



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

BARGAINING WITH LEADERSHIP STYLES: WOMEN  
MANAGERS IN THE NGO SECTOR IN LEBANON

by  
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# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Sociocultural, structural, and institutional challenges that restrict women's rights and capabilities are well-studied global phenomena that affect the upwards mobility of women in their careers. This study aims to assess this in the context of the NGO sector in Lebanon. Based on a case study of two NGOs in Lebanon, this research focuses on the perspectives and day-to-day interactions within the workplace through interviews and ethnography. The aim is to contribute to the research on women's career trajectories, and to explore the challenges caused by gender discrimination and how this affects women managers in the NGO sector. This research is also interested in assessing the gendered leadership styles that Lebanese women managers in NGOs adopt in the workplace. In the present literature, the two leadership styles are transactional leadership and transformational leadership (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). Transactional leadership is usually found to be more present in men and utilizes a more reward/punishment method of leadership which is highly authoritative and competitive. Transformational leadership is generally attributed to women, and those adopting this style tend to be relationship-oriented, conciliatory and focused on caused organizational change as a collective.

The findings suggests that women's leadership styles move beyond the binary of transactional/ transformational but rather situational and fluid. Women's adoption of their leadership styles falls on the spectrum of both styles and is affected by external factors such as institutional structures, the nature of work and also by the gender order and patriarchy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	1
ABSTRACT .....	2
TABLES .....	6
ACRONYMS .....	7
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	8
II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	14
A. KEY INDICATORS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN LEBANON.....	15
1. Meritocratic Disparities Relative to Education.....	15
2. Sociocultural Challenges .....	17
3. Legal and Institutional Challenges .....	26
B. GENDERED LEADERSHIP: IMPLICATIONS ON WOMEN’S WORKPLACE PRIVILEGES AND SUCCESSES .....	32
C. WOMEN IN HUMANITARIAN SECTOR.....	38
III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	42
A. RESEARCH METHODS.....	42
B. SAMPLING .....	46
IV. THE NGO AS A WORKPLACE.....	49
A. HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE AND SUPERVISOR-TO-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS	50
B. HIRING PROCESSES .....	52

C. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES .....	53
D. ADMINISTRATIVE & ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS .....	57
E. NEPOTISM & PERSONAL NETWORKS .....	65
F. GENDER-BASED DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION .....	69
<b>V. CAREER TRAJECTORY .....</b>	<b>72</b>
A. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND .....	72
B. CAREER HISTORY.....	75
1. Experience prior to reaching managerial positions.....	77
2. Social Networks.....	78
3. The hard-working narrative .....	81
4. NGOs and managerial positions: ease of attainment.....	83
5. Self-value, turnover rate, and the environment for career development .....	84
6. Enabling leaders.....	87
C. PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES .....	88
1. Tasks and Task-Related Challenges .....	89
2. Groupthink and allegiance through strife .....	91
<b>VI. CHALLENGES – GENDER &amp; MANAGEMENT IN THE NGO SECTOR.....</b>	<b>94</b>
A. TEAM, TASKS & ACCOUNTABILITY .....	94
1. Culture and Power .....	94
2. Workload and Skillset.....	98
3. Accountability.....	99
B. GENDER: FAMILY & SOCIETY .....	102
1. Appearance and femininity: an advantage and a barrier.....	102
2. The career-woman versus the caretaker.....	104
3. Maternity.....	108
4. Motherhood: not an obstacle, but an added responsibility .....	109
5. The role of support systems in mediating the career and home life .....	111



VII. WOMEN AS PEERS, LEADERS, AND COMPETITORS ...	114
A. THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD LEADER .....	114
B. PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE.....	116
1. Affective mentorship .....	117
2. The team as a collective.....	120
C. GENDER-BASED DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP: BARRIERS, INTERPERSONAL COMPLICATIONS, AND STEREOTYPES .....	125
VIII. CONCLUSION .....	132
A. REVISITING THE LITERATURE.....	132
B. CHALLENGES.....	136
C. WOMEN IN THE LEBANESE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR .....	137
REFERENCES .....	144

## TABLES

### Table

1. Interactional Styles and Gender (Ladegaard 2011, p.05) .....	35
2. Table 2: Interviewed sample.....	48
3. Table 3: Women participants' time spent working prior to reaching their first managerial roles .....	76

## ACRONYMS

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

LNGO – Local Non-Governmental Organization

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

WNGO – Women’s Non-Governmental Organization

KPIs – Key Performance Indicators

HR – Human Resources

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In 2013, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and started my first hands-on experience working in the humanitarian sector in an international non-governmental organization (INGO). More specifically, the projects implemented by the INGO were in response to the refugee-crisis, after the influx of more than 1 million Syrian refugees into Lebanon (The Guardian, 2014). In 2007, there were 5,623 organizations working in Lebanon, and this number remarkably increased in 2015 to 8,311 (Kerbaj, 2012; Mapping Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon, 2015). This increase occurred in light of the Syrian crisis, where many new LNGOs were established and an array of International NGOs opened offices in Lebanon or widened their project scope to address the influx of more than one million refugees into Lebanon (which have now been reduced to 880,000) (UNHCR, 2020). Throughout my experience working with NGOs within the same sector, I have noticed that those employed in the NGO sector do not follow the same gender divisions as I've seen in other workplaces. There was a prevalence of women staff members, including ones in senior positions, at a relatively striking rate. For instance, in one of the three NGOs where I had a professional experience, 21 out of the 30 employees were women and 6 out of the 8 managers were also women. The rates in the other two NGOs were comparable, though no published data exist for further documentation. Since then, my interest in exploring the status of working women in the Lebanese NGO sector had increased, particularly those in senior positions.

While women in Lebanon do have some work-related legal rights, such as the right to work as well as land and business ownership, women face other labor constraints related to legislative prohibitions and the absence of legislative protection (Sidani et. al, 2015). According to Lebanon's country profile in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (2017, p. 208; 2020, p.219), only 8.4 % of all legislators, senior officials, and managers in Lebanon are women; this number had been the same in 2017's report. Though very low, the percentage almost doubled from an approximated 4.4% in 2013 to this value by 2017 (World Bank, 2013).

The role of women in the labor market is developing, as the percentage of women in higher-earning positions doubled, yet they are still considered as less suitable for managerial positions than men in the Middle East (Marinakou, 2015). Numbers presented earlier allude to the presence of multiple cultural, structural and legislative barriers that hinder Lebanese women's ability to reach top management positions. The influence of patriarchal stereotypes, norms and expectations ultimately have an effect on whether women may reach equality in the workforce, as patriarchal culture seems to directly and indirectly affect women's interactions with the public sphere (Afiouni & Karam, 2017). Thus, women's ability to reach top positions – or any position at all – is contingent upon the field or workplace they aim to be a part of and how permeable it is to patriarchal and sociocultural norms. The status of women in the public and private sphere is therefore affected by their position in the patriarchal structure and culture present in Lebanese society. Expectations of women to be a familial agent - or at least pursue jobs that entail a caretaking nature – further present challenges to women's ability to enter certain employment fields and dedicate the time and

effort needed to surpass lower-wage positions and climb the business hierarchy (Sidani et al, 2015; Afiouni & Karam, 2017).

NGOs have historically advocated for women's equality and empowerment in Lebanon, and there is also a prevalence of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations (WNGOs) and multisector NGOs that contribute to the advocacy for women's rights (ie: KAFA, Helem, The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering, Lebanese Family Planning Association, Justice without Frontiers, Marsa, UN Women, The Lebanese Association of Women Researchers "Bahithat", to name a few). WNGOs and multisectoral NGOs that advocate for women's rights have aimed to effect concrete change regarding women's sociocultural, legislative, political and employability statuses through campaigning and conducting empowerment initiatives. However, some studies have shown that their efficacies are not necessarily pivotal enough to cause the amount of substantial change needed to improve the status of women. The main impediments attributed to their inefficacy are cultural norms and values, alongside the patriarchal structure present in the Lebanese society (Awan, 2012; Fonjong, 2001). In Lebanon, similar results were found due to NGOs' programmatic gender segregation within the occupational support that the women receive (Abdo and Kerbage, 2012). The study suggested that instead of women beneficiaries receiving more egalitarian rights with time, they were trapped into sectors that are socially ascribed to women, which had a lower business value and profit rate (ibid). Programmatic challenges were also described as deficiencies in adequately tackling gender-based challenges in the home, where power dynamics continued to limit women beneficiary's capacities (ibid). A more recent study by Abi Zeid Daou (2015) further suggested that the

restrictions on WNGOs' intervention efficacy were related to women beneficiary's educational levels, household income and their ability to access said income, and technological capability. These factors were mitigated by the program's ability to increase participants' understanding of women's rights, political knowledge, leadership skills, financial capacity, and safety within the home. Nevertheless, the NGOs' overall ability to effect change remained relatively low, possibly due to the lack of legal support women have in Lebanon and the impermeable nature of the sociocultural and political landscape (ibid). Furthermore, studies on NGOs in different countries have viewed multiple kinds of gender gaps within organizations, ranging from field and deployment officers to managers and holders of top-tier leadership positions (UN Women, 2017; Parater & Park, 2017; UNHCR Innovation Women Series, n.d; Ruparel et al., 2017).

The gender gap viewed in the private sector in Lebanon and the NGOs described above is starkly different from what I had seen during my time working with multiple NGOs in Lebanon, where women were the majority in all employment levels. For that reason, there seems to be differentiating factors between women entering the private sector and women entering the humanitarian sector, and findings cannot necessarily be generalized onto the whole humanitarian sector. These differentiating factors may be related to the different aspects of each sector that allow women to enter the workforce and flourish in their fields. This thesis is particularly interested in addressing this phenomenon by exploring the leadership styles that women managers at non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Lebanon practice. Additionally, it explores the NGO environment as an enabler or inhibitor of women's career growth, as well as the challenges that impede women's career growth and

how these impediments affect women's career trajectories in the context of the NGO sector in Lebanon. As part of this research, examining the career trajectory of women who reached leadership positions is of great importance as well since, unlike the general issue of women's leadership attainment, some women are advancing in the NGO job market and getting into positions of leadership. Therefore, this study will help understand the paths they took to reach the leadership roles that they have attained while highlighting the reasoning behind the leadership styles that women in these positions have chosen to adopt.

There is little research regarding the different gender-related aspects of being a woman employed in the NGO sector, and even less research on women managers in the NGO sector. This applies to the case of NGOs in Lebanon as well. This research will therefore attempt to add to the body of literature addressing women's employment in the NGO sector by looking at what it means to the women participants in this study to be a leader in the NGO field and how they believe they reached their leadership positions. I will be focusing on the NGO sector and specifically seeking to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How did Lebanese women managers reach their senior positions in the NGO sector in Lebanon?

RQ2: What are the different leadership styles that women managers practice in the NGO sector in Lebanon?

This research is an important contribution as it tackles the NGOs sector in particular, a growing and understudied field in Lebanon. Moreover, this research will serve to



document the trajectories of a group of women in this sector, which may aid in shedding light on women's experiences in managerial positions. Thus, it will help fill a gap in the literature, and will work towards better understanding women's leadership styles and career trajectories. The thesis is divided into six chapters in addition to this introduction. It will begin with a literature review that discusses the sociocultural, legal, and institutional factors that affect women's education-to-employment ratio and probability of achieving promotions and career-related success. It will then discuss the intersection between gender, employment, and leadership theories, and look at research findings related to employment in the NGO sector. The following section will cover the methodology implemented to collect data for this study, including research methods, sampling, and ethical considerations. The analysis chapters thematically encompass the environment that the interviewed women managers are exposed to, as well as the choices they have made to reach and maintain their levels of career success. The former will be discussed through assessing the workplace environment of NGOs and how the NGO sector may have enabling or inhibiting aspects to women's careers, and the challenges, barriers and expectations that affect these women's careers. The latter will look at the women's career trajectories in relation to educational attainment and career choices, as well as the leadership styles and characteristics that they choose to adopt. The limitations of the research and future directions for a better understanding of women's stance within the NGO sector will conclude this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been several studies that explore the status of women at the workplace. This chapter presents an overview of the literature looking at gender and career paths, with a specific focus on Lebanon. It reviews studies addressing the gender gap at the workplace, challenges that working women face and barriers affecting their professional advancement, as well as women in management, and women in the humanitarian sector.

Lebanon ranks 145 out of 153 countries included in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, and at 139 when it comes to economic participation and opportunity, which is a four-mark decrease in comparison to the 2017 report (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017, p. 11; The Global Gender Gap Report, 2020. p.12). When it comes to the social institutions gender index (SIGI), “a cross country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions”, Lebanon ranks 115 out of 120 countries (OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2019). SIGI analysis usually covers 160 countries including East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa, but for this report, there was complete data coverage for only 110 countries over 5 topics: restricted civil liberties, restricted resources and assets, son bias, restricted physical integrity and discriminatory family code. Lebanon’s rank means that the level of discrimination against women is considerably high. It is an eye opener because Lebanon scores towards the bottom compared to other MENA countries (Afiouni & Karam, 2017, p.5).

## **A. Key Indicators on the status of women in Lebanon**

The status of women in Lebanon as citizens, employees, and caretakers is a multifactorial reality affected by the overall patriarchal structure of the Lebanese society. This structure directly imposes the gender division of labor and shaped the norms and values of our society, whereby women are the prime caretakers and men are the prime agentic leaders (Sidani et al, 2015). Conversely, women in Lebanon receive education at higher rates than men, yet are much less likely to be employed. (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2020) yet they are technically capable of being employed much more frequently than they currently are (GGGR, 2020). This section will first discuss the education-to-employment gap, leading to the sociocultural, religious, and institutional aspects of the restrictions placed on women in Lebanon that affect the ratio between employment and educational attainment.

### ***1. Meritocratic Disparities Relative to Education***

When looking at the rates of educational achievement in Lebanon, the statistical evidence is indicative of an advantage for women, where 51.2% of women of corresponding school age are enrolled in secondary education as opposed to 48.8% men (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2020, pp. 219). Similarly, young adults of corresponding age pursue tertiary education whereby a gender gap is not reported (ibid). Contrastingly, the rates of education-to-employment are heavily skewed in favor of men who occupy 76.3% of labor force participation, while women only form 26.3% of it (ibid). This means that out of four employees in Lebanon, only one is a woman, a rate that barely increased since a decade

(Central Administration of Statistics, 2009). The lack of correlation between educational and career achievement cannot but leave questions regarding the alleged meritocratic dynamic of employment.

However, further analysis of the employment statistics in Lebanon reveal that Lebanese women are well represented at the entry level in many sectors like banking, financial services, hospitality, education and tourism (Tlaiss and Kuaser, 2011), yet not in sectors predominantly ascribed to men (Shawwa, 2013). Studies have shown that this is not necessarily correlated with less women pursuing sectors predominantly ascribed to the man worker, such as engineering or technology. A policy brief published by the World Bank (2019) states that 61% of women enrolled in public universities are pursuing degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), which are fields that are culturally denoted to men (Ahmad et. al, 2019 – Published under the World Bank policy brief). However, the most prevalent challenges they face prior to employment are related to social norms and expectations (ibid).

Studies detailing the challenges leading to the gender gap at the workplace on the international and regional levels, as well as in Lebanon, verify the aforementioned. Afiouni and Karam (2017) note different organizational, structural and cultural factors that play a vital role in shaping the career choices and patterns of women. These include – but are not limited to – religion, patriarchy, and the social values of family centrality. Furthermore, the gender gap at the workplace is not only reflected in the numbers of women and men in the labor force, but also to their prevalence in senior positions, salary-based inequalities, and other factors related to the criteria of objective career success. To illustrate the highlighted

gap in gender-based career achievement and contextualize women's leadership styles in Lebanon, the remainder of this section of the literature review will draw on social challenges, cultural-religious challenges, and legal and institutional challenges that hinder Lebanese women's advancement in their career path.

## ***2. Sociocultural Challenges***

In this subsection, the sociocultural challenges faced by women will be discussed to frame the context of women as agents within the Lebanese society, given that sociocultural norms affect legislation, social support and empowerment techniques, acceptable career trajectories, and an individual's rise to success (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015; Torrecillas et. al, 2020; Kumiko, 2013; Vazquez, 2017; Tlaiss and Kuaser, 2011). The challenges faced by women in society are rooted in the patriarchal structure and the resultant sociocultural norms and values that tend to favor men's dominance over women. Becker (1999) states that social structures that contribute to the subjugation of women are what create gender-based inequalities. In relation, Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (1990, p. 20). Walby specifies patriarchy as being a "system" to challenge the preconceived justifications of discrimination based on biological deficits. A related phenomenon linked to expectational social norms is the concept of the 'masculine culture', theorized by Hofstede (2001, p. 297) as being "a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life". In practice, the masculine culture would be

one that is skeptical of women's capacity to be involved in careers that require the "masculine" approach or in leadership roles (Eagly et al, 1992; Tannen, 1998; Holmes, 2006). Furthermore, since men are perceived as assertive agents of success and financial sustenance, they are more likely to receive better pay-outs, benefits, and rewards in comparison to their women counterparts (Jamali et al, 2005). In sum, it could be said that cultures that are masculine and patriarchal are more likely to preserve and continue to perpetuate the sociocultural norms that serve as challenges to women's livelihood and behavioral freedoms. These cultural obstacles related to masculinity and patriarchy seep into different aspects of daily life as they are empowered by and further reinforce the patriarchal structure, which is responsible for the obstacles that women face that obstruct women's capacities and take advantage of their abilities (Walby, 1990). The patriarchal structure includes the systemic sexism found within the sociocultural context, laws, institutions, and the obstruction of women's advancement in the workplace (ibid).

Sociocultural constrictions on women's activities and modes of behavior, particularly in the workplace, are based on ideological stereotypes that define and perpetuate the roles ascribed to women (Rudman & Glick, 2002). A stereotype is a kind of mental compartmentalization characterized by sweeping generalizations about a certain group of people, which are then applied to individuals of that group, including gender stereotypes which are "generalizations about the attributes of men and women" (Heilman, 2012, p.114). There are two forms of stereotypes that affect gender roles to varying degrees: prescriptive and descriptive stereotypes (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). While descriptive stereotypes assume how a person will be based on their gender,

prescriptive gender stereotypes enforce behavioral norms based on gender and take gender disconformity as an infringement to that norm (Heilman, 2012, p.114). Prescriptive gender stereotypes are normative and more dogmatic than descriptive stereotypes: a prescriptive stereotype would dictate that women are not only typically communal, but rather that they are supposed to be communal (Rudman et al., 2012). The same gender stereotype asserts that women should not be dominant or assertive or achievement-oriented because this is how men should be. These stereotypes operate through the six structures of patriarchy, as theorized by Walby (1990), which are “the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations to the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions (Walby, 1990, p.20). The patriarchal mode of production encompasses women’s ascribed role as the household laborer, while the man is of the “expropriating class” (Walby, 1990, p.21), and women’s paid work views the limitations of lower-paying jobs, while the state enables said systematic patriarchy. Violence propagated by men onto women and forced heteronormativity are also two facets of the patriarchal structure. Finally, the patriarchy mobilizes cultural institutions, such as religion, media, and education for the sake of preserving men’s dominance (ibid).

The descriptions of Simone de Beauvoir (1989) are fitting regarding the patriarchal culture’s mechanism of action through stereotypes: the main definition of womanhood, according to the gender-related stereotypes, is the opposite of manhood. De Beauvoir assesses the origins of patriarchal culture, which exploits the natural differences between men and women to enforce the concept of dichotomous opposing genders, and women as the inferior gender. Such concepts have been deeply rooted in today’s societies for millennia,

with references from Aristotle justifying the subjugation of women, as he theorized women to be a deficient counterpart to men with restricted physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities (Lerner, 1986). Similarly, Lerner (1986, p. 24-27) proposes that the patriarchal control of women is a phenomenon that is thousands of years old, and that systematic exploitation of women began with the exchange of women, including through prostitution, and extended to trading them for the purpose of empowering and preserving many different tribes. Exploitation existed within the realm of social norms, and continued through economic deprivation, forcibly dictating women's activities, and the classification of women depending on how respectable they were viewed (ibid). This allowed for patriarchs in tribes to establish elite statuses and develop social privileges, and possibly introduce concepts of slavery through the subordination of women. Lerner explains that the head veil was later introduced as another method of classification by respectability. She further juxtaposes the stance of women in pre-Abrahamic religions - where the presence of goddesses was prevalent and the stance of women was closer to equal - to Hebrew monotheism, where religiosity and reverence was exclusive to men (ibid).

The 20<sup>th</sup> century labor market witnessed a surge in woman participation upon the ignition of World War II. Women were more involved in the workforce in the earlier half of the century, especially in countries that had a direct role in the war (Brock, 2015). As men were sent to fight in the war, man-dominated markets were now available for woman labor. Furthermore, women were also participating in various roles of military service, including medical volunteering and auxiliary service (Brock, 2015). Women also engaged in combat in some countries, such as the Soviet Union, while other countries did not accept women's



involvement in the war as combating soldiers, such as the United States of America (Campbell, 1993). However, the end of the war and the return of many military officers to their home countries led to women being pushed back into the private sphere, despite their desire to continue working (DuBois & Dumenil, 2019). Many different countries that participated in the war achieved women's labor market inclusion towards the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Moghaddam, 1999). The Middle Eastern labor market also witnessed a significant increase of women's employment during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (ibid). Women's traditional employment options were replaced by factory-based employment, such as the sewing-to-textile factory transition (ibid). Yet, the increase of women's labor inclusion also saw extensive backlash from men in the Middle East, with an increased insistence towards conservative clothing and veiling around the 1980s (ibid). Certain developments in Lebanon facilitated a rise in women's freedoms to a limited extent. While other countries may have delayed women's emancipation, some liberties were offered to women after Lebanon attained independence from the French mandate in 1943, which allowed many of the legal freedoms that women in Lebanon have today (Barakat, 1977). Patriarchy in the Arab region is of familial origin and is "a hierarchy of authority that is controlled and dominated by men" (Krauss, 1987; xii), with the father as the utmost patriarch (Barakat, 1993). Prior to that, Schatkawski Schilcher (1988) proposes that the introduction of a social elite empowered by patriarchal norms, private ownerships, and urban power exacerbated gender inequality in the Middle East until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is similar to Lerner's (1986) observations regarding tribal patriarchal empowerment.

