Arab International University

Enhancing Gender Equality for Syrian Female Students in Higher Education Sector: The Case of AIU

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions need to develop sustainable leadership in academic environment that can surpass time, place, geography, race, and exceeding all genders, in order to succeed in today's new model of academic learning and research environment. The urge to empower female academics is escalating, as international and global universities depend on the significant roles played by female academics and professionals. Previous academic research indicates that there is a deficiency in the number of female academics in the Middle East and South Mediterranean region.

An increasingly important major in academic institutions is, the need for developing effective female academics with technical, interpersonal, conceptual and decision-making skills that can maintain a strong and sustainable academic environment. Challenges associated with social, cultural, economic and gender issues are obvious factors that could hinder female academics from taking leadership roles in academic environment. On the other hand, information flood, technological advancement and connectivity, struggle for analytical and research competencies and increasing ethical problems have been among important factors stimulating the need for female leaders, who gained effective competencies and that could exceed cultural, geographical, political, racial and national aspects.

Female academics can contribute in building and creating crucial impact in their countries and the region in different aspects economically, politically, socially and most importantly as academic leaders pioneering change in the academic arena. It is evident that persistent gender and social norms inhibit women from taking leading management roles in higher institutions and professional aspects in business in Middle Eastern and south Mediterranean region.

Equality is one of the five values on which the European Union has based its foundation on. The EU has put significant strategies to establish and sustain gender equality that has reflected positively on the social, economic, political and other important aspects of European society. Gender inequality as a phenomenon being examined reflects negatively on the human, social, economic and political aspects of a society. Establishing economic independence upon both men and women has a positive impact on the economy and will result in better utilization of human capital in any given nation. Gender gap exists in different sectors where women are found to be overrepresented in lower paid sectors and underrepresented in senior management levels and decision-making positions.

For the most part, the topic of gender equality is of importance because gender gap has 50 % impact on total population. The rationale and importance of the gender equality is that if 50 % of human beings are not contributing effectively to different social, economic, professional and political aspects of life, then this society is not fully or effectively employing or achieving its full potential. The Middle East and North Africa region is no exception to this approach.

According to the Global Gender Gap, report published by World Economic Forums Western Europe has a gender gap of 24%, leaving North America behind with a gap of 27%, and Latin America and the Caribbean with a gap of 29%. The East Asia and the Pacific region have a record a gender gap of 32%, and 34 %; and South Asia with a gap of 34%. Most significantly, for the purpose of this research the Middle East scores a remaining gap of slightly less than 40%. It is estimated that the overall gender gap can be closed in 157 years in the Middle East and North Africa. The research indicates that economic gender equality would result in significant economic benefits (Forum, 2018).

The global gender gap index is measured in four dimensions: economic participation and opportunities, educational attainment, health, survival and political empowerment. Economic participation sub index, which is a significant indicator in the scope of this project, is defined in three main approaches: the participation gap, the remuneration gap and the advancement gap. Educational attainment is measured in by examining the gap men and women access to education through ratios of female to male in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, as well as female versus male literacy rates.

Female education is becoming more and more acceptable nowadays, however, education is not helping these women optimize their opportunities employment wise. For that, the level of education of women in SMR societies is not an adequate indicator of women's economic status. Research studies indicate that women are controlled in patriarchal societies because of the interconnection with the structure of their society. The previous report supports that patriarchy is strongest in rural, peasant and tribal communities.

The effects of this problem have led to a generation of female academics characterized by inability, and poor knowledge as executive managers at entry, mid and senior levels, as well as low power dead-end jobs.

According to the United Nations definitions, equality between women and men (gender equality): refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

In addition, Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age. (United Nations, no date). Also, Stereotypes: are characteristics imposed upon groups of people because of their race, nationality, and sexual orientation. These characteristics tend to be oversimplifications of the groups involved, and while some people truly do embody the traits of their stereotype, they are not necessarily representative of all people within that group. Stereotypes are not always accurate and even if positive, can be harmful. (Nittle, 2020).

The aim of this research to examine a situation analysis on female students at Arab International University, Syria, exploring factors affecting Syrian female students. In the next section, a description of the university profile will be provided. (Nittle, 2020).

2. Higher Education Environment in Syria

Before the war in Syria and between 2001 and 2010 private universities in Syria were growing and competing to win and take students. At 2011, a long-term crisis has torn Syria over the past eight years, which has created a devastating situation on a social, economic, environmental and political level including both private and public sectors. The devastating situation drove many individuals including students and academics to leave Syria seeking safer and better living conditions. Currently and after 9 years of war, destruction and devastation on human, social, economic and environmental levels the subject of equality and sustainable development is even more vital than previously, considering the economic background and context which characterizes Syria, particularly reflecting on the social and economic environment. Before 2011 Syrian Higher Education was going through a development phase, characterised by modernising teaching and research environments and knowledge transfer, accreditation with international and mainly EU partners. After 2011 and during the past nine years Syrian Higher Education is characterised with different challenges associated with its infrastructure, operational, human, technical, intellectual and social levels (Dalati and Alchach, 2018).

3. Literature Review

3.1 Gender Equality, Stereotype and Bias

Cultural misconceptions of both genders and generalizing certain characteristics to one gender is what we call stereotyping. Also prejudgment of men and women and their roles in a community is a way of gender bias. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNISCO) girls are the victims because of the large gaps that exist to learning achievements and continuing their education compared to the other gender. In spite of the improvement nowadays, more girls than boys still remain out of school - 16 million girls will never set foot in the classroom based on their studies – whereas women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills.

The main problem starts from childhood and primary school, as reported by United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019). These days more girls are in schools than ever before, however, they don't always have the same opportunities as boys, to accomplish and benefit from an education they choose. Too many girls and women are restrained because of biases, social norms, and expectation affecting the quality of education that they can receive and the subject they study.

