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Analysis of corporate policies on sexual harassment and discrimination in Egypt: experiences of female and male employees

Anum Khan

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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**Analysis of Corporate Policies on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination
in Egypt: Experiences of Female and Male Employees**

A Thesis Submitted to
the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Gender and Women's Studies
in the Middle East and North Africa

Specialization in Gender and Women's Studies in the Middle East/North Africa

by Anum Khan

under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

May 2014

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School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

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Abstract

Analysis of Corporate Policies on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination in Egypt: Experiences of Female and Male Employees

Anum Khan

**The American University in Cairo
under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker**

This thesis entails documenting the experiences of former and current male and female employees within specific Egyptian companies of the private sector, including Egyptian-owned companies and international companies based in Egypt. I explore the experiences of employees in terms of corporate culture, as well as the company policies against discrimination and harassment at Egyptian companies via interviews with employees and Human Resource managers and/or the company founder. I assess what rights and protections employees are given in regards to: anti-sexual harassment and discrimination policies in the Egyptian labor law, and how the Egyptian labor laws are influenced by international conventions on Egyptian corporate practices. In a larger framework, this research aims to better understand the experiences of employees in different companies and relate how transnational and local governances affect corporate culture and policies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis begins with looking at the employment rates of women compared to men, and the factors that contributed to high unemployment rates of women in Egypt. Economic policies, political agendas of the state, and stagnant conservative views about working women have led to fewer opportunities for women seeking jobs, in both the public and private sector. With the state's appropriation of women's rights under Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime, public sector jobs became attractive for women because of the benefits and security offered by the state. However, with the onset of the liberalization of Egypt and economic policies, public sector jobs diminished, while private sector jobs increased, women still continue to face discrimination and marginalization, institutionally and socially.

The female labor marker participation rate "both in absolute terms and relative" is much lower than the male labor market participation rate in the Middle East compared to the rest of the world (See Figure 1 in Appendix). In 1960, only 12 percent of women in the Arab world participated in the labor market, while by 1995, 30 percent of women participated in the labor marker (Mostafa, 2003, p. 253). In 2010, 3,873,000 males (or 47.6%) out of 8,136,000 males between ages 15 and 24 participated in the labor force compared to 1,566,000 females (or 19.9%) out of 7,873,000 females between ages 15 and 24 (International Labor Office 2011). Combining higher age groups, there were 20,162,000 males (or 78.1%) out of 25,831,000 males between ages 15 and 64 who

participated in the labor force compared to 6,481,000 females (or 25.3%) out of 25,628,000 females between ages 15 and 64 (Ibid).

Women's labor market participation is determined through a combination of aspects such as cultural ideas and "social heritage," which can foster discrimination in institutional and societal settings (McGuire & Bagher, 2010, p. 504). For example, in Egypt, societal ideas about women working for the primary reason of saving money for marriage infringe on women being able to freely decide to work, make decisions of where to work (as women are deterred from working far away from home or limited to work in certain positions) or to work while being married (as women are expected to quit after marriage to take care of household responsibilities) (Amin & Al-Bassusi, 2004). Out of the surveys conducted by Amin and Al-Bassusi resulted in comments from female workers who said they would prefer public-sector jobs because they offered "generous maternity benefits, health insurance, job security, and short working hours" to assume household responsibilities," however "such jobs are few and require connections (*wasta*)" (2004, p. 1294). Other drawbacks for why young women who do not continue work after marriage or are deterred from private sector jobs include "harsh work conditions...the lack of interest that private-sector employers have in employing young women" and how society views women that continue to work after marriage (Ibid, p. 1297). Recommendations have been made to encourage more female employment in the private sector by allowing flexible work arrangements. However, private sector can and should be able to provide additional perks (and some already do) such as adequate maternity and paternity benefits, medical insurance, clearly stated policies and enforcement against sexual harassment and discrimination against female employees. Women's

encouragement in the workplace as well as acceptance of diversity within a company is necessary, yet should not be solely enforced by HR managers through policies, but encouraged by society in general. When the organizational level accepts and fosters an inclusive diverse environment, this trickles down to the individual, group and societal levels (See Figure 1 in Appendix).

Male attitudes toward women working in Egypt is patriarchal and men continue to see women as traditionally required to primarily focus on the household and family, while men are seen as the traditional “breadwinners.” These attitudes are reflected in hiring practices and work conditions, which discriminate against women. For example, in a study on a sample of recent male and female university graduates, about a quarter of the graduates are subject to unequal pay that is “unexplained,” which can be deduced to discrimination against women because there are no other explanations as to why female graduates are paid less than male graduates with having similar qualifications. Furthermore, more women are employed in positions that are traditionally viewed as being for women, primarily in informal and public sector economies. In 1995, Arab women were mostly employed in social services (40%), industry (21%) and agriculture (39%) and employed as elementary school teachers, nurses and secretaries (Mostafa, 2003, p. 253).

This thesis attempts to understand the experiences of employees at various companies in Egypt—investigating to see if there are differences between employees’ experiences in national and international companies (companies that have operations in countries throughout the world). Furthermore, I contextualize how corporate policies and culture affects workers’ experiences in Egypt and whether international companies offer

better benefits and “international culture” to employees. For example, international companies are required to comply with Egyptian labor laws as well as its own internal bylaws, some which are derived from international headquarters.

This thesis illustrates how being an Egyptian company versus a transnational company affects the comprehensiveness of anti-harassment and discrimination policies. International companies usually have comprehensive policies against discrimination and discrimination, especially when the company’s headquarters are located in a country where labor laws are progressive and enforced. This thesis compares how anti-discrimination policies and practices came into being in Egypt and the U.S. (through the advent of labor laws), as well as how local and international regulations affect company policies and practices.

Interviews with HR representatives from companies in the case studies will provide comprehensive perspectives on how corporate policies are enforced and the environment they seek to create for their employees, including what issues employees bring forth to managers. Next, I corroborate the statements made by statements with what employees state about policies and corporate culture.

Next, this thesis analyzes what mechanism is utilized in addressing sexual harassment and discrimination in the work place. There can be formal or informal sanctions against employees who harass or discriminate, with side-talks, warnings and/or immediate firings. I present the discussions with HR representatives who described which type of actions their companies take, who is responsible for such sanctions, the formal procedures set in place, as well as how the company deals with unprofessional conduct, such as harassment and discrimination.

Conceptual Framework

This thesis will examine three main aspects: how policies against discrimination were created, how transnational and local governances affect corporate policies and culture, and the experiences of employees in four case studies on Egyptian and international companies in Egypt. I begin with the historical context of how policies against discrimination formed in Egypt and the U.S. and the policies' effect on the present-day. Efforts against discrimination in the workplace began in the U.S. almost a century ago with the women's rights movement for voting rights. In comparison, Egypt's efforts against discrimination began as a top-down approach when the state created opportunities for women's employment in the public sector. While anti-discrimination efforts in both countries differ, from either social movements pushing for legal reforms in the U.S. or the state appropriating women's rights in Egypt, it is important to note that the social contexts and histories of the countries also differ.

I compare how effective labor laws and policies have become in providing greater rights and equality for women in the workplace, and whether the U.S. is the exemplary model of labor policies and practices. I use the U.S. model to compare Egypt's progress with anti-discrimination and harassment efforts because the employees interviewed see international companies as having better corporate standards and benefits than local Egyptian companies and the U.S. is headquarters to many international companies. Employees at both national and international companies believe and claim that companies such as Vodafone comply with international standards or have "better" corporate policies. Though the U.S. has a longer history of policies against sexual harassment than Egypt, I explore the various challenges that continue to exist in achieving gender equality under current U.S. labor law, international labor norms and

Egyptian labor law. While the Egyptian social context is different, using the U.S. model for comparison can be helpful in understanding how efforts against discrimination and harassment require a multi-layered approach that combines legal reform and social forces in accepting diversity for all groups of people. The U.S. is a unique example to compare with Egypt because of the diverse groups of people that still face discrimination and harassment, and looking at how policies and corporate culture have addressed these challenges.

This thesis questions how transnational and local governances affect corporate policies and culture. For example, I question whether companies follow Egyptian Labor Laws, and/or international corporate standards, and how this affects the company's efforts against discrimination and harassment. I compare the comprehensiveness of labor laws and corporate policies and their capability in providing protections for women in the workplace.

Then I look at how local and transnational governances affect employees' professional work experiences. For example, women face discrimination in certain male-dominated positions like engineering. Though labor laws and corporate policies have certain provisions against discrimination, legal regulations are not sufficient to prevent such discrimination, which can be implicit or explicit. I explore the challenges female employees continue to face regardless of the local and transnational regulations that are in place.

I attempt to understand the challenges that exist in Egyptian labor policies and how social forces (i.e. workplace practices) can effect and be affected by labor policies—how the limitations of Egyptian Labor Laws, international corporate policies and

conservative attitudes towards working women can affect their marginalization and discrimination in the workplace. Legal recourse as a panacea for addressing social issues has not been successful without the social environment pushing for these changes, and both the U.S. and Egypt models illustrate this.

Literature Review

It is important to understand the various contexts in which women have been treated in the workplace. The U.S. has a longer history with efforts made towards fighting gender discrimination in the workplace. Organizations and activists working for women's rights led the women's movement in three main waves, beginning with the right to vote. The Civil Rights Movement was paramount as women received legal rights for protections against gender discrimination in the workplace, along with a legal end to racial discrimination against African Americans. Though policies are in place for American women and other minorities, there are still challenges faced in the workplace that policies are unable to rectify. While efforts to end gender discrimination in the workplace in the U.S. were led by activists and women, in Egypt, the government led the way for women's rights by providing employment opportunities in the public sector, making women reliant on the state for employment and protections. When the state faced economic crises in the 1970's, Egypt retreated from providing women employment opportunities, and unemployment increased, causing women to remain marginalized and face renewed discrimination in employment. Factors that remain a challenge for women seeking employment in the private sector include the traditional attitudes held by the government, the companies themselves, and society, regarding women who work.

Women's Rights in the Workplace in Egypt

It is important to differentiate the histories of Egypt and the U.S., which affect labor culture and workers' experiences and perspectives. Egypt had mostly been a welfare state, providing services for its citizens until Egypt supported economic liberalization policies beginning in the 1970's. Under Nasser's regime in the late 1950's and 1960's, Egypt's welfare state developed into state-sponsored feminism (or state feminism) providing rights and opportunities for women. Hatem describes state feminism as "ambitious state programs that introduce important changes in the reproductive and productive roles of women...it referred to government efforts to remove the structural basis of gender inequality by making production a public—not a private—concern and by employing increasing numbers of women in the state sector" (1994, p. 231). However, feminists criticized this top-down approach because it neglected to solve the root-causes of "underrepresentation, discrimination, and subordination" of women (Ibid, p. 232). While these efforts helped Nasser secure political legitimacy, these state-sponsored programs continued women's dependence on the state for economic opportunities and social services.

Nasser attempted to control women's reproductive and productive roles through the welfare state by using female labor from the middle and the working-class because they were "cheaper and more reliable" (Ibid, p. 232). Providing social changes to women in labor, education, healthcare and other social services was part of a larger scheme to not only control women's reproductive and productive roles, but to better the image of the state, to be viewed as "progressive" and modern (Ibid, p. 232).

Hatem (1994) discusses the opportunities Nasser's regime provided for women—including “providing equality of opportunity to all Egyptians” under the 1956 and 1963 constitutions and

declared all Egyptians equal under the law and forbade discrimination on the basis of gender, racial origin, language, religion, or belief...Labor laws were changed to ensure and protect women's equal standing in the labor force. It entitled women to fifty days of paid maternity leave. It obligated the employers to provide day care services where one hundred or more women were employed. Finally, it forbade employers to fire pregnant women while on maternity leave (p. 232).

The state's regulation of maternity leave “made reproduction a public concern for state and private employers,” not private family concerns (Ibid). Additionally, state feminism forces women to be dependent on the state for protections and legal reforms, perpetuating the patriarchal nature of the state (Brown, 1992). These government-sponsored regulations on women's work and maternity leave continued to the present day through Egyptian labor laws. Because of the state's involvement in women's labor rights and conditions, more women attained education, sought limited work opportunities (to save money for marriage) and delayed marriage. In 1956, women were also given the right to vote, which expanded political rights for women alongside economic rights. Regardless of the economic and political opportunities women received from the government, attitudes about marriage and family remained conservative.

Though there were progressive changes under Nasser, personal status laws from the 1920's and 1930's were preserved, unchanging how society viewed women in regards to family. Women continued to be seen as “economic dependents of men, unstable emotional beings that cannot be trusted with the right to divorce,” who had to rely on the

state for social services in health, education and labor, yet economically self-sufficient apart from their families (Hatem, 1992, p. 233).

By the 1970's when Egypt entered economic liberalization, women were not able to take full advantage of economic opportunities because it was socially unacceptable for women to work far from home or to live alone for job opportunities, whereas men did not face these challenges. Even though women attained higher education and delayed the age of marriage, social attitudes towards women working remain unchanged. Over 90% of boys from ages 10 and 19 "reported that wives should be solely responsible for all domestic chores, with girls echoing similar values" (Amin & Al-Bassusi, 2004, p. 1288-1289). Women, and not solely men supported traditional perspectives on women's responsibilities in the home.

The Population Council conducted 27 case studies on women from ages 15 to 29 working in the private sector in Egypt between 1998 and 2000. These women primarily worked in wage work in "garment manufacturing in an industrial zone, sales and services in an urban area near Cairo, and small factories in Mansoura, Dakahlia governorate" (Amin & Al-Bassusi, 2004, p. 1291-1292). A primary reason why most of these women worked, was to "prepare for marriage," which aligned with social norms of seeing the family as the primary focus for women. Work is seen as temporary for women, yet necessary to achieve a "higher standard of living" when two incomes rather than one are better for preparing for marriage, especially with a move towards a nuclear family (living in a separate home in lieu of living with extended family members). The changing work culture will be discussed later in the thesis.

Though this research focuses on women in the private sector in professional jobs, the attitudes towards working women, nonetheless, affect the opportunities and support women have for seeking careers or working in long-term jobs. The focus on marrying and creating a family are social norms that have been instigated not only by society, but state feminism that regulated women's work, including laws on maternity leave and work conditions.

Economic liberalization in Egypt led women to be pushed into the market economy as well introduced them to widespread discrimination in traditionally male work environments. As men sought to work in the Gulf and other private sector jobs in Egypt because of better pay, women were left to find public sector jobs. Yet, women were unable to travel long distances for such jobs because of the traditional values middle class Egyptians had about women working in distant places, away from the family. Conservative family values and discrimination against women in urban and rural working classes who first worked in industrial companies of the public sector discouraged women from working in certain positions. Women in industrial companies faced discrimination as factory managers saw women as "poor employment risks because of their need for maternity leave and child care," even though managers stated the female workers were more productive than male workers (Ibid, p. 237). These attitudes about women in industrial work were upheld when in 1987, the "minister of industry passed a measure in March 1987 to stop hiring women (workers and professionals) in the textile industry. It cited women's health (pregnancy and breast feeding) as the reason" (Ibid, p. 237). Additionally, during this moment in history, migrant workers from Gulf states were returning looking to be re-hired in their former positions, that women previously

assumed. “In 1976, when economic liberalization started, total unemployment shot up to 7.7 percent: 5.5 percent for men and 29.8 percent for women,” which by 1986, the “unemployment rates had doubled to 14.7 percent: with 10 percent for men and 40.7 percent for women” (Hatem, 1992, p. 234). By the 1980’s, the unemployment rate for women increased to four times more than for men. Women faced more disadvantages than men under Egypt’s economic liberalization, as state-feminism was diminishing, which was supposed to provide gender equality and opportunities for women.

Egypt shifted towards a market economy in the 1970’s as Egypt faced an economic crisis under Sadat’s reign, causing the state to retract many of the protections and opportunities it once provided to women for the purpose of economic development. Beginning under Nasser, the government employed many women in the public sector, which was attractive for women because of the advantages of subsidized transportation, child care, and maternity leave” (Hatem, 1992, p. 237). Yet, women’s opportunities were profoundly affected when the state shifted towards a market economy, leaving many women, especially recent graduates with lesser salaries or without public sector jobs that were previously promised to women. Additionally, public sector jobs became replaced with private sector jobs, and since women were already facing challenges within the public sector, private sector jobs had become more unattainable. There was the assumption that with the onset of structural readjustment programs, women would have more employment opportunities in the industries of “labor-intensive manufactured exports, such as textile & garments” because they are cheaper to hire, yet women were still marginalized from these positions, institutionally and socially via economic policies, hiring practices and traditional attitudes towards working women (Assaad, 2004, p. 6).

Globalization has been argued to have negative consequences for the poorest women. Since Egypt's implementation of the International Monetary Fund's Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program in 1991, has exploited the poor and women, further pushing them into poverty because the government retracted from providing services like quality and affordable healthcare and education (Tadros, 2006, p. 237-240). As a result of these economic reforms, jobs in the public sector diminished. In the 1990's, while overall Egyptian female employment increased from 35 to 38 percent, employment in the textile, garment and service industries de-feminized, or women's employment declined in the non-government wage work from 14 to 10 percent (Assaad, 2004, p. 8-9). By the 2000's, women's employment in the public sector was no more than two percent of the total female labor market participation rate, while private sector employment grew one percentage—from five to six percent from 1998 to 2006 compared to eight to 11 percent for men's employment in the private sector (Assaad, 2006, p. 226).

Women who are able to seek professional jobs in the private sector are part of the minority, especially since economic liberalization pushed middle and working class women further in unemployment because public sector jobs diminished with the “demise of state feminism” (Hatem, 1992). Women seeking jobs in the private sector has become more difficult due to the competition with men, who have greater freedoms to travel for work and face far less discrimination than women in the job markets. Nonetheless, with the onset of lucrative private sector jobs led by the economic liberalization of Egypt, men and women with university degrees attempt to find such jobs because of the supposed benefits and job security that companies can offer.

This thesis will attempt to understand the circumstances women face discrimination or biases because of their gender when attempting to enter or working in the private sector. Women may face discrimination because managers assume female employees may leave work after marriage to raise children and managers assume that most of their female employees will take advantage of maternity leave, and thus limit their hiring of single or recently married women; or women at all. Additionally, some positions within the private sector become gendered; because of labor laws or social attitudes regarding certain job fields, men and women are expected to work in certain positions.

While anti-discrimination efforts were created under Nasser's state-feminism, these labor laws sustained to the present day. With the retreat of state-feminism and onset of economic liberalization, women did not have many opportunities to seek work either in the public or private sector; yet finding work became necessary to cover costs associated with healthcare and education since the state ceased to provide affordable social services. Nonetheless, efforts to change perceptions of working women remained stagnant, discouraging women to work in distant places, prioritizing family and household duties above work.

Women's Rights in the Workplace in the U.S.

Efforts to provide women equality in the workplace began well before the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. The first wave of feminism began with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention in New York, which paved the path for the women's rights movement. In the 1850's, the suffrage movement began, not only focusing on women's rights to vote, but other pertinent issues, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union fought

for laws regarding education and children's labor. In the early 1900's, the National Woman's Trade Union worked on improving working conditions for women, as well as upholding "protectionist statutes, including mandatory breaks and prohibitions against night work" (Aiken et al., 2013, p. 386-387).

When the U.S. entered World War I, women for the first time were allowed to serve in the military, which increased the employment opportunities available for women. Women joined industrial jobs, where men used to be employed, which led to development of the U.S. Women's Bureau. The U.S. Women's Bureau challenged safety and health issues for women within the industrial industry. A few years after the end of World War I, in 1920, women received the right to vote under the 19th amendment in the constitution, ending the first wave of feminism (Ibid, p. 387).