A few agents have existed for the sake of effecting improvements related to the status of women in Lebanon, such as the existence of WNGOs that work towards empowering women and a law passed in 2014 that condemns domestic violence (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Furthermore, the end of the French mandate viewed a rise in women's educational attainment and employment, and there was a further increase during the civil war in 1975 (Tlaiss, 2013). Lebanon has viewed four waves of feminism, according to Rita Stephan (2014), starting with *Raedat* in the 1920s. Albeit their elitist nature, *Raedat* were a polarizing feminist group based on voting, education and the improvement of women's roles (as mothers); the *Raedat* group normalized women's work within charitable NGOs and made such work adherent to social norms. The second wave of the 1940s and 1950s viewed the activism of bourgeois and educated women fighting for women's suffrage and women's political participation, which led to three of the women activists being selected for Beirut City council (ibid). The latter half of the second wave was debilitated by the civil war in 1975 and caused a shift of focus towards mitigating violence and negotiation towards peace (ibid). The third wave, which was assisted by the United Nation's 1975 launch of the Decade of Women conference, was heavily supported by NGOs and focused on social gender parity and the preservation of women's humanitarian rights (ibid). The fourth and final/current wave of Lebanese feminism began during women's non-violent participation in protests against the Syrian occupation (ibid). Fourth wave Lebanese feminists mainly tackle eradicating domestic and gender-based violence, sexism, classism, and LGBTQA+ inclusion (ibid). However, despite this long history of feminist activism, women's status in Lebanon remains largely subject to patriarchal gender norms that view women as secondary to men (Afiouni & Karam, 2017; Sidani, 2015).

The violation of gender norms can, especially in the context of prescriptive stereotypes, be met with the backlash effect, which is the resultant of negative perception of women who are not gender conforming (Rudman, 2008). According to Heilman (2012) and as a description of the backlash effect, if women violated gender norms and do not follow the prescribed stereotypes, different penalties are imposed on key work-related measures for objective success. For example, women not conforming with gender stereotypes may result in lower pay, less promotion or hiring and career recognition through organizational awards (Lott, Chung, 2016; Heilman, 2012). As a result, women's career trajectories and rates of progressing forward are hindered negatively (Heilman, 2012). Heilman denotes the man-specific stereotype as "agency", while the woman-specific stereotype as "communality", meaning the role of the friendly, collaborative caretaker who is understanding, intuitive, obedient, respectful, and selfless (ibid, p.15). Heilman summarizes the descriptors of the "communality" gender norm as concern for others, affiliative tendencies, deference, and emotional sensitivity. Meanwhile, she described the stereotype of agency through four main forms: achievement orientation, inclination to take charge, autonomy, and rationality. Agency is often attributed with being task-focused, ambitious, forceful, assertive, independent, decisive, and objective while community is attributed with being caring, warm, friendly, respectful, perceptive, intuitive, and understanding (ibid, p.115).

Religion in Arab societies is also key to the shaping of gender roles where two factors perpetuate said roles (Sidani et al, 2015). First, distinct gender roles are "highly embraced" and men are still perceived as the primary breadwinners. The second is the common belief that men can control women's activities in the public sphere. This is not

necessarily related to the religion itself, but rather that the people in religious/conservative societies use religion as a scapegoat to fight women's freedom and empowerment (Sidani, 2005). Mernissi highlights the facet regarding women in societies, and she describes that women are subjugated and exploited in both the private and public sphere. Accordingly, religion is falsely used as the reason, both regarding how women are treated socially and at home, and regarding anti-egalitarian laws and sexism in the workplace (Mernissi, 1987; Mernissi, 1991; Mernissi, 1993).

As a result, sexism intermediates business choices where men are favored as employees, given that women are culturally and cognitively constructed not to seek leadership, but rather to accept the "traditionally patriarchal family and religious dictates and practices" (Sidani et al., p.277, 2015). Women who are raised under the mentioned cultural restraints may reap insecurities regarding self-image which could in turn limit their aspiration for leadership and gender non-conforming roles (Mason, Mason & Mathews, 2016). To further exemplify the notion of patriarchal limitations on women's career mobility, Afiouni and Karam state that "patriarchy preserves the dominance of men by propagating traditional gender roles with numerous associated practices that subjugate women and restrict their participation" (Afiouni and Karam, p.630, 2017). Sylvia Walby (1990) analyses the manifestations of patriarchal structures in the public and private spheres. Public patriarchal structures are the ill-treatment of women's participation and growth in the state, culturally and in paid work (ibid). Walby further explains that in the public sphere, even if given opportunities, women remain mistreated in the amount of pay and positions they get, the levels of control granted to women employees, and decision-making power.

This affects women's control over different aspects of their lives and limits their behavioral freedom. Private patriarchal structures are highly related to women's familial and homemaking roles (ibid). It is seen that the purpose of women's labor is to serve the family and as a result, serving the home and familial requirements becomes the main realm of women's focus and identity. In this scope, women's role is perceived to focus on reproduction, the family, childcare and maintaining a home (ibid).

However, generalizations among the Middle East cannot be ascertained, as women in the Arab World face different types of discriminations with different intensities and forms. Even though women's challenges can overlap between countries, women and the challenges they face as citizens of different Arab states should not be considered homogeneous (Afiouni & Karam, 2017, p.5), because there are many different discourses in feminist movements across the region (Moghadam, 2004). In summary, the constructed patriarchal structure with its ascribed gender roles operates through the formation of normative stereotypes, which act as a baseline for expectations and as a barrier to women, given that the stereotypes do not paint women as agentic economic drivers of society. Moreover, the patriarchal structure allows laws and institutional regulations to dismiss accommodating women's needs to ensure their empowerment, which is a factor that will further be elaborated on in the following subsection.

### ***3. Legal and Institutional Challenges***

As many studies have concluded, the support of legal and institutional frameworks is integral to the inclusion of women in the workplace and women's acquisition to equal opportunities and career growth (Sidani et. al, 2015; Jamali at. al, 2005; Hejase et. al, 2013; Ruparel et al, 2017; Afiouni & Karam, 2017; Buttner & Rosen, 1988). Thus, the contextual reasons for the disproportion of working men and women in Lebanon will be addressed in this subsection. This will be done by assessing the legal implications on women's equity in the workplace through expanding on studies and theories related to legal empowerment. They will then be linked to the current laws in the country and the patriarchal social and institutional structures that are empowered by said laws, as well as the absence of laws that would potentially improve the quality of women's employment.

Gender-based discrimination within legislation exists in different typologies and to varying degrees across the MENA region. For example, the absence of personal status and family laws in Lebanese legislation allows religious courts to instill rules regarding family laws that limit women's rights and neglect to apply any gender equity laws, but women are still allowed to work, dress and travel as they please. Saudi Arabia's government is an example of a higher level of gender-based discrimination, where it is legally hostile towards violations to sociocultural gender norms (HRW, 2015; Moghadam, 2004). According to Maya Mikdashi (2018), Lebanese laws directly affect the status of women both as individuals and political agents through the intertwined reality of sex (or namely gender) and sectarianism, dubbing the relationship as "Sextarianism". Mikdashi explains that "sextarianism makes possible the biopolitical categories of citizenship, family, and sect—the

very structure of power-sharing (and rivalry) in the Lebanese state” (Mikdashi,2018, p.4). Sextarianism refers to the gender-based laws that the Lebanese law makes that restrict many different aspects of women’s lives, which are both caused by and instigators of sectarianism (ibid). The Lebanese family laws – rather the lack of family laws - promote patrilineality through allowing family laws to be governed by religious courts. Women are not allowed to pass on their citizenship, and women do not have their own census record – they are registered to their father’s registries if unmarried, or husband’s registries if married. Women may also be wed by the age of 14 upon their guardian’s approval if they are Christian, as young as 9 if they are Muslim Sunni, and under an unspecified barrier of having reached maturity if she is Muslim Shia (Mikdashi, 2018, p.18 -27). The approval needed is specifically their father’s approval, as guardianship is paternal.(ibid).

A deficiency in protecting the status of women in Lebanon is not only circumvent personal status and family laws; legislation also fails to support women in the workplace through the lack of laws that aim to minimize gender parity in the workplace. Sidani et al. (2015) assert that a strong legal framework is important for preserving the abilities and rights of women in the workplace, and the absence of them “prompts groups of professional practice to fill the vacuum with their own structure of acceptable behavior” (Sidani et. al, 2015, p.277). On a legal level, laws in Lebanon still discriminate between men and women in the workplace by not promoting the inclusion of women in the workplace, and while women have the right to work as well as the right to own businesses and lands, the World Justice Project ranks Lebanon at 96 (out of 128) in terms of how laws are imposed and regulated (2020). For example, wage discrimination is prohibited by law (Lebanese Code of

Labor, 2000, Article 26), however there are no laws against gender discrimination within employment, nor are there laws prohibiting harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, there are career paths that women are prohibited from choosing that are considered too arduous for women by law, such as melting and refining mineral products and glass materials, quicksilvering, producing alcoholic drinks, production of lead materials with more than 10% lead, operations specific to production or repair of electric accumulators, operating driving engines, cutting animal carcasses, among others (Lebanese Code of Labor, 2000, Article 27). There are also considerable gender gaps in some employment fields (Ahmad et. al, 2019), which is yet to be addressed by any law that promotes the inclusion of women in the workplace, such as laws that incentivize companies to be more inclusive of women in male-dominated fields.

According to Moghadam (2005), solidifying women's civil rights, as well as allowing them to participate in all sociocultural dimensions, are the two ways to ensure gender equality. In relation to that, Smock and Giele (1977) developed a framework to measure the legal and social status of women in a given country. The framework includes freedom of cultural and political expression, ownership, business creation, the ability to move freely, and employment capacity coupled with egalitarian employment aspects (ie: equal pay, rankings, and benefits). It also asserts the need for family and marriage rights, equal educational access, livable health standards, and laws protecting women against violence and harm.

While women have obtained legal rights related to many of these points in Lebanon (ie: access to education, ownership, certain levels of freedom of expression, and the ability to have a job), the legal system has proven to be lacking with other indicators. Particularly,



laws related to gender-based discrimination and childcare accommodation in the workplace are non-existent. Furthermore, familial laws do not protect women since there is no clause on marital rape, and divorce follows religious courts; the Islamic court makes women divorcing their husbands a very difficult task, while Christian courts make this an impossible one (Mikdashi, 2018). Women also do not have the legal right to abortion, with the exception of rare cases, which often leads to illegal and unsafe methods of abortion (World Health Organization, 2019). Women who are found to have undergone an abortion without approval may be sent to prison for 3 years (Mikdashi, 2018). Another example is the 10<sup>th</sup> law of the National Social Security Fund on family allowances, which provides man employees the right to extend their coverage to their families, as well as a monthly assistance fee to cover family expenses when his wife is not working (RDPP et al., n.d.). Contrastingly, a woman employee is not compensated at all if her husband is not working, unless certain special cases apply (example: he is permanently disabled, or he is older than 60, etc.), and her rights to benefit from familial payments are also restricted (ibid).

Institutional discrimination and challenges are also faced by Lebanese women in the workforce. Hejase et. al (2013) note the inflexibility of working hours in Lebanon and the nature of work conditions that may limit women's attentiveness to their children and family. Since women are perceived as the primary caregivers, their role in the house is automatically prioritized over their work and career advancement. Ruparel et al. (2017) note that though organizational support is essential for a woman's promotion in the hierarchy, there are many other factors in the process. In Lebanon, the aforementioned legal and institutional/organizational factors further impede receiving the support women need to

thrive. Meanwhile, some of the organizations may have a culture that favors men, and in place deprives women of the opportunities received by men, (Jamali et. al, 2005) on the constrains women face in Lebanon. The findings not only relate to the theory presented in the previous section, but also add that the structural arrangements of the organizations are alienating and deprecatory to women's progression. Opportunities may include the salary, progress opportunities within the hierarchy, networking and other incentives (ibid). Hejase et al. (2013) refer to the inflexibility of working hours in Lebanon and the nature of work conditions that may limit women's attentiveness to their children and family, which adds another stressor to the fact that women are seen as the primary caregiver in the household. Moreover, the implications of stereotypical attitudes within the Lebanese culture on the country's workforce are evident in hiring trends. In other words, women are considered a high employment risk because of the possibility of future family commitments, which are correlated with women and include maternity, children's sickness, parents' sickness, and so on (Afiouni & Karam, 2017). Thus, laws and the rights of women do not supersede sociocultural norms (North, 1990). Instead, these norms both cause a gradual shift in laws that promote women's empowerment through formal and non-formal social and cultural advocacy, and these legal shifts promote further egalitarianism within the sociocultural sphere.

A family-friendly organizational structure that values employees' work-life is needed across organizations (Afiouni and Karam, 2017). Family-friendly policies are usually catered to women's need to efficaciously balance their work and family responsibilities.

Interestingly, the Arab region views a trend where man-friendly policies are addressed to

men to help them “juggle their work and Islamic duties” (ibid, p.64). In Lebanon, the official working hours of governmental bodies is an example where the working hours ensure accommodating the Friday prayer that men typically attend around noon time. This same type of adjustment of working hours is not afforded to, for example, a breastfeeding mother who would need a temporary time adjustment to ensure feeding her baby or taking pumping breaks. Many interviewees from a study by Sidani et. al noted a lack of laws that aim to accommodate the needs of women, and it is evident that organizational policies have a major role in encouraging or discouraging women to proceed with the development of their careers (2015). In addition, a study done by Buttner & Rosen (1988, p.249), found that “bank loan officers rated women as significantly less like successful entrepreneurs compared to men”, when speaking about women entrepreneurs’ characteristics. This indicates that even at the level of financial institutions, women trying to attain success face the obstacle of pervasive gender-based stereotypes.

It is therefore apparent that the patriarchal culture built within the society has also permeated the legal and institutional levels affecting the multitude of aspects related to their career life. While women struggle to attain equal footing in the private sphere, they also lack legal capacities and protection, as well as institutional support. While on the one hand, women are expected to be the prime caretakers within the familial hierarchy, on the other hand, they do not receive the support needed to maintain their career and family life efficiently, which likely affects women’s careers and their ability to advance forward into leadership positions. It is therefore imperative to the aims of the thesis to understand how

women's leadership manifests in the workplace in the case of women who do manage to attain these leadership positions.

## **B. Gendered Leadership: Implications on Women's Workplace Privileges and Successes**

Bennis (1989, p. 7) defines leadership as "a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action" which then allows one to excel within their leadership role. In this section, the characteristics of leadership will be unpacked through theories on authority, management and speech styles, and different leadership strategies discussed in the literature.

Max Weber's (1978) work on authority is highly relevant in understanding women's leadership authority values; he argues that there are three major categories of authority: 'Rational-Legal', 'Traditional' and 'Charismatic' (1978, p. 212- 307). 'Traditional' authority refers to the centralization of power in paternalist leaders. 'Rational-Legal' authority refers to roles being plainly defined and moderated by rigid rules and procedures. In other words, "the pursuit of rationally developed goals, through rationally pursued means" (Weber 1978). 'Charismatic' authority is generally considered to be a trait of remarkable leaders. Charismatic leaders attain the decree to govern and withhold power through building people's faith in them.

Ever since teamwork and flexible management structures have emerged amongst new leadership theories, a shift in leadership patterns (different from 'Rational-Legal') and a development of interactive authority were introduced. Interactive authority can be considered as the fourth of Weber's categories of authority (Bass, 1997), which includes

social communal action. In other words, authority is fixed in the interactive/ communal approach of the leader and is based on informality, trust, discussion and mediation.

Preference for interaction styles is well documented in literature over the past 30 years of sociolinguistic research (see, for example, Hejase et al 2013, Ladegaard 2011, Baxter 2012). Interaction styles can also offer insight into leadership styles. Three different speech styles were identified by Suzan Case (1988): a predominantly feminine style, a predominantly masculine style, and a “repertoire style” which is more of a hybrid of both feminine and masculine styles. Sociolinguistic research on gender and leadership adopts a social constructionist approach, which uses interactional sociolinguistics as its exploratory framework (Holmes, 2006). Social constructionism is the socially motivated process of constructing a shared thought, idea, or identity related to reality that is agreed upon within the social context, and interactional sociolinguistics is how one uses communicative tools to interact with people. The research therefore highlights that people in professional work settings use a range of linguistic resources to represent themselves and to construct multiple social identities. Janet Holmes (2006) proposes that people are always aware of the gender that they are talking to, and they interact with each other based on their preconceived stereotypes and gendered norms. Additionally, women’s management styles can work effectively for man managers, but when women managers adopt them their competencies are usually challenged (Ladegaard, 2011). This is similar to the description of women leaders being gender non-conforming in communication styles. When women communicate assertively or directly, they are seen to have less influence on their man colleagues than when they communicate in a hesitant manner (Heilman 2012).

French and Raven (1965) identified 6 categories of power strategies relative to this study of leadership: coercion, reward, legitimacy, expertise, reference, and information. According to their theory, a leader that implements their power strategies would be perceived as someone who is in a position to make demands (legitimacy), highly skilled and knowledgeable (expertise), attractive and imposes their worth for respect (reference) in control of what information their subordinates need (informational), and compensates or punishes subordinates depending on their work and behavior (reward and coercion) (ibid).

“Leadership is a gendered concept”, according to Ladegaard (2011), p.4), who explains how employees respond differently to their man and woman managers and the stereotypical leader is one of a man identity (Holmes, 2006). Deborah Tannen (1998) believes that the reason why leadership is usually associated with men is because “the very notion of authority is associated with manness” (1998, p. 167), and with appearance in particular. Researchers have developed further experiments to test for this conclusion; a study conducted on evolutionary developments in the perceptions of leadership qualities found that the perceptions of a pertinent leader were influenced by the leader’s facial features; participants preferred a masculine face during stressful occasions and a feminine face during peaceful times (Van Vugt, Grabo 2015). To take this one step further, another recent study by Fruhen, Watkins & Jones (2015) found that gendered appearance not only affects the positive perceptions of leadership skills, but it also affects salary valuation. Their research suggests that retail managers who are conventionally attractive are more likely to receive higher pay, yet the pay increase of senior managers was correlated with perceived trustworthiness and dominance (ibid). Furthermore, women participants were more likely to

receive higher pay only in tasks where making payments was directly related to facial features (ibid). It is interesting therefore that times of duress and the need for a strong leadership figure is more likely to be linked to man attributes (specifically, a dominant man face in this case).

Holmes (2006) further argues that positive leadership qualities consist of characteristics that are usually correlated with men such as being authoritative, decisive, strong minded, aggressive, competitive, and goal-oriented (2006, p. 34). In the literature on interactional styles, women prefer different leadership styles to men (Coates, 2004; Tannen 1998). These styles are summarized in Table 1 (Ladegaard 2011, p. 5):

Feminine interactional style	Masculine interactional style
Facilitative	Competitive
Supportive feedback	Aggressive interruptions
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Indirect	Direct
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor contribution (in public)	Dominates (public) talking time
Person/ process- oriented	Task/ outcome-oriented
Affectively oriented	Referentially oriented

Table 1: Interactional Styles and Gender (Ladegaard 2011, p.05)

Women who did reach leadership positions were more negatively evaluated than their man counterparts when using man-attributed directive leadership styles, since leadership is regarded as a man dominated role (e.g., Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). This was not the case when women adopted a style that conforms to their gender stereotypes (Eagly et al, 1992). If women want to succeed and reach higher level positions, they need to overcome gender stereotypes by acting independently, decisively, competing aggressively, and taking matters into their own hands when the situation requires it. Since these actions are against what women “should do”, they are seen to be behaving in a way that is reserved for men and so they face negative consequences (Heilman, 2012). Hejase et al. (2013, p.6) differentiate between leadership and management skills, noting that both are inseparable, and both are needed to achieve an objective, a vision or a goal. Having good management skills without the leadership skills is not enough and vice-versa. Managerial skills are easier to attain because they can be acquired by training, and they do not vary much between genders (ibid, p.6). Leadership skills on the other hand are “difficult to master, not forgetting that women’s leadership skills and styles differ from those of men” (ibid, 2013, p.6).

Leadership theories have evolved considerably during the past few decades, and when gender as an element was introduced in studying leadership, a shift in leadership literature began (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). As a result, leadership styles were assessed based on gender differences; transactional and transformational leadership provided a platform to observe these differences (ibid). Transactional leadership is characterized by strong masculine qualities (competitiveness, hierarchal, authority and high control) unlike



transformational leadership which is a feminine model characterized by cooperation, collaboration, and lower control. Transformational leadership was further extended to become a “behavioral process of being learned and managed” (ibid). It is a systematic process of searching for purposeful and organized change and developing resources to promote higher productivity. The transformational leadership style is based on flexibility, relationship-oriented behavior, communication, emotional support, consideration, and getting people to look beyond their self-interest. “These behaviors thus may be advantageous for women” (Zafra-Lopez et al., 2012, p.99) and may enable them to be outstanding leaders (Eagly, 2003), as woman leaders are often more transformational than man leaders (Zafra-Lopez et al., 2012). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is more often associated with man leaders and is based more on reward and punishment. When transformational leaders create awareness of the objectives and mission, organizational change is obtained. This form of leadership allows its followers to look beyond their self-interest and benefit the group as a whole, and ultimately the organization. In transactional and transformational theories of leadership, transformational leadership is linked more strongly to effectiveness. On average, women tend to be more transformational and proactive in addressing problems (ibid). As a result, women are more likely to be seen as effective and satisfying leaders. Leadership effectiveness is determined by the outcome of leaders and not their particular behaviors. It is measured using several indicators that include a followers’ attitude, their level of commitment to the organization, and their motivation. It is also measured by the organization’s level of productivity. Low employee turnover and absenteeism are also considered to be indicators of leadership effectiveness (ibid).