The UNESCO's ground breaking report shows that only 35%of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) higher education students globally are women and the differences are observed within STEM disciplines. For instance, only 3% of female higher education students choose Information and Communication Technology (ICT) studies. This gender disproportion is frightening, mostly because STEM careers are often allude to as the jobs of the future, driving innovation, social wellbeing, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

For UNESCO gender equality is considered a global priority and is tightly linked to its efforts to enhance the rights of education and support the achievements of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Through the Education 2030 Framework for Action, SDG 4 aims to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and SDG 5 to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.' Also the Education 2030 agenda acknowledged that gender equality requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education.'

UNESCO (2019) indicates that poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women, are some of the many hurdles that stop women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education.

Women represent less than 30% of the world's researchers; and women journalists are more exposed to assault, threat or physical, verbal or digital attack in comparison with male counterparts. (UNESCO, 2019).

Emphasizing that education is a human right for all girls for that, UNESCO members have come together for the first time on this issue that concerns over the continuing negative

impact on the duration and quality of girls' education as a result of child early and forced marriage, and early and unintended pregnancy.

Child marriage and early pregnancy is a global concern, especially in areas like as Eastern and Southern Africa, where pregnancy rates range from 15 % in certain countries to over 25% - some of the highest in the world. It has a major impact on the lives of adolescents, especially girls, in terms of their health, social, economic and education outcomes. (UNISCO, 2019)

UNESCO is launching a digital campaign on the #GenderChallenges to shed some light on the achievements of the past 10+ years. As Gender Equality is a UNESCO's global priority and a necessary step to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, in March 2015, UNESCO Bangkok launched its new report – A Complex Formula. Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in Asia. Which wanders through the educational, psychosocial and labor market factors that may be influencing the participation of girls and women in STEM fields to answer three fundamental questions: Where do we stand? What led us here? Where to from here? And here they show us some facts about girls and women in STEM in Asia:

Women in STEM are impassioned and inspired, but too few of them take part in these fields. While women make up almost half the world population, globally only an estimated 30 percent of researchers in science, technology and innovation are female. In Asia, only three of 18 countries had an equal or above proportion that were female: The Philippines (52 percent), Thailand (51 percent) and Kazakhstan (50 percent) – according to the latest data from UNESCO's Institute for Statistics.

Statistics show that women in higher education lean toward life sciences than hard sciences. Girls tend to perform relatively better in science than mathematics, which may explain why they tend to opt for science-related STEM fields such as biology, chemistry or medicine, as opposed to math-oriented fields such as engineering, computer science and physics.

Researchers found in the following extract from a Grade 9 science textbook in Cambodia shows how male and female silhouettes are attributed to different functions of the central nervous system such as thinking, listening, seeing etc.

The decreased number of female role models in STEM at school and in the workplace reinforces disparities. Not only are there fewer female teachers in STEM-related subjects and as the level of education increases, the low participation of women working in STEM fields equates to less role models for girls. More female role models in STEM could help alleviate negative stereotypes and attract more girls and women into STEM fields. Based on 20 classes observed in Nepal for instance, nine out of ten teachers were male in math classes, and eight out of ten were male in science classes. (Salmon Aliénor, 2017).

This article concludes that women leadership style is not less effective than men's, however it does differ whereas men can learn and adopt women's leadership style and apply them

effectively. They also clarified that gender is not a criterion for effective leadership and that both genders can learn from one another. Studies show that women are more effective within the context of team-based, consensually driven organizational structures that are widespread in today's world. It is not a factual appraisal that women leadership style is less effective than men's but rather driven by socialization, to a certainly persistent comprehension.

3.2 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a very controversial subject it differs from one person to another based on their cultural background. In the Arab world it is somehow neglected in a way or another, however, it is definitely happening either in universities or outside universities. Both sexes are exposed to sexual harassment whilst numerous studies according to (Blakely et al., 1995; Cartar et al., 1996; Gutek et al., 1990; Wiener and Hurt, 2000) conclude that women are notably more likely to be subject to sexual harassment than men. (Gutek, Cohen and Konrad, 1990).

Sipe, Johnson and Fisher (2009) in their study the results they found were unexpected whereas the students perception on the matter of sexual harassment in the workplace were lower than reality, it shows that college students fail to comprehend that sexual harassment may affect their own careers and the career of women in business generally, and they are even more unaware of the ongoing prevalence of sexual harassment than expected.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) a federal US agency assess that "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or admission to an academic programme, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment status or academic standing, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance on the job or in the classroom, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or study environment.". Due to the different sensitivity levels of individuals they interpret the same behaviour in many different ways, for that it is hard to define a subtle form of sexual harassment (Kastl and Kleiner, 2001). Kastl and kliener also classified two types of sexual harassment in universities; between professors and students, as well as between the students themselves. They pointed that sexual harassment builds a hostile educational environment, which will affect their performance academically and socially, what complicates this issue is the fact that students may not see themselves as sexual harassers instead they see it as flirtation or cute however people who receive these behaviors get intimidated by them, moving to the professor to student type of sexual harassment it falls under the *quid pro quo* harassment because professors have the power and influence over the academic career of students, using threats or even suggestions of academic harm if the student refuses to become involved with the professor, moreover professors have the power to affect students' academic career, on the other hand some students may be willing to get involved in romantic relationships with a professor but the situation might change and if the student wants to end the relationship may fear from the professors reprisal if the romantic relationship does not continue. Thus from the students

point of view, the relationship could become a type of hostile environment case of sexual harassment if the student feels that her academic success depends on the continuation of the relationship

3. Research Problem

This research poses the following research question: **"How could Syrian higher education institutions enhance gender equality for Syrian female students?"** To answer the research question, a case study approach is employed. A case study methodology, also identified as "case history" is robust research methodology which examines various facets of a single organization, situation, event, personality in an in depth perspective at a phase of particular time (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

4. Methodology

Case studies are preferred as a method to address the "How" and "Why" questions, as the researcher has little control over events and when the aim is to focus on a phenomenon in practical real - life context (Yin, 2012). Case studies are appropriate for situations where the research is primary concerned with understanding rather than hypothesis testing (Eisenhardt, 1989). Case study methodology is applied when a researcher's objective is to examine a single organization and identify aspects associated with it" (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010). The selected target organization for this research study is a leading private university in Syria namely Arab International University (AIU).