Between the 1920's until the Great Depression, there was a retreat from the women's movement as there was a divergence on the focus of the women's movement. However, after World War II, the women's movement revitalized with more women joining jobs that were left vacant by men who entered the war. "Between 1940 and 1945, 5 million women were recruited, trained, and employed in all sectors of the economy, and the number of working women rose by 50 percent over the course of the war" (Ibid, p. 387). Though, with the conclusion of the war, many women were fired to allow men coming back from the war to retake the jobs they left behind, pushing women back into the traditional roles of work, such as "food services, retail and telecommunications." Attitudes towards working women also changed—"A 1946 Gallup Poll indicated that 80% of Americans believed that a woman should not work if her husband was

employed.” Additionally, “in 1965, women earned 58 cents for every dollars earned by men” (Ibid, p. 387).

By the 1960’s, the women’s rights movement joined with the Civil Rights movement, as both minority groups fought for equality. Under President John Kennedy, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was passed, which legally prohibited discrimination of pay based on gender. Though it was initially ineffective and not enforced, it set the groundwork for future work for equal rights in the workplace.

How the Women’s Rights Movement joined the Civil Rights Movement

After the abolition of slavery in the U.S., there was still widespread racial discrimination against African Americans. After the Civil War between the North and South of America, the 13th amendment was passed, ending slavery in the U.S. However, African Americans in the South still faced discrimination and racism. The Northern Republicans responded by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th Amendment, “which guaranteed equal protection to all citizens,” yet African Americans were not provided such protections (Ibid, p. 387). The 15th Amendment was also passed, which allowed African Americans the right to vote, yet they were institutionally prevented from voting because of “poll taxes, literacy tests, or property requirements” in which African Americans were unable to fulfill. As African Americans in the South faced marginalization, violence and discrimination, they sought job opportunities in the North. However, because of an influx of African Americans in the North led to competition for jobs, and the Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson of 1896 affirmed the “separate-but-equal doctrine,” continued the segregation of African Americans and limited their employment opportunities (Ibid, p. 385).

Just as women gained employment opportunities as the U.S. entered World War I, African Americans also sought such opportunities. Yet, during the war and throughout the Depression until World War II, African Americans continued to face much discrimination and “segregation in employment, housing, and education, as well as violence persisted” (Ibid, p. 385). By World War II, “many questioned how the U.S. could oppose the Axis power while denying the rights of its own citizens, especially as many African American men joined the still-segregated armed services” (Ibid, p. 385). The Cold War also ignited the debate on its treatment towards African American citizens, while it was supposedly fighting countries that were communist or supported communism. Nonetheless, events of war provided the largest marginalized minority groups, African Americans and women with employment opportunities, even though there was still widespread discrimination.

A mass movement of protests for civil rights for African Americans launched in the 1960’s, including turning point events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to sit in the back seat of a bus, and when a group of African American students tried to enter a segregated school of Little Rock Central High School in 1957—the governor called upon the National Guard to prevent the students from entering and President Eisenhower called the army to protect the group of students as a response. These incidents were some of the catalysts for many organized protests, especially among young students.

President Kennedy was pressured by activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights groups to advocate for civil rights for African Americans with sit-ins and boycotts of white-owned businesses with the goal to integrate public places such as

“lunch counters, restrooms, dressing rooms, and water fountains” and to employ black store clerks” (Credo Reference, 2009). President Kennedy responded with speeches on civil rights reforms championing for the end to racial discrimination, and was later assassinated in 1963. President Lyndon Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, as an honor to President Kennedy. When the act was brought forth to the House of Representatives, it only included prohibitions against racial inequality. There were claims that Representative Howard Smith wanted to destroy the bill by adding provisions for gender equality, yet was successfully passed into law including the gender provisions (Aiken et al., 2013, p. 388). The act included Title VII, which was the only section of the act that “made it illegal to discriminate in employment basis of race, religion, national origin, and gender” (Credo Reference, 2009). However, gender discrimination cases were not pursued as often as racial discrimination cases were, under Title VII.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) was successful in pursuing gender discrimination cases, such as against the New York Times “to end its practice of advertising for positions separately based on gender” and “won the first sex discrimination case under the CRA in 1969 (*Weeks v. Southern Bell*)” (Aiken et al., 2013, p. 392). NOW was instrumental in reigniting support for the women’s rights movement. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed in 1978, which provided rights to pregnant women in the workplace. Over the next decade, there was more focus and understanding on women’s rights in the workplace. In 1980, the EEOC introduced guidelines that highlighted sexual harassment in the workplace, bringing the first cases to court involving these guidelines.

While Nixon and Carter were not strong public advocates for civil rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed in 1972, which “amended Title VII by extending the coverage of the EEOC to smaller employers as well as state and local governments, providing the EEOC with direct enforcement powers” and created the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinating Council to enforce employment discrimination cases, especially helpful since the Justice Department was unable to adequately handle the many ongoing Title VII cases. The Civil Rights Reform Act of 1978 was passed, establishing the EEOC as the official government agency enforcing fair employment through “Title VII, the Equal Pay Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as well as ensuring Equal Employment Opportunity for federal employees” (Ibid, p. 389). Though these provisions were made law, it did not prevent discrimination in the workplace, housing or education, and the EEOC was still accused of being ineffective. A third of African Americans reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace at least once within a year in the early 2000’s (Nielson et al., 2010, p. 177). Nonetheless, these laws became foundational tools for fighting for gender and racial equality in the coming decades.

From the mid-1980’s, there was focus on fighting against women’s restrictions in climbing the “corporate ladder” due to the implicit or explicit discrimination placed on women. Still, there continues to be “subtle” discrimination against women and other minorities, which are difficult to legally tackle (Nielson et al., 2010, p. 176). The second wave of feminism ended in the 1990’s, with the third wave focusing on plurality of women and including young activists. There was emphasis on the “intersectionality of identity” (sharing more than one identity), for example, those who were African

American and women. The Supreme Court has yet to recognize individuals who can be discriminated under multiple identities, and not one identity should be treated as more exclusive than another—but all discriminations should be of equal importance. Other minority groups continue to face discrimination, such as the racial groups of Arabs, Hispanics and Asian Americans, which have yet to be addressed through legal frameworks. While the women's rights and civil rights movements empowered the gay rights movement in the 1960's and 1970's, they do not have full protections in the workplace. Though currently, many states and companies include prohibitions against discrimination based on sexual orientation, the government has yet to pass national laws against discrimination based on sexual orientation or sexual identity (Aiken et al., 2013, p. 393, 395-396).

The women's rights movement became empowered when it partnered with the civil rights movement for African Americans, when gender and racial equality were made illegal under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Future acts legally protected both African Americans and women in employment discrimination, yet there is still discrimination that women and other minority groups face in the workplace.

Methodology

In an attempt to find participating companies for my research, I used the snowball method of asking friends if they work or knew friends who work at various companies. I considered major national and multinational corporate companies such as Vodafone Egypt, Juhayna, PepsiCo and Orascom. From March 2013 to August 2013, I conducted interviews with employees, including HR managers from various companies. I interviewed about a dozen employees at Vodafone Egypt, making connections through friends, however was unable to successfully speak with Human Resource personnel to

understand company policies on the corporate level. There is a Vodafone global policy against harassment and discrimination accessible online, however I had challenges speaking to HR representatives to understand how these policies are specifically being implemented in Egypt as well as the issues faced by employees at the company. My phone calls, emails and Tweets to Vodafone Egypt went unanswered. With interviewing a select number of employees (none in HR) at Vodafone Egypt, I could only understand corporate culture and treatment of individual employees with a limited perspective. If I were able to speak with HR representatives, I would be able to contribute a more detailed case study of Vodafone Egypt, especially since I have heard mostly positive experiences by employees at the company, in which Vodafone could devise and share formal best practices for other companies to emulate.

At an American University in Cairo Career Fair on April 20, 2013, I took the opportunity to connect with company representatives. After retrieving contact information from dozens of companies, I emailed and called national and international companies with at least 100 employees. Some of the companies I emailed were Danone, NSGB, Juhayna, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Nestle and Edita Food Industries. I did not receive the responses I had hoped, but had to heavily rely on personal contacts and connections. I received only one response by an international company in Egypt and conducted some interviews, however was not able to continue more interviews due to the political situation and the sensitivity of the topic.

Through a friend working for a major regional, Egypt-based engineering company, I was given contact information for the HR Director. I conducted an in-depth interview with both the VP and Organizational Development Director and the Monitoring

and Evaluation Unit Director. After waiting for permission to interview employees at this engineering company, I was told by the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit Director that the CEO refused to allow me to interview the company's employees because he did not "want to share any information on its employees" and "perhaps because [sic I'm] a foreigner." I was able to do in-depth interviews with a few employees regarding their experiences.

Through a friend, I met the owner of a sizable Egyptian facilities and management company, in which the founder began its business with two silent partners in 2011. I was able to understand company policies, practices and the company culture by interviewing the founder and an employee, managing 105 staff employees. I was unable to interview staff members because of the language barrier to fluently interview these employees. Because the information is kept confidential, I can rely on the information provided by the founder and his one employee, who works under the founder.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One discusses my interest in the topic, including why it is important to make companies accountable to creating and enforcing policies against harassment and discrimination, especially if there are to be equal rights in the workplace. The number of women employed and women in unemployment compared to their male counterpart in the Middle East are some of the lowest and highest rates in the world, respectively (See Figure 2 in Appendix). I contextualize how these rates are affected by economic, political and social/cultural factors and how certain factors prohibit women working in the private sector. This chapter introduces how the onset of liberalization affects employment opportunities for women, including working conditions, and compares how government and social conservative views towards working women affect the female

labor participation rate. Additionally, I compare how anti-gender discrimination efforts in the U.S. were created, and the challenges the U.S. continues to face in the present day. This comparison is vital to understand how anti-discrimination efforts came into being in both countries.

In Chapter Two, I highlight particular articles that address women in the workplace in the Egyptian Labor Laws, focusing on how discrimination is discussed. I compare how Egypt and the U.S. both treat discrimination in the workplace in labor laws, and how U.S. and Egypt's labor laws on discrimination affect corporate policies and practices. I analyze how the both legal systems define harassment and discrimination, and the procedures set in place by transnational or national governances for bringing forth cases related to discrimination. Though there are transnational and local governances set in place, I analyze how labor laws and company policies do not reflect company practices, particularly in the U.S. where Egyptian employees see the U.S. upholding labor standards and American transnational corporations as the best companies to work for. I analyze which aspects of Egyptian labor laws are generally better than U.S. labor laws.

Chapter Three involves case studies on the four companies. It begins with backgrounds on each of the companies and focuses on the interviews with female and male employees and managers who currently work or have worked in Egyptian and international companies: I illustrate whether there are any discrepancies between managers and employees on company policies and practices. Within the chapter, I highlight company policies against harassment and discrimination, as well as specific cases where there is harassment and/or discrimination. I also include cases where there is

gendered work; training and working conditions, as well as company maternity leave policies and practices. I analyze the influence of international or local governances on corporate policy and culture.

Chapter Four is a greater analysis of how work culture is influenced by social norms, as well as corporate policies and practices. I highlight what companies attempt to achieve, including benefits that employees enjoy, and how it relates to a wider concept of corporate social responsibility and how companies attempt to create a workplace as an extension of the home. Nonetheless, I include problems that employees face such as lack of professionalism, communication and transparency at work, which influences the overall workplace atmosphere. Finally, I discuss how a changing work culture specifically impacts women especially in today's age of economic liberalization.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the experiences of both men and women who are working or worked at the various companies and compare if their experiences are different or similar, and if working in an international or Egyptian company is a factor in their experiences. I review how companies are able to create and enforce policies against harassment and discrimination, and whether international or local governances, such as Egypt's labor code have influenced corporate culture and the enforcement of corporate policies. I explain how companies can create best practices for employees by being competitive with their policies, benefits and working environments they provide for their employees, and how this can lead to better working conditions for women, and permeate into social attitudes towards working women.

Conclusion

This thesis hopes to provide a glimpse of the experiences of male and female employees working in the private sector, using select companies. It is not representative

of the experiences of all employees working in the private sector, but rather represents localized experiences during a certain moment in history—post-revolution, when Mohamed Morsi was President and post-July 3rd, 2013, when Morsi was removed from office. I attempt to bring into discussion how employees understand their working conditions and experiences faced in the workplace, as well as how the liberalization of Egypt affected employment conditions for women. I do not assume that discrimination and harassment are the main problems that many employees face, nor assume that policies against discrimination and harassment are the focal points in enhancing employees' experiences and conditions. Additionally, I do not assume the U.S. should be the prime example for which Egypt should emulate, as social contexts differ for work cultures and environments.

Chapter 2: Comparing Egyptian and U.S. labor laws on discrimination- How local and international governances affect corporate policies and practices

In this chapter, there is comparison of the Egyptian and U.S. labor laws that address discrimination in the workplace. Egyptian labor laws addressing discrimination have remained active since Nasser's regime, yet are weak in enforcing companies to be compliant. The state's regulation on women's work allows the state to decide how women should be viewed vis-à-vis work and the conditions in which they can work. The state's policies on women's employment influenced and confirmed how society viewed working women, especially in certain jobs. Women were seen in the framework as reproducing individuals, in which work is secondary to family and household responsibilities—men remain the “breadwinners” in Egyptian society. U.S. labor laws, addressing discrimination, originated during the Civil Rights Movement, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, which prohibited discrimination in the workplace on the basis of gender, race, national origin and religion (Credo Reference, 2009). Individuals and organizations collectively worked together to pressure the government to enact laws against discrimination based on gender and race, utilizing a grass roots approach. While many acts have been passed during and since the Civil Rights Movement targeting employment discrimination forcing companies to be compliant to labor laws, however, there is still explicit and implicit discrimination that the legal institution has failed to address. A comparison between regulatory forces (such as labor laws or international

conventions) in the U.S. and Egypt will help provide an understanding of how such governances influence companies.

International conventions require companies to adhere to labor standards. I discuss how international conventions influence Egyptian labor laws and practices, as well as how the U.S. enforces labor laws through local governance. I compare how Egypt and the U.S. views cases of discrimination in the workplace and how regulation of anti-discrimination laws is enforced or not enforced. In the U.S. corporate environment, there are legal retributions against workplace discrimination and harassment; however, that does not mean all employees are safe from discrimination and harassment. U.S. companies continue to violate labor standards, especially in situations where they outsource work outside of the U.S. and U.S. law does not protect overseas non-American workers. Though there are international conventions that Egypt has signed, Egypt does not actively enforce cases against discrimination, and there is no mention of harassment in the Egyptian Labor Laws. Yet, competing corporations have increasingly been proponents of “workplace best practices,” by making working conditions attractive, to attempt to hire the best workers, in order to compete in the neoliberal global market.

Influence of international conventions on Egypt’s labor laws and practices

According to the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), discrimination is defined as: “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on [sic] the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (UN, 2012). “Articles 10, 11 and 13, respectively, affirm women's rights to non-discrimination in education, employment and economic and social activities” (UN, 2012).” As Article 11 outlines that state signatories are responsible to eliminate

discrimination in the “field of employment” and uphold “equal treatment in respect of work,” which can translate into prohibition against unfair treatment (harassment and/or discrimination). The Arab Charter on Human Rights (2004) states there should be “No distinction between men and women shall be made in the exercise of the right to benefit effectively from training, employment, protection of work, and equal pay for work of equal value and quality.” Although discrimination is prohibited in the area of employment via CEDAW and the Arab Charter on Human Rights, conventions against harassment are not directly mentioned in the articles. Nonetheless, it is left to the discretion of companies to include policies against discrimination and harassment, and conventions such as CEDAW are used as guiding documents and optional for companies to utilize and implement.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) was established in 1919 to implement labor standards globally and alleviate poor labor conditions. International labor “core” standards include “freedom from forced labor,” “abolition of exploitive forms of child labor,” “equal opportunity in employment, that is, the right to equal treatment for all workers,” and “freedom of association” (Busse, 2003, p. 41). There are five indicators that are used when quantifying labor standards, in which the first standard rates the “extent of discrimination against women” (Ibid, 2003, p. 45). Egypt has been a member state of the ILO since 1936 and ratified the conventions addressing discrimination in employment in 1960, yet have not ratified 48 conventions out of 177 such as the fundamental C122—Employment Policy Convention or C183—Maternity Protection Convention (International Labour Organization Information System on International

Labour Standards, 2012). Although Egypt has ratified 64 conventions, there is no guarantee of application of these standards.

Additionally, there are international norms and standards that multinational companies are required to follow in terms of “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) such as the SA 800-Social Accountability and Social Responsibility, AA 1000 Accountability/Assurance Standard, ISO 26000 and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. These standards dictate working conditions free from child labor, forced labor, transparency of work practices and working conditions (Stanislavska et al., 2010, p. 66-68). However, some of these standards and norms were created by organizations either in the U.S., Europe or international organizations dominated by these countries. These norms are western-centric, and do not take into account the social or historical context of the people or companies that are in Egypt. While there are western-centric international conventions that dictate labor standards, managers may not see enforcing such standards necessary or applicable to their companies. Presence or enforcement of official norms and standards for which companies are supposed to adhere to does not necessarily illustrate whether managers are reluctant or subversive to addressing workers’ issues. Rather, issues brought to the attention of managers can be handled without adhering to specific standards and addressed informally. Additionally, Egyptian labor laws and companies in Egypt may not enforce international standards because there is not a specific agency that implements these standards and there are no sanctions by the State or international agency if companies do not comply.

Egyptian Labor Laws

While there are international labor standards that multinational companies are expected to adhere to, the private sector must follow laws in accordance with Egypt’s

Labor Code (Act 137 of 1981). The Egyptian labor laws outline guidelines before terminating an employee, as well as consist of articles regarding employing women (Zuehl & Sherwyn, 2001, p. 75). Egypt's Labor Code clearly states the terms for employing women, but not necessarily for men, indicating men already have rights and opportunities, without limitations for work. Additionally, the Egyptian Labor Code includes conditions that outline maternity benefits, employing women in safe working conditions and prohibiting women from working from 7pm to 7am (which can also be seen as a discrimination in itself) (Egypt's Labor Code, beginning p. 43). Furthermore, employees cannot be terminated on the grounds of "sex," "family obligations" and/or "pregnancy," but female employees are allowed to terminate their own contracts (with three months notice) if they are entering marriage or will have children (Ibid, p. 52, 55). The ability for women to terminate their own contracts on these grounds emphasizes the importance of marriage and family responsibilities for women, but not necessarily for men.

While there are not labor laws that specifically address harassment, or provide other specific benefits for women, companies have the choice to create their own policies against harassment to protect female employees. International labor laws and international conventions can be used to influence more comprehensive national labor laws against discrimination and harassment in the workplace, yet there must be agencies or organizations that enforce implementation of such conventions and policies and companies must create a work culture supportive of its employees needs.

The Egyptian labor laws specifically mention women within the family structure or state special working conditions that should be provided to them. The Egyptian labor

laws can explain how managers view women in the private sector, which impacts the support and services they receive by the companies in which they work. For example, labor laws prevent women from working in the evenings, and women are discussed in contexts of families, which obstructs women being viewed as independent to decide for themselves if they want to work during overnight shifts, thus this limits the access women have to work in the evenings (whether it is through official labor laws, or discriminatory practices for women requesting overnight shifts). Though, in some cases, women who decide to work in the evenings, companies provide work-to-home transportation—especially during times of political turmoil post- revolution.

According to the Egyptian Labor Laws, Article 35 defines discrimination in wages on the grounds of “sex, origin, language, religion or creed” (The Middle East Library for Economic Services, 2003, p. 22). The definition of discrimination is not comprehensive on other grounds such as political affiliations, color, relationship status—which is specific to the social context of Egypt. Some employees discussed managers not wanting to hire single or engaged women because they would “take advantage” of the maternity leave policy from their company, or since the current political situation has polarized Egyptians politically, hiring practices may discriminate candidates based on whom they politically support. This particular aspect was not the focus of my study and while the political situation of Egypt is still recently developing, it is difficult to study or analyze any trends in discrimination based on political affiliations.

