UNDERSTANDING MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Nationwide research conducted to analyse female leadership across various sectors

About Us

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The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

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Since 1991, Carnelian's team members have been active across the length and breadth of Pakistan, adding value to organizations, small and large, local and global, private and public and commercial and non-profit.

Carnelian (PVT) Limited has been working with public, private and development sector organizations across Pakistan in the fields of training, research, capacity development, branding and communications. We have trained thousands of people, young ones included, and therefore our experts hold command over topics such as leadership, change management, business development, effective communication, design thinking, diversity and inclusion. This diverse exposure to myriad industries, cultures, business realities and human factors uniquely positions Carnelian as a full-service Advocacy, Research and Communication Consulting partner.

Acknowledgements

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
BRACE	Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment
CDIP	Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CSS	Central Superior Services
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion
DFID	Department for International Development
ECP	Election Commission Pakistan
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
FIR	First Information Report
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INSEAD	Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires
IVF	In vitro fertilization
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPK	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
KPMG	Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler
KII	Key Informant Interviews

KPK	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
KPMG	Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler
LSBE	Life skills based education
MNA	Member of the National Assembly
MNC	Multinational Company
MS	Microsoft
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
ODK	Open Data Kit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
PDF	Portable Document Format
PM	Prime Minister
PR	Public Relations
PSDF	Punjab Skills Development Fund
PUAN	Pakistan US Alumni Network
SCCI	Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SNGPL	Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UNW	UN Women
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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Foreword

"The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough." H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first female President of Liberia.

Women's participation in leadership roles has increased globally and is being commended for making positive contributions to socioeconomic progress. The United States of America has just elected its first woman Vice President – the biggest break in the glass ceiling for women in the United States, and a positive step forward (globally) for women in leadership roles.

While there is a marked visibility of women in leadership roles, there is still debate around how much power and authority they have at the decision-making table. Women, the world over, but more so in developing and culturally conservative countries such as Pakistan, are still questing for more representation and access to crucial decision-making platforms across all sectors. A 2018 report by Women on Board Pakistan shows for every 10 male directors there is only one female director.

The past few years have been a source of solidarity and strong activism for many women in Pakistan as both men and women have marched to advocate for women's right to fair and equal treatment at work, protection from gender-based violence and a call to effectively implement women protection laws in the society. More and more, women are demanding meaningful participation in leadership roles whether as a CEO of a company or a sports captain who can feel safe and encouraged to pursue higher and better positions in their fields, and rightfully so. Yet, in spite of these efforts, global and national commitments to gender equality and reducing inequities, such as SDG5 geared towards promoting gender balance and equality, women still face significant barriers that restrict equal participation, especially in structures of representation be it at a macro, micro or meso level.

Research shows that in a traditional society like Pakistan's, women still remain largely within the confines of their homes, and most decision-making – a critical component of leadership – is done by those that hold the economic power in the household. Even in cases where girls are given the opportunity to pursue education, beyond primary and secondary, development of leadership skills is often overlooked as a fundamental aspect of balanced growth.

A large body of literature suggests that the marginalisation of girls often begins in infancy, when societies condition them to play passive roles and are given little to no opportunities to develop leadership skills. According to Cheryl Sandberg in her pivotal writing, Lean in, "there's an ambition gap for leadership roles between genders. Women tend to settle for non-leadership roles; women need to sit at the table instead of being spectators", to decisions made for them and the generations to come. As a result, women and girls lack the self-confidence and or skills needed to perform effectively in formal positions of leadership. Where women do achieve success in accessing leadership roles, they are often met with hostile cultures that tend to side-line women and keep them from actively participating in decision-making.

This lack of voice and agency, results in women's inability to influence political, economic, and social processes and institutions which directly control and shape their daily lives, resulting in a vicious cycle of exclusion.

Addressing this issue needs to be a priority for government, international organisations, civil society and businesses. The British Council aims to integrate gender equality issues and the empowerment of women and girls into all our work. We recognise that there is no "silver bullet" to overcome this issue, however, we aim to make a contribution to closing the leadership gap and ensure that through our work we are creating opportunities for women and girls to develop their skills, confidence and agency, ensuring fairer access to opportunities, creating space for dialogue and collaboration to shape both policy and the social and cultural attitudes that enable women and girls to lead, influence and fulfill their potential.

This research commissioned by the British Council Pakistan was initiated as a means of addressing gender inequalities with the aim of not only enabling women and girls worldwide access opportunities, participate in decision making, and contribute to social and economic development, but ensuring their participation is meaningful as well. It therefore highlights what "meaningful" participation entails and also showcases the many ways in which women are challenged across various sectors in Pakistan.

It further proposes ways of mitigating these risks for themselves and women around them. Through a gender focused approach in all sectors, this study gathers the experiences, perceptions and practices of more than 600 men and women hailing from all over Pakistan - with diverse social and economic backgrounds. The findings recommend reducing caregiver burden, facilitating women at work, building the capacity of aspiring young women and showing unconditional support to female family members or colleagues. While the COVID 19 pandemic threatens to globally undo the progress made with regards to gender equality, violence against women is up by 300 % globally, it has also in some ways given us the opportunity to build back better – organisations and individuals around the world need to deliver to ensure equality for all. Women Heads of Government in Denmark, Ethiopia,

Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand and Slovakia are being recognised for their response during the pandemic which has resulted in a comparatively rapid flattening of the curve. Now more than ever we need to engage young women and men to create an environment which is fair and equal.

Pakistan has a number of female role models from Fatima Jinnah – one of the leading founders of Pakistan, to the Muslim world's first female Prime Minister Sh. Benazir Bhutto, Speaker of the National Assembly Dr.Fehmida Mirza, as well as phenomenal women like Samina Khayal Baig, the first Pakistani woman to climb Everest and the Seven Summits and Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy the first ever Pakistani Oscar winner to name a few. With the right interventions at the right time, we can aim to add many more to the list.

"Something which we think is impossible now is not impossible in another decade." Constance Baker Motley, the first African-American woman appointed as a Federal judge in the United States.

Shandana Gulzar Khan

Member, National Assembly of Pakistan and Chairperson, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

Nishat Riaz

Director Education British Council Pakistan

Gillian Cowell

Head of Gender and Inclusion British Council

Executive Summary

Women constitute 48.5% of the world's population (The World Bank, 2019), which reflects the unquestionable potential of this still underrepresented group. In spite of evidence asserting women's role in producing stable, secure and open societies, women, especially in Pakistan, continue to remain socially, culturally and economically marginalised, with patterns of severe gender exclusion common across all provinces and sectors.

This trend carries across education and governance as well as in other sectors such as media, law and justice, sports, business and others too, ultimately forming the basis of lack of women in leadership positions across all sectors. Where women do secure leadership positions, more often than not, a deeply rooted patriarchal culture results in diminished authority.

In order to achieve meaningful participation of women in leadership roles specifically in Pakistan, it is detrimental to A) understand the varying perceptions surrounding definitions of leadership and differences in styles, B) identify challenges that women face while progressing in their fields, C) highlight the socioeconomic implications of both absence and presence of female leadership and D) suggest strategies to integrate women leadership to create a more diverse and inclusive society.

Thus, to achieve the aforementioned objectives this nation-wide study was conducted in seven sectors: Business and Entrepreneurship, Law and Justice, Politics and Governance, Arts and Media, Development, Civil Society and Sports. The methodology included:

- A detailed survey yielding 754 responses from all regions and sectors.
- 66 Interviews with gender, leadership and sector experts.
- 16 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) consisting of 130 participants in total.

Findings and Analysis

Exploring Leadership

Most popular definition of a leader with meaningful participation: someone having a vision, a consultative approach and the authority to make decisions.

However, where men associated achieving results as the most important characteristic of leadership, women were inclined towards having the authority to make decisions. It's a reflection of how women have felt that their voices are unheard even when given a seat at the table.

Women leaders were highlighted as more **empathetic, caring, collaborative,** due to their experiences from an early age and social conditioning while growing up. Since most of them juggle between household chores, caregiving and official work, women are known to be great **multi-taskers.** Whereas men tend to be more competitive and sometimes assertive in their interactions. But they also found this ability to be detrimental towards quick decision making, which they felt women were unable to perform.
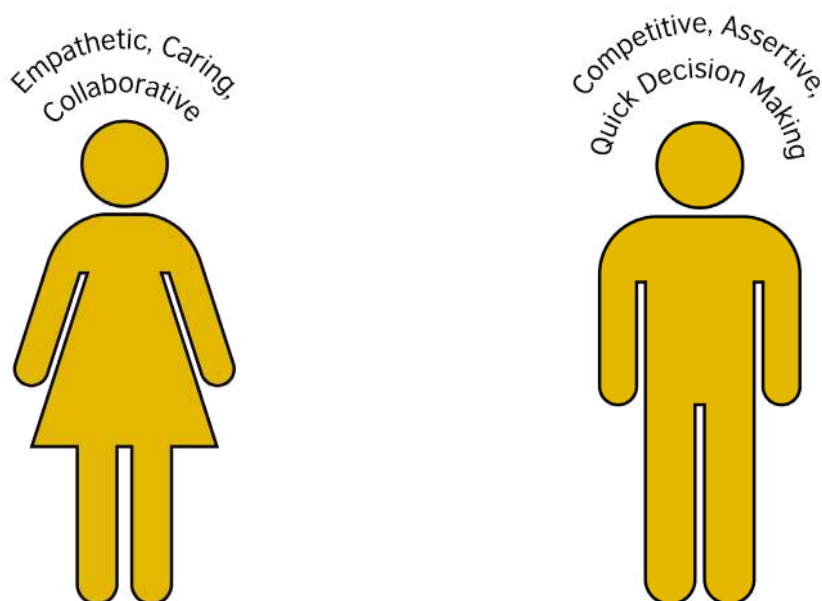
Despite an inclination towards attributes associated with female leadership, there seems to be an innate tendency to be more inclined towards male leadership and seek inspiration from male role models.

Boss Gender Preference ● Female ● Male

Sector	Female	Male
Development	13	14
Arts and Media	10	8
Business and Entrepreneurship	4	14
Civil Society	10	8
Law Justice	10	6
Politics and Governance	5	9
Sports		4
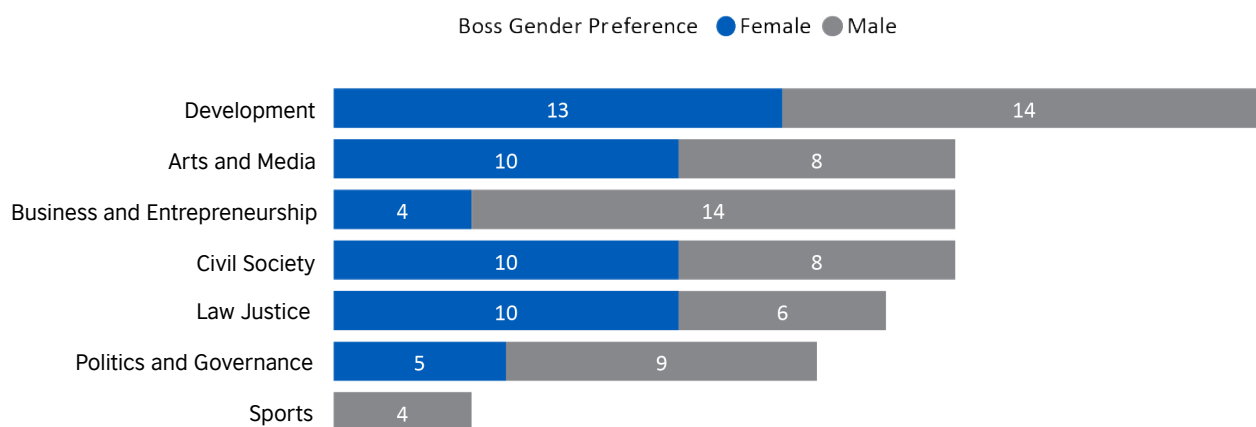
Figure 2.11: Would you prefer working for a male or a female boss? (survey responses by sector and gender preference of boss)
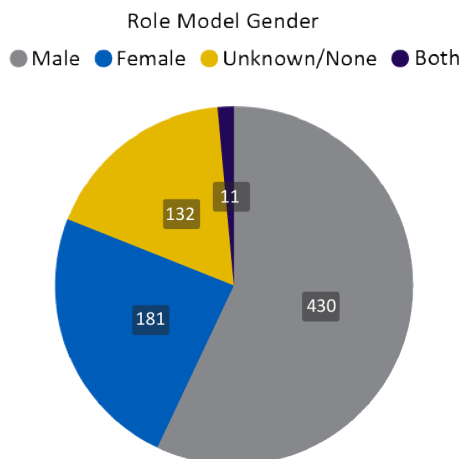
Figure 2.12: Gender of Role Models (survey responses)

57% of the survey respondents named male role models while 24% named female role models.

Extent of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

Majority of both female and male FGD respondents believed that equal representation of both genders in leadership roles was absent, with mostly men leading organisations at Board of Directors and C-Suite positions. A similar trend was noticed regarding gender balance in teams where most of the first line managers reported less females in their teams.
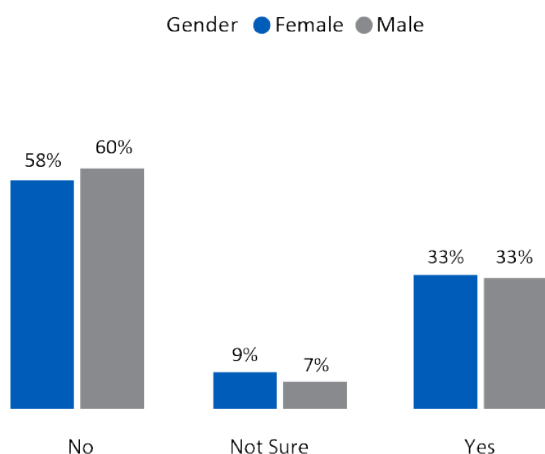
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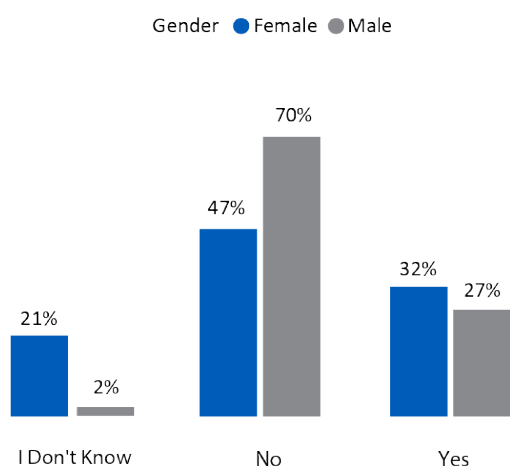
Figure 3.3: Do you have an equal representation of men and women in your team?
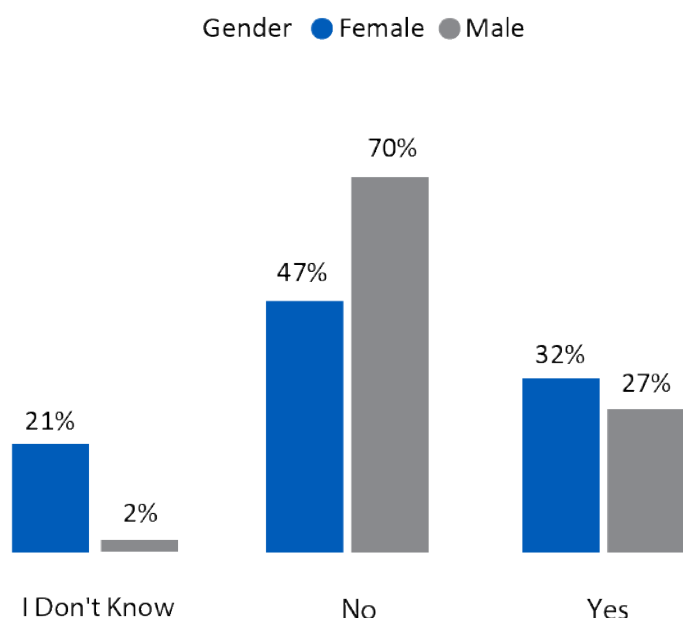
Figure 3.1: Is there difference between salary/benefits given to men and women at your organisation?

Upon inquiry with reference to knowledge on any differences in one's salary or benefits for the same role, the majority of the respondents did not believe that such differences existed in their organisation. But this response varied across sectors significantly.
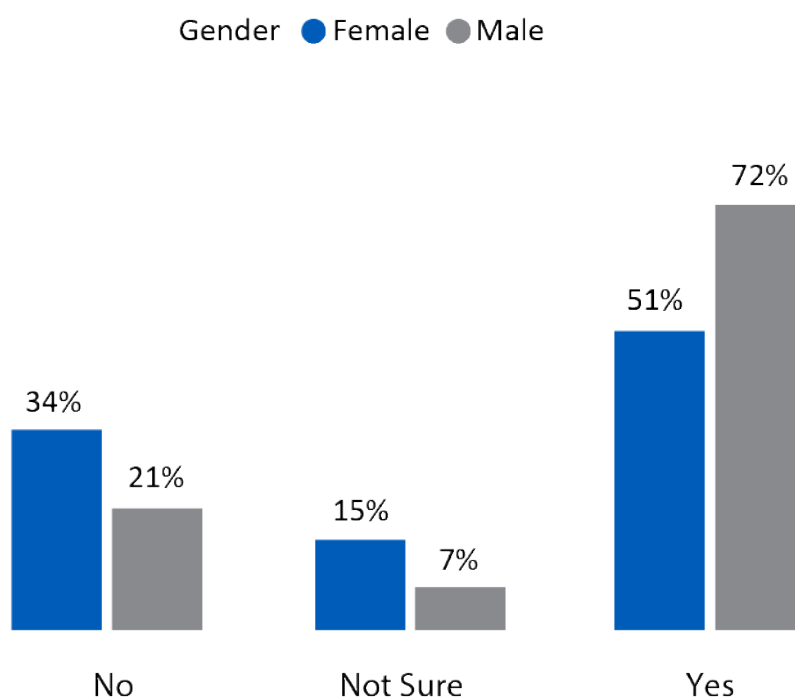
Figure 3.4: Are you provided with facilities such as flexible working hours, transport facility, daycare facility etc. at your workplace?

During the FGDs, Female respondents were almost equally split between agreeing and disagreeing on the provision of adequate facilities such as day care, transportation, flexible working hours among others, within their organisations or overall sector. However, 7 out of 10 male respondents indicated the presence of these support systems for women in their organisations or overall sector.

Gender ● Female ● Male
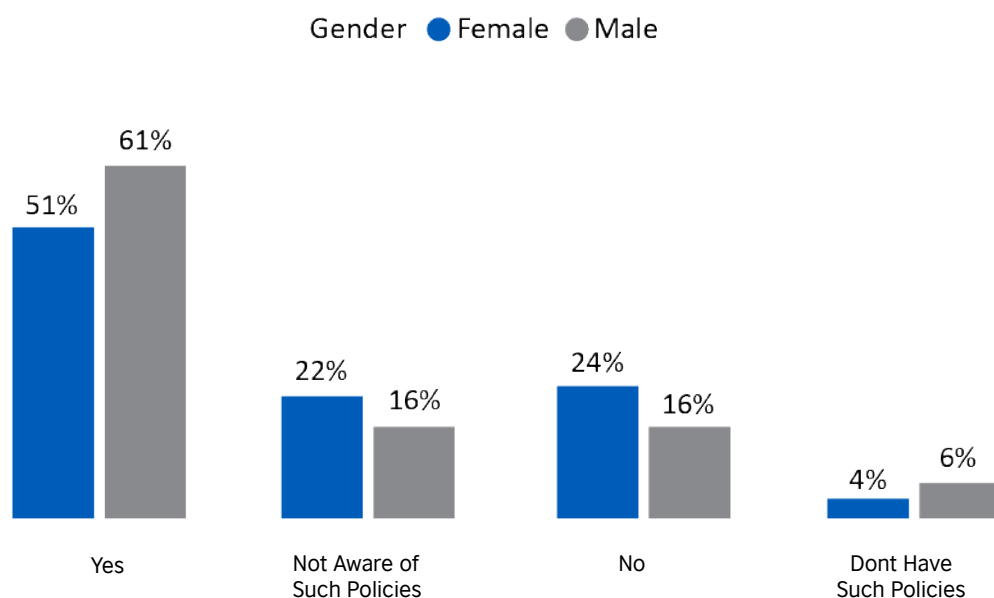
Figure 3.5: Are you satisfied with the maternity leave policy at your organisation?

Majority of both male and female respondents were satisfied with the maternity leave/ protection policies at their organisation. However, this varied across sectors significantly - as an almost equal number of respondents indicated dissatisfaction, absence or unawareness towards the policies.
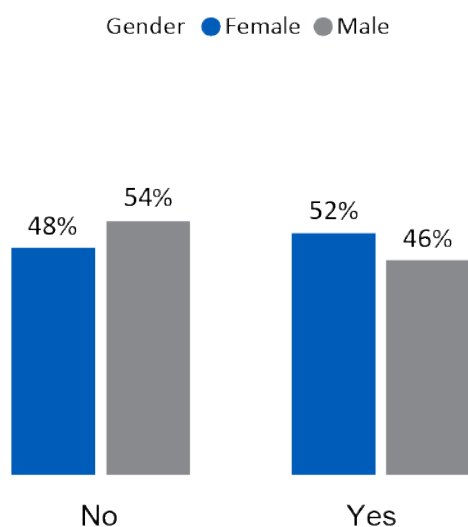
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 3.6: Have you attended any leadership development program?

Gender ● Female ● Male
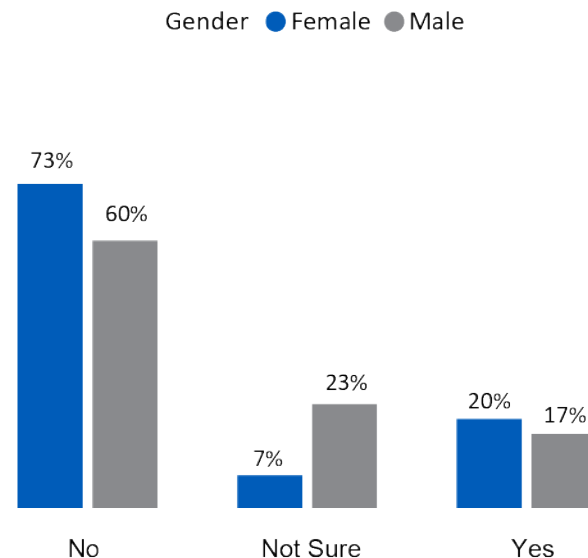
Figure 3.7: Are there mentorship programs for women in your organisation?

50% of both male and female FGD respondents shared having leadership programs for employees in their organisation or having attended one delivered by an external organisation across various sectors. Upon further inquiry, specifically regarding the presence of mentorship programs for women, 73% of female respondents and 60% of male respondents disagreed with the statement and indicated an absence of programs specifically designed to mentor women for leadership roles.

Gender ● Female ● Male
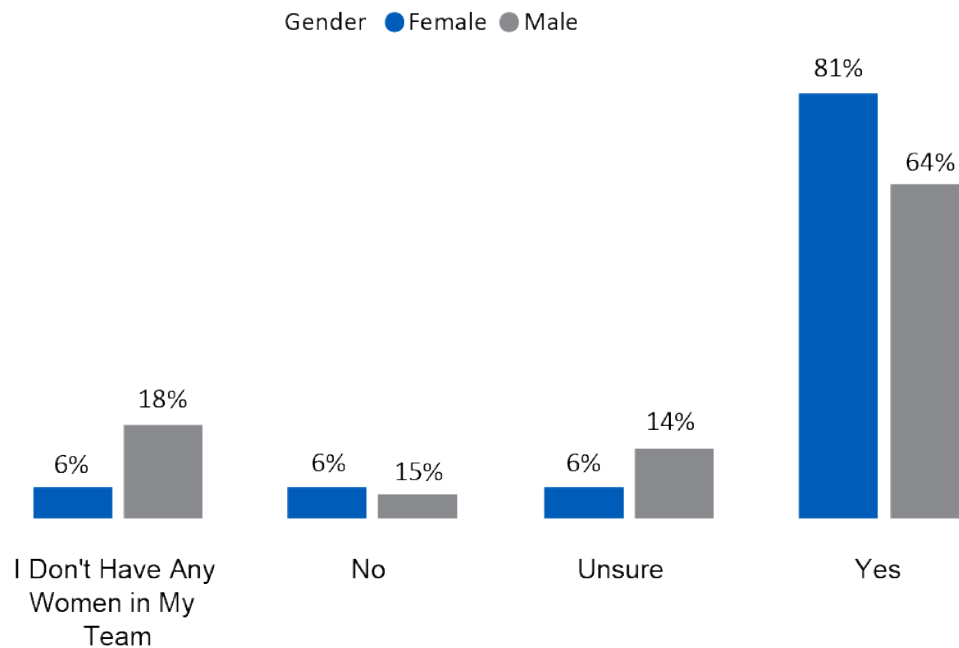
Figure 3.8: Are women in your teams ready to opt for leadership roles?

Majority of the first line managers across all sectors with female representation in their team shared that female members of their team were ready to opt for leadership roles. They supported honing of the female employee's potential and provision of necessary support for their placement at higher positions.

Barriers to Women's Leadership in Pakistan

Respondents were asked regarding any compromises they made in order to reach their current position. **Almost all FGDs' female respondents (91%) and majority of male respondents (71%) believed that women had to work harder for certain positions and that compromises for men and women differed (64 out of 69 female respondents, 38 out of 42 male respondents).**

Data indicated that **societal pressure, norms and stereotypes** were perceived as one of the biggest challenges faced by women across the country. The patriarchal system of Pakistan results in cultural barriers, and adherence to these cultural norms restricts women's mobility in the public sphere, **generates a preference for male leaders** and adversely affects her performance in the workplace. The inculcation of **self-doubt due to lack of family support** from an early age further aggravates the situation. Family pressure to either get married or only **pursue opportunities that are "safe"** and do not consume a lot of time was highlighted as a huge challenge for women's advancement.

These societal and family expectations also result in women performing **unpaid labor at home** alongside their occupation and workplace
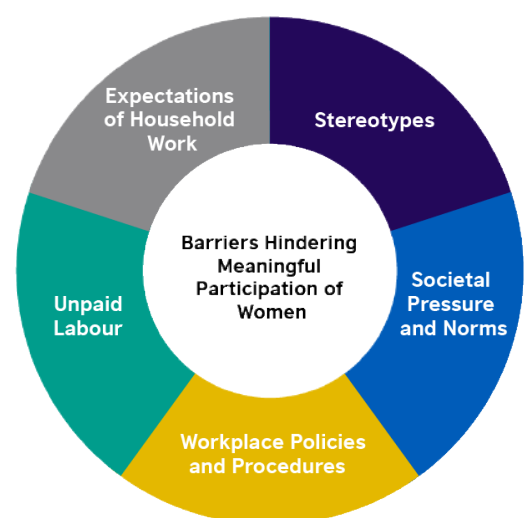
responsibilities. Expectations of household work, especially as primary caregivers of children, have led to high opportunity cost in terms of networking, promotions and overall professional development. Women at senior tiers in organisations identified having **to compromise on family time due to work** as an issue, and there was a sense of guilt associated with preferring work over family. Male respondents evidently did not face such issues, however some highlighted the struggles of a working female family member and attributed it to the lack of inclusive policies at the workplace.

Lack of women friendly **workplace policies and procedures** were consistently held responsible for exacerbating the challenges that women face at home and in society at large. **Long working hours, lack of daycare facilities and inadequate maternity support** were deemed inconsiderate to women's responsibilities as a "home-maker" at several organisations by both male and female respondents. **Safe commute** was also highlighted as a concern as many organisations did not pay heed to mobility restrictions of women. Some respondents also highlighted that **male dominated workplace environments** became "toxic" due to their unconscious bias, and at times conscious bias, towards male professionals and leaders. These issues combined adversely affected a woman's promotion to senior positions resulting in **lack of female role models and mentors** in the organisation which posed another barrier to women's advancement.
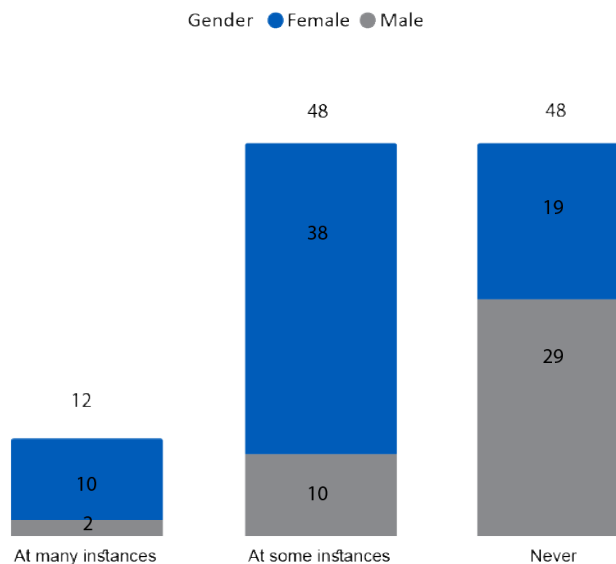
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 4.3: Have you ever felt intimidated or snubbed by the opposite gender during professional meetings and discussions? (FGD responses segregated by gender)

Harassment was a major concern highlighted across all sectors and directly linked to the **ineffective implementation of laws and policies** that have been enacted to protect women in the workplace and society in general. The issues of being **snubbed at professional meetings, being catcalled or being inappropriately approached** was a common experience shared by the majority of women. It was unfortunate to note that **absence of proper mechanisms to protect whistleblowers and victims** further discouraged reporting of such incidents and created an environment where forms of mental and physical abuse against a gender were deemed acceptable. And in sectors where cases of harassment were highlighted were then further **stereotyped as "bad" sectors**, leading to family and community members not providing necessary support and approval for women to either opt or advance in those fields.

Respondents highlighted that these barriers were also directly related to the **absence of female leadership in sectors** which lead to less attention given to these issues that directly impacted women.

Socioeconomic Implications of Absence of Women in Leadership
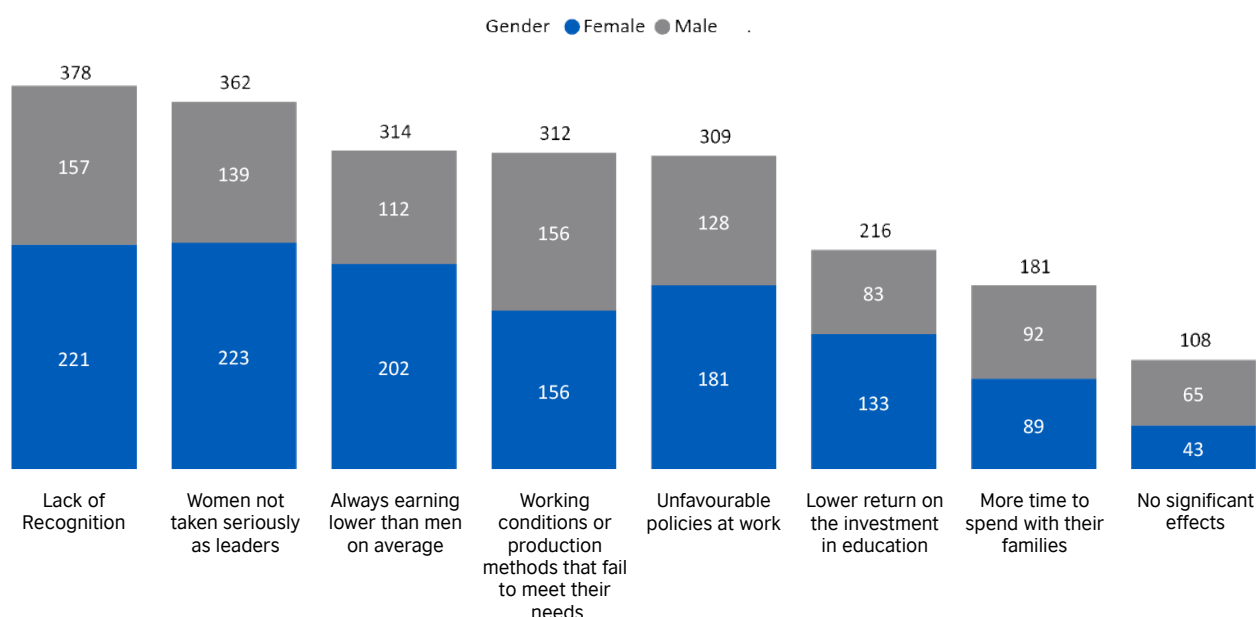
Gender ● Female ● Male .

	378	362	314	312	309	216	181	108
Male	157	139	112	156	128	83	92	65
Female	221	223	202	156	181	133	89	43

Lack of Recognition | Women not taken seriously as leaders | Always earning lower than men on average | Working conditions or production methods that fail to meet their needs | Unfavourable policies at work | Lower return on the investment in education | More time to spend with their families | No significant effects

Figure 5.1: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)

There was a general consensus among survey respondents regarding the major implications of absence of women in leadership roles being lack of recognition of female professionals. For female respondents it was followed by women not being taken seriously as leaders. Whereas male respondents felt that working conditions and production methods that fail to meet women's needs are a major concern due to absence of female leadership in their sectors. An adverse impact on the quality of life in terms of a family's standard of living and overall, the nation's economic prosperity was also highlighted as a result of absence of women in leadership roles. Whereas the presence of women in leadership roles will have a significant and positive impact on:

A significant percentage of both men and women also believed that women having less time to give to children's upbringing will also be a moderate social implication and was deemed as a negative impact of increase in female's participation in leadership roles. This small group of respondents were of the opinion that family structures will be adversely affected by less quality time for children from working women, which was definitely a concern and highlighted as a barrier as well by many women towards their advancement and meaningful participation in leadership roles. However, workplace policies considerate of these roles and responsibilities were credited for their support and conduciveness to female's professional growth and development as a leader.