In this study, transformational/ transactional typology is used as a base to explore leadership styles in Lebanon, specifically in the humanitarian sector. The two typologies will serve as a guide to explore different leadership styles. This study offers an exploratory space to study the hypothesis that transformational leadership is correlated with women managers. The analysis of the collected data is conducted in light of the masculine/feminine leadership strategies presented earlier.

### **C. Women in Humanitarian Sector**

The gender gap at the workplace has also affected the humanitarian sector – even the United Nations itself reports that only 42.8% of their employees are women, and most of them are at entry-level positions (UN Women, 2017). In 2016, the UN Innovation Fellowship Program’s applicants were 75% men, which initiated the launch of a YouTube series on women in the humanitarian sector (Parater & Park, 2017; UNHCR Innovation Women Series, n.d.).

ActionAid International and Care International published a 2017 study on ‘How Can Humanitarian Organizations Encourage More Women in Surge?’, where it was found that women make up only 40% of international surge deployments, and explored the different barriers behind this (Ruparel et al., 2017). The study found that procurement, logistics, and safety/security roles are dominated by men, while communication, information management, and human resources roles are dominated by women (ibid). The interviewees for this study, who were women employees in the sector identified the following barriers: personal safety

and security, confidence, skills, personal hygiene, well-being, social support, family childcare and personal relationships, social perceptions and stereotypes, hostile environments, and living arrangements (ibid).

In a report prepared for the Center of Humanitarian Leadership at Deakin University, Black et al. (2017, p. 4) interestingly note,

“Leadership equality is not about simply having the same number of men and women in positions at the top or in the organizational structure, it is also about ensuring there is equal opportunity for both women and men to get there.”

To have the same number of men and women in positions at the top, assessments should focus on identifying the barriers preventing or discouraging women from equal inclusion. In the study “How Can Humanitarian Organizations Encourage More Women in Surge?” which looked at women’s perceptions of capabilities and gender stereotypes, many women reported difficulties in finding jobs in “hard” or non-traditional fields. The sampled women also reported that they believe agencies may still prefer man leadership in challenging contexts. In that sense, women feel the need to prove themselves in man dominated fields especially, and that they may not even be given the chance (Ruparel et al., 2017).

Furthermore, a study assessing gender inequality in development NGOs by Dema (2008) found that large organizations had mainly men at higher employment levels, or “representational structures”, and the presence of men as technical staff also increased with the increase of the organization’s size. Conversely, the study found that there was a

“feminization” present in the interviewed NGOs, especially in the “smaller, poorer organizations with a more flexible organizational conformation” where women were more capable of reaching higher positions (ibid). The study therefore concludes that women in NGOs face the obstacle of implicit discrimination, where gender differences exist but are subtle enough that they are not noticed or addressed. Explicit gender discrimination was a rare occurrence in NGOs according to the study, and it was visible to both man and woman interviewees (ibid).

The study “Employee Engagement: The Engagement of Lebanese Woman Employees In Humanitarian Work” further assesses the employment of women working in NGOs in Lebanon (Bassim, 2019). Interestingly, the interviewed women do not feel that they are necessarily given unequal opportunities in progressing in their careers, as they felt that they equally suffer due to the high workload, hierarchical structure, and limitations in the ability to climb upward. Those interviewed noted that the NGO environment was supportive, yet the biggest obstacle they have faced is that of juggling work with personal life, especially in the case of mothers. The respondents emphasized the need for support at home (ie: from their husbands, friends, family, or hiring domestic aid) as opposed to institutional or organizational facilitation (ibid). It is, however, important to note that NGOs in Lebanon, similar to the private sector, do not necessarily provide all the needed accommodation for women employees, specifically mothers with child-care responsibilities.

The status of women working in the NGO sector will therefore been explored within this thesis in light of the body of literature presented in this chapter. Patriarchal norms that impede women’s career choices, goals and personal life are present in most aspects of life in

Lebanon, in the private, public, and even humanitarian sector. This study samples a select group of women managers working in the NGO sector to exemplify the methods in which they surpass patriarchal norms and constrictions.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present the methodology used to answer the proposed research questions listed below:

RQ1: How did Lebanese women managers reach their senior positions in some NGOs in Lebanon?

RQ2: What are the different leadership styles that women managers practice in the NGO sector in Lebanon?

#### **A. Research Methods**

In order to address the proposed questions, two main methods were used:

1) Ethnography: “Ethnography is a descriptive account of a community or culture, it usually involves the participation of the researcher in a community’s daily life over a period of time” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.14). Ethnographic methods rely on studying people’s actions and accounts in their usual daily context (ibid). Participant observation is the main approach to data collection in this research method; the researcher immerses themselves in part of the larger community under study, while revealing their identity and the objectives behind their presence.

In the context of this study, I observed participants by spending a period of time actively working as an intern in two selected NGOs in Lebanon. After finalizing sampling procedures and receiving consent for voluntary participation, the management and leadership styles being implemented, particularly by women, were then closely observed. This type of interaction allowed for detailed observations and participant feedback specifically regarding the work processes, employee interactions, manager-team interactions, and the management's leadership styles. Actively engaging in the day-to-day activities as an intern was a key factor in allowing for more detailed observations of the dynamics within the NGOs. Observations were recorded on the daily workflow of an NGO for a duration of three weeks. Since I have over 6 years of professional experience in the NGO field, I was well aware that work in this sector is usually fast-paced and busy. Daily work requires a lot of communication and coordination between the different team members; usually a lot happens during a standard working day. During my stay at an organization, I would write short notes detailing my daily observations. At the end of each day, I would then expand my notes and provide detailed explanations for my observations. By the end of the fifteen-day period (5 days per week and 3 weeks in total) in each NGO, field notes were compiled, and the observations were analyzed. I started interviewing employees at each organization after spending at least 2 weeks there, so most of the interviews took place during the third week of my stay. During my 3 weeks stay, I preferred to do the interviews at the end so the participants are familiar with me and are more comfortable sharing their thoughts and answers.

2) In-depth Interviews: Building on the observations, as well as the interpersonal communication accumulated throughout the internship period, in-depth interviews were conducted with 9 women and 3 men managers with an age range of 20 to 40 years old. Data through informal conversations was collected from some of the managers' employees in the selected NGOs. Interviewing men managers enriches the study as it allows for the analysis of different perspectives related to the adopted leadership styles.

It is important here to explain the organizational structure of the NGOs to better understand the management level of the sample. Most organizations have a director who is usually in the middle between the board members and the managers. The director is responsible for the overall mission of the organization and reports to the board members. The managers are each responsible for a department (Human Resources Manager, Finance Manager, Education Manager...) in which they have staff under them. In this study, the sample are the managers who report to the director and usually have staff under them reporting to them.

Oral consent [appendix I] was requested from the interviewees ahead of the interview, with the aim of the study and details of the interview clearly highlighted, and the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff in senior and mid-management positions in the NGOs, both men and women, to further explore the prevalent management and leadership styles. The average time for a single interview ranged from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the input of the interviewee. The oral consent form had been read to the interviewees and discussed before starting the interviews. Answers were provided to any questions or concerns that the interviewees had. Additionally, a copy of the oral



consent form was kept with the interviewees. As per the consent form, the recordings are to be erased after the finalization of this study.

It is important to note that by the time I was conducting interviews the employees had already met me, so I wasn't a complete stranger to them. This "broke the ice" between us and allowed the participants to feel comfortable during their interviews. However, social desirability bias is more probable when the researcher and participant are knowledgeable of one another (Krumpal, 2011). To try to lessen the biases correlated to the study, I conducted the interviews with managers and employees that I had directly worked with and others that I had barely interacted with in the office, to create variability in the answers I received and attenuate the effect of social desirability bias on the validity of the study. On the other hand, I tried to ask similar questions in different ways to crosscheck the interviewees' answers. Before the interview and throughout, I kept on highlighting to the interviewees that there are no "correct" or "wrong" answers and that I am interested in their own thought process and their own experiences that lead them to their current understanding and opinions. People were initially selected for interview based on their managerial position, then the employees working under them were also observed and engaged in informal conversations to further enrich the study. The interviews conducted during my time working at the NGOs were based on field observations of the internal work dynamics within the organizations; this is how the potential interviewees were identified. After concluding the interviewing process, the interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed.

Several considerations were taken to preserve the ethical standards of the study. Firstly, the formal interviews were all done one-on-one and in person to ensure that any

personal information or information that would cause tensions in the workplace would remain private. The anonymity of the participants is ensured through the absence of the names of the NGOs and the use of pseudonyms to represent them throughout the thesis, and any information that may be deemed too specific and threatens the anonymity of the participants has been excluded. The interviews were recorded on a private locked device and deleted immediately after transcription. Furthermore, non-formal ethnographic interviews and conversations related to personal information or topics that may give rise to workplace tension were conducted in isolated settings where none of the participants' colleagues were present. The final step to ensure ethical standard was full participant consent: the participants, both those who participated in formal interviews and non-formal ethnographic data collection were all briefed on the purpose and scope of the thesis.

## **B. Sampling**

The target participants for this research are the women managerial class of NGOs. Theorized by Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1977), the professional managerial class is a subsection of the middle class with higher technical qualifications and higher salary brackets that have some input on the means of production without fully being in control of it. This class is inclusive of engineers, nurses, administrators and, of specific relevance to this research, managers. Two NGOs were selected for this study for two main reasons. The first reason was to be able to interview enough women managers to identify some trends and contrasts between women in managerial positions in NGOs. I decided to select a local organization and an international one for further validity and for the possibility of

performing a comparative analysis. Second, having two NGOs allowed for a more in-depth ethnographic analysis where trends surrounding gendered interactions were observed and discussed with the participants within a time-frame that is reasonable for an ethnographic analysis. The NGOs chosen were all large NGOs with more than 200 employees. The local NGO (LNGO) worked in emergency response sectors and projects for vulnerable refugee children, while the International NGO (INGO) had a multitude of short-term and long-term projects. The aim of this study is an in-depth look into the gendered dynamics of the two NGOs. I initiated an electronic correspondence with 7 different NGOs, explaining the purpose and meaning of the thesis, and the two NGOs that are in the sample are the ones that responded and agreed to participate in this research. The individuals that participated in the ethnographic and interview sections of the study also participated on a voluntary basis, as their organizations briefed them on the study.

A total of 12 interviews were conducted: 7 in the local organization and 5 in the international organization. 9 of these interviews were with women managers, 2 men managers and 1 man coordinator. Selecting interviewees was challenging as their time and availability was sometimes limited. For example, I could not interview one of the women managers in the local organization as she had been travelling, and when she came back, she was overworked. I tried not to put pressure on the employees and leave them the freedom to participate in the interview. The participants were selected based on their position in the organizational chart of the NGOs and I mainly focused on managers whom either I supported during my stay or managers in different departments (finance, HR, programs...) to allow me to look at leadership in the different departments within the same organization.

Finally, all participants were Lebanese as there were no non-Lebanese managers. This is a direct limitation of the study as it does not allow for an intersectional analysis of leadership styles related to racism, xenophobia, or other layers of differences that may have been observed that may be related to differences in nationality.

	Interview Location	Pseudonyms for Ethnographic Anecdotes and Quotations	Age	Gender	Title
1	INGO	Angela	30s	Woman	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Manager
2	INGO	Marc	20s	Man	Area Manager
3	INGO	Candace	30s	Woman	Engagement Manager
4	INGO	Reem	30s	Woman	HR Manager
5	INGO	Sarah	30s	Woman	Program Manager
6	LNGO	Bassam	20s	Man	Project Coordinator
7	LNGO	Melissa	20s	Woman	Training Manager
8	LNGO	Dana	20s	Woman	Project Manager
9	LNGO	Layla	30s	Woman	Project Manager
10	LNGO	Elene	20s	Woman	Project Manager
11	LNGO	Farah	40s	Woman	HR and Administration Manager
12	LNGO	George	30s	Man	Procurement Manager

Table 2: Interviewed sample

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NGO AS A WORKPLACE

Understanding the environment and structure of the NGO as a workplace and how it manages human resources is imperative to the subject of this study, as it allows us to understand the factors directly related to the workplace that allow some women managers in the Lebanese NGO sector to reach the managerial level at a disproportionate level in comparison to the Lebanese private sector (Stamarski & Son Hiing, 2015). According to Kanter (1976, p. 416),

“The hierarchical systems in which most work relations occur define which people are mobile, which will advance, which positions lead to other positions, and how many opportunities for growth and change occur along a particular chain of positions”.

She also states that the structure of the employing organization plays a larger definitive role in terms of opportunities and behavioral attributes of employed individuals – including leadership styles - than gender differences. The elements of organizational structure that affect opportunities and employee behavior, according to Kanter, are related to hierarchy, or “opportunity structures” (1976, p. 416), and defined by the ability to communicate with superiors, employment position (i.e.: clerk, salesperson, or manager), and ability to climb upwards in an organization. Relationships with peers is also an important factor according to Kanter, and the way these relationships manifest depended on the woman employee’s position relative to the opportunity structure, whereby those in lower positions viewed positive peer relationships as integral, while those in higher positions had a more

competitive approach due to rivalry. This section of the thesis will therefore analyze how the workplace environment affects the interviewed individuals – particularly women’s employment, perceptions and interactions with the workplace in relation to multiple factors related to the NGOs environments.

### **A. Hierarchical Structure and Supervisor-To-Subordinate Relationships**

Both of the NGOs that participated in this study have a matrix structure, where employees are split into departments, and then further split according to the projects they are working on (Hanover Research, 2013). This includes a hierarchical structure with relevant bureaucratic procedures; however, the NGOs differ in terms of how this structure manifests relative to the feedback and culture systemized through these procedures. Managers from both organizations reflect not only a positive outlook towards hierarchy, but a necessity for it, as it ensures that tasks and supervisor-to-subordinate relationships are respected. Enforcing that hierarchical structure in a more transactional method - where strict authority-based interactions were prominent - was frowned upon by the interviewees.

“We need to be flexible. We can’t just behave like tyrants and tell them ‘come here’ and ‘do that’ and ‘how dare you’ and always be the police.” - Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO

“We can’t be dismissive or give them orders and expect them to like their jobs or be passionate about the work when they spend all their time in the field and that’s already hard. Yes, the hierarchy is respected. It’s important, otherwise people will cross boundaries, but we also keep those boundaries in a humane way.” - Sarah, Program Manager, INGO

The women managers from both NGOs did not favor a continuously strict and removed method of interaction with their subordinates. While I viewed this to be true in the INGO, this is contrasting to some of the methods of interaction and leadership I viewed in the LNGO, specifically in relation to task delegation and how the managers approach their subordinates in the event of recurring mistakes. For example, during my ethnographic study in the INGO, I had been assisting one of the employees that was under Sarah (Program Manager, INGO) with some office tasks, and she was complimenting her manager's approach with her when she had been making many mistakes. She described to me a time where she had been overwhelmed with her tasks and therefore struggled with fulfilling her deliverables on time and had been making some frequent mistakes. Her manager therefore spoke to her privately and asked her how she could assist her in improving her deliverables. On the other hand, there had been a similar case in the LNGO, and the manager had scolded her subordinate in the shared office space. Her approach focused on reminding the employee of the times that she had been told that tardiness regarding deliverables was not allowed and that she had better not hand in her deliverables late again. Similarly, many of the women managers from both the INGO and LNGO believed that "it is important to be firm sometimes" (Angela, M&E Manager, INGO) to ensure that this hierarchy is respected. The focus on preserving the hierarchy is indicative of a more transactional approach to leadership (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). It is possible, however, that the nature of the work in the LNGO promotes a transactional approach, as opposed to there being specific differences in their personalities. While the INGO benefits from regular capacity building workshops on management styles and soft skills expansion, the LNGO does not have these same resources. Adding to that is the fact that the projects in the LNGO are emergency-based, rigidly

structured and do not allow for much feedback or flexibility. In that regard, it is possible to say that while the women may have their own perception of how permissive they should be with their subordinates, the environment of the employing NGO also has a substantial effect on how authoritative managers may be. Furthermore, ‘authoritativeness’ and ‘permissiveness’ in the hierarchical relationship between the interviewed managers and their subordinates does not just seem to be a gender-based personality trait, but rather a means that is used to reach the desired end. This was endorsed by the women managers when they expressed the positive attributes of a hierarchal structure in terms of completing and delegating tasks. So, from that angle, it was not gender *per se* but a need for a structure to reach a desired outcome.

## **B. Hiring processes**

Firstly, according to the interviews with the HR managers in both NGOs, the hiring process when new tasks or projects arise in both organizations is conducted by the relevant project or department managers within the NGOs. In both NGOs (local and international) the hiring process also involved two other individuals and consisted of a hiring panel, whereby the HR, a relevant technical specialist, and the manager related to the tasks or projects will assess the candidates. The final decision in the case of equally qualified candidates depends on the manager in question. During their interviews, the project managers have reported this to be an advantage to their leadership autonomy and ability to allocate candidates to the skills the managers feel are complementary, and also provides the privilege of choosing candidates that will have synergy with the rest of the team. “Picking who will be working on



the project allows me to make sure that the team will get along with one another”, attested Candace (Engagement Manager, INGO). The method of hiring through a panel is an interesting one as it may have positive effects towards limiting rates of nepotism within the hiring process. Furthermore, project managers from both NGOs stated in their interviews that field-based employees are hired from the projects’ respective implementation areas. This is an advantage in terms of minimizing social tensions within the areas of implementation and inclusion of individuals from many different social backgrounds, which contributes to local job creations and career development opportunities. This hiring process gives the manager a chance to exercise their leadership skills by assessing the needs of the position and finding a match that not only suits the job description but also fits with the current team and dynamics. For example, George in the LNGO (while hiring a Logistics Officer) strictly expressed that this position should be filled by a male because of the nature of the tasks (coordinating with bus drivers, heavy fieldwork load, being strict with service providers, etc.). According to Georges, this position requires a more transactional leadership style and, in this case, gender is something to look at. The hiring process is multi-layered and it can be tackled differently with different managers depending on their leadership style, their gender and their vision for this position.

### **C. Implementation processes**

New ideas are, as the hierarchical structure in both organizations would suggest, is developed either within the lower employment levels (i.e.: field officer, coordinator, line manager) and passed over to higher management to develop or initiated by higher

management through direct coordination with donors. In the LNGO, the gap between the higher management level (for example the director and the board members) is shrunken, as the director and board members engage in direct communication and feedback regarding the projects with individuals at multiple employment levels through weekly meetings. Similarly, employees below management level are sometimes included in partner meetings and pitches from external organizations, where said employees are allowed to engage and express new ideas and implementations. This is not only beneficial but also imperative to the nature of NGO work, as employees that work on the field, in the office, or at multiple levels of management will have completely different perspectives due to the different types of exposure to information and beneficiaries. Yet many of the interviewed individuals still stated that there were still hierarchical gaps in mindset between higher level superiors, who tended to see things from a more theoretical or “bigger picture perspective” (Marc, Area Manager, INGO), versus the line managers and coordinators, who may see things from a more practical perspective. This may therefore create a detachment between the donors and the needs of the beneficiaries, which may increase the complications faced throughout the implementation process. According to Marc (Area Manager INGO) this was indeed the case when trying to communicate challenges faced during field work that needs to be communicated to the donor, yet communications never fully grasp the practical implications. Angela (M&E Manager, INGO) also hinted to this being a reality during my ethnographic analysis. While discussing complications faced during a project aiming to provide labor-intensive technical training to youth, she expressed her frustration at the incompatibility between the project goals and the actual needs of the targeted Lebanese youth individuals. The inflexibility of “a program that teaches kids with university degrees how to saw wood

and make tables” did not make sense given the higher education attainment rate of the target beneficiaries. “They need money. I know they need it; you know they need it and the Director knows they need it. So why aren’t we doing something to improve their business prospects instead of shifting into another sector?” (Angela, M&E Manager, INGO). This kind of challenge is related to the development of the program idea which in this case was by the donor and not by the actors in the field who are aware of the day-to-day needs. A similar detachment was found in the LNGO, perhaps even more so, as they “receive the project, they tell us what to do, and we implement. We don’t really get a say in what it’s going to look like, but we try our best to fit it to the needs where possible” (Elene, Project Manager, LNGO). Elene commonly described her frustrations with how alienated interventions can be in accordance to beneficiaries’ needs because the implementation specifications are not practical or suitable to the context.

“It’s a struggle. We do our best to be malleable and adapt to the needed behaviors and how we need to deliver but we’re expected to apply theories. It’s not practical.”  
- Elene, Project Manager, LNGO

In general, NGOs tend to have limited ability to select their projects and implementation methods as the amount of flexibility and innovation accepted in implementing projects depends on the specifications set by the granting donor (Mendelson et al. 2002; IASC, 2016). NGOs are fiercely competitive regarding the reception of funds as there are many NGOs in Lebanon, while the amount of funds granted are comparatively scarce. Given that the beneficiaries in the LNGO are refugee children and their vulnerability rate is higher, the LNGO’s work in the education sector is more rigid. Nevertheless, there are

still areas of idea creation within the operational boundaries of the projects, where the managers will have the ability to discuss with their team. During my ethnographic study, I witnessed many occasions in both NGOs where project managers would take the fieldworkers' opinions on how to make their project implementation and communication strategy more nuanced albeit the confines of the deliverables appointed by the donor. For example, the INGO held a full day workshop during one of the days I was conducting my ethnographic study that covered many different aspects of implementation. The workshop covered different topics, including modification of implementation methods and approaching future donors with narratives that will influence donors to appoint tasks and deliverables that are more representative of the country's needs, culture, and sensitivities. Similarly, the managers in the LNGO had regularly adjusted attributes related to the daily deliverables and how parents and teachers are approached.