In the scope of the case study, we designed a questionnaire to collect primary data and employed a non-probability sampling strategy. In this research, a combined approach is employed where we conducted a case study and we employed a questionnaire to collection primary data and explore the situation of female undergraduate students at AIU to exmine issues related to gender quality, gender education, stereotyping, sexual harassment and gender related training.

Sampling is the selection of some elements in a population, which could draw a conclusion about the entire population. A population element is the individual participant or object on which the measurement is taken, and it is the element of study. Despite that an element may be a person it can also be something else. A population is the number of elements in which we wish to make deductions of. A sample frame is the listing of all population elements from which the sample will be drawn. Probability sample is based on the concept of random selection controlled procedure that assures that each population element given a known nonzero chance of selection, this procedure is never haphazard. Nonprobability sampling is arbitrary and subjective, when we choose subjectively we usually do so with a pattern or a scheme in mind, where each member of the population does not have a known chance of being included. In this research, our method was convenience. Nonprobability samples that are unrestricted are called convenience samples; they are the least reliable

design but normally the cheapest and easiest to conduct where researchers or field workers have the freedom to choose whomever they find thus, the name "convenience".

As for the total number of students disaggregated by gender at AIU during year 2019, 2557 are male students, and 2274 are female students, with 4831. Female students account for 47%, whereas male students 53%.

The questionnaire design was based on development of mainly close- ended questions employing nominal, ordinal and interval scales. The response types employed in research questionnaires include rating, ranking and categorization scales. The questionnaire is designed taking into consideration the appropriate type of scale required to perform the analysis, type of response strategy required, type of communication approach required, and questionnaire layout. The questionnaire design examined classification questions (demographic), administrative questions, and topic questions.
We took into consideration faculties in AIU and selected a sample frame from faculties that have the highest percentage of females such including faculty of pharmacy, faculty of arts, and faculty of business administration. Data was collected at faculties of pharmacy, informatics engineering, architecture, civil engineering, fine arts, business administration, and Law. A paper questionnaire was distributed at the respective faculties during November 2019, as well an online questionnaire, which was collected during July 2019.

5. The Case of Arab International University

Arab International University (AIU) is a private Syrian university that was founded by an assembly of academic figures, businesspersons and professionals in the year 2005 as a privately owned university created under Presidential Decree as an institution of higher education, and an entity for boosting scientific potentials. The university includes a number of faculties in operation: pharmacy, informatics engineering, architecture, civil engineering, fine arts, business administration, and Law. It got the approval from the ministry of Higher Education in Nov 2016 to establish faculty of Dentistry. AIU has also applied up-to-date programs that keep pace with the requirements of scientific progress to be in line with requirements of the labour market and social needs. It encompasses several classrooms and science labs, Auditoriums, offices for teaching and administrative staff, general facilities and services, as well as several facilities for sports have been also made available according to the standards set by the Ministry of Higher Education and scientific accreditation rules. AIU has also attracted a selected group of competent professors in all specialized scientific fields. The education process is being continually renewed and rejuvenated. AIU offers Bachelor Degrees in the various disciplines available in its faculties, whose certificates, study plans and diverse systems are recognized by the Board of Higher Education at the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education. AIU graduates are treated like any other public university graduates, and are allowed to follow their post-graduate studies whether in public universities, or any other Arab and foreign universities. As a Private institution of higher education and academic research, Arab International

University strives to be a centre of excellence that conforms to international standards in education and research.

AIU students' population is increasing with the improved political and security conditions in Syria, and it aims to provide a platform for conveying knowledge, values and traditions in the spirit of "good neighbourliness" between Arab countries and Europe, America and all other parts of the world. AIU administration and academics are modelled on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and its curriculum balances knowledge, skills, and competencies and emphasizes the creative use of all. AIU hope is to produce graduates of high competencies, performance and conscience, developing a distinct identity among its professors and students.

At Arab International University, Syria, female academics are adequately presented at department and faculty levels. However, female representation at university board is very marginal. There is only 1 female director, at university board. The representation of women in academic leadership positions is minimal. There are no female deans at AIU. There are female vice-deans and heads of academic departments. Nevertheless, the representation is not adequate. Even though if female representation improves, more work and planning is needed to be achieved to make their impact and existence significant.

6. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive data analysis comprises of female students demographic profile, gender education and inspiration, sexual harassment and training needs for female students at AIU.

6.1 Female Students Demographic Profile

The sample study is distributed across seven faculties operating at Arab International University, where 38.8 % belong to faculty of business administration, 3.1% information Technology, 1.0% civil engineering, 2.0% faculty of Law, 6.1% from architecture, 31.6% from faculty of pharmacy and 17.3 % from Fine Arts. 35.7% of the sample are in the age category less than 20, and 64.3% are between 20 and 25 years. Female students were distributed across years of study where 6.4% are fifth year. 19.1 % are fourth year, 21.3 % are third year, 18.1% are second year and 35.1% are first year. Table 1 presents data on demographical data for female students.