Education of Children | Financial Stability of Households | Affordability and Accessibility of Childcare | Workplace Policies | Independence of Women | Economic Productivity
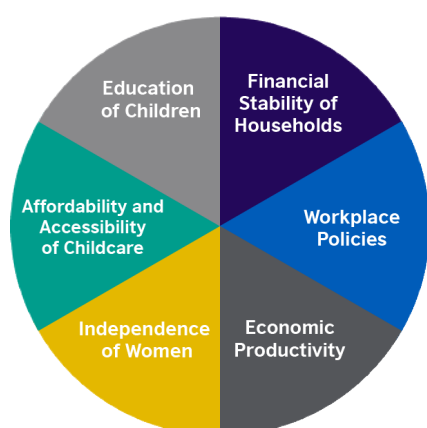
Overview of Recommendations

Upon further inquiry regarding nurturing leadership among women, workplace gender equality and inclusive policies which includes better recruitment procedures, zero tolerance policy on cases of sexual harassment & abuse and strong referral mechanism to handle such complaints, provision of child care support and services, flexible hours & work from home options, salary transparency, forming a support system and sufficient pay packages, training and development of women and men, job security, pension or retirement plans, Mandatory & transparent cross-organisational rotation to give females more exposure, access to decent work and equal opportunities, job postings closer to their hometowns and provisions of sabbatical leaves were deemed detrimental to meaningful participation of women in leadership positions.

74.1% of survey respondents agreed that anti-harassment policies and workshops will be a highly impactful method of increasing meaningful participation of women in leadership roles, followed by safe workplace and commute facilities (73.3%). Both of these need to be introduced at workplaces and as a policy level change by governments.

Level of impact of the following methods to increase meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation.

● High Impact   ● Moderate Impact   ● Low Impact

	Leadership Training Programs for Women	Mentorship Programs for Women	Gender Equity Quota System	Diversity and Inclusion Training	Safe Workplace Commute Facilities	Anti-Harassment Policies and Workshops	Flexible Working Hours	Transparent Promotional Policies	Unbaised Hiring Process	Sufficient Maternity Leaves
Low Impact	7.3%	4.5%	11.4%	6.1%	4.9%	6.2%	6.4%	4.0%	5.4%	5.0%
Moderate Impact	37.9%	29.7%	31.4%	33.4%	21.8%	19.6%	26.0%	29.2%	27.9%	29.0%
High Impact	54.8%	65.8%	57.2%	60.5%	73.3%	74.1%	67.6%	66.8%	66.7%	65.9%

Figure 6.1: As per your beliefs select the level of impact of the below mentioned list of possible methods that can be used to increase meaningful participation of women in leadership within your organisation. (survey responses)

Other effective strategies that can ensure a woman reaches her full potential as a leader and is included in decision making processes across all sectors included:

- Gender sensitization training for male counterparts, to help them reduce their unconscious biases and learn appropriately interacting with women in professional settings
- Behavioural Change campaigns

and interventions to encourage families and communities to be more supportive of women and their work
- Focus on girls' education and skills development during their formative years.
- Policy level changes that ensure practical implementation of laws which protect women from harassment, and ensure their seat at the table through effective quota systems

Conclusion

The study indicated that women have immense potential to become effective leaders and bring diverse and inclusive perspectives to different spaces. The recent pandemic has also revealed that the common trait among all countries that have successfully contained the spread of the virus or have responded efficiently were led by women. Men are encouraged to learn leadership traits that are primarily attributed to women such as being empathetic and more consultative to bring about a larger change in the society, which is not only beneficial for women but for all marginalized groups.

Research has also indicated that the most important strategy to ensure that women are given decision making authority and lead freely with a vision is to focus on gender equality at workplaces with a preference for talent, consideration for women's role in society and an active effort towards changing mindset. The role of government and policy making institutions is also held responsible for ensuring that a group that constitutes half of the country's population is given adequate resources, protection and support to perform as leaders.

Introduction

Rationale for Study

Women constitute 49.6% of the world's population (The World Bank, 2015), Pakistan was reported to have 48.54 % female population in 2019 between the age of 15 and 64 years, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators. Yet, the female labour force participation rate is only 22% which indicates that a huge portion of our population is either not reflected in the formal economy or is being underutilized. Despite evidence directing organisations and policy makers regarding a woman's role in uplifting the society and economy, women, especially in Pakistan, continue to remain socially, culturally and economically marginalised, with patterns of severe gender exclusion common across all provinces and sectors. This pattern of symbolic leadership was noted across various sectors, especially law and justice, politics and governance, business and entrepreneurship and sports. Other areas such as arts and media, civil society and development sector also highlighted an absence of meaningful leadership at senior levels of organisations.

While opportunities and legislations exist on paper, their practical implementation is missing. There is therefore an urgent need to highlight the critical role of meaningful

female leadership in socioeconomic strengthening and identifying innovative and collaborative approaches to creating ecosystems that can foster female leadership.

This research aims to investigate the social and economic implications of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles in various sectors across Pakistan. In addition to providing insight into why meaningful female leadership as opposed to perfunctory or "tokenistic" leadership is critical to the social development and economic growth, especially for emerging economies like Pakistan, this research also sheds light on the different approaches that can assist in fostering stronger female leadership across the board and throughout their careers.

More specifically, using data collected through the primary research, this research aims to answer the following questions:

• Why is meaningful participation of women in leadership critical to socioeconomic progress of a nation?
• What can be done to foster stronger female leadership across the board and throughout professional careers?

This research therefore aims to:

- Create an aggregated prototypical definition of meaningful participation from the perspective of men and women. Highlighting to what extent beliefs vary and whether this form of leadership is desirable, practical and feasible,

- Identify barriers that hinder meaningful participation of women in leadership.

- Present recommendations on how strong (and meaningful) leadership in women be cultivated and nurtured, from early stages on a wider community/societal level.

Literature Review

The aforementioned research aims are supported by a literature review focusing on the definition, implications and characteristics of meaningful participation of women in leadership. Sources for the secondary research have been peer reviewed articles, scholarly journals, published reports and other studies conducted on similar topics. The literature review also served as the basis for developing the e-survey and questionnaires to be used in the primary research.

(I) Definition of meaningful participation in leadership:

The research resulted in various definitions of leadership, we selected a few to reflect meaningful participation such as someone who **'achieves this influence by humbly conveying a prophetic vision of the future in clear terms that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values in such a way that the follower(s) can understand and interpret the future into present-time action steps"** (Winston and Patterson, 2002).

However, this definition, despite being an integrative one, does not encompass certain dimensions of leadership that may vary for different contexts. Linda K. Richter highlights this gap in her article titled Exploring Theories of Female Leadership in South and Southeast Asia by stating: "A dictionary definition looks pallid and simplistic. Yet many studies of leadership also yield unsatisfactory definitions because they suffer from inadequate models. Most studies of leadership are based on particular western cultures. Most are not simultaneously concerned with gender, and most do not agree with each other except in the degree of complexity associated with the notion of leadership and the importance of the topic" (Richter, 1990).

Hence, while the integrative definition of leadership was used primarily for this research, the aim was to analyse how leadership varies in the context of gender. It was also noted that historically, leadership has been largely dominated by the notion of masculinity, and despite the evolution of leadership theories, there still exists a common bias that men fare better than women in positions of leadership (Kimba, 2008). This bias is fueled by societal perception of a woman's role in society and is propagated through various mediums which further limit the advancement of women in leadership positions (Farah et al.). While the number of women in positions of leadership has been on a rise in the 21st century, it largely remains symbolic (Richter, 1990), which is why it is important to understand what meaningful participation of women means.

According to the UN Women Report 2018 of Expert Group Meeting:

"The concept of 'meaningful' participation has evolved to become a conceptual reference point to describe a multifaceted set of elements to realise the tangible and urgent demands that women not only be

present, but that their concerns are heard and taken on board, they have the opportunity to articulate their contributions and expertise, to ensure that gender perspective and analyses inform and shape peace processes, and that outcomes benefit the whole of society"

Therefore, research suggests that in order to move away from a 'symbolic' and tokenistic idea of female leadership, it is crucial to understand how leadership is defined in the Pakistani context, with a gender-focused lens. Furthermore, an emphasis on why strong female leadership is critical for the socioeconomic development of an organisation or a nation, along with exploring the indicators and tools which need to be employed in order to expedite the meaningful participation of women in leadership.

(II) The socioeconomic implications of lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership

According to the literature review, we noted that managerial structures in organisations in the past, were, with the rare exception, nearly all male (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Up till the 20th century, male bosses or men-only boards of directors were hesitant in accepting females into their ranks as equals or partners, preferring to relegate them to subordinate positions like secretaries or assistants. This culture has naturally fed into a host of lasting negative determinants that continue to make it difficult for women to attain leadership positions, even though women today measure up to and even outperform their male counterparts in professional settings.

A highly important, yet often glossed-over, instance of a strong negative determinant inhibiting women's advancement is unpaid work. The most usual forms of **unpaid work** fall under 'informal labour' such as the acts of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, among other household chores. Whilst a certain degree of unpaid work is indisputably helpful for both the care-givers and care-takers, problems tend to arise when voluntary work is the only available source of social inclusion for women. In similar cases, this trend of unpaid labour leads to exploitation (Goldschmidt-Clermont, 1982). On the other hand, in developing nations such as India, China and Africa, high fertility rates and levels of unpaid work contributes to the state of women insecurity and leaves them vulnerable.

The social structure leads to increased dependence on man and suppresses personal development and economic freedom. Women who live in poverty are likely to be uneducated and have limited say in the trajectory of their lives. The social place women have in such societies defines their roles in life and makes them easier to exploit. Early and multiple pregnancies bring with them a host of issues for the lives and careers of women.

The unpaid labour that is part and parcel of motherhood leaves little or no time for other pursuits, creating deep-rooted and culturally ingrained issues that carry social and economic repercussions on a micro, meso and macro levels.

The common avenue left in this situation is either informal employment or unpaid work, which stems from the gender-role stereotyping of women. Cultural stereotypes inform what sort of work and employment is socially acceptable for women, and the under utilising of women's skills or restricted access to labour markets creates even more barriers (Krawiec, 2016).

It was also noted that due to the lack of precedent for female participation and career progression in certain fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics(STEM), women are hesitant to venture out into these professions. Even in sectors which do have a lot of women employed, not many aspire to reach a position of higher leadership.

This lack of ambition is a consequence of prevalent stereotypes in society regarding the participation of women in the economy and the lack of female leaders in areas of diverse professions. Women are less likely to 'know about' or 'be motivated to try' to aspire for a leadership position until they have examples of other fellow females who have paved the way before them (Pande, Rohini, Ford 2011). An increase in the number of female leaders can in turn give a positive nudge to women employed in the workforce which will consequently drive the economic progress of a nation.

Empowering women economically not only leads to 'economic diversification' and 'productivity boost', but it can result in significant GDP increment.

According to UN Women, 'increasing the female employment rates in OECD countries to match that of Sweden, could boost GDP by over USD 6 trillion'. Hence, more female leaders can induce the role model effect on other young women to aspire for greater career progression which will result in improved economic gains (Chung, 2000).

Existing research has indicated three areas in which global economies can benefit from the increased involvement of women in the labour markets:

- More rapid economic growth (UNW 2015; OECD, 2012),
- Family structures benefiting from the financial contribution of women and their control over family budgets (The World Bank, 2012),
- A decrease in child mortality rates, due to better women's education and engagement in the workforce (World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2015).

Some practices on the corporate level, executed by companies such as Intel, Coca-Cola, Google and Facebook, provide more arguments in favour of manifold benefits of women's inclusion in the labour market and in positions of leadership. **Measures introduced by certain high performing organisations are also reflected in the HR policies, which, along with other things, endorse work-life balance, decreased unpaid**

work and fulfilling, paid work. These organisations also initiated flexible working hours for women holding positions of a senior nature. Women are making crucial contributions to the economy and their presence in leadership roles has a highly positive impact on organisational outcomes, which suggests that a gender-balanced organisational structure surpasses political views and outdated ideologies, since it is supported by relevant economic indicators. Evidence indicates the unfettered access for women to the labour market and to C-Suits of organisations is a valuable venture with long-term positive socioeconomic results for all members of society. With a swiftly rising world's population, the economic consequences of decreasing gender disparity are sure to be of importance to all economic states.

According to the existing literature, gender inequality has a variety of consequences for a country's economic as well as social welfare, and according to the analysis of Europe – but valid globally – there are five essential ways in which women can add to economic development (Smith and Bettio, 2008). The main threads selected by Smith and Bettio are:

- A quantitative improvement in female participation in the labour market
- Qualitative improvements through a better use of investment into human capital
- Women's contribution to economic growth through financial independence and participation in the market
- Integrating women into the fiscal system
- The role of women in childbearing

These findings are consistent with the McKinsey report (McKinsey, 2007) that measures organisation excellence through four themes: transformational change (pertaining to leadership, culture), organisational design, merger management, and human capital, and come to the conclusion that **organisations that have a minimum of three women in top management positions score higher than those without women managers.**

(III) List of observable characteristics of meaningful participation of women in leadership.

According to Klenke (1993) "feminine model of leadership is built around cooperation, collaboration, lower control for the leader and problem solving based on intuition and rationality" - attributes that resemble the transformational leadership model. A common finding in successful women leaders and activists is considerable self-belief, personal courage and resilience (Tam O'Neil & Pilar Domingo, 2016).

Lakmali Nanayakkara, Partner and Head of Tax, Ernst & Young, SriLanka associates the effectiveness of female leadership with having backup strategies ready for implementation during planning; "You need a plan A, B and C when you're a woman.... That level of planning enables women to be fulfilled on all fronts, including the workplace, which I think is fundamental to her well-being and performance" (Cima, 2010)

The emerging concept of effective female leadership is being shaped by the socioeconomic landscape of modern society. Egalitarian norms and economic pressures (e.g., the need for families to have dual incomes) have radically altered attitudes toward working women (Spence, 1999). While earlier leadership was thought to be a 'masculine enterprise' (Girdauskienea & Eyvazzade, 2015), today women are being hailed as the future of business (Eagly & Carli, 2003). However, while female leadership is being acknowledged as the need of modern society and economy, the efforts for developing leadership potential of women remains largely ignored. "A woman's inclination to lead doesn't begin in adulthood—it begins years earlier, in her childhood. Providing opportunities to lead – and training on how to do so – could offer a sound foundation for future leadership" (KPMG Women's Leadership Study, 2015). In order to direct efforts for developing effective female leaders, it is crucial to identify the characteristics that are attributed to effective female leadership.

The practices and characteristics of an effective female leader can be identified and taught to develop the leadership potential of more women (Tuminez, 2012).

Even in developed countries like UK where the cause of female poverty has more to do with the career perceptions and trajectory of women in labour force rather than discrimination, leadership motivation can be inculcated in women through an array of mediums like the Women Economic Empowerment project by Oxfam in Scotland in 2006. The project aimed to 'build women's confidence to think about their futures, to bring out their experiences of paid work and their views on local services such as transport and housing, and to provide an opportunity for them to voice their experiences to a local job-support agency (Routes to Work South) and to local service providers". The success of this initiative reiterated the importance of directing the ideas and efforts of women to become more empowered and leadership-centric, and the ability to do so to reap greater socioeconomic benefits (Hoare & Gell, 2009).

While female leadership is a rising trend in modern society, there is still a considerable gap regarding this subject in the context of Pakistan's cultural landscape. Advancement of Pakistani women in their careers and onto the position of leadership is still largely defined by the 'indigenous' culture of the country – a culture which places certain barriers on the advancement of women in professional fields (Manzoor, 2015). However, a subtle cultural shift regarding perceptions about female advancement is underway. As per this cultural shift, female entrepreneurs are cited to be more successful in roles of leadership due to their high emotional quotient and concern for their employees well-being (Faizan and Haque, 2016).

Even though today we have conclusive evidence to support the need for effective female leadership in order to improve profitability for communities, companies and countries, the concept of female leadership and it's 'meaningfulness' is still a largely unexplored field in the domain of Pakistan's cultural context.

To fill in this gap, this study aimed to explore the general perception of what 'meaningful participation of women in leadership' looks like across a diverse set of sectors in Pakistan, along with understanding how we can inculcate traits of an effective female leader into young women and derive policies to make an organisation's culture more inclusive towards the idea of female leaders.

Methodology

The research followed a sequential mixed-methods strategy with three stages (Greene et al., 1989):

1. **The first is based on a concurrent embedded strategy, in which a literature review was conducted and some interviews with experts were taken to ensure that the study's design is relevant and treated from both qualitative and quantitative approaches.**
2. **The second was a quantitative phase in which will include a self-administrated questionnaire (e-survey) was applied to a representative stratified sampling of the targeted regions and sectors.**
3. **The third stage was a qualitative stage comprising Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held through digital platforms (such as Zoom, Skype or MS Teams) or telephone interviews.**

Considering the vast scale of the study, this strategy ensured that we are able to take maximum insights from all regions and sectors, and ensure inclusion of respondents hailing from different backgrounds, race and religion.

Additionally, we also interviewed some women who could be taken as case studies for our research. Case studies can generalise theories (analytical generalisation) rather than expected frequencies (statistical generalisation) by demonstrating that the same mechanism has occurred across a wide range of instances (Yin, 2003, pp. 10-11). Seeing as the respondents are diverse in terms of backgrounds, regions etc., any statistical patterns emerging from random sampling alone are not sufficient to understand the challenges and implications of absent meaningful female leadership. Therefore, the case studies support any patterns that emerged across a wide range of sectors and allow for making an effective case for female leadership.

Designing the Study

For the purpose of this research, seven sectors were identified from Pakistan on the basis of the sector's potential to include women for greater socio-economic contributions. These sectors also presented an opportunity for comparative analysis, and to learn more from effective female leaders present within these areas. These included:

1. Politics and Governance:
Public Sector Institutes,Federal and Provincial Ministries, National and Provincial Assemblies, Local Governing Bodies.

2. Arts and Media:
Artists, Curators, Gallery owners, Newspaper groups, Advertising Agencies, Media and TV Production Houses, Channels.

3. Sports:
Sports Teams, Sports Federations, Sports Boards, Sports Clubs

4. Law and Justice:
Lawyers' Firms, Police Force and Training Academies, Legal Courts and Authorities, Social Justice Organisations, Legal Departments of organisation.

5. Development Sector:
INGOs, donor agencies, Local NGOs with network all over Pakistan and possible funding streams from international investors/donors.

6. Civil Society:
Schools, Foundations, Trusts, Local NGOs (Community based organisations - CBOs or Civil Society Organisations - CSOs).

7. Business and Entrepreneurship:
Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) groups and/or companies Banking industry, Oil and Gas industry, Textile industry,   Telecommunication industries, Incubation Centers, Entrepreneurs, Start Ups, Small Businesses and Enterprises (SMEs).

Considering the vast nature of these fields, these sectors were broadly defined, and relevant organisations were identified to gather data regarding:

- Perceptions on leadership, especially focusing on its meaningfulness
- The extent of meaningful participation of women in leadership in their respective sectors
- Barriers that hinder women's participation in their organisations/sector
- Socioeconomic implications of absence of women and highlighting any changes due to their presence
- Strategies to nurture female leadership in their respective sectors

Existing gender and leadership experts based out of Pakistan were selected to **co-create the design of this study.** For the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) several sector experts with extensive experience in their fields were approached for insights on the current state of promoting female leaders in their sectors. More specifically female leaders or top female professionals from each sector were approached to better understand the challenges faced in getting to their current position of leadership. These interviews provided an insight into core areas of this research but also assisted in developing an understanding of the real-life challenges faced by **women who have wanted to pursue leading roles in their field.** Development of each research tool, and respondent selection framework were finalized in consultation with selected experts, British Council's Research Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (REMU) and Carnelian's senior researchers.

E-Survey

Surveys are designed to provide a 'snapshot of how things are at a specific time (Denscombe, 1998)' and allow researchers to identify patterns and trends without discriminating between different population groups. The survey designed for this study aimed to corroborate definitions, characteristics, implications and strategies identified in the literature review with perceptions, attitudes and practices of people from all over Pakistan. Secondary research was conducted to understand the best possible set of questions to develop the questionnaire and survey for primary research along with some informal interviews with gender and leadership experts while designing the final survey to ensure better quality of the content produced. The final questionnaire was developed using KoBoToolbox, a platform based on Open Data Kit in which data is collected using its own version of ODK Collect and Enketo Webforms.

The E-Survey was circulated among identified organisations hailing from all over the country, and from the seven identified sectors. These respondents were mostly working professionals over the age of 18 but included a small percentage of students as well.

A region and sector-wise breakdown of the responses collected is as follows:

	Sindh	Balochistan	Punjab	South Punjab	Federal	KPK	GB	Sector Total
Politics and Governance	18	7	28	2	27	7	1	89
Arts and Media	27	3	31	2	19	4		86
Sports	28	1	27	3	7	4	1	70
Law and Justice	13	2	23	8	19	4		69
Development Sector	33	20	35	19	36	14	1	157
Civil Society	29	12	27	9	31	18	1	126
Business and Entrepreneurship	42	3	53	16	32	7		153
Region Total	190	48	224	59	171	58	4	**754**

Table 1.1: Target number of survey respondents segregated by sector and region.

Gender:

The survey yielded 754 respondents in total. There were 395 female survey respondents (52.4%) and 359 male survey respondents (47.6%).

It's interesting to note that initially a greater percentage of male respondents was anticipated, however, during data collection, it was discovered that the women approached were far more cooperative and willing to fill out the survey. No known response from the other genders were received.

Figure 1.1: Gender of survey respondents

754 TOTAL

359   395

Gender ● Female ● Male
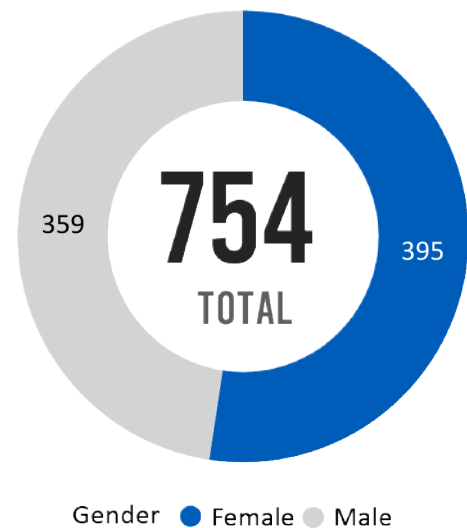
Age Groups:

The age group of 25-29 years yielded maximum number of survey respondents i.e. 235. We also had a fair share of respondents from the 30-39 years and 18-24 years. So, 82% of our overall respondents were below 40 years of age. Only 18% were 40 or above which could possibly highlight that this age group is not as accessible online.

Figure 1.2: Age group of survey respondents

25-29	30-39	18-24	40-49	50-60	>60
235	213	171	69	53	13

Age Groups
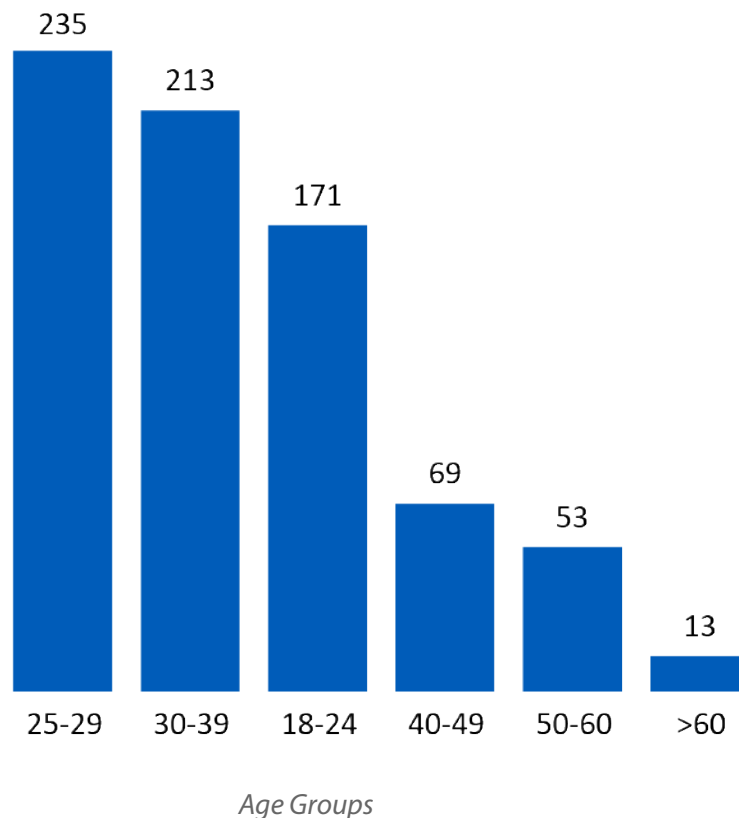
Current Role:

Maximum share of respondents identified themselves performing Individual Contributor roles (252 or 33.4%). First-Line Manager, Senior Manager and Other roles were somewhat in equal proportion (158, 152 and 123 respectively).

The significant number of "Other" responses reflects that different organisations have varying designation titles and respondents were confused regarding their categorisation so they wrote their actual job roles in the "Other" field instead of choosing a relevant category.
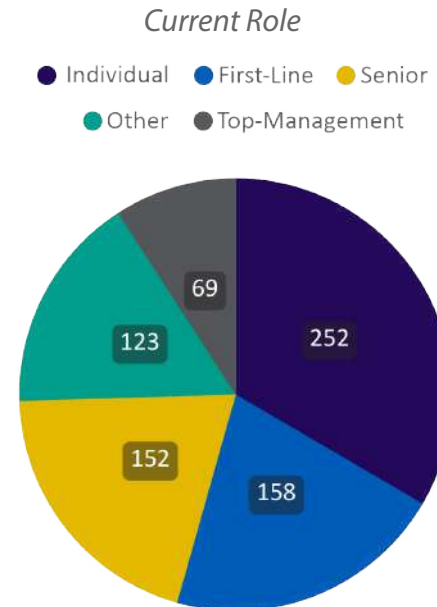
Current Role

Figure 1.3: Current role at work of survey respondents

Marital Status:

Majority of respondents checked single (411 or 54.5%) or married (320 or 42.4%). Only 3% are either divorced or separated. Interestingly, there were more married females (33.4%) than single females (16.2%) and more single males (26.3%) than married males (21.1%) among the survey respondents.
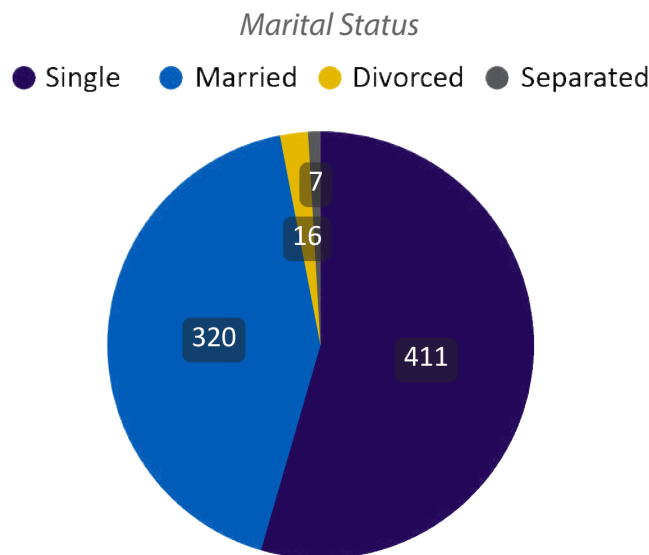
Marital Status

Figure 1.4: Marital status of survey respondents

This is perhaps reflective of the general cultural norm in Pakistan of females getting married at an early age, usually right after they complete their undergraduate university education which is a priority for families as opposed to starting a career, a recurring theme in the interviews and focus group discussions as well.

Current Province:

A large number, i.e. 77.6% of respondents came from Central Punjab (224), Sindh (190) and Islamabad Capital Territory (171). The rest of the regions only formed 22.4% of the respondents.
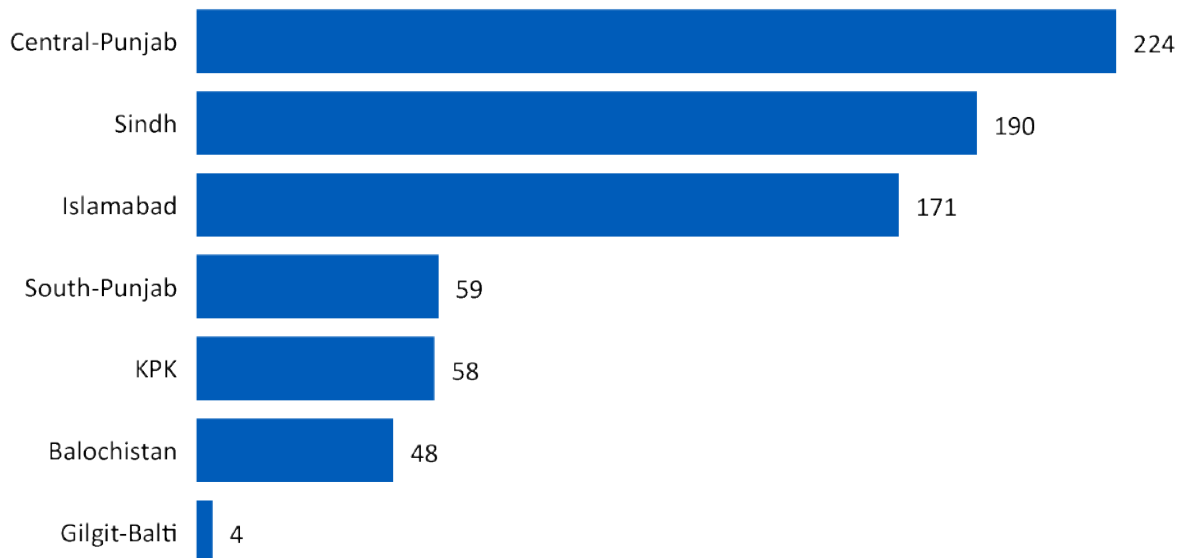
Figure 1.5: Current province of survey respondents

The lowest from a province was Balochistan (48). These statistics point towards an obvious technological gap in these regions. No internet, weak mobile networks and the presence of smartphones/laptops were all reasons why people in these regions, except for a few bigger cities, were not as accessible as the other regions.

Highest Education Qualification:

A majority of the respondents indicated having completed a Master's degree (384 or 50.9%). The second majority were those with Bachelor's degrees (292 or 38.7%.
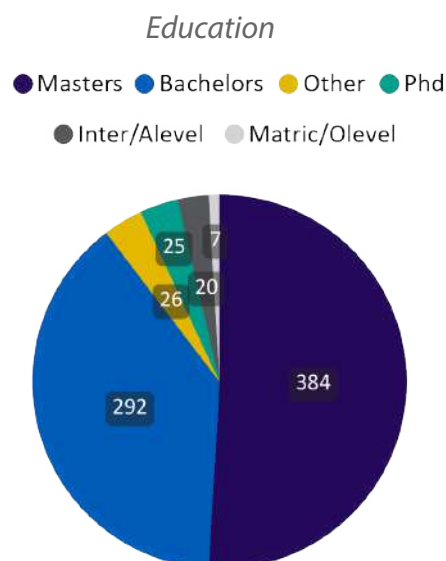
Figure 1.6: Highest education qualification of survey respondents

Sector:

A maximum number of respondents were from the Development sector (158 or 21.0%). Business and Entrepreneurship is a close second with 153 respondents followed by Civil Society with 127. These top three sectors make together 58.1% of the responses. Politics and Governance, and Arts and Media brough 90 and 86 respondents respectively. The lowest number of respondents we see from the Sports and the Law sector, with 71 and 69 respondents respectively.

● Female ● Male ◆ Total
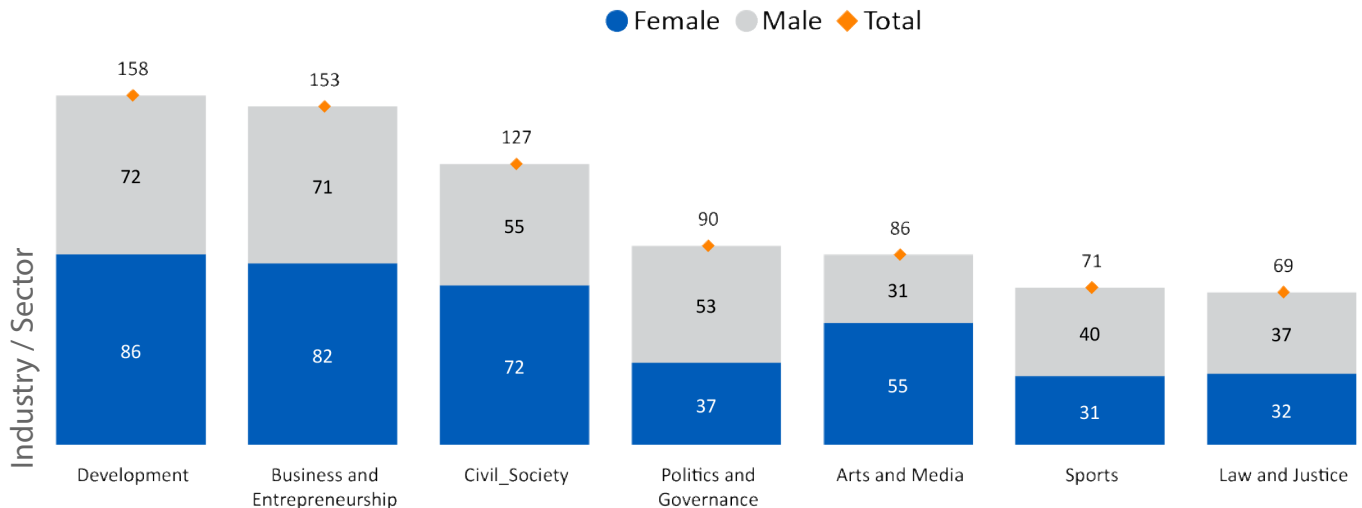
Figure 1.7: Industry of survey respondents (segregated by gender)

This might be alluding to the technology gap in the sports sector particularly, something we noticed in the interviews and FGDs as well. It also shows that perhaps development sector employees are more keen on such topics as meaningful participation of women in leadership as they often relate to this kind of research work.