Furthermore, the observed individuals would regularly try to find opportunities to create and implement their own ideas to benefit the organization, adding to their already existing workload. This was described by multiple interviewed women managers as a motivational aspect of their role and is indicative of wanting to have the ability to create an impact on the level of the organization and go beyond simply delivering what is assigned to them. In relation, Elene (Project Manager, LNGO) created a profiling system to assess the teachers delivering lessons to the organization's beneficiaries, which was beyond the donor's requests. The goal was to ensure that teachers are accurately identified, and that accountability is easier to ascertain. While showing me the system, she had discussed how alarming it was to her that no one had ever expressed a need for such a system but that many

issues had risen on the field due to a lack of a streamlined system that is constantly updated with information regarding the teachers and their activities. She had especially felt the need for such a system as there were teachers with recurring mistakes that had not been accounted for nor were any details or evidence documented regarding these mistakes. Due to that lack of documentation, whenever someone new was introduced into the team, or someone from a different project had to choose teachers, it was difficult to avoid the recurring nature of these mistakes.

Even though the implementation of programs can sometimes be restricting but there is always room for the manager and the team members to enhance and come up with new ideas. This depends on the individual herself/ himself, their vision and role in the project, taking initiatives and lead, which are all different characteristics of leadership styles.

#### **D. Administrative & Organizational Systems**

The organizational accommodation of women's necessities has been noted by researchers as a must for the attainment of women's workplace equality. This is seen in the studied NGOs by their implementation of solutions to what many researchers have noted as impediments through flexibility of working hours (Hejase et. al, 2013), organizational support (Ruparel et. al, 2017), and accommodating women's socially imposed role of the mother and caretaker, as opposed to looking over women for being high risk employees (Afiouni &Karam, 2017). In this sense, the context of the NGO is woman-friendly and therefore the minor advantages related to leadership yield the intended benefits and "starve" prejudicial norms and expectations (Sidani et. al, 2015). The interviewees from the INGO

reported a relatively positive and flexible administration that supports their employees, from flexible working hours/working from home privileges, to not requiring doctor's notes for sick leaves under 2 days, and 5 days off annually to care for sick family members. The INGO employees also have facilitation policies specific to women employees that enhances experience of a support system within the workplace. This is seen through the provision of woman-friendly policies and amenities, such as a pumping room for nursing mothers and a longer maternity leave of 6 months, as opposed to the legally mandated 10-week paid leave. Furthermore, given that women are socially assigned the task of the familial caregiver (Hejase et. al,2013), flexible work hours/ working from home privileges and days off to care for members of their core family (parents, children, siblings, spouse) are especially beneficial to women employees. One of the interviewed women who used to work for an international technology sales and services provider noted that while they were a very large and lucrative establishment, they did not have woman-friendly amenities like pumping rooms. Her old employing company also exercised contrastingly stringent HR policies, such as the need for a doctor's note even in the case of one sick day; she had eventually left due to the diminutive salary and the stringent environment.

Having a strong educational background was the main value focused on during the hiring process, according to the interviewed HR manager in the LNGO. All the interviewed participants and the employees I interacted with also felt that this was the main factor. Also, all of the employees I discussed with, both through the interviews and those who I spoke to informally while conducting my ethnographic study had a university degree, including managers, administrative officers, M&E officers, program officers, and field officers. It is

interesting to note that experience was not mentioned as equally imperative, or at all, when probing both HR managers about their hiring process. Therefore, it may be the case that while experience is valuable, they will not hesitate to hire someone that seems worthy of the job but does not have the experience to match it. This was the case with four of the interviewed women: they had entered been hired for roles with high responsibility holding a high educational caliber but without any matching experience. Instead, these four women noted that they struggled to learn on their own at first and faced many challenges, but that their employers were supportive and allowed them to grow within the organizations. It is interesting how the NGOs allowed for on-the-job learning, which is less cost-efficient and riskier given that the inexperienced employee is more likely to make mistakes at first. It is possible then that these NGOs try to practice youth empowerment as a core value. On the other hand, they may favor younger, cheaper labor which is more expensive at first (due to time spent training them and fixing their mistakes) but more cost-effective later on if they do not provide the employees with a salary boost.

A second method of support found within the INGO is regular capacity assessments done by the interviewees' superiors, which focus not only on deliverables but also on strengths, weaknesses, and room for growth. This is important, according to both the interviewed individuals and research done by London, Larsen, & Thisted (1999), as their study showed that empowerment, job satisfaction and performance may have a positive relationship with receiving reinforcement and feedback. However, it is notable that not all interviewees reported a high frequency of these assessments. Some of the interviewed individuals noted that because of their superior's lack of physical presence in the office, they

do not receive regular assessments, while two other women did not receive assessments as frequently as others but did not find any justifications as to why they did not receive feedback. All of the participants did however state in their interviews that communication and regular feedback from their superiors was regularly received with a maximum gap of 1 week between each communication. Formal reviews and capacity assessments were not regularly conducted for all managers in the LNGO by their superior. Managers will typically have their own method of capacity assessment, varying between formal and informal. This could possibly be due to the fact that there is constant communication between employees and their superiors, so their feedback is given through a more informal setting. Capacity assessment for managers sometimes can happen in their absence where their manager or the director fills an assessment form and adds it to their file without the opportunity for a two-way discussion. This was expressed as a challenge to career and skill growth. Managers in the LNGO felt that their ability to learn and improve as professionals was hindered because they did not receive conducive feedback.

“I feel like I’m missing the ability to really learn from what my boss thinks of me. She’s great and really interactive, but I don’t just want to be a good employee, I want to grow. I’m missing that.” – Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO

Furthermore, subordinates do not conduct assessments for their superiors, unless it is in the form of a complaint regarding a specific instance, which is then directly filed to HR. The absence of an interactive assessment where the employee (whether the employee is a manager or at a lower level) receives direct feedback regarding their strengths and weaknesses will possibly not yield the same results as the study by London, Larsen, &



Thisted (1999), as the employees are not provided with the assessment information. Jackson & Schuler (1983) similarly concluded that a lack of performance feedback is correlated to a low sense of accomplishment. The lack of multilevel programmatic in-depth assessments and feedback is therefore one of the ways where the organizational structure is not supportive of employees. It may be that the NGO structure is interested in being inclusive and effecting positive changes by being inclusive to women and youth, but lacks the organizational discipline to fully actualize their aim to be truly supportive and inclusive. Another factor is the fast-paced projects and programs in the NGOs. Many projects are short term and are considered emergency response. For example, distributing winterization packages (fuel, blankets, warm cloths, etc.) is a specific project that is usually short in nature and season specific. The duration of the project and the nature of the work are also factors that contribute to the challenges of conducting capacity assessments. As someone who worked in the NGO sector for over 6 years, I have personally experienced the different challenges of conducting capacity assessments. Some of the reasons were to avoid redundant bureaucracy, lack of assessment systems in place, not giving this a priority and the fast-paced projects that leave minimal room for anything else which may result in the loss of certain positive aspects of hierarchical structures (such as constructive feedback). This trend was also evident in the LNGO and the INGO, where in the LNGO the aforementioned absence of feedback caused tensions and employee dissatisfaction, and in the INGO, there was almost a hesitance to criticize subordinates at multiple levels of the hierarchy. The latter is especially problematic, as a lack of honest, constructive feedback may sometimes lead to terminated employments, where the employee is left clueless as to why they have been laid off.

Nevertheless, many supporting factors were found in and reported by the interviewed individuals regarding the LNGO and some of the flexible aspects within the organization. Both from my ethnographic study and from the interviews, it was found that employees are usually given room to make mistakes and were supported in order to improve and learn, which is also a part of the more lenient and understanding nature of the social aspects within the LNGO's culture. It is not that there is no accountability - in fact as mentioned before accountability can be delivered through very punitive and harsh measures - but rather that there is a more understanding approach to mistakes, under the condition that they are not repetitive or dire to the organization's operations. In other words, as opposed to adopting a firm and unforgiving approach with employees, nurturing and supporting employees' ability to grow and learn is an accepted part of the LNGO's work environment. To exemplify the more lenient environment, there was an instance during my ethnographic study where one of the field employees submitted a field report with some errors and omissions, due to not understanding the full scope of the data needed. After Dana (Project Manager, LNGO) had read the field employee's report, she approached the employee pointing out that there are many technical flaws and suggested that the employee should review a reporting manual specific to the project at hand. Dana then asked the employee when she should expect an updated report, as opposed to imposing a deadline. Similarly, another one of the field employees had made multiple blunders with the preparation of the training for the teachers regarding the children's recess and class schedules. While this had caused a grave gap in the deliverables, the fieldworker had corrected all errors on her own and ensured that the classes would resume as planned and without any consequences to the deliverables and the budget. Later on, during the team meeting, the same fieldworker informed her manager, who praised

the employee and seemed quite pleased with the outcome. As discussed in the literature review, Dana's behavior entailed flexibility and consideration, which are key aspects to transformational leadership (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Anecdotes dissimilar to the one described earlier with Dana are not necessarily uncommon. To add to the previous anecdote, during another team meeting, I witnessed one of the fieldworkers being heavily scolded by the same manager, who was upset because the fieldworker had some complications arise in the school she was working on, and when she was unable to solve the issue, she informed her manager. Dana was very displeased and insisted that the fieldworker should have told her as soon as the complications had risen, as opposed to trying to solve them herself, although those complications were similar in scope to the former anecdote. Therefore, it is not possible to say that lenience is across the board, nor that the interviewed managers will always have a more transformational approach. This is akin to a study done by Baškarada et al (2017), which suggested that some will fluctuate between transactional and transformational leadership depending on situational factors, such as short-term task planning versus long-term task planning.

The interviewed participants similarly focused on challenges related to organizational structure, whereby the chain of communication and task delegation were reported to be an issue. This was specifically linked with the fact that workloads often tend to be shared and delegation is vague, so accountability was difficult to ascertain. "Content was not my responsibility, but it was forced on me" (Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO) is an example of delegation issues, and perhaps also hierarchical issues with communicating the need for certain tasks to be redistributed to the responsible agent. Angela (M&E Manager, INGO)

also directly expressed that communication regarding task delegation is affected by their intent to stray from “corporate management” by approaching tasks with a cooperative approach, which sometimes leads to issues in ascertaining accountability.

“The line of communication is a challenge. We try here not to adopt a corporate management style in the sense that every person has his position and that is it... Because everyone helps each other, and they work together, some challenges occur. Then at the end, you do not know who to blame because everyone is helping the other. This is because we are not corporate.” - Candace, Engagement Manager, INGO

This is another example of the aforementioned structural issues of accountability in delegation, where the type of environment adapted by the organization at an attempt to avoid having an overly rigid system may serve as a double-edged sword. Another issue regarding the workplace culture was the need for fulfilling “high caliber tasks” that take a lot of time and effort on-the-spot, as opposed to previously coordinated deadlines. This may be related to the nature of the work, given that the LNGO works with vulnerable individuals, specifically refugee children, whereby the role necessitates emergency action. This had also been noted during the interviews and linked to a high turnover rate present within the LNGO. Contrastingly, while the interviewees from the LNGO did not feel that their individual roles were necessarily respected, nor did they feel that their specific tasks are related to their own job descriptions, they did, across the board, feel that their skills and potential were appreciated. Interestingly, this phenomenon whereby accountability is regularly displaced, leaves all the women managers distressed and overworked begs the question of whether the women are truly fully empowered as NGO employees. Hans

Ladegaard (2011) exemplified the ways in which women are exploited, overworked, and subjected to a power dynamic where they are the weaker subject within the workplace.

While it is possible that the women in NGOs are not as subjugated in the workplace – purely by their accounts –it is interesting to see how the way women are still overworked and exploited in the NGO workplace is, in some ways, similar to the exploitation found in the private sector.

### **E. Nepotism & Personal Networks**

According to Sidani et. al, nepotism is one of the obstacles impeding women's employment and promotion capacity, as nepotism usually favors men as leaders (Sidani et. al, 2015). Yahchouchi (2009) further explains the characteristics of nepotism – or *wasta*<sup>1</sup> – in Lebanon and its effect on the employment sector. *Wasta* is a selective mechanism of supporting a specific group of people that were connected by confession, sect, cronyism, or political affiliations (Tlaiss & Kausser, 2010; Yachouchi, 2009). *Wasta* also describes cronyism based on familial and social ties in Lebanon (Yahchouchi, 2009). This is a well-grounded characteristic of some aspects related to the Lebanese culture as exemplified by the popular colloquial saying “me and my brother against my cousin; me and my cousin against the outsider”, in the sense that people who use *wasta* in the hiring process will specifically do so to benefit their connections. While the hiring process attempted to control for nepotism related to the entry of new employees through the creation of hiring committees and

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<sup>1</sup> *Wasta* is a term used in Arab communities to refer to a nepotistic relationship where an individual may receive favors, such as being hired for a certain job depending on personal/familial connections, social connections, or political affiliations.

allowing managers to choose their employees, favoritism was still found to be a possible hindrance within the workplace environment in the NGOs. It is not necessarily a foolproof system of mitigating nepotism, as according to the interview with Marc (Area Manager, INGO), two of his field officers were hired without him ever getting the chance to meet them. Similarly, some managers, according to him, came from abroad and no one directly related to the hiring process had ever heard of them. It was not always reported in terms of nepotism or *wasta* during the hiring process, but rather that some of the staff may have developed more supportive relationships with the directors over time, in comparison to others.

“You feel that there are some people that have more support than others. I don’t feel this; I feel like I’m treated very well. When I say more supported, I mean mainly by the board members. And the programs director but I don’t see it. Maybe sometimes I do. Is it true though? I don’t know.” - Bassam, Project Coordinator, LNGO

The insights from his experience are twofold: not only has he indeed witnessed favoritism among his colleagues and superiors, which happen to all be women, but he also feels exempt from the favoritism that was reported by many of his women colleagues. According to his interview, he did not feel that he needs to create tighter social bonds with certain colleagues over others to advance or protect himself, nor does he feel that favoritism affects him negatively as he reported that he has “the same positive relationship with everyone. To me, there is absolutely no personal relationship with anyone and I feel very comfortable.”

An example of the differences in levels of support is Layla (Project Manager, LNGO) would constantly feel that she was not as supported as her colleague, who would not perform her tasks efficaciously (ie: ignoring the tasks, leaving out important details in reports, always missing deadlines, making her subordinates complete tasks and not giving them credit). I observed in my ethnographic study some instances related to what Layla had relayed, and yet I saw that her colleague had a good relationship with the Director and would regularly receive praise from her. Layla believed that the Director (their direct superior) is enabling her colleague's inefficient work, although Layla felt the extra efforts she was exerting to complete her colleague's tasks were evident, which she feels she needs to do to mitigate grave consequences related to the project goal.

“I do her work sometimes although it's known that it's not my job. She doesn't do (anything). She (her colleague) takes my team for other projects and so they're always drained. One time I sent an email to my boss about her task that I was doing and I didn't CC her because she wasn't doing (anything) or giving any input nor communicating, and (the Programs Manager) knows this. I got in trouble for not CCing her on a task I was doing because she wouldn't, because she (her colleague) was suddenly in charge when the boss is gone. She's not my superior, just a colleague.” Elene, Project Manager, LNGO

In Granovetter's “The Strength of Weak Ties” (1973), he discusses weak ties and strong ties and their relation to micro and macro-level interactions. Granovetter highlights how small case interpersonal interactions are translated into large-scale patterns which reinforces back into the small groups. Having weak tie does not necessary generate alienation but rather are crucial to the individual's possibilities. For job seekers, individuals with whom they shared weaker interpersonal ties are likely to relay information about job

openings (ibid). Similarly, Burt (1992; 1997) argues that having an extensive social network increases the likelihood of finding rewarding jobs and reaching promotions faster. Burt stresses the importance of benefiting from loosely connected networks, or “structural holes” (ibid). The theory of structural holes pertains to when individuals connect with an individual from a different or loosely connected social network to find a job mediates competition in the individual’s direct social network. With these theories in mind, the “weak ties” that Elene expressed do not affect her opportunities and integration in the office.

There were also some instances of vagueness regarding the power dynamics and relationships between the upper management and the interviewed managers: some managers had issues with the nature of their shared superior’s stringency, either finding her too harsh or not harsh enough. “Other than the email, I would call her and say please and please, and I beg you” reported one of the managers regarding being granted days off. She defended her superior soon after criticizing her by saying that it is not that her superior does not want to grant her days off, but rather that the workload is too much for her to afford giving days off to a manager. Another interviewee said that her manager would regularly tell her that she is “very nice and sometimes being that nice doesn’t work because people take advantage of this”. Therefore, it is evident that favoritism and social networks affects the women manager’s relationship with the workplace. This is not necessarily related to whether the employee had directly been hired through *wasta* or a *direct social network*, but may be related to some ingratiation techniques based on ties and connections formed within the workplace. Ingratiation alone is unlikely, as Layla also frequently used ingratiation as an attempt to receive the Director’s approval, but it seemed to cause little change. The accurate details behind why one of these employees is treated better than the other is difficult to



ascertain, and it is one of the challenges faced while trying to study workplace structures, work ties and nepotism in Lebanon.

The fostering of networks (weak ties or strong ties) with key positions in an organization increases the chances of promotion and office relationships. Some of the women interviewed from the INGO alluded to office politics being a large challenge, where the nature of bureaucratic relationships and the need to receive a “consensus” (Sarah, Program Manager, INGO) for the tasks they needed to perform was a hindrance to some and not to others. The study on *wasta* and leadership styles in Lebanon by Yahchouchi (2009) found that *wasta* and transformational leadership were directly related, which can be understood through the fact that Lebanon is a more collectivist society. Given the alignment of findings from the literature to what was observed in the NGOs, there is therefore an existence of office politics due to the social networks and the possible existence of favoritism or nepotistic interferences within the NGOs in several different ways.

#### **F. Gender-based differences within the administration**

There is not an explicit issue of gender-based differences within the administrative structure of both the organizations, according to what has been reported by all of the interviewed managers. In relation, one of the interviewees from the INGO noted that “our culture in this organization doesn’t accommodate that” (Reem, HR Manager, INGO) yet she also claims that the organization will aim to hire men for specific positions that are focused on work within the field.

Yet, the aforementioned is in fact a gender-based difference, and there is an existence of polarizing favoritism within the hierarchical structure that works to some of the women's detriment. Franceschet et al. (2015) labeled the woman who does not see gender disparities as "the difference denier", asserting that a woman who is a difference denier does not acknowledge the different structural, cultural, or social norms affecting women's lives and livelihoods. While it is inaccurate to label the interviewed women as difference deniers, as the interviewed women do recognize gender disparity and describe many instances where they are affected by them, it is interesting to see that they do not recognize the existence of these differences in their workplace. Kelan (2009) describes similar occurrences as gender fatigue, where women will consider discriminative incidents as isolated, as opposed to being part of a larger system. Kelan asserts the significance of the construction of workplaces as gender neutral zones, which therefore limits gender-based assumptions by dismissing gender as a non-definitive aspect of the workplace. It is therefore possible that the preconceived beliefs and expectations regarding what the NGO environment should be affect how critical the interviewed women are towards the NGO they are employed in. Thus, the gender differences are instead minimized in the employees' perceptions of their workplace, as these gender differences do not align with their values, nor the values that their employing organizations advocate for within their programs.

"The good thing in this field (NGOs) is that there isn't this big difference between women and men. I am sure that if I were in the corporate world, or in the banking system, it would have been more difficult. As a woman, you need to be very good to get a manager position. A man doesn't have to be that good. Usually, you have to be really good to get the management position. This is why when we get to the management positions, we do our jobs better because we are more equipped than a man who gets it. Now we have a good balance between the women and men in leadership positions here. Before, this organization was not that big and even here the

men held the biggest portfolios. The two big departments are still led by men rather than women, although we do pretend that we have equality between both. My other colleague and I have management positions here because we are really good and not because they prioritize women.” Angela, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Manager, INGO

Angela’s statement is one of the many self-contradictory perspectives regarding gender equality in the observed NGOs. She starts her statement by claiming that there is not a difference between men and women in the NGO yet continues by exemplifying the experienced gender differences she has seen in the workplace. The distinction Angela makes between her employment status and the status of a woman working in a corporation – which she considers a heightened discriminative workspace - further exemplifies an ideological dilemma, as Kelen (2009) theorizes. This dilemma is manifested by the women’s entrapment between acknowledging the existence of gender discrimination and prohibiting the idea that discrimination could exist in their workplace, especially as a workspace that advocates for women’s rights. To add to the observed discriminative aspects, George, a man Procurement Manager working in the LNGO, insisted that he would only hire a man for the Logistics Officer position, as he viewed that women would not be able to negotiate with service providers, because this task “needs a man. A woman wouldn’t know how”. Therefore, while gender-based differences may be less callous in terms of the way employees are treated, and there may be a minimized gender-based employee discrepancy within the organization, it is unlikely that NGO employees are exempt from administrative gender discrimination and challenges.

## CHAPTER V

### CAREER TRAJECTORY

From personal observations, there is a notable number of women in NGOs in Lebanon that have been able to reach the managerial level, in comparison to the private sector. Similarly, the interviewed NGOs have a women-majority managerial class. Therefore, it may be noteworthy to assess the career trajectory of these individuals who were capable of acquiring promotions and try to find possible patterns in their choice of educational pathways, as well as their employment background, which preceded their arrival to the managerial roles that they currently hold. Ideally, the educational background and choice of career pathway of individuals have a direct relationship with where these individuals will eventually find themselves in terms of career growth. This ideal has therefore been questioned within the interviews held to attempt to assess if it is applicable to the cases at hand, and if not, how instead the women's careers developed into the managerial positions they carry today. Career trajectory has therefore been explored using the following factors: educational background, career history, career-based social networking, and perceptions of current role and responsibilities.

#### **A. Educational Background**

There are two patterns within the interviewed groups' educational backgrounds which immediately stand out: choice of educational pathway and tertiary education as a

continuation to their undergraduate degrees, or as a mechanism of branching out to new fields. The former is not related to *what* the interviewed women chose to study, but rather that their choice of educational field is very different from their current career roles. Out of the 9 interviewed women, only one of them holds a BA directly related to her current role (the HR and administration manager, who holds a degree in public administration). Others may have an indirect relation in terms of transferrable skills; however, it is interesting to note this shift in initial choice of field. It may also relay a lenient disposition on the hiring side, whereby NGOs do not necessarily focus on the chosen educational field but rather the skills held by the applicant. Furthering educational capacity is also notable in that 6 out of the 9 of the surveyed women held a master's degree or had been finalizing their master's degree. Out of those who achieved a master's degree, three of them chose masters programs that were in line with their choice of bachelor's degree, while the other three women chose masters that are more in line with their current career. Furthermore, three out of the nine interviewed women had achieved technical degrees which complement their current careers; two out of those three women also held a master's degree.

