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DOES AN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LEBANESE FIRMS

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Abstract

Globalization and a growing awareness of environmental issues are compelling firms to adhere to international environmental standards. Lebanese manufacturing industries are increasingly pressured to integrate environmental standards, mainly the ISO 14001 certification, in order to access - enter and compete - international markets. Although the ISO 14001 model is proposed to promote continual environmental improvement, the standard does not specify definite requirements for environmental performance, other than a commitment to compliance with relevant national regulations. The adoption of ISO 14001 in Lebanon has been relatively slow due to the lack of government support and deficiency in the infrastructure. Despite the existence of very few ISO 14001 certified manufacturing industries in Lebanon, the practical environmental improvement of these industries after the acquisition of the certification is not known. This research study aims to investigate the impacts of implementing an environmental management system, particularly ISO 14001 standard, on firms environmental performance taking Lebanon as a case study. Accordingly, a semi structured in-depth interview was conducted with each certified organization. Findings revealed that the implementation of an EMS brought positive changes in the organization's environmental performance such as decreases in air emissions and wastewater discharges as well as reductions in the use of resources and compliance with the Lebanese environmental legislation. Furthermore, results revealed that non-environmental benefits accrued from the certification, especially market expansion and financial profitability.

Keywords: certified industries, environmental improvement, ISO 14001, Lebanon, performance

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