Interviews

Semi structured and structured interviews are considered an important technique for descriptive analysis (Mathers, Fox et al 2000). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences, and have been deemed useful as a follow-up to questionnaires, mainly to further investigate responses (McNamara,1999). Considering the complex nature of the topic, and the number of indicators and factors that impacted women's meaningful participation in leadership, using survey responses to achieve research outputs was not deemed sufficient. Therefore, 66 participants who have institutional knowledge and ample experience to comment on the subject at hand were interviewed in detail during data collection for this research. One respondent from each sector per region was engaged as a Key Informant for this study. Therefore, a total of 06 interviews with experts and 60 KIIs were conducted during this study. 04 case studies, each from a different sector with females hailing from varying backgrounds, were developed during this stage after one on one interviews with the identified case respondent.

Questions were developed using a set of core questions based on understanding perceived definitions of leadership, preferences for role models, compromises that respondents have to make, challenges that women face while opting for leadership roles, socioeconomic implications of absence of female leadership and recommendations on promoting female leadership. Additional questions or prompts were developed based on the surveys' results and certain insights generated through secondary research regarding each sector. However, these were only posed in case of further probing and to gain deeper insight on a particular question.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)
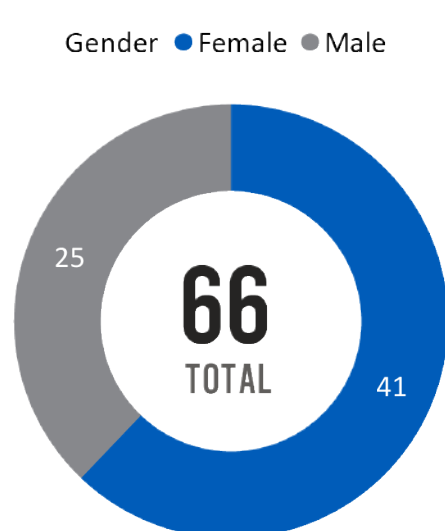
Figure 1.8a: Gender of KII respondents
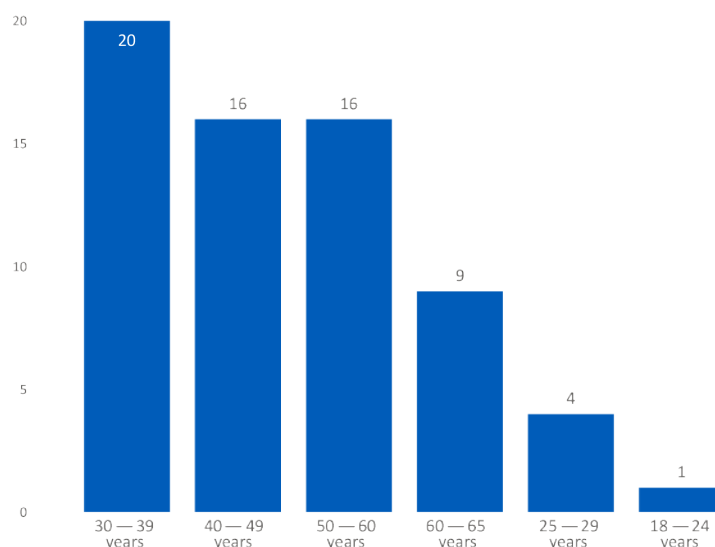
Figure 1.8b: Age group of KII respondents

Total Number of KII respondents = 66

- 41 women
- 25 men
- Among these 06 were experts in the field of gender and leadership development.
- Majority of respondents fell into the 30-39-year-old age bracket, followed by 40-49 and 50-60, indicating that the majority of them were professionals with at least 8-10 years of experience.

Sector Wise:

- Politics and Governance: 12 respondents
- Business and Entrepreneurship: 9 respondents
- Development: 9 respondents
- Law and Justice 9 respondents
- Civil Society: 8 respondents
- Arts and Media: 7 respondents
- Sports: 7 respondents

Regional Representation:

Majority of respondents (16) hailed from the Federal State, followed by Central Punjab (14) and Sindh (13) which indicated that majority of professional respondents at expert level hailed from metropolitan areas such as Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.
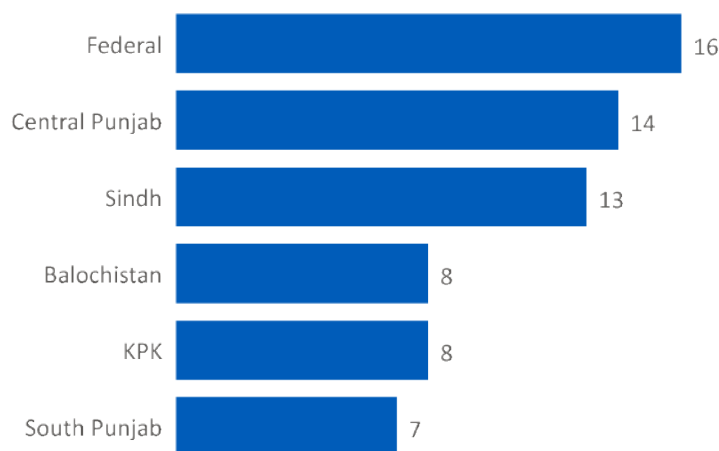
Figure1.9: Current region of KII respondents

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have been deemed as a successful qualitative data collection approach to understand complex social issues; a technique where a researcher aims to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction (Cornwall & Jewkes,1995). Its popularity and application has grown across a wide range of disciplines including feminist research (Wilkinson,1999) among other areas which require an in-depth analysis of a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. Therefore, a series of FGDs focusing on different tiers of organisations in the identified sectors, where respondents were segregated on the basis of their position in the organisation were held after the interview. The respondents were divided as per the following categories:

- Individual Contributor (e.g. Analyst, Executive Assistant, Consultant, Program/District Officer)
- First Line Managers (e.g. Store

Managers, Program Manager, Product Manager)
- Senior Manager (e.g. Regional Manager, Division Manager, Team Lead, Senior Coordinator, District Coordinator/ Manager, Head of Department)

Due to the novel virus COVID-19, an alternative research strategy was adopted, transitioning to utilizing digital platforms to engage with FGD respondents. Respondents were requested to join an online discussion via Zoom during the interview stage, and eventually a pilot FGD was conducted to test the technicalities of the proposed with a total number of 11 individuals participated, consisting of Individual Contributors hailing from Business and Entrepreneurship, Civil Society, Law and Justice, Arts and Media sectors. The participants hailed from Punjab and South Punjab and the total duration of the discussion was 90 minutes. All participants were given guidelines ahead of the meeting to ensure they face no technical difficulties and a decorum was maintained during this interaction.

While identifying participants and sifting through survey responses, it was noticed that definitions of different positions varied across sectors. For example, an Individual Contributor, who for our research was categorised as an early career professional, from the Business and Entrepreneurship sector had different credentials, years of experience compared to someone from the Politics and Governance sector. Similarly, during the pilot FGD it was observed that challenges, opportunities and recommendations varied across sectors as the realities and dynamics of each field of profession varied to a great extent. Therefore, the approach to FGDs was revised and sessions were segregated based on the professional fields or sectors instead of regions which resulted in 02 FGDs per sector (01 for Individual Contributors and 01 for First Line Managers); with a separate session for Entrepreneurs[1] resulting in a total of **16 FGDs - engaging a total of 130 participants through FGDs (78 female participants (60%) and 52 male participants (40%).**

Gender ● Female ● Male

52 (40%)

130 TOTAL

78 (60%)
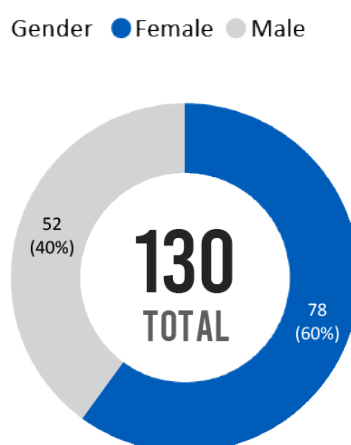
Figure 1.10.a: Gender of FGD participants

Role ● Early Level Professional ● First Line Manager

	Arts & Media	Civil Society	Development	Law & Justice	Business	Politics & Governance	Sports
Total	20	20	18	18	17	16	15
First Line Manager	12	11	9	9	7	6	4
Early Level Professional	8	9	9	9	10	10	11
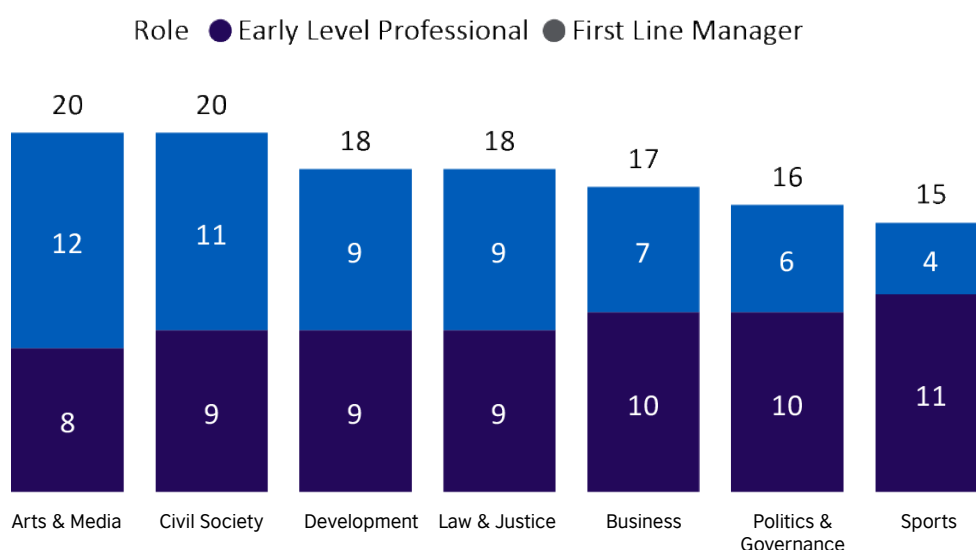
Figure 1.10.b: Current role of FGD participants

Maximum share of participants consisted of **Individual Contributors** amounting to 66 respondents (50.8% of the total) and 58 **First-Line Managers** (44.6% of the total).

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1   Entrepreneurship has a completely different criteria compared to the business/corporate sector, so cater to that a separate session with start-up leads was conducted to ensure the dynamics of this particular sector are covered effectively.

According to the McKinsey report 'Women in the Workplace 2019' which explores the relationship between female leadership and organisation profitability, while the number of women in senior leadership has seen a rise, women are still under-represented across various levels in an organisation. Therefore, participants were segregated on the basis of their designations and organisational level to understand how perspectives on issues vary across different levels of the organisation and explore the popular "Broken Rung"[2] concept. However, it is important to note that these segregations vary across all sectors and participants, and **based on the findings from interviews with sector experts it was decided to identify these tiers as per their sectors'**.

Number of participants in each:
- 01 Pilot FGD[3] = 11
- FGDs for Individual Contributors = 07
- FGDs for First Line Managers = 07
- 01 FGD for entrepreneurs = 06

Regional Representation:
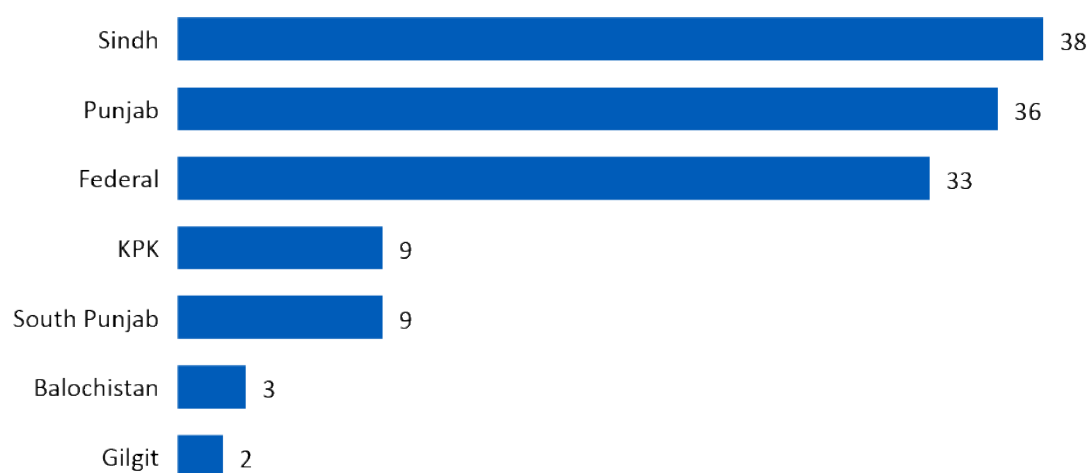
Figure 1.11: Current region of FGD participants

Majority of respondents (38) hailed from Sindh, followed by Punjab (36) and Federal (33) which indicated that majority of professional respondents at all tiers hailed from metropolitan areas such as Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

Sector Wise:

- Politics and Governance: 16 participants
- Business and Entrepreneurship: 17 participants[4]
- Development: 18 participants
- Law and Justice 18 participants
- Civil Society: 20 participants
- Arts and Media: 20 participants
- Sports: 15 participants

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2   Women in the Workplace, 2019 - McKinsey Report shared that the biggest obstacle that women face is much earlier in the pipeline, at the first step up to manager which can be termed as the "Broken Rung" and fixing it is important for achieving gender parity.
3   11 Participants, 9 females, 2 males, all individual contributors, 9 from central Punjab, 2 from south Punjab, 4 Business, 1 Politics, 4 Development, 2 Law
4   Inclusive of 06 entrepreneurs

After consulting with senior management at different organisations, it was deemed appropriate to conduct one-on-one interviews with Senior Managers instead of inviting them to participate in online FGDs as they are more likely to participate at their own convenience of date and time, and considering the uncertainty prevailing in all sectors and the challenges faced by decision makers due to the pandemic, it was noted that scheduling a suitable time for all senior professionals would be challenging. Therefore, 02 Senior Managers / Professionals from each sector were identified for an interview resulting in 14 respondents (10 females and 4 males).

Research Protocols and Ethical Guidelines:

Protocols and guidelines for each research tool were developed in consultation with British Council, and shared with the selected respondents accordingly. These guidelines were to ensure that participants were aware of their rights on the data and were comfortable in sharing required information. The aim was to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for each which Baez (2002) refers to as the "convention of confidentiality" – a conduct held as a means to protect research participants from any possible harm as a result of this research. To ensure protection of data and respondent's identity:

1. An email with an overview of data protection as per the **UK Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** was sent to respondents prior to data collection and processing.
2. Names and personal information shared by respondents of people outside of this study, especially case studies, were changed to protect identities.
3. During FGDs, respondents were assigned **alphabets**, so their name and identity were not revealed to other participants. During surveys, interviews and FGDs participants were given the option of **choosing to not quote personal information** that can help identify individuals (e.g. name of respondent, organisation name).
4. None of the data is processed without written or recorded consent of the respondent. Respondents have had complete authority to withdraw their consent at any stage.

Guiding documents were also created to enhance the understanding and usage of the data collection strategy so as to avoid any confusion, and ensure all data required is collected. Therefore, guidelines were formulated and shared with respondents containing some basic information regarding the study to help potential respondents understand certain aspects of the data collection stage.

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies:

Due to the health and safety guidelines imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, collecting data through visiting respondents was not appropriate. Therefore, the methodology was revised and transitioned to utilizing digital mediums for online interviews and eventually FGDs. Occasionally, **technical difficulties** occurred while conducting and sometimes recording the interviews, but mitigation measures were put in place to ensure data was collected accurately. For the sake of uniformity, it was ensured that most interviewees utilized the same set of applications (i.e. Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp) and referred to the interview guide ahead of the interview.

The role of the researcher during a qualitative research also raises concerns regarding several biases (Mehra, 2002). Potential reasons for an **interviewer bias** can include a) the researcher's mental and other discomfort could pose a threat to the truth value of

data obtained and information obtained from data analyses; (b) the researcher not being sufficiently prepared to conduct the field research; and (c) the researcher conducting inappropriate interviews (Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2003). In addition to these reasons, the degree of association of researchers with the population under study including researchers being a member of the group themselves can introduce a question of bias in the study (Mehra, 2002).

Considering the majority of researchers were females, the topic at hand required an exploration of women's issues resulting in some degree of association for the researchers as well, which posed the risk of limiting their researchers curiosities. **Therefore, researchers were oriented to go with an open mind**, and to not create biases based on their own understanding of the topic. They were guided to only mention assumptions and perceptions once the interviewee had already answered the questions. These assumptions could be rooted either in the respondent's answer or brought up based on survey results and/or literature review. To mitigate this, the team ensured that the interviewers followed a structured set of questions, and only probed further where and when necessary. Other concerns and limitations during the research included:

Respondent Fatigue: As the research survey was designed to support development of interviews and FGDs, in-depth understanding of outputs was required that increased, the length of the survey A few respondents reported that the survey was very lengthy, inculcating a response fatigue which can cause measurement error and misclassification problems in survey research (Egleston et al., 2014).

Language Barrier: To ensure better outreach and diversity in participants a local translation of the survey was available as it was published in **two languages,** English and Roman Urdu (a PDF document containing the Urdu Script version was also linked within the survey). Yet, in certain areas, due to the English version of the survey not being comprehensible, some questions and options were not as clear as in the English version when translated in local languages (even in Urdu). Therefore, some survey respondents were contacted telephonically to ensure that questions were explained to them. FGDs and interviews in any case were conducted bilingually, keeping in mind preferences of respondents.

Gender Bias: As predicted, in some sectors there was an imbalance in the male to female respondents.Overall, an equal representation of both genders was maintained it but it was not common across all sectors and regions. The sports sector for instance, has a male majority while the development sector shows a female majority.

Selection Bias: Similar to the Gender Bias, the use of digital platforms to connect with respondents and collect data limits the population to people with a certain level of education and access to technology. The snowball effect, as a result, has also led to reaching mostly people who can understand the sensitivity of the topic and therefore the insights the results might be limited despite consistent efforts to draw a holistic picture.

Defining Leadership and Indicators of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

Throughout history, the concept of leadership has been widely studied in an attempt to derive a definition that best describes a 'leader' (Madanchian et al., 2016). Peter Drucker claims that "the only definition of a leader is someone who has followers" (Kruse, 2013), whereas in the words of John Maxwell, "leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less" (Saxena, 2009, p.124).

This view of leadership has also been used to consolidate the traditional position of men as leaders in society and explains the continued gender disparity in the field of leadership. Despite these attempts to define the term 'leadership', there is still no unanimously agreed definition of this term, however, it is indeed undisputed that the concept of leadership has evolved just like the modern society (Madanchian et al., 2016).

The aim of this section is to develop an aggregated prototypical definition of meaningful participation from the perspective of men and women and to compare the extent of variation in opinions. To understand these perspectives, questions related to exploring meaningful participation in leadership were addressed at all stages of the research process, which also resulted in identification of any differences in characteristics associated with male and female leadership and the exploration of indicators that reflect meaningful participation of women in leadership.

Exploring Leadership

Leadership has been largely dominated by the notion of masculinity, and despite the evolution of leadership theories, there still exists a common bias that men fare better than women in positions of leadership (Kimba, 2008). This bias is fueled by societal perception of a woman's role in society and is propagated through various mediums which further limit the advancement of women in leadership positions (Farah et al., 2019). While the number of women in positions of leadership has been on a rise in the 21st century, it largely remains symbolic (Richter, 1990), which is why it is important to understand what meaningful participation of women means.

Defining Leadership:

Gender ● Female ● Male

[Bar chart showing survey responses segregated by gender]

- Being able to influence and guide followers to achieve a desired goal: 568 total (Male 254, Female 314)
- Having the ability to gain the support of followers by being well-connected: 102 total (Female 58)
- Delegating tasks and making sure people follow rules: 45
- Other: 22
- Being in a position of power for e.g. a manager or boss: 17

Figure 2.1: How would you define leadership? (survey responses segregated by gender)
As per the survey, the most common definition of leadership which was selected by 75.3% of the respondents is as follows:

"Being able to influence and guide followers to achieve a desired goal"

As explored in the literature review previously, this falls in line with Winston and Patterson's definition (2002) of leadership: "Someone who achieves this influence by humbly conveying a prophetic vision of the future in clear terms that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values in such a way that the follower(s) can understand and interpret the future into present-time action steps". It can be summed up as the ability of an individual to influence and guide a certain group of followers to achieve a desired goal.

In the other definitions, most commonly repeated words were **"inspire", "example", "guide", "team", "goal" and "influence"** as evident in Fig 2.2. Overall, this ties into the most selected definition of leadership as well.

Figure 2.2: Other definitions of leadership word cloud (Survey Responses)
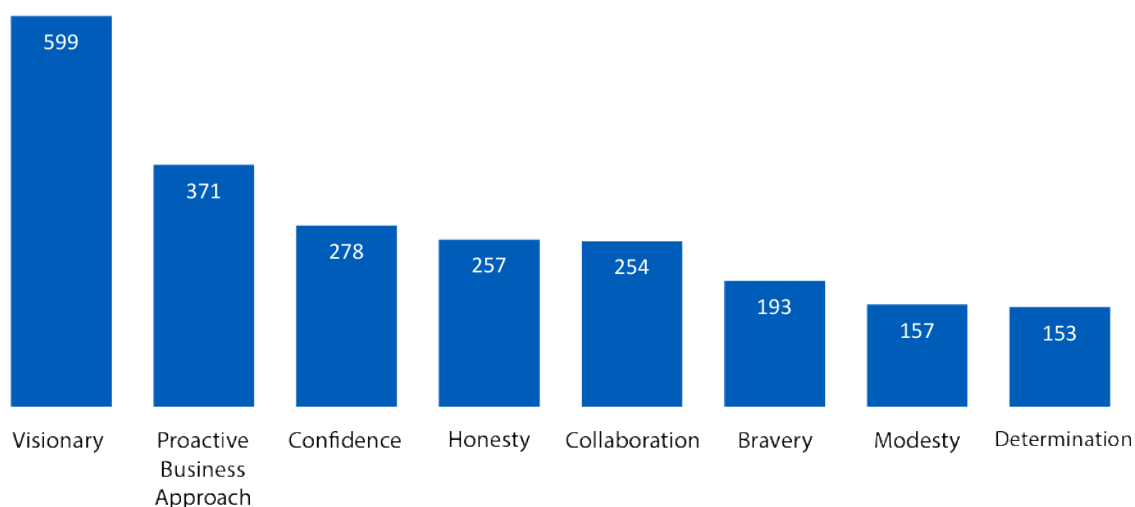
Figure 2.3: What are the top three qualities of a good leader? (survey responses)

Responding to sharing qualities of a leader, 79.4% respondents were of the view that being a visionary is the most important quality of a leader, followed by a proactive approach and confidence levels. Data indicated that for both, male and female respondents separately, the same is considered as the preferred definition for leadership. However, more males than females consider being in a position of power as leadership but the difference between their opinions in the survey was not very significant yet required further exploration during the interviews and focus group discussions as per the research leads. Diving deeper to understand the difference between perceptions of men and women regarding meaningful participation in leadership, majority of the respondents during the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) defined a leader as someone who:

1. **Has vision and creates a following accordingly**
2. **Has the authority to take decisions and autonomy over their work**
3. **Has the ability to influence, guide and uplift other people around them**

Omair Fazilullah Bangash from the arts sector covered all aspects in his response for a definition stating that "Leadership starts from having a vision… Individual's vision aligns with the institutes and is carried forward. Most crucial aspect is that you are not alone. You must lead people and take them along. Every team member has goals, you have to incorporate them and then move forward. Taking very important and crucial decisions, carrying them forward to build that sense of responsibility makes you a leader. You cannot be a good person after every decision taken, and it's okay".
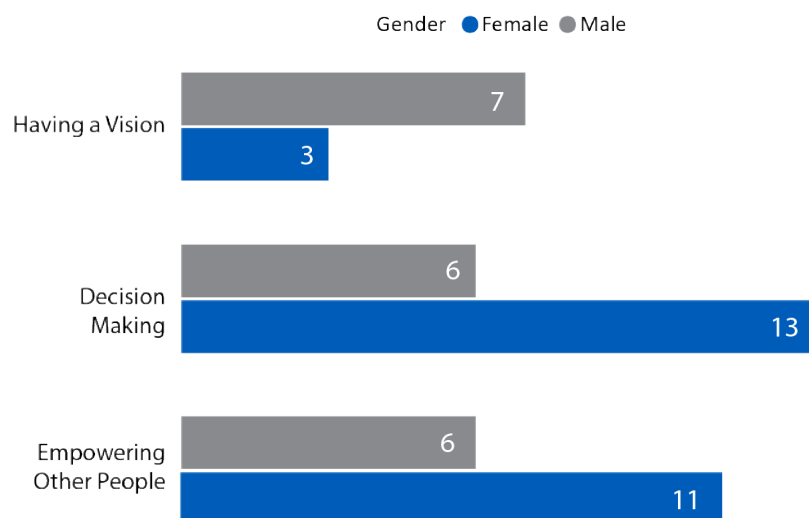
Figure 2.4: What is meaningful participation in leadership? (most popular interview responses segregated by gender)

It is interesting to note that women mostly associated leadership with the ability to have complete control over decision making processes, along with delivering to the people, whereas men would follow someone with a vision and set of mutually beneficial goals. This difference could be attributed to the symbolic form of leadership that women experience, thus depriving them of agency and autonomy over their decisions. Ammara Durrani elaborates on this further sharing, "Leadership is having power and practicing it, it means to make decisions and having the mandate to do so. Nowadays we confuse leadership with inclusion. Numerical strength of women in an organisation is not meaningful participation of women in leadership. I am tired of seeing a man on the decision chair and women sitting symbolically beside them. Meaningful leadership is leading the process of decision making and not 'advising' or 'influencing' it. Those are only participatory roles".

Other responses to the question also highlighted equal representation in leadership roles, ability to compete, and the knowledge and passion towards your field which is necessary to become an effective leader. Respondent, Dr. Maryam Nauman hailing from South Punjab's textile industry highlighted that "Every person is a leader in their own domain… Despite having 20% women in parliament and having a female Prime Minister

(PM) twice, you do not see meaningful participation of women in leadership as such. They (women) are present for cosmetic purposes. Until women are allowed effective decision making, they cannot participate meaningfully. And only a person who understands their business can be a decision maker. We have kept women in our parliament just for show and I see very little influence even in the chambers". On the other hand, examples of Benazir Bhutto were given as a woman with exposure, and political affiliations, which allowed her to compete effectively even in a field largely dominated by women to become the first female prime minister in the world. Another respondent from the law sector also discussed the importance of sufficient exposure to learn the process, before women can become leaders. Similarly, Noreena Shams, a renowned squash player also highlighted the importance of "having the right person for the right job".

A similar trend emerged in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) where leadership was repeatedly defined by the participants across different tiers as "**Being involved in key decision making and your views being heard and respected".** This was followed by **"Providing equal opportunities to all team members/followers and building an inclusive environment"** and **"Communicating an idea/vision to achieve desired goals"**

Legend:
- Female: First Line Manager
- Female: Individual Contributor
- Male: First Line Manager
- Male: Individual Contributor

Being Involved in Key Decision Making and Your Views Being Heard and Respected: 16, 17, 5, 6

Communicating an Idea/Vision to Achieve Desired Goals: 4, 4, 9, 1

Providing Equal Opportunities to All Team Members/Followers and Building an Inclusive Environment: 3, 5, 5, 4
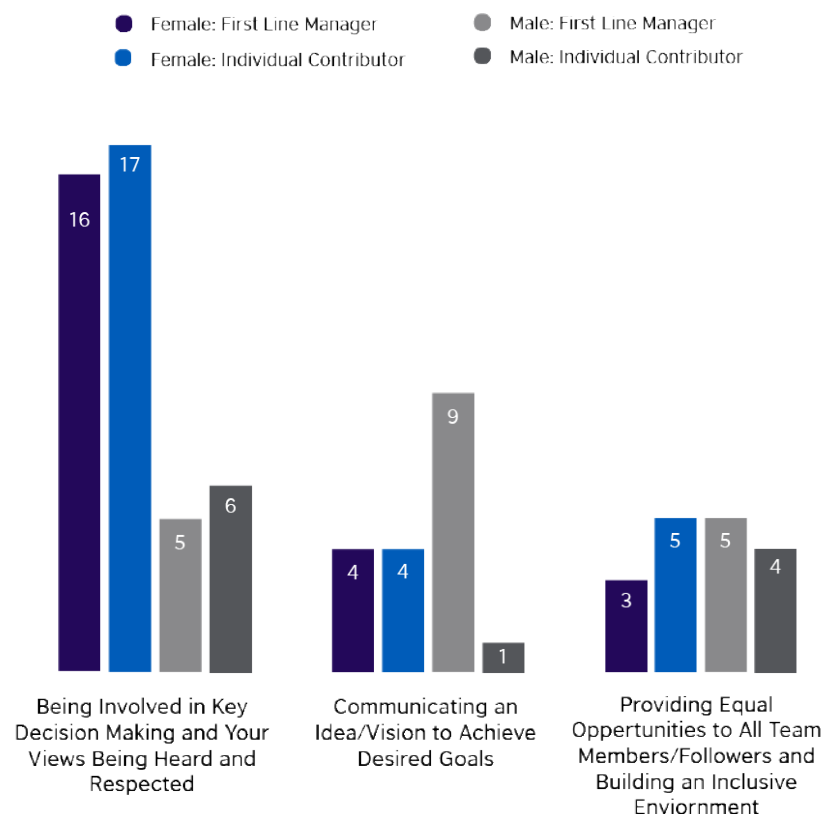
Figure 2.5: What is meaningful participation in leadership? (most popular FGD responses segregated by gender)

It was interesting to note that **"Being involved in key decision making and your views being heard and respected"** was the definition of leadership for more than half of the respondents, and 75% of them were females across both tiers. Furthermore, it was also It was also noted that over 90% participants from the development sector inclined towards this particular definition, followed by 78% and 66% from the Politics & Governance and Law & Justice sector respectively.

Female respondents constantly emphasised the importance of the views of the leader being considered and respected. As mentioned earlier by experts, this can be attributed to the lack of weightage given to opinions from females, leaders or otherwise, in the workplace or society as a whole. Numerous anecdotes were shared by different participants when the opinions and views of females were disregarded solely based on their gender by people in their organisations or clients.

A trainee associate from a leading law firm recalled "When I was working in the corporate sector, my manager was female. There were clients who wanted a second opinion from a man just because the first was given by her and they were not convinced." Some female line managers also highlighted that clients would see a female member and request to call for someone "in-charge" or prefer addressing the male member in the room even if he was a junior associate. A female early career professional, part of a renowned INGO, highlighted the importance of decision making to make women's participation meaningful and said "it would include being part and parcel of changing cultural norms and work cultures as well as have active involvement in policy making, decision making, mentorship and strategic direction."

Overall male participants' definition of leadership did not show significant variation among the above definitions, but a noticeable inclination towards the definition; "Communicating an idea/vision to achieve desired goals" in male first line managers was observed. Their views on leadership revolved around achieving results as opposed to involvement of team members. Terminologies like "Achieving results/goals", "Leading projects/organisation" and "Optimize HR to achieve results"

were repeatedly used by male first line managers which aligns with Winston and Patterson's definition that further elaborates upon the meaningful participation by a leader as the one who 'achieves this influence by humbly conveying a prophetic vision of the future in clear terms that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values in such a way that the follower(s) can understand and interpret the future into present-time action steps" (Winston & Patterson, 2002).

In concise words, leadership can be defined as the ability of an individual to influence and guide a certain group of followers to achieve a desired goal, (Winston & Patterson, 2002). This definition, despite being an integrative one, does not encompass certain dimensions of leadership that may vary for different contexts. Linda K. Richter highlights this gap in her article titled Exploring Theories of Female Leadership in South and Southeast Asia:

"A dictionary definition looks pallid and simplistic. Yet many studies of leadership also yield unsatisfactory definitions because they suffer from inadequate models. Most studies of leadership are based on particular western cultures, they are not simultaneously concerned with gender, and do not agree with each other except in the degree of complexity associated with the notion of leadership and the importance of the topic" (Richter, 1990).

Therefore, to unpack the definition further an emphasis on the "meaningfulness" of leadership was created in the questions that followed.

