**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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Dr. Orly Ganany-Dagan, PhD, studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University. Her publications focus on new communities, the community connection between the collective and the individual, the social periphery of Israel, social generations, inclusion, and gender. She employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods and applies different perspectives to examine these subjects. Dr. Ganany-Dagan is a researcher and lecturer at Tel-Hai College.

Ms. Michal Leizerovitch holds a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Bar-Ilan University and a second master’s degree in management development from the College of Management. She specializes in development, leadership, and introduction of systemwide strategic processes in the military, including intelligence units, as well as processes of organizational development 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. Through interviews and focus groups with fourteen members, we explore the community’s evolution from a support group to an officially recognized channel for organizational knowledge dissemination. Findings reveal the development of an alternative narrative ​~~​~~ substantiated by practices that empowered women and challenged the dominant patriarchal discourse in the army. The community contributed to the wider organization in three ways: building trust based on information and knowledge sharing; it contributed 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, contributing to the understanding of gender dynamics and of 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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