Selim graduated from Cairo University’s Law School and has been working on labor cases at law firms in Cairo for the past four years, discussed the Egyptian labor code and how employees use the court system. Selim stated that the Egyptian labor law

includes “something about discrimination,” but does not include anything specifically related to sexual harassment. Selim affirmed that the Egyptian labor laws mainly reference maternity leave policies.

The Egyptian Labor Code solely discusses discrimination in wages, but not in hiring and firing practices, promotions, benefits and trainings. It does not define how discrimination can occur. Additionally, the Egyptian Labor Laws do not include any article specifically related to defining or prohibiting harassment. The Labor Code includes a section specifically regarding the “Employment of Woman Workers,” which mentions work conditions, hours, maternity leave and return from maternity leave. The following articles relate to women’s employment:

Article 88 states; “Subject to the provisions of the following articles, all provisions regulating the employment of workers shall apply to woman workers without discrimination among them, once their work conditions are analogous” (Ibid, p. 43).

Article 89 states; “The concerned minister shall issue a decree determining the cases, works, and occasions for which women shall not be employed to work during the period between 7 pm and 7 am” (Ibid, p. 43).

Article 90 states, “The concerned minister shall issue a decree determining the works that are unwholesome and morally harmful to women, as well as the works in which women may not be employed to work” (Ibid, p. 43).

Article 91 states, “a female worker having spent ten months in the service of the employer or more shall have the right to maternity leave of ninety days, with a compensation equal to her comprehensive wage...”

A female worker shall not be required to work during the forty five days following childbirth.

The maternity leave shall not be entitled more than twice throughout the female worker’s period of service.” (Ibid, p. 44).

Article 92 prohibits firing a woman during her maternity leave and the “employer may deprive her from the compensation for her comprehensive

wage on the leave period...if it is proved that she has worked during the leave with another employer...” (Ibid, p. 44).

Article 93 provides the nursing female worker “twenty four months following the date of childbirth to two other period for breast-feeding each of not less than a half hour. The female worker shall also have the right to add the two periods together. These two additional periods shall be counted as working hours, and shall not result in any wage deduction” (Ibid, p. 44).

Article 94 states the “female worker in the establishment where fifty workers or more are employed shall have the right to obtain a leave without pay for a period not exceeding two years, to care for her child. This leave shall not be entitled more than twice throughout her service” (Ibid, p. 45).

These articles provide rights and protections to female employees dictating their hours of work, prohibiting harmful work for women and entitling them to paid maternity leave for three months, along with two years of unpaid leave to take care of children, with their position guaranteed to them when they return. Upon return to work, nursing female workers are able to receive an hour per day of paid breastfeeding time for up to two years. A female worker is not allowed to renew her maternity leave more than twice under the same employer.

If an employer fails to comply with any of the abovementioned articles, Articles 247-249 dictate the employer to be fined from either one hundred pounds to one thousand pounds depending on the article violated (Ibid, p. 107). These fines seem to be outdated and negligible compared to the amount of business conducted and profits made by these businesses. Additionally, the enforcement of businesses complying with these articles needs to be made a priority, especially when some of the interviewees discussed that maternity leave has been limited to only two months, rather than three months.

There is no active government agency that enforces Egyptian Labor Laws, rather it is an employees' prerogative to bring cases to the court. Employees discussed the tediousness and length of time it would take to file a lawsuit in court and do not feel the legal system to be effective in implementing labor laws, compared to the U.S. government, which Egyptian employees see as being more effective and successful in filing lawsuits against companies for violating labor laws, including discrimination or harassment of employees.

U.S. Labor Laws

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 included Title VII, which specifically prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion or national origin (Credo Reference, 2009). Other laws have been passed during and since the Civil Rights Movement addressing discrimination based on gender and race, as well as other important aspects regarding women's employment.

The Women's Bureau was established under the U.S. Department of Labor in 1920, which specifically "develops policies and standards and conducts inquiries to safeguard the interests of working women; to advocate for their equality and economic security for themselves and their families; and to promote quality work environments" (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau). The Women's Bureau works on gender discrimination in the workplace, and states that equality is beneficial not just for the individual, but also within a family unit. In Egypt's social context, women are seen as solely within a family unit, rather than as individuals.

The U.S. Labor Laws mandate a provision for equal pay based on equal work, under the Equal Pay Act. The Equal Pay Act states:

Under this law, all employers must provide employees within the same establishment whose jobs require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility, and are performed under similar working conditions “equal pay,” including: an equal salary, overtime pay, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing and bonus plans, life insurance, vacation and holiday pay, cleaning or gasoline allowances, hotel accommodations, reimbursement for travel expenses and benefits. Unequal compensation cannot be justified unless the employer shows that the pay differential is based on a fair seniority, merit or incentive system, or a factor other than sex (Women’s Bureau 2012, p. 1-2).

There shall be no discrimination in pay, or other benefits and resources provided to employees based on gender. This act was inspired by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, yet is more comprehensive in how one can be discriminated in the workplace. Both the Equal Pay Act and provision VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are enforced by the EEOC (Women’s Bureau, 2012).

Lilly Ledbetter led a successful lawsuit against her employer, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for unfairly paying her less than her male counterparts, even though the work and responsibilities were the same as her male counterparts—she received back pay for the amount of about \$3.3 million, the employment salary she was denied and did not know about until later because employees were not allowed to discuss their salaries (National Women’s Law Center, 2013). After winning this case, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 was passed reaffirming Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, bestowing individuals who received lesser pay than fellow colleagues for the same work; the right to claim wages not received within 180 to 300 days (depending on the state) to file a charge with the EEOC (Women’s Bureau 2012, p. 2).

The Guide to Women’s Equal Pay Rights provides employees with tips on what to do if they believe they are facing pay discrimination based on gender. Tips include: trying to resolve it with the employer first, educating and being aware of the laws and

timelines for filing charges with the EEOC, keeping records and evidence of discrimination, following up with state and local laws against discrimination, and finally seeking legal consultation (Women's Bureau 2012, p. 3).

In terms of maternity leave, under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), workers are able to

balance job and family responsibilities by giving employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year for specific reasons, including a serious health condition or to care for an immediate family member who has a serious health condition. During FMLA leave, employers must continue employee health insurance benefits and, upon completion of the leave, restore employees to the same or equivalent positions (U.S. Department of Labor).

The U.S. provides up to three months of unpaid leave for employees, while Egypt's Labor Laws allow up to three months of paid maternity leave. In either case, it is up to the prerogative of private companies to provide paid leave in accordance to local governance, especially paid leaves that surpass what is required by labor laws.

Recently, in 2010, the U.S. Department of Labor passed a provision for breastfeeding time—the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires:

employers to provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk. Employers are also required to provide a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk (U.S. Department of Labor).

The time allocated for breastfeeding time has become mandatory under U.S. Labor Laws recently, while Egyptian Labor Laws have had this article as part of their Labor Laws at least from 2003. The Egyptian Labor Laws also provides nursing women double the time allocated for total breastfeeding time provided in the U.S.—until up to two years, for an

hour each day. The U.S. Labor Laws do not specify how much time can be allocated per day, as well as only be limited to one year for such benefits.

While U.S. Labor Laws are more comprehensive regarding discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender, in other aspects, U.S. Labor Laws are not as favorable as Egyptian Labor Laws. While enforcement of labor laws between the two countries vary, companies in Egypt tend to provide better conditions for maternity leave and breastfeeding time for women, compared to the U.S. Additionally, women in Egypt can leave their positions without pay for up to two years to take care of their children, with their position guaranteed to be left vacant until they return. In the U.S., the FMLA does not provide extensive benefits, and it is left to state and company laws to provide flexible benefits to women.

U.S.- Cases Brought to Court and Legal Procedures (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is an agency under the U.S. government that ensures that companies adhere to labor laws or they are subject to lawsuits—protecting U.S. citizens working in the U.S. or abroad, yet working for U.S. employers (EEOC, 2003). On the EEOC website, employees of a company can “file a charge of employment discrimination.” The EEOC defines discrimination on the grounds of “race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.” The EEOC enforces laws against discrimination in “all types of work situation, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages and benefits (EEOC, 2013).

The EEOC defines sexual harassment as:

“Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.

Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.

Although the law doesn’t prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).

The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer” (EEOC, 2013).

The EEOC’s definition of sexual harassment is comprehensive and lucid to include various circumstances that can be defined as sexual harassment—which is not necessarily “sexual” in nature, but discrimination based on sex, and can incorporate verbal harassment. The EEOC implies any consistent actions that are creating a harmful and unpleasant work environment is illegal, and also provides examples of who can be the harasser. While the EEOC is thorough in their definition of harassment and discrimination, the Egyptian labor laws do not include any prohibition of harassment, but generally prohibit discrimination in wages, based on four grounds—“sex, origin, language, religion or creed” (The Middle East Library for Economic Services, 2003, p. 22).

While the EEOC can enforce cases on discrimination, the “EEOC charge resolution process is itself ambiguous and organizationally constructed by the repeat players in the system so that most cases end with no agency decision beyond the

provision of a right-to-sue letter,” thus there is limited immediate or remedial resolution for the plaintiff (Nielson et al., 2010, p. 177). “Fewer than one in five charging parties obtain any kind of favorable outcome from the EEOC itself” (Ibid, p. 177). Nonetheless, the EEOC does not guarantee resolving cases of discrimination, and still remains costly if one decides to pursue the litigation in court, especially for plaintiffs.

Egypt- Cases Brought to Court and Legal Procedures

While Egyptian employees do not have an active Egyptian government agency that enforces labor laws, they are able to file lawsuits against their employers in court. In terms of discrimination of pay, Selim said he has not really seen such cases because “no one really thinks about it—it doesn’t really matter. In the U.S., feminist organizations assist with these cases, but we don’t really have that here.” Selim detailed the most common cases that are brought forward to the firm by individual employees, which are “dismissal cases,”—when employees sue their company for compensation if they resigned. Selim stated that it is “common to sue companies—at Vodafone, it’s something they have on a daily basis.” However, the employees in my research from Vodafone have not referred to any desire to use the court system to address any grievances related to unfair pay or compensation. Rather, they have rationalized the pay freeze in the past four years due to the economic crisis. Others believe that Vodafone’s salary is higher than most other companies.

There are not many cases related to sexual harassment brought to the court because “it’s not something in the culture,” said Selim. He believes that since culture strongly dictates how sexual harassment is perceived, this prevents employees from seeking justice against sexual harassment through the legal court system.

Selim described the legal system of going to court to sue a company as “a very simple process—it just takes time.” The first step in filing a case against a company is to go to court, then, write a memorandum and submit files for evidence. The procedure takes a long time—an average of two to three years, and sometimes 20 years—depending on how complex the case is and the stages of court.

The case begins with the appeals court, then after appealing the decision, if the case is not won, the case goes to the court of cessation. One cannot appeal the decision from the court of cessation because it only examines “if there is a problem with the law” and “not evidence or facts to say this party is wrong or right.” Though these steps may seem simple to undertake, Egyptian employees may see them as costly and burdensome. Additionally, many of the interviewees did not say they would pursue discrimination and harassment cases in court, rather, they would report it to their managers, and if not handled at the corporate level, would quit to not subject oneself to working in a pernicious environment. Employees would rather have cases be handled personally by the manager, rather than the legal system, which would take longer to resolve.

Influence of International Company Policies in Egypt

Even though the Egyptian labor laws are “vague and not hard to understand,” the main problem is enforcement of the laws. Selim is referring to how the laws are general, thus the vagueness of the written laws causes the legal system to be “very lax and very corrupt, [yet] if we can fix this, we can have something very successful.” Selim believes that the “rise of multinationals made things easier” especially when Egyptian labor laws are not enforced because major international companies are “bound before their own

laws” referring to the country’s laws in which the headquarters of the company is located. Selim provided the example of a case with Seaman’s a few years ago regarding foreign bribery. Since “the U.S. has foreign corrupt practices law, the act penalizes what companies do with listed companies, even if it’s outside of the U.S.” International companies have “personal codes on sexual harassment even though it’s not required by Egyptian law to have—they are just required to have anti-discrimination [laws] by Egyptian law.” Selim sees the U.S. as having comprehensive labor laws, in which multinational companies in Egypt are expected to adhere to its own country’s labor laws, which Selim says, influences Egyptian companies to become compete with better policies.

“For the sake of uniformity,” and because international companies “don’t want to have a lot of problems” with the legal system, these companies “give employees benefits” of creating and enforcing policies, highlighted Selim. In his personal viewpoint, Selim said, “the rise of multinationals became a universal rule,” in which companies want the prestige and “name of Vodafone and PepsiCo.” These companies “need those handbooks,” referring to how Human Resources need to “keep employees to prevent high turnover [rates] and preserve its reputation.” Selim argued that even if governments do not have specific laws on harassment or discrimination, “companies have these handbooks and still use these handbooks because it’s a reputation issue.” In other words, even if Egyptian labor laws are not comprehensive, working for an international company would ensure that the international company’s bylaws and corporate policies are clear, transparent and enforced by the company.

The top international companies in the world, in which individuals from around the world compete to work for such companies that are rated by *Fortune* as the “Best Companies To Work For;” *Fortune* rates aspects ranging from how employees feel about their managers and colleagues as well as corporate culture to the training, benefits and pay they receive from the company (CNN Money, 2013). Any company that is older than five years old with more than 1,000 employees is allowed to participate. Anonymous surveys are randomly administered throughout the company. While there is not a similar system of rating companies in Egypt, *Fortune*’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” encourages companies to create and enforce policies that protect employees while also creating a safe and welcoming environment for all employees. This entices the very best and talented individuals from around the world to work for the top companies rated by *Fortune*. One of the companies (Company I) selected for this thesis was rated as one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For (Great Place to Work, 2013).

The survey looks at how diverse the workplace is, which includes how many minorities and women are employed, if there is an anti-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and if the company “offers domestic partner benefits for same sex-couples” (CNN Money, 2013). While some of these benchmarks are still progressive for Egypt, rating companies for their treatment of employees and the benefits they offer will make companies compete with each other by creating and enforcing progressive practices that works in the Egyptian cultural context.

While many Egyptian companies or international companies are not rated by *Fortune*, Egyptian employees perceive international companies as having better standards and policies than Egyptian companies. Policies that are created to protect and encourage

diversity and nondiscrimination in the workplace have become policies that many other companies aspire to emulate, and for the name and reputation of an international company, requires progressive policies.

Companies Talk the Walk: Policies that do not Represent Practices and the Affect of Public Pressure

Corporations have increasingly become “feminized” in the aspect that they seek to create a welcoming public image to their consumers (Hallsworth, 2005, p. 33). Companies re-market themselves to portray a “friendly, ethical, and nurturing orientation toward the world and its problems” (Ibid). These institutions have adopted positive forms of corporate responsibility or “best practices” and corporate policies against discrimination and harassment, to not only prevent lawsuits, but also induce customer loyalty and create a positive public image. Companies are wary of creating a “risk society” from backlashing against a company that violates human rights, particularly one that practices discrimination or allows harassment to take place within a company.

There are a handful of Egyptian companies that have created policies against harassment and discrimination of female employees. Companies such as Vodafone Egypt has its Code of Conduct available online, which prohibits discrimination and harassment. Vodafone offers examples of what harassment can be and how an employee can report a case. The Commercial International Bank (CIB) in Egypt also has a code of conduct, which prohibits discrimination, enforces equal opportunity and

sets a special article to tackle the issue of harassment. The code is clear in prohibiting harassment at all levels as well as with the bank’s clients. It sets procedures to report complaints on harassment or annoyance and maltreatment in general (UN Women, 2011, p. 18).

Prime Group in Egypt also adheres to implementing non-discrimination and anti-sexual harassment policies, by making employees sign the company's code of conduct, which prohibits harassment and distributing information via e-mail regarding the implementation of the Gender Equity Committee within the company (UN Women, 2011, p. 30). Although the state does not require businesses to have such policies, these companies' policies demonstrate the pro-active approach private institutions take to create a positive public image, even if there are no state laws requiring such behaviors.

Hallsworth argues that companies "embrace the feminine, but they have not become feminine in their practice," since companies still care about profit making (2005, p. 35). Companies are not as "nurturing" to their employees or communities as their policies seem to imply. In one of the companies rated by *Fortune* as "Best Companies to Work For," a female employee filed a lawsuit in court for facing gender harassment and discrimination by colleagues. The employee alleged that HR managers did not take action when she reported fellow employees made offensive, sexist comments and also inappropriately touched her. When the employee complained to her supervisor, she was told, "Boys will be boys," excusing the unprofessional behavior (Bultman, 2013). Another employee filed charges against the same *Fortune* 500 company for facing discrimination when colleagues learned she was lesbian. The employee was subjected to burdensome workloads, especially after she was pregnant; subsequently, the company fired her for not performing to expectations, even though the workload was unreasonable (Brenzel, 2013).

Labor standards are often disregarded when businesses are primarily concerned with profit making, especially in the age of economic liberalization. For example, Levi

Strauss and Wal-Mart were berated on subjecting workers to low pay and horrid conditions. As a result of poor worker's rights and working conditions, their public images were tarnished, and consequently, for the first time in history in 2010, Wal-Mart reported a profit drop during its quarter, despite similar stores reporting profits. Consumer and market research analysts attributed this slump in profit growth due to negative "public perception" (Meeks, 2011, p. 62). Wal-Mart attempted to repair its image by reverting to corporate socially responsible behavior by introducing policy changes as well as "going green" or implementing environmentally sustainable initiatives. "According to former CEO Lee Scott, the decision to 'go green' was a defensive strategy to avoid criticism" (Ibid, p. 63). Also in its many attempts to repair public image because of poor worker's rights abroad, Wal-Mart "both introduced new rules for their foreign subsidiaries/subcontractors and excluded suppliers who use child labor" (Busse, 2003, p. 51). Because of public pressure on Wal-Mart's poor corporate practices and policies, which affected company profit margins, the company was compelled to change corporate practices, not just policies.

Though tarnishing a company's image can cause companies to change policies, companies are still able to violate labor standards without many harsh consequences since filing lawsuits can be difficult and expensive, without any guarantee of winning such a case. Yet again, Wal-Mart came under public fire in 2011, with the largest class action lawsuit in history with more than 90,000 female employees filed against the company. With a 5-4 ruling against them, the court stated that the "situations of each individual are so different, and because the claims of these five plaintiffs are not representative of thousands of women who work at Wal-Mart" (Martin, 2011). Although the women did

not win the case, they intend to file separate cases against the company, as some women claimed that they were paid less than fellow male employees, or women were only allowed to work in certain positions because “women tend to be better at information processing” and “men are better at focusing on a single objective” (Martin, 2011). This lawsuit garnished much media attention and it is likely that Wal-Mart will attempt to be more cautious in not discriminating against women; even if a lawsuit was not won against the company—a negative public image can do just as much damage.

While not all U.S. companies enforce labor laws and workers still face unjust working conditions, U.S. companies seldom enforce labor laws if they are outsourcing work outside the U.S. to non-U.S. citizens. In April 2013, an eight-story garment building, called Rana Plaza factories collapsed in Bangladesh with more than 3,500 workers inside—over 1,000 workers died and another 1,000 workers were hospitalized. American, Canadian and British companies used these factories to produce clothing for prominent brands such as The Children’s Place, Primark’s ‘Denim Co.’ Garment workers earned 14 to 26 cents an hour, working 13 to 14 ½ hour shifts, six to seven days a week (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, 2013).

