 5 Male HR professionals, of which 3 work in Lebanon and 2 in Kuwait. Participants work in 10 different industries varying from retail, to engineering, consulting, education, etc... Table 1 summarize the sample characteristics. In addition, 100 working females were surveyed making sure participants were of different age groups, positions, educational background, and in different areas across Lebanon. The survey link was posted on LinkedIn, Facebook, and sent to family and friends. Table 2

summarizes the sample demographics.

*Table 1*

*Demographic Characteristics of Interviewed HR Managers*

| <b>Pseudonym (Alphabetically)</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Industry</b> | <b>Country</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Amira                             | Female        | Healthcare      | Dubai          |
| Farah                             | Female        | Consulting      | Lebanon        |
| Hani                              | Male          | Retail          | Kuwait         |
| Karam                             | Male          | Education       | Lebanon        |
| Lama                              | Female        | Sales           | Lebanon        |
| Mariam                            | Female        | Service         | Kuwait         |
| Mohamad                           | Male          | Engineering     | Lebanon        |
| Rabah                             | Male          | Service         | Kuwait         |
| Randa                             | Female        | Service         | Lebanon        |
| Rima                              | Female        | NGO             | Lebanon        |
| Rouba                             | Female        | Finance         | Lebanon        |
| Sami                              | Male          | Retail          | Lebanon        |
| Sarah                             | Female        | Service         | Lebanon        |
| Serene                            | Female        | Marketing       | Lebanon        |
| Yasmine                           | Female        | Engineering     | Lebanon        |

*Table 2*

*Demographic Characteristics of Surveyed Women*

|                   |            |     |                       |                 |     |                            |        |     |
|-------------------|------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|-----|----------------------------|--------|-----|
| <i>Age Groups</i> | 18 – 24    | 11% | <i>Position Level</i> | Entry Level     | 10% | <i>Years of experience</i> | 0 – 2  | 13% |
|                   | 25 – 34    | 67% |                       | Mid-Level       | 43% |                            | 3 – 6  | 47% |
|                   | 35 – 44    | 16% |                       | Senior Level    | 38% |                            | 7 – 10 | 21% |
|                   | 45 & above | 6%  |                       | Executive Level | 6%  |                            | >10    | 19% |

|                               |                             |     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| <i>Educational Background</i> | No degree                   | 2%  |
|                               | High School degree          | 4%  |
|                               | Technical/Vocational Degree | 2%  |
|                               | Bachelor’s Degree           | 61% |
|                               | Master’s Degree             | 30% |
|                               | Doctoral Degree             | 1%  |

### **Data Collection**

The interview protocol was designed to collect information about gender discriminatory HR practices in the Middle East and how do HR professionals perceive gender discrimination on an individual, organizational, and economic level. It included 11 questions designed to summarize their personal experience, real life cases/examples, and different HR practices with relevance to gender discrimination. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix 1.

Regarding the survey, questions were designed to combine data on demographics, personal experience with relation to gender discrimination (whether they passed through it or witnessed any), and how this experience affected other factors. Demographics included age, educational background, years of experience, position and their position within the hierarchy. Discrimination questions summarized what type of gender discrimination they encountered, how it affected their performance at the job, who was the party practicing the discrimination act, how their relationship with this party got affected, and how they dealt with it as individuals. The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. Surveys and interviews were both conducted in English, yet some interviewees were switching between Arabic and English during the interview, noting that all interviews were transcribed into English. Some challenges were faced throughout the data collection process. Working on the survey, it took some effort to convince females to participate which made it difficult to collect 100 complete surveys within the limited time of data collection. Regarding the interviews, 4 HR managers work abroad which caused difficulty in setting a suitable time for both taking into consideration the poor internet connection and other technical difficulties.

### **Data Analysis**

Three different cycles of analysis were undertaken in this study, analyzing interview results, survey results, and job ads. Regarding the interviews, we adopted content analysis, where themes and categories were identified, going back and forth between the data. Each question from the 11 questions was analyzed across all 15 interviews and results were combined into a thematic table. Similarities and differences in responses helped in the merging of answers into categories. This process allowed for a clear understanding of the data and ensured a final set of themes that was data-driven and aligned with the survey results. The survey was designed using Lime Survey, and results were retrieved in organized tables and graphs that helped in analyzing the data through descriptive statistics and data correlation. Results were filtered to be able to combine several aspects under one headline. Regarding job ads, a thorough online search on recruitment websites was made and each vacancy was analyzed separately based on the position, gender requirements, and preferences.

As per Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007), using multiple qualitative data analyses allows the researcher to utilize the strengths of each qualitative data analysis tool involved in order to understand better the phenomenon. The ability to “get more out of the data” by using multiple analytical tools, provides the opportunity to generate more meaning, thereby enhancing the quality of inferences. Accordingly, collecting data via documents (job ads), surveys (with employees) and interviews (with HR managers) allowed for a triangulation of methods and sources, leading thus to more robust and trustworthy findings. Using more than one source for data collection and analysis increased reliability and thus provided a clearer picture of the situation. Hence, the development of more integrated assessment strategies can create a system of checks and balances to ensure the validity of results (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

In this section, we will first present the results of the interviews, followed by the survey results and the job ads.

#### Interviews

Table 3 summarizes the interview results which reflected how HR professionals perceive gender discrimination, how they believe it affects individuals, organizations, and the economy as a whole, with real incidents that have occurred and how did they deal with it on a professional level. Analyzing the answers, we were able to identify five different themes, summarized in Table 3 below. Under each theme, we were able to identify several categories which will be discussed further below.

*Table 3*

*Themes*

| <b>Theme</b>                           | <b>Summary</b>  |
|--|---|
| <i>Internal policy</i>                 | This reflects whether HR managers include gender discrimination and sexual harassment within their internal policy or not.  |
| <i>Gender discrimination</i>           | HR managers shared their perception about gender discrimination in the Middle East, whether it's been practiced at their organizations, and whether female HR managers faced any personal discrimination act. |
| <i>Impact of gender discrimination</i> | Based on experience or beliefs, HR managers shared how gender discrimination impacts women, organizations, and the economy.   |
| <i>Recruitment</i>                     | It highlights the extent to which HR managers are practicing discrimination throughout the recruitment process.   |
| <i>Women development</i>               | This reflects how HR managers are designing and implementing programs to accelerate female leadership development.  |

