

MS Research Thesis

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF FEMALE
ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL**



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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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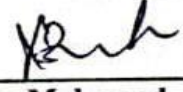
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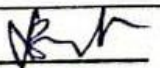
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

It is hereby declared that author of the study has completed the entire requirement for submitting this research work in partial fulfillment for the degree of MS **Educational Leadership and Management**. This thesis is in its present form is the original work of the author except those which are acknowledged in the text. The material included in the thesis has not been submitted wholly or partially for award of any other academic certification than for which it is being presented.

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

The thesis titled “CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF FEMALE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL” submitted by Ms. Ayesha Ibraheemi Regd. No. 19-FOE/MSEDU/S23 is partial fulfillment of MS degree in Educational Leadership and Management has been completed under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied with the quality of student's research work and allow her to submit this for further process as per IIUI rules and regulations.

Dr. Azhar Mahmood

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this research project first and foremost, to the Almighty ALLAH for the Supremacy and to the Redeemer of my Soul. I also dedicate this to my husband and to my family whose love for me knew no bounds and, who taught me the value of hard work and have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done. Thank you for your efforts and support for me. ALLAH's blessings and your support gives me the strength to weather any storm that comes my way.

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Abstract

The research explores the challenges and prospects of female academic leadership at the university level within the context of Pakistani universities. Despite the increasing number of women entering academia, their progression into leadership positions remains limited due to a combination of gender biases, cultural norms, and institutional challenges. The objectives of the study were to explore the specific challenges faced by female leaders in achieving and maintaining leadership positions in Pakistani universities, identify the influence of gender biases, cultural norms, and institutional practices on the female academic leadership, find out the prospects that can facilitate the career advancement of female academics into leadership positions and investigate the availability and effectiveness of support mechanisms such as mentorship programs, leadership training, and family-friendly environment. Using a mixed methods approach, this research aims to specify challenges and challenges faced by female leaders and to find out the prospects and opportunities that can facilitate their career progression. The population of 140 female participants was selected from 2 faculty of 2 public universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi (International Islamic University Islamabad (Female Campus), and Rawalpindi Women University). Data collection was done in 3 steps. At first the qualitative data were collected through interviews from HODs. Secondly on the basis of qualitative data quantitative instrument was generated. Lastly the quantitative data were collected through close-ended questionnaires. The study employed thematic analysis technique for qualitative data and descriptive statistics (percentages and mean scores) for quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. The key findings of the study are female academic leaders in Pakistan face complex and interconnected challenges rooted in organizational inefficiencies, societal expectations, and limited access to support systems, which collectively hinder their career progression and personal well-being. Effective mentorship, accessible leadership training, and family-friendly institutional policies are essential prospects that can significantly enhance the leadership journey, confidence, and success of women in higher education. To improve workplace infrastructure and promote gender sensitivity to reduce barriers for female academic leaders, and expanding mentorship, training programs, and family-friendly policies to support women's leadership growth would be recommended. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the academic literature on gender disparities

in higher education, provide recommendations for university administrators and policymakers, and advocate for institutional changes that support female leadership. By addressing the identified challenges and promoting best practices, this research seeks to empower female academics and enhance gender equality in university leadership positions in Pakistan.

Key Words: Challenges, Prospects, Female, Academic Leadership, Higher Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in academic leadership has gained increasing attention in recent years, as higher education institutions around the world strive for inclusivity, equity, and diversity in governance and decision-making (O'Connor, 2020). In the context of Pakistani higher education, the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions such as deans, department heads, and vice-chancellors reflects broader systemic, cultural, and institutional barriers. These include gender biases, rigid cultural norms, organizational inefficiencies, and the challenges of balancing personal and professional responsibilities. At the same time, there are promising prospects and opportunities, such as supportive mentorship, leadership development programs, and evolving institutional policies that can empower women to rise into leadership positions.

The purpose of this research is to provide insights that can inform practices, ultimately creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Findings can be used to advocate for policy change, targeted interventions, and create supportive environments that enable women to thrive in academic leadership roles. By highlighting the experiences and challenges of female educational leaders in Pakistani universities that are organizational, personal, work-life, socio-cultural, economical and gender discrimination, this study can contribute to greater efforts to promote gender equality in higher education.

1.1 Background and the Context of the Study

Gender inclusion in educational leadership has become a growing concern worldwide, aiming to address the gender gap in leadership roles in academic institutions. While universities are striving for more diverse and equitable environments, the development of gender-inclusive educational leadership has emerged as a research and practice priority. This introduction provides an overview of the importance of gender inclusion in educational leadership and focuses on the need to find ways to advance women in leadership positions in higher education. Gender inclusion in educational leadership means creating an environment in which individuals of both genders have

equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and develop in leadership roles in academic settings. Research shows that leadership teams diversity with equal gender representation improves decision making, innovative problem solving, and organizational improvement performance (Byrne, 2019). However, despite advances in women's education and labor force participation, women remain underrepresented in senior positions in higher education worldwide.

Gender inequality in leadership roles in education is an issue of global importance. Despite progress in promoting gender equality, women remain underrepresented in senior academic positions. Research shows that although women make up a large proportion of the academic workforce, they are disproportionately represented in leadership roles such as deans, department heads and vice chancellors (Morley, 2013; Blackmore, 2014). This lack of engagement is not only a social justice issue but also a serious loss of talent and ideas that could drive the growth and innovation of learning institutions.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the global higher education landscape shows a persistent gender gap in leadership with many countries having few senior academic positions or leadership roles about women having the same or better academic credentials and experience when compared to their male counterparts (UNESCO, 2020). This trend is evident in both developed and developing countries, underscoring the widening gender inequality in education.

Several studies have documented the challenges women face in climbing the academic ladder. These include structural challenges such as gender bias in recruitment and development processes, cultural norms that denigrate women's contributions, and organizational practices that do not support work-life balance (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2014). In addition, women often face implicit biases and stereotypes that question their ability to lead, further hindering their professional development (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Higher education in Pakistan reflects a broad set of social values, which are heavily influenced by patriarchal values and traditions. These cultural and social norms often prioritize women's roles as caretakers and domestic workers, creating additional

challenges to their professional development (Shaukat et al., 2014; Shah, 2015). Pakistani society, characterized by traditional gender roles, often prevents women from participating in public and professional jobs, including education. Women often expect family responsibilities to take precedence over their careers, limiting their accessibility and opportunities for professional advancement.

The educational system and organizational practices in Pakistani universities contribute to the limited advancement of women in leadership roles. Factors such as gender bias in recruitment and tenure processes, lack of mentoring opportunities, and inadequate support for work-life balance are common issues (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). These challenges are exacerbated by a lack of effective policies aimed at promoting gender equality and a supportive organizational culture that values diversity and inclusion.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, women's participation in the labor force is much lower than that of men, and this gap extends to education. Although women are increasingly entering education as teachers, their progress in leadership roles is still pending very few (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2018). This trend is evident across disciplines and universities, reflecting the systemic issues in promoting gender equality in higher education.

An examination of institutional policies and practices in these universities reveals several areas that warrant attention. For example, although some universities have established gender committees and introduced gender equality policies, the implementation and effectiveness of these measures vary widely (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2019). In addition, detailed data and research on the experiences of female academic leaders are needed to inform policies and practices.

Several challenges prevent women from advancing into school leadership roles in Pakistan. These challenges can be categorized into systemic, cultural, and personal factors. Women often face gender bias in recruitment and tenure policies. Research has shown that women are less likely to be considered for leadership roles and tend to have higher perceptions than their male counterparts (Shaukat et al., 2014). These biases can be implicit and explicit, affecting women's opportunities for career advancement.

Access to mentoring and networking opportunities is critical to career advancement. However, women in Pakistani education often have limited access to mentors and professional networks, which may hinder their career advancement (Shah, 2015). Mentoring programs provide guidance, support and opportunities for women to overcome the challenges of academic careers to develop their leadership skills. Balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments is a major challenge for many women. This issue is further compounded by the lack of family friendly policies and weak administrative structures in academic institutions (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Women often struggle to manage the dual burden of work and domestic responsibilities, which can limit their availability and desire for leadership roles. Traditional gender roles and social expectations impose additional burdens on women, limiting their opportunities for career advancement. Women often expect family responsibilities to take precedence over their careers, which may hinder their career advancement (Shaukat et al., 2014). These social norms are deeply ingrained and can be difficult to change. Organizational culture in academic institutions can also pose challenges for women. Organizations that lack diversity and inclusion or have a male-dominated culture can create an unhealthy environment for female students (Blackmore, 2014). Changing the culture of the institution requires a concerted effort to promote gender equality and create a supportive environment for all employees.

Women often struggle with self-perception and confidence issues, which can affect their desire to pursue leadership roles. Research has shown that compared to men, women underestimate their abilities and hesitate to apply for leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). To overcome these personal obstacles, give women the support and encouragement they need to build confidence and leadership skills. Despite the challenges, there are possibilities and opportunities to promote female academic leadership in Pakistan. Identifying and addressing challenges to women's advancement can help create an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Efforts to change social institutions and cultural norms are necessary to advance gender equality in education. This includes challenging traditional gender roles and promoting the value of diversity and inclusion. Universities can play an important role in this regard by raising awareness of gender equality issues and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion. This research is important not only to fill a gap in the literature,

but also the potential to influence positive change in academic institutions. By identifying challenges and opportunities for female academic leadership, this study can contribute to the development of strategies to support the advancement of women and ensure their representation at the highest levels of academic governance.

The under-representation of women in academic leadership positions in Pakistani universities is a major issue, highlighting widespread systemic challenges and biases. Despite the increasing number of women entering education, their progression into senior leadership roles is limited. This disparity is deeply rooted in the prevailing patriarchal values and traditional gender roles in Pakistani society, which often force women to prioritize family obligation over career motives, confining them to their careers limits development opportunities Lack of supportive policies for work-life balance, coupled with lack of opportunities to mentoring and networking opportunities exacerbate these challenges These policy issues reflect global development in terms of differences a there is a gender gap in academic leadership, where women continue to be underrepresented despite their large presence in academia. Understanding these multifaceted challenges is essential to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

There is also a need to establish an inclusive and equitable sector of higher education in Pakistan and address the prospects for women academic leadership. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the constraints and opportunities available to women in academic leadership roles, thereby contributing to the development of strategies to support their development and representation in senior positions. By promoting an inclusive learning environment, we can harness the full range of academic potential of women to contribute to and advance gender equality.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women working in universities are still not seen often in top leadership positions, especially in countries like Pakistan. Even though more women are becoming part of higher education, many face problems when trying to move into roles such as heads of departments, deans, or vice-chancellors. These problems include unfair rules at work, pressure from society, and difficulty balancing home and work life. Although

some steps have been taken to support women, there is still not enough understanding of what truly helps or blocks their progress.

Further, this study aims to explore the specific challenges faced by women teachers in Pakistan and the possibilities that can help them grow as leaders in universities, thus contributing to the wider discourse on gender and leadership in higher education.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i Explore the specific challenges faced by female leaders in achieving and maintaining leadership positions in Pakistani universities
- ii Identify the influence of gender biases, cultural norms, and institutional practices on female academic leadership
- iii Find out the prospects that can facilitate the career advancement of female academics into leadership positions
- iv Investigate the availability and effectiveness of support mechanisms such as mentorship programs, leadership training, and family-friendly environment

1.4 Research Questions

RQ.1 What are the key challenges faced by female academics in Pakistani universities in terms of career advancement and leadership roles?

RQ.2 How do gender biases, institutional practices, and cultural norms impact women's progression into academic leadership positions?

RQ.3 What are the prospects that can support the advancement of female academic leaders in Pakistani universities?

RQ.4 How do mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, and supportive policies contribute to promoting gender equality in academic leadership?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is important for universities, society, and education because it looks at why there are so few women in leadership roles at Pakistani universities. It aims to help university leaders, female teachers, and students understand the problems women

face and how to create fairer and more supportive environments. For university leaders, the study gives practical advice on how to influence and built supportive relationship that raise gender equality, leadership training, and work-life balance. For female academics, it highlights their challenges and opportunities, giving them a stronger voice and helping them find ways to grow as leaders through mentoring and support. For students and the university community, having more women in leadership creates a more inclusive and diverse space, which can improve learning, creativity, and fairness. Overall, the study fills a gap in research by focusing on women leaders in Pakistan's universities and add to global discussions about gender equality in education leadership.