At the Next Collections factory in Bangladesh, companies such as Gap and Old Navy were accused of labor violations against garment workers by paying its 3,750 workers 20 to 24 cents an hour, working 14 to 17 hour shifts and denying women maternity leave or firing pregnant women from their jobs (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, 2013). The EEOC does not provide legal protections to workers who are not U.S. citizens, like those employed by American companies outsourcing abroad; workers, especially female workers, do not have rights and become marginalized. U.S.

retailers also do not directly oversee every tier of the supply chain, because there are not legal liabilities to do so in foreign countries. Linda Conrad, the Director of Strategic Business Risk for Zurich Insurance Group Ltd. In New York, stated, “I met with the risk manager of a very large company who didn't know that their products were made in that factory” (Zolkos, 2013).

After the Bangladesh factory collapse, negative media attention compelled companies to re-think their policies and safety standards. Yet, mostly European companies signed onto “The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh,” being overseen by the ILO (Venkatesan, 2013). Europe has a better governance structure, with a “stronger commitment to sustainability” and “social responsibility,” whereas in the U.S., “there isn’t that strong a market push” (Zolkos, 2013). American companies do not want to be held legally liable, nor view overseeing their entire supply chain as cost-effective for them, unless it severely impacts a company’s reputation *and* profits. Since the Accord is an agreement between companies and unions, it still up to factory managers to improve conditions because there are no legally binding implications for companies to make sure labor standards are upheld (Lindsey, 2013, p. 17-18). Additionally, because Bangladesh has been pushed into the neoliberal market economy by the 2000’s, more women have been pressured into working for its thousands of garment factories for low wages to keep from starving, and it is mostly women who are exploited, with the failed promise of an improved standard of living. Bangladesh will not enforce safety standards or protect workers because the garment industry—propelled by Western countries—is worth more than \$20 billion; because of Bangladesh’s ability to keep low costs of garment production, it is able to compete in the international neoliberal market, especially

since China is a main competitor for cheap labor (Lindsey, 2013, p. 18).

While rare, there are movements making progress in changing the way companies operate through public pressure. With “younger crowds (of consumers),” they are “less about the money and more about values...a marketing firm specializing in values-driven branding programs, views today’s consumers not as passive marketing targets, but as brand advocates” (Meeks, 2011, p. 63). Because of the public image of companies at stake, companies are creating or reconstructing policies that ensure safety standards and better workers conditions—all for a better public perception. Employees from Vodafone in interviews expressed brand loyalty, and having pride working for Vodafone because of its reputation, corporate culture and policies of how they treat employees and attributing their positive experiences to being an international company. They expressed how Vodafone’s competitor, Mobinil also plays on brand loyalty—how consumers prefer to support Mobinil because of their nationalist support for Egypt, rather than foreign companies. Nonetheless, consumers are caring more about what companies stand for, as well as how they treat their communities and their employees.

Conclusion

While the contexts of how both Egypt and the U.S. created laws against gender discrimination in the workplace are different, the labor laws of both countries seek to provide rights and protections to women in the workplace. Though the U.S. has a longer history with the women’s rights movements leading progressive changes in women’s employment and a government agency responsible for cases involving company discrimination against employees, labor laws are not always upheld or applicable to workers hired overseas by U.S. companies and there are still violations by American

companies where employees continue to face discrimination and harassment. Compared to U.S. labor laws, Egyptian labor laws may not be as comprehensive, yet they provide female employees with certain benefits that are more favorable than those required by U.S. labor laws, even if Egyptian women's rights in the workplace were initially appropriated under state-feminism. The government or a government agency may not enforce Egyptian labor laws, yet there is still a culture where companies in the following case studies provide females with adequate maternity leave benefits and other benefits. International labor conventions and standards do not play a big role in enforcing individual state labor laws, but rather provide general guidelines for countries to follow. Yet, it seems that companies can be pressured to change corporate policies and practices to publicly show they are ethically and morally responsible towards their employees in response to a negative public image, if it severely affects company profits.

Chapter 3: Company Policies and Practices- Employees and Managers Speak

This chapter looks at the employees' experiences at the four companies used for this thesis. The managers also discuss corporate policies and practices, company culture and benefits and opportunities available for employees. I present what employees and managers say to illustrate the experiences they have at these companies as a way to give them their own agency. Joan Scott's (1991) article "The Evidence of Experience" explains how people's experiences are used to confirm certain histories of people, but not used to challenge them. Scott states, "the visible is privileged...writing is reproduction, transmission—the communication of knowledge gained through (visual, visceral) experience" (1991, p. 775-776). While experience is used to give people authority to make claims about identity and versions of history, historians use experiences to create the basis of knowledge. Using the "authority" of experience can be troublesome when it becomes difficult to challenge claims, or rather we do not see the nuances between women's individual histories. Historians use women's experiences to make universal claims about their histories and identities, which is not shared by all women (Scott, 1991, p. 787). Thus, I attempt to present the experiences of male and female employees and managers as an interpretation, my interpretation, rather than claiming their experiences are illustrative of all workers experiences in the private sector.

Backgrounds on the Four Companies

Company E is a major Egyptian corporation with presence in regional countries such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Company E employs more than 2,000 engineers, architects and interior designers throughout the Middle East region, with its

headquarters based in Cairo, Egypt. In Egypt, Company E employs 233 women and 1,301 men. Company E has been ranked in the top 225 International Design Firms in 2013 (Engineering News-Record 2013). In-depth interviews were conducted with Sarah, Vice President and Director of Human Resources and Organization Development; Tamer, Manager of Monitoring and Evaluation; and employees, Adel, Senior Engineer and Selma, a Junior Communications Engineer.

Company F is an Egyptian company that works in facilities management, providing its clients with consulting services, facility and management services, including cleaning, security, pest control and other maintenance services. Company F employs 240 employees; its clients include Pepsi Co and Vodafone. Akram established his business with two silent partners in 2011 after attaining fifteen years of experience in the facility and management field. Akram described why he started his own business; “It was a dream of mine to establish my own business according to international standards and according to the capabilities of my people.” Akram worked abroad for more than 15 years, including the United States and England. In-depth interviews were conducted with Akram, the founder and Ali, an employee under Akram, who is the Property Manager for a client company.

Company I is a major international corporation with presence in Egypt. Company I conducts business in more than 75 countries, with about 72,000 employees worldwide (Company I website 2013). Company I’s headquarters is based in the U.S., which has been named as one of the Best Companies to Work For by *Fortune* magazine in the U.S., while internationally (with select countries, not including Egypt in its evaluations) rated in the top 30 by World’s Best Multinational Workplaces (Great Place to Work, 2012).

Company V is a major international corporation, *Vodafone*. *Vodafone Group PLC* was founded in the United Kingdom and conducts business in over 30 countries with over 86,000 employees worldwide (Vodafone Group Plc. Annual Report 2012, 2012, p. 34). *Vodafone Egypt* employs 6,500 men and women and is the “number 1 mobile operator in Egypt with the largest customer base. *Vodafone* proudly serves more than 36.3 million customers” (Vodafone Egypt 2011). I was unable to interview HR managers after many attempts in contacting them. Thus, I interviewed former and current employees through friends and contacts I made. Interviews were conducted separately with Akram, Azzam and Ali who were colleagues together, along with eight other current and former employees.

Corporate Policies Against Harassment and Discrimination, Company Practices

Most companies in the case studies have written policies that include ethic codes highlighting anti-discrimination practices, yet policies against harassment were rare to find in all companies. Most managers (regardless if international or not) emphasized creating a corporate culture that does not rely on written policies. The only company that does not have policies against harassment and discrimination was Company E, an Egyptian company.

At Company E, when employees are hired, they are required to sign the Ethics Code, which “includes everything—from which gifts they may receive outside of the company.” Sarah, the Vice President and Director of Human Resources and Organization Development at Company E compared similar practice in the U.S., providing the example that in some professional environments, employees are only

allowed to receive up to \$20 for the value of the gift. Company E's employees are told verbally what is unethical.

Sarah defined harassment as encompassing different types of harassment, including "female to male." Company E does neither have a policy against harassment, nor discrimination—but has internal bylaws. According to Sarah, there was a case a few years ago, involving an employee who sent emails to another employee with messages indirectly implying other meanings, which was professionally unacceptable for the company. In this case, Sarah stated it was not blatant harassment, however, the company still took action and fired the employee. In terms of harassment and how grave the incident is, they are fired immediately without warning. Sarah said there had been no cases involving discrimination, which contradicts further statements made by her as well as her employees.

If employees want to report cases of harassment or discrimination, Sarah stated they should go to HR, or can go directly to their boss or manager. If the employee reports it to HR, the HR manager will inform the supervisor and they will decide whether to pursue an official investigation into the case. If there is evidence of harassment or discrimination, the contract is terminated.

According to Sarah, the company does "not look at religion and gender, but looks at people, their university degree and what they are good at. No one is allowed to discuss the forbidden three topics—religion, politics and sex." Adel, an employee who has been with Company E for four years as a Senior Engineer said he looked at CVs and found it "strange" that candidates listed religion, when "the company doesn't need it. If someone gets or does not get the job because of this, that's discrimination." Some candidates also

list their gender and marital status, and Adel said he understood why some HR managers are interested in viewing marital statuses—being married may prevent employees from being fully devoted to their work.

While Company E may not consider viewing or inquiring about marital statuses as discrimination, when the company accepts to view CVs that state marital statuses, women who are single or recently married may be unfairly discriminated against, whether or not it is intentional. Whether women proactively include their marital statuses in their CVs or companies inquire about them, it perpetuates the notion that a woman's marital status matters when seeking job positions, whereas for men, marital statuses do not matter. Adel stated that when a candidate includes his or her religion, it could be potentially discriminatory for the candidate, and the “company doesn't need it.” This rationale should also transpire when discussing listing marital status in a CV—the company should not need it, regardless if an employee thinks disclosing one's marital status is innocuous.

Although Company E's HR manager states the company does “not look at religion and gender,” its practices may extemporaneously discriminate against younger and newly married women. Company should explicitly refuse to inquire about or accept CVs that identify one's marital status and religion. While Company E is formally following and upholding anti-discrimination policies, as required by Egyptian law, HR managers are not ensuring anti-discriminatory hiring practices. There is still a lack of understanding of how discrimination can be implicit when female employees list their marital statuses. Since Egyptian Labor Laws do not prohibit listing marital statuses or protect women from employment discrimination due to marital status, Company E

practices some bias towards hiring women, especially those who are single or recently married without children. Company E assumes that employing such women will be a financial loss.

While there are local governances such as the Egyptian Labor Laws, which protect women from discrimination in employment pay on the basis of gender, there are no articles that specifically address gender discrimination in hiring practices. The hiring process is where women can face initial instances of implicit or explicit discrimination, based on gender.

Adel corroborated Sarah's information about gender-based discrimination. People don't discriminate based on religion, but based on sex. The department managers don't want to hire women, from what I understand. Women have two main problems: 1) can't make them stay late. There are social limits. They can't make them stay after 7:30pm. 2) If married, women get pregnancy leave and it can go on for a while. They drop work for a while. Some departments are all men, like the HVAC (Heating and Ventilation and Air Conditioning) team. Department managers don't want to hire women because of technical issues, not because women are inferior to men. But to me, this is [still] discrimination.

Adel describes the main reasons for women not being hired because of these two reasons as discrimination. Adel did point out that there are a lot of women in architectural and interior design departments, but management and project management do not have many women. Adel pinpointed the problem that the company "pushes employees to stay late" and this becomes a problem for female employees. However, once women work for Company E, there is no discrimination in choosing employees for project assignments.

Company E blatantly discriminates against women—which is corroborated by both the manager and an employee who sees there are not many females employed for the company. Whether or not many females undertake studying engineering compared to males, Company E prefers to hire men because of the assumptions that single women

tend to get married and these women along with recently married women will have children and, thus will take off from work—and under Egyptian law, the company cannot fire women who take off from work to have babies, and their job positions must be available to them when they return. This in and of itself is a form of discrimination—whether or not single women or recently married women will take off from work to have children. Women are unfairly discriminated against because “they can and are having babies.”

When companies discriminate against hiring women for reasons such as this, this perception of women of having the primary responsibility of having and raising babies is further perpetuated within society. Women will not be encouraged to pursue engineering as a career, rather will be encouraged to pursue it as a temporary job. A woman’s potential is seen as having and caring for babies, and if a single or recently married woman does want to find a career in engineering, she will face many more challenges than a man will, because Company E does not commonly view a woman suitable for engineering as a career, and will most likely take a man for the position even if a man and woman put forth the same CVs.

Sarah detailed how Company E wants to be a “younger company,” implying that the ages of the employees should be younger. However, according to Egyptian Labor Laws, Company E cannot terminate employees of age and sets the retirement at 60. Company E still has employees who are aged 82+ years on payroll, even though Company E keeps the retirement age at 65. Employees who are 65 years and older cannot retain managerial positions, but work as consultants five days per week. If employees are aged 70+ years, they are allowed to work three days per week. The VP

commented, Company E “doesn’t give pink slips, we leave it for God.” (These employees are still fully covered regarding health insurance.) While the managers are looking to change the future of Company E by employing younger professionals, this in itself could be a form of discrimination on the grounds of age. Although the company is not firing those who are older in age, it is still discriminating its future hires by looking to hire younger candidates.

The differences between why female and male employees leave the company confirm Sara’s reasons of why she does not like to hire women. Sara claims “women leave work to get married, stay at home and raise kids.” Some female employees also leave because they are not able to work late hours, or they live far from work sites and are unable to travel due to security matters within the country. In contrast, male employees leave to pursue a Master’s degree, which is a trend amongst younger employees. Other employees leave because they find work outside of Egypt. The reasons for leaving work differ between men and women, with women mostly leaving for the same reasons of why unemployment for women remained high in the last five decades—to start families, unable to work in distant places or late hours—reconfirming and perpetuating traditional attitudes towards working women. The reasons why women leave the company perpetuates the discrimination that managers scourge onto employees when hiring, assuming young women will leave at higher rates to start families or unable to work in the same conditions men work in, regardless if female employees want to work longer hours, or see engineering as a career.

Egyptian Labor Laws fail to address this gender and age discrimination, present in hiring practices. Additionally, conservative views on working women that were present

since Nasser's reign continue to be reaffirmed by hiring managers, by not employing women because they are unable to work late, and family priorities triumph over career responsibilities. These social views on working women can negatively affect women's desire to enter fields that are mainly male-dominated, or alter their views on having careers, because of socially expected familial duties.

In terms of harassment, Sarah explained how Company E would terminate an employee's contract if found guilty of harassment, and earlier provided an example of an employee being fired for sending inappropriate emails to a colleague. Yet, an employee described an incident where a department manager treated and spoke to Adel's team in a demeaning manner. Adel provided details about this department manager who would "swear, and mainly guys put up with it. When I talk to people, they say, 'it's just the way he is, he didn't mean it or aren't hurt by it.'" Yet, an employee was offended by this and recorded the manager's conversation.

He was talking bad about a woman in the department. When the woman heard the recording, she went to management. Management transferred the department manager to another role—to a consultant. But after a year and half, he went back to his position as a department manager. Management said 'he's a good worker,' and the company gave him his position back because 'he's good at what he does.'

Company E failed to take appropriate action that it claimed would when an employee is found guilty of harassing a fellow employee. Because this incident was not seen as very offensive by administration and there was not an official policy reprimanding harassment, this company took a subjective, case-by-case approach. Recalling a previous incident of harassment when an employee sent inappropriate emails to a female colleague, he was immediately fired. Yet, in this case, because the employee was seen as valuable to the company, his unprofessional behavior was excused and he was pardoned, being able to

return to his position after being reassigned within the company. It is important to ask whether if a female evoked the same unprofessional behavior in front of colleagues would be subject to the same exoneration, or disciplinary action.

At Company F, Akram stated he created his corporate policy using his 18 years of experience working in the facilities and management field, mostly at international companies outside of Egypt—he “compiled bits and pieces from here and there,” as well as included his own policies. He discussed how employees might never see each other since they mainly work at their client’s sites, thus Company F’s policy includes the employee being required to adhere to their client’s code of conduct. For example, Company F’s employees must also agree to PepsiCo’s ethics code. Aside from a written policy, Akram discusses policies and code of conduct with managers and supervisors in monthly meetings. Akram emphasized that the written policy must coexist with verbal discussions with employees. For example, there is a no-tolerance policy regarding theft. Theft has been the most critical issue facing the company. In the past two years, there have been three incidents of theft. If any employee is found guilty of theft, the employee is immediately fired. For example, a bottom-line employee was found guilty of stealing Pepsi cans, and was fired; in August 2013, six supervisors were laid off because they were found guilty of theft.

In the case of harassment, Company F’s Code of Conduct states in Business Conduct Standard Number Three (out of 13 standards), “Encourage a diverse workforce and provide a workplace free from discrimination, harassment or any other form of abuse (See Figure 3).” Both discrimination and harassment are explicitly listed in its code of

conduct and categorized as abuses. Because Akram has had experience working for American and international corporations, both in and outside of Egypt, he understands and respects the value of having a Code of Conduct that specifically includes harassment and discrimination; the influence of international governance has impacted the Code of Conduct at Company F. Additionally, Akram has the expertise to not only include articles that are not mentioned in the Egyptian Labor Laws, but communicate such standards for compliance with his employee base.

Akram reflected that Company F does not see harassment as a major issue within the company. Though, Akram described a sexual harassment incident that occurred on-site in January 2013. A female worker was harassed by a fellow male colleague, and brought this case forward to her manager. After the incident was investigated and the alleged harasser was questioned, he was found guilty of sexual harassment and fired. Akram stated, he is not “born with any tolerance of some stuff—lying, theft and sexual force—this is not part of my DNA.”

Akram shared some cases of harassment and discrimination incidences that took place between his employees and clients. The discrimination that took place a few months ago involved his worker who was discriminated on the basis of religion by a client, who was a senior representative. Akram described the situation as “very weird;” after investigating the case, he discovered that the senior representative of a client company treated him unfairly and unjustly. The senior representative “kept putting unnecessary pressure on the employee to crack down on him—for example, making him stay later, or if he was five minutes late to work, she would make it seem like he was a few hours late.” The senior representative of the client company was Christian and

Company F's worker was Muslim. Akram commented, "This [religious discrimination] does not happen frequently." He diffused this situation by relocating his employee to work on another project with a different client.

A year and half ago, Akram discovered that a client factory manager insulted one of his cleaners through a formal complaint that was reported to the cleaner's manager. Akram filed a complaint with the client company and threatened to shut down the operation if the factory manager did not offer an apology to his worker. Akram said he has no tolerance for someone "taking advantage of a weaker subject." Threatening to shut down the operation, as retribution against the client company, is not accordance to any corporate policy, yet shows the informal nature and case-by-case approach that managers take when handling cases involving discrimination, harassment or unprofessional conduct. Additionally, the demand made by Company F was not according to some policy, but more personal and authentic, rather than a result of corporate policy, which can limit or prevent handling cases of disparate circumstances, despite how minor the incident.

As Company F is a smaller company, Akram, as CEO, takes each case of harassment, discrimination or unprofessional conduct with seriousness, regardless if it is dealing with a client. Akram handles cases personally as he and his colleagues see fit, because policies cannot stipulate consequences for every case of unprofessional conduct. Rarely do policies address such incidences of insulting a colleague by demanding an apology, rather policies would stipulate recording the incident and the manager would have a conversation with the employee; in a corporate policy, there would not be threats to suspend operations for a minor incident. The company did not abandon the employee

when he was being mistreated for the sake of company profit or maintaining a valuable business relationship.

At Company F, Ali manages 105 people. Ali used the skills he learned at international company Vodafone to train his employees at Company F—such as “how to speak to others, how to handle confidentiality, and about harassment.” He condemns employees to avoid any relations between men and women;

If we see any boy likes a girl, we remove him from the site and relocate him somewhere else. We don’t stop anything, but we relocate him to remove any problems for the business. In Egyptian culture, if there’s a relation in these services, it’s a huge problem. In order to avoid conflicts, we move one of them to another building to make people respect them and not talk about them.

