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Insights on Female Citizens' Contributions and Experiences in the Formal Economies of the MENA Region

Focus on Lebanon: Recruitment, Retention, Promotion, and Recommendations



January 14, 2025



Introduction

Exploring Female Contributions and Experiences in Lebanon's Formal Economic Sector

- ✓ Female contributions and experiences in Lebanon's formal economic sector.
- ✓ Based on qualitative data from the SAWI Project's third-wave interviews.
- ✓ Part of a larger SAWI initiative focused on implementing RRP policies with employers for inclusivity.
- ✓ Covers key sectors: **STEM, education, financial services, and healthcare.**
- ✓ Analyzes the impact of **Lebanon's economic crisis, COVID -19, and structural disruptions** in recruitment, retention, and promotion.



Objectives and Scope

Highlight the strategic findings related to female participation in the workforce.

Actionable recommendations for improving recruitment, retention, and promotion practices In Lebanon

51 women working across key sectors in Lebanon, considering factors like age, location, and marital status.

thematic analysis of interviews, with a focus on gender - related discrimination, work - life balance, and systemic barriers to career advancement.

Challenges and Successes

Challenges

Difficulty matching profiles for interviews, particularly with fully employed women, women in the informal sector, and those working in health and STEM fields.

Poor internet connectivity during interviews occasionally disrupted data collection

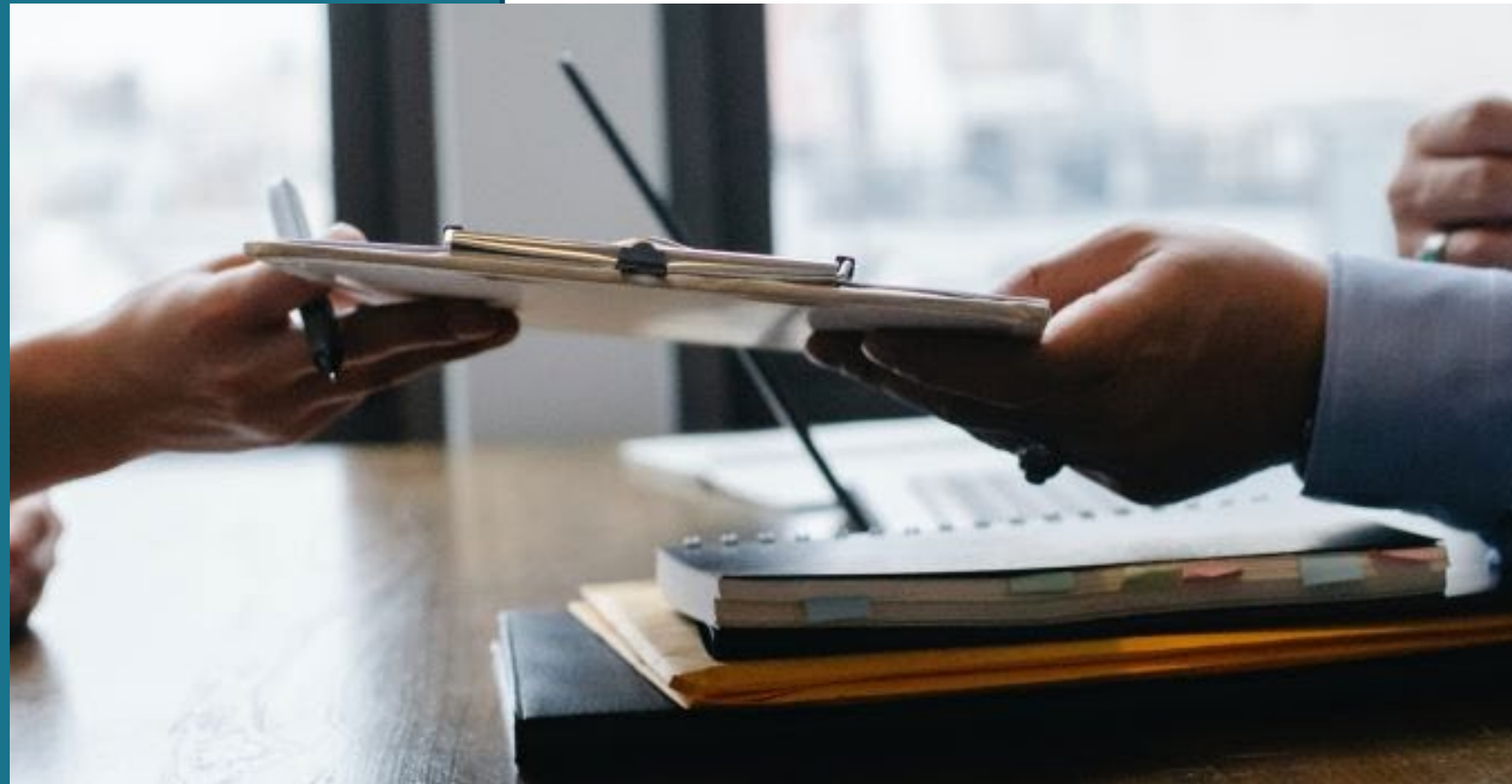
Securing participants for focus groups required extensive outreach efforts.