Table 4

*Thematic Template*

| <b>Theme</b>   | <b># of responses</b> | <b>Pseudonym (alphabetical order)</b>   |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| <b><i>Internal policy</i></b>                                      |                       |   |
| Protects employees from gender discrimination                      | 10                    | Amira, Hani, Karam, Mariam, Mohamad, Rabah, Rima, Rouba, Serene, Yasmine                                  |
| Gender Discrimination not part of the internal policy              | 5                     | Farah, Lama, Randa, Sami, Sarah   |
| <b><i>Gender discrimination</i></b>                                |                       |   |
| Practiced in the Middle East                                       | 15                    | Amira, Farah, Hani, Karam, Lama, Mariam, Mohamad, Rabah, Randa, Rima, Rouba, Sami, Sarah, Serene, Yasmine |
| Practiced at the organization                                      | 6                     | Farah, Hani, Karam, Lama, Sarah, Yasmine  |
| Personal GD experience   | 5                     | Farah, Lama, Mariam, Randa, Sarah   |
| <b><i>Impact of Gender Discrimination</i></b>                      |                       |   |
| <b><i>Women</i></b>  |                       |   |
| Health/Psychological Issues/Anxiety/Depression                     | 7                     | Amira, Farah, Karam, Mohamad, Randa, Rouba, Sarah   |
| Productivity   | 6                     | Amira, Lama, Mohamad, Randa, Rima, Sarah, Hani, Mariam, Randa, Sami, Serene                               |
| Low self-esteem/confidence   | 5                     | Hani, Randa, Rouba, Sami, Sarah   |
| Demotivation   | 5                     | Hani, Lama, Rouba   |
| Conflict between the 2 genders                                     | 3                     |   |
| Barrier for career development                                     | 1                     | Yasmine   |
| Limits females   | 1                     | Sami  |
| Commitment   | 1                     | Hani  |
| <b><i>Organization</i></b>   |                       |   |
| High Turnover/Losing potential talents                             | 4                     | Farah, Mohamad, Sarah, Serene   |
| Profitability  | 4                     | Amira, Mohamad, Sarah, Yasmine  |
| Culture/Company Morale   | 3                     | Mohamad, Rabah, Rima  |
| Legal actions/Reputation   | 2                     | Mohamad, Rima   |
| Informal Lobbying  | 1                     | Karam   |
| <b><i>Economy</i></b>  |                       |   |
| Household Income/Less Investments/Spending                         | 4                     | Amira, Karam, Sarah, Yasmine  |
| Talents travelling abroad  | 2                     | Farah, Rima   |
| Children's Education, Health, wellness                             | 2                     | Amira, Sarah  |
| Not operating at full potential                                    | 1                     | Serene  |
| <b><i>Recruitment</i></b>  |                       |   |
| Equal Opportunity  | 8                     | Farah, Mariam, Rabah, Randa, Rima, Rouba, Sarah, Yasmine  |
| Gender preference  | 7                     | Amira, Hani, Karam, Lama, Mohamad, Sami, Serene   |
| Equal pay and data monitoring                                      | 3                     | Mohamad, Rabah, Rouba   |
| Specify gender in Job ads  | 2                     | Lama, Sami  |
| <b><i>Women Development</i></b>                                    |                       |   |
| No Specific development programs                                   | 14                    | Amira, Farah, Hani, Karam, Lama, Mohamad, Rabah, Randa, Rima, Rouba, Sami, Sarah, Serene, Yasmine         |
| Programs to accelerate women development into leadership positions | 1                     | Mariam  |

Table 4 represents a thematic table that summarizes the main themes and categories identified through the content analysis of the 15 interviews as well as the respondents' pseudonyms to allow the reader a better understanding of the demographic characteristics of the HR Managers, whose answers fall within a specific category.

### **Internal Policy**

The analysis of the question "Does your internal policy protect employees from gender discrimination or sexual harassment?" led to two categories summarized by whether the organization includes any of the mentioned above as part of its internal policy or not.

#### *Protects Employees from Gender Discrimination*

In total, 10 HR professionals stated that gender discrimination and sexual harassment is strictly included in their internal policy. If we take a look at the pseudonyms in the thematic template and sample characteristics, we realize that all of the 4 professionals who work in gulf countries do include harassment in their policies and they highlight the importance of including such a clause.

*During their onboarding, all employees need to read and sign the Employee Handbook and Code of Conduct in which the Discrimination, Bullying & Harassment policy is detailed. Breaching this policy is categorized as zero-tolerance and will lead to the employee's termination post investigation (Amira, Dubai).*

*Yes. Gender discrimination is included in our internal policy. We do encourage employees (whether males or females) to speak up in case they faced any type of discrimination (Hani, Kuwait).*

*We have an internal policy that states clearly all employees will be evaluated against achievements, performance, and competencies; regardless of gender. Any kind of harassment is encouraged to be reported and a clear policy is in policy to state that such acts are strictly prohibited within the organization's premises and that if such behavior occurred, it would lead to termination (Serene, Lebanon).*

#### *Gender Discrimination is not Part of the Internal Policy*

Five HR professionals indicated that neither gender discrimination nor sexual harassment are part of their internal policy which reflects that none of the employees are protected in case of a discrimination incident. Unfortunately, all 5 professionals work in Lebanon in different industries and did not mention their intent to include such a clause within their policy.

*We do not have formal internal HR policy. It is drafted but not yet communicated. It only states that MSE is an equal opportunity employer (Farah, Lebanon)*

*No. actually our internal policy is more-broad focused on dress code, leaves, smoking areas, working for others, but unfortunately doesn't include gender discrimination nor sexual harassment (Lama, Lebanon)*

### **Gender Discrimination**

Analyzing the question “Do you think gender discrimination is practiced in the Middle East? How about the organization you’re working in? Personally, have you ever faced any type of discrimination?” we were able to identify 3 different categories listed below. This question was aiming to verify the existence of gender discrimination through the perception of HR professionals.

#### *Practiced in the Middle East*

All HR professional believe that gender discrimination is practiced in the Middle East through its different forms. They stated that it is clearly reflected into the society, culture, mentality, and daily practices. Below are some of the responses.

*Of course. Gender discrimination is practiced worldwide not just in the Middle East. Maybe in the Middle East it might be more sensed as our culture is more masculine than feminine. So, females tend to face more disrespectful, degrading, and inhumane actions from men or even from females as well (of older generations) (Hani, Kuwait).*

*Having many contacts working at different organizations in Lebanon and the UAE, I can confidently say that gender discrimination is widely practiced in the MENA region, slightly varying from a company to another (Amira, Dubai).*



*Sure, there is still gender discrimination in the Middle East. In our culture, they still think that being in a Management position required a male figure since females have other issues to take care of like family & personal concerns (Rima, Lebanon).*

#### *Practiced at the Organization*

Six of the HR professionals stated that Gender Discrimination is practiced at the organization they are working at. It's surprising to hear such statements from HR professionals who have the power and control to change such situations. Not to mention that the other 9 professionals could either be sugar coating the actual truth, or do not even realize it happening. Below are two quotes from the interviewees, the first two stating that Gender Discrimination is actually occurring and the other states the opposite.