1.6 Delimitations

The study was delimited to:

1. International Islamic University Islamabad (Female Campus).
2. Rawalpindi Women University

1.7 Operational Definitions

1.7.1 Female Academic Leadership

Women hold positions of power and decision-making in academic institutions, such as deans, department heads, vice-chancellors and teachers.

1.7.2 Challenges

Factors impeding women teachers' professional development, include cultural, social, organizational and personal challenges.

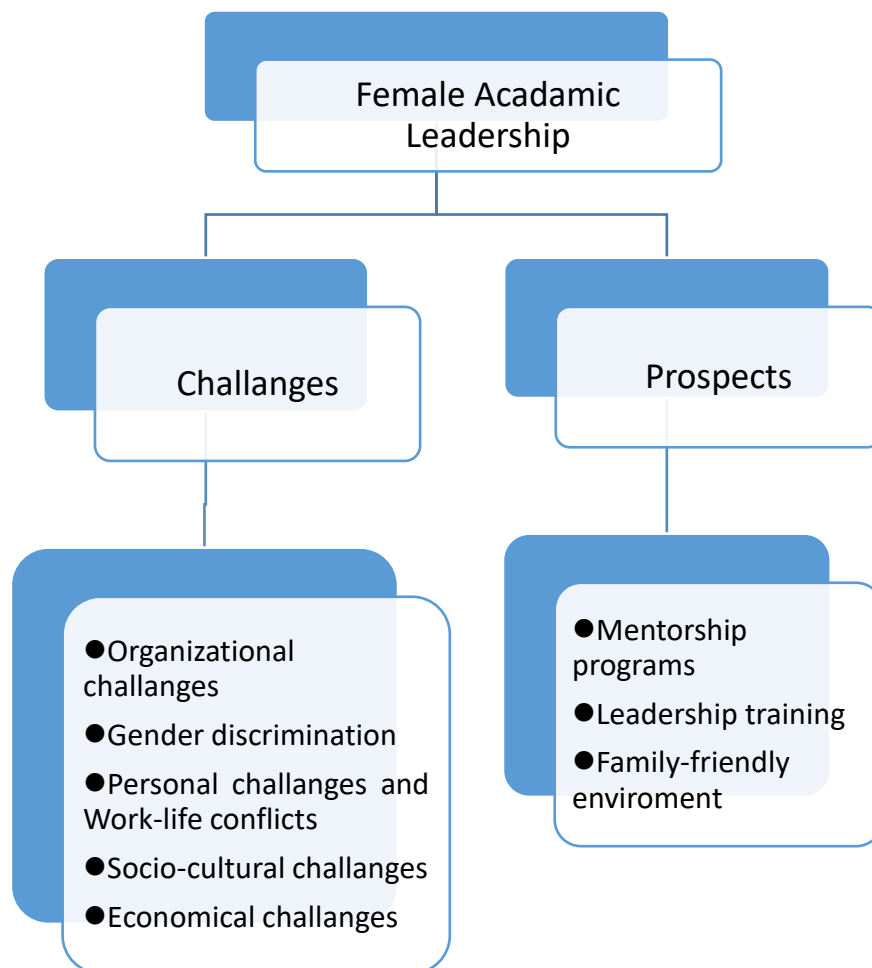
1.7.3 Prospects

Opportunities and positive factors contributing to the career advancement of women educational leaders.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Figure: 1.1

Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework outlines the key factors influencing female academic leadership in Pakistani universities, divided into two main domains: challenges and prospects. The challenges include organizational issues, gender discrimination, personal and work-life conflicts, socio-cultural barriers, and economic constraints, all of which collectively hinder women's advancement in leadership roles (Alsubhi et al., 2018). On the other hand, the prospects such as effective mentorship programs, leadership training, and family-friendly work environments serve as vital enablers that support women in overcoming these barriers (Ashiq et al., 2021). This framework

provides a structured approach to examining both the obstacles and opportunities that shape female academic leadership.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this study delves into the multifaceted challenges and promising prospects confronting female academic leaders within Pakistani universities. Aspiring to uncover the intricate dynamics of gender disparity in leadership roles, this review synthesizes existing research and scholarly discourse. It explores multiple challenges that impede women's progression into and within leadership positions. Moreover, it examines the potential impact of prospects available as pivotal factors in enhancing career advancement opportunities for female academics. By critically analyzing pertinent literature, this review aims to inform comprehensive insights into the current landscape, contributing to strategies for fostering gender equity and inclusive leadership practices in higher education contexts.

2.1 Global Perspectives on Female Academic Leadership

The issue of female academic leadership resonates globally because it mirrors a wider concern of equity in higher education and within any leadership context. Women are still a minority in senior academic leadership roles despite their increased participation in academia around the world. Studies have shown that although women seem to have progressed in lower and mid-level academic roles, advancing into leadership positions is a far cry due to underlying issues like systemic bias, absence of mentorship, and insufficient support from the institution (Morley, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2019).

Women are involved in leadership in higher education in terms of teaching, research, and management. Still, their presence is unequal since fewer women have top-tier appointments. This unevenness highlights the importance of having policies that advocate for fair representation and respond to the specific needs of women academics (Meza-Mejia et al., 2023).

The under-representation of women in academic leadership is a widely documented global issue. Research from a variety of sources highlights the common challenges and structural challenges women face in their ascent to leadership positions in education. For example, in many Western countries, women are well represented in

the junior ranks, but their numbers decline sharply in the senior ranks (Morley, 2013; Blackmore, 2014). Factors contributing to this disparity include gender bias in recruitment and development, lack of mentoring and networking opportunities, challenges in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Furthermore, an organizational culture that favors male leadership styles and undervalues women's contributions compounds the issue (Aiston & Jung, 2015).

2.1.1 America

For instance, research in North America has shown that although women make up a large proportion of the academic workforce, they underperform in senior leadership positions (Bilimoria & Liang, 2012). Similarly, research in Europe indicates that women continue to face challenges, such as gender stereotypes and lack of support for their studies (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010).

In spite of the attempts to establish gender equality, women are underrepresented in upper level leadership positions in higher education globally. There are systemic impediments at the individual, institutional, and societal levels that hinder this. It is difficult for women to balance work and domestic responsibilities, schedule personal life milestones with career development, and face institutional cultures that prefer masculine models of leadership (American Council on Education, 2021).

Women possess distinct qualities in global leadership positions; though they possess the competence to lead, very few women have had a chance to be in global leadership positions since there are ongoing enduring limitations in trying to enhance women's chances for leadership. In 2012, women only occupied 29% of the senior management jobs in public sector. For far too long, leadership was derived from study findings carried out on white men in the USA yet, the necessity to develop and grow more women leaders across all segments of the world cannot be overemphasized. Obstacles like absence of supportive framework within the organization, societal expectations, and hindrances some women put on themselves, restricting their choices also have to be tackled (Amaechi, 2018).

A number of barriers to women's involvement in academic leadership, such as gender biases, fewer opportunities for mentorship, and restricted access to professional networks. Overcoming such obstacles is imperative for the realization of an enabling

environment that promotes women's rise in higher education leadership (Education Policy Analysis Archives, 2023).

To increase female representation in academic leadership, institutions are urged to adopt extensive data gathering to determine disparities, formulate policies that enhance work-life balance, and design mentorship programs specific for women. These efforts can assist in breaking systemic barriers and fostering greater inclusiveness within the academic community (American Council on Education, 2021).

2.1.2 Africa and Asia

The situation is similar in developing countries, where cultural and social norms often place additional burdens on women, making it more difficult for them to pursue and succeed in leadership roles. Women face greater challenges in learning due to and lack of supportive structures (Morley & Crossouard, 2016). Research in sub-Saharan Africa highlights how patriarchal values and limited resources contribute to the poor absence of women in academic leadership (Mama, 2003).

In developing countries, socio-cultural barriers are important in determining women's leadership opportunities. Research from African and South Asian nations indicates that patriarchal norms, traditional gender roles, and the absence of childcare facilities pose major challenges for female scholars (Madsen et al., 2012; Siddiqui, 2021). In spite of these obstacles, there are instances of improvement. For example, focused mentorship and leadership initiatives in South Africa have dramatically expanded women's representation in higher-level academic positions (Hugo & Nyangeni, 2020).

2.1.3 Europe

The case in Spain, nonetheless, is dissimilar to the rest of European nations and America in economic and political development. Women have historically been underrepresented in the labor force in Spain primarily because of entrenched social perceptions of women. Under Franco's dictatorship (1936–1975), Spain was largely shut off from other European nations and was thus economically at a disadvantage. The dictatorship imposed a gender ideology that made null most progressive legislation for equality between the sexes enacted by the Republic prior to the Civil War (1936–1939) (Hernandez Bark et al, 2014).

In developed countries, initiatives such as the Athena SWAN Charter in the United Kingdom and the ADVANCE initiative in the United States seek to end gender imbalances through policy reforms and structural measures. The initiatives have made tangible gains by developing inclusive cultures and opening doors for women to make progress in academe (Ovseiko et al., 2017; Rosser & Lane, 2002). In the same way, Scandinavian nations have implemented gender quotas and open hiring procedures to ensure women's representation in academic leadership (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005).

At the international level, there is increasing awareness of the necessity to reshape leadership models in a more inclusive and equitable manner. This requires tackling both structural and cultural obstacles that reinforce gender disparities. Evidence emphasizes the need for an integrated approach, which brings together individual development initiatives and institutional changes to generate long-term change in the academic leadership landscape (Morley, 2013; Ely et al., 2011).

2.2 Challenges to Female Leadership in Academia

Research has revealed several significant challenges to women's advancement in academic leadership. These challenges can be broadly categorized as systemic, cultural, and personal factors. Institutional policies and practices that inadvertently harm women include weak work schedules and inappropriate family-friendly policies, which can disproportionately affect women who often bear the burden of caregiving responsibilities (O'Connor, 2015). Furthermore, gender bias in recruitment and promotion processes can restrict women's career advancement opportunities.

Many academic institutions are permeated by a social and organizational culture that prioritizes male leadership and minimizes the contributions of women. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including gender bias in research, exclusion from informal power networks, and the "glass ceiling" effect, which refers to invisible challenges that prevent women from succeeding do not move into senior leadership positions (Chesterman et al., 2003). In Australian universities, research has shown how entrenched gender norms and biases affect women's career paths (Winchester & Browning, 2015).

Personal factors such as self-awareness and confidence also play a role. Women are often associated with being more conservative and risk-averse, which may hinder

their ability to pursue leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Furthermore, the dual burden of managing professional and domestic responsibilities may limit women's availability and willingness to take on challenging leadership roles. For example, in Indian teaching, female teachers report greater challenges in balancing work and family commitments (Bhatnagar & Rajadhyaksha, 2001).

The challenges regarding women leadership appear to be advancing, gender stereotypes still exist, especially, in the approach that enterprises and societies understand leadership. Consequently, there has to be a rise in societal engagement in the form of national and global reorientation regarding the subject matter. There also has to be a transformation of the education system, and an implementation of policies and programs that are moderate and more supportive of women (Amaechi, 2018).

Academic women frequently face deeply embedded gender stereotypes and biases. These biases take the form of beliefs that women are weaker leaders than men, resulting in fewer opportunities for promotion (Morley, 2013). In addition, cultural expectations regarding women's roles as caregivers frequently collide with the requirements of leadership, presenting further challenges (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

The academic institution's organizational culture often supports male leadership patterns, excluding women (Acker, 2012). Academic institutions tend to have no policies that directly address gender equity, and thus they promote a culture of exclusion. Research by Blackmore (2014) points out that conventional hierarchies in academia help sustain the status quo, with male dominance in leadership going largely unchallenged.

The pressure of juggling professional and family as well as personal responsibilities disproportionately burdens women. Academic leadership positions are time-consuming, and it is expected that women bear the caregiving responsibilities in society (Bailyn, 2003). The pressures may cause stagnation in careers as women choose to desist from pursuing leadership positions in order to achieve a balance between family and work (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016).