Successes

A dedicated outreach coordinator and strategic use of social media ensured diverse representation.

Organized 6 focus groups (exceeding the target of 5) and conducted 51 interviews with high-profile participants across diverse sectors

Key partnerships with employers were established to pilot and implement inclusive policies under the RRP framework



Recruitment

Job Advertisement in Recruitment

1

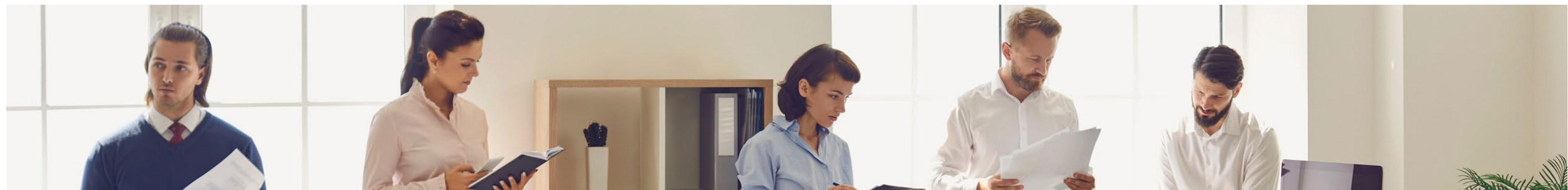
Internal Job Advertisement:

- Common in educational (universities) and healthcare sectors.
- Promotes inclusivity by prioritizing existing staff familiar with institutional culture and values.
- Potential to improve retention by leveraging internal talent

2

Informal Recruitment Methods

- Some respondents reported job openings shared via word of mouth or by direct managers/colleagues.
- STEM and financial services sectors showcased varied methods, ranging from formal advertisements to informal recruitments.



Most job advertisements avoided specifying personal attributes (e.g., gender, age, nationality, race).

This attracts diverse candidates, fostering an inclusive environment.

Employees feel valued and respected in a workplace emphasizing diversity and inclusivity.

Inclusivity in Job Postings

Candidate Proficiency

Educational Achievements :

- In academia, advanced degrees (Master's or higher) were critical for selection, emphasizing proficiency.
- Practical experience combined with academic qualifications strengthened candidates' profiles.

Sector -Specific Trends :

- Healthcare and financial services sectors favored criteria-led recruitment and regulated mechanisms.
- Urban responses indicated more systematic HR procedures than rural ones.



Sector -Specific Recruitment Dynamics

Healthcare and Education

Often perceived as women-attracting and women-driven sectors, especially in healthcare.

Gender assumptions occasionally influenced recruitment.

STEM Sector Insights

Recruitment relied less on formal qualifications, more on personality and learned-on-the-job skills.

Highlighted flexibility in recruitment criteria, though sample size limits generalization.





Retention

Job Satisfaction

- **Passion for work** and alignment with personal goals boost retention, even in high-stress environments (e.g., healthcare during COVID-19).
- **Supportive work environments,** work-life balance, job security, and growth opportunities are key.
- **Salary dissatisfaction persists** as many seek better-paying jobs post-crisis.
- **Retention driven by capacity and achievement,** not gender, though home responsibilities led some women to leave, with men often taking over.
- **Men sometimes given more responsibilities** and higher titles.



Organizational Culture



Inclusive Work Environments

Diverse organizations and supportive colleague relationships boost retention.
Long-term support and commitment through internal policies provide security



Opportunities for Growth

Professional growth opportunities (training, workshops, promotions) drive retention.
Personal development incentives enhance employee commitment.



Anti-Harassment Measures

Varied awareness and reporting mechanisms across organizations. Most interviewees felt confident in reporting harassment and trusted corrective measures



Work-Life Balance

Critical Role in Retention

Work-life balance is essential for retention and career advancement.

Married women and caregivers face significant challenges balancing work and home responsibilities.

