KIP Documentation Project

Facilitators for the effective participation of Lebanese women at work in leadership positions

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Executive Summary

This project aimed to provide Lebanese women leaders with a clear framework that would render them accepted and thus effective in the workplace. The project builds on the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012; Hogg, 2001; D. van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), the expectancy violations theory (Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987) and the uncertainty reduction hypothesis (Chattopadhyay, George, & Ng, 2011; Mullin & Hogg, 1999) to explain some of the hindrances against the effectiveness of women leaders and to propose a way to overcome them. The project draws on leadership prototypicality and establishes that prototypicality is contingent on the extent to which one identifies with their workgroup and, in the case of gender, on the extent to which one holds traditional gender stereotypes (Hogg et al., 2006). To the extent that an atypical leader (e.g. women) occupies a leadership role typically ascribed for men, the woman leader will not be considered prototypical which ultimately compromises her influence on the workgroup (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; B. van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Contextualizing the above study in Lebanon, it is evident that traditional gender stereotypes are heavily embedded in leadership roles whereby the masculine prerogative is at play (Iborscheva, 2012; Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005; Sidani, Konrad, & Karam, 2015). As such, it becomes crucial to identify means to equip women leaders to overcome the barriers affecting their influence in the workplace.

To carry out the research project, data was collected from 10 small to medium sized organizations in the services sector. Moderated mediation analyses revealed that for women leaders to be

considered effective (perceptions of effectiveness, building good relationships with followers), they have to resort to directive leadership particularly with their male followers.

While a permanent solution for the endorsement of women leaders in the Lebanese context would be for gender stereotypes to change, the findings of our study offer practitioners several guidelines to endorse women leaders. Particularly, practitioners are advised to support and encourage women leaders to be directive, especially with her male followers. Practitioners are also advised to make managers and raters of the performance of women leaders aware of the beneficial impact that directive leadership has on the effectiveness of women leaders.