*There was a huge gap clearly seen between the 2 genders at the workplace. I have personal incidents such as sexual harassment and degrading and this was the main reason I am out (Sarah, Lebanon).*

*At the organization I am working in, we do have discrimination but we are practically forced to do so. The driver of the university president should be male, the maintenance guy should be a male, even security guards, as they have to sleep overnight, etc. (Karam, Lebanon).*

*As for my organization, we have equal opportunities for both genders; even recently, I'm seeking to recruit more males to ensure balance, as female number of employees far exceeds the males. 12 to 8 (Serene, Lebanon)*

#### **Personal GD Experience**

I was *curious* to know whether Female HR professionals did actually face any gender discrimination, and how challenging was it to reach senior positions. 50% of the females interviewed reported facing gender discrimination at work.

*I complain sometimes from it since I am not able to participate in big projects in KSA since I am a female and they want men only to be part of the team (Farah, Lebanon).*

*After working as an HR generalist in my previous job for 3 years. I realized that the previous employee who held my position was a male*

*and earned around 1.5 times my salary. I believe I got demotivated the second I knew that and was a major reason I started looking for another job. Being in the HR field, it was not very challenging, as most organizations aim at hiring females for such a position. But I believe if I were in any other domain, for example Chief finance officer, my career ladder would have stopped at finance officer without the Chief (Lama, Lebanon).*

### **Impact of Gender Discrimination**

Analyzing the question of impacts of gender discrimination, HR professionals were asked how they believe such a practice is affecting women, the organization, and the economy as a whole. Accordingly, 3 different categories were formed, where multiple subcategories were identified. Most of the subcategories are quite similar to what authors have stated and were cited in the Literature Review section. These results highlight an important question that remains unanswered. If HR professionals are aware of the existence of gender discrimination at the workplace, and are aware of its impact on the employee, the organization, and the economy, so why isn't there any action being taken or even future plans to change the current situation?

#### *Women*

Seven of the HR professionals mentioned that it highly affects their health, causing anxiety, depression, and psychological issues. Six stated that gender discrimination directly affects the productivity of women at the workplace. Five mentioned confidence and low self-esteem as a direct impact, and 5 mentioned demotivation, that might lead to all the other different subcategories as well. Moreover, 3 professionals stated how gender discrimination could lead to conflict between the 2 genders at the workplace which in return affects the organization as a whole. One mentioned that it limits females at the workplace; another mentioned that it acts as a barrier for her career development, and another mentioned how her commitment to the organization and the job might be affected.

*Employees lose self-confidence and work with fear rather than passion (Mariam, Kuwait).*

*It may cause psychological problems, demotivation, and conflict between employees across the hierarchy which in return affects the organization (Rouba, Lebanon).*

*Can be a barrier for a woman's career development, the organization will not benefit from the full potential of the female employee (Yasmine, Lebanon).*

*On women, it could lead to mental health issues, legal issues, and poverty. It could also expose her to threats and less productivity (Mohamad, Lebanon).*

*I believe such discrimination draws boundaries and puts limits for females in the field. It draws a glass ceiling, and lowers the expectations females have when they decided to enter the workforce (Sami, Lebanon).*

*Being an individual at an organization and feeling you do not fit it, automatically your motive to work or stay at this organization drops. Your commitment to your job, your sense of belonging, your self-confidence, willingness to perform, and your attitude and behavior with others around you are all highly affected (Hani, Kuwait)*

### *Organization*

On the organizational level, answers of HR professional varied between different aspects. Four mentioned that it leads to high turnover as the organization will be losing its potential and existing talents. Another 4 mentioned that it highly affects the organization's profitability. Linking this to the previous category affecting women, any organization operating with demotivated, unproductive, or depressed employees, will definitely lead to reduced profits on the long run. In addition, 3 professionals stated that the culture and company morale will be affected, 2 mentioned the legal actions which in return would affect the company reputation, and 1 stated informal lobbying as a direct effect.

*On the organization level, it leads to less productivity, high employee turnover and damaged morale (Mohamad, Lebanon).*

*In terms of organization, it decreases the chances of attracting high potentials and of being employer of choice (Farah, Lebanon).*

*With that being said, the organization will definitely be affected. If they deal with customers, it might be reflected in their job, if they deal with colleagues, it will show, with their managers, with the job itself and everything (Hani, Kuwait).*

### *Economy*

Analyzing the effects of gender discrimination on the economy level, not all HR professionals did have an answer to this question, as they couldn't draw a link between such practices and the economy as whole. Those who contributed to this question had answers that vary between 5 different subcategories. Four mentioned how gender discrimination affects the household income resulting in fewer investments and spending, as females might feel insecure or even lose their job, causing less spending, taxes, etc. Today, females provide equal financial support for the family as do males; losing one source of income would affect the entire family rather than the individual alone. Two professionals mentioned that the country will be losing the talents, as they would be travelling abroad in search for better opportunities and work in cultures that are free from any sort of discrimination. This is true as females might be encouraged to apply to countries that are adopting feminization programs and empowering women rather than stay in an unsupportive, challenging, and discriminatory environment. Moving forward, 2 HR professionals mentioned the effect on the children in case the employee is married. I believe this could be divided into two different aspects. First, having stress, depression, or other sources of psychological problems might unintentionally be spilled over at home. This might affect the children's well-being, concentration and progress at school, which might lead to failing or dropping out from school, which affects the economy on the long run. On the other hand, linking the financial support aspect, investing heavily in your child's education, health, and extra

activities, might not last long. Families would have to cut on these costs by reducing child expenses which in return affects the economy in general. Finally, 1 HR Professional mentioned that the economy will not be operating at its full potential, as females who are skilled and capable of adding value to the economy are not given the opportunity to do so, leading to inability of benefiting from the available human resources in the country.