Impact of the Crises

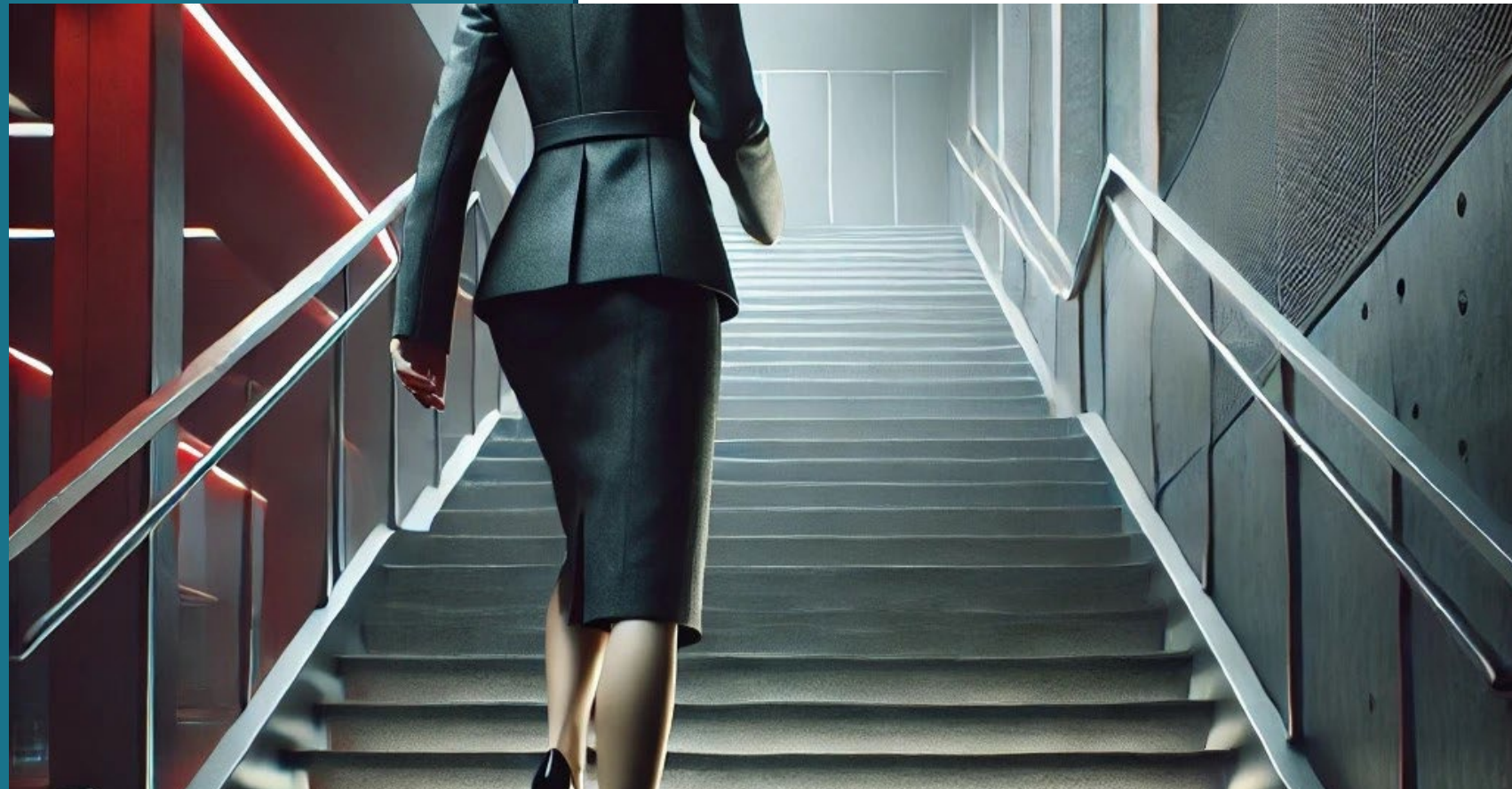
Post-crisis, many women let go of household helpers, increasing their caregiving burdens.

Strict working hours and unpaid leave reduce retention, with some opting for part-time work to manage family duties.

Career Advancement Challenges

- ✓ Difficulty balancing long hours with home responsibilities hampers career growth.
- ✓ Organizations often replace married women or caregivers with younger, unmarried women or men.
- ✓ Rigid policies and lack of support for family-related challenges lower retention rates.
- ✓ Flexible and family-friendly policies are crucial to improving retention.





