



Suliman S. Olayan School of Business



## **KIP Research Project**

# **Experiences and Attitudes of Harassment and Discrimination from a Subset of Students at the American University of Beirut**

## **Project Team**

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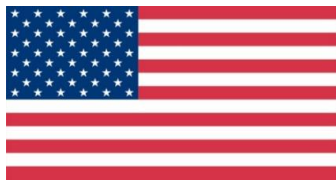
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## I. Executive Summary

The proposed academic research study, “Experiences and Attitudes of Harassment and Discrimination from a Subset of Students at the American University of Beirut”, received a one-year sub-award for \$10,000 effective April 1, 2016 from the Knowledge is Power (KIP) program funded by the US State Department.

This study aims to examine the experiences and perceptions of discrimination in the form of sexual harassment and other sexual misconduct, of undergraduate and graduate students at AUB. Institutional understanding of how students experience the campus community is critical to supporting students’ learning and development. Survey findings will assist AUB administrators in formulating policies and practices that support improved student experiences on campus.

The timeline of the study, initially anticipated to be conducted in the fall of 2016, has been significantly impacted by delays in securing Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval. A summary of these challenges is provided below in Section VI. Institutional Challenges.

Sex-based discrimination including sexual harassment in academic contexts remains a widespread problem with significant legal, psychological, and economic consequences<sup>1</sup>. In the recent American Association of Universities (AAU) survey of 27 higher education institutions in the U.S., 55% of female students (and 48% of all students) report being victims of sexual harassment, yet only 7.7% reported the harassment to a campus official<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Bursik, K. and Geftner, J. (2011). “Still Stable After All These Years: Perceptions of Sexual Harassment in Academic Contexts”, *The Journal of Social Psychology*.

<sup>2</sup> Cantor, D. et al, (2015). “Report on the American Association of Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct”, (Tables 4-1 and 6-2), Westat.



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The proposed survey, the first of its kind in Lebanon and the region, will increase knowledge of the harassment and campus climate association, and offer insight into the experiences and attitudes of students. This critical data will support the formation of a more robust institutional program and framework for addressing sex-based discrimination and harassment. Specifically, the study will investigate the following:

- Campus climate around harassment and discrimination
- Frequency and nature of experiences of sexual assault or other sexual misconduct
- Awareness of related resources on campus
- Reporting frequency and perceptions of institutional responses to reporting
- Bystander effect

Specifically, the findings will inform the development of:

- Policies to improve institutional responses to unwanted sexual behaviors in academic settings;
- An improved climate for reporting sex-based discrimination and harassment;
- Protocols for training to deepen understanding of victim responses and predator characteristics;
- More inclusive institutional strategies for response, awareness, and prevention activities.

Survey findings will provide useful information policymakers as well as make a significant contribution to the body of academic research on this complex issue. The more AUB knows about the patterns and dynamics of sexual misconduct and discrimination on campus, the more effective it can be in its programs and activities.