Defining "Meaningful" Leadership:
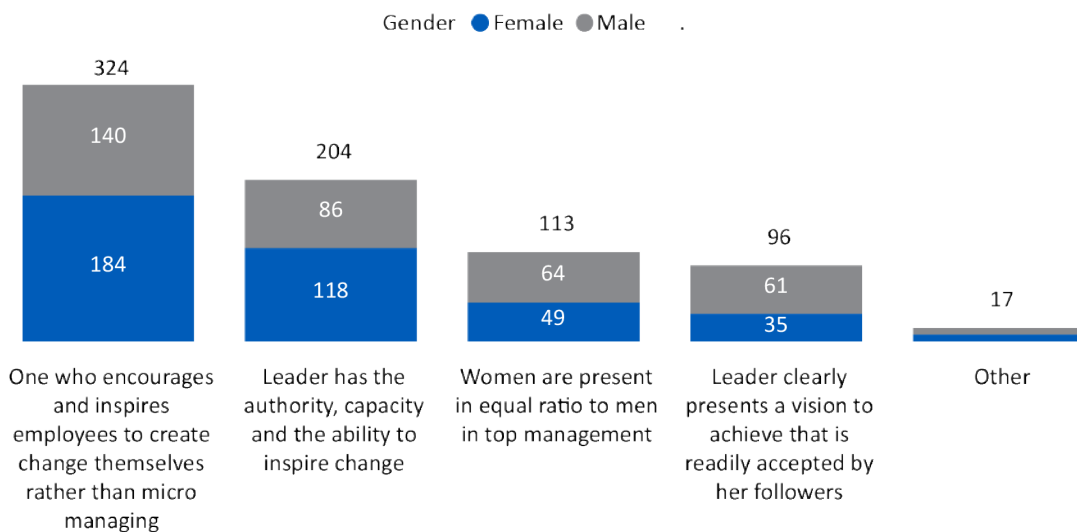
Figure 2.6: How do you define meaningful participation of women in leadership? (survey responses, segregated by gender)

As per the survey, the most common definition of meaningful participation of women in leadership selected by 43.0% of the respondents, for both male and female respondents, is **"One who encourages and inspires employees to create change themselves rather than micromanaging".**

In the other definitions, the most commonly repeated words were **"equal/ equally", "decisions", "inspire"** and **"influence".** Respondents, especially female, highlighted that being an **equal part of decision making and being empowered** is very important to achieve meaningful participation.

Considering all the data collected, the prototypical definition of leadership encompasses all three elements of having a vision, a consultative approach and the authority to make decisions.

However, as indicated earlier, female respondents highlighted "decision making" and "voices being heard" as the most important aspect whereas a results-oriented and targeted achieving ability was deemed important by men. This necessitated further investigation of: **understanding any perceptions and characteristics associated with male and female leadership and the indicators and scope of women's meaningful participation in leadership across various sectors** which is shared in the upcoming sections.

A) Characteristics associated with Male and Female Leadership:

In the survey, questions regarding identifying qualities of a leader were repeated but posed as qualities necessary for a male and female leader separately to understand if different attributes were given to male and female leaders.
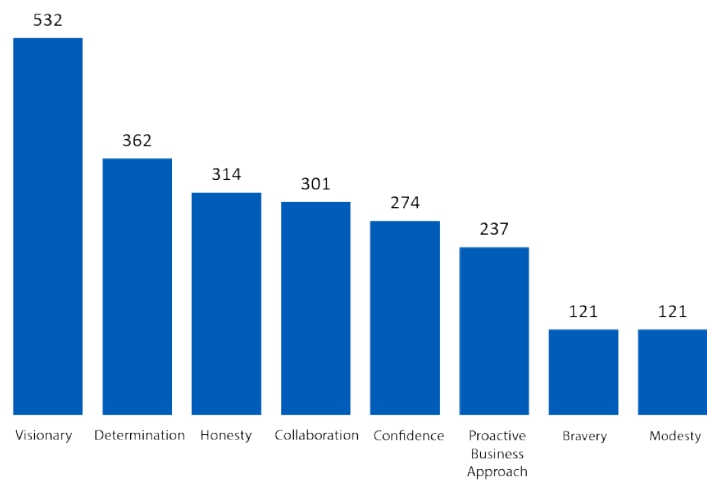
Figure 2.7.a: What are the top 3 qualities of a male leader? (survey responses)
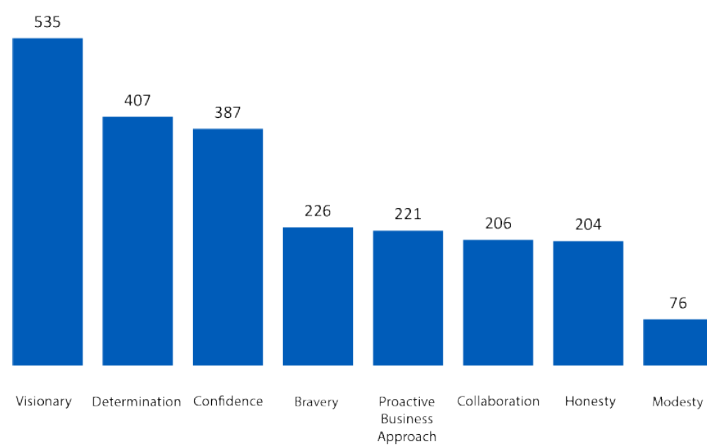
Figure 2.7.b: What are the top 3 qualities of a female leader (survey responses)

As evident from the graphs, the most highly ranked quality for both male and female leaders is **being a visionary** followed by **determination** and **confidence.**

Similar to the survey, the **KIIs also explored any differences attributed to the styles of leadership opted by men and women** and majority of the respondents believed that the leadership styles and attributes differ.
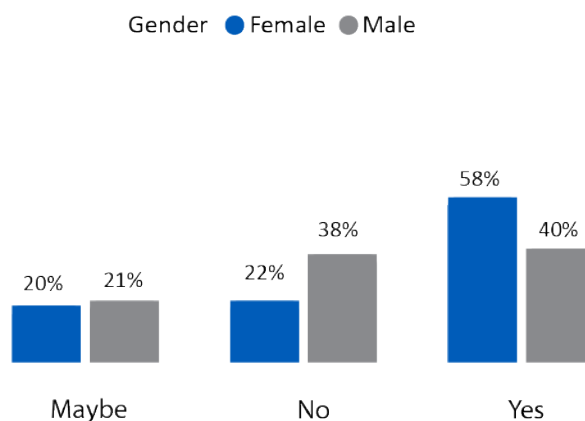
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 2.8: In your opinion does male and female leadership differ? (interview responses, segregated by gender)

Women leaders were highlighted as **more empathetic, caring, and collaborative by majority of respondents, due to their experiences and socialization.** Since most of them juggle between household chores, caregiving and official work, women are known to be great multi-taskers. Helen Barnes elaborated on this further saying that "Women leaders tend to factor in different perspectives. Perhaps because they know what it is like to not have the dominant voice in the room, they understand diversity better." One of the male respondents went to lengths appreciating two of his female

line managers who taught him the art of organizing and managing more than one task at a time.

Even male respondents stating that there is no difference between male and female leaders did admit that women are caring and have a more consultative approach towards leadership. **Most of the women who did not differentiate between male and female leadership attributed the slight differences to stereotyping and patriarchal mindsets. Majority of the respondents agreed that given the right amount of exposure and capacity, anyone can perform as an effective leader.** Ammara Durrani explicitly shared that "there is a problem with the mindset of people, where men have a hard time taking orders from a woman or accepting them in roles higher than themselves."

However, the stereotyping of leadership styles was reflected in a male respondent's comment who highlighted that one of the female ministers, who is serving her second term now, "does not even seem like a woman". It was noted, **there is a certain expectation from women to be softer and polite in their interactions.** Some of the male respondents also mentioned that female leadership is most effective in the Human Resources department as women are more understanding. Whereas another praised them as gynecologists, stating that only women are well-equipped to perform this role.

Similarly, male leadership style is seen as more aggressive as one of the respondents shared that **"men are a lot more testosterone driven, aggressive and territorial"**. Even some of the male respondents highlighted that **men tend to be more competitive and sometimes assertive in their interactions.** They did however also find this **ability to be detrimental towards quick decision making, which they felt women were unable to perform**. It was also noted that women tend to work harder and gather more support before they can make a verdict. A male respondent also shared that "At the top management level, often women are unable to make decisions

without being dependent on someone due to the way our society is built". The same question was posed during **FGDs** to understand attributes associated with both genders in various sectors where the majority of the participants (58 out of 130) agreed that t**here is a difference between male and female leadership.**
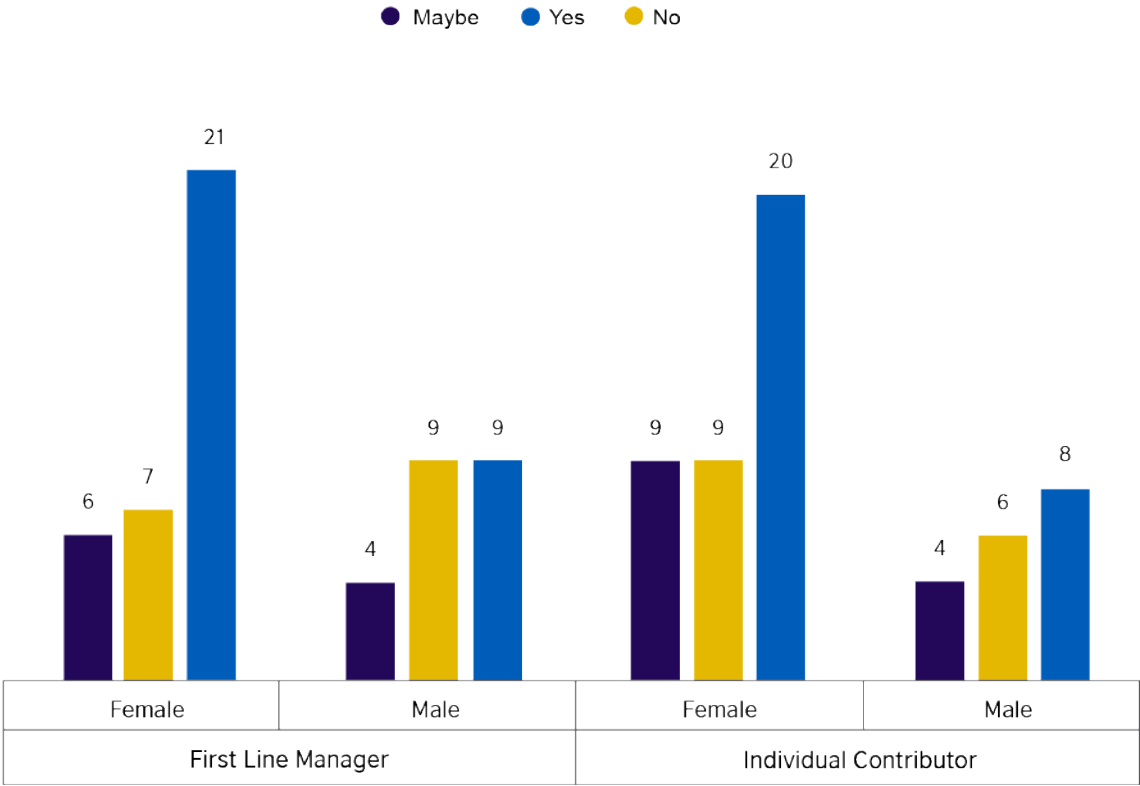
Figure 2.9: In your opinion does male and female leadership differ? (FGD responses segregated by gender and employee's position)

It was repeatedly highlighted in the comments given by participants that female leaders tend to adopt empathy and consultative behaviors in the workplace. It was also highlighted that **female leaders uphold high levels of integrity and fairness in the workplace as compared to male leaders.** An Individual Contributor who was an early career professional at a leading digital agency in Pakistan, further elaborates "For women to be a leader is different from a man. When a man is leading, in my experience at an MNC, there is a lot of discrimination and favoritism in the workplace. There are some limits that you cannot pursue as a woman. Whereas when women are leading, all options are open to both genders. I feel that for a man it is an insecurity for a woman to be ahead of them or given a chance. For a woman it is hard to move forward as opposed to a man. Therefore, I think a woman is a better leader than a man."

It is important to note that there were some male and female participants who considered both leadership styles similar, where gender was not believed to be a determinant of leadership but the personality and competencies of the leader. An individual contributor from the civil society sector, defined leadership by sharing that *"I have worked with both males and females. I have seen both owning their responsibility and taking their roles passionately without biases. Leadership is not something gender specific. Leadership is an idea, which is driven by positive passion".*

However, this stance was highlighted quite significantly in the survey response when to further probe an understanding on how men and women perceive a good leader, we inquired if there were gender preferences to having a male or female line-manager.

Understanding Leadership Style Preferences:

Gender   ● Female ● Male

Does not matter	332	307
Male	29	34
Female	34	18
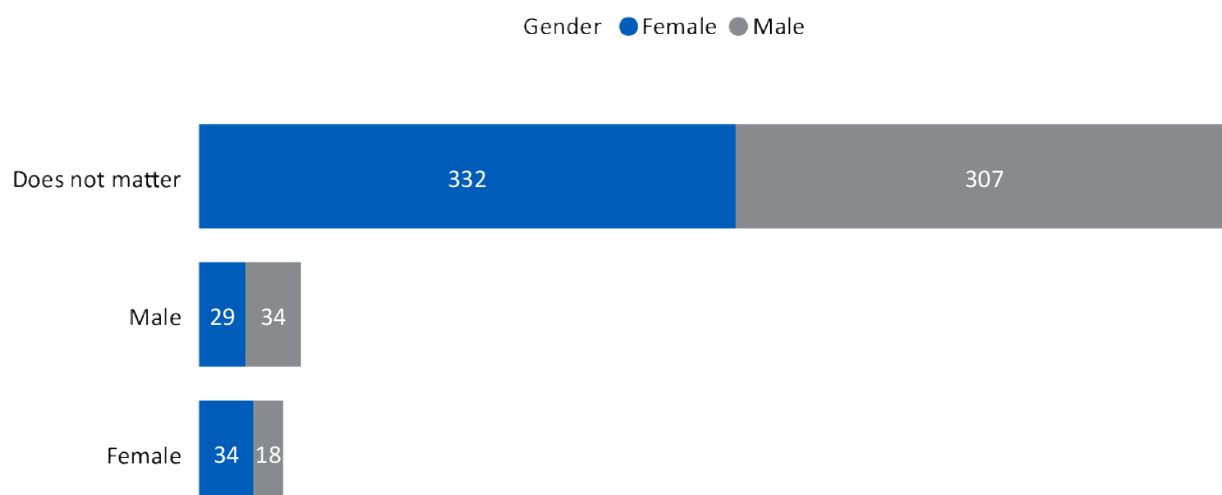
Figure 2.10: Would you prefer working for a male or a female boss? (survey responses segregated by gender)

84.7% of the respondents selected that it does not matter whether their boss is a female or male, and respondents tend to seek qualities of a leader rather than gender. The remaining who gave preferences were equally split.
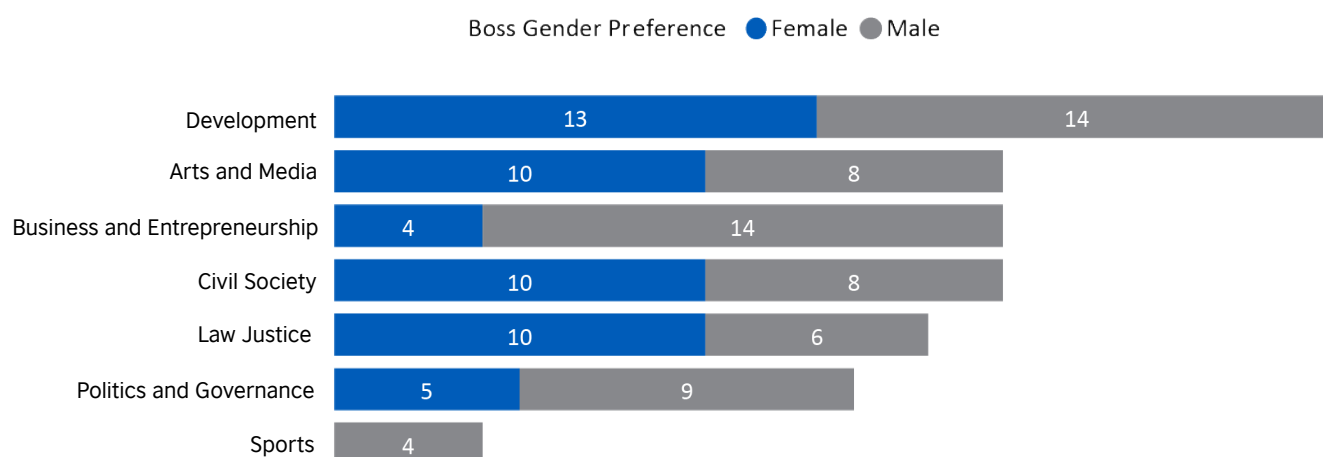
Boss Gender Preference   ● Female ● Male

Development	13	14
Arts and Media	10	8
Business and Entrepreneurship	4	14
Civil Society	10	8
Law Justice	10	6
Politics and Governance	5	9
Sports		4

Figure 2.11: Would you prefer working for a male or a female boss? (survey responses segregated by sector and gender preference of boss)

Data indicated that the preference for male leaders comes primarily from the Business/Entrepreneurship sectors. Our expert from the business and entrepreneurship sector, Sadaffe Abid commented on this difference stating that social conditioning has created this preference as we are used to seeing male assertive leaders and "When people are asked should they (men and women) be promoted, they agree on both but people do not like it when it is a woman being assertive like a man. Given the fact that women are generally associated with being more nurturing and collaborative roles, so when women are more decisive and assertive people might unconsciously prefer that". Data shows that Development sector respondents state nearly equal preference for both genders. The only sector with no female preference of a line manager or boss is the Sports sector, possibly alluding to the lack of female leadership in the sector. It is important to

note that without experiencing female leadership, it is difficult to generate a preference for it.

Therefore, it was deemed necessary to understand characteristics associated with identifying role models in order to make pragmatic recommendations on improving presence of female leaders and model figures as they tend to help women advance in their careers, especially at early stages (Gilardi, 2013). Therefore, we explored the presence of female leadership and respondents' choices of role models. **57% of the survey respondents named male role models while 24% named female role models.**

Figure 2.12: Gender of Role Models (survey responses)

Figure 2.13: Who is your role model?
(word cloud of popular survey responses)

We also note that only a handful of the participants who chose female role models were male (12.2%) and the remainder 87.8% were female. This shows that female

role models or leaders are generally less renowned and are not as visible in the Pakistani society as male role models. Usually the few that do exist, are largely recognised by females only.

The question of role models was asked to better understand leadership aspirations of male and female respondents, as well as to identify any gender inclination in those aspirations and **to explore what inspires respondents to assess their perceptions of a leader.**

Therefore, based on the responses, choice of role models was made on the following factors:

1. **An individual who has played a pivotal role in the respondents' life**
2. **An individual who is renowned for their work in the specific sector of work.**

Responses indicate the segregation of identified role models as either belonging to family, a professional network or a famous personality. **Male respondents seemed to have an inclination towards opting for famous personalities** such as Quaid-e-Azam or a notable personality in their relevant work sector like sportsman Shahid Afridi or politician Shahbaz Sharif and showed the least inclination towards family members as potential role models. On the other hand, **there was a pattern among women identifying a family member as a role model**, mostly a parent figure who has had a considerable influence in guiding them in their career path and life choices.

"For me, my mother is my role model. She was a working woman. She had a decent education, but she really wanted to do something with her life apart from being a homemaker. She established many successful businesses and she demonstrated to us that women can do both, and men are not excluded from household responsibilities" (Senior Professional, Law and Justice Sector, Sindh)
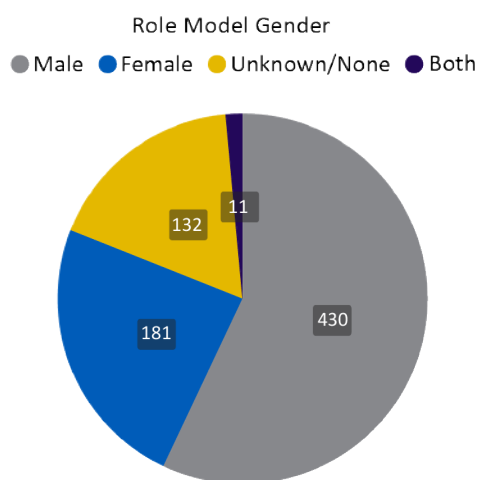
After identifying necessary characteristics that inspire people, and encourage them to participate in leadership meaningfully, the study explored various indicators present or absent at organisations which create an environment for female leaders to flourish.

B) Indicators of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

During this research, certain indicators were highlighted as reflective of equal and meaningful participation of women in leadership across different sectors and organisations.
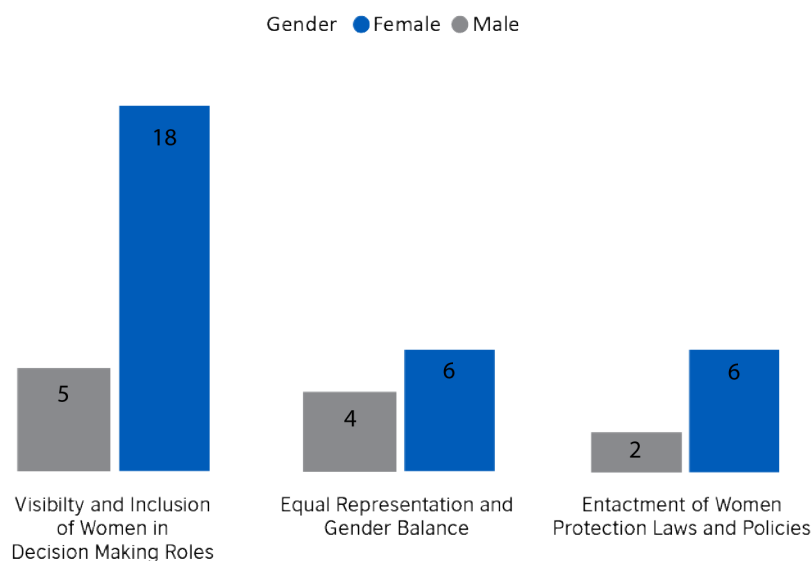
Figure 2.14: What are the indicators of meaningful participation of women in leadership? (most popular KII responses segregated by gender)

As displayed in Figure 2.14, the most significant indicators were:

> **Visibility of Women and Their Inclusion in Decision Making Roles**
>
> This indicator covered women's equal representation in the board of directors and/or senior management, an overall balanced presence of female managers and female voices being included. As Nayab Jan, part of a renowned civil society organisation working for community development highlights that "Women having an equal seat at the table and being able to express themselves and have the same kind of impact in policy making and decision making as men... If you have one female leader, there are other women who look up to her and want to rise to the same position. Women are heard, not just there for lip service and other women can follow the path that you are following easily and getting rid of the obstacles that women face in becoming a leader. Also allowing them to express themselves freely. True openness will be when women can speak up."

> **Inclusive Workplace Policies and Creating Equitable Spaces as the Most Important Factor**
>
> A manager from the development sector highlights that "Women may have certain constraints in doing their jobs such as family expectations, going home at a reasonable hour, family needs. These are all things that I believe should be accommodated without making them feel guilty of underperforming because of their gender roles or expectations from society. If a culture of motivating young women is maintained at organisations by ensuring workplace equality, more women leaders will be seen in senior roles", (Anum Masood, First-line manager, Development).

→ Enactment of Women Protection Laws and Policies

Commenting on the third most popular indicator, Dilawar Khan, an experienced law professional, elaborated on **enactment of women protection laws and policies** stating that "Article 25(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 which encourages enactment of special provisions for protection of women and children to ensure equal access and opportunities for them. There is a need to understand the jurisprudence behind Article 34 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 which provides for full participation of women in national life. We have legislations right now, but a real indicator of change cannot truly be manifested without administrative action"

Indicator	Description
1. Equal Representation/gender balance in the organisation at all tiers	This indicator was very popular among male respondents and was referred to as a prerequisite to any form of meaningful engagement for women by the majority of female respondents. Respondents specifically highlighted equal representation in leadership such as C-suite or Board of Directors which, along with gender balance in organisations was identified as an indicator.
2. Enactment of women protection policies and laws	Focusing especially on the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010 and maternity protection/leaves, this indicator was seen as detrimental to improving women's participation in leadership.
3. Flexible working conditions and facilities to support women	Remote work, flexible working hours, transportation facilities, segregated spaces, day care facilities etc. were determined as working conditions and facilities that are necessary to support women and were clubbed under this indicator.
4. Orientation on gender diversity targets/policies	Some respondents highlighted orientation on policies related to improving gender ratios in all tiers of organisations and the presence of diversity and inclusion which reflected a focus on improving women's numbers and their role in the organisation.
5. Presence of female role models	Female mentors, senior professionals and leaders in the organisation or sector serve as inspirations for young aspiring female employees. Their presence in an organisation reflects realisation of female leadership to an extent. Thus, respondents highlighted them as a necessary indicator.

6. Access to mentorship and capacity building programs	Programs to hone technical and social skills of employees, especially females identified as potential leaders, are an effective strategy to promote female leadership. Their presence in an organisation indicates presence of either female leaders or an active effort to promote female leadership.
7. Difference between salary and benefits based on gender	Using the gender pay gap as an indicator to understand the extent of meaningful participation of women in leadership was necessary when the issue was highlighted by female respondents as demotivational since the level of effort and job role is the same, if not more, considering their household responsibilities. The difference between salary and benefits for the same role/position based on gender is identified as discriminatory and indicates low levels of inclusion in an organisation.
8. Confidence level towards promotion	Knowing a respondent's confidence level regarding their career progression was deemed important. It reflects a presence of a conducive environment where employees feel recognised and have access to growth opportunities. Any differences in confidence levels of male and female employees was gauged as an indicator to understand the extent of meaningful participation of women in leadership across all sectors.
9. Participation in leadership development programs	Presence of skills-building programs was repeatedly highlighted by respondents as an indicator of meaningful inclusion of all employees at an organisation. This reflected the organisation's efforts to inculcate leadership skills among employees, and if these were accessible to all male and female employees then it served as a positive indicator.

Table 2.1: Indicators of meaningful participation of women in leadership

Apart from the aforementioned indicators, other indicators were identified that displayed a realisation of female leadership in organisations which were explored further for each sector. The indicators mentioned in Table 1.1 were explored through survey, FGDs and interview responses to unpack the extent of meaningful participation of women in the seven selected sectors.

Please refer to Table of Contents to refer to specific sectors and their sections.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Development Sector

As per respondents, meaningful participation for women in this sector is present to a **great extent**.

91% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager
(survey)

84.2% respondents have personally reported to a female line manger

47.4% respondents agreed that the L&D programmes were very successful

Leadership & Development Programmes
(survey)

respondents have attended

30.5%

23.3%

The development sector has the highest number of respondents answering that they have reported to a female manager.

48.1% respondents confirmed that their organisation offers a leadership and development programme with respect to gender, diversity and inclusion

81.4% females shared that they were given leadership opportunities

Leadership Opportunity
(survey)

90.3% males shared that they were given leadership opportunities

Both male and female, shared that they were given opportunities to lead. The development sector had the highest percentage of females who have been given a leadership opportunity.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Development Sector

Females are involved in decision making
- 1.9%
- 7.0%
- 54.4%
- 36.7%

Females concerns are addressed
- 1.9%
- 10.8%
- 58.9%
- 28.5%

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 1.3%
- 7.5%
- 56.3%
- 34.8%

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 5.7%
- 27.2%
- 50.0%
- 17.1%

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 3.2%
- 19.0%
- 48.1%
- 29.8%

In every organisation for every policy made, there has to be a gender sensitive/feminist lens attached to it. Men also need to know how it is being like a woman also until men are shown what women go through, there will not be any change in our society (Female Respondent).

Legend:
- ● Strongly Disagree
- ● Disagree
- ● Agree
- ● Strongly Agree

(survey)

KII respondents also pointed out that due to presence of global diversity and gender parity policies at headquarters or main offices of most INGOs, these policies are replicated at country level thus giving women equal representation. However, the effectiveness of these policies and meaningful participation of women at decision making roles is still under question.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Development Sector (FGD)

- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Program for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

A female participant shared that while women were given generous transport allowance, it made them feel as if they owed more time to their organisation in exchange.

Legend:
- ■ No
- ■ Unsure/Unaware
- ■ in some areas
- ■ Yes
- Female
- Male

One female respondent believed that having only maternity leave puts the entire onus of child upbringing on the mother whereas both parents should perform equal roles and responsibilities.Therefore, albeit of global standards, maternity policies generally put child caring responsibilities more on women than men.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Civil Society

Majority of the respondents from the civil society believe that there is meaningful participation of women in leadership present to a **great extent**.

86.6% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager *(survey)*

78.0% respondents have personally reported to a female line manger

56.4% respondents

Future Promotion
Highly Confident
(survey)

Civil Society was the leading sector in terms of meaningful participation of women in leadership.

75% female respondents shared that they have been assigned leadership roles.

34.7% respondents

Women are Present in Managerial Roles

82.7% respondents said women are involved in decision making

39.3% respondents said there is still a lack of leadership at the senior most positions such as board of directors and senior management.

Interestingly, the lowest number and percentage of male respondents sharing that they have not been assigned a leadership role is in the civil society sector, which may reflect that women generally tend to hold senior positions.

Leadership & Development Programmes
(survey)
respondents have attended

19.4%
41.8%

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Civil Society

Females are involved in decision making
- 2.4%
- 15.0%
- 52.8%
- 29.9%

Females concerns are addressed
- 3.2%
- 18.9%
- 52.0%
- 26.0%

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 1.6%
- 17.3%
- 44.9%
- 36.2%

Legend:
- ● Strongly Disagree
- ● Disagree
- ● Agree
- ● Strongly Agree

(survey)

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 13.3%
- 52.2%
- 28.9%
- 5.6%

It was noted even during the interviews, that there was a general consensus among participants, that while women are present in managerial roles and are given roles with considerable responsibility, there is still a lack of leadership at the senior most positions such as board of directors and senior management.

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 2.4%
- 26.8%
- 42.5%
- 28.4%

A human rights activist from Central Punjab commented on the effectiveness of awareness seminars by mentioning one where the male trainer passed inappropriate remarks regarding women's outward appearances and recommended female participants to be "careful about what they wear and how they conduct themselves", which is a victim blaming approach and thus the quality of such interventions need to be improved and more focused on behavior change.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Civil Society (FGD)

Legend:
- ■ No
- ■ Unsure/Unaware
- ■ in some areas
- ■ Yes
- ♀ Female
- ♂ Male

Indicators:
- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Program for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

Axis: 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, 0

A male first-line manager highlighted in the FGD that while organisations provide maternity leaves, there is not enough moral support to help new mothers readjust themselves in the workplace.

It was also interesting to note that 80% of the participants who were unaware of any such policies were women.

59

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Politics and Governance Sector

Both male and female respondents were of the view that things have drastically improved in terms of female representation due to the **33%** women reserved seats in the parliament, however, the extent of meaningful participation for women is still limited to only some extent as there is still lack of consensus on this type of participation actually being meaningful.

93.3% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager
(survey)

74.4% respondents have personally reported to a female line manger

62.5% respondents

Future Promotion

Highly Confident
(survey)

73% of all respondents said that male support was required for implementation of any policy recommendations that came from women (FGD response).

43.2% respondents

Gender Diversity Policy (FGD)

Made Aware of **Gender Diversity** Targets/policies

62.5% respondents

100% respondents

Leadership & Development Programmes

(survey)

respondents have attended
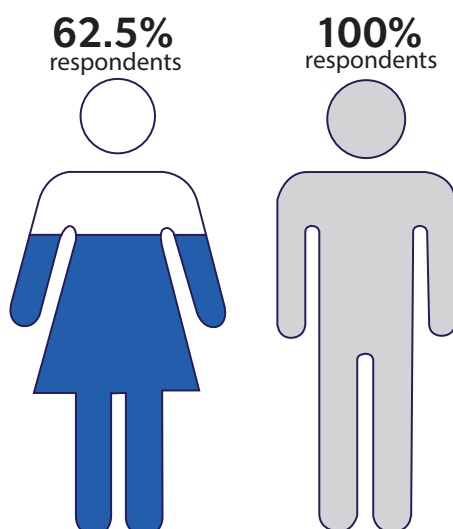
25.6% of the survey respondents indicated that their organisation offers a leadership and development programme with respect to gender, diversity and inclusion

27.0%

22.6%
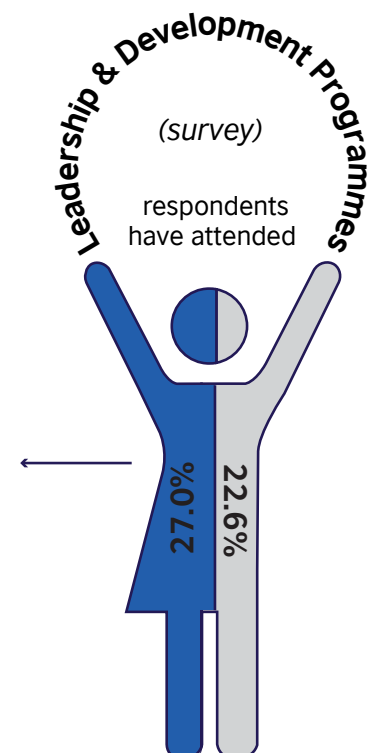
Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Politics and Governance Sector

Females are involved in decision making
- 2.2%
- 24.4%
- 54.4%
- 18.9%

Females concerns are addressed
- 1.1%
- 25.6%
- 56.7%
- 16.7%

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 13.3%
- 52.2%
- 28.9%
- 5.6%

Legend:
- ● Strongly Disagree
- ● Disagree
- ● Agree
- ● Strongly Agree

(survey)

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 3.3%
- 35.6%
- 45.6%
- 15.6%
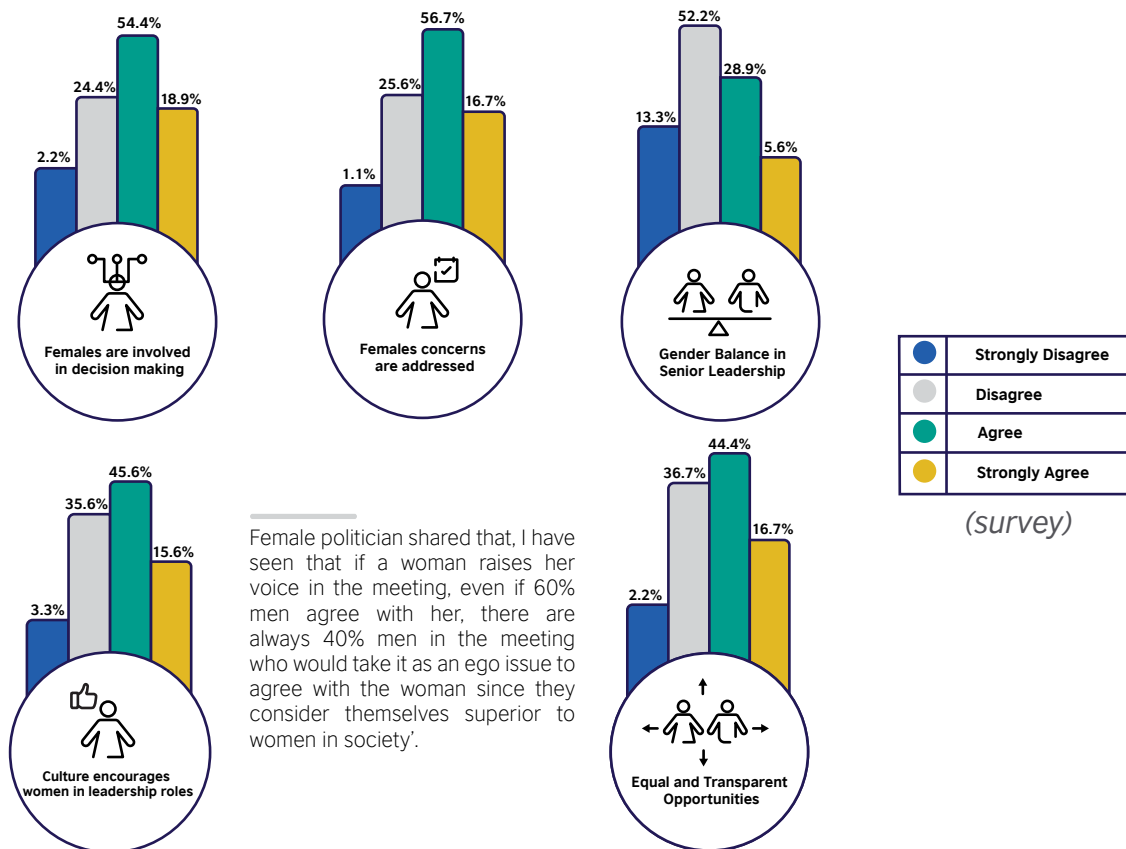
Female politician shared that, I have seen that if a woman raises her voice in the meeting, even if 60% men agree with her, there are always 40% men in the meeting who would take it as an ego issue to agree with the woman since they consider themselves superior to women in society'.

