

**Project Title:** Creating a framework for an institutional gender equity initiative with a focus on leadership development for women.

**Name and Institution:** Ayesha Mian; Aga Khan University (AKU)

**Collaborators/Mentors:** Asad Ali, Khairunnissa Ajani, Dilshad Ashraf, Gauhar Afshan, Anjum Halai, Carl Amrhein

**Topic Category:** Faculty Development

**Background, Significance of project:** Women enter the health and education institutions in Pakistan in large numbers; medical schools admit 50% or more females, whereas nursing and education programs are largely comprised of women. Top leadership positions, however, are still traditionally held by men. The few women who do reach executive leadership positions frequently share anecdotal accounts of micro-aggressions, which made their career courses uniquely challenging. Apart from occasional workshops, there are no comprehensive leadership programs for women in academia across the Asian continent; a deficit that highlights a significant opportunity.

Aga Khan University has been a pioneer in high quality medical, nursing and teacher education for decades. A recent economic impact report showed it has had considerable impact in the education, empowerment and capacity building of women in Pakistan. Aligning itself with an international focus on gender equity, AKU is therefore primed to be a forerunner in the region, as it commits to an organizational assessment of gender equitable practices with a focus on developing leadership capacity for women in academia.

**Purpose/Objectives:** To develop a strategic framework for an institution wide gender equity initiative that undertakes organizational assessment followed by plans for leadership development for women. Objectives include, 1) Assessment of the risk tolerance of the institution to invest in in-depth analysis of policies and practices relative to gender, 2) Establishing coalitions across the institution to identify interest, expertise and sources of mentorship, 3) Completion of a comprehensive needs assessment, 4) Designing a day long forum for the initiative to be introduced by executive leadership.

**Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy:** Meetings were held with executive institutional leadership to ascertain support for the initiative. A university wide mini symposium was organized to introduce the initiative, which included a keynote by an ELUM Board Trustee. A dinner for the trustee and a small group of select senior women leaders across the university was hosted as a focus group. An objective needs assessment is underway via data collection through Human Resources, including women in different academic ranks and leadership positions. A team of collaborators is finalizing a survey assessing gender climate among faculty. Women leaders from university alumni have been engaged for expanded coalition building.

**Outcomes/Results:** The first two objectives have been achieved through intensive engagement with all stakeholders, including the President and selected trustees on the University Board. The general feedback on the project has been supportive and encouraging. Data gathering on current status of gender equitable practices and conduct of a survey is underway.

**Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact:** A recognizable program of gender equity within the institution, and that of leadership development across the country for women in academia, will make it explicit that AKU is invested in recruitment, capacity building and retention of women leaders. This will further elevate the visibility and reputation of the University as a place for women to thrive through all stages of career development.

# Framework for an institutional gender equity initiative with a focus on leadership development for women



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Presented at the 2019 ELAM® Leaders Forum



## BACKGROUND

Women enter health and education institutions in Pakistan in large numbers. Leadership positions, however, are still traditionally held by men. The few women who do reach executive leadership frequently share accounts of micro-aggressions, adding unique challenges. Apart from occasional workshops, no comprehensive leadership programs exist for women in academia across the Asian continent - a deficit that highlights a significant opportunity.

Aga Khan University is primed to be a forerunner in the region, as it commits to an organizational assessment of gender equitable practices with a focus on developing leadership capacity for women in academia.

## PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

To develop a strategic framework for an institution wide gender equity initiative that undertakes organizational assessment followed by plans for leadership development for women.