Mentorship is a crucial aspect of developing leadership. Unfortunately, female academics do not necessarily have access to mentors and professional networks that would offer advice, encouragement, and career opportunities (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

There being no women in leadership positions further exacerbates this problem and restricts career paths for female potential leaders (Sanders et al., 2015).

For marginalized women, obstacles are heightened by intersecting gender, race, and ethnicity. Women of color have special challenges, such as institutionalized racism and lack of access to informal networks (Turner, González, & Wood, 2008). Intersectionality brings to the fore how intersecting identities heighten disadvantages in academic leadership settings.

In order to overcome these impediments, institutions need to have inclusive policies and practices. Strategies that work include establishing mentorship programs, enhancing work-life balance through flexible policies, and having an institutional culture that is diversity and equity focused (Morley, 2014). Women's leadership training programs can also equip them with the skills and confidence to negotiate the intricacies of academic leadership (Burkinshaw & White, 2017).

2.3 Prospects and Opportunities for Female Leaders

The terrain of female academic leadership is changing, with both opportunities and prospects for women looking to or already occupying leadership roles. This literature review discusses the existing situation regarding female academic leadership, pointing out the gains realized and the ways through which progress can be further made.

Despite these challenges, there are many possibilities and opportunities that can support the development of women in academic leadership. Mentoring and support programs, professional development opportunities, and supportive organizational structures have been shown to be effective in promoting gender equity in leadership providing women with the necessary mentorship, support, and networking to overcome challenges in academic leadership is important. Mentoring can help women develop the skills and confidence needed to pursue leadership roles and overcome organizational and cultural challenges (Klenke, 2017). To groom more female leaders, organization, societal, and grassroots level leadership training programs are suggested so that the subject of women leadership can be highlighted in the coming times (Amaechi, 2018).

The last few years have seen a steady rise in the number of women occupying leadership positions in academia. Research shows that women are increasingly filling teaching, research, and management positions in institutions of higher learning, though there are still imbalances across various fields and levels of hierarchy (Meza-Mejia et al., 2023).

The use of women specific leadership development programs has been key in readiness of female academics for leadership. These programs have an emphasis on skill building, networking, and mentorship and provide women with the skills necessary to handle academic leadership complexities. Studies highlight the success of such programs in augmenting women's leadership skills and confidence (Violon & Prado, 2024).

Leadership training and workshops can help women build the skills and knowledge needed for academic leadership positions. These programs can also provide valuable networking opportunities and assist women with professional relationships that can help them advance in their careers (Fitzgerald, 2014). For example, in the United States, the ADVANCE program has been instrumental in promoting gender equality in STEM fields through comprehensive support for female faculty (Rosser, 2004).

Policies that promote gender equality, such as family-friendly employment policies, equal hiring and promotion opportunities, and anti-discrimination policies can foster an environment that supports women in academia can provide a more supportive environment for women in learning Organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion are more likely to see higher levels of female representation in leadership roles (Klenke, 2017). Gender ratios and policies that support work life balance have been successful in increasing female representation in academic leadership in the Nordic countries (Teigen, 2012).

Access to strong professional networks and mentorship has been cited as a key driver of women's leadership opportunities. Participation in academic networks offers visibility, opportunities for collaboration, and access to resources necessary for career advancement. Mentorship, specifically, provides advice, assistance, and advocacy,

helping women navigate institutional dynamics and move into leadership roles (Helden et al 2023).

The confluence of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology offers new avenues for women leaders in the academy. AI can help address biases in recruitment and assessment procedures, thus supporting a more level playing field. Technology also enables flexible work patterns, allowing improved work-life balance, which is important for keeping and developing women talent in academic leadership (Financial Times. 2024).

In spite of these advances, obstacles persist. Residual gender stereotypy, work-life balance issues, and under-enrollment in some fields still hamper the complete actualization of women's leadership potential in academe. Sustained actions are needed to rectify these challenges, such as developing supportive institutional cultures, offering ongoing professional development, and countering societal stereotypes that limit women's career progression (Khan, 2024).

The future and potential of women leaders in academia are widening with the help of institutional change, leadership development programs, and advances in technology. Although progress has been impressive, concerted efforts are needed to address the persisting challenges and to provide equal opportunities for women to lead and excel in academic settings.

2.4 Female Academic Leadership in Pakistan

Female academic leadership in Pakistan involves a nuanced portrayal influenced by gendered social norms, institutional policies, and self-agency. Even though more women are studying in higher institutions, women remain underrepresented within higher academic leadership positions in Pakistan. This mismatch can be viewed across different areas of study as well as educational institutions, and men mostly lead the positions. Evidence suggests that although women are entering academic institutions in increasing numbers, their advancement to leadership positions is stymied by structural barriers (Khokhar, 2018). Patriarchal conventions underpinning cultural norms tend to limit the career growth of women since family roles are given priority over professional goals (Shah, 2009). These obstacles are augmented by institutional issues, such as gender discrimination in hiring,

lack of mentorship, and a lack of supportive policies such as flexible work arrangements and childcare facilities (Malik & Courtney, 2011; Shaukat & Pell, 2015).

Yet, recent trends bring hope. Women-specific leadership development programs are being launched, offering critical skills, mentorship, and networking (Ashraf, 2021). Gender equality policies in academia have also started to tackle systemic inequalities, though their implementation and effectiveness are still uneven (Zulfqar et al., 2016). Shifting societal attitudes are slowly creating a more inclusive culture, inspiring women to seek and achieve leadership positions (Zia, 2013).

The challenges faced by women teachers in Pakistan are mainly cultural and social norms that prioritize traditional gender roles. Women in academia often have to navigate a complex of expectations and prejudices that limit their career progress. The study highlights several key challenges faced by women teachers in Pakistan, including lack of mentoring and networking opportunities, gender bias in recruitment and tenure systems, and professional and personal challenges in balancing responsibilities (Shaukat et al., 2014).

Limited access to mentorship and networking possibilities is a massive challenges for lady lecturers in Pakistan. Mentorship can provide valuable guidance and assist, helping women navigate the challenges of educational management. Networking possibilities also can assist ladies build professional relationships that can aid their profession advancement (Shah, 2015). Gender biases in recruitment and promotion tactics can restrict ladies's opportunities for career development. Women may be ignored for management positions or face better standards and expectancies in comparison to their male counterparts (Shaukat et al., 2014).

The dual burden of managing professional and domestic responsibilities is a major challenge for women teachers in Pakistan. Women are often burdened with caregiving and domestic responsibilities, which may limit their access to and willingness to assume challenging leadership roles (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Despite these challenges, Pakistan also has examples of successful women education leaders who have overcome these obstacles. These success stories can provide valuable insight and inspiration for other women who aspire to assume leadership roles in academia (Qureshi et al., 2016).

Despite advancement, challenges continue to exist. The absence of representation in leadership roles in disciplines, combined with ongoing cultural and structural obstacles, emphasizes the requirement for continuous action. Future research needs to assess the impact of policy programs and development initiatives in order to determine the extent of equitable access to leadership positions among women in Pakistani academia.

2.5 Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

Empirical research and case studies provide precious insights into the stories of lady educational leaders in Pakistan and comparable contexts. For instance, Rehman and Roomi (2012) performed a phenomenological examine of ladies' entrepreneurs in Pakistan, highlighting the unique demanding situations and strategies hired via ladies to reach a male-ruled surroundings. Similarly, Qureshi et al. (2016) reviewed the instructional studies on women in leadership in Pakistan, figuring out key traits and gaps inside the literature. These researches underscore the significance of context-precise research to understand the precise demanding situations and possibilities confronted by way of woman educational leaders in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, Shah (2009) focused on the dual issue of professional requirements and cultural expectations, adding that women leaders bear disproportional responsibilities when compared to men. These studies stress the continued issues of gender bias, lack of access to professional networks, and inadequate policy support.

A study by Shaukat et al. (2014) investigated the gender-related challenges confronted via woman school in Pakistani universities, revealing vast limitations in institutional practices and cultural expectations. Furthermore, Shah (2015) tested the effect of mentorship on woman teachers in Pakistan, demonstrating how effective mentorship can mitigate some of those boundaries.

A study explores the multifaceted challenges encountered by female academic leaders in Pakistani universities. Through in-depth interviews with women in leadership positions, the research identifies barriers such as gender bias, lack of institutional support, and societal expectations. The authors argue that these challenges are deeply rooted in cultural norms and institutional practices, which hinder women's progression in academic leadership roles. The study emphasizes the need for policy reforms and

supportive measures to create an enabling environment for female leaders in academia (Bhatti & Ali, 2021).

An article discusses the persistent hurdles that women face on the path to leadership in higher education. It highlights issues such as underrepresentation, gender bias, and the need for systemic change within academic institutions. The author outlines strategies to overcome these challenges, including mentorship programs, policy reforms, and creating inclusive environments that support women's advancement in academia (Chao, 2023).

Empirical research illustrates that women higher education leaders confront systemic and cultural obstacles in becoming leaders. Empirical research by Alemayehu and Teka (2022) in Ethiopia described notable obstacles that limit women to pursue leadership careers in higher education, such as societal expectations, absence of mentoring, and institution gender biases. Likewise, a case study by Kundu and Rani (2021) in Indian universities indicated that patriarchal beliefs and stereotypical gender roles are the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in high-level academic ranks.

Consistent with the objectives of the feminist movement, there has been a real improvement in terms of gender equality in the US and in the majority of European nations since the 1960s (Rubery, 2002). Among these, a rise in the share of women in the workforce over recent decades: By the start of the 21st century, nearly 50 % of employees in the vast majority of countries in Europe (e.g., Germany: 45.6 % and the US: 46.9 %) were women. Moreover, women have come to reach similar or even somewhat superior degrees of education to men. For instance, in 2012 of the 30 to 34 year-old age group, the percentage of women receiving tertiary education was 32.9 % in Germany and 52.6 % in Denmark as opposed to 31 % in Germany and 33.7 % in Denmark for men. In spite of this advancement, in the EU, women are more numerous than men who work part-time, and in nearly all European nations and the United States, women remain underrepresented in positions of leadership, particularly in high management levels in business and politics. For instance, women constituted 14.6 % of Fortune 500 executive officers in 2013, and 16.6 % of board members of the largest businesses listed in the 27 member states of the European Union were women (Hernandez, 2014).

In spite of these difficulties, intersectionality also brings to light the agency and resilience of women in academic leadership. A Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) study exemplified how Latina educational leaders make use of their intersecting identities to enact inclusive leadership practices in favor of plural student populations. In South Africa, African women academic leaders call on their culture and experiences of marginalization in order to practice transformative leadership patterns that counter institutional inequalities (Chisholm, 2001).

Knowledge of intersectionality is essential for the formulation of policies that support equity in academic leadership. Institutions need to appreciate the varying experiences of women leaders and institute measures that deal with the unique challenges brought about by intersecting identities. These include the development of mentorship programs specifically addressing the needs of women of color, developing inclusive institutional cultures, and facilitating equitable access to leadership positions (Turner, 2002).

Intersectionality offers a broad perspective to consider the complex lives of female academic leaders. In recognizing and acting on the entangled intersections of race, gender, and other social identities, higher education can more effectively facilitate and empower women leaders.

2.6 Intersectionality and Female Academic Leadership

Intersectionality considers how numerous social identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, socio-economic reputation) intersect to create precise studies and challenges. In the Pakistani context, factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic background, and nearby disparities intersect with gender to create compounded challenges for female instructional leaders. Research on intersectionality in academia highlights that women from marginalized backgrounds face extra challenges compared to their extra privileged counterparts (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Organizations are acknowledging that more must be done to provide support to female talent. One reaction to this is women-only leadership development programs (WLDPs). Up until now, no scoping review has been undertaken to explore the design and outcomes of these programs. The aim of the current review was thus to synthesize existing knowledge on these interventions. A scoping review of the literature in June

2022 was conducted through Business Source Premier (EBSCO), PsycINFO and SCOPUS, and 13 articles were included. There are positive indicators that these programs enhance women's development by incorporating intersectionality and positive psychology frameworks and networking, conflict management, and career planning curricula. While the detail of the design and content actually delivered by such theories is ambiguous, their provision does seem to make participants in the WLDPs under consideration here report increased self-knowledge, purposeful clarity and better feelings of being real. Such a review does also prompt reservations as to whether the rigour of the techniques used to select participants for receiving the programs can be assured, and whether they report the methodology of design and delivery in unvarnished terms. In addition, directions for research as well as theory and practice implications are given (Sayers-Brown et al., 2025).