Two employees hired were married prior to joining the company, thus Ali relocated the husband to another location to avoid any problems. In another instance, there was a security guard who liked a housekeeping woman, so Ali relocated the security guard. Some of the problems that arise when there are relations between two employees include leaving work or duties and talking to each other. Because there are cameras, Ali noticed employees slacking during working hours, which also resulted in complaints from client employees, stating, “They talk too much to each other.” Ali saw his training of professional conduct from international company Vodafone as helpful, thus he bequeathed these skills to his employees. (However, later in the thesis, the corporate culture and stance from employees at Vodafone will juxtapose how relationships between colleagues are seen).

Mohammed, an HR representative has worked at Company I for four years, with 13 years of combined experience in HR and consulting for companies such as PepsiCo,

oversees about a 100 employees in Egypt and 250 employees directly report to him. He discussed how policies against harassment and discrimination are not formally written because there is no current need for it. Since there have been seldom incidents of harassment or discrimination, there is no need to set precedent of creating formal policies, but if there was a necessity because of reoccurring cases, Mohammed said the company would consider formulating written policies. In Mohammed's four years at Company I, he has not heard of any cases of harassment or discrimination brought to his attention.

Through a colleague working at a company location in Saudi Arabia, Mohammed spoke about a case, in which a manager misspoke to a female colleague. The female colleague claimed that the manager sent her emails with "bad meanings" telling her "he likes her." Mohammed said there was "no real truth" and that no misconduct "was proven" because there were rumors that the two colleagues were "boyfriend and girlfriend."

Mohammed stated if there are any cases of harassment or discrimination and the HR manager fails to take action, the employees are aware of contacting the regional Ombudsman, who is in charge of the Middle East and Turkey locations. Mohammed could not release the contact information of the Ombudsman. In speaking with other employees, they were conscious of contacting the Ombudsman if they were unable to come forward to their HR Manager or if their HR Manager failed to satisfactorily respond to the issue.

Mohammed differentiated between Egyptian Labor Laws and Company I's policies on harassment and discrimination. In Egyptian labor laws, Mohammed stated,

there would be an “investigation and the person is occasionally fired” if found guilty. At Company I, policies are “tougher,” particularly because it violates one of the five guiding principles (which will be discussed below), in which a “colleague is not being mutual[ly respectful] to a fellow colleague.” Mohammed, as an HR Manager sees himself as a “guardian of these policies.” Because it is a leading international company, Company I does not only follow Egyptian Labor Laws, but its own internal bylaws that are viewed as stricter than local governances. Additionally, refractor against discrimination and harassment policies is seen as violating morals, since Company I’s policies are enacted as “principles.” Because Company I is an international company, it is required to follow international governances, which are U.S.-based.

Mohammed stated how the company has built a corporate culture where there are five guiding principles that employees are taught—1) Responsibility, 2) Quality, 3) Efficiency, 4) Freedom, and 5) Mutuality. These guiding principles contain behaviors that condemn harassment and discrimination of fellow employees via responsibility and mutuality principles. These guiding principles are standardized across its global locations and also available online on the company’s website, especially because it is an international company.

In an interview with Amirah, an employee who has been working at the company for a year, discussed how “solutions [against harassment and discrimination] can’t come from the company.” She discussed how all people, in and outside of work “must make it the norm,” referring to men seeing women as equals, without double standards. Amirah advised that this would require women being brave enough to challenge judgments against them—for example,

the more men see women, for instance, cursing, the more they will accept it and get over it. It comes from us, personally, not the government or company. It's not easy, but my generation needs to finally feel empowered to do what they want.

She theorized that when people get to know a person, they will not make judgments, and implied that perhaps women are judged because they are afraid to challenge the status quo of how women should act and behave.

Amirah provided an insight to the corporate environment that she faces, as a young woman in her twenties, and not being an Egyptian like her colleagues, but Lebanese from a higher socio-economic status. She lives with her sister in an apartment in Rehab, the outskirts of Cairo, while her family lives in Lebanon. She defined harassment as something that is not just physical, but verbal as well; she defined discrimination as being judged and having assumptions made about the person. She stated how she had never been harassed, but there have been judgments and assumptions made about her due to her identity as a young, non-Egyptian female, as well as her lifestyle choices such as smoking and drinking. Amirah said, "People see me as spoiled, [and] an airhead. You need to prove yourself." However, she is unable to show her true identity and act freely amongst colleagues because she feels as if they will judge her. She can only show her true self only in front of a few trusted colleagues. She stated, "You can't act like yourself—whether if you smoke or if you drink, you're looked down upon." When she first started working at the company, she thought the company was open-minded, but her colleagues are conservative. She spent a lot of time with male colleagues, and soon realized that the rest of her colleagues were making assumptions about her, with comments like, "Take care, because of your future husband." While they were joking, they implied that because she spent time with male colleagues, it is

culturally unacceptable as a woman to spend a lot of time with men, especially because her supposed future husband would not like her to be known as spending time with male colleagues. They analyzed Amirah's body language, behavior and identity as a single, female and Arab, who is supposed to conform to the gender and cultural identity that society has constructed for her. Her colleagues expect Amirah to perform this identity as a "modest, Muslim woman who should not speak much to males." Amirah commented, "If you're in Egypt, you're in Egypt," contradicting the HR Manager's statement that Company I "is like an island in Egypt."

Amirah reflected how her manager thought she was a "brat and unreliable," and "made a lot of assumptions" because she has light-colored hair. "They consider the way you look, and think you're an airhead, so you must try hard to prove them wrong." She believes that the company would not want to hire women, because the company has to provide them with maternity leave and they cannot stay late after work-hours because of family norms in Egypt. Thus, even if the woman is the "same caliber" as a man, the company will hire the man—"this is the underlying thought in the office," commented Amirah.

Amirah discussed the "smaller things" that she considers discrimination. For example, when she walks toward male colleagues who are smoking during their breaks, they stop their conversation. "It took me awhile to start smoking publicly." When she traveled with them for a company-wide event, they made assumptions about her because she publicly drank with her male colleagues. When her female colleague decided to swim publicly with her male colleagues, they also made judgments about her. Amirah said, her male colleagues described her female colleague as "weird." Amirah described

that while her colleagues do not discriminate blatantly in front of her or her female colleague, they are indirect in their discrimination and judgment against them.

They act upon it in the way they talk to you—they won't say it to your face, but you can tell with their body language. If you want to work here, you need to look like a man. In a [corporate] culture like this, it's civilized, but in Cairo, there are a lot of underlying assumptions, and at "Company I," it's a lot less than everywhere else.

Amirah senses the difference in treatment by her colleagues because of her identity as a young, liberal female from a higher socio-economic class. Additionally, even if she were to be a conservative woman from the middle class like her colleagues, Amirah believes she would not be treated differently. Nonetheless, Amirah does not believe it is enough to be a female to succeed in Company I—one must practically be a man, implying that men are free to smoke or drink without colleagues judging them. Nonetheless, Amirah believes the corporate culture at Company I is still better than most other companies in Egypt. Transforming corporate behavior amongst colleagues that includes subtle discrimination in treatment cannot be addressed through local or transnational governances, even though Company I is a reputable international corporation. In a way, policies can become empty guidelines that become difficult to enforce without the social forces working to change corporate culture.

Amirah said she has to act a different way in front of various people. But first she has to "communicate with as many people as possible to see how one thinks to understand the person...then, adapt myself to the person in front of me." She provided the example that she was able to befriend a colleague who is from the Muslim Brotherhood, even though she identifies herself as a liberal woman. Amirah stated she was able to become friends with this colleague, "after I proved I could communicate in

his language.” Amirah sees the only way of being able to work at Company I, is being cautious with whom she can present her natural identity, and having to negotiate her identity depending on whom she interacts with since male colleagues generally make assumptions about her because of her actions or lifestyle choices (living independently with her sister, speaking with male colleagues, smoking, drinking). Amirah stated, “I really can’t be myself and expose the way I am. I can only be myself in front of two or three people,” and gave the example of not being able to wear a swimsuit at a company-wide retreat at a resort with her male colleagues because she would be judged. She commented how unfortunate it is to hide her identity when “work is three-quarters of your life. Colleagues are the people you see the most. Men can be who they want to be without being judged.” She explains this phenomenon exists because “at the end of the day, you’re in Egypt,” even if the company is an international company. Amirah understands that there is no one forcing her to act a certain way, nor are there policies that restrict her from displaying her identity and lifestyle choices (since men are freely about to show their identities), “I know people will accept it, but will still judge you,” referring to how Egyptian cultural norms dictate how women should act, even in international company environments.

Amirah’s experiences highlight the larger issue of conservative social attitudes towards women in the workplace as well as work cultures that condone informal discrimination, especially towards certain women. Women’s expected roles in society can be seen in the workplace—women’s behaviors are scrutinized and women are expected to conform to how society deems acceptable for how they should act in the workplace. Those who are “good girls,” or those who “conform to traditional roles” or

seen as conservative women, experience friendly work conditions, whereas “hostility is reserved for women in nontraditional roles (“bad girls”). This differentiation between “good” and “bad” subcategories of women appears to provide a means for men to justify and excuse aggressive behavior some women” (Harris, 2008, p. 10). Thus, Amirah and her colleague experience hostility in the workplace for not conforming to the “traditional role” women are expected to perform.

Even though Amirah’s experiences do not fit legal definitions of harassment, they still contribute to an uneasy and unwelcoming work environment, in which “sexist attitudes and environmental harassment may still be unofficially condoned and institutionally supported as a process for excluding women” (Ibid). Local labor and transnational governances cannot change how society views and treats working women, even though such social views contributes to women’s marginalization, harassment and discrimination, whether subtle or explicit, in the workplace.

In a discussion with Azzam, who worked for *Vodafone* for 12 years—starting in 2001 as a maintenance engineer and ending his *Vodafone* career in construction and real estate, described the corporate policies and culture at *Vodafone* and the changes that have taken place in the past decade. Azzam said, “there are processes for everything. [*Vodafone*] is one of the rare companies that respects policies, regulations and laws in Egypt.” Many of the employees expressed their enjoyment and confidence in working for an international company because of its reputation and having policies that both, *Vodafone* and its employees respect. Nonetheless, there have been a few cases of

harassment at work—some condoned by colleagues and managers, while others found guilty faced consequences.

Haitham described an incident of harassment that took place at work. A male colleague had called a female colleague after midnight. The female colleague complained to the supervisor. The case was investigated within the team to see who also was called after work hours and also to inquire about the alleged harasser. After the investigation, it was discovered that other female employees were called, but did not come forward to their manager. Apparently, the male colleague who called the female colleague asked if her husband was nearby. Haitham commented that if the phone call related to business, there would be no need to ask such a question. Haitham believed *Vodafone* took the right course of action by firing this colleague. However, Haitham wanted me to see this case through another perspective. He said that perhaps this male colleague was looking to make a female friend, and the timing of the call was not late since employees have shifts around the clock, and *Vodafone* encourages colleagues to build relationships among team members. He described how *Vodafone* sponsors social events and gatherings. Haitham felt as if he could sympathize with this male employee, arguing this action of seeking friendship outside of work endorsed by *Vodafone*.

Azzam said you could see sexual harassment at *Vodafone* “while walking,” for example when “a man and a lady are going to the elevator and he’s putting his hand on her shoulders. It’s not in culture in Egypt to touch someone like this.” Azzam described how some harassment comes from females, with similar cases. He detailed an instance that occurred to him during a meeting, “with legs under the table and a woman trying to touch him under the table.” These incidents are not reported to HR managers as

colleagues see these occurrences as harmless, thus promoting the workplace acceptability of certain behaviors in the workplace. Other incidents included consensual actions between couples, in which they are “caught within the company, kissing.” Whether or not these actions are consensual between both parties, such behaviors are examples of unprofessional conduct that should not be allowed to occur in the workplace, yet are accepted by colleagues.

More explicit incidences required action. While at work, Azzam “caught two sleeping between cars in the basement.” The managers were informed, and the company had to start securing areas with cameras. “There are hidden cameras in elevators.” Azzam said, “There’s also publications and warnings sent to employees on the Internet” about displaying such behavior at work. Anyone who is caught is fired. Azzam observed that majority of the cases involve youth at call centers. Managers speak to employees in groups condemning such behavior while at work. If there are any harassment or discrimination cases, employees are told to directly report it to their managers. If it is the manager who is harassing the employee, the employee is able to go directly to the HR. According to Azzam, the investigation process is “ethical and very confidential.”

Some other cases of unprofessional behavior took place in the Smart Village in 6th of October, in which security caught a couple in a car naked. The security called Azzam, who was the contact person for the site, yet, since this incident took place “outside work premises,” the company was not responsible for taking any action. There is no policy that says colleagues cannot get involved in consensual relationships with each other. Azzam said, “its encouraged.” Azzam knew of cases where some colleagues became divorced and married a colleague from work. “Inter-office relationships are very

common—about 50%.” Azzam said, “If done in a normal and clean way, why discourage it? If colleagues are together all the time, it makes people more attached to the company.” Azzam viewed having inter-office relationships as good for the company because work life develops into an extension of their personal lives. In this case, inter-office relationships are not seen as unprofessional conduct. It is seen as a culturally acceptable way of meeting a potential spouse at the workplace, whereas in other countries such as the U.S., inter-office relationships would not be condoned and employees would be discouraged from such actions as it could negatively impact the workplace environment. Also seen in the case of Company F, a smaller Egyptian company that does not accept inter-office relationships and relocates individuals involved in a relationship as to not let it affect work—in contrast to practices at *Vodafone*.

In terms of official policy against harassment and discrimination, it is written and communicated vis-à-vis the Internet. According to *Vodafone*’s Code of Conduct, under its Diversity and Inclusion section, it states, “We will not accept any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying,” which are standards beyond what is stated in the Egyptian Labor Laws because *Vodafone*’s policy includes ramifications against harassment and bullying, which are not part of the labor code (*Vodafone Code of Conduct 2012*, p. 18). If an employee is facing any sort of discrimination, harassment or bullying, the employee is encouraged to speak to HR or the line manager. Azzam stated,

There’s a very big campaign against discrimination. It’s described as sex, culture and age. There are focus groups and sessions discussing this. They make them notice themselves if they are discriminating and how to handle discrimination.

The only obvious discrimination that Azzam noticed was in hiring engineers. Managers do not like to hire women, even if a man and woman “with two equal CVs.” When asked

why might there be discrimination against women in hiring them as engineers, Azzam responded that “some men are very religious and think [women] will spoil rest of guys. [Or] Some don’t think women can handle work on streets because of construction work on site. They would be required to travel in villages in Giza doing network.” Azzam also said how managers see women who “join the company, get married, get pregnant and receive maternity leave,” thus “don’t get enough work from them.” To counterbalance this stereotype, Azzam mentioned the example of two female engineers and how their performance was good. Azzam also reasoned the difference in treatment between men and women, is due to different capabilities of the genders:

You can’t ask the same thing from men and women. Everyone has his or her own capabilities on what you can ask from different people. It was tough for me; I had to travel thousands of kilometers, with stops and dealing with people. If she’s ready for it, show me.

These instances of discrimination in hiring female engineers is also common in the case study with Egyptian Company E, mainly due to the prevalent traditional attitudes towards working women in male-dominated fields. While *Vodafone* can encourage its managers to hire more female engineers, it is difficult to enforce policy compliance, when discrimination occurs on wide-scale societal level, including in the U.S. with female engineers. Regardless if females are employed as engineers, managers and fellow colleagues still subject them to implicit discrimination and difference in treatment because they are working in a male-dominated field, possibly taking away jobs from unemployed males or seen as unable to handle the work conditions that the field of engineering requires.

Gendered Training, Work Conditions and Opportunities

When more women began working at Company E, certain accommodations had to be created. Until a few years ago, Company E did not have many female engineers. Currently, Company E has 233 female employees and 1301 male employees working in Egypt. Since Company E has not always had a significant female workforce, the issue of bathrooms had to be discussed. In the last few years, since there have been more female employees, the company needed to redistribute toilets to accommodate the female workforce. The impact of gender in the workplace can be simple as addressing the issue of facilities for women, while other instances of gender impacts women and companies in more explicit ways that requires understanding of cultural sensitivities.

Female employees can be limited to working daytime hours, because some families do not want their daughters working late into evenings. This affected Sarah's outlook on hiring women. Sarah stated, "due to our culture, we're not dealing with just women when I'm hiring, but dealing with the family—parents intervene in working hours." Sarah does not like to hire women, because apparently they are not independent enough to handle their own work dealings; their work hours and conditions have to be to the satisfaction of female employees' parents. This can be both seen as a discrimination or protection for female employees, in which they are not expected to work long hours into the evenings. Yet, because managers already have a presumed notion that women are not "independent," they can discriminate when hiring, or female employees that want to take on certain projects are overlooked because supervisors assume they will not be able to work late.

In terms of gender differences in training, at Company F, Ali says he must provide more instruction for women because “they talk too much.” He believes that women need more training to work professionally, whereas men do not need as much direct supervision. Yet, Ali condemns all his staff to not speak with each other, unless it relates to work or if it is the supervisor speaking with the staff. He sees that limiting communication between the staff will prevent conflicts between them and the client’s employees. “If they want to speak to each other, they must have a supervisor present.” There is a one hour break in which they can speak to each other. Though there may be a difference in treatment towards all female employees, labor laws and company policies do not address preventing stereotyping “women’s behavior” and regulating it.

Ali discussed how women at Company F are not permitted to work outside the premises—complying with Article 90 of the Egyptian Labor Code, which prohibits women from working in areas “harmful” to women. However, Company F does not differentiate between job roles if they are working on the same floor. If the cleaners are women, Ali must hire a female supervisor. He described that not more than 70% of the staff should be females because “some tasks are difficult for them—it’s about what they’re capable of,” which are housekeeping jobs.

This discussion of whether prohibiting women from certain tasks that are “harmful” to women is discriminatory or protects women, is debatable. Within the Egyptian cultural context, it is not socially acceptable for women to undertake certain tasks, especially those outdoors, vulnerable to potential public or street harassment, such as cleaning outside building premises or in security. However, it can perpetuate gender discrimination in work tasks and gendering certain job roles. Many of the housekeeping

positions are left for women, while security and other outdoor work positions are left for men—regardless if women or men want to work in other positions, they may not be allowed to work in such positions, as it would be a liability for the company (violating Article 90).

Women are legally not allowed to work from 7 PM and 7 AM, except in certain cases in which the minister determines the acceptable “cases, works and occasions” for which women are allowed to work (Article 89, The Middle East Library for Economic Services, 2003). This can both reflect social acceptability of women’s working hours and conditions in which they should work, yet also perpetuates these conditions in which they have to work, and women may not be able to decide when and where they want to work. This removes the agency women have to make certain choices about their work, while critics can claim how it may protect women from working overnight shifts and being forced to work in less socially acceptable, and potentially dangerous positions, such as security.

At Company I, Amirah says opportunities to advance depend on the “way you are perceived in the company. If your social status in the company is good, then that’s what matters. Personality has a lot to do with promotion.” She refers herself to fitting into the image of a “bad girl,” which justifies certain judgments and treatment by colleagues (Harris, 2008, p. 10). Amirah believes because colleagues see her with a progressive lifestyle, managers and colleagues do not choose her for certain opportunities. Selma, who has worked for Company E for four years, also discussed how opportunities differ for women based on their relationship status; for example, if a woman takes maternity leave, she has “no right to take a higher position or work on your own project...they love

single women, they have more benefits than married women.” Because of the treatment towards certain women, Selma, being 27 years old feels as if she is institutionally discouraged to get married because of her position at the company and does not want to lose opportunities. She decided to delay marriage for another couple of years because she wants to be promoted within the company, and believes getting married would potentially hinder her chances.