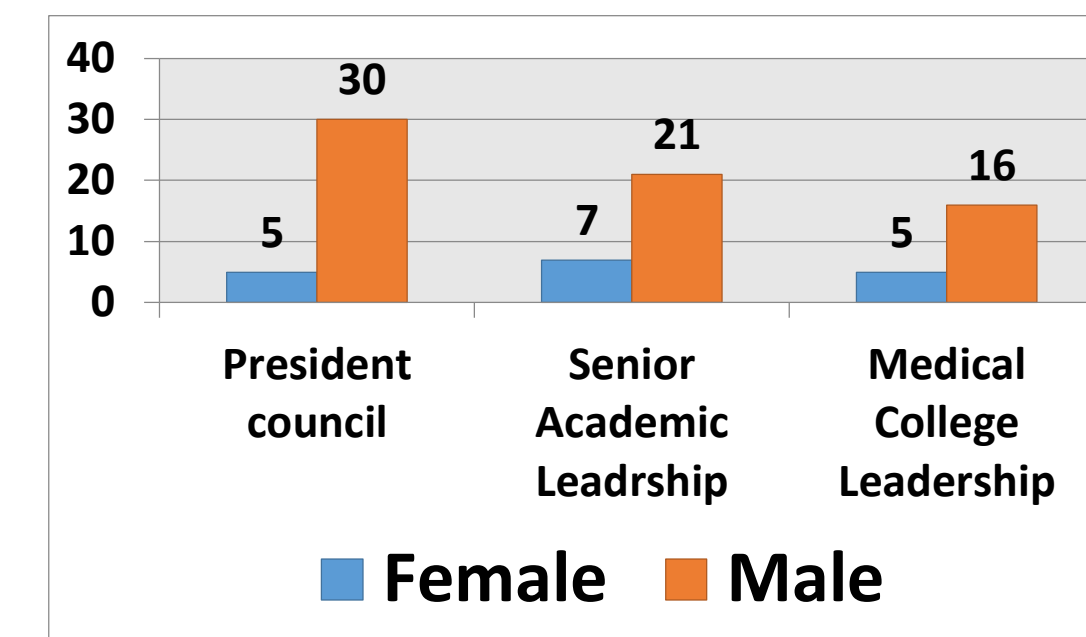
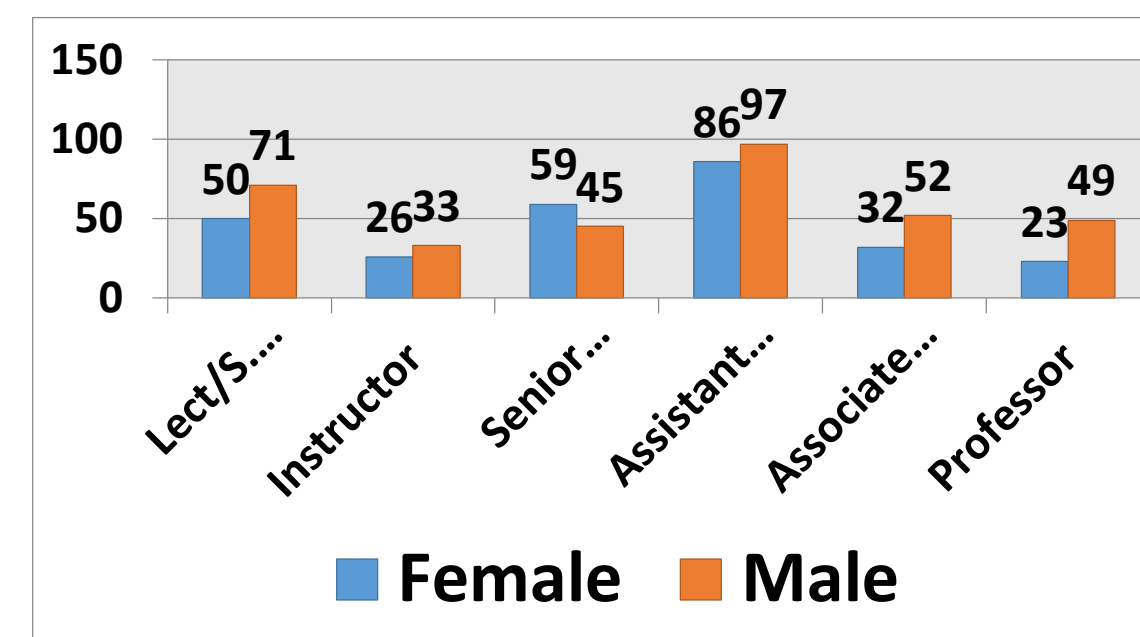
- Assessment of the risk tolerance of the institution to invest in in-depth analysis of policies and practices relative to gender
- Establishing coalitions across the institution to identify interest, expertise and sources of mentorship
- Initiation of a comprehensive needs assessment

## METHODS

- Meetings were held with executive institutional leadership to ascertain support for the initiative.
- A university wide mini symposium was organized to introduce the initiative, which included a keynote by an ELUM Board Trustee.
- A dinner for the trustee and a small group of select senior women leaders across the university was hosted as a focus group. An objective needs assessment is underway via data collection through Human Resources
- A team of collaborators is finalizing a survey assessing gender climate among faculty.
- National and international women leaders from university leadership, alumni and beyond have been engaged for expanded coalition building.

## RESULTS/OUTCOMES

- Commitment achieved through intensive engagement with all stakeholders including President, Provost, Deans and selected trustees on the University Board via in-depth interviews.
- Current applicable data is being collected and analysed.
- Data gathering on current status of gender equitable practices and conduct of a survey is underway through the strategic task force.



## DISCUSSION

- A strategic framework has been developed, focused on four areas towards achieving gender equity.



## STATEMENT OF IMPACT

- A recognizable program of gender equity within the institution, and that of leadership development across the country for women in academia, will make it explicit that AKU is invested in recruitment, capacity building and retention of women leaders.
- This will further elevate the visibility and reputation of the University as a place for women to thrive through all stages of career development.

### References:

- Gender Differences in Academic Medicine (Acad Med, 2018)
- Morahan, P. S., Rosen, S. E., Richman, R. C., & Gleason, K. A. (2011). The leadership continuum: A framework for organizational and individual assessment relative to the advancement of women physicians and scientists. *Journal of Women's Health, 20*(3), 387-396.