Another insight that was found among the interviewed women with degrees beyond the undergraduate level is that there was no correlation between their motivation to attain the masters/technical degree and their current roles. One of those who had the technical degrees achieved it while doing her bachelor's degree, the second achieved the degree just after graduating, and the third attained the degree after reaching her current managerial position. Since their pursuit of further educational attainment was not for the sake of career

advancement is indicative of intrinsic motivation<sup>2</sup> to have more qualifications and capabilities as opposed to only pursuing the diploma to advance further in one's career. Similarly, most of the managers interviewed had attained a managerial position prior to pursuing their master's degrees. One example of the aforementioned is what the interviewed Engagement Manager noted as her primary motivator for achieving a technical degree in graphic design:

“I had to do a lot of materials, presentations, visuals, concepts for different things that required this. We can succeed more if we have this. As a student I used to pay for someone to do it for me. I can use it for my work. I did it (the design degree) when I was doing my BS.”

Therefore, she had gotten a technical degree in graphic design to expand her skillset and ability to complete her tasks autonomously, although she already had someone fulfilling that aspect of her work.

The women managers' educational profiles are in line with their employing NGOs' alleged high regard towards educational capacity, as well as their own expressed appreciation for knowledge and skill attainment, as all of the managers hold at least a university degree, and most of them pursued masters and/or technical degrees as well. Their profiles also match the statistic of women being likely to pursue higher education, as well as education past the undergraduate level (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2020, pp. 219). Similarly, Norris-Tirrell et al. (2017) found that 98% of their sample of 1,787 executives working at not-for-profits held undergraduate degrees. Interestingly, graduate degrees were

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<sup>2</sup> Intrinsic motivation is when the motivation behind a behavior or pursuit of a goal is internal, as opposed to being motivated to satisfy external pressures (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

not that prevalent among those with experience mainly from the private sector –where the majority of the cluster was men - with 30% of correspondents holding graduate degrees (ibid). In contrast, 67% of the correspondents with mainly not-for-profit career experience – which was the cluster with the most women - held graduate degrees (ibid). It is interesting that whenever probed regarding their educational background, the interviewed women would give very brief answers during the interview. Their responses during the ethnographic study yielded similar responses and a quick shift to different topics, usually related to what they had achieved and are currently achieving throughout their career, as opposed to their educational experience. One possibility as to why women did not offer much background regarding their education is that they may not like to focus on it as a contributing factor to their success – even though it is an evident privilege and advantage given that everyone in the NGO is well educated. It may then be the case that the women do not feel that their higher educational level sets them apart from their peers. They are well educated, similar to all of their colleagues; their education and their career are not closely related, similar to their peers. Thus, there may be a mental disconnect between their academic lives and their career lives. Given the high importance placed on their career, the next section will therefore delve into the career trajectory of the interviewed women to attempt to understand the experiences that led them to a managerial role further.

## **B. Career History**

In addition to their findings regarding high attainment of post-graduate degrees among those employed in the NGO sector, Norris-Tirrell et al. (2017) found that CEO's in

the for-profit domain worked on average five more years than those working in the non-profit sector prior to reach their positions. Furthermore, the study showed that women needed two more years than men to reach their CEO roles, on average (ibid). In general, the amount of experience in terms of years of work and tasks the women managers harbored prior to reaching their managerial position is, according to the women interviewed for this study, in line with the amount of knowledge and expertise needed to acquire a managerial role. In other words, most women felt that they were well equipped and ready when they had reached their current roles as managers. Therefore, it may be the case that the way the NGOs structure their task flow provides the exposure and technical capability needed through their on-the-job-learning methodology. It may also be the case, however, that the managers attained the soft skills needed to absorb quick hierarchical climbing.

Title	Experience Class Prior to Management Role
M&E Manager	7-9
Engagement Manager	5-7
HR Manager	10+
Program Manager	5-7
Training Manager	5-7
Project Manager	7-9
Project Manager	7-9
Project Manager	1
HR and Administration Manager	0

Table 3: Women participants' time spent working prior to reaching their first managerial roles



Adding to the aforementioned are observations from other women managers, as many had voiced that they were very unprepared for the role that they had taken on when they had initially started their career, but that issue had not been present after being promoted. It was not observed, according to the interviewed women in the studied NGOs, that women employees will get promoted faster, nor that the NGO sector is lenient in terms of reaching a management position. Instead, choices in career pathway, number of years employed within the respective sector, and personal motivation were said to have a positive relationship with reaching a managerial position. In that regard, there were some instances regarding how experienced the managers were (or inexperienced) that added a further nuance, which will be explored.

### ***1. Experience prior to reaching managerial positions***

Firstly, most of the interviewed women had between five and nine years of experience prior to reaching a managerial position. Six out of the nine interviewed women managers had most or all of their professional experience within the NGO sector. One of the six had been in the educational field and reached her first upper management role in the school she had been employed at for seven years, as opposed to reaching it while working in an NGO. Another had an eclectic training experience, as she worked in the medical field under an emergency educational program for the same amount of time that she has spent in the NGO sector (four years in the medical field and four years in the NGO she had been employed at during the time of the interview). She became a manager after a total of six

years of training experience. The other four out of the six had roles that were all directly related to their current roles in terms of domain and tasks, and their work experience is mainly from the NGO sector. Three were exceptions to this range of five-to-nine years of experience: one worked for ten years prior to reaching her first managerial role; one worked for two years prior; and one received her first managerial position as a fresh graduate out of university. Their individual cases will therefore be analyzed throughout the following subsections.

## ***2. Social Networks***

Jane Jacobs first introduced the term “social capital” in 1961, in her analysis of the efficacy of self-governance, and highlighted the importance of preserving communities through social networks (Jacobs, 1961). The term is commonly attributed to Robert Putnam, who is believed to have popularized it in the United States. Putnam’s work on social capital was mainly about its “demonstrable externalities” (Putnam, 2001), meaning its effect on the overall society. Putnam understands that social capital does have private returns, such as someone being “more likely to come to your aid if you should have a fit or have a heart attack” if you regularly nod to them while walking down the hallway in a shared space (ibid), but focused on the social capital of organizations and communities (Putnam, 1993). According to Putnam, the amount of organizational participation (such as parents’ involvement in schools or belonging to women’s clubs and fraternities) had gone down in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – which he considered social capital - and that had led to lower civic engagement – which caused a decline in public benefits (Putnam, 1995). Social capital,

driven through “features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust” (Putnam, 1993) would not just benefit the individual, but the community as a whole. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Bourdieu believed that social capital was an individual property mobilized through institutional and interpersonal connections (Bourdieu, 1986). In Bourdieu’s work, social capital symbolizes how much power a person held, and is empowered by the individual’s class and socioeconomic standing (ibid). According to him, individuals use social capital to advance themselves in multiple types of social layers, including career-based hierarchy (ibid). This is directly related to the individual’s position in society and not just how many networks they had, and therefore Bourdieu’s social capital also highlights the inequality found in access to social capital, which is related to sociocultural and institutional limitations (ibid).

Social capital and administrative favoritism (and possibly nepotism) seem to be, as previously exemplified, factors that are possibly present in the NGOs that were observed, yet the existence of nepotism and *wasta* was regularly negated in interviews, possibly due to social desirability bias (Krumpal, 2011). While almost all of the interviewed women stated that they did not make use of social networks to find jobs and receive promotions, one of them did report the use of a social network to enter the job market. The individual who was able to reach a managerial role as a fresh graduate did so because of a personal connection which led her to immediately attain a managerial role at a private bank. Afterwards, she worked in multiple different private companies and organizations as an HR manager for 20 years prior to entering the NGO sector, also as an HR manager. Farah (HR and Administration Manager, LNGO) utilized her strong relationship with her university

professor – who was the CEO of the bank she was first hired in – to immediately find a job after graduating as his bank’s personnel manager. The role initially began with more simple tasks, such as payroll duties and filing, then with time the role became functionally identical to an HR manager. It is interesting to see that the network that Farah used did not only provide her an entry level job as soon as she graduated – which is increasingly difficult to find as a fresh graduate in Lebanon (Chaabani, Osseiran, Rajeh & Abdallah, 2019; Brihi, Takieddine & Zmeter, 2019) – but rather, her network immediately landed her a job in a managerial position. On the level of future prospects, corporate ranking, and social status, she was therefore given an immediate advantage to peers with the same educational background. Having the label of “manager” gave Farah authority within the institution she had been hired in, as well as a ranking that is deemed as more prestigious. Furthermore, it supported Farah’s ability to be hired as a manager or higher when applying to future jobs, regardless of whether she is technically capable to complete the tasks. What further adds to the interesting dynamic of this prospect was the fact that Farah was indeed performing entry-level tasks when she had been hired. Much like getting promoted, the level of complexity of her tasks increased with time – except she had the social authority of a managerial ranking. This is one of the many ways that social networks create a complex workplace dynamic where colleagues or subordinates that do not receive the same opportunities will experience envy or a feeling of unfairness, which further increases workplace tensions. Workplace tensions are further doubled when the promise of a meritocracy-based career is threatened, and those who later on utilize networking to advance in their careers may not necessarily disclose that fact as they understand the negative social image of doing so. Nevertheless, the absence of other anecdotes from participants who used nepotism or *wasta* to advance in their

careers does not necessarily mean that they have withheld these anecdotes, but rather that it presents the challenge of transparency when it comes to studying nepotism in Lebanon, especially with the *a'ayb* culture (Al Jallad, 2010). Instead, most participants referenced hard work and perseverance as the reasons why they had attained their positions – which is not necessarily false.

### ***3. The hard-working narrative***

On the one hand, Reem (HR Manager, INGO) had 10+ years of experience. She completed her undergraduate degree and then started as a receptionist within the same NGO she had been employed at during the time of the interview and worked towards becoming the HR manager while going through multiple different roles. She is similar to the other interviewed women (the six managers with five-to-nine years of experience) in that all of her experience is in the NGO sector, and added to that is the fact that she had developed her career within the same organization as well through “perseverance” (Reem, HR Manager, INGO).

On the other hand, Elene (Project Manager, LNGO) had two years of experience. She had been working in an NGO under a pilot project that was directly related to her field of study where she then received a promotion after the second year. Afterwards, she decided to venture towards the educational field, as she was passionate about helping refugees and vulnerable children attain a better education. While sharing coffee and discussing what it means to her to reach a managerial role and whether this is where she envisioned herself while she was still in university, Elene expressed that she believed the promotion was

offered because of how hard she worked. She dismissed the idea of any other factors expediting the attainment of a managerial position, and rather detailed how her tasks encompassed that of a field officer, logistics officer, trainer, among other types of tasks. She concluded that this high workload that served different departments contributed to her ability to become a manager after only one year of employment. While speaking about her experience of becoming a manager in the interview, she noted that she had worked very hard and aimed for the promotion the entire time prior to receiving one. I have personally witnessed similar promotions within the NGOs I had worked in with some women colleagues and subordinates. Women employees with little to no experience prior to attaining their positions would exert themselves in a multitude of departments and contribute to the successes of many different projects within a short period of time. They would solve tough programmatic challenges, contribute to the NGO as a whole in a multitude of transformative, work long hours and identify gaps within the NGO's deliverables, approach, or structure. Promotions for these women were almost guaranteed as they were in fact not only hard workers, but also smart workers who understood the NGO system, contributed to it, and challenged it while satisfying the needed level of office politics. These colleagues and subordinates guaranteed programmatic success for the NGOs, which meant more funding from large donors. Therefore, when a gap is identified within a project, or – and more importantly - when the project ends and the NGO is hiring for a new project, these women had an advantage. Therefore, while it is difficult to understand the nature of nepotism in NGOs from these case studies, it is possible to pin-point some trends regarding how NGOs may allow women to advance.

#### ***4. NGOs and managerial positions: ease of attainment***

Contrasting to what she had reported about her first promotion, Elene (Project Manager, LNGO) did not initially intend on attaining a managerial role in the organization she had been working in during the interview, as she had been a part-time trainer for six months prior to her promotion, but rather was promoted from a trainer position to a project manager. Beyond not expecting the promotion, Elene also found the transition very challenging given that she had very limited experience in this specific training field and that she had not yet become accustomed to the work environment specific to the organization. A similar case was present among the interviewed individuals in the INGO, where Reem (HR Manager, INGO) was hired as a receptionist and kept on getting promoted position after position until she became the manager of the department after extensive self-coaching. This is indicative of a possible factor behind the high managerial promotion rate found in NGOs among women: it is possible that the NGO culture is generally nurturing towards employees -whom are generally women in their majority - and allows them to grow within the NGO, as opposed to rigidity within the hierarchical structure which extends the time prior to receiving a promotion. This may also be disadvantageous – as the individuals working in the NGOs cite high turnover rates, where the high pressure of being unprepared for higher level tasks may be part of the cause. While programmatic factors related to short-term contracts contribute to high turnover in NGOs, organizational factors also play an important role in “dysfunctional turnover”, or turnover directly caused by administrative and organizational functions (Loquercio et al., 2006). Dysfunctional turnover caused by organizational factors were related to poor support from superiors, insufficient training, and insufficient managerial

experience (ibid). The positive side of this factor was attested to by the interviewed women, as many believed that their employing NGOs offered the privilege of exposure to higher level tasks, meetings and trainings on the one hand while offering them a space to learn and grow from their mistakes. Furthermore, given that the majority of employees in NGOs are women, this may then promote the existence of a high rate of women managers in these organizations. The interviewed women - as well as two of the three men interviewed – shared nearly identical opinions as to why they believe NGOs tend to have more women employees. This trend was attributed to the men not applying to work in NGOs, as opposed to NGOs purposefully selecting women over men. Most interviewed individuals believe that men do not apply to jobs in NGOs, because they are seen as feminine, caretaking jobs that pay less and aren't fundamental. Furthermore, the analyzed NGOs had more accommodations for women in comparison to other workplaces, as suggested in Chapter 4. In sum, while NGOs may be more lenient in how they allow women to climb the hierarchy, and they may facilitate this upwards ascension by exposing their employees to multilevel conversations, tasks, and responsibilities, this may also be a double-edged sword. To many employees, this exposure and leniency may be seen as career support, while it is the exact opposite to others, who may feel that they are expected to learn and do everything on their own and therefore feel isolated from any support from their superiors.

##### ***5. Self-value, turnover rate, and the environment for career development***

Several themes arose regarding the interviewed women's perception of their roles in the organizations they worked in and the reasons why they were capable of reaching a



managerial position. On the one hand, their satisfaction and willingness to stay in an organization was dependent on their perceived value to the organization, as well as how valuable the work was to their self-growth. Several interviewees noted that they decided to work for a different organization when they felt that their roles were no longer valuable. Interestingly, their pursuit of further education (ie: Master's and technical degrees) did not occur during the time that they decided to shift jobs or left their position for a new one. The absence of a relation between the two is an interesting one as they did not use further education as a tool for promotion, and this may add another dimension to the possibility of internal motivation as the main factor behind pursuing these degrees and to attain promotions. There was also high importance placed on the presence of challenges that promote learning.

“I didn't see that it was any more added value for me and nor I was an added value to the organization.”

“[while speaking about a previous position] I don't know what to say about this position. It wasn't that important... I like when things are challenging and when you have to do something new and at the same time, I have the flexibility to do my own research and decide.”

On the other hand, the interviewed women who had experience prior to reaching the managerial positions they had at the time of the interviews attributed acquiring their managerial roles to working very hard to deserve them. Similarly, the women with experience before becoming managers did not attribute business connections or further education as contributing factors, as exemplified in the previous section. Most of the women with experience prior to joining the observed NGOs were hired for the same title as they had in their previous employing organization. It is arguable then that the employing NGO was

exposed to their level of skills, hard work, and deliverance of KPIs, which is what may have then led to their promotions. It is interesting, however, that the same women disagreed that building relationships within the workplace was one of the assisting factors to receiving their promotions. This is contrary to previously mentioned literature regarding the importance of social networking in advancing one's career.

Finally, most of the interviewed women attributed almost the majority of their work experience to the NGO they had been working with at the time of the interview. A common trend among some of the interviewed managers was also that they had been employed at the NGO either as an intern or an officer, and then left to work with other organizations, then returned for a higher position. Retention and rehiring of previous employees are common among the NGO sector, as employees are often hired on a project basis. Given that the projects that NGOs receive are temporally limited (they will not commonly last for more than five years), NGO employees are likely to fluctuate in and out of different organizations. However, an organization that had employed someone whom they had good relations with will rehire that individual in the event of receiving a project with a role suitable to said ex-employee. This possibly also contributes to systemic nepotism, as the organization may then begin to cycle between the same individuals for reasons that are not necessarily meritocratic. The interviewed women that had chosen to join other organizations did so to gain more exposure and "expand their horizons" (Angela, M&E Manager, INGO) and then returned for a higher role. Thus, it may also be said that given that the phenomenon is akin to receiving a promotion after attaining the needed experience, even though there was a lack of linear

growth within the organization since they had acquired the experience in a different NGO then came back.

## **6. *Enabling leaders***

The interviewed managers mentioned the environment of the NGOs as a contributing factor to the managers' successes today, particularly the environment's inclusive nature and flexibility with junior employees and the way seniors treated their subordinates. They reported that when they were juniors, their seniors would offer them challenges beyond the tasks they were hired for and expose them to higher level conversations and meetings.

“We had a great boss back then who would expose us to a lot of things. So even though I was an officer, I was exposed to really high-level discussions, I was part of important meetings. We had the flexibility to lead our own processes.” – Angela, M&E Manager, INGO

Noe (1996) suggests that organizations should teach managers and superiors how to be enablers that support their subordinates through trainings on giving advice, feedback, and referrals “to facilitate development behavior” (Noe, 1996, p. 131). Furthermore, Orth, Wilkinson and Benfari (1987) assert that managers should assume the role of the mentor, through developing support, understanding employees and their needs, and providing them with the climate to learn. Thus, acquiring a vast array of career chances, potential for growth, and eventually receiving promotions can be contingent on whether an individual's superior provides this layer of support. This differs from literature on women's enablement for career

advancement in Lebanon, where women are less likely to be provided with the tools and networking opportunities needed to acquire a promotion (Hejase et. al., 2013).

Evidence suggesting the general enablement of employees by managers supports the possibility that the NGO sector, the culture it endorses, and the communities within it are generally a more enabling space for women to receive promotions. The usage of social networks was also important in the women's attainment of their leadership roles, given that it could be argued that their superiors, who they viewed as a notable agent of development through the provision of the tools and referrals needed to advance, is also within a career-supporting social network. Nevertheless, not all aspects regarding the ease of promotion were positive, as swift provision of higher roles bore challenges that made the participants' ability to perform their roles difficult due to lack of substantial experience.

### **C. Perceptions of Current Roles & Responsibilities**

To understand the interviewed women's perceptions regarding their roles as managers and whether the way they tackle their work and perceive their roles had any specific nuances, it was imperative to view the way they would describe different attributes specific to their roles. Comparisons and insights for future analysis were also drawn based on how the men who were interviewed responded.

## ***1. Tasks and Task-Related Challenges***

Both men and women interviewed did not have an issue in terms of the difficulty of their tasks. The interviewed women also reported that they welcome many of the challenges that they face in their roles as promoting self-growth and keeping their interest piqued, as opposed to feeling discouraged by these challenges. This was not necessarily the case with the men interviewed; they either noted challenges as a neutral aspect of their role or an unfavorable one that hinders the quality of their deliverables. For example, Angela noted during her interview that she enjoys challenges because they add depth to her work, break the daily routine and allow her to learn.

“I like it when things are challenging and when you have to do something new and at the same time, I have the flexibility to do my own research and decide on the best way that things should be done” – Angela, M&E Manager, INGO

Contrastingly, Bassam (Project Coordinator, LNGO) noted that working in an NGO possesses many different complicated elements, such as excessive research, budgeting, quality control, and crisis attenuation. These elements were reported to be irritant hindrances to the workflow.

“The work is rewarding in the sense that you are providing free education and otherwise children would be on the street...but it is not positively complicated. It could be much less complicated” – Bassam, Project Coordinator, LNGO

It is interesting that the men that were interviewed did not derive a positive overall outlook of the challenges faced, although the men interviewed are only three and therefore not representative of any generalizable sample. Yet, research does suggest that women and men have different stress coping mechanisms, where women's reaction to stress tends to be seeking social support, while men tend to shift their thinking towards the stressor (Ptacek et al., 1994; González-Morales et al., 2006) and so it is possible that women have different ways of perceiving stress. In relation, differences in perception are notable, especially as they had been found in both NGOs. The interviewed women's answers regarding task-related complications were similar to Angela's, while the three interviewed men - as well as the men I conversed with informally during my ethnographic study - had answers that were more proximal to Bassam's perspective. Given the high percentage of women working in NGOs, and the theorized way in which women seek emotional comfort to cope with stress, the NGO environment may therefore be more conducive to women's career satisfaction. A factor behind that may be that NGOs encourage conflict sensitivity and support towards one another, which is something I witnessed during my work in NGOs and during the ethnography as well. Conflict sensitivity is a skill that NGOs tend to stress on within the workplace, and many NGOs deliver trainings specific to harboring this skill as well. Another factor that may be even more relevant than that is that women are the majority of NGO employees and given that women favor emotional support during stressful times, they may also be adept at offering it. This is also enhanced by women's likelihood of scoring higher on emotional intelligence tests (Bindu & Thomas, 2006; Meshkat & Nejati, 2017; Fida, Ghaffar, Zaman, & Satti, 2018; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003) and women's tendency to be

transformational leaders, meaning leaders that work to uplift the team as a whole (Jogulu & Wood, 2006, Ladegaard, 2011).