Maternity Leave

All companies in the study provide women with paid maternity leaves of at least three months, adhering to Egyptian labor laws. However, adhering to national governances does not translate into discrimination-free experiences for women at all companies. Sarah of Company E asked if she could be frank with me and stated, “Personally, I don’t like hiring women,” as she laughed. Sarah discussed how the current generation of “women do not put work in front of them as careers, but put work in front of them as income,” while “men see engineering as careers.” Instead, women are more concerned about getting married and having children, leaving work as they see fit. Sarah stated how the company invests in women, but does not reap the benefits in return—referring to three-month paid maternity leaves the company is required to provide for women according to Egyptian law. Sarah referred to the Egyptian labor laws, and stated the company is not allowed to terminate a female employee while on maternity leave; her position must remain available to her when she returns and cannot be replaced by another employee. Sarah stated, “a female employee is allowed to ask for another three to six months of leave, but it is not paid leave, however, the company still pays for her insurance,” and the company is still not allowed to replace her. Sarah stated, “if we have

too many of these cases, we're in a fix," referring to providing many female employees maternity leaves. However, according to Egyptian labor laws, Company E does not comply with Article 94, which allows the female employee the "right to obtain a leave without pay for a period not exceeding two years, to care for her child" contrary to the three to six months Company E claims to provide (The Middle East Library for Economic Services, 2003, p. 45).

Though Sarah stated she does not prefer to hire women on account of many female employees take maternity leave, once women are employed at Company E, they receive the benefits outlined in the Labor Laws, including paid maternity leave and nursing time during work hours, which are more generous than U.S. Labor Laws, which do not offer paid maternity leave.

Sarah explained how the company pays for the first two years, one hour a day for breastfeeding time for female employees, in accordance with Egyptian labor laws. For example, if an employee works from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM, she may be able to work from 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM, because according to Egyptian labor laws, she is allowed to take off the first hour of the day. However, in this case, the company is flexible and allows the employee to deduct any hour. Some women requested to combine these hours from the duration of the week to deduct five hours at one time, however, the company refused, with the rationale that the lactation time is an "advantage for the baby, not the mother." However, if a woman begins employment at the company and is already pregnant, she is not able to use the insurance for delivery, follow-ups or medication and vitamins; she must wait one year before qualifying for the use of the health insurance.

Also, according to Egyptian Labor Laws, if a company employs more than 100 females, it is required to provide access to a nursery. Company E provides female employees with discounts to various nurseries. There are also three resident doctors on-site (two juniors and one senior doctor).

Azzam provided the example of *Vodafone* providing six months paid maternity leave (three months more than required by the Egyptian Labor Laws), and the employee can come back to her position after up to two years of unpaid maternity leave. Azzam compared *Vodafone*'s competitor, stating *Mobinil* provides only three months maternity leave (the minimum required by Article 91 in the Egyptian labor laws) and does not offer unpaid maternity leave for up to two years. Article 94 of the Egyptian Labor Laws state a company must provide unpaid maternity leave for up to two years—*Mobinil* does not comply with this article, according to Azzam. Employees have stated that because of the economic crisis, companies take advantage of high unemployment rates and refrain from providing full benefits to employees required by Egyptian Labor Laws or company policies. Also, because there is not much enforcement of Egyptian Labor Laws or serious repercussions for violating these laws, employees believe that companies do not feel required to provide full benefits to employees. Azzam commented that while a company may not follow Egyptian labor laws, the only recourse would be go to court, yet no one pursues this path because “it’s a big hassle.” Nonetheless, in terms of maternity benefits, *Vodafone* complies with international and national governances on maternity leave, adhering to its global corporate policies as well as Egyptian labor laws.

Yusra, who has been working at *Vodafone* for more than five years said, “It’s not common in other companies” to receive generous maternity leave benefits. Yusra

received four months paid maternity leave, two months less than what Azzam described as the corporate policy, yet still one more month than what is required by Egyptian Labor Laws. She described how her team leader helped her get an ID card, which was used “to [receive] pregnancy for free and stay for two days” at the hospital. At the Dar al Hikma hospital in Nasr City, she received a company-paid delivery at the hospital, which is an 8,000 LE cost for delivering a baby. After delivering the baby, Yusra became ill and was allowed to work from home. Yusra was very grateful for the benefits provided by *Vodafone*, and believed *Vodafone* to be one of the few companies to provide full benefits to employees, because it is an international company. Yusra was unaware of U.S. labor laws, which do not offer paid maternity leave as Egyptian labor laws do. While *Vodafone* offers three months of paid maternity leave in England, Egyptian companies are legally required to provide three months of paid maternity leave. Employees assume that international companies have better maternity leave benefits, however, Egyptian Labor Laws stipulate women to receive at least three months of paid maternity leave, antithesis to U.S. labor laws.

While there are generous maternity leave benefits and other perks offered by international and national companies, there is still a hostile work environment for women, in which married women are assumed to take maternity leave. Both, female and male employees expressed how women are assumed to not take work seriously and “abuse” maternity leave benefits. With these attitudes and stereotypes, women do not feel encouraged in the workplace. Amirah (from Company I) and Selma (from Company E) explicitly described having to “prove themselves” or “act like men” to be taken seriously by managers and colleagues, regardless of being an international company. Alaa

commented on this phenomenon by noticing how her colleagues have left *Vodafone* after marriage and having children, because “it’s difficult for married women to work with children.”

Conclusion

While only two of the companies (Companies F and *Vodafone*) in the study have explicit policies against discrimination and harassment, the existence of these policies is not dependent on whether the company is international or national (See Figure 4). Nor do the absence of policies indicates whether or not a company cares about the concerns of its employees; managers utilize their own internal bylaws that address discrimination and harassment, which they deem sufficient. Managers acknowledge that there are not many cases involving discrimination or harassment, in which corporate policies do not become necessary. Rather, managers seek to handle cases informally, on a case-by-case basis. There have been incidents when managers acted in alliance with corporate policies, however, employees spoke about other cases that did not follow company guidelines, because repercussion was at the discretion of managers.

All of the companies in the study adhere to maternity leave benefits as required by Egyptian labor laws. However, having policies against discrimination, harassment and providing maternity leave do not guarantee a welcoming environment for female employees, regardless if it is an international company. There is still implicit and explicit discrimination and harassment perpetuated by managers in hiring practices, training or work opportunities, as well as by colleagues. Almost all female employees in the research discussed some type of negative experience faced in the workplace, even if they did not seem to think it fit the definition of harassment or discrimination. When directly

asked if the employee directly faced discrimination or harassment, employees described a work culture in which women do not feel completely safe or welcomed.

Chapter 4: A Changing Work Culture

Companies seek to “feminize” the corporation by offering benefits to its employees, while also creating a corporate culture that portrays an image that it cares not only for its employees, but its community as well. Companies provide benefits like meal allowances and transportation for its employees that are not mandated by labor laws or international governances. Companies also create a positive public image by offering community services such as internships and mentorships to students as well as donating food and clothes for the less fortunate. There are corporate policies that employees find pleasing, which companies attempt to use to retain its workforce. However, there are informal practices that lead to a work culture than cannot be addressed via policies; rather, there are work practices that are antithesis to labor laws and corporate policies, such as having employees work longer hours, for less pay. Because of high unemployment rates, companies have the leverage to subjugate employees to work more, for less or the same pay. Additionally, sustaining the assumption that women leave work to care for domestic duties prevents addressing aspects of work culture that most severely impacts women.

Social Responsibility- Feminizing the Corporation

The idea behind socially responsibly companies is that it “maintains the satisfaction of employees” and “employees are motivated” (which “consequently leads to the increase in a corporation’s profit”) (Stanislavska et al., 2010, p. 65). Companies attempt to create a positive image to retain its employees because workers feel a connection to the workplace; as well believe the company upholds social values.

At Company E, Sarah discussed how the name of the company includes the word “group,” and its translation into Arabic is “magmu’a,” which implies how the corporate culture is friendly, similar to a family environment. Employees help fellow employees in times of need. For example, the Directors discussed how there is an internal social responsibility; “if someone is in need of money for his/her family, you will find employees chipping in. If they don’t have the money, they will find money to chip in.” They also discussed a case from a few years prior to the implementation of the life insurance policy; there was a death of an employee, and fellow employees volunteered half a day of their salaries to contribute to the employee’s family.

Sarah explained how part of Company E’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) is having their employees be mentors for 200 undergraduate university students per year. After this year, the “best students” out of these undergraduate students are selected to work for the company after the completion of their graduation. Last year, the company selected one male and one female student and sent them to Chicago for training. The Manager for CSR is also responsible for “charity work,” where they package dry food and blankets for the less fortunate, family outings and football matches for the employees. These are best practices that the company deploys to make employees and future employees view the corporate environment as less corporate, and more familial.

Sarah discussed how there is an Employees Union, in which she is a member. She commented this is the “only [worker’s union] in the private sector that’s working.” Any employee is able to buy a share, and when they retire, they receive compensation from the Worker’s Union. This Worker’s Union communicates their events and other information through e-mail. Before, only tenured employees with annual contracts could

become members of the union, however, now, every employee has an annual contract, thus anyone can join the union. Sarah described the union as a “calm one,” devoted to working on social issues, such as “going on pilgrimage” or providing financial “support, if an employee is in need of an operation.” The worker’s union serves the purpose of the company supporting the interests of the employees. Sarah claimed this is probably the only worker’s union in the private sector because it is “social” in its interests, which if its goals were different, would put Company E in a difficult position, such as having workers potentially demand a change in working conditions and compensation, such as overtime pay.

At Company I, Mohammed discussed how the company fosters an environment through an annual competition in the U.S., where employees are not encouraged to make the most sales, but become the “best people” or best line manager. In lieu of recognizing the best seller in monetary value, the company recognizes efforts and actions of employees—“this is how you create culture,” states Mohammed. He says the “difference between companies like Company I and P&G, which value the efforts of employees and companies like Nestle and PepsiCo, which recognize the best sellers, is the emphasis on improvement in quality, and not quantity.” Corporate culture cannot focus on profits simply, but “improving employees capabilities and skills and developing people”—which contributes to better retention rates.

Company I is keen on listening to the recommendations made by employees each year and because of a suggestion made by an employee, was able to create another office location in Maadi for employees that found it too far to travel to the 6th of October location. Employees may work out of the hub office created in Maadi for four days out

of each month. There are also flexible hours at Company I, where employees can arrive to work anytime between 7:30 AM and 10:00 AM, without being penalized and work eight and half hours anytime after arrival.

Azza provides examples of other benefits Company I offers, such as bonuses for mid-year and year-end targets, reimbursement for phone bills and transportation allowances; since she lives in Heliopolis, the reimbursement is prorated—she receives about 2,100 LE after tax deductions. Because Company I is a renowned international company, it is able to pay its employees bonuses and provides other allowances. Meanwhile, there are rare occurrences of such practices in other Egyptian companies in the study.

Some corporate cultures have progressed to make relationships between managers and employees more amiable. The workplace environment is less formal in which employees address managers by a first-name basis. In Companies *Vodafone* and I and (both international companies), employees are allowed to address their managers via first-name basis. At Company I, Amirah likes the open-space floor plan at the 6th of October work location—where she says, “There are no offices. There is no differentiation between boss and Associate—everyone’s friends.” Azza also expressed how much she enjoys the “friendly atmosphere,” where “there is no manager yelling at you—there is genuine care. We are called Associates, not employees and we address managers by first name.” While Company I is an international company, Mohammed emphasizes how the company strives to create an extended community at work. Azza praised the company culture saying, “It’s the best thing about Company I.” Company I has casual Thursdays, when employees are allowed to wear jeans as opposed to business-

casual for the rest of the week. The corporate culture allows colleagues to view each other as part of a family, with no hierarchical differentiation. These best practices allow Company I to be seen as a friendly and familial company.

However, at Company E and F (both Egyptian companies), Adel and Selma, both confirmed that they are not allowed to address their managers on a first-name basis, unless instructed otherwise by their direct managers. Akram, as CEO of his company stated, “it is customary in Egypt” to address supervisors and managers by ‘Mr.’ or with their position title, such as ‘Engineer.’

At *Vodafone*, Azzam was offered full medical insurance, a car allowance and a free mobile phone for business use along with discounts for any additional phone lines for family members. There is a generous maternity leave benefits offered to employees. Employees also receive transportation (it is mandatory for women who work after 10:00 PM to receive door-to-door transportation) and meal allowances seven to ten LE per day. *Vodafone* also has separate rooms to enjoy PlayStation videogames, smoke or pray. Alaa discussed also having company-sponsored competitions. The highest performer in July 2012 received a dinner voucher for two persons at the chic restaurant, Studio Masr. Another competition for the top performer received a trip to the U.K. for two weeks, in which Alaa won second place.

The company hosts several social gatherings for its employees. Alaa commented that “networking with other teams that you don’t really meet” is helpful. Alaa showed me pictures on her phone of other social outings with colleagues and events, such as Hat Day. The efforts in creating a family have been important to *Vodafone* and Company I, since the assumption that working in a major international company can make employees

feel isolated and just one of many employees who are not given individual attention, yet *Vodafone's* best practices include creating an environment where employees feel connected to each other, like a family, in which the company is the parent—taking care of its members, who are the employees. Through networking events, colleagues have the opportunity to socialize, and live in an extended-family working environment.

Because *Vodafone* and Company I are both international companies, employees receive more bonuses, allowances and other benefits that have not been offered by the Egyptian companies in the case studies, especially since Egypt's been facing an economic crisis. Regardless, the companies in the study attempt to offer benefits and social cultures that induce company appreciation and familial connection to the best of their abilities.

Issues At Work (Lack of Professionalism, Communication and Transparency)

At Company E, when asked if Adel sees himself working for the company in the next five years, he commented, “No, mainly because of the informal way of dealing with things that should be dealt in a formal way.” He specified two reasons that would make him consider leaving the company. The first is a lack of design requirements and deadlines. “You don’t know exactly when you’ll be submitting a project. And no emails are sent with deadlines. I don’t know [if] the background problem is with the project manager or client, but they don’t communicate with me. It makes a problem with my time management.” Adel said how sometimes the project manager tells him the project is due next week so he has to stay late. This prevents Adel from being given the option to coordinate his schedule to compensate for the late hours he has to put in. The second reason why he wants to leave the company is the poor evaluation/rating system, which

evaluates an employees' "ethical behavior, timeliness, working under stress, hygiene and dealing with people." Adel described how employees are rated every year, but almost all with high scores. The evaluation system is not efficient or accurate because team leaders give their employees high scores because project managers feel that the scores are a reflection of their leadership; project managers think, "My team is the best team." Also, Adel asked, "What's the point of an evaluation score if we can't see it?" Employees are not allowed to see their evaluations, so Adel explained how he is not able to improve himself if he is not evaluated accurately and honestly. Adel provided the rationale that employees are not allowed to see their scores because it causes problems for the management and between colleagues if some colleagues get different scores than others. However, if an employee knows someone in management, the employee is able to see his evaluation.

Adel also pondered whether he would consider the following case as harassment; "tension between the team leader and his workers. Maybe he's angry with you and makes you stay late," by saying, "We may need you. The team leader gives "employee any work because there's no transparency in the submission date. He tells people that the project will be submitted in two weeks, when it will actually be submitted in four weeks. The project manager tells people different dates to make [people] work." There is no transparency or organization in work projects—"Sometimes I don't know why I'm staying late," and it "happens a lot." Adel described this lack of professionalism from his managers as a form of harassment, when workers are forced to work more simply if a manager is upset with his employees. Harassment does not necessarily constitute a male to female relationship, but with a manager and his employee that also embodies a power

relationship—one seeks power over another through subjecting him or her through disrespectful and unprofessional treatment.

Akram describes the corporate culture at Company F as something that cannot be created through written policies. He detailed how one of the most critical issues the company faces is “aggressiveness of communication,” or “imposing instruction in a non-efficient fashion through insult or aggressiveness.” Akram sees the only way of changing this aspect within the company is through coaching and mentoring employees in how to deal with employees and issues in a positive way. He provides the analogy that “it is easier to insult or confront someone negatively, yet more difficult to be positive in instruction.” Akram says he cannot teach or change this behavior from employees through policy, but teaching and practicing this behavior with his employees—or teaching by example. Akram says,

If employees observe managers or supervisors dealing harshly with people, they will follow this behavior and see this is how business works, but if they observe managers and supervisors being fair and positive, especially in negative situations, it will transpire throughout the organization. Establishing this environment through paperwork—banners and papers that stick to walls is wrong—it’s actual practice [that works].

Akram understands the necessity of changing corporate culture by leadership, rather than creating policies on paper. He sees the limitations in using corporate policies to positively transform corporate culture.

Ali, the Property Manager for Company F’s client, an international bank located in Heliopolis is in charge of the facilities, security, housekeeping, maintenance and other soft services for the building. Ali was a trainee as a Maintenance Engineer in Facilities Management under Akram at *Vodafone*, who left and came to work for Akram. He previously worked at *Orascom* and explained leaving because of a lack of

professionalism and weak management. Ali said, “They want to hire their relatives.” Aside from nepotism, he saw that age is a factor used to determine how experienced and qualified you are for a job. For example, “I was 27 years old at the time and they did not see me as able to manage people. You must be 40 to 50 years to manage people. How can I gain experience like this?” Ali discussed how “*wasta*” or having connections is important when finding positions if you are not seen as “old enough” to manage people.

Issues of a lack of professionalism, communication and transparency affect how employees and managers view harassment and discrimination. If employees do not feel a company holds all of its employees to the highest professional standards, reporting cases of discrimination and harassment may be seen as futile. If there is a company culture where there is transparency of company standards and practices or an environment where employees and managers can innocuously communicate with each other about issues in the workplace, then addressing formal and informal incidences of harassment and discrimination is possible.

A Changing Work Culture

A changing economy has affected corporate practices and work culture. Because of higher unemployment rates in today’s market-based economy, employees are facing conditions of working longer hours for the same or less pay. Employees described stagnant work salaries, less pay for more work, or less benefits offered—some of which violate Egyptian labor laws and corporate policies. Additionally, specific political conditions in Egypt have affected working conditions and opportunities.

At Company E, Adel complained about being required to work overtime for a month and half for a “fast-track project” when the company promised to provide

overtime for the employees, yet the company “went back on its word because a lot of people took advantage by staying in the office [after hours] and not working. They wouldn’t work during normal hours but started to work during overtime to have something to do.” They replaced overtime pay with compensating employees who stay past 4:30 PM until 7:30 PM with a 30-pound meal allowance. Adel said he had to stay for work anytime between 9:30 PM and 12:00 AM, as well as being required to come on Saturdays. The company promised to pay its employees one-quarter of a month’s salary for this fast-track project, yet “took their word back after a month” because they saw many employees taking advantage of this overtime benefit. Adel said he “heard from other people [in the company] that they read this—our company doesn’t follow workers law; they should be given overtime pay.”

According to the Egyptian Labour Code Article 80: “workers shall not be employed in actual Labour for more than eight hours a day, or forty eight hours a week, not including the appropriated meal and rest hours” and in terms of overtime pay, Article 85 states,

...The worker shall in addition to his original wage be entitled to a wage for the overtime hours as shall be agreed upon in the individual or collective labour contract, providing such wage shall not be less than the wage the worker is entitled to plus (35%) for the day working hours, and (70%) for the night working hours (The Middle East Library for Economic Services, 2003, p. 40, 42).

Company E has not complied with Article 85 given Adel’s statement that employees worked overtime, but were not compensated for it because some employees took advantage of the overtime pay by postponing daytime work until after working hours. This is a matter of managers being responsible for following up with their employees’ work and tasks and making sure work was completed during designated times—however,

refraining from overtime pay for all employees is illegal according to the Egyptian Labor Laws.