*Since women represent 50% (maybe a bit more) of the population, it is important that she has an equal opportunity in her career and pay scale since she will contribute to the economy through living costs, taxes etc. (Yasmine, Lebanon).*

*So, gender discrimination affects not only women, but also the entire society. Women's bargaining power will be also reduced while it has a significant importance on investments, children's education, health and wellness (Amira, Dubai).*

*Again, this in return will affect the economy. Here I am staying at home. If I was married, I would have probably moved my children to a cheaper school, or cancelled my insurance, or decreased my shopping expenses etc. it's just a cycle that does nothing but negatively affecting everyone (Sarah, Lebanon).*

## **Recruitment**

The fourth theme identified is the recruitment process and how is it linked to gender discrimination whether intentionally or not. Analyzing the interviews, it was impressive and interesting to see such results that highly support my research goals. 4 different categories were identified as below

### *Equal Opportunity*

Eight out of the 15 HR professionals stated that applicants have equal opportunity in getting hired, no matter what the position or seniority level is. It is important to highlight the point that responses from HR professionals are not facts, yet opinions. Mentioning that applicants or employees have equal opportunities might or might not be true. Sometimes, it's difficult for HR professionals, especially in senior

positions, to admit practicing such discrimination, and in other cases they might not be aware that what they practice on a daily basis does fall under discrimination.

*Equal opportunity, we are objective in selecting our people without looking for nationality, gender or any type of favoritism (Rabah, Kuwait).*

*No. as I said earlier, we never discriminated, we hire solely on performance and skills (Randa, Lebanon).*

### *Gender Preference*

Seven HR professionals of both genders stated that they do prefer certain genders for certain positions based on physical requirements for the job, seniority of the position, and other factors. What was stated from the professionals is the perception built in the minds of most people and reflects what we actually encounter when applying for jobs. It's worth to mention that 3 out of the 7 HR professionals are females practicing such acts.

*Personally, I always hire for skills when the job requires both genders to perform the job equally. But sometimes, I prefer males for jobs that require physical effort or high physical ability. On the contrary, I also tend to hire females for jobs that require administrative skills as I believe they will last for the job much more than men. Men will always strive for a higher position and will tend to leave as soon as they find something better (Sami, Lebanon)*

*Being in the sales industry, we tend to hire more males as it requires more flexibility and working from outside the office. So, we believe males especially singles are more flexible and tend to take less days off and are willing to drive long distances for some clients. On the other hand, we prefer females for administrative positions such as secretary/filing/call center as males are rarely interested in such positions (Lama, Lebanon)*

*I believe that men and women can equally perform any job that doesn't require a high level of physical effort. However, since we live in a conservative society, some positions are preferable to be hired by a specific gender. For instance, my current company is engaged in the management of medical laboratories in the UAE. The community requires women to perform phlebotomy instead of men. So, while recruiting, we tend to interview female candidates for this specific position to meet the local community's needs (Amira, Dubai)*

*Specify Gender in Job Ads*

When asked about specifying gender in job ads, only 2 of the 7 who prefer a certain gender for the job do actually mention it in their ads. This reflects on the level of knowledge and professionalism that HR professionals possess, reflecting a bad image/reputation for themselves individually, and the organization as a whole.

*Yes, we do. As I mentioned above. When I need a man for the job, I do specify that and for females as well. I don't think it's being discriminatory, yet more of realistic. A female cannot work as a maintenance officer, so why waste my time screening such CV's? (Sami, Lebanon).*

*Equal Pay and Data Monitoring*

Three HR professionals stated that they have equal pay and data monitoring to ensure equal opportunity and rights for both genders.

*Yes, we do have sex-disaggregated data to ensure no discrimination actually takes places throughout our HR practices (Mohamad, Lebanon)*

*Yes, we do have such data to make sure there is a balance between both genders (Rouba, Lebanon)*

**Women Development**

Analyzing the interviews, it was interesting to note that only 1 HR professional actually implements programs to accelerate women development into leadership positions, and she works in Kuwait. On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees do not have any specific programs for women development and some do not have any development programs for any of the genders.

*Yes of course. We created an internal development training program for managers acting as general managers (Mariam, Kuwait)*

*No, all employees are promoted based on their performance, achievement of yearly objectives, and adherence to core values (Farah, Lebanon)*

*We have Training and Development section that is responsible for*

*providing training for all employees* (Rima, Lebanon)

The above analysis reflected the perception of a small sample of HR professionals compared to hundreds of professionals operating in the Middle East. Whether intentionally or not, individuals, organizations, and economies are highly affected by the discrimination practiced within the HR field which can be eliminated by increasing gender knowledge, understanding, and awareness in the region. Taking perceptions of HR professionals was supported by survey results analyzed below.

### **Survey**

Analyzing the survey results, we were able to identify the percentage of females who have experienced gender discrimination at the workplace, and how did such practice affect other factors inside and outside work. The results above were grouped into 2 figures. Figure 1 represents the participants' demographics, including age, years of experience, position level, and educational background. Figure II shows results of discriminatory related questions. Each question is represented with the answer choices, count, and percentage of respondents, along with a pie chart to represent clearly the proportion of each answer compared to the rest. The majority of the participants are between 24 – 35 years old, hold a bachelor's degree, have 3-6 years of experience and hold mid to senior level positions.

The results show that 37% of participants claimed facing gender discrimination at work opposed to 63%. Amongst the 7 different types of gender discrimination practices mentioned, the top 3 faced by the 37% of participants were: 60% unequal pay, 50% sexual harassment, and 32% positional bias, noting that 1 participant could chose more than one answer. These results are highly supported by the literature review, as unequal pay has been witnessed for hundreds of years today and as per (Standing,



2000), women are concentrated at the lower end of the hierarchy and salary grades.

When asked about the party practicing the discrimination, it wasn't surprising that amongst the 7 different options, 50% stated "Male Manager", and 24% stated "Male Colleague", and the same percentage applies to "Owner/CEO". Then comes "Female HR Manager" with 20% response rate.