Table 1 Demographical Data for Female students (n= 98)

Faculty	Frequency	Percent %
Faculty of Business Administration	38	38.8
Faculty of Pharmacy	31	31.6
Faculty of Information Technology	3	3.1
Faculty of Civil Engineering	1	1.0
Faculty of Law	2	2.0
Faculty of Architecture	6	6.1
Faculty of Fine Arts	17	17.3
Total	98	100%
Age Categories	**Frequency**	**Percent %**
Less than 20	35	35.7
20 years – 25 years	63	64.3
Total	98	100%
Year of Study	**Frequency**	**Percent %**
First year	33	35.1
Second year	17	18.1
Third year	20	21.3
Fourth year	18	19.1
Fifth year	6	6.4
Total	94	100%

6.2 Gender Education and Inspiration

The Individual level analysis for female students at Arab International University investigated gender education and the way female students perceived gender roles. The investigation of gender education on AIU prevails minimal results, where 78% indicated the lack of gender related courses, whereas 22% responded otherwise, indicating the lack of existence of courses on gender equality, female entrepreneurship, and empowerment training. Figure 1 illustrates data on classes supporting female students.
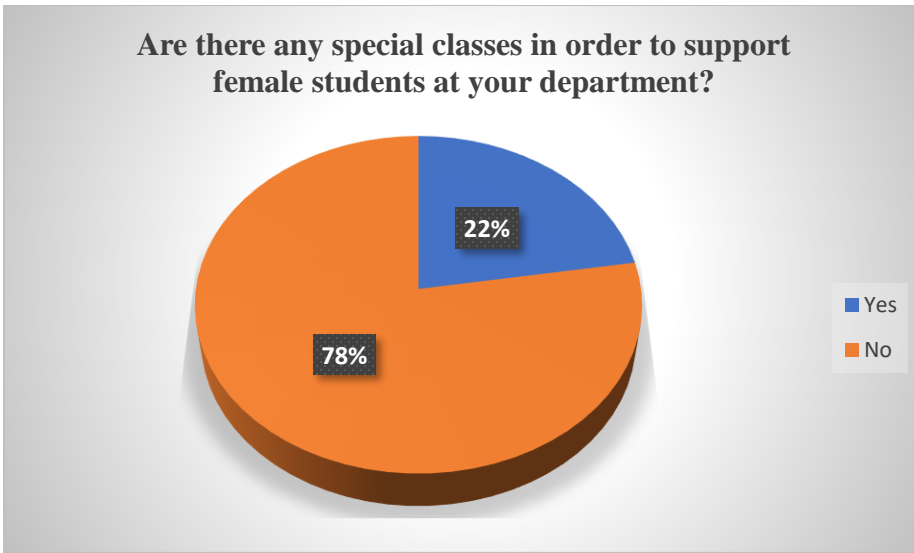
Figure 1 Special Classes to support female students

Examining female students' preferences of gender-related courses 56% responded positively that they are interested in studying this topic, whereas 44% indicated the opposite. Figure 2 illustrates female students' interest in learning courses focusing on gender related issues.
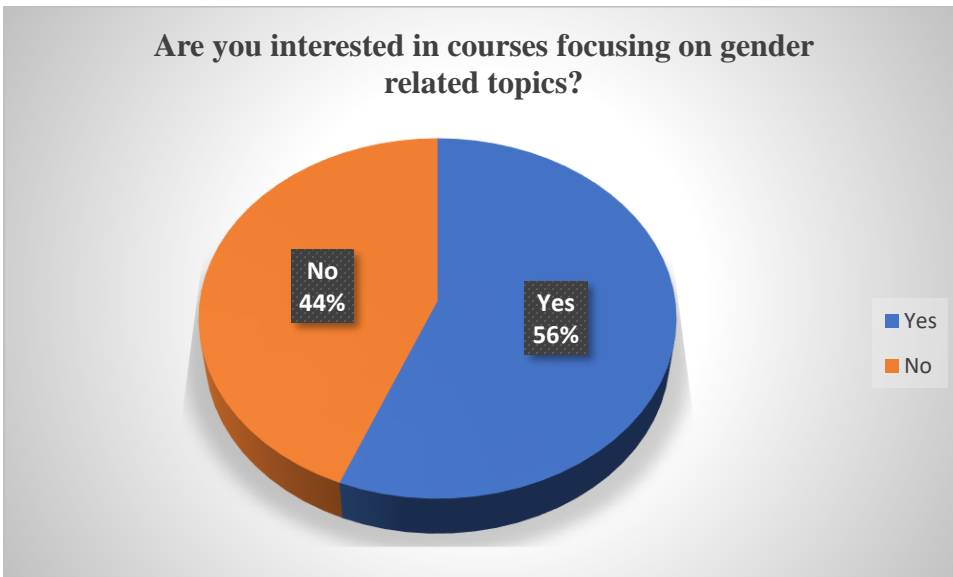

Figure 2 Female students' interest in gender related courses

Examining female students' preferences for gender – oriented courses, 29.6% emphasised Social Justice as an interesting course of study, whereas 27.6% identified gender equality; 13.3% selected empowering training, 13.3% female entrepreneurship, and 3.1% introduction to gender studies. Figure 3 presents data types of courses of interest for female students in the scope of gender topics.
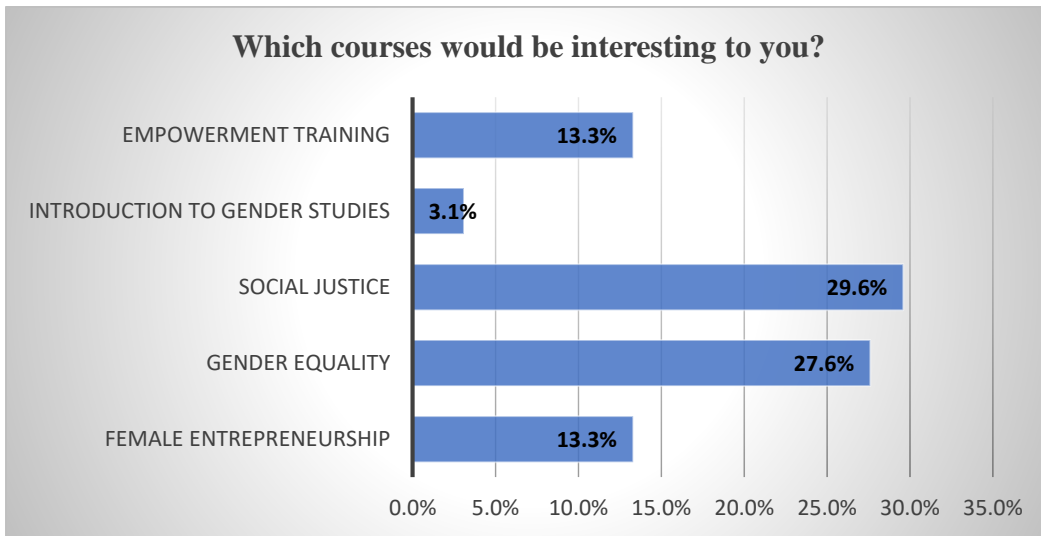
Which courses would be interesting to you?