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 2.2%
- 36.7%
- 44.4%
- 16.7%

A female respondent from Balochistan mentioned an instance of a woman who used to bring her young child along to the assembly sessions, and some of her male counterparts condoned her for this stating it was against rules. The female official left the premises in tears. Our respondent highlighted the role of male counterparts and hoped they can be considerate of a woman's responsibility as a caregiver. She also recommended day care facilities in all departments and assemblies.

All male respondents said that women were provided with flexible working hours and supportive working conditions, whereas female respondents either disagreed on the presence of this indicator, or were unaware of any such policies.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Politics and Governance (FGD)

- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Program for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary

Legend:
- ● No
- ● Unsure/Unaware
- ● in some areas
- ● Yes
- ● Female
- ● Male
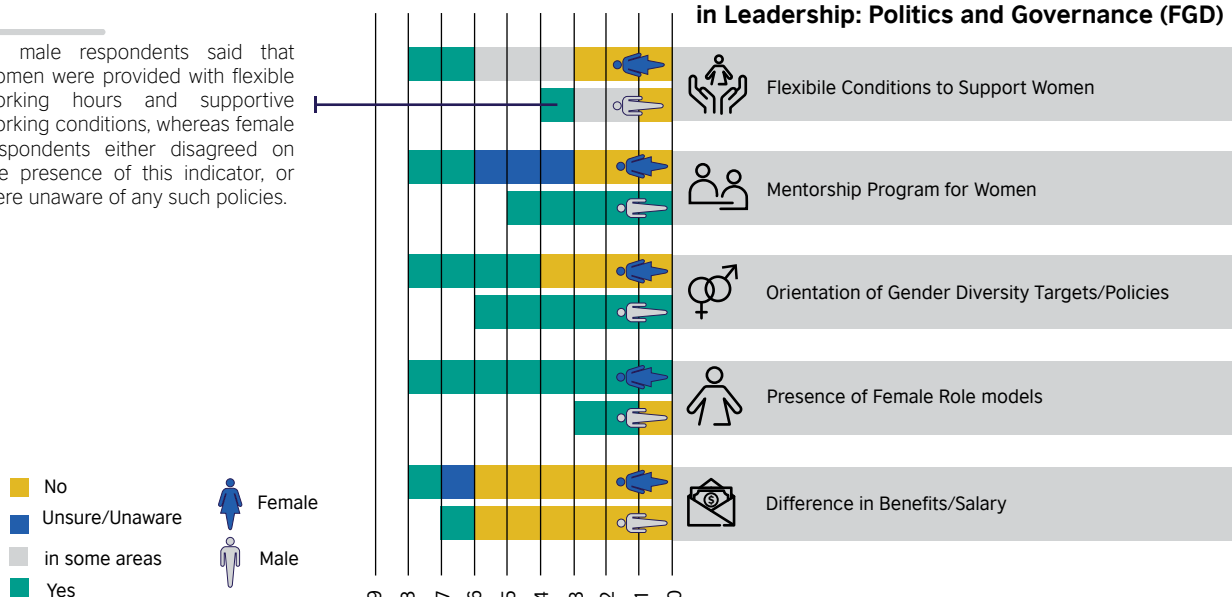
Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Law and Justice Sector

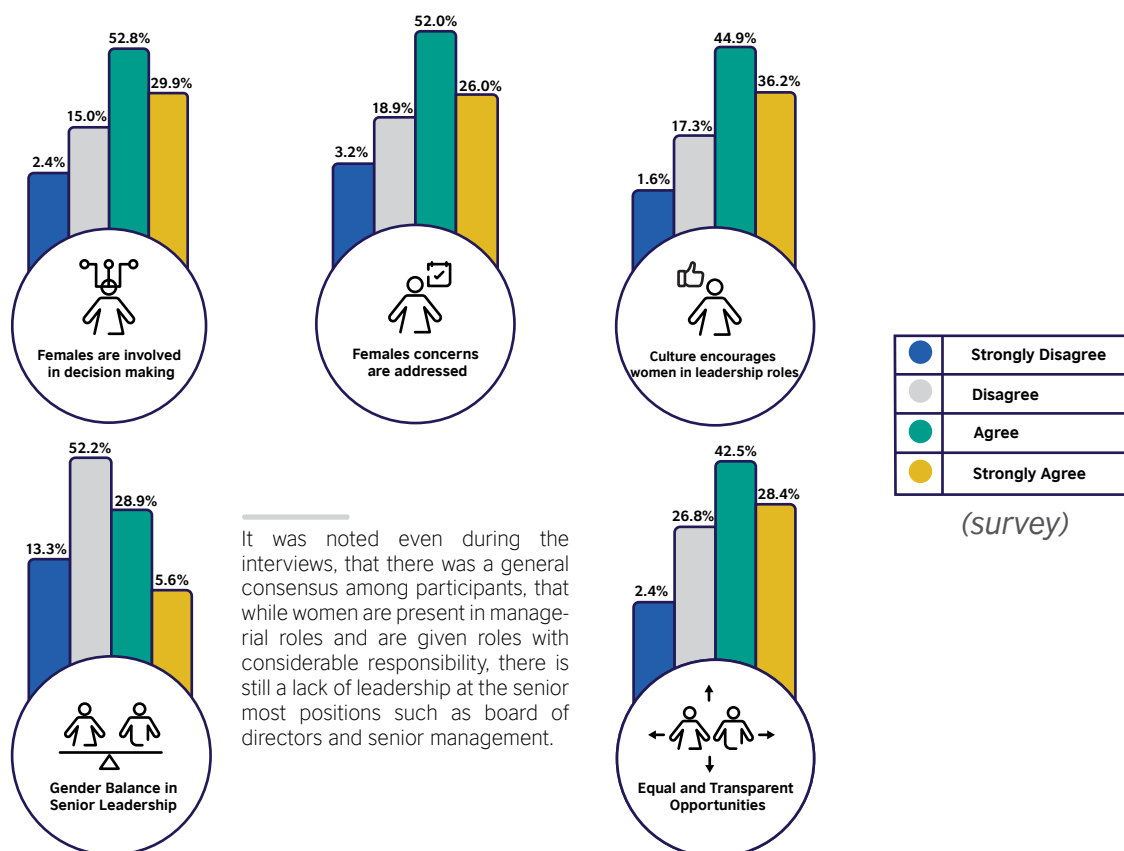Majority of the respondents from the law and justice sector believe that there is meaningful participation of women in leadership present to a **small extent** with the absence of a gender balance, flexible working conditions and other necessary indicators in the sector overall especially with regards to the courts or police departments.

75.6% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager
(survey)

66.7% respondents have personally reported to a female line manger

Majority of the organisations had little to no women leaders or partners, for example in the police and law firms.

Future Promotion
Highly Confident
(survey)

59.5%
respondents

34.4%
respondents

Leadership Opportunity
(survey)

83.8%
respondents

The absence of day care facilities was also highlighted as the reason behind an absence of female leadership in other firms. A law firm partner mentioned the only female partners in their firms were unmarried and/or childless.

90.6%
respondents

Leadership & Development Programmes
(survey)

respondents have attended

25.0%

23.3%

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Law and Justice Sector

Females are involved in decision making
- 5.8%
- 13.04%
- 53.6%
- 27.5%

Females concerns are addressed
- 27.5%
- 20.3%
- 40.6%
- 36.2%

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 5.8%
- 18.8%
- 44.9%
- 30.4%

Legend:
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

(survey)

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 14.5%
- 34.8%
- 37.7%
- 13.0%

The very fact that we have never once had a female supreme court judge in the 70+ year history of Pakistan's existence tells you a lot about the meaningful participation of women in the law and justice sector in the country" (Dilawar Khanlawyer).

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 8.7%
- 21.7%
- 40.6%
- 29.0%

While a lot of women do opt for law studies and do fairly well at school, their numbers drop when they step into the professional fields. Be in the finance law sector or family courts, while some women are present at the managerial roles or magistrate seats, their presence in boards or as judges is a rare sight such as Asma Jehangir.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Law and Justice (FGD)

A female FGD participant said: 'I was more qualified (she had a Masters degree) than a male colleague (he had a Bachelor's degree), I recently found out he was getting paid more than me. They start women off with less so they think they aregetting more eventually'
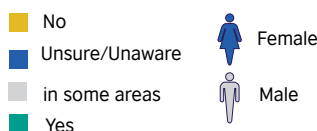
- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Programme for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

Legend:
- No
- Unsure/Unaware
- in some areas
- Yes
- Female
- Male
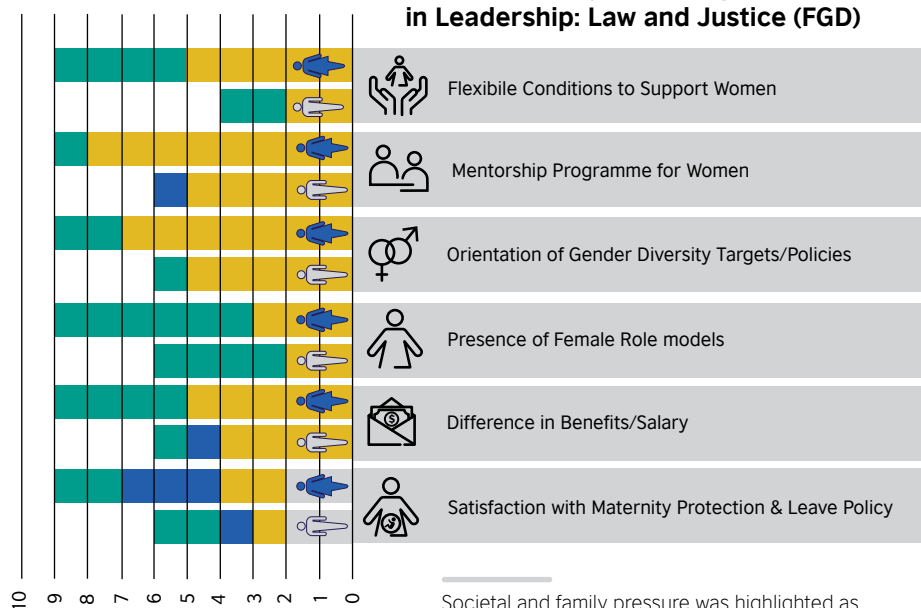
Societal and family pressure was highlighted as a barrier to entry in criminal law for females due to the negative connotations associated with it.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Sports Sector

Majority of respondents revealed that meaningful participation of women in leadership is present only to a **small extent**. While male respondents agreed that there has been some improvement in the role of women in the sports sector, however, according to the female respondents, 'meaningful participation' is still lacking.

66.2% respondents have female leaders in organisation

Female Leaders
(survey)

67.6% respondents have directly reported to a female leader

72.5% respondents

Future Promotion
Highly Confident
(survey)

This sector has the largest proportion of respondents choosing no female leaders in their organisation.

33.8% had no Female leaders in organisation

71.0% respondents

Presence of Female Coaches (FGD)
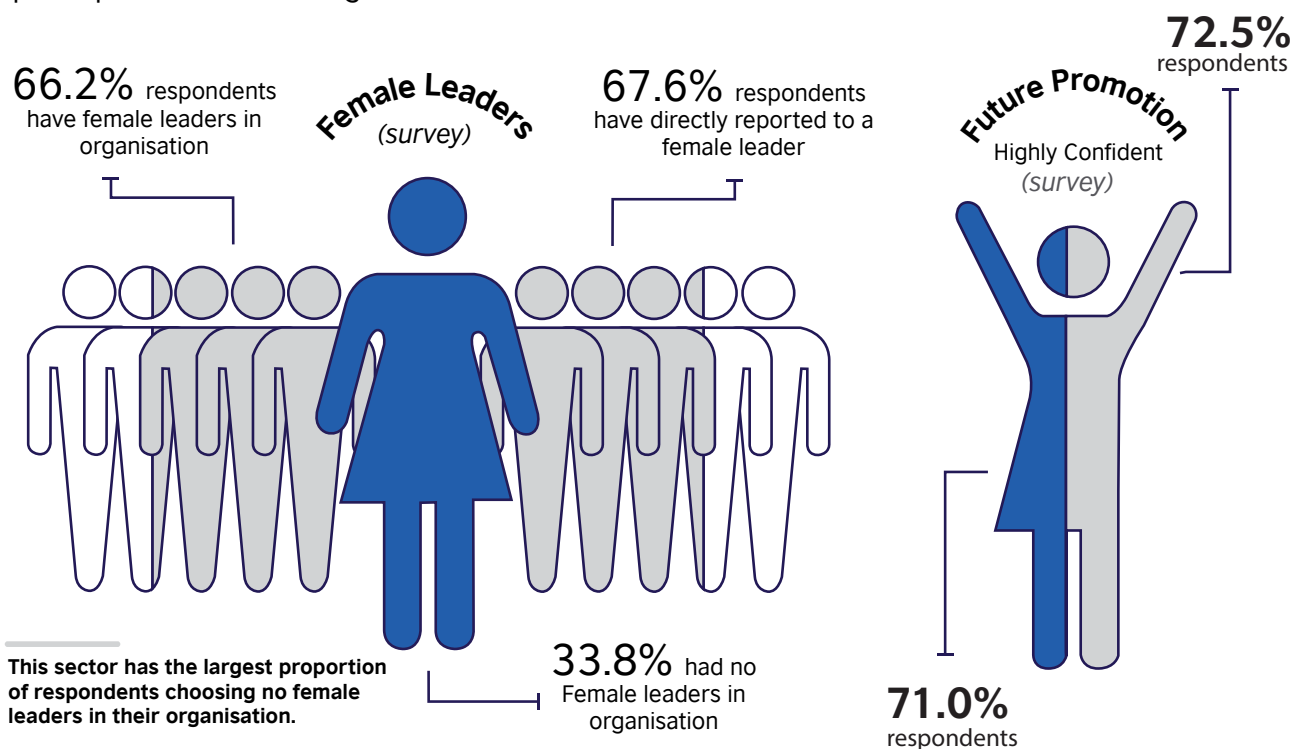
71% respondents
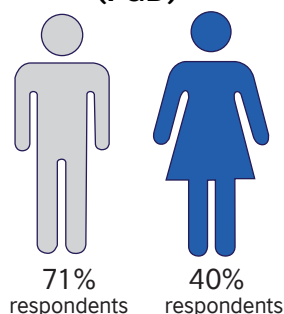
40% respondents

A male respondent said, **'There is a big problem of sexual harassment also due to a lack of female coaches and thus girls tend to not opt for sports'.**

Leadership & Development Programmes
(survey)

respondents have attended

22.5%

32.5%

Orientation on Gender Diversity Targets/Policies (FGD)

organisations offer a leadership and development program with respect to gender, diversity and inclusion

32.4% survey respondents

100%   60%
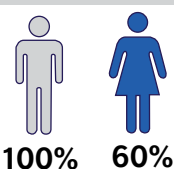
Such programs were successful

43.5% survey respondents

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Sports Sector

Females are involved in decision making
- 5.6%
- 11.3%
- 66.2%
- 16.9%

Females concerns are addressed
- 4.2%
- 8.5%
- 67.6%
- 19.7%

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 12.7%
- 16.9%
- 47.9%
- 22.5%

Legend:
- ● Strongly Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ● Agree
- ● Strongly Agree

(survey)

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 9.9%
- 31.0%
- 50.7%
- 8.5%

A male respondent observed 'A lot of people pointed out that we do not have sufficient female role models. So for any sport, we cannot idolise anyone here as such.

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 8.5%
- 25.4%
- 42.3%
- 23.9%

A male respondent from KPK noted that 'Facilities provided to us are close to none. We aren't reaching the optimum level. Although a lot of money is being put into cricket but we can see that the results aren't satisfactory. And all other games are at below par standards. There is a lot of talent but there is a lack of economic support from federations'.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Development Sector (FGD)

Prize money for male athletes in tournaments is drastically higher than what females are being offered, and similar difference persists with male and female coaches.

- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Programme for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

Legend:
- ■ No
- ■ Unsure/Unaware
- ■ in some areas
- ■ Yes
- 🔵 Female
- 🧍 Male

It was repeatedly highlighted that female sports teams perform much better than those of males, especially in football - yet they do not receive the same level of media coverage or training support.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Buisness and Entrepreneurship

Majority of the respondents from the business and entrepreneurship sector believe that there is meaningful participation of women in leadership present to a **small extent**.

81.1% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager
(survey)

62.8% respondents had personally reported to a female line manger

72.5% respondents

Future Promotion
Highly Confident
(survey)

Overall while women fare better in this sector, there still aren't many women present at the board level or on the C-suite executive level.

71.0% respondents

79.3% females were assigned leadership roles

Leadership Opportunity
(survey)

83.1% males were assigned leadership roles

Leadership & Development Programmes
(survey)
respondents have attended

One of the male participants mentioned that one of their products was targeted towards helping people which was initiated and led by a female. He also highlighted having a number of women leaders in his startup.

During interviews, a female group director of a sports goods company in South Punjab pointed L&D programmes are very expensive which is discouraging for organisations. Having seminars on women-related issues within their company is mostly a compliance requirement as they work with a lot of multinationals.

79.9% **78.9%**

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Buisness and Entrepreneurship

Females are involved in decision making
- 2.0% (Strongly Disagree)
- 20.9% (Disagree)
- 56.9% (Agree)
- 20.3% (Strongly Agree)

Females concerns are addressed
- 3.9% (Strongly Disagree)
- 14.4% (Disagree)
- 50.3% (Agree)
- 31.4% (Strongly Agree)

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 3.9%tr (Strongly Disagree)
- 21.6% (Disagree)
- 47.7% (Agree)
- 26.8% (Strongly Agree)

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 14.4% (Strongly Disagree)
- 43.8% (Disagree)
- 34.6% (Agree)
- 7.2% (Strongly Agree)

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 3.9% (Strongly Disagree)
- 30.1% (Disagree)
- 47.1% (Agree)
- 19.0% (Strongly Agree)

Legend:
- Strongly Disagree
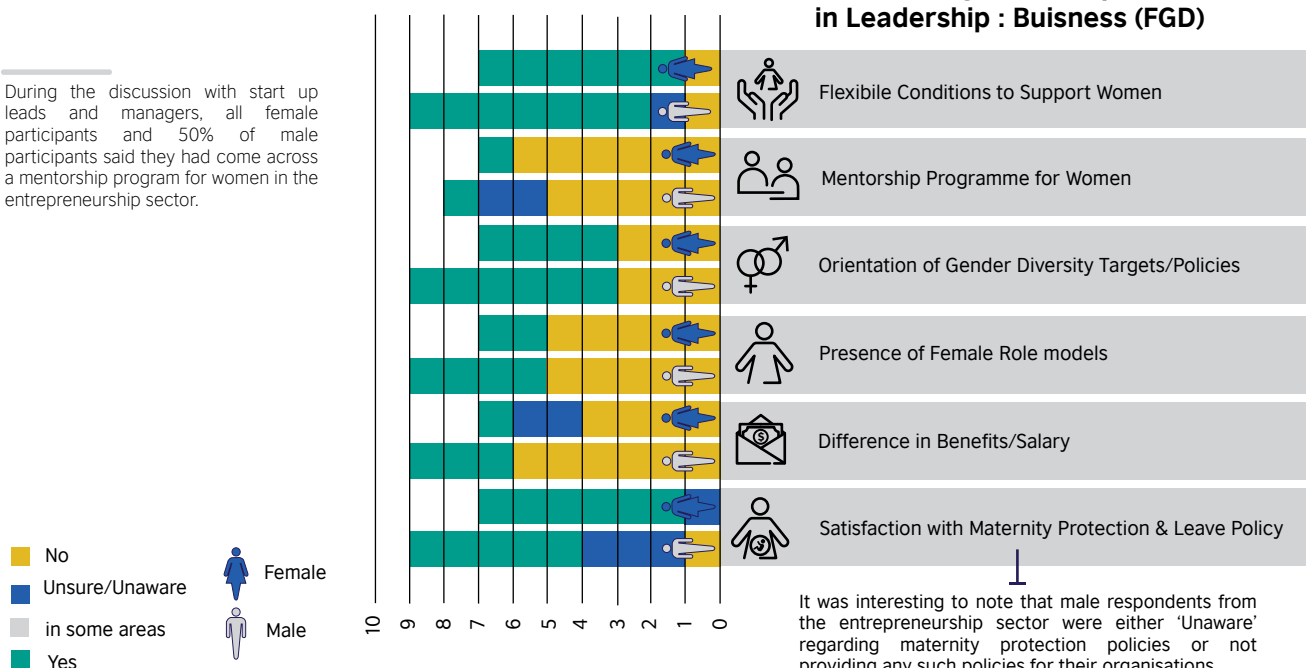- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

(survey)

Even in liberal and progressive families, women are told to prioritise family. Organisations can help women by also enabling men to contribute more in the household through incentives such as paternity leaves (respondent from a renowned FMCG).

It was interesting to note that all female entrepreneurs in the FGD had created gender diversity or protection policies for their business while no male entrepreneur did. However, a female entrepreneur highlighted that, while a lot of male entrepreneurs in Pakistan have that presence or public image where you can learn more about them, there are very limited females in the same capacity.

During the discussion with start up leads and managers, all female participants and 50% of male participants said they had come across a mentorship program for women in the entrepreneurship sector.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership : Buisness (FGD)

- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Programme for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

Legend:
- No
- Unsure/Unaware
- in some areas
- Yes
- Female
- Male

It was interesting to note that male respondents from the entrepreneurship sector were either 'Unaware' regarding maternity protection policies or not providing any such policies for their organisations.

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Arts & Media Sector

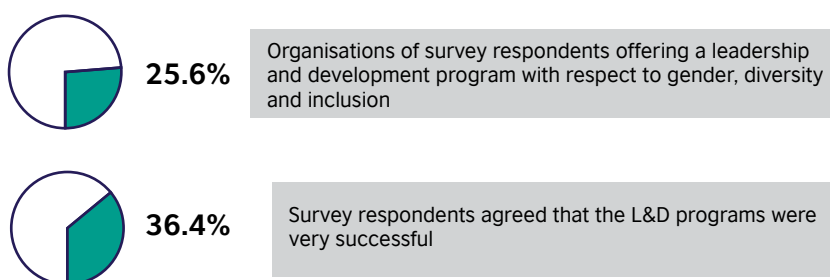Meaningful female representation in this field is present to **some extent**, especially for urban women. However, for women in remote areas, the participation level is still relatively low due to cultural barriers especially restricting mobility of women.

82.6% respondents have female leaders in their organisation

Female Manager
(survey)

84.9% respondents have personally reported to a female line manger

Leadershio Role Assigned

90.3% respondents

yes
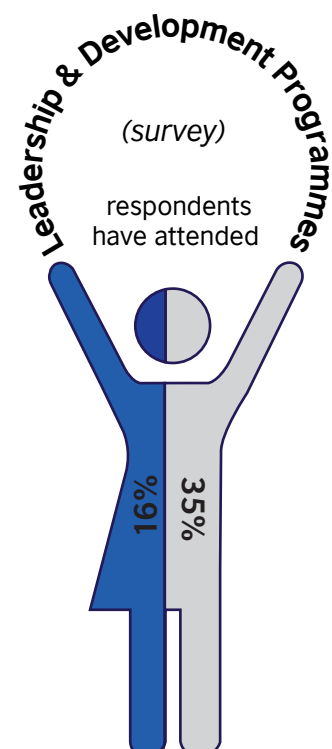*(survey)*

85.5% respondents
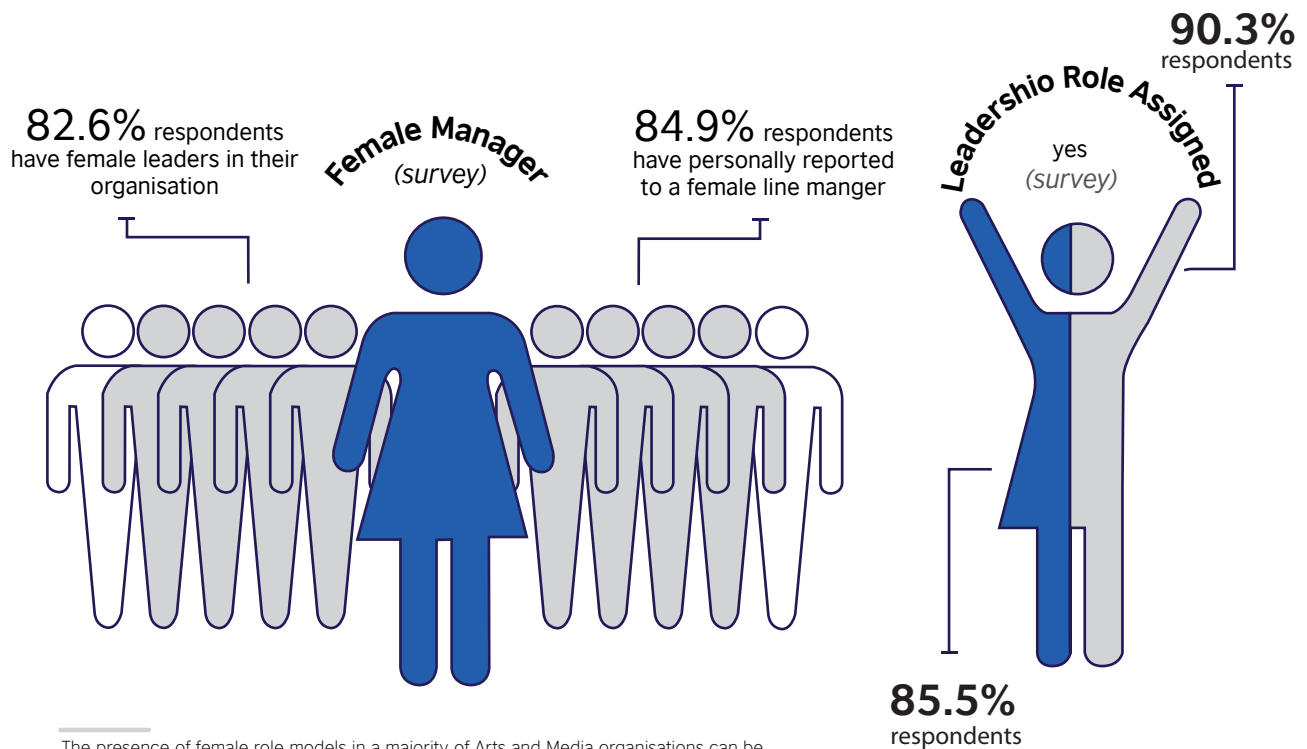
The presence of female role models in a majority of Arts and Media organisations can be attributed to equal participation in nearly half the organisations, female's interest in the area and access to flexible work policies. However, for women in remote areas, this level of participation is still challenging and most budding artists or people looking to grow in the field relocate to capital cities.

Made Aware of Gender Diversity Targets and/or policies

25.6% Organisations of survey respondents offering a leadership and development program with respect to gender, diversity and inclusion

36.4% Survey respondents agreed that the L&D programs were very successful

83% of both male and female focus group participants were not oriented on any gender diversity policy during their recruitment.

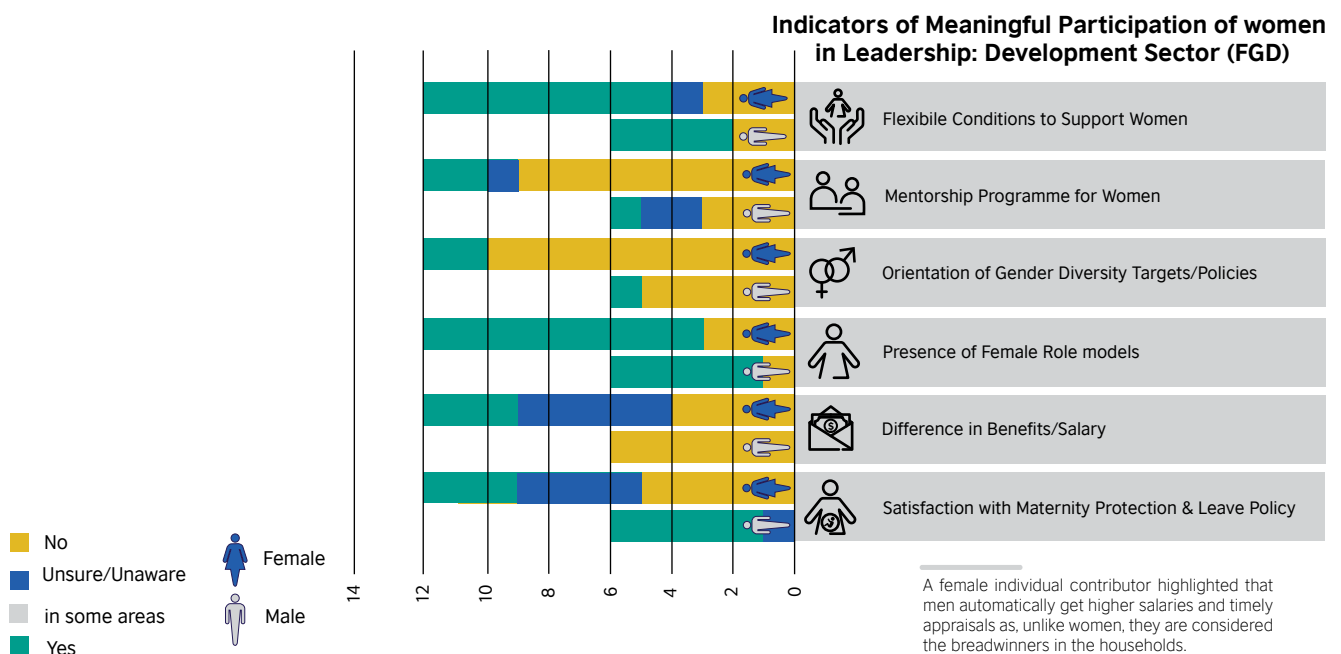**Leadership & Development Programmes**

(survey)

respondents have attended

16%

35%

Extent Of Meaningful Participation Of Women in Leadership
Arts & Media Sector

Females are involved in decision making
- 3.5%
- 9.3%
- 57.0%
- 30.2%

Females concerns are addressed
- 5.8%
- 14.0%
- 58.1%
- 22.1%

Culture encourages women in leadership roles
- 3.5%
- 14.0%
- 48.8%
- 33.7%

Legend:
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

(survey)

Gender Balance in Senior Leadership
- 10.5%
- 47.7%
- 29.1%
- 12.8%
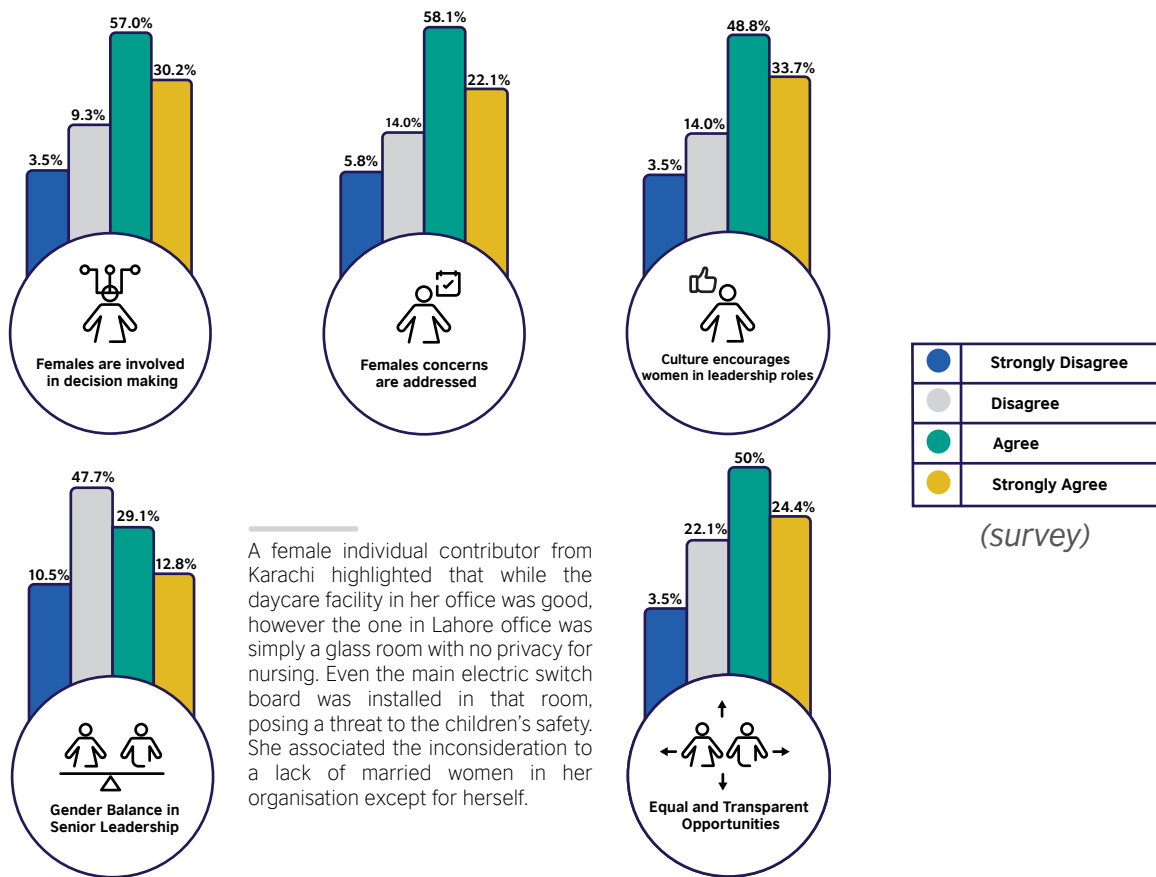
A female individual contributor from Karachi highlighted that while the daycare facility in her office was good, however the one in Lahore office was simply a glass room with no privacy for nursing. Even the main electric switch board was installed in that room, posing a threat to the children's safety. She associated the inconsideration to a lack of married women in her organisation except for herself.