Adel commented how the company does not allow its employees to have a second job, even if they are consultancy jobs, yet about 20%-30% of employees “work outside the company without the company knowing it.” A sizable percentage of employees have second jobs because in the current economic climate, it becomes necessary for these employees to earn secondary income. There is not enforcement of this corporate policy because it is understandable that some employees need extra income during this economic recession.

At Company F, Ali compares his working hours to those who work in Europe: he said in Europe, hours are from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM, and “everyone leaves at 5:00 PM, sharp. But, in Egypt, it’s different. I have to stay after 5:00 PM. And I’m on call 24/7.” Similar to Adel’s experience at Company E, employees are not compensated for working overtime especially in an economic recession, or are required to work more hours without extra compensation—violating Article 85 of the Egyptian Labor Code, which requires employers to compensate employees for overtime work.

Ali does not accept a candidate who has a second job. He said the problem arises when security personnel are required to work 12-hour shifts, and if they are coming from another job, “they will come to work to sleep.” The company will only pay for 12-hour shifts. It used to be eight-hour shifts, but with the economic situation in Egypt, this has changed. If there are eight-hour shifts available for certain positions, there is a 250 pounds difference between eight and 12-hour shifts. Ali explained most companies pay the same for 12-hour shifts, for the work that used to be eight-hour shifts. This is a

pattern that seems to exist for many of the interviewees who are required to work more for less—an effect of working in the neoliberal system. Companies retain financial power through controlling labor populations, and because of high unemployment rates under an economic recession, companies maintain leverage over employees' working hours.

Ali, an employee who worked at *Vodafone* for three years and also former colleagues with Azzam and Akram explained that when the new CEO came in, Hatem, who is Egyptian, *Vodafone* become “unrecognizable.” Many people left because of frozen salaries since the last eight years—there used to be salary packages for English speakers, which was six times more than non-English speakers, stated Ali. Now, both these salaries are similar in pay. Ali described, as a result, it is hard to understand any *Vodafone* sales representatives on the phone because of poor English-speaking skills or accents. Ali left *Vodafone* because there was not an increase in his salary as well as wanting “to learn something new.”

Yusra said she would not consider working for *Vodafone* for the long-term because her salary has remained the same since the past five years. When she asked for a higher salary, she was told to meet certain targets, but said she was unable to because she did not receive sufficient training for reaching targets, and also because she “can’t offer customers plans because they’re expensive.” However, Tarek, a former employee as a Communication Engineer at *Vodafone* from 2008-2009 compared his salary at *Vodafone*, which was higher than what it is currently now with working at NSGB, a private Egyptian bank. Yasser, a Retail Advisor at *Vodafone*, who joined in December 2012, described the salary at *Vodafone* as good for Egypt.

In a neoliberal Egypt, and dealing with a long-term economic crisis, more employees are compelled to work longer hours for less pay. The “more for less” or exploiting human labor is an effect of companies competing in a capitalist market, and this emerging trans-regional company is one of many companies attempting to “control financial power and labor” by making employees work more for less (Hardt & Negri, 2006, p. 31). Additionally, because transnational companies collectively retain financial power, they are able to take advantage of the economic crisis (i.e. high rates of unemployment) and continuously exploit human labor because companies know employees will find it difficult to find another job.

Because of deteriorating economic conditions, employees have less leverage in demanding flexible working conditions. Especially within larger companies, managers track working hours and patterns of employees since clocking in and out is computerized. This example of monitoring its employees’ whereabouts and working times is an effect of a transnational company—Company E uses a computerized system of tracking the working times of its workforce because it employs more than 2,000 individuals. There is less freedom to have a flexible working schedule because working times and schedules become monotonous, and employees are constrained to follow these schedules—for both employees and companies are working in a capitalist market. Although, monitoring where employees live was helpful for the company in making the decision to continue having a work site in Nasr City, as well as creating a new work site in Smart Village, 6th of October.

Delving Deeper into Vodafone's Corporate Culture

During the start of his career at *Vodafone* in 2001, Azzam said work was “very competitive,” where employees would be easily replaced for low performance. Then, there was a shift towards becoming a “Values Based Organization,” (VBO) which was an attempt to change the corporate culture, through what Akram, Azzam’s colleague described by “setting a mission, vision, regulating and implementing ethical standards.” Azzam described how many focus groups were conducted to “evaluate and understand employees’ issues and concerns.” Akram was one of 19 champions selected out of 3,000 employees who became trained to facilitate seminars for fellow employees about ethics and other values the company wanted to implement. According to Akram, *Vodafone* “imported a third-party consultant from New Zealand, who came in with “bells and whistles” and recruited internal champions for their \$6 million project. Azzam said, after the focus group sessions were completed, there was a creation of “six absolute rules that the company should follow.” These absolute rules included flexible work schedules, in which employees could work from home on Sunday or Thursday. However, the CEO observed that employees were taking advantage of this by taking “long paid weekends, thus, changed the flexible work arrangements working from home during the middle of the week with the permission of a manager. When employees were not able to take advantage of the flexible working days, they named their managers, “non-VBO persons.” Azzam stated how he personally had flexible hours because his manager understood his work needs; “he knew how I liked to work—it’s important that the work gets done. And I did the same with my team.”

Ali spoke positively about the change to VBO. Ali said *Vodafone* provided him with much helpful training in VBO. Specifically, he felt pride when he worked for the company. He recalled how employees used to say, “Ana Vodafone,” or “I am Vodafone,” having confidence in the company for which they worked. Yet, not all employees were pleased with *Vodafone*’s transformation into a VBO. Reflecting upon the push towards becoming a VBO, Akram stated there were:

double standards. You can’t go and say this is how you behave—through paper—when the manager does the exact opposite. The mind of a human being works by logical induction; when he sees something, he will do exactly the same thing. Everything works by setting an example. The VBO is all-theoretical; unless the top management starts behaving the exact same way they’re saying to do, and then you don’t need paper. It was \$6 million for that exercise—thrown down the drain. Someone else got rich from it. This continued for a few years, and the result of this was banners on walls—eloquently made. It wasn’t fruitful.

Akram saw the change in corporate culture as a top-down approach that did not result in values being diffused throughout the company. When Hatem took position as the current CEO, *Vodafone* returned to a “competitive, performance-based company.” Tarek discussed how some of his colleagues resigned from *Vodafone* after the CEO changed from a British to an Egyptian, which had to do with reverting the company to more aggressive work practices and treatment towards employees. Tarek’s colleague explained how “policies changed in a worse way. Management is totally different.” The colleague’s criticism of the current CEO of playing an austere role in building a “competitive, performance-based company,” seems to be relevant for some of the employees interviewed, especially for Ali and Azzam discussed earlier.

As the company attempted to standardize its policies and work culture, *Vodafone* imported “experts” from the Global North, where people from the “developed countries”

could teach people in “developing” countries about standards, policies and “values.” To standardize policies internationally assumes that culture can be ignored within a particular country and that people from the Global North can teach people from the Global South to become economically efficient for the benefit of the Global North (Gomez, 2007, p. 432). Akram criticized these so-called international experts who “taught” Egyptian employees about standards, policies and “values.”

Though these “values” were imported from “international experts,” *Vodafone* maintained its own informal policy on prohibiting discussion on certain topics. Alaa recalled on her first day of training, *Vodafone* discouraged discussion on: 1) Politics, 2) Religion and 3) Sports. She recalled an incident that involved a male employee who was going to be terminated after ten days; “he sent an email to the entire company about his religious beliefs. It was very unprofessional. It was sent to 2000 people. HR talked to him, but he was already leaving.” Management prohibits discussions on these topics because they can be divisive in the Egyptian social context.

Though the company return to a competitive-based organization, the friendly atmosphere between managers and employees from the VBO project was bequeathed under the new CEO. An aspect of the VBO that Ali liked was:

There was no differentiation between manager and the smallest guy in the office. If he is a good person, we treat each other as brothers and friends and do anything to support him, even if there is a problem in his family, we will try and fix it.

Other employees corroborated this aspect of working at *Vodafone*—Hossam, a former intern at *Vodafone*, described the office culture: “There are no offices, it’s a very big floor and everyone is there, and the main manager is there. I liked that. And you call everyone by first name basis—the age doesn’t matter.” An employee in Technical

Support, Abdelrahman who had been working at *Vodafone* for less than a year described the environment as “friendly and professional.” Tarek liked the ability to address his manager by his first name; “We don’t use their titles. Age doesn’t matter. It was Tamer, without Mr.—I liked this. I felt free in communication. It makes a good environment in work.”

The open floor plan is an attempt to have colleagues working together, and sharing ideas and resources, whereas, having offices makes many employees feel isolated from others—and largely, isolated from the company. To delineate a horizontal relationship between managers and colleagues, the company encourages colleagues to address their supervisors by their first name. An open floor plan, without separate offices is assumed to help with communication and collaboration because there is no hierarchical organization between colleagues. Although, studies in the U.S. have indicated that with an open workspace, a lack of privacy with more work interruptions has not helped with collaboration or work performance, but these issues were not pertinent to the employees from *Vodafone* (Hua et al., 2001, p. 808-809).

Yasser described the corporate culture “like Europe. In an Egyptian company, you must deal directly with manager. With *Vodafone*, you can deal in other ways, with another manager.” Yasser described a situation in which he needed assistance with a connection issue, and since he was unable to reach his immediate manager, he was able to ask another manager for assistance, and his “direct manager didn’t feel bad.” Yasser mentioned how *Vodafone* facilitates communicating and seeking help from “colleagues from everywhere from German University in Cairo to Genaina Mall,” which are different areas of Cairo. He said this was a huge difference from working in a local company,

compared to *Vodafone*, an international company. Yasser worked at a call center prior to *Vodafone* and compared his experience there as being a “machine, like a computer. You must be awake for 14 hours and do whatever they say. You must take 200 calls a day. At *Vodafone*, it’s different. You have rights...there’s nothing worse in Egypt, than a call center. At any call center, people turn crazy.” Alaa also said “there is not so much pressure and you can make work fun to enhance performance. We are people, not machines.” Prior to *Vodafone*, Alaa worked for four months at an international company, headquartered in the U.K., called Forte, and said, “It was horrible and strict.” Employees like the flexibility they have at the company to seek help from others, as well as not working in a rigid and stressful work environment.

Tarek, stated how he was “working to be the best, not to be good. Tarek gloated that his team came in first as communication engineers with training. He stated how its competitors *Etisalat* and *Mobinil* are “doing the same after the success story from *Vodafone*.” Every time I came to work, I felt like I was working for a real international company, not in Egypt.” Tarek had the opportunity to work with people from around the world because he was working for a major, international company. *Vodafone* allowed Tarek to learn “how to deal with different cultures and nationalities, foreigners, especially Indians.” Tarek described his dealings with foreigners:

I don’t like to deal with Indians—feel so strange every time, I don’t feel comfortable, but believe in their qualifications. It’s great to deal with Australians and people from New Zealand and Germany. Indians act and work like machines—there’s no human feeling in work. I don’t like it. It’s a different culture. I can’t comply with their sense of humor in work and different accent.

Nonetheless, Tarek admired the qualifications and experience that Indians have. They’re doing the best in “communications and networking, especially for GSM. We depend on

Indians.” Because *Vodafone* is an international company, there is exposure to other cultures and diversity, which helped him to understand and accept people’s differences. Though Tarek expressed his dislike for working with Indians, he accepts and respects their work ethic, and praised *Vodafone*’s reliance on them.

Tarek left *Vodafone* because of the outsourcing policy and the financial crisis of 2009, which prevented being permanently hired for *Vodafone*. Tarek currently works for NSGB, a private Egyptian bank and discussed how the environment at the bank is “totally different” than *Vodafone*.

It’s extremely formal; you must abide with policies without negotiation. It’s like working in a cave—you don’t feel free. I’m thinking about resigning and joining an international company. If you work for an international company, you cannot work for a local one.

Tarek believed his experience at the bank was more rigid in its work atmosphere, while his experience at *Vodafone* was mostly positive because he had flexibility. Tarek attributed his flexibility in work conditions and atmosphere to *Vodafone* being an international company.

While the majority of employees interviewed from *Vodafone* described a positive company culture and working experiences at the company, some employees discussed the challenges they faced, which related to when *Vodafone* reverted from a VBO back to a competitive, performance based company. Azzam discussed the main reasons why he left the company, which were: problems with the HR director and the corporate culture, which “changed to a competitive based environment.” Azzam felt the HR director had a problem with those who were not “obedient” to her—“you can’t say no, even if you know it’s not possible and it won’t work, you must say yes. For me, this was unacceptable. I felt like I wouldn’t move further up in the company.” Azzam also

discussed how the company was demoting people and “putting pressure on employees. I didn’t want to stay to wait until I got demoted.”

How Work Culture Affects Women

Women living in a neoliberal system are expected to work more to sustain “increasing costs of higher living” in which “work has become a financial necessity” (Gini, 1998, p. 4). More women have to work full time jobs than in past decades and multiple incomes are becoming necessary to sustain families; in the U.S., “two job families make up 58% of married couples with children” (Ibid, p. 5). Especially amongst the middle class in the U.S., women’s income has become necessary to contribute to household expenses. Working less hours, or having flexible work opportunities is not possible for most women—or these choices are available for elite women “who have more resources available to them to achieve a workable balance (Selmi and Cahn, 2006, p. 2). In the U.S. from 1970 to 2000, single mother households doubled in percentage. In U.S. studies, few women would trade having more time at home for less income, and many women stated that they could not afford to work less (Ibid. p. 4). Additionally, while maternity leave is available to women in the U.S. (mandated by U.S. labor laws under certain conditions), it is still not affordable to women earning lower incomes because it is unpaid (Ibid. p. 6).

Work culture has become increasingly competitive “with less bargaining power,” especially in terms of flexible work arrangements (Selmi and Cahn, 2006, p. 1). In a *Fortune* Magazine article, Betsy Morris states, “Companies want all their employees, women and men alike, to clock as much face time as possible. Companies are interested in results, productivity, and success and not in child care commitments and kindergarten

recitals” (Gini, 1998, p. 13). Many employees from the different companies discussed having to work more hours or under certain conditions because of the economic crisis and female employees were not granted flexible work arrangements.

Aside from an unsupportive work culture, women have to bear “the burden of a second job—their second shift—the home, the kids, and yes, the care and maintenance of their husbands,” which adds another 15 hours of work per week more than men’s work (Ibid). Yet, this does not mean married women with children have less work responsibilities. Women not only have to work more to sustain higher living costs, but also have to work in a culture that does not always support women’s needs and can discriminate towards women because they are assumed to have babies.

The assumption that women leave work because they need to prioritize household responsibilities, denies the more significant challenges women face in the workplace that cause women to leave their positions. “It is the people in an organisation that make the place not its structure and processes” (Metz, 2011, p. 288). There are work-family programs in place that are supposed to help women, yet when women utilize flexible work arrangements, they are “discouraged or even penalized for using the very programs that are designed to help them combine work and family responsibilities” (Ibid). Some female employees described fearing losing opportunities if they were to get married and take maternity leave in view that managers assume they are unable to take on certain tasks because of their inability to work late hours. Thus, women end up leaving work because of the treatment they face by colleagues and managers that lead to hostile work environments. In a study with 44 Australian women who left the banking industry, discussed the reasons why they left their positions in a “female-dominated industry with a

male-dominated hierarchy;” the work culture condoned hiring fellow male colleagues, in which 57% discussed differential treatment towards women, one-third discussed discriminatory practices, 27% spoke of “broken employment promises and legal obligations upon their return from maternity leave as a primary reason for their departure,” and 45% talked about “unwelcoming practices that did not give them a fair opportunity to return or continue to work” (Ibid, p. 293-296). Most women left work not primarily on account of family duties, but because of work culture and work-related factors, that included work-family flexibility. At *Vodafone*, Yusra continued to work after having a daughter—and said the only reason she would consider leaving *Vodafone* is if she did not receive an increase in her salary, which is a work-related factor.

Assuming that women leave work to have children or prioritize family responsibilities, limits the discussion of other important work-related factors that discourage women’s capabilities and choices in the workplace. Factors such as having the ability to make choices related to work affects women more significantly than men. When employees have more “job satisfaction,” they tend to “gain higher control over work,” which includes “decision-making abilities of workers” and “worker’s power to express her opinion in different aspects of her work” (Banerjee & Yang, 2013, p. 210-211). When female employees are seen as subordinates and do not have a say in their working conditions or environment, their job satisfaction decreases. Job satisfaction relates to the “worker’s perceptions about workplace benefits, relationship with supervisors and flexibility in work hours” (Ibid. p. 212). Women without a supportive workplace culture will have less job satisfaction or workplace control, leading them to quit work.

Perception About Jobs in Security and Cleaning

Ali mentioned at Company F, “people see housekeeping and security work as low jobs.” However, because of the economic situation in Egypt, especially after the revolution, these jobs are viewed more as socially acceptable work opportunities. Some of Ali’s staff graduated from “commercial universities” such as Cairo University, who work as security staff out of necessity. It has been a social norm in Egypt to work in professional fields, and middle class Egyptians with college degrees who work in security and housekeeping duties is still not widely looked favorably upon. Ali said this could be changed with “government support and encouragement.” There are no benefits and trainings provided for those who work in cleaning services. Ali mentioned those who clean the streets with their hands and broom sticks—“moving dust from one place to another” is an ineffective method, compared to how cleaning is done in the U.S. and Europe where cleaning and trash collectors use trucks and machines, and people do not pick up trash with their bare hands. Instead, “the guy who is cleaning trash is very clean—he’s sitting in a car with air conditioning and doesn’t touch rubbish.” He discussed how these cleaners make a lot of money, and society does not look down upon them. This can be changed in Egypt, if there is proper support from the government where these jobs can be seen with pride and prestige. The government should provide training centers with good salaries for trash collectors. Ali believes it is a matter of encouragement from society as a whole to change the perception about trash collectors. Ali said, “This doesn’t depend on culture, but depends on what’s around yourself. If you see someone throwing trash on the street, I’ll do the same. It’s not about laws, it’s about support and encouragement.”

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Through these case studies, we see that both national and international companies adhere to local governances of Egyptian labor laws, which may not be as comprehensive as U.S. labor laws, but in some aspects are more flexible than U.S. labor laws, especially in regards to maternity leave. Additionally, contrary to what employees assume about international companies, not all use transnational governances to create policies against discrimination and harassment. Companies that do not have explicit policies against harassment and discrimination discussed not needing written policies because there had not been many cases involving such incidences; additionally, managers attempt to resolve cases of harassment and discrimination vis-à-vis an informal, case-by-case approach. All managers expressed a serious commitment to making sure employees were respectful of their colleagues in the workplace. The managers at national Company F and international Company I both believe that corporate culture against harassment and discrimination cannot be solely created or enforced through written policies, yet are actions that are enacted by higher management that transcends throughout the company vis-à-vis leadership for the rest of the employs to replicate. Companies E and I that do not have clearly stated policies against discrimination and harassment still have internal bylaws or ethics codes that their employees are expected to uphold. Nonetheless, while all companies comply with Egyptian Labor Laws, there is still implicit or explicit discrimination that women experience that is difficult to address via policies or laws. There are other workplace factors that affect employees other than written corporate policies or labor laws, which are exacerbated by neoliberalism.