Studies show that women of color in academic leadership experience exacerbated difficulties from the intersection of race and gender. For example, a study by Jean-Marie et al. (2009) showed that African American female leaders in U.S. institutions of higher education frequently find themselves subjected to both race and gender biases, which results in greater scrutiny and marginalization. Likewise, Hispanic women in higher education indicate that they suffer from a "double bind" of racism and sexism, which slows down their career advancement (Gándara & The Latina Feminist Group, 2015).

In the Australian context, Indigenous female academic leaders encounter specific challenges that arise from the intersection of indigeneity and gender. According to Moreton-Robinson (2000), these women tend to work in institutional settings that exclude Indigenous knowledge systems, adding to the challenges related to gender discrimination.

In spite of these difficulties, intersectionality also identifies the strength and agency of women in academic leadership. A study by Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) illustrated that Latina educational leaders use their intersecting identities to develop inclusive leadership practices that serve diverse student groups. In South Africa, African female academic leaders use their cultural heritage and experiences of marginalization to develop transformative leadership styles that resist institutional inequities (Chisholm, 2001).

It is important to understand intersectionality in the context of building policies that enhance equity in educational leadership. Institutions need to acknowledge the varied experiences of women leaders and adopt measures that tackle the unique issues resulting from intersecting identities. These include developing mentorship programs responsive to the needs of women of color, building inclusive institutional cultures, and providing equal opportunities for leadership (Turner, 2002).

The intersectionality model offers a holistic perspective to analyze the diverse experiences of women academic leaders. By recognizing and responding to the intricate intersection of race, gender, and other social identities, higher education institutions can more effectively empower and enable women in leadership roles.

2.7 Institutional Support and Policy Interventions

Effective institutional support and policy interventions are critical to addressing the gender gap in academic leadership. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) has launched several programs aimed at promoting gender equality in higher education, but the implementation and effectiveness of these policies remain inconsistent (HEC, 2019). Comprehensive policies that promote gender equality, provide leadership training and ensure fair performance and promotion are needed to support women teachers in their leadership aspirations.

Institutional support and policy measures play an essential role in responding to gender imbalances and promoting women's academic leadership. Mentorship programs are especially vital, as they provide women with the requisite leadership skills and self-confidence. Recent research underlines the value of formal mentoring schemes in supporting women in being successful within institution-level dynamics (Ely et al., 2011; Fitzgerald, 2019). Flexible work schedules, such as parental leave and telecommuting possibilities, are essential in helping women manage personal and professional responsibilities (Morley, 2013). In addition, professional networks have been successful in improving exposure and collaboration possibilities for women academics (Fitzgerald, 2019).

Ogbogu (2011) discovered that women's involvement, compared to that of men reduces at senior levels. This condition prompted Obafemi Awolowo University to be concerned with the matter of gender balance by introducing the university gender

policy, which is a tool for facilitating gender equality within the university. Because women overwhelm the lower ranks in academia and are underrepresented in decision-making committees, there is a need to enhance and make gender equality stronger through the university gender policy (Igiebor, 2021).

The gender roles within Nigerian universities are a product of socially constructed patriarchal norms, values, and rules. It shows that the Nigerian university is a masculine oriented institution that shapes gender relations, reasserts and reproduces male dominance by the invisible places women hold within the university. Notwithstanding initiatives to solve the systemic problem of gender disparity in academic leadership at Nigerian universities by setting up gender centers and adopting gender policies, women remain underrepresented in positions of academic leadership (Igiebor, 2021).

The discussion around equality laws and the ongoing debate in Spanish society regarding diversity on boards of directors have been significant since 2004, when the then-socialist Prime Minister pledged to prioritize gender equality. The peak of this effort occurred in 2007, when the Spanish parliament passed a new Gender Equality Act aimed at increasing women's employment by favoring companies with higher female representation. This legislation aligned with Spain's Unified Good Governance Code, which had been approved the previous year by the Spanish Securities and Exchange Commission, recommending positive discrimination for female board members. However, recent national surveys indicate that these initiatives have seen limited success, as many female managers in Spain express skepticism about the 2007 law, with 42% considering it ineffective and noting a lack of substantial changes. Furthermore, a significant number of Spanish managers believe that women encounter more challenges in securing managerial roles, with 61% of male managers and 88% of female managers agreeing with this view (PWC 2012), and many also acknowledge the existence of salary discrimination against women in their organizations (Hernandez et al., 2014).

Gender equity policies play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive academic environment. Initiatives like the Athena SWAN Charter in the UK and Gender Action Plans (GAPs) in European universities highlight the effectiveness of structured approaches in enhancing diversity (Ovseiko et al., 2017; European Institute for Gender

Equality, 2020). Additionally, measures that promote transparency and accountability, such as mandatory gender equity reporting, have significantly advanced efforts to tackle institutional biases (KPMG, 2019). In various regions, affirmative action through gender quotas has been key in boosting women's representation in leadership positions (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005).

Case studies highlight the worldwide effects of these interventions. For example, the University of Cape Town's "Next Generation Professoriate" program and the ADVANCE initiative by the National Science Foundation in the United States have effectively aided women in advancing their careers in academia (Hugo & Nyangeni, 2020; Rosser & Lane, 2002). However, challenges remain, such as resistance to change and uneven policy enforcement. Addressing these obstacles demands ongoing institutional dedication and creative approaches.

2.8 Gender and Social Role Theories

Gender and social role theories provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of female academic leadership. These theories emphasize the influence of societal expectations, cultural norms, and prescribed gender roles on individuals' behaviors and opportunities. They also offer insights into the challenges and biases faced by women aspiring to leadership positions in academia.

Gender role theory indicates that societal expectancies approximately gender roles have an effect on people's behaviors and career selections. In many cultures, conventional gender roles dictate that women must prioritize own family and caregiving duties over professional aspirations. These societal expectancies can restrict women's possibilities for profession development and management roles in academia (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This theory provides a framework for understanding how cultural norms and societal expectations shape women's experiences and opportunities in academic leadership.

Gender role theory, introduced by Eagly, suggests that societal norms and expectations shape the roles considered suitable for men and women. This theory sheds light on the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions by emphasizing the conflict between traits typically associated with effective leadership, such as

assertiveness and decisiveness, and those traditionally viewed as feminine, like nurturing and empathy.

Eagly and Karau's role congruity theory, proposed in 2002, delves deeper into this issue, indicating that women in leadership often encounter a "double-bind." They may be criticized for being too feminine, which can undermine their authority, or too masculine, which contradicts societal expectations. This dynamic creates additional obstacles for women in academia, as they must continually navigate these conflicting pressures.

Globally, gender equality in academia remains a significant challenge, with women being underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles. Despite various initiatives by universities to promote gender equality, women in academia continue to face hurdles in overcoming inequality. The gendered climate within academic institutions, along with everyday interactions, significantly affects not only female participation but also their outlook on future opportunities in academia. Research indicates that female academics struggle with networking and achieving their career aspirations. Additionally, the challenges faced by women in academia in Sri Lanka vary based on their marital status and childcare responsibilities. To prevent the attrition of female academics and enhance their job satisfaction, it is essential for academic institutions and relevant authorities to recognize the sources of these challenges and implement effective strategies to foster a more supportive working environment for women in academia (Gunathilake, 2023).

Social role theory, also coined by Eagly, is the social and cultural construction of gender roles. It refers to the sex division of labor that has solidified gender-based stereotypes over the course of centuries. In the intellectual arena, the theory delineates the deep-seated prejudices that view leadership as a masculine domain, driving women further to the margins.

Social role theory posits that gender differences in behavior, attitudes, and expectancies arise from the social roles assigned to ladies and men. In the context of academia, women may be socialized to undertake much less assertive and more nurturing roles that can impact their self-belief and willingness to pursue leadership positions. This principle allows give an explanation for the underrepresentation of girls

in educational management and the challenges they face in breaking through conventional gender roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Research by Heilman (2012) shows that stereotypes play a significant role in creating biases during recruitment, promotion, and evaluations, often putting women at a disadvantage. For instance, women in academia are less frequently considered for leadership positions and tend to be judged more critically when they display traits typically associated with effective leadership.

The application of gender and social role theories in academic settings reveals important issues, such as the perception that women are less competent leaders due to these stereotypes. Ridgeway (2011) points out that these biases continue to exist even in academia, where merit is supposed to be the main factor. Social expectations surrounding caregiving disproportionately impact women, affecting their availability and how committed they are perceived to be to leadership roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). To meet societal expectations, women often adopt transformational leadership styles that are more collaborative and inclusive. While this approach can be effective, it may still be undervalued in male-dominated academic environments (Rosette & Tost, 2013).

Gender and social role theories offer important insights into the challenges women encounter in academic leadership. They underscore the necessity for systemic changes in societal norms, institutional policies, and organizational cultures to eliminate biases and foster gender equity. Future research should investigate how these theories can be combined with intersectional perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of female leadership in academia.

While numerous studies have examined gender disparities in higher education leadership globally, limited research specifically addresses the nuanced challenges and prospects faced by female academic leaders in the university context of Pakistan. Most existing literature emphasizes broad structural and cultural barriers but often overlooks the intersection of institutional policies, leadership support systems, and personal agency in shaping women's leadership journeys. Moreover, empirical studies focusing on firsthand narratives and lived experiences of female academic leaders at the university level in Pakistan remain scarce. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing context-specific insights into the barriers and enablers of female academic leadership,

thereby contributing to both academic discourse and policy development in higher education.

The purpose of this research is to provide insights that can inform policy and practice, ultimately creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Findings can be used to advocate for policy change, targeted interventions, and create supportive environments that enable women to thrive in academic leadership roles. By highlighting the experiences and challenges of female educational leaders in Pakistani universities, this study can contribute to greater efforts to promote gender equality in higher education.

2.9 Critical Summary

The literature highlights the complicated and multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by multiple female educational leaders. It underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach that considers structural, cultural, and private factors. By building on the existing literature and focusing at the unique context of Pakistani universities, this look at objectives to contribute to a deeper knowledge of the boundaries and possibilities for lady instructional management. The insights won from this research can tell the development of centered interventions and rules to promote gender fairness and help the development of ladies in instructional management roles.

The literature on female academic leadership reveals a complex interplay of global, institutional, and cultural factors that influence women's progression to leadership roles. Globally, women remain underrepresented in academic leadership due to systemic barriers, including gender biases, limited mentorship opportunities, and inadequate institutional support (Morley, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2019). Challenges such as the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon and societal expectations that prioritize familial responsibilities further exacerbate the issue (Ely et al., 2011; Ovseiko et al., 2017). However, initiatives like the Athena SWAN Charter and NSF ADVANCE have shown promise in addressing inequities by promoting structural reforms, mentorship programs, and flexible policies (Rosser & Lane, 2002; Hugo & Nyangeni, 2020). Despite these advancements, regional disparities persist, as seen in Pakistan, where socio-cultural norms and institutional gaps hinder women's leadership progression (Siddiqui, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2022).

Intersectionality and theoretical insights offer deeper understanding of the nuanced challenges faced by women in academic leadership. Frameworks such as gender and social role theories reveal how societal expectations shape perceptions of leadership and perpetuate biases (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway, 2011). Intersectional experiences stemming from race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds further compound these challenges, necessitating tailored interventions. Empirical evidence highlights best practices, including holistic programs integrating mentorship, skill development, and systemic reforms, which emphasize the need for sustained institutional commitment and policy consistency (Hugo & Nyangeni, 2020). Ultimately, achieving gender equity in academic leadership requires not only individual empowerment but also a fundamental restructuring of institutional policies and cultural norms to foster inclusivity and equity.