EMPOWERMENT TRAINING — 13.3%
INTRODUCTION TO GENDER STUDIES — 3.1%
SOCIAL JUSTICE — 29.6%
GENDER EQUALITY — 27.6%
FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP — 13.3%

(Axis: 0.0% 5.0% 10.0% 15.0% 20.0% 25.0% 30.0% 35.0%)

Figure 3 Courses teaching Gender related topics

The analysis examined female students' perception of female role models. Descriptive analysis illustrates that 83% of female students have encountered a female academic or professional, whom they considered as a role model, compared to 17 % indicated the opposite. Figure 4 illustrates the ratio female role models.
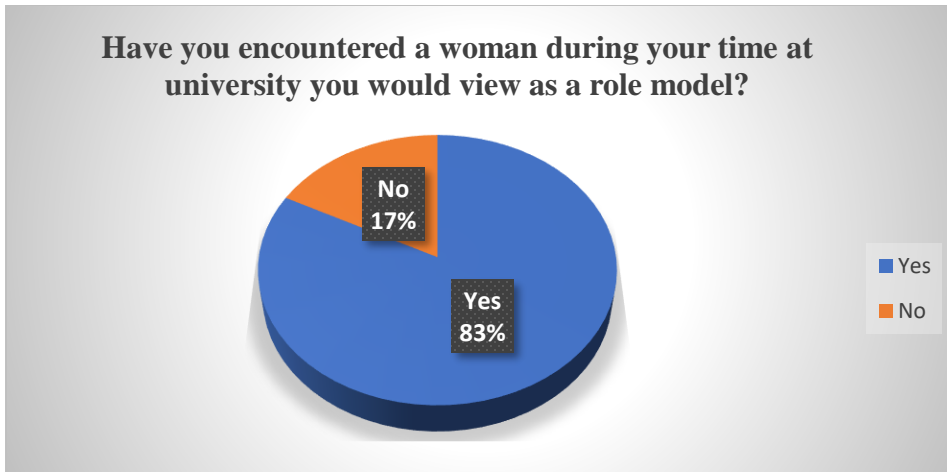
Figure 4 Female students' perception of Female academic role models

Examining female student's motives and causes which made this role mode inspiring, 41.8% indicated the reason in due to expertise in academic field, whereas, 43.9% identified confidence, 37.8% indicated charisma, whereas 28.6% selected ability to uplift her students. 27.6% indicated the ability to inspire, whereas 18.4% identified independence, 15.3 % for resilience, and only 8.2% reported assertiveness as a characteristic of the female role model. Figure 5 presents percentages characteristics associated with female students' perception of female role models.
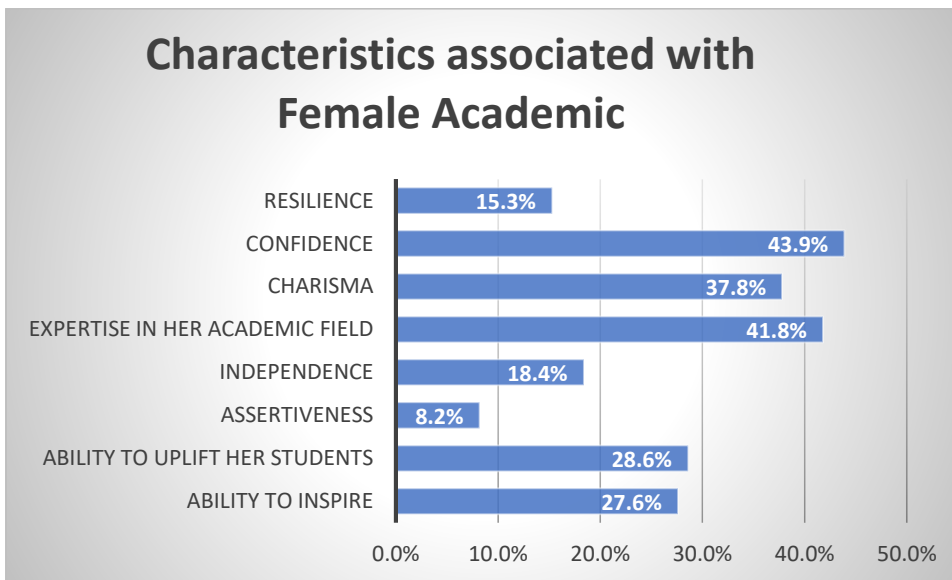

Figure 5 Characteristics associated with Female Role Model

The same examination of female students' perception of characteristics associated with female role models, signifies similar results, where 29.5% of ranked expertise in the academic field as the first fact of importance. Confidence was ranked second of importance, where 30.2% identified it as second of importance, and 18.9 % has ranked ability to inspire as their third choice. Table 2 illustrates ranking choices on characteristics of female role model ranked by importance.