## ***2. Groupthink and allegiance through strife***

An interesting linguistic nuance in how the women managers answered questions regarding their roles and tasks is that they would tend to emphasize their roles within the team. Their answers regarding their own roles would often be answered within the context of how they maneuver with their team and support their subordinates, focusing on terms like “support”, “check-up”, and “we” instead of “I”. This focus on the collective is in line with the gendered approach of transformational leadership, whereby women will often keep an integrative - as opposed to individualistic - mindset of their roles as leaders (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Furthermore, the interviewed women managers noted that routines and fixed schedules are not expected nor are they favorable, even with smaller tasks such as checking emails prior to arriving to the office. Research has suggested that flexible schedules within organizations add to women’s career opportunities and work-life balance (Dema, 2008), and these flexibilities are present to varying extents in the observed NGOs. In parallel, the employees in the NGOs, and especially the women according to the interviewed individuals, are expected to be flexible in their schedules and the amount of time spent working, as opposed to having fixed working hours. In fact, a few women noted that they have to work twice as hard to achieve and climb further in the workplace, as presented in Chapter 4. Many of the women managers related this to the emergency nature of their work and that their roles require for them to be flexible, not only with their time but also by sharing tasks with

other departments. Some viewed this aspect of their roles as positively adding to their abilities, while others found it difficult and overwhelming.

“At a senior management level, an organization cannot succeed if every person is only focusing on their department because it is about learning across different units and departments and it is having a bigger picture as an organization, so it allows me that” – Candace, Engagement Manager, INGO

“It can be overwhelming because it covers all the regions in Lebanon and you have to keep track of everything like the field, school implementation, quality across all regions.” - Layla, Project Manager, LNGO

In sum, it may be said that the women managers suffer from the way they are grouped and juggle one another's tasks and face many challenges because of it, added to the challenges faced due to the nature of their roles. Yet, it seems that the interviewed women also use group thinking and the rewarding factors related to their jobs as a mitigative element to the difficult nature of their roles. It is therefore further evident that while internal motivation may be one of the key factors that pushes women to achieve their roles, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there is also an external aspect. The collective nature of the teams they manage empowers them, and they in turn enforce this collective nature to try and empower their colleagues. In other words, they have created a support network between them, their colleagues, and their subordinates, where tasks, stressors, challenges, and successes are shared. This further aids in their transformational approach to leadership, where the team as a whole creates an impact as opposed to a select few. While this is advantageous in many ways in comparison to a strictly transactional approach to their teams and tasks, this creates its own kind of stressors. Sharing everything with the team means increasing the workload and time spent on work, as well as the emotional effort spent on



supporting the team. While this may be very advantageous to the organization's goals, this may add another layer of challenges especially to women that do not have time to be flexible with their work hours, or women that already work in high-stress and high-workload positions. Nevertheless, the interviewed women state that they enjoy the roles that they currently possess, in spite of – and sometimes due to - the overwhelming nature of their roles. The next chapter will analyze the reality of these challenges and how they affect women's capacity to attain career success and satisfaction.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHALLENGES – GENDER & MANAGEMENT IN THE NGO SECTOR

While the women interviewed felt that they have successfully moved past challenges stopping women from attaining jobs and advancing in their careers, their experiences were not free from challenges. The women participants faced a myriad of obstacles in their careers and daily lives, ranging from challenges related to office and employment experiences, to the impediments imposed by the sociocultural structure that Lebanese society reinforces. This chapter will cover these challenges and how they affect the women managers' ability to function freely and productively as career women.

#### **A. Team, Tasks & Accountability**

The challenges faced within the workplace were similar in both the local and international NGOs and were heavily centered around communication, workload, support, and accountability, where the four factors are all closely interlinked.

##### ***1. Culture and Power***

Many interviewed women, especially within the LNGO, expressed facing difficulties with what they referred to as the “NGO culture” and its approach. The “NGO culture” was described as the “overly sensitive and too accommodating” (Melissa, Training Manager,

LNGO) way employees, superiors, and subordinates are expected to behave. Some employees struggled with colleagues and subordinates being “too sensitive”, and others complained that others were “too harsh”. One of the women recounted that “direct feedback in this culture is very challenging. We have a very sensitive culture that takes things very personal and you were just direct and honest with them”, while another maintained that she had to teach herself “not to take it personal”. This also manifested in the creation of office politics and gossip, according to one of the interviewed managers, as colleagues would not directly communicate with one another whenever problems arise. They would instead discuss in the form of individual conversations or subgroups with other subordinates of that manager, and they would similarly complain to the managers about colleagues instead of directing their issues to the colleague in question. The prevalence of office gossip in the workplace has been theorized to be a method to establish power dynamics between fellow gossipers through indirect aggression and therefore, in a sense, the disgruntled subordinates can compensate for their feelings of frustration and distrust towards their managers (Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Ellwardt, Wittek & Wielers, 2012). Furthermore, and especially relevant to women in NGOs where their gender is the majority, gossiping is suggested to have a direct relationship with the increase of intragender conflict between women, as well as an increase in harsh judgement and unrealistic expectations targeted at women, by other women (Brownlee, 2013).

Directly related, tensions would arise in regard to establishing trust and power dynamics, where challenges related to communication were listed by a considerable amount of the interviewed managers. The same managers detailed difficulties in establishing mutual

trust, especially regarding the challenges related to gaining the team's trust and comfort when joining the team. Reem (HR Manager, INGO) experienced this issue given that when she joined the organization, she was replacing a manager that was well liked, while Melissa (Training Manager, LNGO) had a similar issue in gaining trust, except she was replacing someone the team did not particularly like. Melissa was instead promoted from a colleague to a superior, and therefore faced the issue of establishing the superior-subordinate dynamic due to moving from being perceived as an equal to an authority figure, as well as the difficulty faced while trying to establish that her methods are different from the previous manager. According to research done by Farabaugh and Davidhizar (2007), the existence of sensitivity within the workplace in lieu of a shift in power dynamic with the introduction of a new leader is not uncommon, especially if that leader is a former peer. Added to that was the maintenance of superior-subordinate boundaries without "creating resistance to people in a sense that you've become in such a role so you cannot engage in this type of discussion" (Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO), Melissa described, while detailing how it feels to try to have a regular social discussion beyond work deliverables. It is difficult to maintain an equal social relationship, according to Melissa, after becoming your colleague's leader. She explained this after a visibly awkward interaction with her subordinate, who had been recently married. Melissa had added the descriptions of "wife" and "mother" to her identity a while ago, and was eager to describe her experiences to her newly-wed subordinate. The line between 'professional' and 'personal' had blurred once again, and Melissa chose to suppress her enthusiasm not too long after beginning to engage in the conversation. Overt closeness to the team is inherently problematic according to Farabaugh and Davidhizar (2007), which also seemed to be Melissa's experience, as the manager will struggle to

properly delegate tasks, diver disciplinary actions when needed, and enforce the policies and status quo that are integral to said manager's workplace. Similarly, excessive aloofness may not be able to offer the proper guidance and growth needed by a subordinate, as well as build a productive workplace environment (ibid). While observing these superior-subordinate dynamics, I noticed that many of the other women managers in both organizations had an authoritative approach with their subordinates sometimes, exhibiting varying levels of harshness, while delegating tasks using confrontational and straightforward language. They would later approach the same subordinates with a joking and friendly manner but would soon exit the conversation, similar to Melissa. It is possible that this dissonance between being too friendly and too aloof had therefore affected the women manager's mannerisms with their subordinates. While the men managers and coordinators were a very small sample (both those formally interviewed and informally studied), I observed more consistent behavior; they were mainly either transformational or transactional; friendly or strict; straightforward and confrontational or conciliatory. On the other hand, women managers used context and purpose to choose which style they decided to adopt with their subordinates. Instead of using one approach that maybe does not work for all situations, they maneuver between being more transactional or more transformational to fulfill a goal or reach the reaction they are aiming for from their subordinates and colleagues. This was especially exemplified by how many of the managers expressed that they do not want to be too authoritarian but at the same time do not want to give subordinates too much leeway to ensure that these subordinates will respect boundaries. Within that sense, I noticed that women's leadership style is more situational and fluid compared to men.

## **2. *Workload and Skillset***

On another note, a sizeable amount of the interviewed individuals had issues with their tasks and workload, although many had described challenges to be motivating and an opportunity to learn and grow, as presented in Chapter 5. Generally, the managers felt that juggling the number of tasks they had to cover was difficult, and that there are important but menial tasks that they have to do that take away from their main role as a manager. In the LNGO, this was associated with the high turnover rate present within the organization. Coordinating between the many individuals in the team was also listed as a largely difficult aspect by some of the interviewed managers.

“I am not only managing; managing is not delegating everything. Balancing management and one’s own work is not easy because you are trying to set the direction for so many things because you need to develop the strategic planning, engage yourself in a lot of work and support the team” Dana, Project Manager, LNGO

Another listed challenge was insufficient training during the beginning of employment; as mentioned in Chapter 5, it is possible that NGOs hire individuals that are not necessarily fully trained but allow them to grow within the organization. Yet, insufficient training is an amplified challenge, as some of the interviewed individuals noted. This was directly related to another recurring theme, which is that the managers at many times felt a lack of support from their superiors.

“I would see my manager supporting me. Currently I don’t have that fully with the current changes going on... sometimes there is that component which is difficult. You need to take on certain things or even fill the gap of others while you need sometimes someone to guide you as well or to just give you a bit of direction.” Sarah, Program Manager, INGO

The relationship between on-the-job training, managerial support and job perception is well documented, as research has suggested that feeling unsupported and untrained has a direct correlation to feelings of job dissatisfaction (Chiang, Back, & Canter, 2005; Jones, Jones, Latreille, & Sloane, 2009; Mosadeghrad & Ferdosi, 2013).

### ***3. Accountability***

Issues directly related to accountability were found to be an issue among the interviewed individuals in both organizations, but more so in the LNGO. In the INGO, it was mainly mentioned in regard to conflict resolution, where other managers and employees would try to pass on the responsibility to peers or HR to resolve conflicts. Other than that, however, interviewed women from the INGO tended to have a relatively conciliatory and interactive approach, and voiced that they understood the shared nature of this burden. In the LNGO and mainly among the three Project Managers interviewed, there was a lot of tension with regards to which tasks should be delegated to whom, with all three of these managers feeling that there are tasks that they have to fulfill but should be someone else’s responsibility. This was related to what was reported as more menial tasks and also to tasks that are, depending on title and contract, supposed to be allocated to a different manager.

“I had problems with someone from the office because I was doing her work and then she is still in the project but not doing any work on it directly. She is not my supervisor but a colleague.” Layla, Project Manager, LNGO

This narrative had been shared among all three Project Managers interviewed in the LNGO, which is interesting since they all felt that they were doing someone else’s tasks, meaning there is a delegation issue. A study by Shahidul Hassan (2013) suggested that role ambiguity and lack of task-based accountability at the workplace may increase feelings of job dissatisfaction, and these factors have shown to be a predictor of work-based stress and tension among colleagues. The challenge in establishing accountability in the interviewed NGOs was attributed to a “non-corporate structure” by one of the project managers, as they would generally share tasks and not have direct task delegation. Therefore, issues related to responsibility start to develop, especially when mistakes are made. Accountability issues were also attributed to difficulties in efficient communication. In addition, I observed during my ethnography that the tensions are mainly between the women managers and neither between the men nor intergender. It is possibly due to issues with accountability, superiority, and office politics as opposed to the “dismissive stereotype” that women hate other women because they are jealous of each other.

Bee Theory (Staines, Tavris, & Jayaratne, 1974; Abalkhail, 2020) is also relevant here. The women managers not only compare themselves to one another and demean one another’s level of hard work, they also exhibited caustic behavior towards other women and not men, as I noticed during my ethnographic observation. I had specifically noticed that the women would do so in direct ways, through backhanded compliments, nitpicking, and



delivering implicit criticisms. They would also exhibit these caustic behaviors in indirect ways, such as passive-aggressive facial expressions and ending neutral conversations abruptly when some women colleagues would try to join, almost as if to exclude them. This was not observed in the INGO, as the women within the same departments interacted with one another as a collective and had a general positive approach, where the women were acquainted and friendly with one another, more so than with the men. For example, women in the INGO would be inclusive of one another in a multitude of activities, even the day-to-day ones such as having lunch with one another as a team. They would share knowledge and try to include their women colleagues in a multitude of conversations, both on the professional and personal level. They would also commonly disagree with their men colleagues as a collective. An illustration of this was a time where one of the women project managers that I had not interviewed had a disagreement with Marc (Area Manager, INGO) regarding technical methodology related to project. A few of the women managers (including Angela the M&E Manager at the INGO) vocalized their disagreement with Marc as well. Contrastingly, on the same day another one of Angela's men colleagues that was not interviewed had made a case as to why the monitoring and evaluation process should include different variables than what one of her women colleagues was suggesting. Angela gently suggested that he was right by saying that they should discuss his perspective a bit further as it may have some benefits. It is possible then that the culture at the INGO promotes a more collective and inclusive environment. Added to that is some individual feminist and collectivist characteristics in the women leading the INGO do further promote the trend of supporting women, which may further normalize this behavior.

## **B. Gender: Family & Society**

Challenges to women's ability to excel in their careers based on social and familial expectations have permeated the lives of women working in the NGO sector (Ruparel et al., 2017), and the interviewed women managers communicated anecdotes reflecting this reality, which will be exhibited in this section. This section of the chapter will focus on the challenges that arose for the women managers due to childbearing and familial responsibilities, societal expectations, societal perceptions of women, and the related barriers that these perceptions create in the workplace. Societal barriers are a prominent challenge to women in the workplace (Afiouni & Karam, 2017), and all the societal barriers that the women managers described have implications to the rest of the challenges mentioned in this section.

### ***1. Appearance and femininity: an advantage and a barrier***

One of the interviewed women felt that her physical appearance has helped compensate for the fact that she is a woman, specifically that she is younger and conventionally attractive. Similarly, she felt that appearance is an important factor in whether women will be respected and accepted as managers. Conversely, it was also noted by a few of the women that their appearance can only get them so far, as men superiors will likely ascribe the woman to certain stereotypical positions and not others, and men colleagues will not accept them: "this is always in the back of men's head, that women are for prestige like for a marketing manager position." Contrastingly, a shared opinion among many of the women managers was that appearance was not as pivotal for men, as "they

come to the office with cloths of their choice, they throw their comment nobody questions them.” On the one hand, physical appearance may have some advantages, where certain roles have a stereotypical aesthetic and those who fit into that aesthetic are more likely to be socially accepted. For example, a woman who is conventionally attractive and wears what is considered “professional attire for women” (ie: skirt suits and button up shirts) is socially fitted to many administrative roles that are stereotypically normalized to women’s employment. This is also immediately coupled with barriers, as women who do not fit the appearance stereotype for these roles may face professional skepticism, where others will not perceive them as suited for the position. This leads to an evident facet of appearance stereotypes that is gender-based. Given that leadership is inherently considered male, and that there are certain roles that are specifically socially ascribed to men (ie: technical jobs, IT and technology jobs, finance positions) women may have a difficulty penetrating these roles depending on their appearance. Women whose appearance is less stereotypically feminine may also be granted masculine roles more often, but will be socially scrutinized as they do not fit the descriptive stereotype of what women look like; feminine women may face the opposite issue. This is what Candace (Engagement Manager, INGO) also felt when she described the kind of implicit discrimination she faced when meeting with potential partners external to the organization, particularly men governmental officials. She believed that she had to go prepared for these meetings not only with the tools and information relevant to the organization and potential partner, but that she also needed to be ready to justify her ability to carry such meetings. Candace did not go to such meetings alone during the first stages of her career; she would opt to go with her manager, who was a man and who was almost always met with less scrutiny and distrust towards his authority and informational capacity.

Candace explained that she used to do all the preparations for the meeting and a proper planning of the next steps in the project but give them to her manager to present during the meeting because they would “take him more seriously”. With time, she had to break away from her manager’s protection and learn to accept this barrier. As she explained, one of the ways that helped her break this barrier was doing a lot of preparations and having the answers and insights to anything that might arise in the meeting. This way, she proved herself to be a source of knowledge and responsibility. This is an added challenging layer to women’s career as “authority” does not come with being a woman but rather it comes with being a man. It is a notable challenge and especially in reference to governmental leaders, as it provides an insight to the discriminative basis behind the gender gap at the governmental level, where only 8.4% of officials are women (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020).

## ***2. The career-woman versus the caretaker***

Firstly, the interviewed women considered social taboos related to what women should be doing a sizeable challenge. One of the barriers is the limited ability to pursue certain jobs, or the judgement that encompasses pursuing them, because these jobs require travelling.

“Sometimes, managerial positions do require a lot of travelling, so it is frowned upon when a woman travels a lot if she has a family. For men this is something normal; we are seen as worse mothers or lesser women.” Angela, M&E Manager, INGO

This is in line with research done on the “good mother” stereotype, where participants viewed employed women who were unsatisfied with their careers were as “significantly more committed to their maternal role” (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002).

While the interviewed women generally felt that they had to work much harder than their men colleagues to achieve a managerial position, they were not always given the chance to prove themselves. This was attributed to outside barriers and others’ perceptions of whether they are dependent and dependable. For example, many of the women from the INGO complained about what they are allowed to tackle in the workplace through the tasks delegated to them, as their workloads were noted as “either too much or too little, depending on how useful we are seen to the superior” (Angela, INGO). Similarly, some of the women managers reported facing difficulties because they are committed to their careers. According to their interviews, they feel that society judges women who are committed to their careers, and this yields the need to compromise.

“After having my first child, I had to take some time off. It is not okay for women to have children and work, and the men don’t help them. Now, there are many appealing jobs that I let go of because they’re not as flexible and need longer working hours. I regret that sometimes, not having a child but giving up on these jobs. Maybe I’ll consider similar jobs in the future.” Sarah, Program Manager, INGO

The descriptive stereotypes that affect women who are committed to their careers while also having children were listed as an issue among all interviewed women, and especially the assumption that women who are mothers or are expecting will not perform their roles efficaciously. Afiouni and Karam (2017) assessed the perceptions of motherhood

in relation to employment, as detailed in the research review, and the conclusion was that women were seen as a more costly employee given the possibility of familial commitments. Conversely, the interviewed women also personally felt that having parental and familial commitments affected their careers because of the cultural assumption that women are supposed to offer more of their time and efforts to their families: “for men it’s fine.... it is a cultural thing that women in our society give more.” (Farah, HR and Administration Manager, LNGO). Another descriptive stereotype that was a challenge for some of the women was the value placed on women’s careers. Melissa (Training Manager, LNGO) expressed that society sees women’s careers as unnecessary; Bassam (Project Coordinator, LNGO) concurred to this societal perception as well: “maybe a woman’s career is always seen as second grade to a man’s career.”

Furthermore, challenges regarding caretaking were not limited to childbearing, as the women managers also cited the additional obstacle of the responsibility placed exclusively on women to care for sick familial members such as parents, siblings, or children. This meant a further reduction in the time and capacity to dedicate the same amount of work into their careers as their man counterparts, as they would have to take days off work to care for their sick relative. Interestingly, one of the men participants claimed that the reason why this responsibility is carried by women is because they are more likely to be in emotional distress regarding a sick family member than men are. His response is in line with the theory that women are socially stereotyped to be an emotional and caretaking counterpart to the authoritative/assertive man (Sidani et al, 2015).

The aforementioned societal barriers, as well as the stereotype painted by the aforementioned man, were relevant to the interviewed women's experience as employees. On the one hand, explicit bias related to gender holds the nature of direct, sometimes even aggressive sexism that is openly expressed and perpetuated through descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes (Brown & Gaertner, 2008). Implicit bias, on the other hand, given its indirect nature, is not necessarily visible to the bare eye and does not include public displays of subjugation but is rather more subtle (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995). Implicit discrimination may be detected through disparities in the number of women in leadership positions, the roles offered to women versus the roles offered to men, and the way people react to women versus men in an organization, such as Candace's experience with governmental officials as mentioned in the previous section. In the INGO, one of the interviewed women noted that until recently, the majority of the higher positions and more important projects were held by men: "Before, men held the biggest portfolios. The 2 big departments are led by men rather than a woman although we do pretend that we have equality." (Angela, M&E Manager, INGO). Therefore, while the INGOs does advocate for women empowerment in their programs and employ and promote many women, it seems that the topmost positions are reserved for the man leader. Reem (HR Manager, INGO), who had worked in the INGO for more than ten years as HR, also noted that to be the case, and highlighted that the board members usually promoted men to become head of departments. Furthermore, while discussing her comfortability as a woman manager and whether she felt accepted as one while I had been conducting my informal ethnographic interviews, one of the women managers felt that men do not accept having a woman as their superior. She stated that while she had not faced this issue personally, she had seen men subordinates feel more

uncomfortable when receiving tasks from their woman superiors, and man colleagues reacting to woman managers in a less accepting way when she had not reached the managerial level. She also believed that men treat a woman manager who behaves like a man as an imposter, and women managers who behave like women managers as less of an authority figure. The backlash effect theorized by Rudman (2008) denotes this same reaction to “masculine” women, where women who ascribe to leadership styles ascribed to agentic and successful men are viewed as inferior, and women who behave like women are treated as incompetent. The women managers also listed perceptions of women’s emotional and intellectual capacities as a challenge, which falls under the umbrella of explicit/direct discrimination. All the interviewed women struggled with the misconception of women being too emotional, incapable of making difficult and strategic decisions, unable to remain objective, as literature on gender discrimination in Lebanon suggests (Sidani et. al, 2015; Jamali et. al, 2005; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

### ***3. Maternity***

The factor of pregnancy discrimination and women’s inability to perform their managerial roles while pregnant was one of the more prominent challenges the interviewed women faced, as Jamali et. al (2005) described in their research “Constraints facing working women in Lebanon: an insider view”. Gender-based issues within the workplace that were related to maternity were a recurring theme amongst all the interviewed women, and the HR manager that was interviewed from the INGO noted that managers, especially those who are men, tend to complain about the four-month maternity leave offered to pregnant women.