Equal and Transparent Opportunities
- 3.5%
- 22.1%
- 50%
- 24.4%

KII respondents were of the view that women have a lot of representation on-screen and get a lot of air time, however, there is a major gap when it comes to having female reporters or more women on the technical side of media, or even on the decision making boards.

Indicators of Meaningful Participation of women in Leadership: Development Sector (FGD)

- Flexibile Conditions to Support Women
- Mentorship Programme for Women
- Orientation of Gender Diversity Targets/Policies
- Presence of Female Role models
- Difference in Benefits/Salary
- Satisfaction with Maternity Protection & Leave Policy

Legend:
- No
- Unsure/Unaware
- in some areas
- Yes
- Female
- Male

A female individual contributor highlighted that men automatically get higher salaries and timely appraisals as, unlike women, they are considered the breadwinners in the households.

Barriers that Hinder Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

Today many women are performing leadership roles especially as high state level officials such as Jacinda Kate Laurell Ardern who is serving as the Prime Minister for New Zealand with her commendable leadership skills, especially in the times of crisis. Similarly, we have Sheikh Hasina who is the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and even though the first female prime minister of the world, Benazir Bhutto was Pakistani, women are still mostly associated with the domestic sphere which includes caregiving, household responsibilities and prioritising family relationships and getting married over any professional growth in the South Asian region (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). Women face challenges everyday due to social structures and perceptions of society and are unable to either engage or perform meaningfully in leadership positions.

The aim of this section is to understand the challenges that organisations and individuals face in promoting meaningful participation of women from the perspective of men and women, hailing from the identified sectors, and to compare the extent of variation in opinions. To understand these perspectives, questions related to barriers around participation in leadership were addressed at all stages of the research process, which also resulted in identification of any societal barriers, unconscious biases, or discriminatory workplace policies that hinder meaningful participation of women in leadership.

There is a consensus among men and women that **societal pressure and lack of family planning options,** followed by **expectations of housework or unpaid labor** and **lack of family support** hinder meaningful participation of women in leadership. These challenges, along with others, were repeatedly discussed during interviews and FGDs, and the majority of the respondents felt that women have to work harder to overcome them.
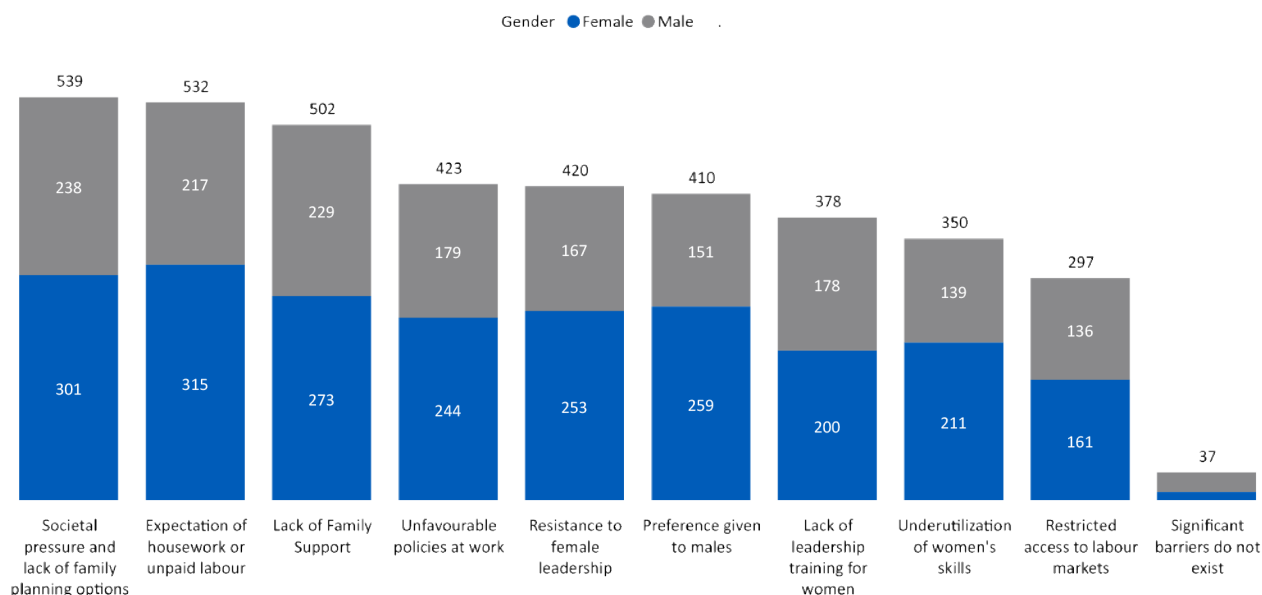

Figure 4.1: What are the barriers that hinder meaningful participation of women in leadership in Pakistan? (survey responses segregated by gender)
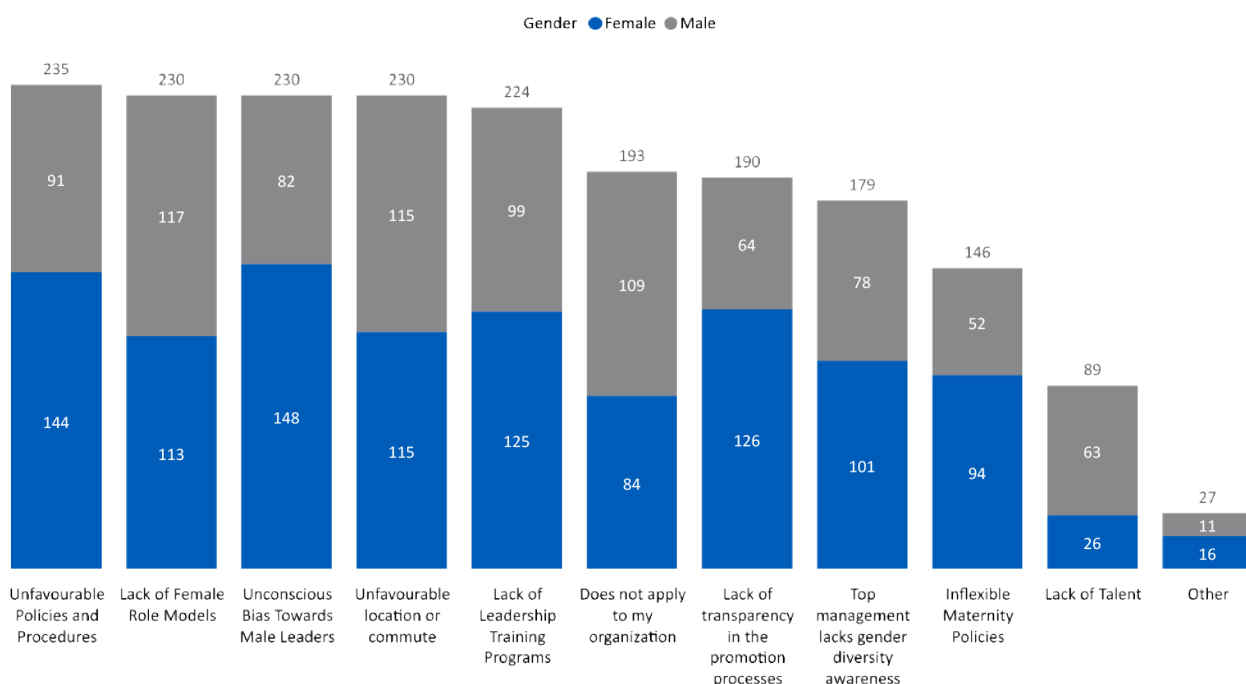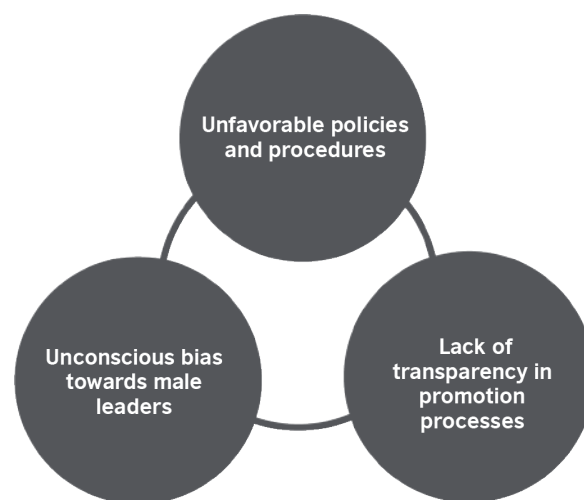

Figure 4.2: Please indicate situations that you believe are holding back women from advancing to senior leadership levels in your organiszation (survey responses segregated by gender)

During the survey, respondents also highlighted situations that hold back women specifically in their organisations. The three most popular situations among both men and women were **unfavorable policies and procedures** followed by **lack of transparency in promotion processes** and an **unconscious bias** towards male leaders.

However, it is interesting to note that a small number of respondents also believed that there are no significant barriers to meaningful participation of women in leadership. It was important to explore this barrier and understand our respondents' experiences and their perceptions regarding struggling towards achieving their goals.

Therefore, during the FGDs, respondents were asked regarding **any compromises they made in order to reach their current position.** As per majority of male and female respondents **women had to work harder for certain positions** (63 out of 69 female respondents, 30 out of 42 male respondents) and that **compromises for men and women differed** (64 out of 69 female respondents, 38 out of 42 male respondents).

Unfavorable policies and procedures

Unconscious bias towards male leaders

Lack of transparency in promotion processes

While issues were present more or less across all sectors, there were barriers faced by participants specific to their sector as well which were further explored during the KIIs and FGDs.

Societal Pressure, Norms and Stereotypes

The barrier highlighted consistently in South Asian literature on female leadership links with societal norms and pressure, and it was also shared as the biggest hindrance to women's promotion towards leadership during this research. A study conducted by professors in University of Sussex with the support of British Council titled *Women in Higher Education Leadership in South Asia: Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance, Revisioning* also identified the power of the sociocultural dynamics of the society as the primary barrier to women's advancement in leadership roles, in the civil society and education sector (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). These societal

norms ranged from society's acceptance of a woman in a public domain as well as labelling and stereotyping women to the limited role of a home maker. Both female and male respondents agreed that these societal norms, which **women are socialised into since an early age, are the major deterrent to women's promotion.**

A female from the Civil Society sector pointed out that due to these differences, **networking opportunities are extremely limited for women** who unlike men have **limited mobility** and are note part of the daily 'cigarette break chat' culture.

75.6% of respondents in the **Politics and Governance** sector selected the societal pressure and lack of family planning options as a barrier to meaningful participation of women in leadership. This is the barrier also selected most by male (40) and female respondents (28).

Meena Majeed, a political party representative from Balochistan shares that barriers start early on with societal expectations and conditioning at home. When women do become part of the workforce, it's a patriarchal setup with policies drafted by men. She said, "Male-

dominated society does not accept a female leader - only women who can follow men and not the other way around. Culture norms and values are so embedded in our society that no matter what, we do not sacrifice them. If a woman's dupatta is a little displaced, or she is wearing clothes

not from our culture or she is working with twomen people will talk about that that it's against our cultural values. She is accused of disrespecting norms and spoiling other women as well.

One of our survey respondents commenting on the importance of gender sensitization and leadership development

programs from Balochistan stated that "In our community, tribalism has been the biggest issue and females are not allowed to come out of their home. Lack of awareness has been the other big issue so if the program like this is initiated it would leave a big impact over improving women's leadership skills and opportunities.

> " We have seen women like Ayesha Farooq to become first women fighter pilots – but we swing between Ayesha and Qandeel Baloch (one embracing the honor and the other killed in the name of honor). We as a community need to redefine our honor code for women" (Dilawar Khan, Male, Law & Justice Sector).

Adherence to Cultural Norms

Cultural stereotypes inform what sort of work and employment is socially acceptable for women, and the under utilising of women's skills or restricted access to labour markets creates even more barriers (Krawiec Alexandra E., 2016). In the Arts and Media sector, female participants highlighted often being judged based on their looks and dressing style in the industry. "In our society, women working in the media industry are deemed **'characterless'** and 'immodest'" said a group director at a leading media group in one of the interviews (Naeemuddin Syed from Sindh). A female individual contributor at an advertising firm was told **'this industry is not for women'** on the first day of her internship whereas another female participant recalled having to keep a reputation and making compromises in terms of clothing and interactions with her colleagues. A female anchor at a media house said that she has to be extra careful in carrying herself at work.

A number of female respondents also highlighted **having to compromise on their dressing style and public appearances.** A female individual contributor in a teaching organisation shared her story saying "I had to move to a completely different city and navigate the entire place and city myself. At my workplace, I had to commute an hour on

public transport and teach girls in remote areas who had never seen someone like me. I had to cover myself up, do *'niqab'* (covering of face) at times, completely change my appearance to fit in, and change my opinions and viewpoints so the students, principals and parents would trust me."

It was also noted that **self doubt** also came out as one of the barriers that hindered women's progress in leadership which was linked to challenges women face growing up in society. Many women are socialised in a way where they grow up to fit a certain societal mould of **'what a woman can and can not do'.** This issue has been consistently highlighted especially for women hailing from diverse and ethnic backgrounds where the sociocultural barriers and lack of family support tends to induce the "imposter feeling" in people of color. One male respondent belonging to the Arts and Media sector said "Cultural sensibility keeps increasing until the idea of dominance and subservience becomes genetic. Certain things or certain acts become unconscious or subconscious reactions" (Omair Fazilullah Bangash, Male, Arts & Media).

Furthermore, a few KII respondents also revealed how the **general patriarchal nature of society conditions women to be apologetic for their ideas in different workplace settings** which further reflects their self doubt and lack of confidence.

"When we share an idea or are part of a discussion, we are apologetic when men are present", (Ayesha Khan, Female, Civil Society Sector)

Data also indicates that young girls witness their fathers or brothers being the decision makers of the house and this impacts their own ability to take initiative and leadership charge later in life. Adil Nizami, a respondent from the Arts and Media Sector shared that "Norms and values restrict women. 70% population in rural areas: family structure is such that the father looks towards work and then

brothers. Women don't get a chance to practice their leadership qualities. Even if a woman gets a 16-year education, after that it goes back to them having to get married and start a homemaker life",

While now many women are coming out to work, some respondents highlighted that after marriage, many women become comfortable with a certain position because they do not receive sufficient support to manage household work with professional obligations, and they do not feel confident to strive for more.

Unconscious Bias Towards Male Professionals

As indicated earlier, since leadership has been largely dominated by the notion of masculinity, there still exists a common bias that men fare better than women in positions of leadership (Kimba, 2008). FGD respondents from the Law and justice sector also highlighted that people hesitate going to a woman lawyer perceiving that she may have a lot of problems of her own and may be an easy target for the opposing party. Many respondents were of the view that society labels certain jobs to be unsuitable for women and then propagates that belief in upbringing, choice of educational qualification as well as at the time of job selection which also creates a bias **towards male professionals.** This was repeatedly highlighted in the focus group discussions as well that **despite a woman often being much more qualified and experienced, people in the sector often turn to the man in the room**. From clients to judges to male candidates appearing for interviews, participants shared multiple anecdotes of women being disrespectfully talked down to and clients asking for the 'man in charge'. An associate attorney at a leading law firm said "During an interview a male interviewee wouldn't even speak to a female partner and every time I asked a question, he would look at the other partners and respond to the question addressing them (male colleagues)"

A male participant mentioned **an instance**

of where an international client directed all questions at him, even though a female partner who had been leading the correspondence was present. He also noted that **male interviewees would not look at the female on the panel and direct all their answers to the men present.** Other female participants reported instances where they were snubbed by judges and have been asked by clients to **bring a male lawyer into the discussion "who would understand things better"**

A senior female lawyer quoted an incident stating 'I was working with a client whose father owns one of the biggest textile conglomerates in Pakistan and was representing his father. He bluntly said to me: you know women in this country only work at home- and I was surprised because I was actually doing their case.'

Several female participants highlighted **gender discrimination in the Law and Justice sector** that hinders **women's progress beyond a certain stage.** A female individual contributor from a law firm in Punjab recalled being given 'lighter work' during her four years with her law firm. She would be handed banking and family cases by default, while criminal cases, property and FIA matters fell into a male colleague's lap. Throughout the study, women shared that being **highly discouraged to go into courts was highlighted as one of the biggest barriers females in the Law and Justice sector face,** whereas their male colleagues are encouraged and supported

to visit courts early in their careers. Similarly, in the business sector, **areas such as sales and operations are still largely male dominated** due to the same societal conditioning and women's advancement in these streams is still largely underrepresented despite them having taken up technical subjects at the education level.

Lack of Family Support

While few male participants had to deal with family and societal pressure at an early career stage only, **the issue remained prevalent in females across all tiers and sectors, with some still facing the issue**, making lack of family support for professional growth opportunities a major concern for all female respondents. "Sometimes people say that a particular job is more suited for a man or this job is more suited to a woman, but I think that is incorrect. No job except birthing a child is more suited for a woman as opposed to a man", (Mehvish Muneer, Female, Law & Justice).

While some families allow daughters to choose law, women are not allowed to study criminal law for it being considered 'too dangerous for women' as highlighted by several participants. This can also be attributed to the negative connotations associated with criminal law and its **'tendency to have a bad influence'** as mentioned by a respondent from Balochistan.

KII respondents from the Arts and Media sector highlighted that a woman in the stream of media is often frowned upon "First and foremost they (women) have to face their families if and when they decide to work. And if they choose Media then it's generally frowned upon because of the **negative connotations attached to the industry** *"Agar larki media mein hai tou hai hi kharab larki"* (if she is in the media,

she must have a bad character). The families trust their daughters but worry about people *"Log kya kahenge"* (what will people say). These stigmas make her overprotective of herself at the workplace and she is not able to perform optimally, which hinders her career growth", (Naeemudin Syed, Male, Arts & Media).

Furthermore, requirements in terms of dressing can cause clashes with the demand of professionals as mentioned earlier. Though Pakistani law does not forbid women from wearing specific clothing, cultural norms that have been constructed through Islamic values require women to follow several societal and religious traditions (Nanayakkara, 2012). **In sectors such as sports,** people are skeptical to invest in the training and development of female athletes because oftentimes, they are unable to continue their career or progress internationally either due to the backlash faced by female athletes on sportswear or because after marriage there is a possibility of **lack of support from the spouse or in-laws.** "Women leave after marriage. We invested in around 20 female athletes, got them international exposure, and when they got ready for competing, won our country gold medals, and gained great experience. All of them left saying their husbands won't allow it. Female athletes in other countries are married and have children too, they are working as well, but they are still playing and winning medals for their country", (Mudassar Arain, Male, Sports).

69.0% of respondents in the **Sports sector** selected the lack of family support as a barrier to meaningful participation of women in leadership. This is the option also selected most by both male (28) female respondents (21).

Noreena Shams, famous squash player, shared her story including the barriers she and her female counterparts continue to face in the pursuit of success and leadership. She makes a strong case for meaningful participation of women in sports, where female leadership is non-existent.

The Mulan of the Sports Empire!

Noreena Shams, a girl in her early 20s, born in Lower Dir District of Pakistan has been fighting the system to make a place for herself since she bought her first racquet. She was aware of the challenges she might have to face to grow in this field as she walked in disguised as a boy, at the age of 15 into a cricket academy in Peshawar.

Shams played cricket and was also popular as the girl who rode the bicycle in public spaces every morning. She remembers one of her coaches fondly who encouraged her to continue her cycling so other women can be inspired to pursue their dreams. She was the first ever cyclist to win a silver medal for Pakistan in the Junior Olympics. However, Shams soon realised that even though she was good at cricket and cycling, squash was her true calling!

"After my persistent efforts to find someone to train me in Peshawar and failing to identify any facilities for girls - one of the coaches at Aslam College gave me a chance to play and train with his team. And I remember playing as a boy for years at that academy before the teammates were informed of my real identity. And so, at a very young age, I was exposed to the preferential treatment given to boys especially in sports."

After posing as a boy for many years, and then eventually having to reveal her identity as a girl, she was able to enter facilities developed for both genders and make direct comparisons between the training facilitating and skills offered to male and female athletes.

"I could see the stark difference in the way boys and girls were trained. Even the level of facilities reflected a bias towards male players. They keep telling me that I am not winning enough to be a part of the international tournaments, but I believe it's because we are not trained as well as we should be. I had to find better coaches for myself. I had to save money to buy equipment. Sports can be a very expensive activity if the state is not offering you adequate facilities and services"

The preferential treatment for male athletes can be reflected in the quality of coaching, facilities and opportunities provided to them, and the situation worsens when female participation in decision making is absent. Despite her struggles and challenges, Shams was the first ever cyclist to win a silver medal for Pakistan in the Junior Olympics. She has won 63 gold medals, 24 silver medals and 5 bronze medals, and as a squash player, Shams ranks 209 in the world and has been among the Top 40 Asian Junior Squash Players. This case study focuses on her real-life experiences that have led her to achieve her goals against all odds, and she advocates for nurturing female leadership in sports to encourage more women to come forward in the sector.

Case Study

Lack of Access to Quality Coaching

The access to quality coaching was restricted due to unpaid labor/work at home and low incomes of most players. Many families are already reluctant in sending their girls for sports, therefore bearing extra financial costs for this "hobby" is not even close to their priorities.

"Right now, the coach that I have is the most expensive one in Pakistan for the reason that the skills that he has no one else in Pakistan currently has. I can afford to hire him as my sponsor pays for my training. But there are other kids in my academy who can not avail this opportunity since they do not have huge amounts to pay for the training… There are many players whose families depend on them. Such as Anam who has a lot of potential and she was the one who used to teach me. She can do wonders, but she is burdened with her house rent, bills and traveling." She also shared that, "Ayesha and Qirat are two sisters who live in Karachi and their parents are not dependent on them which is why they are performing well - however, they have also had their fair share of struggles"

She also highlighted the difference in access to quality coaching among players based on their family relationships and connections in the sector. The federations tend to nominate players with better access to these services without realising the potential of other athletes, who if given the opportunity can perform at the same or perhaps better level.

"Player Arya is from an army background and she doesn't really have to worry about courts as she has access to the squash court in the Cantt area and her father arranges for her coaching. That is one of the biggest reasons that she is performing well…so basically the problem that we only look at the top players and even when they don't perform well internationally, nothing's been done about that as well.

Lack of Access to Equal Opportunities

The difference in access to quality coaches and training facilities has been highlighted as the main reason for the difference in ability and performance of male and female players. Female athletes are paid less and given less opportunities to play at international level. Shams quoted a difference of 50% in prize money for both male and female athletes in the field of squash in Pakistan.

Figure 4.4: Are you satisfied with the level of opportunities given by the federation to play at national/international tournaments? (FGD responses-sports sector)

Figure 4.5: Are you satisfied with the role of the federation in ensuring equal opportunities for all? (FGD responses-sports sector)

60% of female respondents of our FGD with the sports sector said that they did not receive equal opportunities to play national and international tournaments. 91% of all respondents said that federations were ineffective and played no role in providing equal opportunities.

"So, for girls if the winning money is 10k, for boys it would be 20k. If a girl is getting 25k, the boy will get 50k. In camps, the duration for training for boys is far more than for girls. In international championships even, most often the federation would send either Carla Khan or Maria Toor, and usually the ratio between the boys and girls selected is 5 to 1, and even that was because that girls parents would fight for the girl to be sent to the championship....In the world, squash is the only sport currently that has the same prize money for boys and girls, and players get an equal split for example in Wimbledon for tennis, their prize money is different but in the squash US Open, the prize money is the same. Whatever the boy wins, the girl wins too. Same is in other countries like Egypt, Malaysia and even in Saudia Arabia squash is the only sport that actually had a tournament for women, so if it can happen over there then I don't know what is wrong with Pakistan"

Absence of Female Coaches

The lack of female role models and coaches also deters many from pursuing sports as a field. This could be seen as a strong implication of absence of meaningful participation of women in sports leadership roles. Shams also highlighted that male coaches tend to get very possessive about their trainees. The female players are made to feel that they "belong" to a certain coach and if the athlete wants to shift to another one, the coaches tend to create a lot of fuss.

"We do not have any female coaches- coaches are all male. On the girls' side, the coach is male, and the junior coach often has a weird mindset that the girl they are coaching will always stick with them no matter how bad the coach is. So, if a girl tries to go to another level and decides to switch to another coach, the same guy is going to create a lot of fuss for her on her character. A lot of girls get scared by this"

On the other hand, the remuneration and benefits offered by the federation to coaches is sub-standard and discourages people from opting for this field. She mentions that the number of coaches has decreased since the past decade, and since the government and federation are not giving timely wages and due support to the sports faculty, most of this talent is leaving the country.

Absence of Relevant Decision Makers

It was interesting to note that even with the presence of popular female athletes, the sports sector is either being managed by females without any sports experience or by men in positions of power. The participation of women is seen as merely tokenistic.

"The unfortunate thing that has happened with the sports community is that our associations and federations are not being run by any athlete. They are being run by doctors, engineers, ministers or someone else. They don't know the ABCs of sports or managing athletes. The problem is that a female athlete is needed in each federation to run it. We need male athletes too... but even a male athlete would not understand the problems of a woman. Carla Khan, who took our name out into the world is now living in England not doing anything and she is ready to serve Pakistan but neither is the federation

calling Maria Toor nor are they calling Carla Khan. And they would invite me to meetings for pictures only."

Due to the lack of relevant leadership, she felt that Pakistan is lagging behind even in comparison to countries with a similar state. She mentioned that Nepal, even without abundant resources, starts preparing for South Asian games at least two years prior to the tournament. Whereas, Pakistani camps take place 10 days in advance, and even that clashes with national games which makes the timeline chaotic. The federation is meant to play an active role in such situations but since the decision makers are unaware of the needs of the industry, they don't intervene.

"So, the leadership that is required is the right person for the right job. The last minister for KPK, he did not even know the meaning of cardio and that was the person appointed as our sports minister. And the person who was really good for the job was Mr. Aslam, but he was removed - we are still trying to figure out why. So, there is a disconnect between authorities and athletes, and there is no real representation of what is needed in the sector. I know a lot of athletes do not get proper qualifications but at the same time only an athlete can know and understand the problems of other athletes. "

Making A Case for Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

She strongly felt that meaningful participation of women in sports leadership will really help eradicate most of these problems as she noticed that men appointed by other men tend to side with men - and the vicious cycle continues. She feels a female leader is more suited to work in stressful environments due to their social conditioning. She also termed them as "fairer" and more inclusive.

> " I have seen women being more fair in their dealing. People doubt the skills of a woman but take the example of the tennis player Andy Murray, he had a female coach for 5 years and he still managed to get Wimbledon[4]. **He was coached by a female so that shows that okay wow, a woman does have the skills.** So that's the whole point, that when a woman leader is appointed she is more fair, she is more equal, they think more emotionally I believe and one issue which all athletes in Pakistan are facing right now is the mental problem. They have a lot of pressure on their mind and men are taught that since you are a male, they are taught to hide their emotions except anger. But women are different, they know how to use their emotions. They know how to channel it. I believe if they come, they'd be more like mothers in the academy and they will take care of the academy more. Some may believe that harshness works but there are many kids who need to be motivated. Even personally for me, I am someone who works better if I am motivated and I believe women are better at that which is why we should have at least one female in the academy as an administrator… A lot of coaches are currently going through mental health problems, including male coaches, and I believe the sector would be more understanding of it due to a woman's presence".

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5   Murray hired former world No.1, Amelie Mauresmo in 2014 as a coach and received a lot of backlash for doing so. He also highlighted that due to her gender she received worse criticism compared to his previous coaches (who were men), and if he ever lost a match then people would not hesitate in blaming her.

Shams also quoted Malaysia's example where Nicol David, a renowned player of squash and eight-time world champion, is the only squash player in the entire world who is sponsored by Mercedes and she even has a stadium named after her. Utilizing her abilities, and position of influence, she is currently the biggest advocate for squash in Malaysia and even Pakistani coaches in Malaysia are being employed at the academy supported by her. Competent young female athletes are being empowered as David has established her own foundation[65] to cater to their needs and also developing her own country's standing in sports.

Shams also highlights the loyalty of female athletes to their country and the field. She mentions the support of private organisations who tend to support women because of their abilities, and to promote their brand. It is evident that these corporations can play a huge role in supporting women players as she also mentioned a few female athletes getting better opportunities due to support of organisations like SNGPL. She also highlighted that investors realise that it is more secure to invest in women as "men tend to leave to settle abroad as soon as they get the opportunity and I've asked this many times, have you seen any girl leave the country and settle abroad as soon as she gets the money/opportunity?"

Most importantly, Shams highlights the association of Sports with achievements of male athletes in the past and the lack of innovation as a huge problem which she also believes can be countered by nurturing female leadership in sports.

"Squash as a sport has evolved globally. It is no more a 'Jehangir Khan's' sport. It has grown so much. And apparently Pakistan is still under that delusion that we are the best. And in this delusion of being the best, they've not realised that they must adopt the new techniques of this sport which have been developed, and that adaptation is not being done by the federation…Maybe in Jehanagir Khan's time there were many women who wanted to come forward but they couldn't, but that doesn't mean that there can not be anyone else like Jehangir khan…**If Jehangir Khan could do what he did for 10 years, then a woman could also have done if she had similar support."**

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6   Nicol David Foundation seeks to empower girls through sport to reach their full potential. This will be refined fully in a strategic partnership with PwC to create the best structure and programme moving forward to have more girls playing sport, improve their study skills and soft skills too.

Expectations of Household Work and Unpaid Labor

Research suggests that whilst a certain degree of unpaid work is indisputably helpful for both the care-givers and care-takers, problems tend to arise when voluntary work is the only available source of social inclusion for women. Similarily, this trend of unpaid labour leads to exploitation (Goldschmidt-Clermont, 1982).

It is true, that in spite of being better educated than men of the same social strata, the utilisation and valuation of women's skills is far behind that of men (Eccles, 1994, Fausto-Sterling, 2008). The rigidity of traditional gender roles, lack of childcare and the implicit encouragement for women's voluntary work creates touch barriers and impedes both social and economic advancement. In spite of its existence in virtually all cultures, unpaid labour tends to be overlooked by both macro- and micro-economic models (Lewis, 1993). Any and all services related to house and hearth provided by women continue to remain in an economic limbo, even though it is understood how substantial the economic implications of this contribution are.

According to the Beijing +25 - Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls report released in 2020, men account for nearly double the share of women of total paid work whereas in unpaid work, women's share is nearly triple that of men. It was also noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, such expectations increased drastically. For instance, female professionals who participated in our FGDs or interview processes were often interrupted by either children or family/ household related responsibilities to cater to resulting in restrictions to their availability and participation in the study.

Even during interviews and FGDs for the study, this issue was identified as one of the biggest barriers to women's advancement by both male and female respondents. Family obligations and an expectation to give more attention to the house has been identified consistently as a challenge to women's advancement, especially in South Asian societies where women are often restricted to perform in the domestic sphere.