Figure 1

Demographics

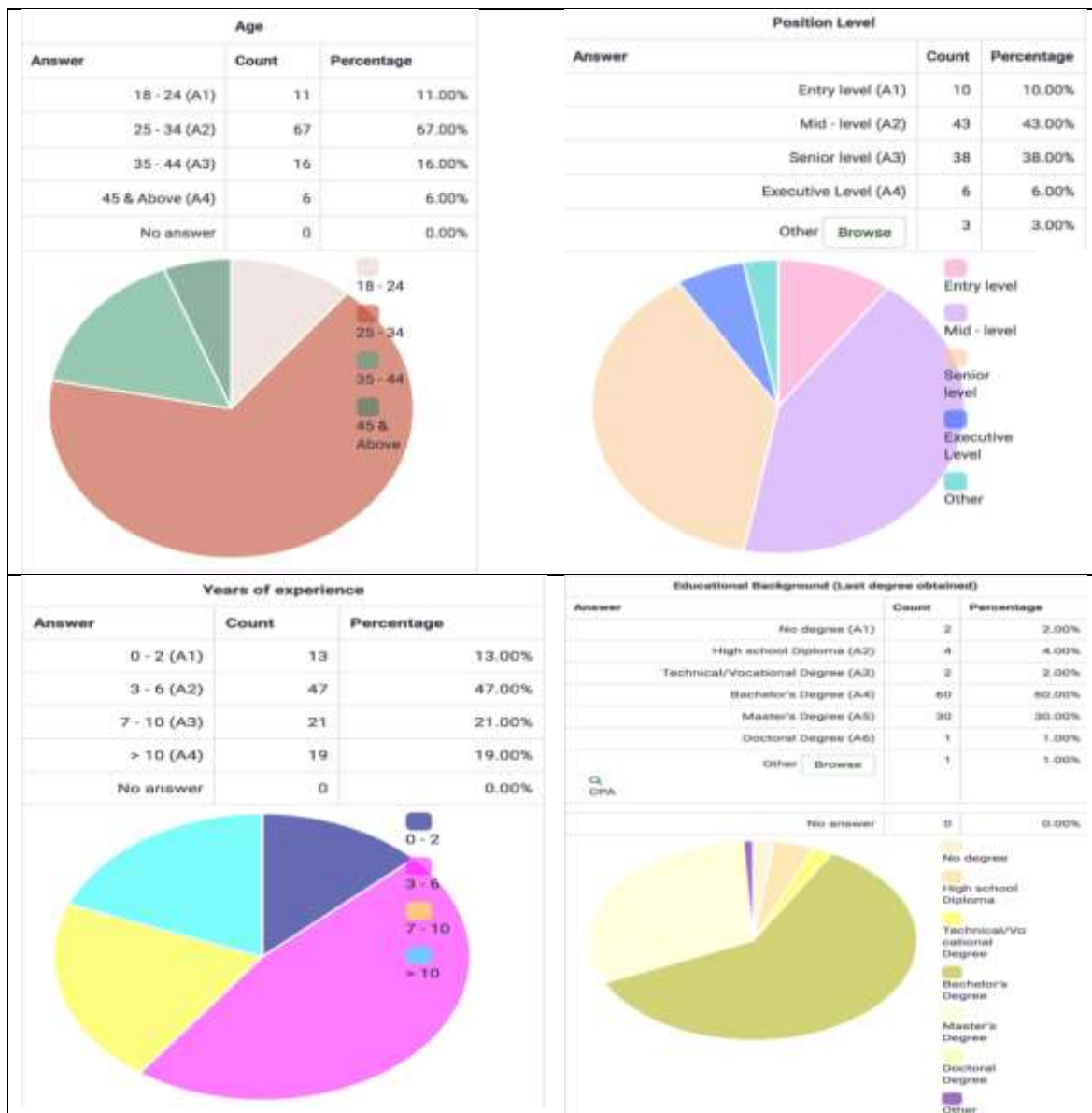
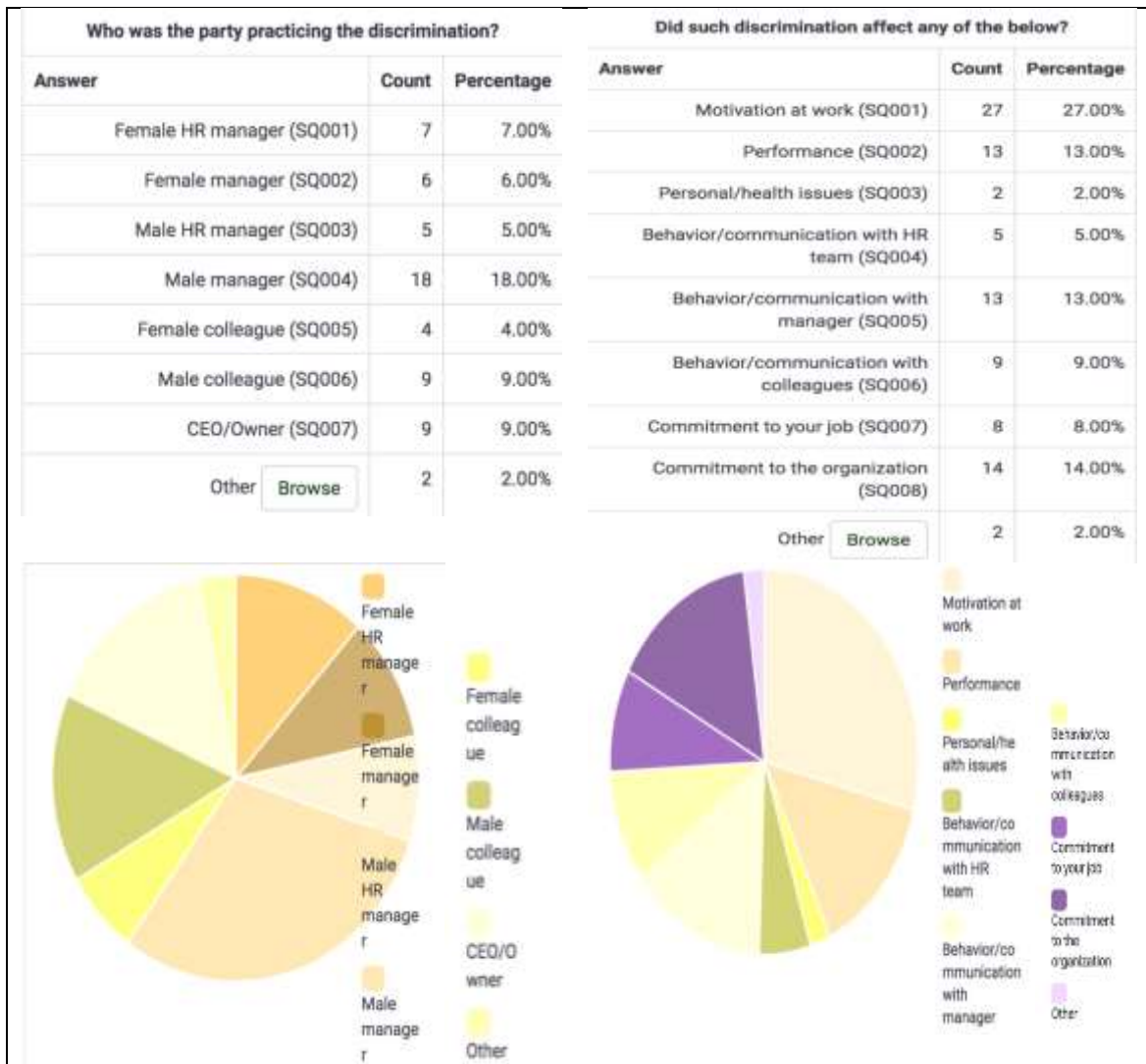


Figure 2

Gender Discrimination and its Implications



Figure 2- “Continued”



Moving on to the effects of gender discrimination on each of the participants who faced such practices, results varied between eight different categories. Table 5 below summarizes each effect with the percentage of responses from highest to lowest.