An instance of the perception of pregnancy was found in one of the interviews with the men, where he stated that having a pregnant woman in the team may be seen as a hindrance.

“When a woman is pregnant, you need to bear with her for 9 months with a lot of ups and downs and emotional changes and then she needs to take a maternity leave. And if there is a miscarriage (this happened twice in my team) again, they need to disappear for 2 weeks for surgery and then when they come back, emotionally you need to give them support. It is fine if they are your team member, you need to support them, but technically speaking, these are factors that may impact the time availability of a woman, of a married woman specifically in a certain job.” - Marc, Area Manager, INGO

Therefore, negative and dismissive perspectives of pregnancy seem to be a sub-layer of challenges related to gender-based discrimination in the NGOs, whereby women’s pregnancies are seen as obstacles to the workflow and office dynamic, especially by colleagues who are men.

#### ***4. Motherhood: not an obstacle, but an added responsibility***

Becoming a mother affected the careers of most of the women with children to a certain extent. The effects were felt through the inability to dedicate the same amount of time to work after having children, as well as posing a hindrance to different attributes of job opportunities that include a need to travel and work later hours. The interviewed women with children had to stop working, some beyond the maternity leave. That alone presented certain challenges, such as reintegrating into the workplace post-maternity leave, which meant compensating for lost time through working very long hours and therefore sacrificing time spent caring for their children. While some were only affected by introducing a child

into their lives temporarily, and reported a feeling of “slowing down a bit for a while in terms of career advancement and what I want to focus on”, others felt that the longevity of the challenge was indefinite: “A lot of times I felt and I still feel, that if I weren’t a mom and didn’t have 2 souls depending on me, I would have gone further”. Tlaiss and Kauser’s (2011) study on women’s career advancement observed the perceptions of Lebanese women managers regarding familial responsibilities, including childbearing. Their study showed that childless women saw their childlessness as an advantageous aspect of their lives as they have less hindrances to career-advancement. Contrastingly, mothers did not see children as an obstacle to career advancement but “rather an additional responsibility”. The main difference between the women of this study and Tlaiss and Kauser’s study (ibid), however, is that most of the women in this study did not have a domestic helper. The existence of domestic helpers meant receiving assistance in terms of chores and childcare, which the researchers mentioned as a possible reason as to why the women interviewed in their study differed from the common alternative view. Most of the mothers of this NGO case study, however, noted how juggling tasks is a challenge since they had already needed to cover almost all unpaid labor in the home on their own prior to having children. Adding children to the equation meant adding all the responsibilities related to the third member of the family (other than herself, her husband, and in a few cases, her parents). Cleaning, feeding, and washing the child, providing emotional support, school support, and playtime are all tasks that are time and energy consuming that the women had to take care of alongside the regular house chores and balancing their careers. Without support systems that effectively mitigate the intensive stress and task-load of women who are mothers, career women in NGOs are likely to feel the

excess pressure and perhaps settle for jobs that are not necessarily their choice but rather what is doable in light of their strenuous workload.

##### ***5. The role of support systems in mediating the career and home life***

In terms of coping with the added responsibility of being caretakers and parents, the mothers/managers placed a high emphasis on the importance of familial support in regard to attenuating maternal challenges, similar to those of the Tlaiss and Kauser's study (2011). Furthermore, the women who reported that maternity did not affect or only temporarily affected their careers also noted that their partners are supportive with house chores and taking care of their children. Assistance from the parents of the mothers/managers was also a key aspect of how they were able to maintain their career while caring for young children. This was integral to the point where those who benefited from parental assistance noted that they would not have been able to juggle these responsibilities without said assistance. Support from the participants' close social circle such as friends and extended family was also emphasized, not just in terms of assisting with childcare. Rather the social circle's acceptance of the women managers' choice to work and parent was the emphasis, and this is culturally relevant as there is a taboo regarding mothers who work, since the social assumption is that working women are less efficacious parents. Women who did not have the same level of support were more likely to sacrifice aspects from either their career or spending time with their children. In fact, the women who felt that they needed to sacrifice many aspects of their career – and continue to sacrifice – reported that they did so because of lack of support from their husbands mainly, as well as lack of general familial support.

“With my eldest daughter I missed a lot of stuff. I used to go home at 8 or 9 at night. During the first period, I used to put her at my mother in law’s house and used to arrive home late. I used to have constant guilt about always arriving late or that she’s always sleeping in the car on the way home and I don’t get to see her, I am not there. This also affected my relationship with my husband. [he would say] ‘what is this? You always stay at work and our daughter is constantly staying at my mother’s and this is not normal’.” Reem, HR Manager, INGO

Furthermore, all the women who felt less supported had to delay the pursuit of aspirations and planned goals because of their maternal responsibilities: “Personal development is on the side now for a while. I’d really like to do a master’s degree now but definitely I cannot think about it.” (Layla, Project Manager, LNGO). Two of the women in question noted that their husbands did however pursue preplanned goals. Similarly, on one of the days that I was conducting my ethnographic study, around the end of the work shift I had noticed that Farah (HR and Administration Manager, LNGO) had begun to check her phone anxiously every few minutes. She saw that I noticed, and explained that she was flustered, as it was 4:15, and her daughter finishes kindergarten at 5:00, and was worried about being late to pick her up. She does not share this responsibility with her spouse; instead, Farah picks her daughter up from kindergarten every day and then continues working after she puts her daughter to bed.

Employment in the NGO sector may have some humanitarian benefits, as these organizations attempt to uphold the values they advocate for, yet the attempt to insulate the organizations from the private sector’s shortcomings proves to be a double-edged sword. The aforementioned challenges also display the complications that women face as employees and individuals within the patriarchal culture. While the NGOs they are

employed in may have some facilitation for women, this does not fully eliminate all the impediments that women face, partially due to their lives outside the office, but also due to the intrusive nature of the patriarchal structure and its ability to permeate different levels of private and public life.

## CHAPTER VII

### WOMEN AS PEERS, LEADERS, AND COMPETITORS

Previous research on leadership in the workplace has captured the complexity of gendered approaches to leadership styles and found stark differences between the way men and women manage their teams (Heiman, 2012; Hejase et al 2013; Ladeguard 2011; Baxter 2012; Jogulu & Wood, 2006; Tannen, 1998). So far, this study has attempted to contextualize the hypotheses of said research to the NGO sector in Lebanon to observe the gender-based leadership dichotomy, or to identify different patterns relevant to the analyzed sample. The aim of this chapter is to view how women managers in the Lebanese NGO sector navigated leading their teams, as well as how they perceive themselves as leaders and supported their subordinates. Analyzing the interviewed individuals' perceived and utilized leadership orientations was therefore divided into two aspects: the leadership attributes they value in themselves and their perceptions of how they lead, support, and interact with their teams. The chapter will lastly delve into the direct gender-based conflicts faced among peers in the NGOs, as well as gender stereotyping found among the interviewed participants.

#### **A. The makings of a good leader**

There was minimal difference regarding leadership attributes valued in oneself between the woman & man participants' responses: technical capability, communication skills, and ethics and objectivity were mentioned unanimously. Guidance and understanding

were also mentioned by many of the interviewed women, suggesting a mentorship approach to leadership. This may be exemplified through the way the INGO's Program Manager described being a leader. She viewed leadership as synonymous with guiding her subordinates in the right direction and giving them the platform to grow as employees and as individuals. Similarly, I had noticed multiple instances of a mentorship approach among the managers during my ethnographic study. For example, in a meeting I observed, the Country Director of the LINGO (whom I did not interview) was guiding the conversation towards the future approach of the project managers, allowing them to brainstorm how they would react in certain contexts and suggesting certain approaches. Mentor-like leadership is one of the attributes of transformational leadership, where leaders assist the individual employee's needs, skills and aspirations, which in turn improves the team as a whole (Nash et al., 2017).

Furthermore, most of the interviewed women and the three interviewed men also noted the importance of interpersonal skills and differentiated between them and communication skills. Kurland and Pelled (2000, p. 428) define the act of communication as "a process by which a message is transferred from an active source, through a channel, to a passive receiver". Interpersonal behavior and relations may be seen as a human extension to the technical nature of communication, as interpersonal relations revolve around perceptions and expectations of one another, as well as the mode of interaction with one another (Heider, 1958). Spitzberg and Cupach (2011) further emphasize the interactive importance of interpersonal skills as "the means through which all human relationships are initiated, negotiated, maintained, transformed, and dissolved".

“Yes, you should know how to communicate the idea, the goal of the project you need those skills, but you also need interpersonal skills. You need to know how to connect with people, how to understand them and see eye to eye with them and their experiences. You need this to negotiate and get what you want while still being a kind and considerate leader.” Dana, Project Manager, LNGO

The role of interpersonal skills in solidifying the leadership capability of employees in managerial roles, according to most of the interviewed women, is indisputable. Similarly, Tannenbaum, Weschler, & Massarik (1961) define leadership as the use of interpersonal influence and communication ability to complete a task or goal. Leadership as a function of gender further views the interjection of interpersonal skills, yet not necessarily in that there is a presence of interpersonal skills and tools in one gender’s leadership style and an absence in the other (Holmes, 2006). According to Holmes, interactive styles used in order to achieve a goal may skew the interpersonal approach towards certain gender norms. The women’s focus on communication skills, guidance, mentorship, and especially interpersonal skills suggests a leaning towards a transformational style. While the women did show these skills during the ethnographic study, there were many challenges to their perception, as they often also resorted to a more transactional approach. This will be further delved into throughout the second section of the chapter.

## **B. Perceptions of Leadership Style**

The data regarding the second aspect of leadership orientation – which is their perceptions of how they lead, support, and interact with their teams - was similar across the women participants, however the amount of emphasis placed on each attribute was different.



Furthermore, two out of the three interviewed men showed minimal gender differences in their answers. The third did not provide substantial information in this section, however from my observation during fieldwork, I saw that he had a more transactional approach with his subordinates, as his approach was more direct, task-oriented and reward-punishment driven. With the exception of the aforementioned manager, the prevalent approach was a transformational approach with some transactional properties. The rest of this section will be centered on the answers of the women managers.

### *1. Affective mentorship*

Firstly, all the interviewed women managers were affectively-oriented, according to their perceptions of their leadership style, and placed a high emphasis on providing their team with emotional support. Layla (Project Manager, LNGO) for example, who reported that she was very strict with her team, also emphasized that albeit her strictness, she intentionally focuses on empowering her team-members and providing them with a platform to grow both as employees and as individuals. She also reported that she will always try her best to show her team that she is appreciative of them and advocate for her team-members; the other managers who were surveyed provided similar sentiments. One instance that I had witnessed during my ethnographic study was also during Elene's interview (Project Manager, LNGO), as one of her employees had interrupted the interview to ask her a question regarding one of her tasks. Firstly, her subordinate felt comfortable doing so, which indicates a less rigid manager-to-subordinate dynamic, and also the nature of Elena's response was interesting, as she did not only tell her subordinate the steps needed to

complete the task. Instead, Elene asked her what she needed in order to complete the task and provided her with a quick overview of the importance of the task. Before her subordinate left, Elene thanked her for providing pictures of the trainings they had been providing in one of their schools, as she did not get the chance to do so in the morning because she had an interview with me. While desirability bias cannot be dismissed, given that a large chunk of the interview was about how the managers feel that they lead and treat their subordinates, it is interesting to view the importance the women place on being transformational. All of the women placed considerable weight on being affectively supportive, team-oriented and understanding with their subordinates during their interviews; some of them even specifically mentioned transformational leadership and its superiority as a leadership orientation. Through adopting a supportive and interactive approach, the managers provide a platform for comfort, self-actualization, and growth within the workplace (Jogulu and Wood, 2006), and all the women seemed to understand that in ideal terms.

“If I received something from anyone of them, even if I didn’t use it, I will call them and tell them Thank you, it was very helpful. I think acknowledgment is very important and that is the only thing that gives a lot of motivation...” Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO

“It is a balance; you have to give them credits and you have to show them that things are not as per your order. You definitely don’t want someone to work out of hate, you need someone who is working based on desire and wanting to work.” Angela, M&E Manager, INGO

Understanding individual differences relating to each person in the team was viewed as an important aspect of being a leader, in order to effectively communicate, adapt to the

team-member's needs and properly allocate them to tasks. In fact, a recurring theme during the interviews was motivating and reinforcing subordinates, as well as trying to provide them with new challenges while providing guidance and technical support as well. This style of leadership is also in line with the mentorship approach (Nash et al., 2017).

Other aspects that are key to transformational leadership that were found among all the studied women managers are consideration and flexibility. One example includes the attendance bank program that the HR manager at the LNGO created to reinforce extra hours spent at work, as opposed to punishing late arrivals through salary deductions. Moreover, most of the interviewed women reported that they will purposely adapt their own approach to the needs and personalities of their subordinates, as opposed to expecting the subordinates to navigate an approach that may not be suitable to them. While rewards based on exhibiting desirable behavior is key to transactional leadership (Zafra-Lopez et al., 2012), the presence of rewards with the absence of punishment is an interesting combination of transactional leadership style. In this case, women would aim for low-conflict interactions and try to use motivation through goals and tasks as opposed to punishment. Conversely, most of the women managers emphasized the need for strictness and punishment, which is also one of the main attributes of the transactional leadership style (ibid). "The least I can do is to let them be as long as they are doing their tasks it is fine" Sarah (Program Manager, INGO) stated, however she also further added that she needs for the team to "feel her presence" in the sense of always reporting to her in detail, regular meetings, and provision of explicit guidance. Adding to the aforementioned instance, many of the women managers stated that they need to be strict to reinforce the need to respect limits and the authoritative balance in

the hierarchy, as well as to ensure that tasks are completed and deadlines are met. In fact, while the women managers focused on the collaborative dynamic in terms of task distribution and idea creation, and ensured accessibility for guidance or support, most of the interviewed women reported that they have a more task-oriented approach. Their task-oriented approach, as well as their aim to preserve the hierarchy and maintain authority are some of the main characteristics of transactional leadership (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). This dissonance between many of the women's ideals and practical approach is one of the phenomena that arose during the case studies. Therefore, the women are aware of the advantages of a transformational approach, possibly because transformational leadership is encouraged within their workplace. Yet, the many times where they've chosen to forfeit the transformational approach raises questions regarding how suited a strictly transformational approach is to the NGO culture, and particularly how internally accepted the approach is by those leaders who decide what the NGO culture looks like. It also provides an insight to how effective these leaders perceive the transformational approach to be.

## ***2. The team as a collective***

Similar to the perceived relationship-oriented nature of the interviewed women managers, they also reported a preference for collaborative, team-oriented dynamic. Namely, all of the interviewed women, with the exception of one, reported that new ideas are expressed, negotiated and developed as a team, with some nuanced differences. Even if the projects are suggested or designed by the donor and higher management (top-down), there is always space for personal initiatives and implementation styles that give room for a

collective team approach. The collectivist approach of collaborative working is in line with the theory on transformational leadership and the interactional styles that women choose to model (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2006; Tannen, 1998), as women often choose to use tasks and goals to promote development and organizational change as a collective group. While the interviewed women sometimes had a top-down approach with their subordinates, especially while delegating tasks and through some instances of day-to-day communication, the collectivist approach specific to idea creation was evident. The nature of collaborative work and decision making ranged between sharing tasks with colleagues -as well as subordinates sometimes - and creating new ideas as a team. Regarding idea development, the interviewed women reported accepting pitched ideas from subordinates (such as activities, ways to implement the project, creation of monitoring tools, etc.) and developing them as a team, team meetings where ideas are collectively developed, and open-ended discussions regarding challenges and events that proliferate new ideas.

“I usually try to do a joint type of branding (brainstorming for the sake of developing the brand) because it can be interesting for someone who’s role might be limiting in certain places to be engaged” Candice, INGO

“For me I do not believe in being a boss or to follow the title as a manager. Being a leader, you have the respect that you need from others and you get exactly what you want when you have these values as respect and equality at work” Dana, Project Manager, LNGO

Most of the women also claimed to provide room for individual decision making, as well as the perceived need for mistakes, which falls in line with their reported perception of the NGO environment and how it allows for growth through error. This approach is closer

to transactional leadership, which tends to be less involved with the details, and therefore subordinates are given the room to make their own decisions as long as the end goal is delivered (Coates, 2004; Tannen, 1998). Therefore, it seems that the managers' approach to collaborative versus autonomous work does not necessarily fit in a dichotomy; rather, the team's need to be collaborative or not is the deciding factor. There was a recurrent focus on reinforcing the "bigger picture" as well as encouraging growth and reflection. This is one of the key points of transformational leadership, and it was expressed through emphasizing to their subordinates the importance of looking beyond tasks, trying to make contributions that create sustainable change, and constantly discussing intentions.

"If you have a vision and horizon, this makes the team feel safe. I do tell my team that this project is hard and they do agree..."

One of the managers (Melissa, Training Manager, LNGO) was an outlier to the trend and followed a transactional approach with decision making and task delegation. Melissa had reported this in her interview, and I had also noticed this method of interaction during the ethnographic study. This was a stark contrast to how she would regularly provide emotional and social support to her team, through her more nurturing linguistic style and mentoring approach. She explained that the reason she feels the need to rely on this approach is that most of the time, she feels that she does not have time to discuss with her team because of the emergency nature of her work and therefore adopts a more autonomous approach. Melissa noted that she "can see the whole picture, I do not have the time to show it to everyone else or to wait for them". She however continued to state that she still makes

the effort to empower her team, especially knowing the nature and limitations of both a subordinate role and an emergency context, which can challenge a subordinate's growth. She also stated that she offers them the space and freedom to make decisions, even if some mistakes happen in the process, and I noticed that she follows this approach more so than the other managers. "I now know that even if things went wrong, I can take it easy, wait and give it time. Before I wanted everything to be right, now I still want things to be right but at the same time taking it easy on others. This has improved a lot." Similarly, most of the interviewed women had a more conciliatory approach when communicating that mistakes were made. Crisis response occupations do face an added obstacle regarding leadership, whereby transformational leadership is more difficult to attain due to the nature of the role (Caro, 2016). Caro (2016) therefore posits the need for employers to address this challenge, thus necessitating the support of their employees through efficacious emergency training which will both support the employee and minimize risk factors.

From the overall responses and exposure within the ethnographic study of the NGOs, it can be concluded that there is more likely a mixed approach between transactional and transformational leadership amongst women managers in the NGO sector in Lebanon. Interviewed women from both NGOs emphasized more on the transformational approach in values and mentorship style yet at times had a mainly transactional approach in practice, which was especially evident in the LNGO. The women not only emphasized on the importance of transformational leadership, but they rather enforced it in many cases, such as through interactive idea creation, some aspects of communication (especially in the INGO) and systemic inclusion of subordinates in higher-level conversations and tasks. Yet, the

women's use of punishment, power dynamics and a hierarchical approach, as well as a trend towards leadership that is more task-oriented without being overly involved in the details of the tasks fit into the transactional leadership style. This may be due to the nature of the work, given that both NGOs work with vulnerable populations, large donations, and tight deadlines. The higher prevalence of the transactional method in the LNGO further contributes to this possibility since the entire scope of their work is with extremely vulnerable children and emergency responses. However, some of the managers in the INGO also worked in these domains and did not have as high of a tendency towards transactional leadership. The nature of their leadership approach(es) is possibly linked to the need to manipulate their role as a leader, as opposed to using their role as a leader to maneuver through the workplace. Since women managers in Lebanon face heightened levels of skepticism regarding their authority and whether they are qualified to have it, they may revert to a more authoritative approach to prove that they should have it when they need to (ie: enforcing hierarchy and bureaucracy through power dynamics to preserve respect and order). Specifically, NGOs commonly work in highly volatile situations, with highly volatile stakeholders and vulnerable beneficiaries whose lives are almost never stable. This environment is commonly a breeding ground for both transformational and transactional leadership styles, according to my personal experience working with NGOs, as well as the interviews held with the women who manage such environments. This is despite the fact that the women know that transformational leadership creates a better and more sustainable culture within the NGOs, not because they avoid it due to their idealistic preferences for transactional leadership. What may also have a pivotal influence on their leadership style is their ability to contribute to the overall NGOs direction or goals. While there is some form of



idea creation in the LNGO, the women in the INGO had more influence on what ideas were implemented as projects, and the women in the INGO were less transactional than those in the LNGO. In this case, the top of the hierarchy is not the Head of Mission, CEO, or Board of Directors, but rather the donors who enforce restraints or provide flexibilities to this leadership level, and these restraints then trickle down to the managerial class. While the enveloping society's effect on gender may push women to lead a certain way, their work environments also may have a direct effect on the end result.

In this case, we can say that the leadership styles of women managers go beyond the binary of transformational and transactional leadership and more situational. This is because of the different interchangeable factors such as gender, society, culture, expectations and norms; as well as the work environment and day-to-day challenges in the job that contribute differently to women's experiences and leadership styles.

### **C. Gender-Based Differences in Leadership: Barriers, Interpersonal Complications, and Stereotypes**

This section of the analysis will focus on the women managers' perceived gender-based differences, perceptions of gender-roles imposed by society, and how these gender roles influence their interactions in the workplace. Intragender interactions and conflict will also be discussed. Finally, insights gained from the perspectives provided by the man participants will be used to further develop the analysis.

Perceptions of societal gender roles and perceived differences were in line with the findings of the literature review and were reported to be influenced by the way society views

women (Candace, Engagement Manager, INGO). The stereotype posits that women are more emotional, talkative, and sensitive, while men are expected to be tough, emotionless decisionmakers (Hofstede, 2001; Heilman, 2012). In fact, the interviewed women attributed gender gaps related to the hiring process in other sectors to the assumption that women are unable to think critically or act as problem solvers and decisionmakers. Furthermore, social pressures regarding gender expectations were deemed a critical influence on women's leadership styles and interactions with the workplace.