Table 2 Characteristics for Female Role Model Ranked by importance

Characteristics for Female Role Model	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eight	Total
1. Ability to inspire	13.7%	14.7%	18.9%	20.0%	13.7%	9.5%	5.3%	4.2%	100%
2. Ability to uplift her students	6.3%	8.4%	14.7%	24.2%	17.9%	11.6%	4.2%	12.6%	100%
3. Assertiveness	2.1%	4.2%	12.6%	10.5%	17.9%	12.6%	22.1%	17.9%	100%
4. Independence	8.4%	7.4%	6.3%	12.6%	6.3%	13.7%	20.0%	25.3%	100%
5. Expertise in her academic field	29.5%	15.8%	15.8%	3.2%	13.7%	10.5%	7.4%	4.2%	100%
6. Charisma	17.9%	15.8%	14.7%	13.7%	6.3%	14.7%	9.5%	7.4%	100%
7. Confidence	21.9%	30.2%	12.5%	4.2%	11.5%	10.4%	8.3%	1.0%	100%
8. Resilience	2.1%	2.1%	4.2%	11.6%	12.6%	16.8%	23.2%	27.4%	100%

6.3 Sexual Harassment at institution

The examination of sexual harassment at the institutional level was investigated at the female students' sample. Descriptive analysis indicates that greater percentages are assigned for the choice of neither observed nor experienced. Percentages for neither observed nor experienced. In comparison, 8.2% of the sample indicated that they have observed and experienced sexual behaviour as teasing, remarks, or questions, 32% observed this type of behaviour, whereas 57.7% neither observed, nor experienced this behaviour. Sexual behaviour, as sexual letters, phone calls or emails were examined, as 6.2% indicate they have observed and experienced, 13.4% observed this type of behaviour, 1% experienced, whereas 79.4% neither observed, nor experienced this. Table 3 illustrates data on sexual harassment among the female students' sample.

Table 3 Sexual Harassment at Institution

Sexual Harassment at Institution	Experienced	Observed	Observed and experienced	Neither	Total
Sexual/sexist teasing, jokes, remarks or questions	2.1%	32%	8.2%	57.7%	100%
Pressure for dating	3.1%	11.3%	5 %	80.4%	100%
Sexual/sexist letters, phone calls, emails	1 %	13.4%	6.2%	79.4%	100%
Leaning over, cornering, pinching, touching, unwanted physical contact	4.2%	22.9%	6.3%	66.7%	100%
Pressure for sexual favours	1%	3.1%	2.1%	93.8%	100%
Stalking	1%	20.6%	10.3%	68%	100%
Physical/sexual assault	0%	6.2%	1%	92.8%	100%

When asked if they sought advice or support from friends, academic or administrative staff, 34.7% indicated friends, 3.1% professors, 3.1% student representative, while zero response is assigned to seeking assistance from HR or specialist expert. This is interesting results regarding no response assigned to HR staff, which indicates that careful attention, should be given to further HR active role in providing different kinds of support to students, particularly, female students. This also indicates lack of this expertise at the institution. The examination of their attitudes and responses while they were reporting for this kind of behaviour, indicates that 15.3% felt safe while reporting; 3.1% indicated the behaviour decreased, 11.2% indicated the behaviour stopped, 8.2% believe it made no difference, while 18.4% indicated they are glad because they reported, and 12.2% felt supported while reporting.

For those of them who did not report, when asked about the potential causes why they did not, 3.1% were afraid, 5.1% did not feel comfortable, 12.2 % believed reporting would not change the situation, and 3.1% did not where to go, 7.1% they did not think it was important enough to report while 6.1% felt ashamed to seek advice.

The examination of the types of support female students wished for, 29.6% indicated psychological support, 6.1% emotional support, 11.2 % legal support, and 26.5% is assigned for clear actions taken by the institution. The interpretation of clear actions in this case would be in the form of policies, actions, and rules regarding this behaviour. Figure 6 presents types of support to be provided by AIU.
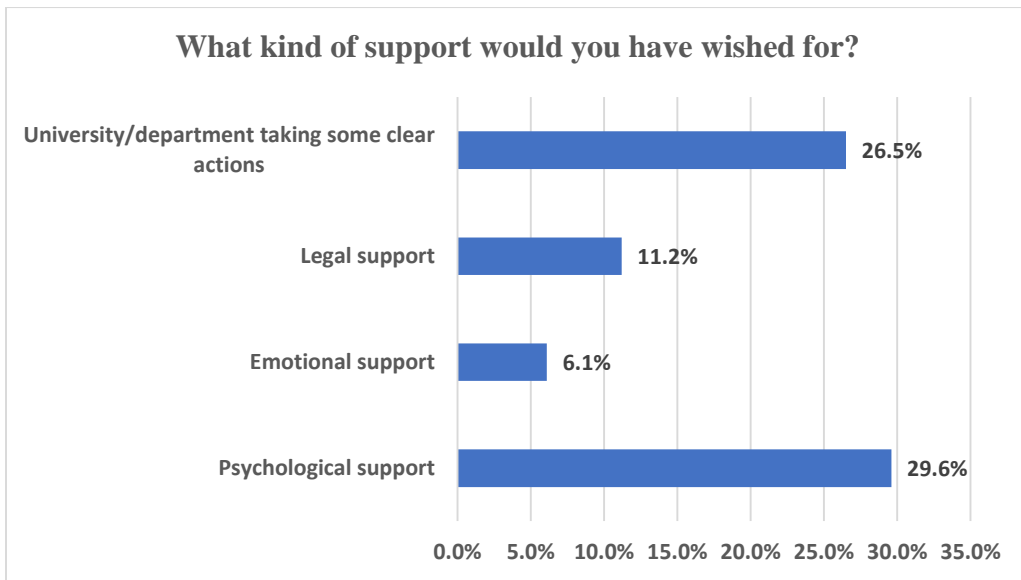
Figure 6 Types of Support to be provided by the university

The examination of stereo types, prejudices, and social expectation is examined where data analysis provided interesting results. Examining female students' perception of common stereotypes and social expectations, 50% indicated that they were exposed to stereotypes as questioning their ability to perform effectively and achieve superior grades, 14.3% are exposed to stereotypes as questioning their ability to solve problems related to course studies. 22.4 % believe their abilities to make decisions is questioned, whereas 20.4% perceive that their abilities to lead a group of students is questioned.

