**Navigating change from within: The impact and challenges of a women’s virtual community in transforming gender dynamics in the IDF army**

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Ms. Michal Leizerovitch holds a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Bar-Ilan University, as well as a second master’s degree in management development from the College of Management. She specializes in development, leadership, and the introduction of systemwide strategic processes in the military, including intelligence units, as well as organizational development processes in the third sector. Ms. Leizerovitch has conducted organizational research in academic frameworks and in the army. She is currently responsible for development in the field of social resilience at Mahut Israel, an NGO for community crisis treatment in Israel and other countries.

**Abstract**

This case study examines the impact of an informal virtual community of professional women (VCoP) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on changing gender dynamics in the organization. Through interviews and focus groups with 14 community members, we explored the community’s evolution from a support group to an officially recognized channel for organizational knowledge dissemination. Findings reveal the emergence of an alternative narrative ​~~​~~ substantiated by practices that empowered women and challenged the army’s dominant patriarchal discourse. The community contributed to the wider organization in three ways: building trust based on information and knowledge sharing, contributing to valuable organizational initiatives, and demonstrating the value of non-hierarchical and cross-organizational communication. The study highlighted the significant role of virtual communities in leading gender-oriented organizational change and furthering the understanding of gender dynamics and bottom-up change in organizations. It offers insights into the potential of virtual communities as catalysts for organizational development.

**Keywords:** virtual communities of practice, gender equity, organizational change, narrative, IDF/military

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