As shown in the table, motivation at work is highly affected by gender discrimination practices, followed by commitment to the organization, behavior with the manager and on-the-job performance. Most of these responses were mentioned by HR Managers when asked about the effects of Gender Discrimination on females at the

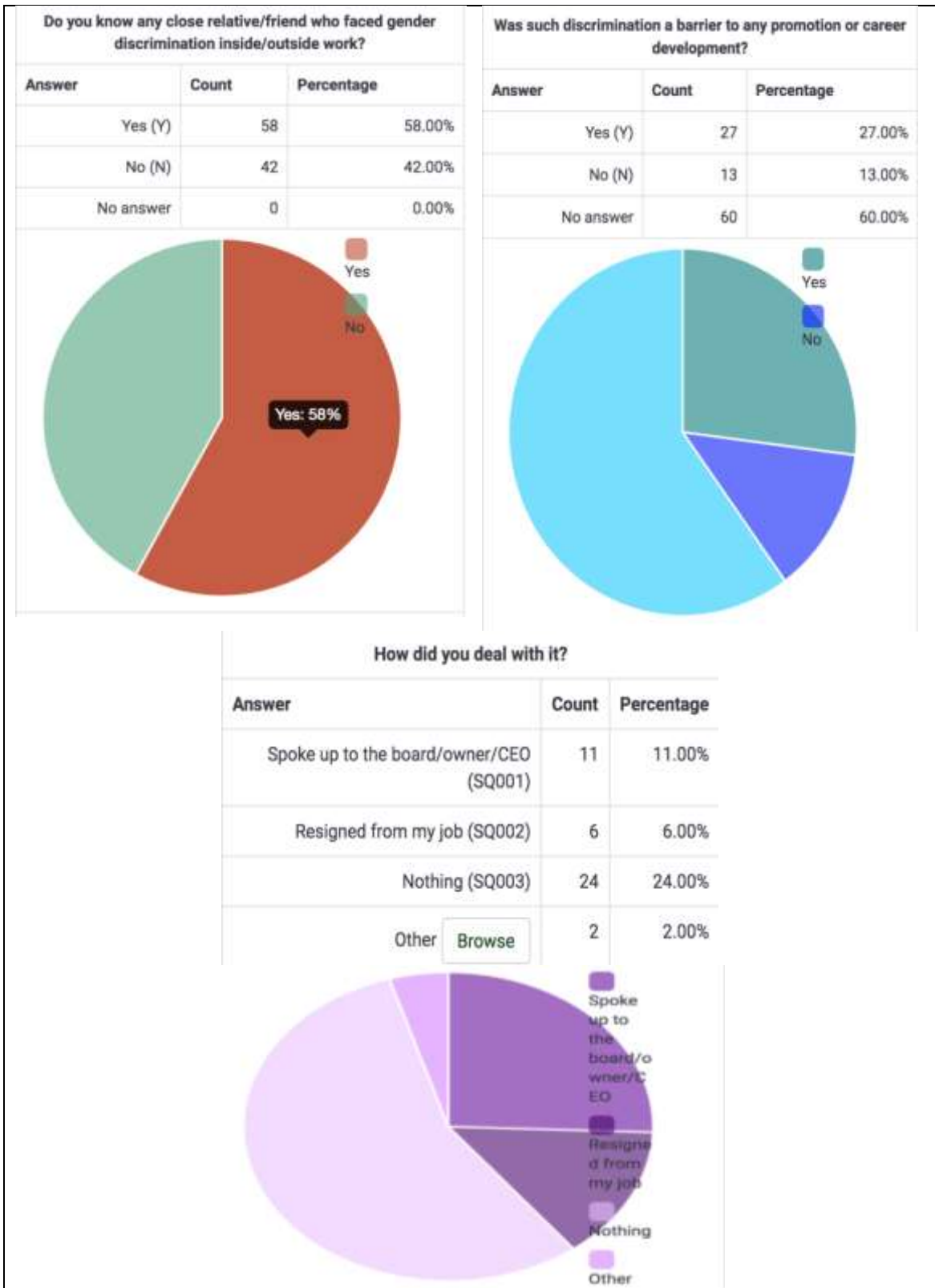
workplace. Moreover, 73% stated that such discrimination was a barrier that led to missing promotions and career development opportunities. Considering how females reacted to such discrimination, it was surprising that 65% did nothing, yet only 30% spoke up or reported it.

*Table 5*

*Effects of Gender Discrimination*

| <b>Effect of Gender Discrimination</b> | <b>Percentage of sample</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Motivation at work                     | 73%                         |
| Commitment to the organization         | 38%                         |
| Performance                            | 35%                         |
| Behavior/communication with manager    | 35%                         |
| Behavior/communication with colleagues | 24%                         |
| Commitment to your job                 | 22%                         |
| Behavior/communication with HR team    | 14%                         |
| Personal/health issues                 | 5%                          |

Moving outside the work context, 30% of participants stated that they believe their spouse should earn more than they do, 56% of participants mentioned that they faced gender discrimination outside work, and 58% stated that they know a close relative/friend who faced gender discrimination inside/outside work.



### Secondary Data

Searching through recruitment websites and online job ads, it won't take much effort to realize gender preferences based on the job position. As discussed earlier, jobs that are perceived for males only vary between engineers, managers, IT technicians, or doctors. Figures I & II below reflect a sample of some of the jobs searched. As shown in Figure I, a Field Service Engineer vacancy is posted in Lebanon mentioning that it's restricted for Males. Likewise, Figure II shows a senior developer position in Nigeria that specifies Males as the preferred gender. Occupational gender segregation has always been a focus in gender discrimination studies, which mainly concerns why females are excluded from some positions representing high prestige, technology requirement and salary (Wang, 2004). On the other hand, jobs perceived for females such as teachers, nurses, assistants, promoters, or secretaries are also noticed. Figure III and IV show ads restricting the Nurse and Secretary vacancies to females only. As Darity Jr. & Mason, (2004) mentioned, women were requested for positions that included household and domestic workers, stenographers, secretaries, typists, bookkeepers, occasionally accountants (for "girls good at figures"), and waitresses.