When asked about the potential factors / persons who could be confronting them, 16.3% indicated professors, 20.4% pointed male students, 21.4% female students, and 17.3% family. Figure 7 illustrates data on confrontational factors perceived by female students.
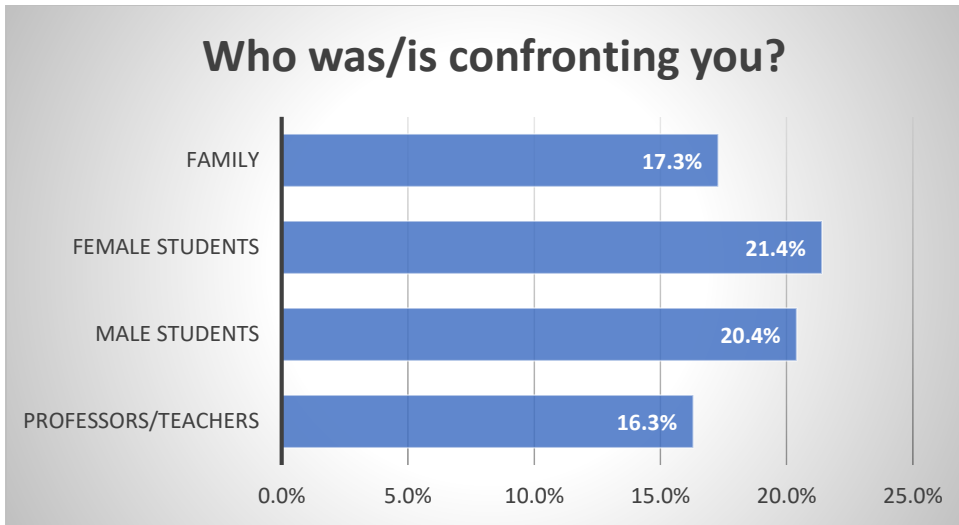
Figure 7 Confrontational factors for female students

Examining the effect of these negative confrontational barriers, 61.2% indicated they did not care, 5.1% indicated it made them question their decisions, and 27.6% responded it diminished their self-confidence. In the context of classroom situations, when female students were asked if they have ever felt discriminated because of their gender, 63.3% responded no, whereas 33.7% responded yes. The examination of kind of discrimination female students experienced illustrated that 15.3 % were not taken seriously, 3.1% were unfairly graded, 8.2% responded that opportunities were given to male students, and 9.2% indicated they were subject to disrespectful and degrading comments.

6.4 Training Topics
The examination of training areas focusing on female students investigated a myriad of skills including soft, technical, digital, problem solving and leadership skills. Descriptive data analysis illustrates that 78% of female students sample responded negatively, that they were not provided with the skills necessary in order to pursue a career in academia, whereas 22% responded positively, that they were provided with all skills necessary. Figure 8 illustrates female responses on provision of skills necessary for a career in academia provided by AIU.
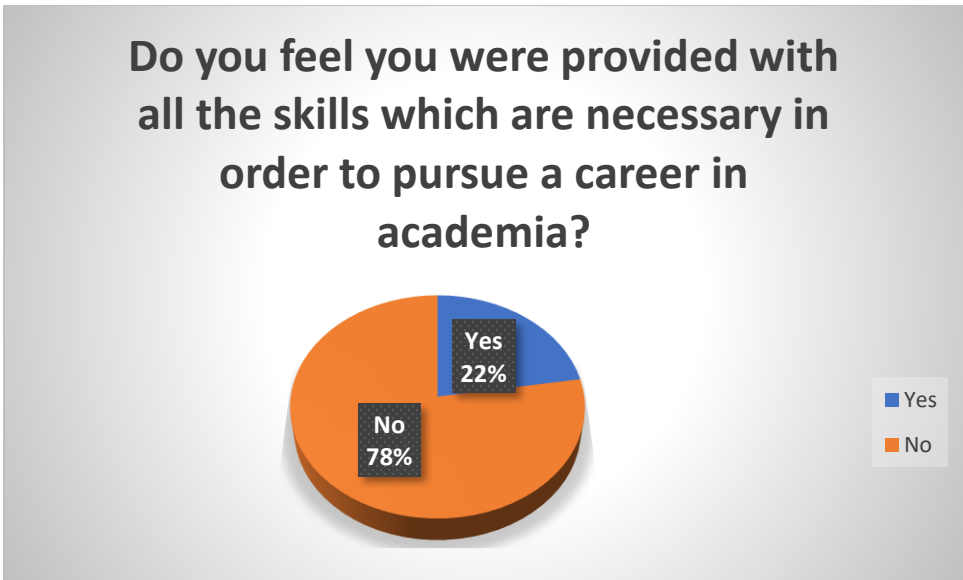
Figure 8 Skills for female students for career in academia