CHAPTER 3

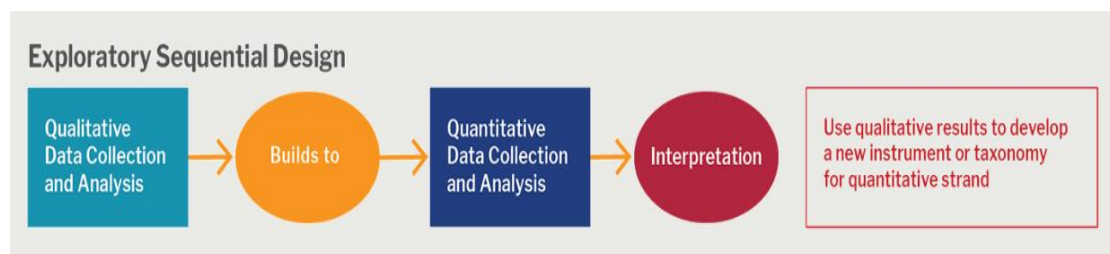
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher presents the overall procedures and methods used to conduct the research in this chapter. The researcher used mixed-method research design both qualitative and quantitative, with the help of questionnaire that contained close ended statements and semi structured interview for teachers by using random sampling technique. The researcher used virtual mean for data collection. Mean and thematic both statics were used for data analysis, mean for quantitative data analysis and thematic for qualitative data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used a mixed methods research approach following the exploratory sequential design.

Figure: 3.2 *Exploratory Sequential Design*



(McLeod, 2024)

Exploratory sequential design is a mixed-methods research technique that starts with qualitative data collection and evaluation to explore a phenomenon, followed with the aid of quantitative statistics series and evaluation to test and enlarge upon the initial findings. This method permits for a deeper understanding with the aid of the usage of qualitative effects to tell the subsequent quantitative phase.

3.2 Population of the Study

The Population of the study comprised of 140 participants; female HODs (15) and teachers (125) from 2 public universities; International Islamic University Islamabad (Female Campus), and Rawalpindi Women University. The data related to

population were taken from the official website of selected universities. The detail of population is follows:

Table 3.1

Population

Sr.	Universities	HODs	Teachers
01	International Islamic University, Islamabad (Female Campus)	8	46
02	Rawalpindi Women University	7	79
Total	2	15	125

Population (N)

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A universal sampling technique was used to select the sample for qualitative population that is 15 HODs for semi structured interviews. For quantitative part random sampling was used which according to LR Gay tables gives a total of 95 out of 125 teachers.

3.4 Instrumentation

The researcher used two instruments for data collection: a self-developed semi structured interview with context to conceptual framework on the basis of its results the close ended questionnaire was developed. Both the instruments were divided into 2 sections (Challenges and Prospects). For semi structured interview first section consisted of 21 items and second section consisted of 15 items. For closed ended questionnaire first section contained of 5 variables; Organizational Challenges with 8 items, Gender Discrimination with 6 items, personal Challenges and work-life Conflict with 7 items, Socio-Cultural Challenges with 6 items and Economical Challenges with 7 items. The second section contained of 3 variables; Mentorship Program with 15 items, Leadership Training Program with 9 items and Family-Friendly Environment with 10 items. Semi-structured interview was conducted from HODs and closed ended questionnaire for the teachers. To address objective 1 and 3 qualitative instrument was used and to address objective 2 and 4 quantitative instrument was used.

3.5 Procedure

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research instruments, the researcher established the validity and reliability of the tools through expert evaluation, pilot testing, and statistical analysis. These steps were essential to confirm that the questionnaire was both clear and capable of producing dependable results.

3.5.1 Validity of the Instrument

Validity of the instrument was evaluated by expert of Education Department's opinion. After expert opinion some statement were added and deleted in instrument.

3.5.2 Pilot Testing

The pilot test was conducted before administering the questionnaire as a pretest to check the instruments' reliability and clarity. The pilot test was conducted randomly from 10% of sample students from the population of the study. The collected data were then used to measure the reliability. Participants taken for the pilot testing was not included in the final data collection procedure.

3.5.3 Reliability of the Instrument

According to Carlson et al, (2009) a dependable scale is one that produces similar results in diverse settings. A scale internal consistency reliability study was performed to anticipate scale internal consistency dependability. Cronbach alpha has a value between 0 and 1. A high Cronbach alpha value indicates strong reliability, whereas a low Cronbach value indicates poor reliability and scalability. Cronbach alpha must be larger than 0.7 to be considered acceptable

Table 3.2

Reliability Coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.786	68

Table 3.2 shows the reliability statistics of quantitative questionnaire. The value of Cronbach's Alpha is .786 which mean it is reliable (Hair et al., 2010).

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection was done in 2 steps. At first the qualitative data was collected through interviews from HODs. Secondly on the basis of qualitative data quantitative instrument was generated. Lastly the quantitative data was collected through closed ended questionnaires. The data was collected through both personal visits and google forms.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis technique was used for analyzing qualitative data. For the thematic analysis, three steps were followed which are:

- Reading
- Describing
- Classifying

The researcher began the qualitative data analysis by thoroughly reading all completed questionnaires, interview transcripts, and field notes to highlight key ideas provided by the respondents. Major themes were then identified and used as main headings to categorize responses. Detailed descriptions were developed based on participants' answers to open-ended questions and interview data, ensuring accuracy in representing the views of teachers and student advisors. Under each main theme, sub-themes were created to further clarify responses. Finally, the researcher coded the data by comparing participants' concepts, identifying patterns, and forming categories to interpret the findings systematically, following the approach recommended by Gay (2015).

Descriptive statistics (percentages and mean scores) were used for the analysis of quantitative data. The interpretation of mean scores from the 5-point Likert scale was guided by Oxford's (1990) criteria: a score between 1.0 and 2.4 indicated a low intensity, 2.5 to 3.4 reflected a medium intensity, and 3.5 to 5.0 represented a high intensity.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the measures taken to make sure confidentiality. Informed consent was acquired from all members before data collection. Measures were taken to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of contributors. Data was anonymized, and identifying statistics were eliminated from the transcripts and survey responses. Ethical approval were sought from the relevant institutional overview forums to make certain examine adheres to moral requirements and suggestions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter presents the results and interpretations of the study that was collected from the universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Thematic analysis was used to examine the result of the qualitative data. Percentage and mean were calculated to examine the result of quantitative data. The results are presented based on the research objectives of the study. The research utilized the ‘Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS)’ to run the analysis to determine Percentage and Mean for quantitative data.

4.1 Results of Qualitative Data

4.1.1 Challenges

Theme 1: Organizational Challenges

Many respondents identified time management, workspace allocation, and a lack of available rooms as significant organizational challenges for female academic leaders. Additionally, they noted that the distance between classrooms and offices poses a major structural challenge.

Some participants also highlighted other difficulties, such as facing stereotypes and managing multiple responsibilities.

Theme 2: Gender Discrimination

Most respondents identified general discrimination as a significant challenge for women in Pakistan; however, they did not see it as an issue within the academic field. They noted a positive attitude from male colleagues and seniors towards female leadership. Therefore, they felt there was no need to address gender discrimination in academia, as it was not perceived to be a problem.

Theme 3: Personal Challenges and Work-Life Conflict

Most respondents acknowledged the personal challenges they face, highlighting the difficulty of balancing work and managing their time as significant hurdles for female academic leaders. To maintain this balance, many try to keep their personal and

professional lives separate by prioritizing important tasks one at a time. Additionally, a large number of respondents noted that family support plays a crucial role in helping them manage work-life balance.

Some respondents also mentioned that the stress from juggling multiple roles affects their health and leadership effectiveness, indicating a need for support.

Theme 4: Socio-Cultural Challenges

Most respondents denied that Pakistani societal and cultural norms affect their roles as academic leaders. They also indicated that the social and domestic responsibilities assigned to Pakistani women do not hinder their leadership roles, although there are generally higher expectations for women compared to men. Many respondents noted that women tend to be more assertive than men in leadership positions, highlighting the need for a shift in socio-cultural attitudes towards women in leadership. Changing these attitudes can be achieved by providing more support for women seeking leadership roles, raising awareness, and encouraging the sharing of domestic responsibilities among all family members.

Some respondents mentioned that women are often expected to focus solely on domestic duties, which can limit their ability to perform professionally or maintain a balance between the two. Additionally, there is pressure on women to always be available for family needs.

Theme 5: Economical Challenges

Most respondents disagreed with the notion that they faced economic challenges in their journey to academic leadership. The majority of them attended public institutions and had support from their families. They also acknowledged that financial constraints affect their ability to perform effectively in their roles, indicating that economic support is essential for women to reach their goals. To address these challenges, higher education should be made more affordable, and institutions should offer more financial benefits to women.

Additionally, some respondents noted that financial constraints could limit opportunities for training, which may hinder their progress.

4.1.2 Prospects

Theme 6: Mentorship Program

Most respondents believe that mentorship is crucial for the career advancement of female academics. It offers guidance and reassurance on the right path. Many describe an effective mentor for female academic leaders as supportive, empathetic, and knowledgeable in their field, patient, a good listener, selfless, and sympathetic. A significant number of respondents have participated in mentorship programs during their academic careers, noting a positive impact on their development as leaders. These programs facilitate skill development and promote a positive mindset, which can help overcome gender-specific challenges.

Some respondents suggest that an effective mentor should be willing to share personal experiences, be accessible, and possess extensive experience in academia. They also emphasize that mentorship empowers women to pursue leadership roles and tackle obstacles.

Theme 7: Leadership Training Program

Most respondents believe that leadership training programs are valuable for female academics who aspire to leadership roles. These programs positively impact their leadership abilities, although many women face challenges in accessing them. According to the majority of respondents, there is a need for leadership training programs focused on problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management.

Additionally, some respondents suggest that training should also cover work-life balance, employee motivation, communication, conflict resolution, and portfolio development.

Theme 8: Family-Friendly Environment

Most respondents describe their institute as being very supportive in fostering a family-friendly work environment. The majority of these institutions offer medical facilities, daycare services, and competitive salaries. Many believe that increasing student interaction activities, peer-to-peer engagement, extracurricular programs, and

informal gatherings for female leaders would strengthen relationships. By enhancing the family-friendly atmosphere, the career prospects and overall well-being of female academic leaders can be improved.

Some respondents suggest that institutes should implement more family-friendly initiatives, such as remote work options and part-time leadership roles, as these changes would create a more supportive environment for career advancement and lead to greater job satisfaction and productivity.

4.2 Results of Quantitative Data

4.2.1 Challenges

Table 4.1

Teachers' Responses regarding Organizational Challenges (95)

Organizational Challenges	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Organizational Challenges	72.8	15.5	11.7	100	3.84
Family Management	49.5	33.0	17.5	100	3.60
Time Management	83.5	5.8	10.7	100	3.92
Female Workplace Allocation	13.6	34.9	51.5	100	2.53
Daycare Facility	83.5	6.8	9.7	100	4.15
Medical Facility	75.7	13.6	10.7	100	4.01
Structural Challenges	40.8	8.7	50.5	100	2.96
Distance Between Office and Class	82.5	7.8	9.7	100	3.97

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of 72.8% respondents agreed with facing organizational challenges, with a mean score of 3.84 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 49.5% respondents agreed with facing challenges in managing a family, with a mean score of 3.60 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 83.5% respondents agreed with having to face time management as a challenges, with a mean score of 3.92 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 51.5% respondents disagreed with having female workspace allocation as a challenges, with a mean score of 2.53 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 83.5% respondents agreed with having daycare facility, with a mean score of 4.15 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 75.7% respondents agreed with having medical facility, with a mean score of 4.01 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 50.5% respondents disagreed with having to face structural challenges, with a mean score of 2.96 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 82.5% respondents agreed with having to face the distance between the office and class a challenge, with a mean score of 3.97 which also represented high intensity.

This indicates that female academic leaders encounter significant organizational challenges, with 72.8% of respondents recognizing difficulties in this regard. Time management stands out as a major challenge, along with balancing family responsibilities. Although most respondents did not view workspace allocation as an issue, the physical distance between offices and classrooms posed a notable obstacle. Despite these challenges, institutions offer robust support through daycare and medical facilities. Structural challenges were not frequently mentioned, highlighting a complex organizational landscape where female leaders receive some institutional support but still face ongoing struggles with time management and logistical concerns.