*Figure 3*

*Senior Developer (Nigeria)*

| SENIOR DEVELOPER ( NIGERIA ) |              |                |                        |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <a href="#">Apply Now</a>    |              |                |                        |
| General Information          |              |                |                        |
| Company:                     | Confidential | Job Type:      | Information Technology |
| Location:                    | Niger        | Date Posted:   | Nov 21, 2018           |
| Salary:                      | Negotiable   | Employee Type: | Full-Time Employee     |
| Gender:                      | Male         |                |                        |

Figure 4

Field Service Engineer

**FIELD SERVICE ENGINEER**

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[Apply Now](#)

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**General Information**

|                  |                        |                       |                    |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Company:</b>  | Medicals International | <b>Job Type:</b>      | Engineering        |
| <b>Location:</b> | Lebanon                | <b>Date Posted:</b>   | Nov 23, 2018       |
| <b>Salary:</b>   | Unspecified            | <b>Employee Type:</b> | Full-Time Employee |
| <b>Gender:</b>   | Male                   |                       |                    |

Figure 5

Nurse

**NURSE**

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[Apply Now](#)

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**General Information**

|                  |             |                       |                    |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Company:</b>  | FDC         | <b>Job Type:</b>      | Nursing            |
| <b>Location:</b> | Lebanon     | <b>Date Posted:</b>   | Nov 21, 2018       |
| <b>Salary:</b>   | Unspecified | <b>Employee Type:</b> | Full-Time Employee |
| <b>Gender:</b>   | Female      |                       |                    |

Figure 6

Secretary

**SECRETARY**

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[Apply Now](#)

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**General Information**

|                  |                  |                       |                    |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Company:</b>  | MICO-SAL         | <b>Job Type:</b>      | Human Resource     |
| <b>Location:</b> | Lebanon - Beirut | <b>Date Posted:</b>   | Nov 24, 2018       |
| <b>Salary:</b>   | NG               | <b>Employee Type:</b> | Full-Time Employee |
| <b>Gender:</b>   | Female           |                       |                    |

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This project has examined gender discrimination at the workplace within a regional context, focusing on the impact it has on women, the organization, and the economy as a whole. Analyzing the interviews, survey, and online job ads, I was able to reach a variety of conclusions that point in a similar direction. Starting with the surveys, 37% of the participants who claimed facing gender discrimination at the workplace, mentioned sexual harassment, unequal pay, and positional bias as the most types of discrimination faced.

It is important to highlight that 63% of the participants who claimed not facing any type of gender discrimination at the workplace might not actually be aware that what they face on a daily basis does fall under gender discrimination acts. Foley *et al.* (2015) noted that, when individuals perceive that discrimination exists, they may adjust their work-related attitudes accordingly, regardless of the reality of the situation. Having a clear understanding of these can help employers prevent discrimination from occurring and should also better allow them to mitigate its adverse effects when it does occur. Getting into long conversations with participants who answered “No” to this question, I realized that women are unaware of what gender discrimination is, they lack the knowledge of the term and what lies within its framework. I am sure that if all participants are aware that sexual harassment, unequal pay, glass ceiling, and many other practices fall under “gender discrimination”, the percentage would have risen far from 37%. In addition, due to our masculine culture and the way we were raised, gender discrimination became a norm. The man is considered the head of the household even in



cases where the woman makes large contributions to the family's income (Metcalf, 2008). A female realizes that her male colleague is earning more than she does for the same job, but she believes it's the right thing. This is clearly reflected in one of the questions, where 30% of participants stated that they believe their spouse should earn more than they do. Although both might be contributing equally to the household expenses, yet the cultural and social norms had led to such beliefs.

Moving forward, 20% of those facing gender discrimination mentioned "Female HR Manager" as a party practicing such acts. This was not surprising, as we can recall from the interview results, 3 Female HR Managers stated that they do discriminate during recruitment and other HR practices. Similarly, when testing the relation between gender identification and discrimination, Foley *et al.* (2015) found that women perceived more gender discrimination partly because they make gender comparisons and partly because they perceived systematic bias against women as a group in their organizations. Testing the impact such discrimination had on the working females, results varied between performance, commitment, communication with HR/Manager/Colleagues, and even health issues. Same results were identified from the HR professionals and similarly highlighted by most authors.

As Memon & Jena (2017) stated, the female employees on receiving an unequal treatment from the organization develop a built of frustration and stress which in turn dampens their work dispositions. This reduces their levels of satisfaction and motivation and eventually cast a shadow on their marginal productivity making them sources of inferior human capital. Finally, considering how females reacted to such discrimination, 65% did nothing compared to 30% who spoke up or resigned from their job. Unfortunately, due to the current economic situation which requires females to act as a main financial contributor to the household income, females are obliged to accept

the current situation with fear of losing their jobs. Especially in our current region, females are expecting to face such discrimination wherever they go, so they try to accept and adapt to it. Here comes the responsibility of HR Managers in making sure such discrimination is eliminated, or building the culture of whistle blowing, speaking up, or reporting unacceptable behavior from any party whatsoever, ensuring job security and confidentiality.

Interviewing HR professionals in the Middle East has reflected on how they perceive gender discrimination and to what extent is it embedded into daily HR practices. The results indicate that they might either be unaware of what HR practices do fall under discrimination, or they might be simply hiding the truth. As a start, since 33% of interviewed professionals do not have gender discrimination or sexual harassment as part of their internal policy reflects the level of HR professionalism on one side, and the lack of attention and concern they have for protecting employees from such practices and embedding the importance of eliminating such actions into the culture of the organization. Analyzing the results of female HR professionals, it is important to highlight that 50% actually faced gender discrimination themselves. I believe this should motivate them to make changes in their current workplace and work on building a culture free of discrimination and harassment. On the contrary, it was surprising that 1 of the female HR professionals who faced gender discrimination actually stated practicing discriminatory HR practices when it comes to recruiting.