According to the research respondents, these family obligations are very closely tied to societal norms. Despite having an education, home making and taking care of the family is still seen as the primary role of a woman. Hence, not only do women face considerable pressure to get married early, but after marriage, their role and responsibilities towards their families tend to increase be it by way of demands from in-laws, spouses or children. **A woman is expected to manage this additional unpaid labour with the demands of a professional job, which while many women continue to do so, can often cause problems when it comes to competing for leadership roles.**

"Women face backlash from society. Their family life needs commitment and so does their work life, and she has to prove herself in both these arenas" (Female, Individual Contributor, Civil Society)

Opportunity Cost of Caregiving = Professional Growth Through Skills Development and Networking
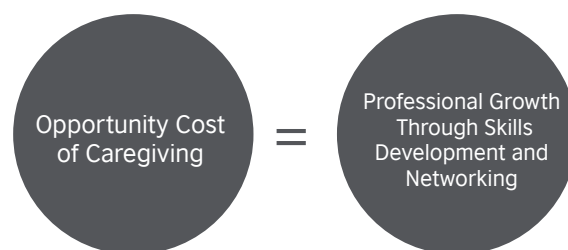
The issue of unpaid work and labor also leads to women going home earlier and missing out on opportunities to network for professional growth and exposure. This further leads to lack of **technical education,** another barrier identified by both male and female respondents belonging particularly to the media and business sector.

Once again linked to societal conditioning, many KII respondents were of the view that **certain subjects are deemed more 'appropriate' for women as compared to the rest.** In the media sector, women do have representation but that is often limited to being on screen.

Technical aspect of the job including handling equipment is still largely dominated by the man "On the creative side, it is extremely technical. Have a lot of machinery with which you need to do a lot of tinkering of hardware and software. The way we bring up women, we discourage them from the aspect of technicality", (Omair Faziullah Bangash, Male, Arts & Media).

74.4% of survey respondents in the **Arts and Media sector** selected the expectation of housework/unpaid labour as a barrier to meaningful participation of women in leadership

In the Law and Justice sector, several FGD participants from both tiers and genders highlighted that not having a legal background created hurdles for them. A male managing partner at a law firm in KPK recalled having to do mundane tasks such as carrying files during his early career. He also mentioned that having **no previous connections in the litigation sector often leads to people not letting you go forward. Lack of networking opportunities was especially highlighted by some female participants as well who believed a "smoke break" really worked in the favor of their male counterparts.**

76.3% of survey respondents in the **Civil Society sector** selected the expectation of housework/unpaid labour as a barrier to meaningful participation of women in leadership. This is the option also selected most by both male (40) and female respondents (57).

At least thrice as many female first line managers as female individual contributors highlighted having to compromise on family time due to work. This can be ascribed to expectations from women to take care of family as well as work. The tier wise difference can also be attributed to females being married in the latter stage of their lives and thus having more responsibilities with regards to family. Most of the female respondents in our study were married, thus their personal experiences corroborated with this issue.

" **A female individual contributor pointed towards the challenges that come with juggling deadlines as a mother.** 'The Motherhood penalty: if a woman decides to go start a family, she will be set 2 years behind at the workplace because she missed out. There is no way around it and in Pakistan it is amplified 10 fold due to lack of things like basic healthcare, proper maternity leave and legal ways to actually get what you have been promised and climb the ladder", (Meshal Malik, Female, Arts & Media)

74.7% of survey respondents in the **Development sector** selected the expectation of housework/unpaid labour as a barrier to meaningful participation of women in leadership. This is the option also selected most by female respondents (74).

A significant percentage of both men 48.7% and women 51.6% among survey respondents believed that **women having less time to give to children's upbringing will also moderately impact the society.** A few male respondents also shed light on the **children being disconnected from their parents as a negative social implication of participation of women in leadership roles.** Some men further added that independence will lead to **less compromise which will lead to divorce,** and a capitalist society leading to greed for money and ruining social and cultural values were mentioned as some negative outcomes of the **"feminist approach".** These respondents highlighted that **family structures will be affected by less quality time for children from working women.** Thus, the expectation of household work and childcare is deemed as a responsibility for women in our society and serves as a major challenge to their advancement.

Workplace Policies and Procedures

First society holds women back, then organisations do the same. Workplace policies are another barrier highlighted in studies conducted to understand women's leadership in South Asian societies; organisational culture is often deemed as "unfriendly and unaccommodating to women" (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). This is experienced as gender discrimination and bias, and in many cases leads to lack of transparency in opportunities, an absence of female leaders in the organisation and unfortunately instances of sexual harassment.

According to KII respondents, most women juggle between their household duties and professional work, hence, the way an organisation facilitates its women becomes a crucial factor for their success professionally. Having flexible work hour policies, inclusive workplace infrastructural design, maternity policies and mentorship can prove to be a real support to women balancing their family with their career. **"The lack of childcare/ day-care at workplaces, and even something as simple as office layouts and the presence of women's toilets are things not thought out",** (Abbas Hussain, Male, Development Sector).

In the law and justice sector, many female respondents highlighted that lack of female washrooms at courtrooms can do cause inconvenience to female lawyers.

> " **There are long working hours including nights, which is not feasible for women especially given our societal concerns. Companies here have no maternity policies, and the worse, our courts. Even bathrooms for women are close to non-existent and the ones available are not clean. There is harassment around us. Many cases go unrecorded and sometimes even judges will pass off-handed remarks. It doesn't create a conducive environment for women to succeed in",** (Ali Kabir, Male, Law & Justice).

Another female respondent from the Law sector highlighted that she often worked late hours for work that could easily be managed from home, and upon sharing this her line manager suggested maybe you should become a judge. She highlighted this attitude as problematic and shared that It's not necessary that I have to be there in the office all the time for the work that can be done from home. Until we have more women in these positions, it is not gonna change because the same men are gonna be framing the policies.

In the Sports sector, giving optimal training hours to male athletes while female athletes make room to conduct training at odd hours also leads to problems for many women. Similarly, in politics and governance, respondents highlighted that lack of provision of day care facilities can also become a major source of inconvenience for a mother who is trying

to manage her family while being a working woman.

A manager in the Development sector pointed out that "There is a patriarchal system in not just our society but also in our workplaces. Women face all the societal barriers only to come to work and deal with workplace inequality.

There is a lack of presence of females in leadership positions within the organisation which doesn't help other young women. Moreover, men label female co-workers as their 'daughter' or 'sister' which automatically subjugates women as culturally these relations are deemed as below men"

36.6% of the respondents in the **Sports sector** said that unfavourable policies and procedures are holding women back in their organisations, **making it the most popular option.** This is also the most selected situation by female respondents (14).

In Arts and Media, respondents shared a **lack of flexibility of work hours as a barrier which hinders a lot of women from progressing.** Alongside this, women have to convince their families and then fight a battle at the workplace to get themselves recognised and prove professionally worthy. They have to put in more to manage both expected obligations (Senior Professional in Arts and Media).

Difference in Compromises Due to Work

Compromises highlighted by the majority of the **male participants** were inclined towards two major compromises: **'Long working hours' (more prevalent among first-line managers) and 'Relocation' (more prevalent among early career professionals).** Few early career male professionals mentioned facing family pressure while choosing a career, however, those participants belonged to either the Sports or Law and Justice sectors.

One of our respondents from the Politics and Governance sector, the youngest Hindu Council Advisor (at the age of 28) shared his story: "When I first started, my family said how can you reach there, they have so much power and can take votes, while you just earn 25000 rupees. How can you compete with them? When I started, there were a lot of competitions and contestants with so much money to get votes. When I met people individually, I got a lot of support and I reached this point. I faced a lot of pressure from political parties to bring their people in, and when I contested, I faced a lot of challenges. People would threaten me to resign. When

you do not have such a huge coalition as a minority, it is very dangerous"
While female participants experienced similar issues, these respondents highlighted several instances of compromises that were gender specific. Several female participants regarded **'long working hours' as a determinant of progressing to senior positions in their organisation.** A female individual contributor said to get ahead she has to stay late in the office because her male counterparts do. A female program manager at an international Development sector organisation said **she had to work through most of her maternal leave and still was given zero authority in her director position.**

Several female participants highlighted having to switch to another organisation or even relocate to another country due to the "toxic" male dominated culture of the organisation or sector. A female first-line manager in the Law and Justice sector said she had to take a break and move to England due to the work environment being hostile to women, while a female program manager in the Development sector had to quit her job due to family pressure for living independently in another city.

Another Senior Creative Manager at an advertising agency said "I have to be available 24/7. There was a bias that if I am a girl, I wouldn't be able to work overtime. I had to take a pay and position cut and move to a new organisation because the culture in the previous firm was very toxic due to male managers".

A female Sports wing member from a well-known political party highlighted that toxic and male dominated cultures within sectors and organisations leads to women not being able to stay in one place to progress or having to spend their own resources to prove their value. She said "In the government I worked as a research consultant for a year, I was kept equal to district sports officers with 12 employees working under us. When we were made equal, even though our role was contractual, they (colleagues) felt insecure that we had such a big staff and they did not want to work or give us funds so we had to use our own money. They (colleagues) tried to make sure that we failed or did not work. As a female, if you know how to work, that's an issue, if you don't, then that is an issue too. The reason I was able to do all this is because when in one place you are disturbed, it's better to not stay too long, and you keep trying whether in urban or rural areas"

38.6% of the survey respondents in the **Business and Entrepreneurship sector** said that unfavourable policies and procedures are holding women back in their organisations, making it the most popular option. This is the most selected situation by female respondents (34). The situation selected by most male respondents as holding women back is an unfavourable location or commute to the workplace.

Asking women about when they are getting married, or not promoting women because they might have to start a family or will not be able to give time to their work was indicated as a common practice during hiring. Oftentimes, these things are just assumed rather than giving a woman a chance to prove herself "The fragility often associated with our gender which I think also prompts some women to act extra emotionless just to prove them wrong. And what Participant C[7] said about marriage. I know a friend who was refused a job because the employers said you got married 2 years ago so you will probably have a child now and leave", (Sana Naeem, Female, Business & Entrepreneurship).

35.6% of the respondents in the **Politics and Governance sector** said that a **lack of leadership training programs** is holding women back in their organisations, making it the most popular option. This, along with a **lack of transparency in the promotions processes**, are the most selected situations holding women back by female respondents (15). The situation selected by most male respondents as holding women back is **a lack of female role models.**

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7   FGD participants were allocated alphabets as alias to protect their identity during data collection

Harassment at Workplace

Existing literature indicates that women are harassed in the form of verbal abuse, mental torture and threats and sometimes to secure a job, most of the working women, particularly those who are the sole bread earners are unwilling to take any action; as a result, culprits are taking advantage of women (Sadruddin, 2013). Harassment, physical and mental in the workplace was another barrier highlighted by both male and female respondents who revealed that in workplaces, verbal aggression does happen. "Politics is messy business. There's a lot of pushing and shoving both physically and emotionally", (Samar Ali Khan, Male, Politics &

Governance). It was noted during the FGDs, that respondents from the Politics and Governance, Law and Justice and Sports sector highlighted that they have directly faced physical and verbal harassment during their careers.

Many people still do not subscribe to the idea of a woman venturing out of her house for work and despite the enactment of the **Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2010)** there is lack of application within organisations. **Majority of the Law and Justice sector FGD respondents also agreed that there was a stigma associated with reporting and pursuing cases related to harassment.**
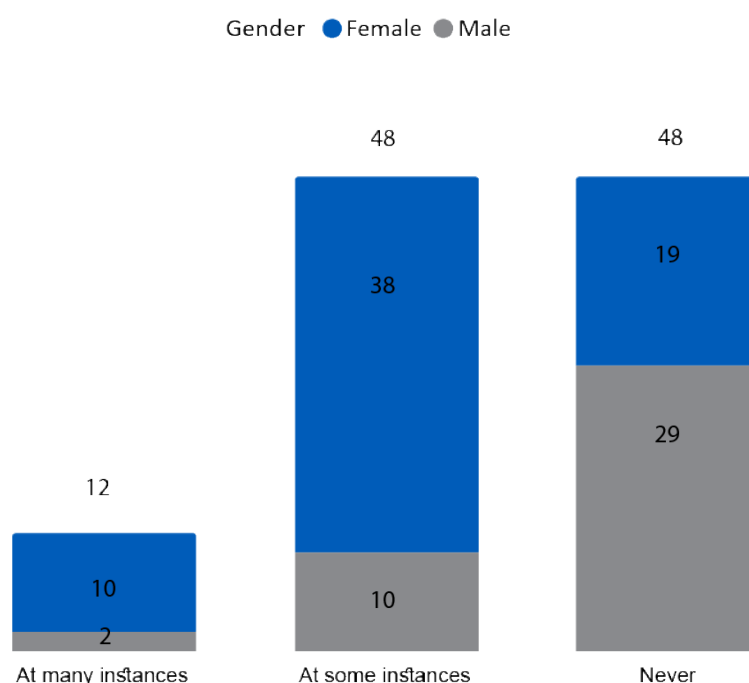
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 4.3: Have you ever felt intimidated or snubbed by the opposite gender during professional meetings and discussions? (FGD responses segregated by gender)

It was noted that a **majority of women respondents have felt intimidation during meetings as well as professional discussions:** "Initially I felt intimidated and discouraged, as male colleagues sized me up and passed judgement on whether I actually knew what to do/say. A lot of this still happens. Harassment is not just in the form of verbal/physical abuse but is mainly associated with how they make you feel. I cannot let down my guard at any point otherwise I am perceived as frivolous and incompetent. I want to be taken

seriously but I am judged by the way I look and act. I have to be more well-prepared than men and I have to look the part. You will be more susceptible to sizing up so I tell my associates to dress very professionally", (Asma Hamid, Female, Law & Justice).

In the **Arts and Media sector**, a female first-line manager expressed that she had faced snubbing from both genders, but it stemmed from their insecurities rather than gender.

It was also observed during the FGD, that **02 male respondents would start responding to comments made by other participants and speaking over fellow female respondents, to a point where the moderator of the discussion had to intervene.** One of the male respondents by the end of the discussion seemed quite frustrated and stopped commenting on questions after mentioning that he feels that there is no dire need for further discussion on the topic as meaningful participation of women already exists.

In the **Sports sector**, the issue of harassment was highlighted repeatedly, to an extent where some participants were not comfortable in commenting on it. 40% of female respondents said that they had faced some form of physical or verbal harassment by the opposite gender whereas 20% of female respondents declined to comment also indicating a stigma associated with vocalising such instances. It was also important to note that, **none of the male respondents had ever been snubbed in a meeting by the opposite gender whereas all female respondents shared being either harassed at many instances or some instances.** During the **Civil Society** FGD, a senior female professional, who came with 20 years of experience,

said although she did not experience being snubbed at her organisation, **there were multiple instances in other non-profit organisations or public sector organisations where she was often questioned on her knowledge and ability to work with the public sector.** She also shared an instance when she was snubbed in a room full of people by an executive director of a civil society organisation based on a difference in opinion. Another female participant highlighted how this further **demotivates women** and **reduces their self confidence thus creating a cycle of self-doubt feeding into the number of challenges already faced by women.**

Lack of Female Role Models and Development of Women

As per data revealed from FGDs, female respondents seemed to have an equal representation of men and women in their teams as compared to the men, and female respondents also expressed

more faith in the potential of women in their teams when it came to pursuing leadership roles. Contrary to this, many male respondents revealed that they do not have female representation in their team, and where present, they expressed that the ratio of men and women in their team is "off".

40.2% of the respondents in the **Civil Society** sector said that a lack of female role models is holding women back in their organisations, making it the most popular option

An individual contributor from the Development sector highlighted that "The way society is built plays against the women. Mobility of women is quite a barrier be it for work or for anything. In an organisation, a bossy or assertive woman leader is perceived negatively while at the same time, a man with the same attributes is taken as normal. A lot of women do

have leadership potential but there is a lack of training, mentoring and polishing of their skills to help them get to the top from the early level of their career." This statement corroborated with the findings in Defining Leadership and Indicators of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership which reflected that women were expected to be more polite,

but even that was deemed as a weakness when it came to quick decision making. A manager in the Sports sector highlighted that these situations hinder women from coming in the forefront and thus lack of female role models in the sector holds back other women from progressing. The issue of absence of "… famous and popular female athletes and champions, (exists)

because the media only reports on the competition, training, and daily lives of famous male athletes" (Laar et al.,2019). This issue was also highlighted during the Sports sector FGD where respondents agreed to lack of media coverage of female sports and achievements compared to male sports activities.

36.0% of the respondents in the **Arts and Media** sector said that the **lack of leadership training programs are holding women back in their organisations,** making it the most popular option. This, along with **unfavourable policies and procedures**, are the two most selected situations by female respondents (22 each). The situation selected by most male respondents as holding women back is the **lack of gender diversity awareness in the top management.**

It is also important to note that the absence of female leaders and role models in organisations further exacerbates the challenges women face and excludes their voices from important decisions and policies that affect all employees in the organisation. Their absence creates an unjust system which tends to accept harassment and exploitation. Irum Mahmood from the Law and Justice sector shares her story and calls for females' active participation and inclusion in leadership roles.

Injustice in the Justice System

Irum Mehmood, a single mother in her 50s, was born and raised in the city of Quetta. Despite having family's support to get an education, she was not free to choose her discipline. With her crushed dream to be a scientist, she accepted her fate and studied law as per her mother's desire. She is told by her family that "who will deal with the men? Who will attend your phone calls? We won't be able to tolerate this humiliation". Even while entering the sector, her choices are limited by the family as criminal law is looked down upon. It is perceived that being in the company of criminals will have a bad influence on her. She highlighted how lack of family supports keeps many aspiring young female lawyers from even entering the sector.

"As a young lawyer I used to perform fieldwork with my senior colleagues. However, several young female lawyers do not perform fieldwork. When I inquired, their response was that they do not get permission from their families. I told them your progress will be hampered greatly since most of the challenging cases occur not in Quetta but in interior Balochistan"

When she began her practice of law, Mehmood would rarely get a case. Her male colleagues reminded her that being a lawyer is not a job for women, even when she did get a client or two. To battle against the exploiters, she decided to open her own chamber. **In 2000, she became the first female lawyer in Balochistan to run an independent chamber.**

The struggles of the divorced single mother did not end there. **While all other lawyers would go home for lunch after court hearings, Mehmood would be on her way to her chamber where her kids would meet her after school.** The kids would change, rest and wait for their tutor to visit them in the chamber. Playing roles of both parents, her job was twice as challenging. Yet she always prioritised her children over work.

"On the result day, I would leave my chamber at 10 am and spend the rest of the day with my kids. People discouraged a single mother going out with her children, but I did it for my kids."

In the beginning, she was introduced to the cruel irony of injustice in the justice system. **Being a divorced woman, she was deemed as "always available for favors" by the men in the sector.** Judges would rule against her when she turned down their indecent proposals. Her male colleagues had the audacity to make inappropriate advances towards her openly.

"Once three of my male colleagues brazenly invited me to a bachelorette party at their farmhouse. All three were married and had children. To teach them a lesson, I recorded the whole conversation on my phone and showed it to the bar association."

"One of the lawyers once accused me of having affairs with multiple men. I was completely shocked, and I felt helpless. But suddenly something in me told me that if I stay quiet now, I will have to stay quiet for the rest of my life. So, I retaliated, and he was taken aback by my reaction as he did not expect it. Everyone told me to stay quiet and not fight but I told them it was necessary. No one said any such thing to my face after that"

With over two decades of experience in the law sector, Mehmood is the first ever woman lawyer to have her own chamber in Balochistan. **She frequently mentors young aspiring female lawyers and familiarizes them with the facts on the ground. She has also been working with the judiciary in Balochistan to implement the anti-harassment acts and laws.**

Sexual harassment of women has been highlighted as one of the biggest barriers, keeping women from entering or staying in the Law sector. They face harassment even from their senior colleagues or bosses. Although Anti-sexual Harassment Act was passed in 2010, it is still not being implemented. Mahmood has been working towards the implementation of the act for over 10 years now. In 2016, a meeting was also planned on the request of Aurat Foundation and Irum Mahmood to discuss the issue of implementation of women friendly spaces and development of Gender Sensitive HR policies for court premises in Balochistan.

"Ever since the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2010 has been passed, I have been working toward its implementation. I took an application to every chief justice, requesting them to make anti sexual harassment committees in high court and lower judiciary but to no avail. Every time my application was tossed out of the window. Instead, they would label me 'blackmailer'"

Be it appearing in courts, working with senior colleagues, or getting a promotion, sexual harassment exists in all areas of the job. She also mentioned that during the time of appraisal, women are asked for "favors" in exchange. "You make us happy; we will make you happy"

Poor implementation of law is causing the ineffectiveness of the justice system. From an FIR not being filed at a police station to the lack of implementation of Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2010, the implementation system of law is weak. Mahmood highlights "We make laws all the time but never implement them. For instance, our constitution does not allow anyone to hold two jobs. Whereas the first ones to get a second job are government employees"

Making A Case for Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

She firmly believes that meaningful participation of women in leadership roles is a necessity to overcome the challenges in the law sector. **She highlighted that more women in the sector would mean less exploitation of women. Most importantly, it would eradicate the association of particular jobs, such as lawyer, to a specific gender.**

She highly commended quota systems as a measure to increase participation of women in leadership. Mehmood believes while it has its pros and cons, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

However, she stressed upon making their leadership meaningful and not tokenistic. "I appreciate the policies built to include more women in legislation. Although it compels men to have a required number of women, we can see more women entering this sector. People have also started to encourage women to study law. I enjoy my work even more as I see an increase in women in the courtrooms. But this should not be limited to bringing women forward while they do not have a say. They should be made part of decision-making processes as well"

She also believes that meaningful participation of women enables them to be independent and encourages young women to have role models. "Now we have women chairing in the court because of the decision to have equal participation of women. They have started to get more respect as well. When women are independent, they do not have to condone unfair treatment. It also encourages young women to break the glass ceiling when they have role models in their own families or neighborhood"

Socioeconomic Implications of Lacking Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership Roles

Socially and economically, the gender gap is not just harmful for women, but harmful for all. Women who are healthy and educated are much more likely to have children who are healthier and educated-which leads to a virtuous cycle of development. When women are in positions of authority and realise their economic potential- it leads to an evolution in policy, business practices and general attitudes. The positive outcomes of women's inclusion in the labor market are evident. In regard to the specific feature of women in higher ranks of organisations and in leadership roles, the Catalyst Report of March 2011 shows that women leaders provide highly productive input to the companies they lead (Carter et al. ,2011).

The aim of this section is to understand the impact of both the absence and presence of female leadership at an organisational and individual level, especially focusing on effects on the society and economy. To understand these perspectives, questions around implications of female participation, or lack thereof, in leadership were addressed at all stages of the research process. As a result, this research was able to identify and explore valuable indicators such as role of female leaders in organisations, as participants of the workforce and households with respect to various sectors.

Gender ● Female ● Male

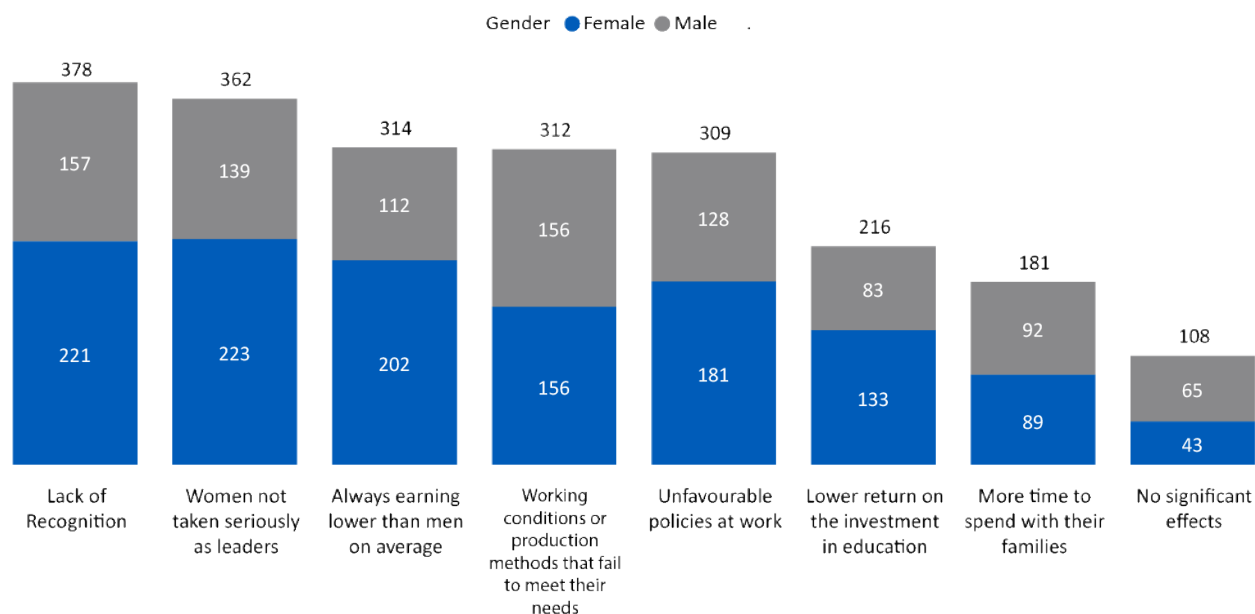|	Lack of Recognition	Women not taken seriously as leaders	Always earning lower than men on average	Working conditions or production methods that fail to meet their needs	Unfavourable policies at work	Lower return on the investment in education	More time to spend with their families	No significant effects
Total	378	362	314	312	309	216	181	108
Male	157	139	112	156	128	83	92	65
Female	221	223	202	156	181	133	89	43

Figure 5.1: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)

Implications of Absence of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership Roles

There was a general consensus among survey respondents regarding the major implications of absence of women in leadership roles as being a lack of recognition of female professionals. For female respondents it was followed by women not being taken seriously as leaders. Whereas male respondents felt that working conditions and production methods that fail to meet women's needs are a major concern due to absence of female leadership in their sectors.

These implications were further explored to understand how the lack of female leadership in various sectors impacts socioeconomic policies and circumstances in each organisation.

Lack of Recognition of Female Professionals, Thus Lack of Female Role Models and Women Not Being Taken Seriously as Leaders, Thus Lack of Decision Making Authority

Research also indicates that women are less likely to 'know about' or 'be motivated to try' to aspire for a leadership position until they have examples of other fellow females who have paved the way before them (Pande et al., 2011). An increase in the number of female leaders can in turn give a positive nudge to women employed in the workforce which will consequently drive the economic progress of a nation. Hence, more female leaders can induce the role model effect on other young women to aspire for greater career progression which will result in improved economic gains (Chung, 2000).

However, both qualitative and quantitative data reflected that **male role models were popular compared to women,** and the absence of females in leadership positions is highlighted as both a barrier and an implication of women's lack of meaningful participation in leadership roles.
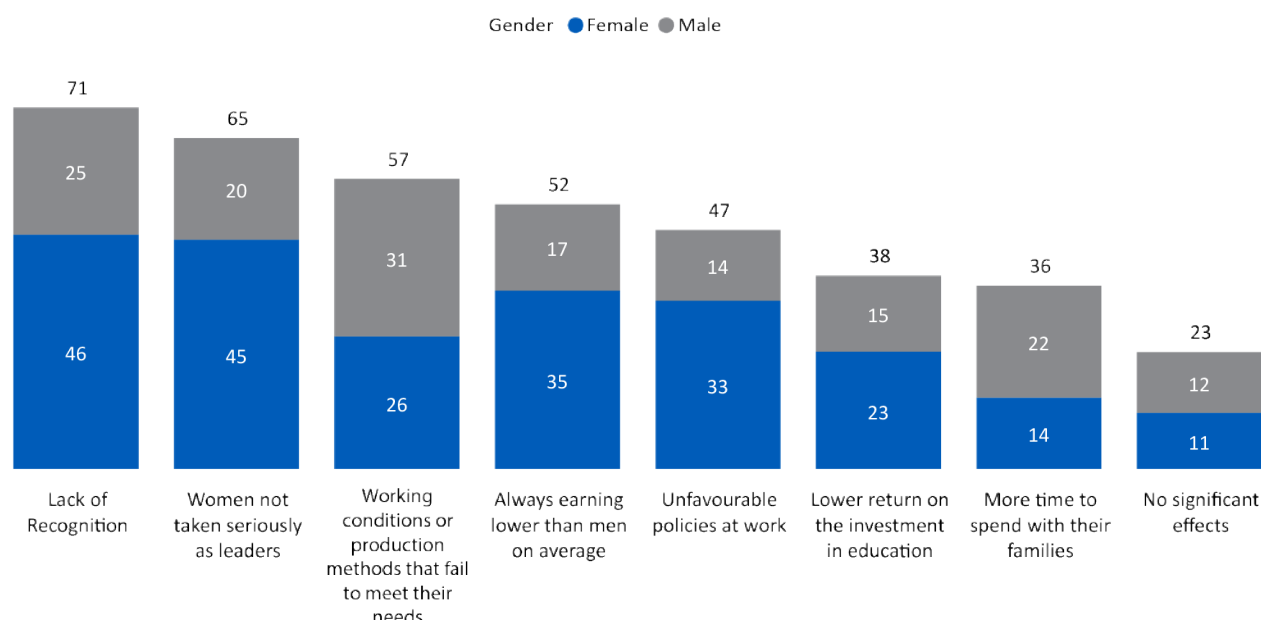
Figure 5.2: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Business and Entrepreneurship

The highest proportion (46.4%) of the respondents in the Business and Entrepreneurship sector responded that **there is a lack of recognition for women due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles.** Majority of the female respondents (56.1%) also responded with the same and added that women will not be

taken seriously as leaders. One female respondent also mentioned that lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership will lead to a "lack of mentorship, lack of advice on how to handle specific situations and live a whole life (balancing ambitions with societal pressures, guilt, etc.)"
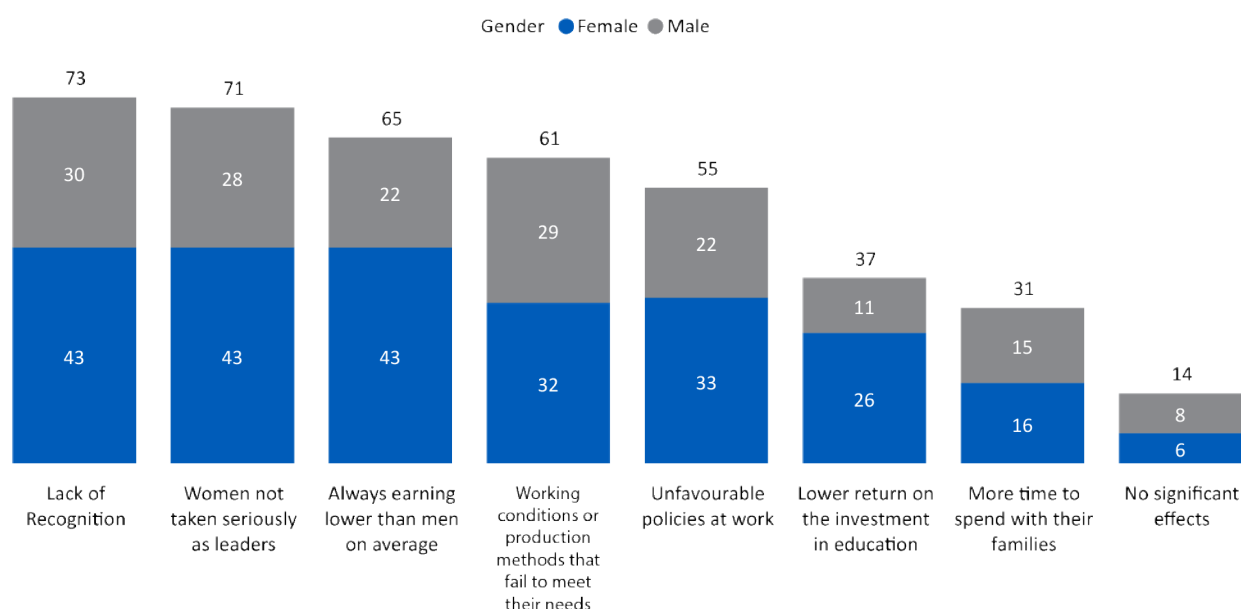
Gender ●Female ●Male

Figure 5.3: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Civil Society

Majority (57.4%) of the respondents in the **Civil society sector** responded that there is a lack of recognition for women due to a **lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles.** Majority of the female respondents (59.7%)

responded with the same followed by **women will not be taken seriously as leaders** and **will always keep earning lower than men on average. Civil Society respondents highlighted lack of role models as the major implications of**

lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership. Many respondents were of the view that women in senior leadership were seen by all, and looking at a woman in a position of authority can serve as a major motivator and influencer for other young women in terms of knowing that they too can reach senior level despite all barriers.