Findings

When specifically asked if women felt discriminated or harassed in the workplace, almost all said not directly. Yet, they described work atmospheres that viewed and treated women differently, in which they felt they had to negotiate their identities or choices, such as delaying marriage to not lose out on opportunities or promotions, or “acting as men” to prove their capabilities. These implicit and explicit examples of discrimination can affect their workplace power—or the ability to make choices and decisions about their work conditions, because women are the minority. These coincide with the many levels of discrimination that are still rampant in the U.S., where women, especially those who are non-white and/or from minority groups, face barriers in climbing the corporate ladder because of a glass ceiling as a “result of cultural beliefs that rank women below men” (Elliot & Smith, 2004, p. 365-366, 368). Thus, to be successful in the workplace, women have to “rely more on education and experience, relative to white men, to “break into” higher levels of power, and often have to “out credential” white-male counterparts to compensate for their lack of network assistance” (Ibid, p. 368). Female employees working for the different companies all have higher education and/or immense experience and expressed their gratitude for the respective companies in which they have positions. Yet, they still feel the workplace is still dominated by men, in which women are not being hired as often as men in certain fields or positions, and have no power to make decisions about their work conditions. While many of these women never expressed leaving work to have babies (as assumed by those in control of the workplace), they felt as if their work culture does not condone women because of traditional attitudes in the workplace. If women do want to take maternity

leave or get married, they feel as these factors will prevent them from future opportunities and will be discriminated on account of these factors. Yet, the real issues women discussed that would affect their decision to leave the workplace are explicit incidences of harassment, not having an increase in salary and other work-related factors. Female employees want to be viewed as equal counterparts to their male colleagues, without having to face repercussions for being “women.”

Regardless if companies have policies against discrimination and harassment, gender discrimination occurs at the companies selected for this research in various ways. Firstly, there is gender discrimination in hiring—managers do not prefer to hire females because managers assume women are a liability for the company in terms of not being able to work late hours, or get pregnant and take maternity leave, whereas men are able to stay late and do not get pregnant, thus are not entitled to maternity leave as required by Egyptian labor laws for women. A female manager at national Company E admitted to not “liking” to hire women, because the company has to provide maternity leave benefits, and employees corroborated this statement by providing insight to the gender disparity within the company—having more males than females work in the company. Male employees stated that team leaders are unable to ask females to stay and work late hours because it is culturally unacceptable to have women work late nights, especially since companies need to provide safe transportation from work to home if they work late, and in the current political climate, it becomes a liability.

Regardless if a company is international or national, utilizing local or transnational governances, there is still blatant discrimination in hiring women in engineering positions—as is in the U.S. because they are still male-dominated fields.

Female employees in Egyptian and international companies acknowledged the double-standard that is prevalent in corporate practices with a preference in hiring males, even if both a potential male and female candidates put forth the same C.V.'s, especially for engineering positions. These attitudes align with the traditional attitudes that were present during Nasser's state-feminism against working women, especially in male-dominated positions. Women's employment is assumed to be less important than familial duties, or temporary since women are expected to prepare for marriage and start a family. It is assumed that when a young woman is working, she is usually working to prepare for financial costs of marriage and saving for her family, rather than seeing work as a career. Discriminatory social attitudes can contribute to institutional discrimination in the workplace and vice versa, and institutional discrimination can shape social attitudes. Institutional discrimination perpetuates gendered positions for men and women—where women are not seen as competent or able engineers, thus can face discrimination in hiring from managers or discrimination from colleagues if hired. As seen at Company F, there are gendered positions where women are expected to work in housekeeping positions, while security jobs are reserved for men. Or, at Company E, institutional discrimination exacerbates discouraging females from pursuing studying engineering, or seeing engineering as a career, rather than a job that is temporary—this perpetuates the notion that women and men can only work in certain positions.

Secondly, there may be informal discrimination based on gender, class and a woman's identity, for example if a female employee identifies herself as liberal, she may face discrimination by fellow male and female colleagues. A young female employee at international Company I felt as if her fellow male colleagues discriminated against her

because Amirah identified herself as a young, liberal woman. Because of her lifestyle choices, male colleagues did not treat Amirah as they did other female colleagues, who were known to not drink or smoke. Male employees informally treated her differently than other female colleagues because of Amirah's personal lifestyle choices, which were not seen as socially acceptable behaviors for women, especially in the middle class. Male colleagues viewed her as a "bad girl." Thus, Amirah felt like she had to negotiate her identity and present herself differently depending on whom she was interacting with at work—despite Company I being an international company. Amirah and other female employees expressed having to "think and act like a man" to succeed at their companies since women can face discrimination structurally by hiring managers or implicitly from colleagues. Female employees described having to make certain sacrifices in their lifestyle choices or identities to be seen as equals to their male counterparts, especially to not lose opportunities or promotions in the workplace because of assumptions made about women.

It would be worthwhile to see if there is reverse discrimination in the workplace towards women who are viewed as "traditional women," who wear hijabs, or headscarves. In an informal discussion with a friend who worked at *Yahoo!* in Egypt (not part of the case studies), discussed supervisors and colleagues inviting women, who were viewed as liberal by colleagues to outings with clients. Some of these outings had alcohol served at the venues, thus, colleagues decided to not invite female colleagues who wore headscarves, potentially, excluding them from certain opportunities at work. This thesis did not extensively focus on the impact of the hijab at the workplace; yet, it would be interesting to see the effects of the hijab in different work environments.

While there can be implicit and explicit instances of discrimination in the workplace, local and transnational governances do not address these issues. Egyptian Labor Laws are not comprehensive in addressing various forms of discrimination that can take place, nor include ensuring a harassment-free environment. Employees do not consider the various forms of harassment, aside from the explicit sexual harassment most people think about that can occur in the workplace, which may not be relevant in the Egyptian private sector context, at least in these case studies. If various examples of harassment and discrimination were identified, employees would be able to clearly recognize and report incidences that are implicit in nature (sexist comments, offering opportunities to men rather than women, gendered training, not promoting or allowing flexible work arrangements for women, not encouraging female advancement in the workplace, especially in senior-level positions).

Neoliberalism Affecting Work

While discrimination and harassment in the workplace can directly affect women's experiences in the workplace, other workplace factors can significantly alter work culture. Employees in Egyptian companies reported not being compensated for overtime pay, provided with training, or companies freezing salaries or not providing the entire maternity leave package—three months paid maternity leave and up to two years of unpaid maternity leave for companies employing 50 or more workers—required by Egyptian Labor Laws. Yet, in some ways, Egyptian Labor Laws are more generous compared to U.S. Labor Laws, which provide pregnant women with twelve weeks of unpaid maternity leave.

Due to working in a neoliberal world and with the political situation affecting Egypt, employees understand that they will not be bestowed certain benefits to the full extent. Employees at international company *Vodafone* discussed the skills and training that current *Vodafone* employees have, to be far less than the skills and training *Vodafone* employees had eight years ago, due to financial cut backs in training. Though, international companies have been consistent in providing bonuses, allowances and other benefits to its employees. Nonetheless, companies want all of their employees working competitively by making them “work more hours for less pay”—in order to compete in the international labor market. This aspect of encouraging individual competitiveness derives from Egypt participating in neoliberalism, beginning since the liberalization of Egypt in the 1970’s, where there was a stronger push for working in the private sector. The economic crisis led to high unemployment rates, which provide an advantage to companies being able to keep employees working more hours without providing them the full benefits and rights prescribed by the Egyptian Labor Code and corporate policies. Additionally, there is not active or efficient enforcement of the Egyptian Labor Laws, and if there is a lawsuit filed by an employee, the repercussions for violating the Egyptian Labor Laws are not grave; many Egyptians do not see legal repercussions as a viable route in addressing issues in the workplace.

Even in the U.S. where Egyptian employees see active enforcement of labor laws and standards, exist workplace environments that excuse harassment and discrimination, and perpetuate competition between employees to work more, for less, on account of the economic crisis. Though the EEOC exists to work on cases against harassment and discrimination on various grounds, there is debate on the effectiveness of the EEOC and

the ability to address rampant cases of implicit harassment and discrimination, and the costs and procedures associated with filing charges against a company deters many employees from using the judicial process. Thus, employees are threatened to accept substandard working conditions; female employees are informally discouraged from taking maternity leave because either there is not a corporate culture that supports work-family balance or women's needs and success in the workplace, or women cannot afford to take time off from work because of rising costs of middle-class living.

Nonetheless, while full benefits may not be provided to employees, according to the employees' perspectives under Egyptian Labor Laws, they continue to work for these companies, especially those that are international. Employees are proud to work for companies with reputable names that are recognized outside of Egypt, and believe that salaries, benefits and standards at international corporations are better than Egyptian companies. International companies may have more financial resources to provide their employees with more benefits and higher salaries than national companies, but that does not change the work environment that induces working competitively or discouraging women from taking maternity leave benefits.

Changing Perspectives and Policies

The implicit instances of discrimination female employees face in the workplace are conducive in creating an overall discouraging work environment for women. While seen as minor incidences, women being asked about their marital statuses; informally penalized for taking maternity leave; and treated differently depending on what "kind" of woman she is. The assumptions made about women take away from the workplace control women have—the ability to voice opinions about their work and conditions

(Banerjee & Yang, 2013). Companies need to encourage women's participation and inclusivity in the workplace, without penalizing women for deciding to be mothers or taking care of household responsibilities. Women with children and domestic duties are given the unfair double-burden of motherhood and working (often in difficult work environments). The lack of institutional support for women's needs and success in the workplace prevents women's advancement in the workplace. Creating and fostering flexibility work arrangements for women is vital. Additionally, a move towards companies providing and society supporting paternity leave can also change the way people think about domestic responsibilities and allows both men and women to share in such tasks.

Olmsted argues that although women find paid employment, "they remain more economically vulnerable than men, not only because they face discrimination and exploitive work conditions, but because societies continue to assign them the generally unremunerated economic role of reproductive labor" (2005, p. 112). Women need to be viewed outside of the motherhood role, where their identity is not solely defined as having children and taking care of the house. Women need to be supported in not just pursuing fields of their passion, but helping them break into and succeed in male-dominated fields.

Rather, the main question that remains is how Egyptian women can be provided with institutional and societal support, whereas jobs are seen careers, and viewed as important as familial responsibilities. Attitudes towards women working in male-dominated fields must alter so that women are encouraged to pursue positions such as engineering, which is not exclusive in the Egyptian social context, but also in the U.S.,

where female engineers still work in a male-dominated environment. When it becomes commonplace to see female engineers, then society can normalize their attitudes to accept diverse employment practices—but employing more women in male-dominated fields is the initial step. Companies need to accept that some women need more accommodations than men, but should not penalize women for taking such benefits legally provided by companies or labor laws.

While Egyptian Labor Laws solely discuss discrimination in pay based on gender and do not mention harassment, and legal recourse does not serve as a panacea for ending discrimination in the workplace, there needs to be more comprehensive examples of the forms of discrimination and harassment that can occur in the workplace. Employees mainly identified inappropriate touching as harassment, without seeing other implicit examples they discussed as harassment or discrimination. Acknowledging the diverse forms of harassment and discrimination that can take place will make more employees aware of mistreatment and end the social acceptability of such treatment by colleagues or managers. While the current Egyptian Labor Laws are outdated and ineffective in addressing these challenges, it is vital to reform labor laws to support women's active participation in the workplace, which can also serve as a useful foundation to educate employees on the various forms of discrimination and harassment that can occur in the workplace, especially if corporate policies lack in defining these terms.

Aside from comprehensive written policies and laws, if companies take a proactive approach and assume social responsibility to provide employees with a safe space to address concerns in the workplace, ensure female employees are treated fairly, foster mentorship and institutional support, women will be encouraged to succeed, ultimately

benefitting the company. When female employees have more decision-making abilities in the workplace, they are happier and “are more likely to make important work-related decisions than women with lower level of happiness” (Banerjee & Yang, 2013, p. 212). Further, when companies create a supportive work culture and offer adequate benefits, it attracts and retains employees that will work their best for the company. This can lead to competition between companies attempting to recruit the very best employees because employees care about the values their companies condone, and how colleagues and managers treat them. Thus, a supportive environment, in and outside of work is conducive to women’s personal and professional success.

Conclusion

The Egyptian state retreated from state-feminism beginning in the 1970’s, diminishing public sector positions and failing to offer the benefits and protections the state once promised under Nasser. Opportunities in the private sector were available in a limited percentage, and recent graduates attempted to seek private sector positions. Working women faced societal and institutional marginalization and discrimination for newly entering many jobs in the private sector, which are present to the current day. Society views working as temporary for women, because women are expected to place work as secondary to family duties. This places limitations on the types of jobs they can work in and the conditions in which they should work. As a result, women face explicit discrimination in engineering positions, or exclusion from certain positions; for instance, housekeeping jobs are seen for women, whereas security jobs are for men. Aside from perpetuating gendered positions for work, there is discrimination against single or recently married females because it is assumed, if women are single or recently married,

they will have children and take advantage of maternity leave benefits, or not able to work late hours because their families will not allow them. Thus, managers do not prefer to hire women if they can hire men, because companies do not need to offer men maternity leave and benefits, and men have flexible work conditions. These assumptions about women limit their ability to succeed in the workplace, because there is a lack of institutional support.

With the combination of a frail economic situation, poor political stability, transparency and proficiency of the Egyptian government, including a weak judicial system in the Egyptian cultural context, labor rights and experiences of both male and female employees can be consequently affected, regardless if they are working in an international company. Legal corporate policies and labor laws provide limited protection for women, because they do not address the various forms of explicit and implicit discrimination and harassment women (and men) can face. Until there is a marriage between comprehensive legal reforms (policies) and a social push for changing attitudes towards accepting and employing women in all sectors of employment (practice), there will be little progress in gender equality in the workplace.

Appendix

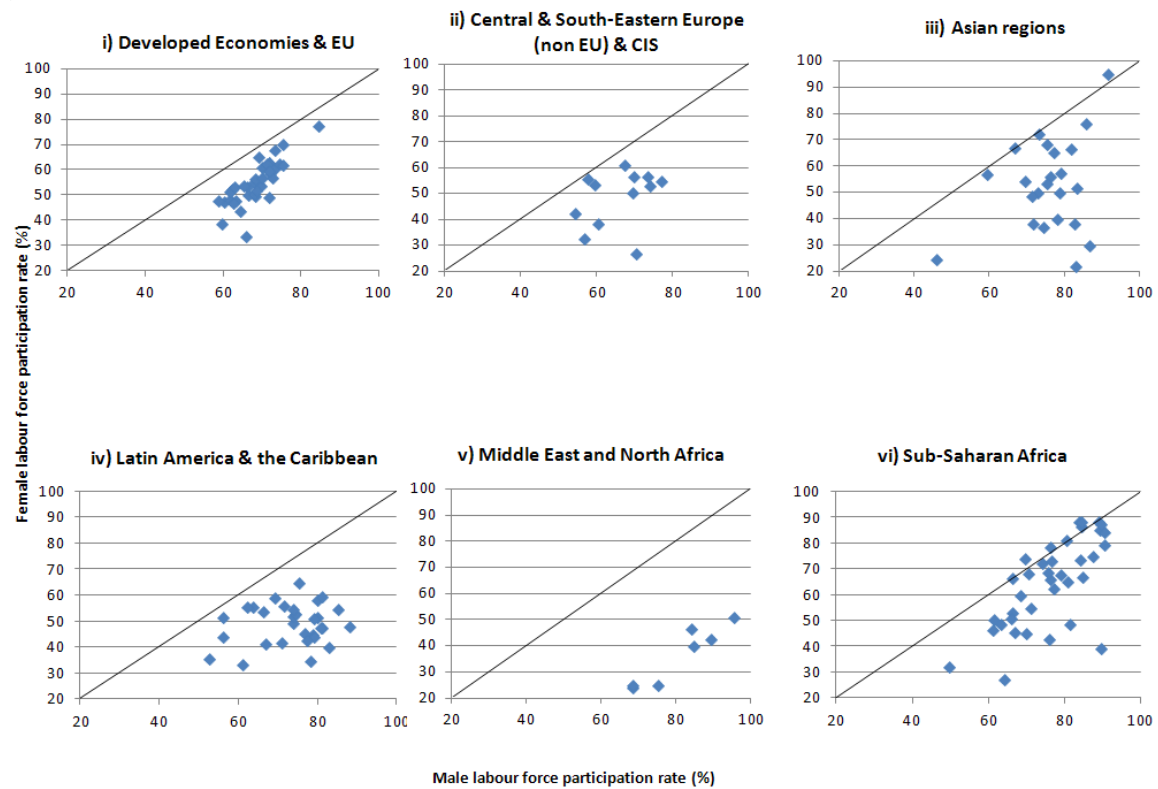
Figure 1

Individual level	Harness positive attitudes to diversity
	Promote an understanding of the effects of power and privilege
	Educate employees about diversity
	Develop and frame of self-identity
Group level	Help employees overcome diversity barriers
	Promote teamwork through inclusive activities
	Foster respect and tolerance of difference
	Review group values Improve access and support
Organisational level	Reexamine recruitment, promotion and other practices
	Provide career mentoring and coaching programmes
	Develop organisational policies towards diversity
	Promote a positive diversity climate
	Facilitate diversity workshops
Societal level	Appoint diversity champions
	Promote equality and social justice
	Eliminate discrimination
	Encourage greater participation of diverse groups
	Foster positive relations amongst diverse groups
	Dissemination of good practice

Source: McGuire & Bagher, 2010, p. 495

Figure 2

Comparison of Female and Male Labour Force Participation Rates



Source: International Labor Organization, 2011

Figure 3

Company F Code of Conduct

Purpose and Scope

This Code of Conduct sets forth the business conduct standards to which Company F [sic] expects its employees, subcontractors & vendors to adhere to. This Code covers suppliers, vendors, contractors, consultants, agents and other providers of goods and services who do, or seek to do, business with Company F [sic] entities in all of Company F [sic] locations.

Business Conduct Standards

Company F [sic] expects all those related to conduct business responsibly, with integrity, honesty and transparency and adhere to the following standards:

- (1) Comply with all applicable laws and regulations of the countries of operation.
- (2) Compete fairly for our business, without paying bribes, kickbacks or giving anything of value to secure an improper advantage.
- (3) Encourage a diverse workforce and provide a workplace free from discrimination, harassment or any other form of abuse.
- (4) Treat employees fairly and honestly, including with respect to wages, working hours and benefits.
- (5) Respect human rights and prohibit all forms of forced or compulsory labor.
- (6) Ensure that child labor is not used in any operations.
- (7) Respect employees' right to freedom of association, consistent with local laws.
- (8) Provide safe and humane working conditions for all employees.
- (9) Carry out operations with care for the environment and comply with all applicable environmental laws and regulations.
- (10) Keep financial books and records in accordance with all applicable legal, regulatory and fiscal requirements and accepted accounting practices.
- (11) Deliver products and services meeting applicable quality and safety standards,
- (12) Support compliance with this Code by establishing appropriate management processes and cooperating with reasonable assessment processes requested by Company F [sic].
- (13) Observe Company F's [sic] policies regarding gifts and entertainment and conflicts of interest when dealing with Company F [sic] employees.

Source: Company F

Figure 4

Type of Company

Company	National	International	Type of Company
Company E	✓		Engineering
Company F	✓		Facilities and Management
Company I		✓	Confectionary
Company V (Vodafone)		✓	Telecommunications

Number of Employees—Percentage of Male to Female Employee Ratio

Company	Employees in Egypt	Men (%)	Women (%)
Company E	1534	85%	15%
Company F	240	90%	10%
Company I	--	--	--
Company V	6,500	60%*	40*

* This is an estimate from an employee, not official statistics provided by a manager.

-- Could not attain information because the company pulled out of research due to political situation in Egypt.

Corporate Policies on Discrimination, Harassment and Maternity Leave

Company	Anti-Discrimination Policy	Anti-Harassment Policy	Maternity Leave Policy according to Egyptian Labor Laws
Company E			✓
Company F	✓	✓	✓
Company I			✓
Company V	✓	✓	✓

Corporate Culture

Company	Can address managers on first-name basis
Company E	
Company F	
Company I	✓
Company V	✓

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