This again leads to the same conclusion, that females especially those in the HR field lack the required gender discrimination knowledge and are unaware of how to eliminate it. This is supported by figures I-IV that show job ads being posted by HR professionals specifying gender preferences. Noting that only 2 HR professionals stated mentioning gender preferences in job ads, yet 7 of them had gender preference when

recruiting. This means that whether they specify in job ads or not, discrimination is actually occurring. Results from the interviews showing the impact such actions have on women, the organization, and the economy were matching with what most authors mentioned. For example, Deitch *et al.* (2003) mentioned how impaired emotional and physical well-being also likely have organizational costs (as well as being personally damaging to the targets), in that they may lead to absenteeism and other withdrawal behaviors. Consequently, this will have a direct effect on losing talents, profitability, and company culture. Moreover, one out of 15 HR professionals stated having programs that aim at developing female talents. Surprisingly, Saudi Arabia and other countries in the gulf actually implement and support such programs, where females are entering the workforce and receiving the training and support needed to reach higher positions, unlike Lebanon and other countries who are still standing behind.

After examining the current situation in the Middle East concerning gender discrimination, and how do HR discriminatory practices negatively affect employees, the organization, and the economy as a whole, we can clearly identify gaps that accumulated from cultural issues and lack of adequate knowledge/awareness. It's not only that HR professionals are not professional enough to handle such positions and deal wisely in discriminatory situations, yet the society in general is in need of awareness. The way we are raised and the borders the society drew enhancing males and limiting females is what led us here. It would be interesting to take this research further by understanding the reasons behind such discriminatory actions. Understanding the way people think (males and females) across different educational, economic, and cultural backgrounds, age groups, and religions. Since before raising awareness across different generations, it's important to understand their way of rationalizing things and what factors are affecting their actions across different discriminatory practices, whether

it is a simple perception towards females or an actual sexual harassment practice.

In conclusion, our results have shown how gender inequity infiltrates through the organizational system and impacts HR practices, including the persistence of gender stereotypes (Powell, 2011), biases in recruitment and selection processes (Davidson & Burke, 2004), and few female role models and limited training opportunities (Wirth, 2001). Hence, gender inequalities in recruitment, retention and career development prevent talented women from achieving equal outcomes at work as similarly to talented men. As such, gender inequality remains one of the major barriers to promoting meritocracy in the workplace (Acker, 1992) and deserves further scholarly attention, namely in the Middle East Region.

## CHAPTER VI

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Seeing our results, we can clearly identify certain gaps and room for further practical implications whether on an individual, organizational, or national level. At the individual level, gender discrimination awareness is strongly lacking across different generations. Being in the HR field, we can play a major role in cooperating with schools, universities, and institutions to educate the youth (both genders) about gender discrimination, highlighting its antecedents and consequences on the short and long term. This awareness raising process could be developed further to public events, social media, large-scale media, and workshops targeting different generations and socio-demographic characteristics. This step will allow the youth to build a new perception about this topic and adults to change their current perception, where each can play a role in raising awareness within their environment.

Within the organizational context, employers and the HR department could build a culture free of any discrimination and harassment. In some cases, HR hesitates to take action against discriminators due to the lack of policies at the workplace. Accordingly, a zero-tolerance policy should be designed and communicated to everyone at the organization emphasizing on gender discrimination and the importance of speaking up and reporting relevant incidents. Moving forward to HR practices, training should be provided to all employees across the hierarchy mainly to highlight on the importance of the topic and embed it into the organizations culture. Furthermore, gender sensitivity training can be implemented to reduce gender biases that are

prevalent in organizations. In addition, a clear path and unified criteria should be set for employee hiring, evaluation, promotion and advancement to provide equal opportunities for both and eliminate any sort of discrimination that might occur. This can happen through the collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data and gender audits to identify and rectify gender discrimination in the workplace.

Moving on to the national responsibilities, the government could play an impactful role in promoting equality in the labour market. They could start by drafting and reinforcing a law on sexual harassment that is at present non-existent. Furthermore, quota systems can be implemented to ensure equitable representation of women in senior management positions. What's important is for the government to monitor organizations' compliance to these laws and policies to contain discriminatory practices.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (HR PROFESSIONALS)

1. Does your internal policy protect employees from gender discrimination or sexual harassment?
2. Do you think gender discrimination is practiced in the middle east? How about the organization you're working in? Can you tell us about some recent incidents? (what happened, how was it resolved?)
3. What kind of impact do you think gender discrimination has on women? The organization? The economy?
4. Have you had any complaints in recent years about gender discrimination? How did you deal with it?
5. As an HR professional, do you have a preference to hire a specific gender for a specific position or do both male and female applicants have an equal opportunity in being selected? Can you tell me more about it?
6. Do you specify the gender in your job ads? If yes, for which types of jobs and why?
7. What is the percentage of females at the organization? Percentage of females in senior positions? Were they promoted or hired externally?
8. Do you have any specific programs in place to accelerate women's development to leadership positions?
9. Are you aware of the feminization programs developed in the gulf? How do you perceive such programs? Do you think they can be easily implemented in Lebanon?
10. Personally, have you ever faced any type of discrimination? Was it challenging for you to reach a senior position? Can you tell me about it? (Females only)
11. Do you have sex-disaggregated data to monitor if there is equal pay? How about to monitor other HR practices?

## APPENDIX II

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Age
  - 18 – 24
  - 25 – 34
  - 35 – 44
  - 45 & above
2. Position: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Position Level
  - Entry level
  - Mid-level
  - Senior level
  - Executive level
4. Years of experience:
  - 0 - 2
  - 3 - 6
  - 7 - 10
  - > 10
5. Educational Background (Last degree obtained)
  - No degree
  - High School Diploma
  - Technical/Vocational Degree
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Doctoral Degree
  - Other
6. If married, do you believe your husband should earn more than you do?
  - Yes
  - No
7. Have you ever faced any gender discrimination at work?
  - Yes
  - No



(If you answered “yes” for question 8, kindly answer questions 9-13, otherwise move to question 14)

8. What type of discrimination did you face? (please select all that apply)

- Unequal Pay
- Sexual Harassment
- Glass Ceiling
- Career Advancement (training)
- Pregnancy/maternity discrimination
- Termination
- Positional Bias

9. Who was the party practicing the discrimination? (please select all that apply)

- Female HR manager
- Female manager
- Female colleague
- CEO
- Male HR Manager
- Male Manager
- Male Colleague
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. How did you deal with it?

- Spoke up to the board/owner/CEO
- Resigned from job
- Did nothing
- Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

11. Was such discrimination a barrier to any promotion or career development?

- Yes
- No

12. Did such discrimination affect any of the below? (please select all that apply)

- Motivation at work
- Performance
- Personal/health issues
- Commitment to your job
- Behavior/communication with HR team
- Behavior/communication with manager
- Behavior/communication with colleagues
- Commitment to the organization

13. Have you ever faced any gender discrimination outside work?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you know any close relative/friend who faced gender discrimination inside/outside work?

- Yes
- No

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