“There are so many criteria for us women to meet. You have to be excellent at your work, you have to have a clean house, focus on your children, stay beautiful. We have so many things that we have to achieve, it is really tough on women. There isn't this fair distribution at home, what women should do and what men should do.”  
Reem, HR Manager, INGO

In terms of perceptions of gender, it can be generalized among the participants that there is perceived gender-based differences between men and women both intrinsically and in the workplace. A common theme among the interview results was that the women managers believed that women tend to notice social cues and have a high level of emotional intelligence, more so than men. Many studies attest to this hypothesis where women were found to have higher overall or factor-based emotional intelligence and pay more attention to social details (Bindu & Thomas, 2006; Meshkat & Nejati, 2017; Fida, Ghaffar, Zaman, & Satti, 2018; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003).

“Men notice less some cues. For example, we are in a meeting and there is a clear dynamic of a problem between two people, I feel that men do not notice it. When you tell them about it, it is as if it never even crossed their mind... Women notice a bit more than men” Dana, Project Manager, LNGO

Farah, the HR and Administration Manager in the LNGO, detailed a situation similar to the aforementioned after a meeting that I had observed during the ethnographic study. She described how she had been speaking to one of the newer employees about his team and tasks. She noticed that two of his women colleagues had some implicit negative interactions with one another, which I had also noticed, yet he did not feel like there was anything different.

On another note, women participants viewed women as more detail oriented, judgmental, and tough self-critics, expressing sentiments such as the following: “We do far more than men, so we are really tough on ourselves. For my background, all the women that I know are really supportive” (Angela, M&E Manager, INGO). However, some of the participants did not perceive definitive gender differences in relation to how women act, their ability to perceive emotional and social cues, or their ability to be hired and promoted in the NGO sector. One of the women managers attributed differences to social perceptions and not accurate representations of women, while another emphasized that differences are related to individual character traits as opposed to gender. Befitting to stereotypes regarding women’s deficient technical capabilities, George (Procurement Manager, LNGO) expressed that he would never hire a woman as a logistics officer, as he felt that a woman would not possess the negotiation and coordination skills needed to perform the task. He explained that this is what he believes not because women are less skillful but rather to “protect” them because this position will expose them to a lot of men drivers and service providers and that the language they use offends women. So, it will be hard for women to negotiate and coordinate with them. Furthermore, while another one of the men managers stated that women have equal opportunities as men, he later on noted that out of all the managers he has

worked with, only one of them was a woman. It is possible that the interviewed individuals that do not view gender-based differences have not experienced these differences firsthand. Another explanation may be social desirability bias, where they may subconsciously deny any difference in gender experiences because such differences may be perceived negatively (Krumpal, 2011), and especially in an NGO context where fighting sexism is one of the key pillars of change.

Most of the men and women managers reported that their superiors, over the course of their career, had generally been more involved in the details and processes of their work if they had been women, and the opposite was true in the case of their man superiors. Most had reported that they preferred the more involved method, and that their women superiors would provide more in terms of personal growth and enhancement of the projects at hand. This finding matches the theory related to the effect of transformational leadership - which is predominantly attributed to women - where involvement and process-orientation are factors of the transformational approach and are sound methods of providing subordinates with the support needed to work, learn, and grow (Tannen, 1998).

“I believe that it is easier for me to work with women not men because I believe they have a higher emotional intelligence and they can multitask and it is easier for them to trust you.” Bassam, Project Coordinator, LNGO

The effect of gender roles in the workplace on employment and management capacity was also assessed. Firstly, the study was in line with Heilman’s research, which showed that women who do not conform to leadership styles that are ascribed to women face

consequences that hinder their capacities in the workplace at multiple levels (2012).

Therefore, the NGO culture and the presence of a women-majority at the workplace did not attenuate the phenomenon of women leaders being shunned for harboring leadership attributes that are usually accepted for man leaders. Instead, the necessity of conforming to the leadership style expected from them rises again, and according to Candace (Engagement Manager, INGO): *“if you are a man and you are very bossy and straightforward then you are a good leader, but a woman is not.”*

The challenge is in fitting “leadership” (which is male attributed) into the defined set of cultural and behavioral role of women (Merchant, 2012). “Women are expected to behave like leaders while simultaneously fitting into the stereotypical feminine role” ... “the more they violate the standards of their gender, the more they are penalized by prejudiced reactions” (Merchant, 2012, p.42). At the same time, when women exercise authority and control in leadership positions they are harshly judged (definitely more than male leaders). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders suggests that the dissonance between the “female” as a gender role and leadership results in two forms of prejudice: the first is regarding women in leadership position as less “favorable” than men and the second is evaluating the characteristics of women leadership using the “masculine” lens which in this case is less favourable for women (Eagly & Karau, 2002). As a result, and in situations where the female “ascribed” gender role and the leadership role cross, women face several challenges such as having less positive attitudes towards female leaders (ibid).

Perceptions of factors that attenuate gender differences - which were also seen to skew gender-based character traits caused by the social structure and pressures - were

education and friend-and-family-based support groups. An interesting insight from one of the women participants was that the “way women are raised” (HR Manager, INGO) heavily determines their character composition, as well as their ability to perform as effective problem solvers. The participant noted that women are not always nurtured with the skillsets needed for problem solving and decision making.

In addition to that, an interesting finding of the study that went beyond the initial research questions was the phenomenon of intragender conflict and competition, mainly among women, and both with colleagues and subordinates. Although most of the women asserted that they feel more supported by women, there were evident instances of tensions between the women, feelings of toxic behaviors that were expressed about women peers and subordinates more so than men peers or subordinates, and a higher amount of competition between their women peers. Intra-gender competition is not necessarily a woman-specific phenomenon as members of all genders, according to David Buss (1989), will engage in self-promotion and competitor derogation to advance themselves. The likely distinguishing factor is that, according to studies on gender differences in aggression, women are more adept at indirect aggression, also known as “social aggression” (ie: gossiping, social exclusion, scrutiny and other methods of harming one’s social position and self-esteem (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988).

“Women in general are very judgmental and tougher on ourselves than men.” Elene,  
Project Manager, LNGO

One instance of intragender tensions between the women was a meeting that I had attended, where the manager, a woman, was assigning a task that she could not fulfill to her subordinates; one of the subordinates was a woman and one was a man. While the man subordinate accepted the task, the woman subordinate criticized her manager harshly regarding the task, noting that it was not part of her job description, and the manager reprimanded her in a particularly harsh manner as well. During the manager's interview, she expressed feelings of being judged and personally attacked, as she felt that the woman subordinate was criticizing her for not being skilled enough to fulfill the task.

It seems that overall, the fact that the women are working in NGOs that advocate for women's empowerment does not exempt them from facing gendered obstacles. The interviewed women managers exhibited that they were capable of reaching managerial positions and above in a span of time that does not necessarily exceed their men counterparts. This reality is dissimilar to the general trend of struggling to succeed due to the backlash effect (Lott, Chung, 2016; Heilman, 2012). This counterproductive fear is not necessarily unjustifiable, as women in other sectors do struggle to reach the same status that they have reached and will be criticized for being overly feminine or overly masculine (Heilman 2012). Furthermore, tensions may arise between women in response to criticism or aggression from women more so than men because women may be more likely to feel betrayed by women aggressors.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The data collected within the two studied NGOs is critical to looking at the research questions of this thesis, which aimed to understand how Lebanese women managers in NGOs were able to acquire their advanced roles, and what leadership styles they adopted in these roles. By collecting in-depth accounts and observations of their day-to-day lives through interviews and ethnographic analysis while participating in their teams as their subordinate, I was able to analyze the women's stance as employees and leaders in the Lebanese NGO sector. These case studies contributed to situating the NGO experience for women into the context of women's studies in the Arab world, and how women face structural, sociocultural, and institutional discrimination in the workplace. It also allowed for the intersectional review of how some women adopt and enforce their positions as leaders in light of these challenges. This concluding chapter will therefore reiterate the theoretical and literary findings of the research and align them with the empirical findings of these case studies.

#### **A. Revisiting the Literature**

Relevant literature has shown that women in the Arab world, including Lebanon, face gender-based discrimination under a plethora of guises and through many different channels. Women across the MENA face sexism and subjugation to varying degrees and in



different formats, even within the same country. Discrimination against women across the MENA countries takes different forms and shapes, can be direct and indirect and explicit or implicit. This does not mean that some or all are not present across the countries. For example, populations where explicit discrimination is allowed will logically also have cases of implicit discrimination. Similarly, countries where explicit discrimination is not part of the social norm will also still have cases of explicit discrimination, such as the legal marriage age of women and familial status laws (or lack thereof), women's inability to adopt certain career paths, and gender-based violence. The aforementioned are all facets of gender-based discrimination in Lebanon; Lebanese culture is riddled with sociocultural, legal, institutional and career-obstructionist challenges experienced by women that are put in place and reinforced by the patriarchal structure.

Nevertheless, women in Lebanon are allowed to work both legally and socially, have land ownership rights, are not legally subject to attire restrictions, and are not legally restrained from travelling or living on their own. Lebanese women do face other challenges due to the patriarchal structure of the society such as not being able to give their nationality to their husbands and children, family matters, divorce, custody and economic participation which ultimately affect their career trajectories – that is, if they are empowered to have a career, as many Lebanese women are not. An indicator of these challenges is how women are more likely to attain education and higher education than men, however women's education-to-employment rate is only 26.3%, while men's is 76.3% (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2020, pp. 219).

Lebanese women face descriptive stereotypes, where they are not expected to be employed within certain sectors, such as STEM, or as leaders (managers, directors, CEOs, etc...). They also face prescriptive stereotypes regarding what they should and should not do, such as the stereotype that women should take on the role of the caretaker, and that women are not qualified to be leaders. These stereotypes lead them to not being accepted in the roles that they aspire to be in or face challenges due to being in these roles. Regarding the latter, women will find it more challenging to receive promotions, receive less respect or authority in the workplace, and face higher levels of scrutiny regarding their appearances and professional approach. Similarly, women will face the double-edged sword of motherhood stereotypes. One is the good mother stereotype, where women who have children are either limited in their professional capacity because they are good mothers, or are bad mothers because they dedicate too much time and effort into their careers. Another stereotype is that women should prioritize their housework and be the prime caretakers of their families. Women who violate these stereotypes and norms may become subject to further discrimination, or “The Backlash Effect”. This is because superficial acceptance within the public sphere and receiving opportunities does not nullify the mistreatment of women in the workplace, where they may still be subject to microaggressions in the workplace, lower pay, and less promotions, among other challenges. Furthermore, the familial internalization of the patriarchal structure disenfranchises women and therefore affects their ability to pursue certain opportunities in the first place. There is also a lack of support for careerwomen in light of the social expectations placed on them as familial caretakers. Pregnant women are given an inadequate maternal leave, there is no necessitation for pumping rooms or facilitation for employed mothers, and rarely are women given extra

days off specifically for caring for sick family members. Contrastingly, governmental jobs allow men to leave work early on Fridays to fulfill their Islamic prayer duties, and men are provided with extra money from the Lebanese NSSF when they are married.

The aforementioned builds towards the styles that individuals adopt as leaders, which can either be transformational or transactional. Men are commonly associated with transactional leadership, which is based on an authoritarian, confrontational, individualistic, and reward/punishment and rigid superior-subordinate dynamic. Women are commonly attributed to transformational leadership. This leadership style is characterized by leaders who aim to support employees and peers, include themselves in the process of their subordinates' tasks, and effect organizational change as a collective. While transformational leadership is seen as a style that leads to better outcomes on the organizational and employee satisfaction scales, women who adopt this style are still placed at a disadvantage. Women who adopt a transactional style are placed at an even further disadvantage, as they would be violating the prescriptive stereotype of what women are supposed to be as leaders, similar to the theory of the backlash effect. The reason behind this is theorized to be that leadership is associated with men and not with women. NGOs consistently try to fight this phenomenon by adopting gender equality programs, advocating for women's rights, and publishing research on women in NGOs. However, the humanitarian sector is not exempt from gender-based challenges. Some studies have found that women suffer from implicit discrimination in the NGO workplace, and others have demonstrated a sizeable gender gap at multiple levels of employment, and especially at leadership positions. Furthermore, research has exhibited programmatic discrimination affecting women beneficiaries in NGO projects that

aim to close the gender gap. This is characterized by the typification of women into employment that pays less and jobs that are considered 'feminine'. Further complications arise due to improperly addressing gender-based discrimination, oppression and violence within the private sphere alongside these projects.

## **B. Challenges**

Several challenges and limitations arose while conducting this study, both regarding its implementation and the analysis of results. During the implementation stage, while reaching out to potential NGOs to be considered for this study, some of the NGOs showed an initial willingness to participate that was reversed after they obtained more detailed information on the research requirements. Another limitation that was encountered later on was the difficulty to coordinate with the staff of the NGOs given their heavy workload and very limited available time. This made it more challenging to schedule suitable interview times with the targeted sample where they could communicate comfortably. For example, I started an interview that lasted for 15 minutes and then the interviewee got called for an urgent meeting. We stopped the interview and set another date and time to continue. Referring to participants' observations also provides an array of complications due to heightened subjectivity in their feedback. Having the in-depth interviews as a second main method reduces this effect. The participants' interviews further the key points and allow for the cross-checking of the available information through the collection of ethnographic data to increase the reliability of the analysis. Providing information regarding their private and work lives is also a limitation given that I was still technically a stranger, but what helped

was conducting the interviews at the end of my stay in the NGOs. So, when we did the interviews, I was someone they knew, someone who joined during lunch time and someone who supported in their day-to-day tasks. The review of complementary literature prior to conducting the interviews and ethnographic study was imperative to ensuring an educated perspective was held throughout the data collection stage. The use of literature to validate analyses served a similar purpose. Other limitations were related to the method and sample. Given that the study is an ethnographic research based on case studies, the sample was small and therefore not generalizable. This is amplified in the case of the sample of men, which was only three. It would therefore be insightful to assess the reality of how men in the NGO sector interact with and climb the hierarchy.

### **C. Women in the Lebanese Humanitarian Sector**

Lebanese women employees in the NGO sector are exposed to men from the exterior, such as governmental officials and private sector stakeholders. This is because NGOs do not exist in an enclosed bubble; they are rather interactive with a multitude of different sectors where men are the majority and effective advocacy for women's rights is almost nonexistent. This inevitability means that women will face gender-based discrimination at a multitude of positions in their career. Field officers that must communicate with municipal representatives, employees from the STEM and private sector employees and company directors, who are usually men and come from fields with much less women employed in them. Top-tier managers and directors, who need to negotiate for

funding and influence high-position government officials will also face implicit (and sometimes even explicit) discrimination.

The women managers may also face discrimination from men working in the NGOs, despite the fact that the NGOs interviewed had a higher number of women employees and more advocacy for women's equality as organizations. The observed/studies NGOs have the basic tools to ensure better workplaces for the women employed in their organizations. They are highly inclusive of women in a multitude of roles, provide (varying) flexibilities for pregnant women, and hire mostly women in decision-making and leadership roles. However, the aforementioned challenges that women face suggest the imminent need for more effective multisectoral advocacy for women's rights and equality. Firstly, NGOs as organizations that advocate for women's rights would benefit women from deploying more internal trainings and workshops aimed at combatting social injustice within the workplace, not just outside. Even though the NGO is considered flexible and inclusive regarding pregnancy (paid maternity leave and pumping room), implicit and explicit discrimination still exists among the interviewed and observed employees and it is still far from being an egalitarian workplace and context. There is therefore a need for ensured organizational understanding and socially enforced norms that women are yet to be freed from. While the studied organizations provide longer pregnancy leaves for women and caretaking leave days, some managers did have some issues with women taking those extra days off and needing a certain amount of consideration while pregnant. This is problematic as it may lead to implicit discrimination during the hiring process, as well as unnecessary behavior towards pregnant women. The interjection of gender-based biases is also an important predictor of how the

organizations affect women's interactions with one another. This is shown in how the fact that women managers regularly contested one another is not in line with how women perceive working with men and the challenges it entails. It is doubtfully the case of the women being jealous of one another as the men interviewed theorized, but more likely to be related with how the NGO itself does not provide feelings of security among the managers. Since the majority of the managers are women, they will naturally contest with one another since they are in the same managerial level. Furthermore, the existence of a "Queen Bee" phenomenon where the participants are particularly harsh with their women subordinates is also possibly related to the women managers' fear of losing their leadership positions, since such positions are much more occupied by men in Lebanon. Therefore, internal battles against misogyny perhaps being quieted by a socially favored patriarchal system are further silenced by organizations not providing space for women to fully and securely lead. This is suggested by how much less contention there was between the women in the INGO in comparison to the LNGO.

Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between the NGOs assessed and other sectors regarding their acceptance of women, and especially women leaders. Most of the employees were women; almost the entirety of the leadership level were women. There was no indication that men apply to jobs in these NGOs any less than women do. The women employed in the NGOs were all qualified and educated, and exhibited the technical skills, soft skills and knowledge for leadership. The study also presents an interesting and non-linear educational trajectory of the women managers: most of the women pursued undergraduate degrees that were unrelated to their careers, and then pursued graduate

degrees for their own interest and not necessarily related to their current job. Furthermore, their focus on hard work and managerial support and almost entirely dismissing the idea of utilizing social networks is interesting. “*Wasta*” was not observed at both NGOs. It was more of personal connections, networking, competition which created different dynamics between the team members, the managers and the bigger necessarily NGO community. However, it would be unjust to contribute their ability to attain their roles just to familial/social/political networking or cronyism, as the women are, as previously mentioned, fit for their roles and adept at executing them.

Therefore, the work nature of the NGOs (coordination with donors -that are usually international- flexible working hours, team work and focus on the deliverables) may be the reason why women’s strengths and capacities are better appreciated. The studied NGOs as organizations favor an environment of transformational leadership, conflict-sensitive behaviors and minority empowerment within their projects. The NGO as an organization that advocates for women equality is singular in the way women are represented, and employees working with this NGO will likely understand this representation and how women are supposed to be treated equally. Yet, understanding the representation of women and fully internalizing the equality of women are not necessarily the same. While the NGO’s advocacy of women’s rights may mitigate the existence of gender discrimination, it does not completely eliminate implicit sexism and its manifestation in the workplace and the private sphere.

While the men interviewed were only three and certainly not representative of any trend, the general observation of men in the NGO was that they were more likely to adopt a transformational approach with subordinates. There is not necessarily a correlation between



transformational leadership and stereotyping, as was hinted by the comments that the interviewed men made about their female colleagues. Furthermore, the men interviewed did not report anything regarding intragender tension regarding their men subordinates – in fact they said that it did not exist. During my ethnography, I observed that men in both organizations were very reserved around colleagues regarding tasks and did not share them at all, which was a more masculine aspect of their interactional style. Similarly, they were very succinct in conversations regarding work with both men and women, but quite conversational with non-work-related topics, especially with men. It may be the case that they are unwilling to share career-related aspects due to territorial reasons, thus an interesting future avenue to explore would be why men in NGOs tend to have a distinctive relationship differences between their career persona and social persona. Their adoption of discriminatory stereotypes regarding their women colleagues are likely caused by them internalizing the patriarchal structure and culture, but they are more implicit in their internalization given the environment that they work in. Furthermore, the people employed in more technical roles, such as IT, finance, and STEM trainers in both NGOs were mostly men, meaning that there is also discrimination at the structural level.

Although NGOs favor an environment of transformational leadership, the women employed do not necessarily utilize transformational leadership as their sole interactive method. Findings related to women's leadership styles in both organizations were not necessarily aligned with or defiant of the literature on women and their prevalent use of the transformational leadership style. Instead, it suggests a transient mixture of both styles, and instead of adopting these styles because they are specific to women and femininity, women choose their style contextually. They utilize the two different leadership styles as tools to

maneuver the workplace and its requirements depending on which approach would be most fit to the situation and environment at hand.

The main contribution of this thesis is in moving beyond the binary of transactional/transformational leadership styles where the findings showed that women's leadership style is situational and fluid. Women's leadership in this research fell on a spectrum showing a mix of both styles where the use of one style or another is determined by several factors such as the structure of the institution, nature of work, nature of the task at hand etc. Even with this fluidity and the adoption of different styles, leadership remain gendered and affected by gender order and patriarchy.

In *Bargaining with Patriarchy*, Kandiyoti analyzed women's strategies and coping mechanisms in patriarchal societies. She explains that different patriarchal structures require women to use different strategies to maneuver these challenges. Not only on a rational conscious level of decision making, patriarchal bargain also shape the "unconscious aspects of women's gendered subjectivity since they permeate the context of their early socialization as well as their adult cultural milieu" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.285). In the case of the interviewed women, the leadership style used was not a norm but rather a condition dependent on who they are interacting with and why. How they lead their employees specifically in terms of tasks showed a more masculine and transactional style. When employees made mistakes, they were punished; when their mistakes were not noticed, they were praised. Similarly, most of the women did not care to always be up-to-date with their employees' tasks as long as they were done on time and in a satisfactory fashion. It is also not possible to say that the interviewed women had a solely transactional style. They were also transformational in the way they would include their subordinates in higher-level meetings and negotiations, and

ensured emotional support towards these subordinates regularly, using transformational leadership as a motivational tool that ensures organizational cohesion.

Even with its challenges, the NGO sector is an enabling environment of women's career advancement and getting into leadership positions. For multiple reasons, (institutional, nature of programs, exposure, flexibility, type of work...) the NGO sector empowers women to reach and exercise positions of leadership. In leadership, the interviewed women demonstrated a clear understanding of the challenges around their career development which is a persistent bargain with patriarchy. Women were able to face some of these challenges either directly or indirectly depending on the situation. Although the main purpose of this research is to study the leadership styles of women managers in the NGOs, the analysis of the NGO as a workplace was for the purpose of giving the reader a contextual idea and to look at the enabling and disabling factors of women's careers in this context.

To better understand and support women's career development, it is important for future research to look at different job settings (private sector, governmental bodies and NGOs) as institutions and assess the enabling and disabling, the conscious and the unconscious, the embedded and the clear factors for women's careers.

Moreover, while looking at women's leadership styles, it is important to think about it as a spectrum of styles that are fluid, can be mixed and situational. At the theoretical level, this would be an invite to "queering" our approach to the study of women leadership styles.

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