

Chapter 3

The Monastic Institution: A Case Study of Female Needs in a Higher Education Institute in Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

Although workplaces have significantly evolved over the years, they continue to cling onto conventional rules and regulations. Due to the ever-changing journey of the modern-day woman, it is essential to consider their role as a multi-dimensional one in any institute they are present. Not only has the profile of the typical employee changed, the needs of students in higher education have changed tremendously as well. However, although workplaces have significantly evolved over the years, they continue to cling onto conventional rules and regulations. Therefore, the notion of the monastic institute – which is inflexible of the idea of a lack of attachments outside of the workplace, is outdated and no longer serves its stakeholders. In this chapter, critical issues revolving around feminist theories are discussed which support the need for new ideologies pertaining to the needs of the modern-day woman pursuing a job or education alike.

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

In this case study, a determined group of females were able to find a way to assist one another in their educational journey in order to make it a possible option. By identifying common needs and catering to their own requirements as female students

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The Monastic Institution

with extensive family responsibilities, these women were able to shed the light on the often-overlooked subject of gender equality in higher education institutes. The women formed a “Mommy Club” where they informally delegated personal and academic responsibilities amongst one another. In doing so, they impacted the lives of other women in the same institute, who were suffering from similar working-mother dilemmas, and brought the much-needed conversation to light. The focus of the narrative is to showcase the crucial role of the Human Resource Management (HRM) as agents for change. By creating a supportive environment for females in the organization, HRM practitioners are able to embrace inclusion and diversity by allowing mothers to pursue their careers whilst catering to their family needs – whether they are students or staff members. The institute being studied, which offers majors in STEM subjects only, has a student roster dominated by females (more than 65%) between the ages of 18-35 years, many of whom are married and have children. Therefore, it is imperative for the organization to address their needs and anticipate their desires. In order to ensure proper gender equality and inclusivity, the individual needs of all female stakeholders must be addressed.

SETTING THE STAGE

Throughout history, the under-representation of women has been continuously reported in the realm of higher education. It is often the case that “a range of structural-institutional, social and cultural factors and ideologies have been identified as glass-ceiling barriers to women’s academic career advancements” Luke (2001). Even in today’s world, the struggle is ever-more endured but is under-reported as some women fear “anonymity and marginality” if they dare to challenge or resist the conventional patriarchal system (Stalker, 1994). Moreover, in a study by De McPherson (2000), it is revealed that the basis of women’s issues is strongly linked to gender stereotypes and old paradigms which continue to be practiced today. From a Critical Management Studies (CMS) perspective, which aims to criticize managerial issues that may impact society, under-representation of women could be grounds for concern. Besides the conventional glass ceiling paradigm, there are a magnitude of feminist-related issues at hand. According to Habermas (1987), a pioneer in the critical theory or sociology arena, a worldview is developed and widely accepted within each society that delineates the values and goals for that culture. As the system evolves, it creates pathological tendencies which are evident in the breakdown of institutions such as the family, religion, and education. He further explains how the system infringes upon the everyday life, stating that “legitimations and motivations important for maintaining institutional orders are secured, at the expense of, and through the ruthless exploitation of, other resources” (p. 386). In

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