Table 4.2*Teachers' Responses regarding Gender Discrimination (95)*

Gender Discrimination		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Mean
		%	%	%	%	
Gender	Discrimination	32.0	11.7	56.3	100	2.86
Experience						
Attitude Of Colleagues And		75.7	14.6	9.7	100	3.79
Seniors						
Supportive		79.6	11.7	8.7	100	3.94
Collaborative		76.7	14.6	8.7	100	3.89
Gender Discrimination In		52.4	27.2	20.4	100	3.39
General						
Reducing	Gender	75.7	9.7	14.6	100	3.81
Discrimination						

Table 4.2 shows that majority of 56.3% respondents denied facing gender discrimination, with a mean score of 2.86 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 75.7% respondents agreed with having positive attitude of colleagues and seniors, with a mean score of 3.79 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 79.6% respondents agreed with having supportive colleagues and seniors, with a mean score of 3.94 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 76.7% respondents agreed with having collaborative colleagues and seniors, with a mean score of 3.89 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 52.4% respondents agreed with having gender discrimination, with a mean score of 3.39 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 75.7% respondents agreed on having positive measures to reduce gender discrimination, with a mean score of 3.81 which also represented high intensity.

This indicates a largely positive academic atmosphere concerning gender equality. Most respondents did not face gender discrimination in their academic positions, and there are clear signs of positive workplace relationships, with many reporting supportive, collaborative, and encouraging attitudes from both colleagues and superiors. However, a significant number of respondents recognized that gender

discrimination exists in a wider context, pointing to societal or external challenges. Positive measures are being implemented to address and reduce gender discrimination.

Table 4.3*Teachers' Responses regarding Personal Challenges and Work-Life Conflicts (95)*

Personal Challenges and Work-Life Conflicts	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Personal Challenges	74.7	10.7	14.6	100	2.30
Work life Challenge	41.7	21.4	36.9	100	3.02
Time Management Between Work-Life	84.5	9.7	5.8	100	3.93
Balancing Personal Growth	7.8	13.6	78.6	100	3.91
Prioritizing Tasks	78.6	9.7	11.7	100	3.88
Separate Professional And Personal Time	74.7	10.7	14.6	100	3.78
Family Support	82.5	6.8	10.7	100	3.95

Table 4.3 shows that a majority of 74.7% respondents agreed with having to face personal challenges, with a mean score of 2.30 which also represented low intensity. A majority of 41.7% respondents agreed with having to face work-life challenges, with a mean score of 3.02 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 84.5% respondents agreed with having to face time management between work-life as a challenges, with a mean score of 3.93 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 78.6% respondents disagreed with being able to maintaining personal goals balance the demand of their leadership role, with a mean score of 3.91 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 78.6% respondents agreed that they prioritize more important task at time, with a mean score of 3.88 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 74.7% respondents agreed that they prefer separate personal and professional time, with a mean score of 3.78 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 82.5% respondents agreed with having family as a biggest help in balancing work-life, with a mean score of 3.95 which also represented high intensity.

The study reveals that personal challenges are a major concern for female academic leaders. Most respondents reported difficulties in juggling personal and professional responsibilities, with time management being a key issue. Many found it hard to strike a balance between their personal aspirations and the demands of

leadership. Despite these obstacles, most participants implemented effective strategies, such as prioritizing essential tasks and keeping their personal and professional lives distinct. Family support was highlighted as crucial, with a high mean score of 3.95, underscoring its significance in achieving a work-life balance. The findings highlight the intricate nature of personal challenges and the importance of robust support systems in fostering female leadership in academia.

Table 4.4*Teachers' Responses regarding Socio-Cultural Challenges (95)*

Socio-Cultural Challenges	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Pakistani Norms	14.6	37.8	47.6	100	2.66
Expectations from Women	52.4	35.9	43.7	100	2.61
Social Responsibilities	14.6	28.1	51.3	100	2.42
Domestic Responsibility	38.0	6.8	60.2	100	3.02
Need of Change	55.3	11.7	33.0	100	3.02
Aggressiveness	47.6	9.7	42.7	100	2.81

Table 4.4 shows that a majority of 49 respondents disagreed with Pakistani societal and cultural norms affecting their role as academic leaders, with a mean score of 2.66 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 54 respondents agreed that there are more expectations from women than men, with a mean score of 2.61 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 59 respondents disagreed with having any effect on their role as academic leaders from social responsibilities, with a mean score of 2.42 which also represented low intensity. A majority of 62 respondents disagreed having domestic responsibilities particularly challenging in their role, with a mean score of 3.02 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 57 respondents agreed that socio-cultural attitude toward women in leadership need to change, with a mean score of 3.02 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 49 respondents agreed with women being seen as more aggressive than men in leadership roles, with a mean score of 2.81 which also represented medium intensity.

The study suggests that societal and cultural norms have little impact on female academic leaders, as most respondents do not view social or domestic responsibilities as obstacles. However, broader societal expectations continue to be a concern, with many noting that women face higher expectations than men and are often perceived as more aggressive in leadership positions. Respondents believe that socio-cultural attitudes toward women in leadership roles need to evolve. While direct cultural pressures are limited, underlying gender biases and intensity of leadership still pose challenges overall.

Table 4.5*Teachers' Responses regarding Economical Challenges (95)*

Economical Challenges		Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Economic challenges	Journey	12.6	34.0	53.4	100	2.56
Public Institute		72.8	10.7	16.5	100	3.89
Domestic Support		80.5	7.8	11.7	100	3.94
Ability to perform		52.4	11.7	35.9	100	3.03
Financial benefits to women		53.4	8.7	37.9	100	3.01
Cheaper Education	Advance	49.5	11.7	38.8	100	2.93
Economic Support		74.8	8.7	16.5	100	3.74

Table 4.5 shows that a majority of 53.4% respondents disagreed with facing economic challenges in their journey to academic leadership, with a mean score of 2.56 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 72.8% respondents agreed with studying in public institutes, with a mean score of 3.89 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 80.5% respondents agreed with having positive domestic support, with a mean score of 3.94 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 52.4% respondents agreed that financial constraints impacted their ability to perform effectively in their role, with a mean score of 3.03 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 53.4% respondents agreed that institutes should provide more financial benefits to women, with a mean score of 3.01 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 49.5% respondents agreed that advanced education should be cheaper, with a mean score of 2.93 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 74.8% respondents agreed that economic support is crucial for females to achieve their goals, with a mean score of 3.74 which also represented high intensity.

This shows that economic challenges are not a significant obstacle for most female academic leaders, as they did not encounter financial difficulties. Many gained advantages from attending public institutions and had robust support at home. However, financial limitations still affected job performance. There is a need for increased

financial assistance, indicating a demand for more financial benefits for women and a push for more affordable higher education. Overall, respondents highlighted that economic support is essential for reaching professional aspirations.

Table 4.6*Teachers' Responses regarding Mentorship Program (95)*

Mentorship Program	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Important for career advancement	83.5	6.8	9.7	100	3.89
Carrier Consolation	74.8	10.7	14.5	100	3.80
Right Path	80.6	10.7	8.7	100	3.86
Supportive Mentor	77.7	12.6	9.7	100	3.80
Empathetic Mentor	79.6	8.7	11.7	100	3.88
Domain knowledge	84.5	8.7	6.8	100	3.92
Patient Mentor	78.6	8.7	12.7	100	3.86
Good Listener	76.7	9.7	13.6	100	3.84
Selfless Mentor	73.8	11.7	14.5	100	3.83
Sympathetic Mentor	78.6	8.7	12.7	100	3.81
Attended Mentorship Program	80.6	8.7	10.7	100	3.87
Positive Impact on Development	77.6	12.7	9.7	100	3.89
Skill Development	78.6	8.7	12.7	100	3.80
Supportive Mindset	75.7	14.6	9.7	100	3.81
Overcome Gender Specific Challenges	81.6	8.7	9.7	100	3.91

Table 4.6 shows that a majority of 83.5% respondents agreed with mentorship being very important for career advancement of female academics, with a mean score of 3.89 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 74.8% respondents agreed that mentorship provides career consultation, with a mean score of 3.80 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 80.6% respondents agreed that mentorship guide towards the right path, with a mean score of 3.86 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 77.7% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be supportive, with a mean score of 3.80 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 79.6% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be empathetic, with a mean

score of 3.88 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 84.5% respondents agreed that effective mentor should have domain knowledge, with a mean score of 3.92 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 78.6% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be patient, with a mean score of 3.86 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 76.7% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be a good listener, with a mean score of 3.84 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 73.8% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be selfless, with a mean score of 3.83 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 78.6% respondents agreed that effective mentor should be sympathetic, with a mean score of 3.81 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 80.6% respondents agreed they have attended mentorship programs during their academic career, with a mean score of 3.87 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 77.6% respondents agreed that mentorship program had a positive impact on their development as a leaders, with a mean score of 3.89 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 78.6% respondents agreed that mentorship programs provide skill development, with a mean score of 3.80 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 75.7% respondents agreed that mentorship programs encourage supportive mindset, with a mean score of 3.81 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 81.6% respondents agreed that mentorship programs can help in overcoming gender-specific challenges in academic leadership, with a mean score of 3.91 which also represented high intensity.

This emphasizes the crucial role of mentorship in advancing the careers of female academics, with 83.5% of participants acknowledging its significance. Mentorship offers valuable career advice and guidance toward the right direction. Effective mentors are characterized as supportive, empathetic, knowledgeable, patient, good listeners, selfless, and sympathetic, with a strong emphasis on their expertise in specific fields. Most respondents had engaged in mentorship programs and reported a positive influence on their leadership development. These programs foster skill enhancement, promote a constructive mindset, and assist in navigating gender-specific challenges in leadership. Overall, the study highlights mentorship as a vital element in improving leadership abilities and empowering female academics in leadership positions.

Table 4.7*Teachers' Responses regarding Leadership Training Program (95)*

Leadership Program	Training	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Access to LTP		37.9	16.5	45.6	100	2.93
Positive influence on capability		60.2	16.5	23.3	100	3.48
Beneficial for Aspiring Female		68.9	14.6	16.5	100	3.37
Problem-Solving training		81.6	9.7	8.7	100	3.90
Conflict Resolution Training		84.4	4.9	9.7	100	4.05
Digital Skill Training		62.1	16.5	21.4	100	3.49
Time Management Training		76.7	8.7	14.6	100	3.87
Learned Many Skills		82.5	7.8	9.7	100	4.08
Access Challenging for Women		50.5	12.6	36.9	100	3.03

Table 4.7 shows that a majority of 45.6% respondents disagreed with having access to leadership training programs, with a mean score of 2.93 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 60.2% respondents agreed that leadership training programs have positively influenced their capabilities as leaders, with a mean score of 3.48 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 68.9% respondents agreed that leadership training programs are beneficial for female academics aspiring to leadership positions, with a mean score of 3.37 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 81.6% respondents agreed that there should be problem-solving training, with a mean score of 3.90 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 84.4% respondents agreed that there should be conflict resolution training, with a mean score of 4.05 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 62.1% respondents agreed that there should be digital skills training, with a

mean score of 3.49 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 76.7% respondents agreed that there should be time management training, with a mean score of 3.87 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 82.5% respondents agreed that they have learned many skills through these leadership trainings, with a mean score of 4.08 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 50.5% respondents agreed with having to face access to leadership training program as a challenge for women, with a mean score of 3.03 which also represented medium intensity.

The study indicates that leadership training programs are very advantageous for female academics, with 68.9% of participants recognizing their importance and reporting a positive effect on their leadership abilities. However, access continues to be a significant challenge, particularly for women. There is a notable demand for training in areas such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management. Furthermore, respondents reported acquiring valuable skills through these programs. In summary, while leadership training improves leadership skills, accessibility is still a major concern.