The examination of types of skills needed and lacking by female students illustrates the need for following skills. 30.6% of the sample identified lack for soft and technical skills, 26.5% for leadership skills, 17.3% for problem solving skills, and 7.1% identified digital skills. Figure 8 illustrates data on types of skills needed by female undergraduate student.
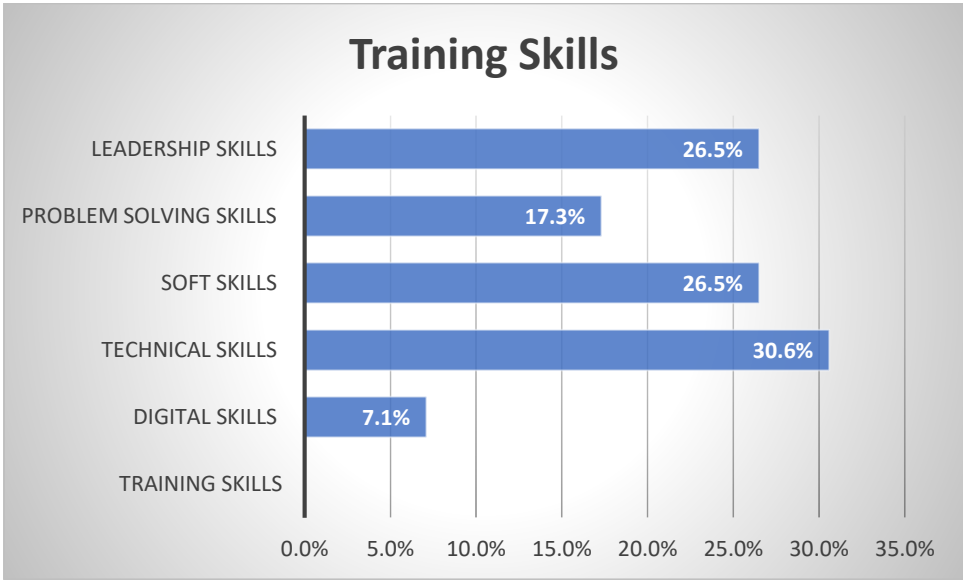

Figure 9 Training for female students

Another approach investigating training areas employed a ranking scale question, where female students were asked to rank the courses by strength of importance. The analysis illustrates that 44.3% ranked self- empowerment as their first choice, emphasizing the need and significance for this training. Second rank was assigned to developing management

and leadership skills where 22.8% ranked it as their second choice. Third rank of importance and magnitude was assigned to networking skills, where 30.4% ranked it as their third choice. The analysis emphasizes the need for empowerment training, which is at the heart of this project and its scope and objectives. Table 4 presents ranking choices on training courses for female students.

Table 4 Training Courses

Training Courses	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Total
1. Introduction to Gender Studies	7.9%	19.7%	11.8%	17.1%	31.6%	9.2%	2.6%	100%
2. Self-empowerment	44.3%	20.3%	8.9%	20.3%	6.3%	0%	0%	100%
3. Learn how to network	13.9%	16.5%	30.4%	10.1%	15.2%	13.9%	0%	100%
4. Improving digital skills	9.1%	18.2%	15.6%	24.7%	9.1%	23.4%	0%	100%
5. Developing management and leadership skills	25.3%	22.8%	22.8%	12.7%	8.9%	7.6%	0%	100%
6. Learn how to integrate gender perspectives into my research	1.3%	3.9%	11.7%	15.6%	24.7%	42.9%	0%	100%

7. Discussion and Recommendation

Regarding the courses associated with gender issues, we see that more than half of the percentage 56% of female students say that they are interested in them. Therefore, the need for such courses is significant. In contrast, the answer of 44% of the female students was "not interested" which cannot be underrated, moreover, spreading awareness is a priority in educational environments.

In our questionnaire, we offered four course's outlines, and got the following varied percentages: 1) social justice which got 29.6%, 2) gender equality that got 27.6%, 3/4) female empowerment and female entrepreneurship got the same percentage, which is 13.3%. The role of the university here is to adopt pedagogical curricula in addition to the educational curricula to disseminate this type of culture.

Moving on to the following question we asked female students if they have encountered any academic female role models, the results indicated a very positive perception 83% answered yes. AIU has many competencies in this field and training these competencies is an advantage for both students and the university.

In the case of sexual harassment, we handed out questionnaires to different segments in the university from open to conservative environments and the resulted assured the practice of sexual harassment.

When asking female students about who is confronting them, the results were shocking. Reflecting a kind of stereotyping, whereas female counterparts took the highest percentage in intimidating and standing in the way of each other.

8. Recommendations:

In order to achieve some progress regarding gender issues in AIU they need to take action such as placing security cameras all around campus in order to document any harassment incident. They can also establish courses related to all gender issues available to all stakeholders in AIU, and developing an appropriate pedagogical curriculum that supports all gender issues. In addition, promote gender awareness across all students (males and females) through role models. Another idea that they can benefit from is to incorporate a department for Psychological support offered to all stakeholders in AIU. According to the percentage we got when asking if they would prefer any sort of support 29.6% answered "psychological support". Despite the policies the university applies, however, they need to take a further steps in that matter to meet the needs of students that are being harassed. According to the results in training courses, we see that there is 30.6% need for technical skills, 26.5% for soft skills and leadership skills, 17.3% for problem solving skills and 7.1% for digital skills in training. Consequently, they should work to enhance the training and development department in AIU for all stakeholders and we recommend that they establish training curricula in addition to the academic curricula.

9. Limitation

The first research limitation is associated with sampling strategy, which follows a non-probability sampling technique. A future study will investigate better sampling strategies for secure representative samples. As representative sampling techniques enables researcher to perform statistical techniques and levels of analysis.

10. Conclusion

To sum it all up, we recognize that AIU has great competencies and thus, driving them in the right direction, they could spread awareness regarding gender equality and other gender issues, fight against sexual harassment, and influence students by example. From our research, we concluded that students in AIU are able and willing to participate in such progress, and that providing them with a pedagogical curriculum in addition to the educational curricula will benefit them significantly. We can also see that social norms and cultural backgrounds affect the way people think and how they behave. In the near future, AIU will have definitely achieved at least some improvements concerning gender issues.

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