Promotion



Job Satisfaction

- Inconsistent and **unclear promotion policies across organizations** , with limited employee understanding.
- **STEM** and finance sectors had **more structured HR practices** , while other sectors lacked clear career pathways.
- Dissatisfaction and **perceptions of unfairness** due to ambiguous promotion opportunities and evaluation standards.
- **Long waits, favoritism, and structural barriers** hindered women's career advancement.
- Despite job satisfaction, **bureaucratic practices** undermined trust in transparent promotion processes.

Career Development Opportunities

1

- **Professional development programs** (trainings, workshops, courses) enhance skills and leadership.
- More common in rural institutions than in urban corporate settings.

2

- **Disconnect from promotion:** Few linked programs to career advancement, seeing them as capacity-building tools.
- Leadership workshops improved management skills but rarely led to promotions.





Challenges and Successes

Inequality in Opportunities

Bias in promotional practices reported across sectors, favoring men over women.

Decisions often not based on abilities or contributions, reducing women's chances of career advancement.

Stereotypes and Barriers

Employers perceived men as more suited for higher positions due to fewer family-related concerns.

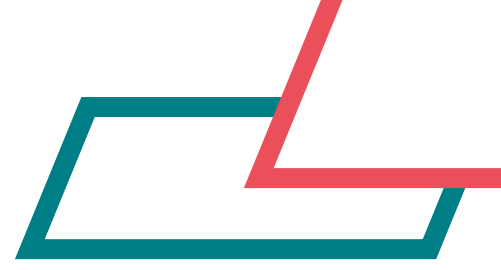
Women's maternity leave and caregiving duties cited as obstacles to promotion opportunities.





Recommendations

Recruitment



- ✓ Clearly outline responsibilities, qualifications, and expectations for roles.
- ✓ Use inclusive and unbiased language to attract diverse talent.
- ✓ Leverage technology: online job boards, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.
- ✓ Streamline systems for automation and security.
- ✓ Expand recruitment avenues, including employee referrals and agencies.



Retention



- ✓ Strong academic qualifications and practical experience enhance job satisfaction and security.
- ✓ Growth programs and continuous learning opportunities boost engagement and motivation.
- ✓ Employees feeling valued and aligned with organizational culture increases retention rates.
- ✓ Supportive culture fostering collaboration and feedback drives engagement and loyalty.

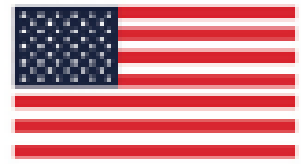


Promotion



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- Transparent promotion policies help employees understand advancement pathways.
 - Regular feedback aligns efforts with organizational expectations for promotion.
 - Merit-based promotions and equal opportunities for women combat implicit biases.
 - Mentorship programs guide career development and leadership preparation.
 - Demonstrating investment in employee growth enhances readiness for promotion.





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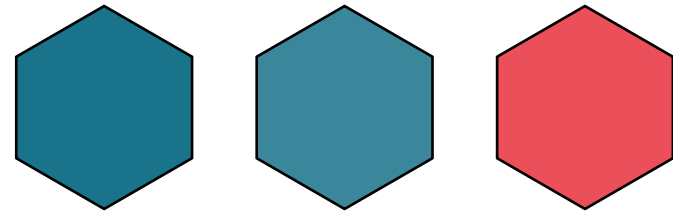
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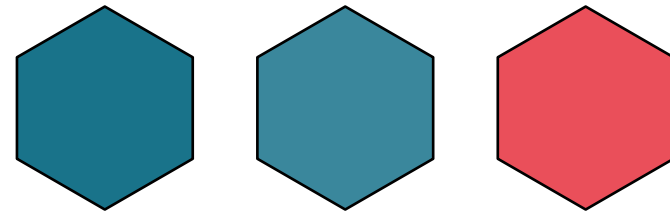


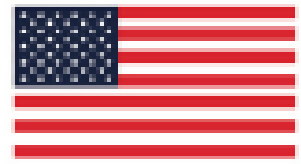
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Questions?





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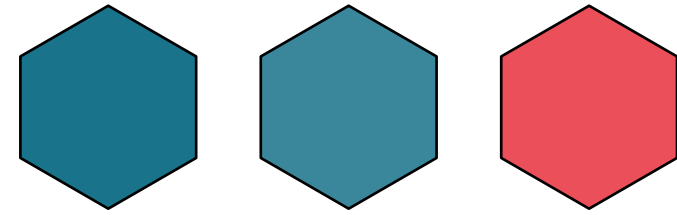
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Thank you