Table 4.8*Teachers' Responses regarding Family Friendly Environment (95)*

Family-Friendly Environment	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Total %	Mean
Supportive Institute	75.7	6.8	7.8	100	3.95
Medical Facility	63.1	10.7	26.2	100	3.46
Daycare Facility	81.5	6.8	11.7	100	3.86
Good Payment	56.3	15.5	25.2	100	3.45
Student Interaction Activities	76.7	8.7	12.6	100	3.82
Peer to Peer Interaction	74.8	8.7	16.5	100	3.76
Extracurricular Activities	84.5	5.8	9.7	100	3.93
Informal Gatherings	76.7	13.6	9.7	100	3.87
Enhance Career Prospects	72.8	15.5	11.7	100	3.74
Enhance Well-Being	83.5	6.8	9.7	100	3.91

Table 4.8 shows that most 75.7% respondents agreed with having supportive institutes in term of creating a family-friendly work environment, with a mean score of 3.95 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 63.1% respondents agreed that their institute provides medical facility, with a mean score of 3.46 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 81.5% respondents agreed that their institute provides a daycare facility, with a mean score of 3.86 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 56.3% respondents agreed that their institute provides good payment with a mean score of 3.45 which also represented medium intensity. A majority of 76.7% respondents agreed that there should be more student interaction activities to improve a friendly environment, with a mean score of 3.82 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 74.8% respondents agreed that there should be more peer to peer interactions, with a mean score of 3.76 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 84.5% respondents agreed that there should be extracurricular

activities for female leaders to interact with each other, with a mean score of 3.93 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 76.7% respondents agreed there should be informal gatherings for female leaders to improve bonding, with a mean score of 3.87 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 72.8% respondents agreed there should be Creating a more family-friendly environment can enhance career prospects, with a mean score of 3.74 which also represented high intensity. A majority of 83.5% respondents agreed that creating a more family-friendly environment can enhance the well-being of female academic leaders, with a mean score of 3.91 which also represented high intensity.

This indicates that most female academic leaders perceive their institutions as supportive in fostering a family-friendly work environment. Many organizations offer medical services, daycare options, and competitive salaries. Respondents highlighted the importance of increasing student interaction, peer engagement, extracurricular activities, and informal gatherings to strengthen relationships among colleagues. A significant number believe that a family-friendly atmosphere can enhance career opportunities and promote the well-being of female academic leaders. In summary, institutional support and a family-oriented culture are regarded as essential for the professional and personal success of women in academia.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study titled "Challenges and Prospects for Women's Academic Leadership" looks into the systemic obstacles and opportunities that women leaders encounter in higher education. It focuses on key factors such as gender bias in hiring and promotions, the influence of cultural norms, and the accessibility of mentoring and professional development programs. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to thoroughly understand how these elements affect women's career growth in education. The study will utilize thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores, for quantitative data to offer a well-rounded view of the issues involved.

The problem statement highlights the under-representation of women in leadership positions, which is attributed to systemic challenges, societal expectations, and a lack of mentoring and networking opportunities. This research aims to delve into these challenges and pinpoint supportive strategies to boost female leadership. Its goals include investigating the difficulties faced by women leaders, assessing the impact of gender biases and cultural norms, identifying pathways for career progression, and evaluating the effectiveness of support systems like mentorship, leadership training, and family-friendly policies.

The study emphasizes the importance of mentorship for career growth, with effective mentors characterized as supportive, empathetic, knowledgeable, and patient. Leadership training programs were deemed beneficial but were less accessible to women. Participants recommended training in areas such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management. Additionally, the study found that while institutions provided support through medical and daycare facilities, there was a need for more peer interaction, extracurricular activities, and informal gatherings to improve the work environment.

5.2 Findings

Findings have been presented based on the objectives of the study. Findings related to Objective 1: “Explore the specific challenges faced by female leaders in achieving and maintaining leadership positions in Pakistani universities.” Are as follows;

1. Majority of the respondents pointed out that time management, insufficient workspace, and a lack of available rooms are major organizational challenges for female academic leaders. They also highlighted the physical distance between classrooms and offices as a significant structural issue that affects efficiency and accessibility (Theme 1).
2. While the majority recognized the general discrimination against women in Pakistan, they did not see it as a challenge within the academic sector. They reported a positive attitude from male colleagues and superiors towards female leadership, indicating that there is no perceived need for further measures to combat gender discrimination in academia, as it seems to be absent (Theme 2).
3. Many respondents shared that they encounter personal challenges, with work-life balance and time management being the most pressing. They manage these issues by keeping their personal and professional lives distinct and prioritizing their tasks. Family support was widely acknowledged as a vital element in achieving a healthy work-life balance (Theme 3).
4. Most respondents expressed that societal and cultural norms in Pakistan do not impede their roles as academic leaders, nor do social and domestic responsibilities obstruct their leadership. However, they noted that women often face higher expectations than men and are frequently viewed as more aggressive in leadership positions. Respondents suggested that altering socio-cultural attitudes necessitates increased support for women, raising awareness, and sharing domestic duties within families (Theme 4).
5. The majority of respondents did not encounter significant economic challenges on their path to academic leadership, as most attended public institutions and received domestic support. Nonetheless, they recognized that financial limitations can impact their performance, underscoring the

need for economic assistance. They recommended making higher education more affordable and providing enhanced financial incentives for women in academia (Theme 5).

Findings related to Objective 2: “Identify the influence of gender biases, cultural norms, and institutional practices on the female academic leadership.” Are as follows;

1. Time management is the biggest challenge with the mean of 3.92 when it comes to organizational challenges on the other hand mean value of 4.15 shows that the institutes provide high quality facilities like day care and medical. Female academic leaders encounter considerable organizational challenges, especially when it comes to balancing time management with family responsibilities. Although workspace allocation isn't a significant problem, the physical distance between offices and classrooms continues to pose difficulties. (Table 4.1).
2. Mean value of 3.94 shows a largely positive academic environment concerning gender equality. Most respondents reported not facing gender discrimination in their roles and highlighted supportive, collaborative relationships in the workplace. However, many recognized that gender discrimination exists in a wider context, although there are positive measures implemented to tackle it (Table 4.2).
3. Mean value of 3.95 shows that for teachers’ family plays the biggest role in helping balance work-life. This indicates that personal challenges have a considerable effect on female academic leaders, as many find it difficult to juggle their personal and professional responsibilities, especially when it comes to managing their time. A robust support system from family was crucial in helping them attain a balance between work and life (Table 4.3).
4. Mean value of 3.20 showed that it is necessary for the socio-cultural attitudes to change toward women in leadership. The study shows that societal and cultural norms do not greatly affect female academic leaders, as most do not see social or domestic responsibilities as challenges. However, many feel that society expects more from women than men, and women in leadership are often seen as more aggressive. While direct cultural

pressures are low, gender biases and leadership stereotypes remain challenging (Table 4.4).

5. The mean of 3.74 showed that for women to achieve their goals, economic support is crucial. The study indicates that economic challenges are not a significant obstacle for most female academic leaders, as they generally do not encounter financial difficulties and have the advantage of public education and robust domestic support. (Table 4.5).

Findings related to Objective 3: “Find out the prospects that can facilitate the career advancement of female academics into leadership positions.” Are as follows;

1. Most respondents viewed mentorship as essential for career growth, providing guidance and support to women in academia. An ideal mentor was characterized as supportive, empathetic, knowledgeable, patient, a good listener, selfless, and understanding. The majority had participated in mentorship programs, which significantly contributed to their leadership development by enhancing skills and fostering a positive mindset to tackle gender-specific challenges (Theme 6).
2. Most respondents found leadership training programs valuable for female academics aiming for leadership positions, as these programs had a positive effect on their leadership skills. However, access to these programs was often limited, making it difficult for women to take part. Respondents recommended offering training in areas such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management (Theme 7).
3. Most respondents described their institutions as very supportive in fostering a family-friendly work environment, providing medical facilities, daycare, and competitive salaries. They suggested increasing student interaction, peer engagement, extracurricular activities, and informal gatherings to strengthen connections among female leaders. A more family-friendly atmosphere was viewed as advantageous for both career opportunities and the well-being of female academic leaders (Theme 8).

Findings related to Objective 4: “Investigate the availability and effectiveness of support mechanisms such as mentorship programs, leadership training, and family-friendly environment.” Are as follows;

1. Mean value of 3.89 shows that mentorship is important for the career advancement of female academics. The study indicates that mentorship plays a crucial role in the career advancement of female academics. Effective mentors are characterized by their supportiveness, empathy, knowledge, and patience. (Table 4.6).
2. Mean value of 4.08 showed that leadership training has been beneficial for teachers to learn new skills. Leadership training programs are highly beneficial for female academics noting a positive impact on teachers’ leadership capabilities. Access remains a challenge, particularly for women. There is strong demand for training in problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management (Table 4.7).
3. Mean value of 3.95 showed that institutions are supportive in terms of creating a family-friendly work environment. Many female academic leaders feel that their institutions are supportive in fostering a family-friendly work environment, offering amenities such as medical services, daycare, and competitive salaries. The respondents expressed a desire for increased student interaction, peer engagement, extracurricular activities, and informal gatherings. (Table 4.8).

Triangulation of the Findings

The responds of qualitative data for the themes; organizational challenges, gender discrimination, personal and work-life challenges, Socio-cultural challenges and economic challenges (For Challenges), and mentorship program, leadership training program and family-friendly environment (For Prospects) were supported by the responds of quantitative data.

As it was found in qualitative result that family support was widely acknowledged as a vital element in achieving a healthy work-life balance, further while analyzing quantitative result it was supported with the mean score of 3.95. The finding from qualitative result that they reported a positive attitude from male colleagues and superiors towards female leadership, was also supported with the mean score of 3.94.

Also as it was found in qualitative result that leadership training programs had a positive effect on their leadership skills, further while analyzing quantitative result it was supported with the mean score of 3.48. The finding from qualitative result that institutions are very supportive in fostering a family-friendly work environment, was also supported with the mean score of 3.95.

5.3 Discussion

This study found that female academic leaders encounter various organizational challenges, including issues with time management, insufficient workspace, and the physical distance between classrooms and offices. These results are consistent with the observations made by Morley (2013) and Blackmore (2014), who highlighted that women in academia often face structural barriers and logistical difficulties. However, in contrast to studies conducted in Western contexts, where work-life integration tools are more readily available (Aiston & Jung, 2015), Pakistani universities do not offer such support systems, revealing a specific gap in this context. Unlike global findings that indicate gender bias in academia (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010; Bilimoria & Liang, 2012), this study found no significant gender discrimination within Pakistani academic institutions. Respondents reported positive attitudes from their male colleagues and superiors. This finding diverges from the global narrative but is in line with Qureshi et al. (2016), who also noted supportive environments in certain Pakistani universities. This suggests that cultural norms may not uniformly impact all academic institutions in Pakistan.

The study highlighted work-life balance as a major challenge, with family support playing a vital role. This aligns with the findings of Winchester and Browning (2015) and Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2016), who noted similar difficulties in juggling professional and personal responsibilities. However, unlike Western countries where institutional support such as flexible working hours is more prevalent (Fitzgerald, 2019), universities in Pakistan offer limited structural solutions, focusing instead on cultural expectations regarding women's domestic roles. While societal norms did not outright prevent women from taking on leadership positions, they did face heightened expectations and were often viewed as more aggressive in such roles. This observation aligns with Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory, which posits that women in leadership encounter a "double-bind" of being perceived as either too assertive or too passive. In contrast to research conducted in Europe and North America (Rosette & Tost, 2013), where women are increasingly challenging stereotypes, Pakistani cultural norms remain more entrenched, upholding traditional gender roles.

Economic constraints were not generally seen as obstacles due to the presence of public education and domestic support. However, financial limitations did impact

the effectiveness of leadership. This is in contrast to research conducted in developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Mama, 2003) and South Asia (Madsen et al., 2012), where economic barriers are more evident. It underscores the distinct socio-economic context of Pakistan, where public education alleviates some financial burdens for women.

Mentorship was recognized as crucial for career growth and for addressing gender-specific challenges, which aligns with the findings of Eagly and Carli (2007) and Klenke (2017). In contrast to Western settings where formal mentorship programs are more prevalent (Rosser & Lane, 2002), this study revealed that informal mentorship networks are more common in Pakistan. This is consistent with Shah (2015), who emphasized the significance of informal mentoring in navigating local institutional dynamics. The research indicated that while leadership training is beneficial, it is not easily accessible, with a particular need for skills in problem-solving, conflict resolution, and digital literacy. This corresponds with global findings (Fitzgerald, 2014; Violon & Prado, 2024) regarding the importance of leadership development for women. However, unlike developed nations that have established leadership programs, Pakistani universities lack structured training pathways, revealing a notable gap.

