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Empowering Women Through Cyber Security

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

A large segment of women today lacks access to high quality education, faire employment opportunities, and inadequate business opportunities just because they are women and that is why Sue Durkheim call them the “missing women.” Scholars argue that women empowerment could be accomplished through offering them resources, boosting their agency, and facilitating their achievements (Kabeer 2005). Education improves access to resources, boost their agency, and develops their leadership. It improves their share in the job market, cognitive capacity, decisions quality, and chance to have a good partner. What is not yet clear is the impact of different academic majors or teaching strategies on empowerment. In this project, we attempt to explore how service learning empowers Arab female students and prepares them for the labor market. Service learning is a teaching strategy through which students address societal needs through community service while realizing learning objectives (Knapp and Bradley 2010). It offers a wide range of benefits for students, faculty, academic institution and the local community. However, we are interested in their offering to students that may empower them. Service learning develop their skills of problem solving, leadership, decision making, collaboration and communication.

We established a cyber-security group of female students in my information security course. The cybersecurity filed is very competitive particularly in a labor market that favors muscular workforce. Adopting the service learning pedagogy, the class assignments were set out to offer training to high school female students, write news articles, organize awareness campaigns, contribute to Wikipedia, develop podcasts, and publish infographics related to security issues.

Our objective is to develop a conceptual framework that outlines the role of service learning of cybersecurity in women empowering. We are using a grounded theory approach that integrates data from multiple sources including focus groups, field notes and unstructured interviews with our students. We will collect data about resources (e.g. knowledge, electronic services, software, and social resources) students use in their security activities. Another issue of interest is investigating how these community services boost different aspects of their agency such as autonomy, capacity, self-determination, conditions, freedom of association, communication skills, and leadership. Another interesting empowering factor is the intrinsic goals they achieve during service learning such as self-steam, independence, fulfilment, responsibility, personal development, and the sense of security. The framework will also outline key achievements (e.g., podcasts, news articles, tutorials) or collective actions (workshops, seminars, projects) they have achieved. We hope that this work will contribute to both the women empowerment areas and the information system education.

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