Supportive work environments were acknowledged, but there was a suggestion for increased peer interaction and bonding activities. This aligns with the findings of Winchester and Browning (2015) and Bailyn (2003), who highlighted the significance of supportive work cultures for female leaders. In contrast to Nordic countries that have established advanced family-friendly policies (Teigen, 2012), Pakistani universities offer limited provisions, highlighting the cultural and policy disparities. The study underscored the necessity for policy reforms and cultural shifts to foster gender equality. This aligns with global calls for institutional reforms (Morley, 2013; Ovseiko et al., 2017). However, while Western institutions have made progress through initiatives like the Athena SWAN Charter, Pakistani universities are still behind in policy implementation, as pointed out by Siddiqui (2021).

5.4 Conclusion

Based on the findings, following conclusions are envisaged;

1. **Organizational Challenges:** Female academic leaders encounter significant hurdles, such as difficulties in managing their time, insufficient workspace, and the physical distance between classrooms and offices, all of which can impede their productivity and efficiency.
2. **Gender Discrimination:** While discrimination against women is a broader issue in Pakistan, it is not seen as a major concern within academia, where male colleagues and superiors typically support female leadership.
3. **Personal Challenges and Work-Life Conflict:** Striking a balance between work and personal life poses a significant challenge for female leaders, with family support playing a vital role in managing these dual responsibilities.
4. **Socio-Cultural Challenges:** Although societal norms do not directly obstruct leadership roles, women often face higher expectations than their male counterparts and may be viewed as more aggressive, underscoring the need for cultural shifts and increased support for women in leadership positions.
5. **Economic Challenges:** Economic barriers are not widely recognized as significant obstacles due to the availability of public education and domestic support. However, financial constraints can impact leadership effectiveness, highlighting the necessity for economic assistance and affordable higher education.
6. **Mentorship and Career Advancement:** Mentorship is crucial for career growth, providing guidance, skill enhancement, and a positive outlook to navigate gender-specific challenges. Effective mentors are regarded as supportive, empathetic, knowledgeable, and patient.
7. **Leadership Training Programs:** While leadership training programs are advantageous, they are not easily accessible to women. There is a pressing need for training in areas such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, digital skills, and time management to bolster leadership capabilities.
8. **Family-Friendly Work Environment:** Supportive workplaces that offer medical and daycare facilities are valued. However, there is a need for increased peer interaction, extracurricular activities, and informal

gatherings to strengthen relationships and improve the career prospects and well-being of female leaders.

5.5 Recommendations

a. Recommendations of the study

The following recommendations are given based on the conclusions;

1. Organizational Challenges such as time management, insufficient workspace, and office-classroom distance hinder productivity. To address these issues, university administrators may implement flexible scheduling, assign dedicated workspaces, and improve campus layouts. The use of digital tools is also encouraged to streamline academic tasks and enhance productivity.
2. Subtle gender discrimination and stereotypes still influence leadership roles, even though overt bias is minimal. To reduce bias, universities may conduct regular gender-sensitization workshops, promote gender-neutral hiring practices, and highlight successful female leaders through events and leadership forums.
3. Personal and work-life conflict makes it hard for women to balance professional and family responsibilities. University HR departments may provide flexible work hours, remote work options, and on-campus childcare services to help female leaders manage both domains effectively.
4. Socio-cultural expectations pressure women to prove themselves more and label assertive behavior as aggressive. Educational institutions and community partners may run awareness campaigns, involve male allies, and create open dialogue platforms to challenge traditional gender roles and promote shared domestic responsibilities.
5. Financial constraints limit access to development opportunities and affect leadership performance. Government agencies and universities may offer targeted scholarships, grants, and leadership development funds for women pursuing advanced education and training.
6. Lack of structured mentorship hinders leadership development among aspiring female academics. Universities may formalize mentorship programs, conduct regular mentorship workshops, and connect junior faculty with experienced leaders to support career growth.

7. Limited access to leadership training prevents women from building key management skills. University management may offer leadership training in problem-solving, digital skills, conflict resolution, and strategic planning. Programs should be available in flexible and online formats.
8. Female leaders need stronger peer support and informal interaction opportunities to enhance collaboration. Universities may organize peer interaction events, extracurricular activities, and informal gatherings to foster stronger networks and a supportive academic culture.

b. Recommendations for Future Studies

1. Explore the long-term impact of leadership training on female academic advancement.
2. Conduct comparative studies between male and female academic leadership experiences.
3. Investigate regional and institutional differences in challenges faced by female leaders.
4. Study the effectiveness of mentorship programs across various university settings.
5. Examine the role of digital tools and remote work in supporting female academic leadership.

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APPENDIX A

Semi Structured Interview

CHALLENGES

- Q1. How long have you been in the leadership status?
- Q2. How would you define your role as a leader?
- Q3. How would you distinguish your experience as a faculty member before entering leadership?
- Q4. Can you describe any specific organizational challenges you have faced in your role as a female academic leader?
- Q5. How do the policies and practices within your institution impact your leadership role?
- Q6. Are there any structural challenges within your organization that you believe hinder your effectiveness or advancement?
- Q7. Have you experienced gender discrimination in your academic career? Can you share specific instances or examples?
- Q8. How do you perceive the attitude of your colleagues and superiors towards female leaders in your institution?
- Q9. What measures do you think can be taken to reduce gender discrimination in academic leadership?
- Q10. What personal challenges have you faced in achieving and maintaining a leadership position in academia?
- Q11. How do you balance your personal aspirations with the demands of your leadership role?

- Q12. Are there any personal strategies or resources you rely on to overcome these challenges?
- Q13. How do societal and cultural norms in Pakistan affect your role as an academic leader?
- Q14. Are there any cultural expectations that you find particularly challenging in your leadership role?
- Q15. In what ways do you think socio-cultural attitudes towards women in leadership need to change?
- Q16. Can you describe how you manage work-life balance in your leadership role?
- Q17. What impact does your leadership position have on your personal and family life?
- Q18. Are there any institutional policies or practices that you find helpful or unhelpful in managing work-life conflict?
- Q19. Have you faced any economic challenges in your journey to academic leadership?
- Q20. How do financial resources or constraints impact your ability to perform effectively in your role?
- Q21. What economic support or resources do you think would benefit female academic leaders?

PROSPECTS

- Q1. Can you describe any mentorship programs you have participated in during your academic career? How did they impact your development as a leader?
- Q2. How important do you think mentorship is for the career advancement of female academics? Can you provide any specific examples?
- Q3. What qualities do you believe are essential in an effective mentor for female academic leaders?
- Q4. Are there any mentorship programs you think should be implemented or improved in your institution to better support female leaders?
- Q5. Have you had access to any leadership training programs? If so, how have they influenced your capabilities as a leader?
- Q6. What types of leadership training do you think are most beneficial for female academics aspiring to leadership positions?

- Q7. Can you share any specific skills or knowledge you gained from leadership training that has been particularly valuable in your role?
- Q8. What challenges, if any, do you think exist for women in accessing leadership training programs?
- Q9. How could leadership training programs be tailored to better address the unique challenges faced by female academic leaders?
- Q10. How do you think mentorship can help in overcoming gender-specific challenges in academic leadership?
- Q11. How supportive do you find your institution in terms of creating a family-friendly work environment?
- Q12. Can you describe any family-friendly policies or practices that have positively impacted your ability to lead effectively?
- Q13. What challenges have you faced in balancing your family responsibilities with your leadership role, and how has your institution supported you in this regard?
- Q14. Are there any additional family-friendly initiatives you think would benefit female leaders in academia?
- Q15. How do you think the creation of a more family-friendly environment can enhance the career prospects and well-being of female academic leaders?

APPENDIX B

With due respect I am a Scholar of MS Educational Leadership and Management at International Islamic University Islamabad. I am working on my thesis with the topic Challenges and Prospects of Female Academic Leaders. Now I am at data collection phase. Therefore, I directly need your help in completion of this process. You are requested to kindly spare your 10 minutes for filling out the questionnaire, please. Your corporation in this regard was appreciated. The collected data will only be used for academic purpose.

Age: _____

Education: _____

Experience: _____

Sr.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
CHALLENGES						
a. Organizational Challenges						
01	I have faced organizational challenges as a female academic leader.					

02	Managing a family can be challenging for me.					
03	Managing time can be challenging for me.					
04	The allocation of female workspace can be challenging for me.					
05	My Institution provides the facility of daycare.					
06	My Institution provides a medical facility.					
07	I face structural challenges within my institution.					
08	Distance between the office and classes can be challenging.					
b. Gender Discrimination						
01	I have experienced gender discrimination in my academic career.					
02	The attitude of my colleagues and seniors towards female leaders in my institution is positive.					
03	They are supportive.					

04	They are collaborative.					
05	Females in general face a lot of gender discrimination at workplaces.					
06	Positive measures should be taken to reduce gender discrimination in academic leadership					
c. Personal Challenges and Work-Life Conflict						
01	I faced personal challenges in achieving and maintaining a leadership position in academia.					
02	Work-life balance is a top challenge for female academic leadership.					
03	I can manage time between work-life.					
04	I balance my personal goals well with the demands of my leadership role.					
05	I prioritize more important task at a time.					
06	I prefer separate professional and personal time.					

07	Family plays a bigger role in helping balance work-life.					
d. Socio-Cultural Challenges						
01	Pakistani societal and cultural norms affect my role as an academic leader.					
02	There are more expectations from women than men.					
03	Social responsibilities affect my role as an academic leader.					
04	I find domestic responsibilities particularly challenging in my leadership role.					
05	Socio-cultural attitudes toward women in leadership need to change.					
06	Women are seen as more aggressive than men in leadership roles.					
e. Economic Challenges						
01	I have faced economic challenges in my journey to academic leadership.					
02	I have studied in public institutes.					

03	I have had positive domestic support.					
04	Financial constraints impact my ability to perform effectively in my role.					
05	Institutes should provide more financial benefits to women.					
06	Advanced education should be a little cheaper.					
07	Economic support is crucial for females to achieve their goals					
PROSPECTS						
a. Mentorship Program						
01	I think mentorship is important for the career advancement of female academics.					
02	Mentorship provides career consultation.					
03	Mentorship guide the right path.					
04	An effective mentor for female academic leaders should be supportive					
05	An effective mentor should be empathic,					

06	An effective mentor should have domain knowledge					
07	An effective mentor should be a patient					
08	An effective mentor should be a good listener					
09	An effective mentor should be selfless					
10	An effective mentor should be sympathetic					
11	I have attended mentorship programs during my academic career.					
12	Mentorship program had a positive impact on my development as a leader.					
13	Mentorship programs provide skill development,					
14	Mentorship programs encourage a supportive mindset					
15	Mentorship programs can help in overcoming gender-specific challenges in academic leadership.					
b. Leadership Training Program						

01	I had access to leadership training programs.					
02	LTP have positively influenced my capabilities as a leader.					
03	I think leadership training is beneficial for female academics aspiring to leadership positions.					
04	There should be problem-solving training.					
05	There should be conflict resolution training.					
06	There should be digital skills training.					
07	There should be time management training					
08	I have learned many skills through these leadership trainings.					
09	It is challenging for women to access leadership training programs.					
c. Family-Friendly Environment						
01	My institute is supportive in terms of creating a family-friendly work environment.					

02	My institute provides a facility of medical.					
03	My institute provides a daycare facility.					
04	My institute provides good payment.					
05	There should be student interaction activities to improve a friendly environment					
06	There should be more peer-to-peer interactions.					
07	There should be extracurricular activities for female leaders to interact with each other					
08	There should be informal gatherings for female leaders to improve bonding.					
09	Creating a more family-friendly environment can enhance career prospects					
10	Creating a more family-friendly environment can enhance the well-being of female academic leaders.					

APPENDIX C

List of Experts

Sr.	Name of Experts	Designation
01	Dr. Fouzia Ajmal	Assistant Professor, Teacher Education Department, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
02	Dr. Humaira Akram	Assistant Professor, Teacher Education Department, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
03	Ms. Sumaira Batool	Teaching/Research Associate, ELM Department, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
04	Dr. Sana Jahangeer	Lecturer, Humanities Department, Air University