'The discourse that feeds into patriarchy is based on men being visible as headstrong figures whereas, women aren't seen in such kind of leadership roles. For example, not a lot of women forward to pursuing higher education, and due to the low absence of female leaders in education, people question as to why even teach them (girls)? We need to understand that at a broader level, having women in your whole system can increase accessibility of other women towards the rights that they deserve but may not be aware of', (Nimra Afzal, Early Career Professional, Civil Society).
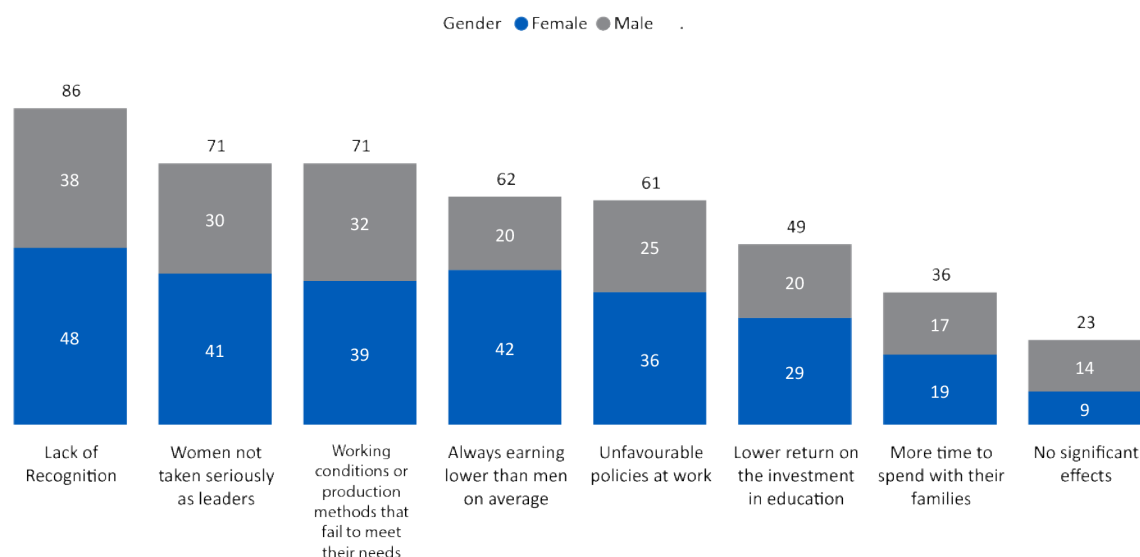
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 5.4: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Development

Majority (54.4%) of the respondents, both men and women, in the **Development sector** responded that there is a lack of recognition for women due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles.
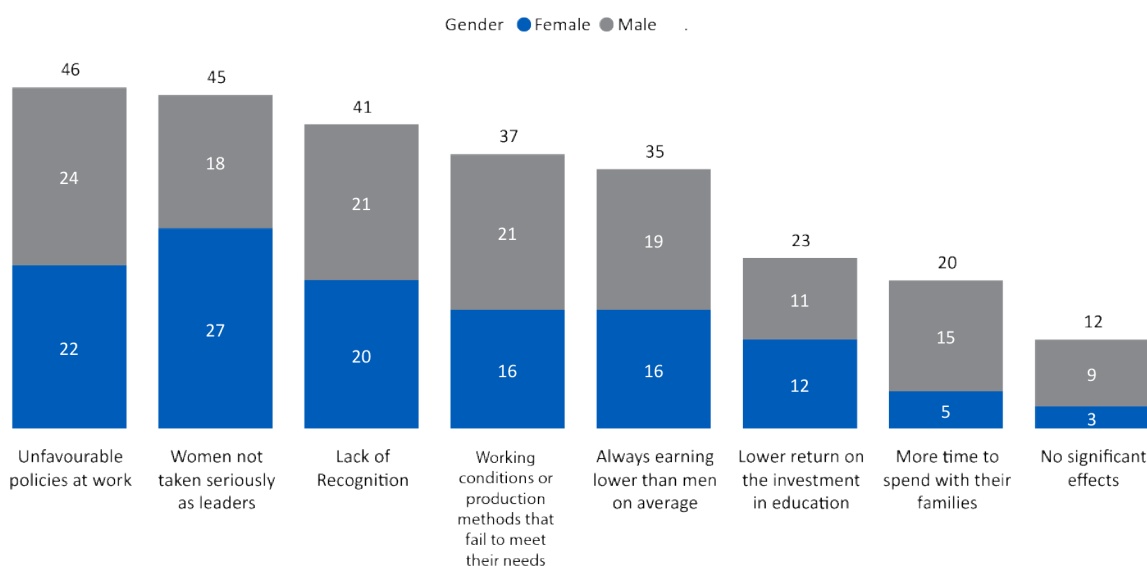
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 5.5: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Politics and Governance

Majority (51.1%) of the respondents in the **Politics and Governance sector** responded that there is a lack of recognition for women due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles. Majority of the male respondents (45.3%) also responded with the same. Majority of the female respondents (72.0%) responded that women are not taken seriously as leaders as a result of lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership.

Even in the **Sports sector**, the biggest implication for the FGD respondents came out to be the **lack of role models available to young women.** Many respondents highlighted that family members do not allow young girls to pursue sports because they are unaware and clueless themselves since they have not seen many young women play to such a level, and don't know how to guide or support.

Gender ● Female ● Male

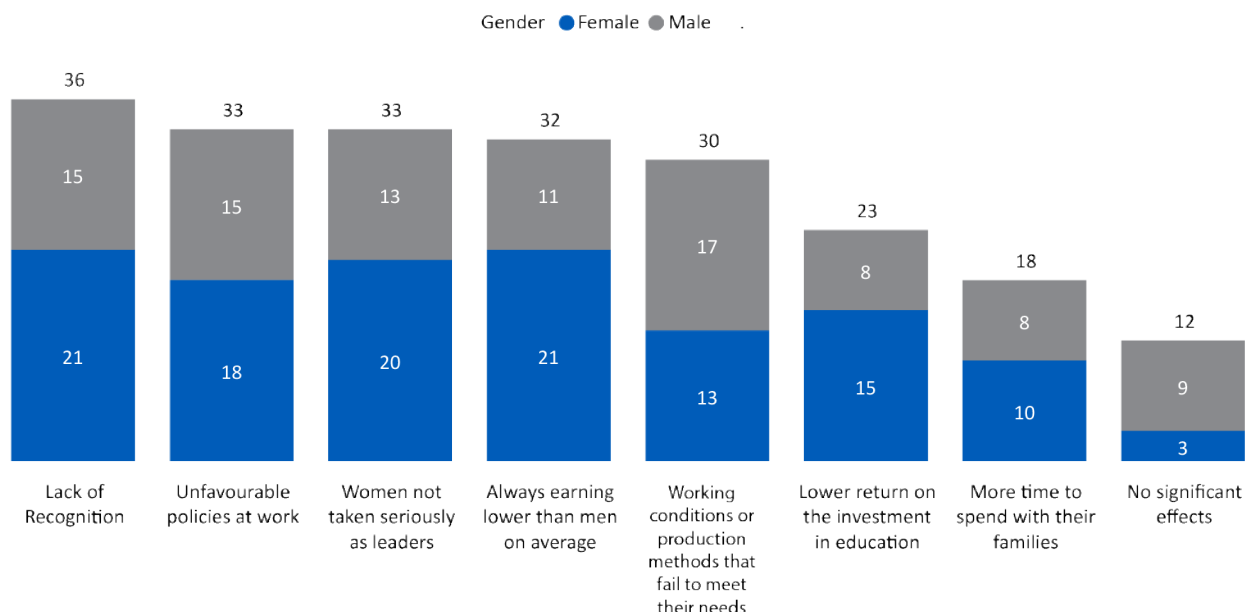| Category	Female	Male	Total
Lack of Recognition	21	15	36
Unfavourable policies at work	18	15	33
Women not taken seriously as leaders	20	13	33
Always earning lower than men on average	21	11	32
Working conditions or production methods that fail to meet their needs	13	17	30
Lower return on the investment in education	15	8	23
More time to spend with their families	10	8	18
No significant effects	3	9	12

Figure 5.6: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Law and Justice

Majority (52.2%) of the respondents in the **Law and Justice sector** responded that there is a lack of recognition for women due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles. Majority of the female respondents (65.6%) also responded with the same effect and also that women will always keep earning lower than men on average. Other effects mentioned by female respondents are a **lack of role models and mentors who would invest in young women and continued basic training for girls to become housewives in the future.**

The respondents during the FGD, were of the view that women rising to the top in the workforce will not only help the economy but also **help boost their own sense of empowerment**. Having **female role models** or women in high positions also enables young women to raise their concerns more openly and feel more confident on being heard 'When there are women in leadership positions, the female subordinates feel comfortable talking about a lot of issue', (Irum Mehmood, Law & Justice, Balochistan).
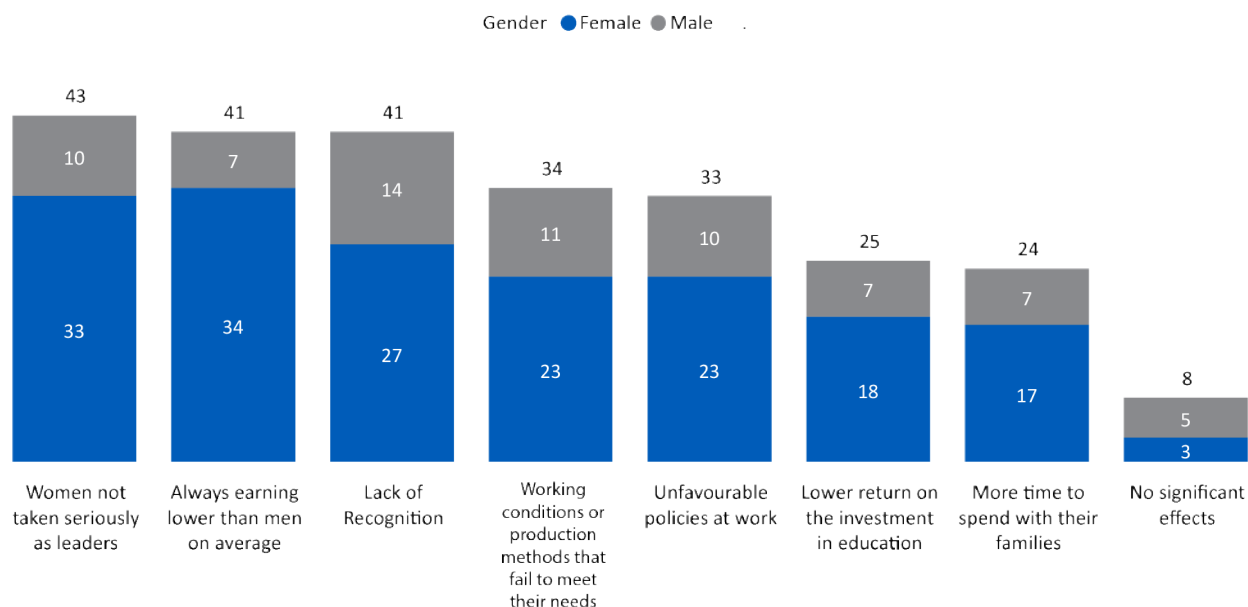
Figure 5.7: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Arts and Media

Majority of the **Arts and Media sector** survey felt that **women will not be taken seriously as leaders due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles and a majority also felt that that women will always be earning lower than men on average** until more women come forward as leaders. The majority of male respondents agree that there will be a lack of recognition for women as a result of lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership.

Responses from the senior managers suggested that the biggest impact is the l**ack of incorporation of the female voice in all walks of life** 'When there are less women there is less representation for them in terms of a voice that can speak for them. This translates into lesser jobs for women. That has an economic impact because we must make up at least half of our population', (Hira Mohibullah, Central Punjab, Arts & Media).
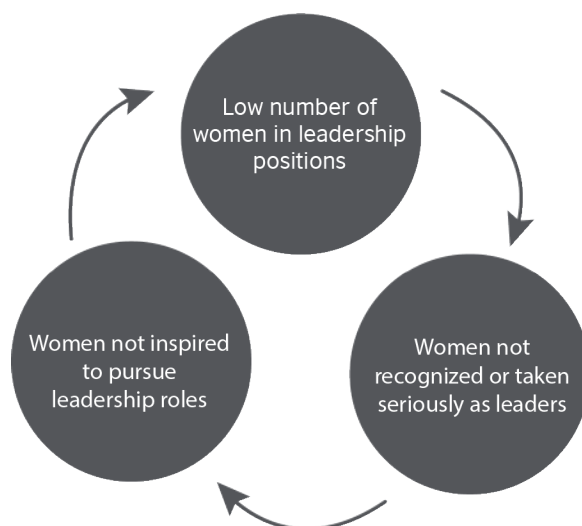
Therefore, a vicious cycle is formed when recognition of female professionals and their ability to perform leadership roles is questioned profusely, not only deterring them from moving forward, but also reducing the number of female leaders in the organisation. The situation further worsens due to absence of female leaders

and role models in the organisation since these women leaders are to provide a conducive environment and inspiration for women honing their leadership skills and progressing in their careers are detrimental to emancipating younger women in the organisation.

Lack of Inclusive Policies and Systems at the Organisation, Thus Lack of Diversity and Space to Grow

The second most popular implication highlighted due to absence of female leadership in organisations was the policies and systems in the organisation which are not favorable for women. This was also highlighted as a barrier in the previous section and can be attributed to the absence of female leadership in different organisations. When women are in positions of authority and realise their economic potential- it leads to an evolution in policy, business practices and general attitudes. This could theoretically translate into organisations making an investment into affordable childcare, early years education and better terms of parental leave. Businesses committed to gender parity would naturally set targets for the recruitment and retention for a more diverse group of employees, whilst being aware of unconscious biases, stereotyping tendencies and cultural assumptions of gendered behaviour (Tyson, L.D., 2014).
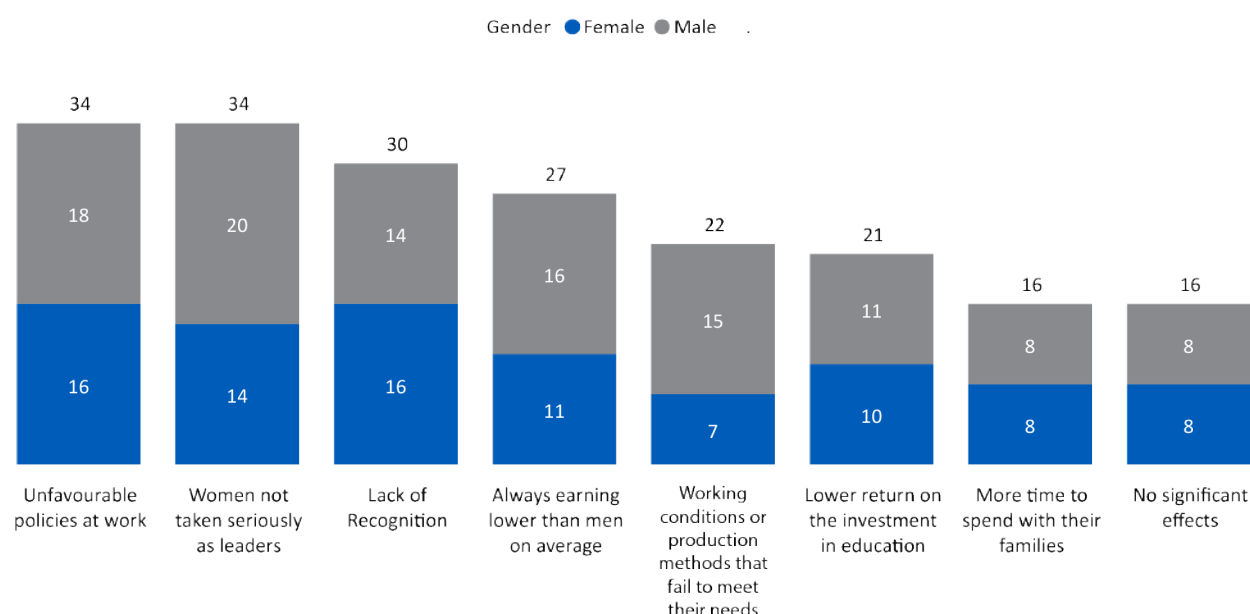
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 5.8: As per your understanding, select the effects on women due to lacking meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation. (survey responses segregated by gender)-Sports

The highest proportion (47.8%) of the respondents in the **Sports sector** responded that there are unfavourable (for women) policies at work due to a lack of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles. Majority of the female respondents (51.6%) also responded with the same and also that there will be a lack of recognition for women. KII respondents highlighted that **having female leaders is critical to having inclusive policies in the sports domain.** Most of the policies or administrative action is taken with regards to male athletes be it the training hours or provision of facilities. These can prove to be detrimental to the success of a female athlete. "There should be equal participation. Just like famous male cricketers, we have had brilliant women cricketers as well. Nowadays, Waqar Younus and Younus khan are leading as coaches. This should apply to women as well. Because if they are hired as coaches for women, they will understand their issues better since they have been through it all, domestic as well as international", (Female athlete, Sports, Balochistan).

Similarly, for senior managers of the sector, **the presence of female senior leaders was imperative to formulation and implementation of effective policies that will help other young women venturing into the Sports sector.** A male sports manager and coach shared that,

"Our current policies are driven by needs of men. When women participation will be included, there will be provisions, relaxations, policies and procedures amended to provide them with safety and security. Our policies need to bring in a certain level of confidence in women that they can come and participate and have security".

Business and Entrepreneurship sector's focus group respondents as well as the senior managers highlighted **lack of inclusive policies** to be major implications of absence of women in leadership. Individuals from both groups said that **having female representation at the top brings a diverse and unique perspective and allows for women's issues to be heard and addressed.** This helps in the creation of more inclusive spaces as well as chances of a higher success rate of that policy since it caters to more diverse groups "More women are now picking up economic opportunities. We do not give preference to women while recruiting. If women are at the top level, they will help in making more inclusive policies. And yes, the economic impact is only when the remaining 50% of our population can contribute", (Saad Khan, early career professional, Business).

Senior managers such as Ms Tazeen Adnan, Head of HR, spoke about how female leadership at her firm has led to more inclusive policies to facilitate other women at their firm. She also mentioned how her being at a senior role in management can be a source of motivation for young women in the firm "My presence as the Head of HR becomes more of a role model/reference point for other companies and people see that a woman has reached this position means the organisation must be safe and secure for women to work".

Civil Society KII respondents and senior managers also indicated lack of inclusive policies to be the biggest implication of the absence of women in leadership positions. According to these respondents, **women at the top can truly make a change with their diverse and empathetic attitudes, and pave the way for other groups that can enable**

progress of other young women.

"A lot of companies are realising that they are losing out on diversity of opinions and insights when they do not have women in meaningful leadership. It's only when women are making these policies, the more they are involved in showing the economy that they can do what men can do. This way they can physically impact policy making and workplace rules and regulations which are obstacles. This plays a huge role symbolically as well. When women are in leadership positions, that is when other women have role models to look up to and that is when they can plan their lives in a way that they can also have these meaningful roles. Currently we are losing out on so much: their vast experience that they bring into the workforce, their huge skillset, their different personality traits. So many companies could use that empathetic top leadership style as well at various levels in the company", (Nayab Jan, Punjab, Civil Society).

For senior managers, the lack of inclusive policy is a major hit to the economy as without female perspectives, policies that can help women (who are already part of the informal economy) can come forward and contribute to the nation as well as their household incomes which is detrimental to the nation's socioeconomic betterment; "We will not be able to meet the needs of women nor get their perspective otherwise. Till we listen to women, we cannot move towards betterment. When they do not consent to decisions, the society remains imbalanced", (Akbar Achakzai, Male, Civil Society)

Development sector respondents during discussions and interviews, identified **inclusive policies** to be the biggest indicator and impact of meaningful participation of women in leadership.

The respondents were of the view **that having women at the top allows for the diverse point of view of women to be taken into account** which, in case of a male leader, is often not given its due importance. Women's inclusion ensures an addition of a unique point of view during

policy formulation and hence, often fares well at the time of implementation too.

Moreover, **a woman in a meeting tends to feel cornered while speaking up in a male dominated space**, leading to the drowning of her voice and her ideas, especially in the absence of female leaders present within the organisation. "When the larger workforce is male, women become an afterthought and their issues are largely ignored. So, when you don't have women as decision makers, more female centric issues are highlighted. If females are lesser in number in a meeting, men often gang up and support each other just because they are men. If it is not a safe environment, not many women come into the workforce into competitive positions and take easier roles", (Umbreen Arif, Education Expert, Federal). One senior manager hailing from Punjab mentioned how women can be critical role players in formulation of policy making that can help make the workplace more inclusive for other women "Women travel allowance, harassment committee, internal daycare facility, a bit flexibility in working hours… main push of all these changes in my organisation has been from the women in senior roles and position at my firm".

Focus group participants, KII respondents as well as the senior managers from the **Politics and Governance** sector also labelled lack of **inclusive policies** as their biggest concern due to absence of meaningful participation of women in leadership roles. Many respondents were of the view that **this sector (politics) is extremely male dominated, and the recent changes or discussions of topics pertaining to women is a change which has come about as a result of more females in strong positions**. "If women are not there, then women's issues will not be addressed. It was only when Fehmida Mirza became speaker of assembly, only then they realised that there should be a separate forum for women to voice their problems. Also, there used to be no daycare center earlier but then later it was provided", (Roohiya Qazi, Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Studies).

Similar trend was seen in our discussion with the KII respondents who highlighted that **many of the recent bills concerning women were an effort of women parliamentarians, and earlier these issues were not even on the discussion agenda since it used to be a male dominated table.** "There are many issues which women raised in the parliament such as transgender issues. First time ever in Pakistan's history Human Rights Awards were conducted. I was the member of the jury and I fought with everyone to have the transgender representation in the awards. And also, for other taboo topics like dowry and menstrual hygiene which women brought to the table and men are being forced to listen because they know there is a pressure. Genuine groundwork is being done by the women in the parliament" , (Romina Khurshid Alam, MNA).

Senior manager Shagufta Sultan stressed on the diversity women bring to the table and spoke of the changes such as formulation of anti-harassment committee, grievance and whistle blowing policy, daycare facility etc. that have resulted in her own organisation due to presence of senior female leadership.

> " Absence of a female or even a male, leaves a space sometimes. How can ten men sitting together decide what women want, or when they feel harassed or what kind of help they need from their senior management. **Women bring a different perspective. I don't want it to be all women because we won't know male perspective then. It wouldn't be complete without both genders present".**

According to the senior managers from the **Law and Justice** sector, **effective policy formulation and implementation was the biggest indicator of female presence on the top** which again ties with the implication of lack of inclusive policies.

Rafay Alam spoke about his own experience as a chairman of the board where 5 women were made part of the board (which constituted less than a third of the total board members). "The very

way information was digested and argued at the board changed substantially. So, one could tell that at a policy level there was a lot of influence. I wouldn't call it the female touch but it was certainly outside the realm of the male dominated boards that I had experienced before that". These female members were able to influence a lot of HR policy changes which make the workplace more inclusive to other female employees. Comparing this to his earlier experiences at other boards which had only one or two women, Rafay Alam compared that being a minority it was difficult for them to present their ideas on a male dominated panel. **'While 5 women is still less, but the power of a group does help'.**

Senior manager from the Business Sector reiterated the same implication and spoke of the cultural change in her organisation as a result of female participation in decision making roles "There has been a huge paradigm shift in empowering women whether its players, management staff, or people with leadership roles within the organisation to take decisions, voice their opinions, and give them equal facilities to what the international standards needs for the game at the moment".

According to this research study women are deemed more empathetic as leaders and existing literature also highlights that "feminine model of leadership is built around cooperation, collaboration, lower control for the leader and problem solving based on intuition and rationality" (Klenke, 1993). In other studies, female entrepreneurs are cited to be more successful in roles of leadership due to their high emotional quotient and concern for their employees well-being (Faizan & Haque, 2016), data collected during FGD with entrepreneurs also indicated that female start up leads or managers were orienting employees on gender diversity policies, and generally had a fair idea of maternity and paternity protection, anti-harassment acts and other policies that concern women and other marginalised groups.

Therefore, the presence of women is deemed integral for implementing policies such as the availability of day care facilities, transport support, adequate maternity and paternity leave, proper mechanisms to report harassment and flexible working hours that would support women in improving their performance. These organisational decisions and systems play an integral role in helping women progress to senior leadership positions and were also identified as indicators of meaningful participation of women in leadership. The absence of these policies is also attributed to not having a female at the decision-making table, who are more considerate towards diverse needs of the employees at an organisation.

Lack of Female Inclusion and Recognition in Workforce, Thus Adversely Impacted Quality of Life

The lack of representation of women in leadership positions in the economic sphere leads to: a lack of recognition of the contribution they make to both the paid and unpaid economies, working conditions or production methods that fail to meet their needs, an inability to access or control economic resources, and being confined to the lower end of the value chain- leading to lower economic returns (Hoare, Gell, 2009).

Existing research has indicated three areas in which global economies can benefit from the increased involvement of women in the labour markets:

- More rapid economic growth (UNW 2015; OECD, 2012),
- Family structures benefiting from the financial contribution of women and their control over family budgets (The World Bank, 2012).
- A decrease in child mortality rates, due to better women's education and engagement in the workforce (World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2015).

These areas affect the standard of living and quality of life immensely. Thus, another major implication highlighted by several

participants was the **impact this absence has on the quality of life in terms of economy and social structures.** Making up half of Pakistan's population, if trained and encouraged, there would be rapid economic and productivity growth in all sectors. Their participation is necessary for a balance and to raise the voice for other women. One female respondent believes women are better multi-taskers compared to men quoting examples of Khadija, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wife and Benazir Bhutto. Male respondents also referred to their positive experience of having worked under women leaders who were visionaries.

Female survey respondents shared that their meaningful participation would address violence and poverty for a prosperous country and boost self-esteem, encourage independence and strengthen negotiation abilities in personal life. One male respondent shared that women bring new techniques and lead to economic and social progress at macro and micro levels leading to achievement of the SDGs.At the household level, they have more knowledge about education and health, and thus at policy level they can make more inclusive policies and laws, and at company level, they can contribute to revenue through their work. Thus, their inclusion will improve all qualities of life of people, as their impact on both society and economy is positive.

Respondents from **Arts & Media** highlighted this **effect on quality of life** as the biggest implication of absence of female leadership. Most of these responses tied their statement to an effect on the economy as well by citing that **lack of women in leadership roles means that less women are venturing out for work.** This affects economies at a macro level but also household economics where at a time of rising inflation, the breadwinning responsibility if solely falls on the man can adversely impact their well-being and lifestyle.

When women do not utilize their skills besides as caregiver, it turns into a cyclical trap where **women are not motivated to work harder because they know there are no prospects of excelling and it puts indirect pressure on men as well to become the sole breadwinner and women constantly become stuck in the caregiver role and that takes away from their financial independence'** - Female Individual Contributor, Media Agency

From the Business and Entrepreneurship and Law and Justice sectors, respondents shared similar concerns regarding the **impact of women's absence on the economy.** According to these respondents, currently the talent of the female population is going to waste and as a result, the economy is suffering. Many respondents also linked financial growth to an overall improvement of a family's lifestyle by saying that a woman's earning is a **second stream of income into the house which can help in improving the overall life quality.**

> " If only a certain segment of society contributes to the economy, you are an inefficient system. If you let women contribute to the economy, your workforce/driving force becomes a lot more powerful. If you bring them as hands to only do some work, you're not really creating an additional force. If you bring them leadership, you have more thinking power, analytical power; you have increased your decision making beyond what just the male leaders have done. Women balance family and can solve complex problems. If that is brought to the corporate/commercial sector, that is a force that we are not utilizing" (Ghazanfar Mirza, Business Sector, Punjab)

Evidence indicates the unfettered access for women to the labour market and to C-Suits of organisations is a valuable venture with long-term positive socioeconomic results for all members of society. With a swiftly rising world's population, the economic consequences of decreasing gender disparity are sure to be of importance to all states.

Implications of Presence of Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership Roles

When women are in positions of leadership and authority, changes come faster. For instance, research on *panchayats* (local village councils) in India shows that areas with female-dominant councils had a 62% greater number of drinkable water projects in comparison to areas with male-dominant councils (Albrectsen, 2017). When women in India were given more power at the local level, it led to a direct increase in the establishment of public goods. This was not just limited to female-preferred public goods like water availability and sanitation, but also male-preferred ones such as better irrigation and schooling, as well as reduced rates of corruption (Beaman et al, 2009; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Empirical evidence demonstrates that bribes paid by both men and women in villages that were female led were 2.7% to 3.2% lesser as compared to villages that were male led (Beaman et al, 2009). In both India and Nepal, it was shown that when women were given a bigger role in decision making regarding forest management, conservation outcomes

showed a marked improvement (Agarwal 2010a; Agarwal 2010b).

In terms of leadership on the political sphere, in the last three decades women have made substantial strides towards gender equity. The percentage of women serving in state legislatures has risen from 8.1 percent in 1975 to over 24 percent in 2010 (CWAP 2010).

One of the most regular findings in gender and politics research is that female legislators prioritise women's issues to a higher degree as compared to their male counterparts. Female legislators are more likely to support legislation that promotes equality, advances the status of women, encourages social welfare programs, and helps at–risk children and family structures (e.g. Barnello and Bratton 2007; Carroll 2001; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Swers 2002b), all themes that lead to positive social impact. Therefore, economic and social implications were further explored during the research resulting in the following:

Economic Implications

Level of impact of the following economic results of meaningful participation of women in leadership

Figure 5.9.a: What will be the level of impact of the following economic results of meaningful participation of women in leadership? (Female Survey Responses)

Level of impact of the following economic results of meaningful participation of women in leadership

High Impact • Moderate Impact • Low Impact

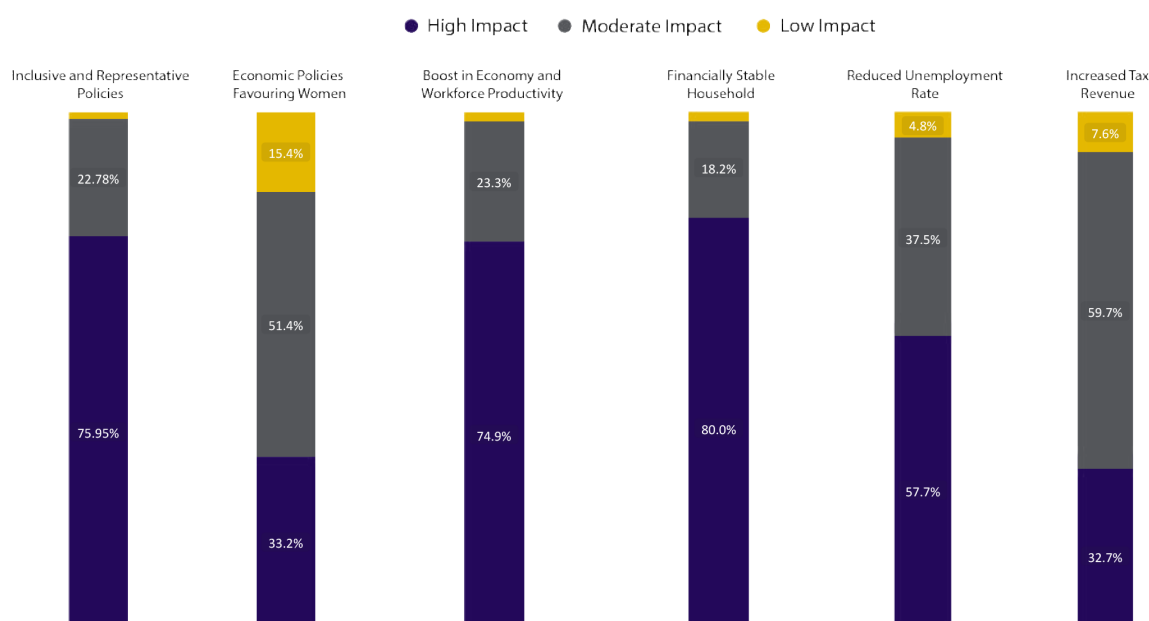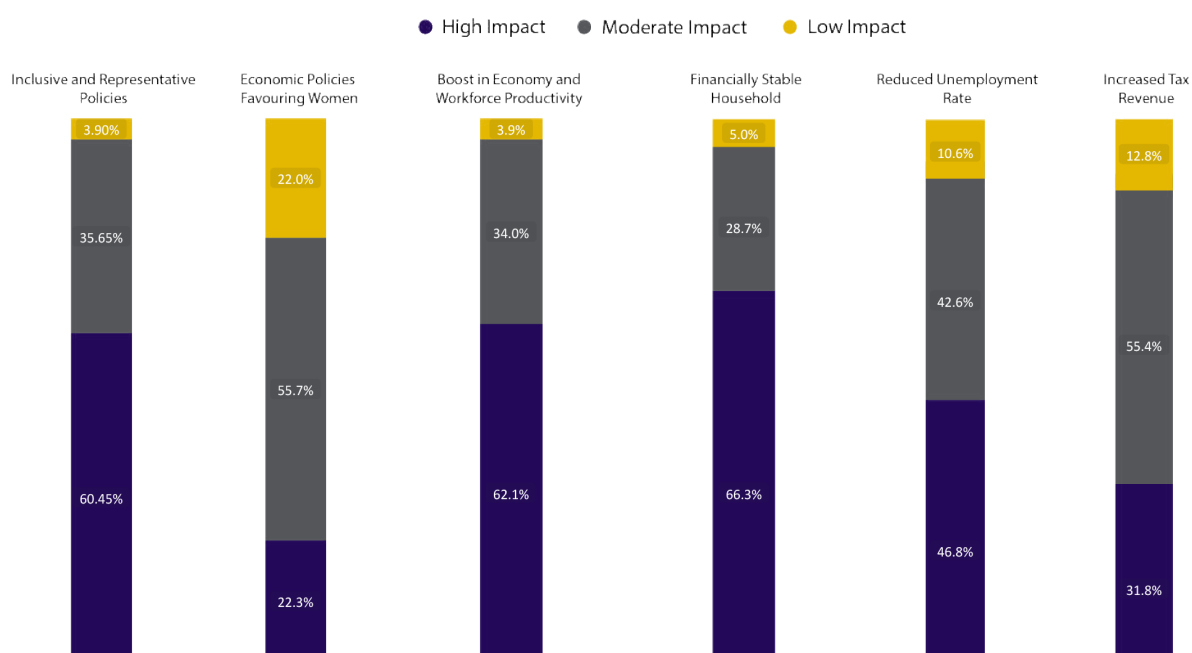|	Inclusive and Representative Policies	Economic Policies Favouring Women	Boost in Economy and Workforce Productivity	Financially Stable Household	Reduced Unemployment Rate	Increased Tax Revenue
Low Impact	3.90%	22.0%	3.9%	5.0%	10.6%	12.8%
Moderate Impact	35.65%	55.7%	34.0%	28.7%	42.6%	55.4%
High Impact	60.45%	22.3%	62.1%	66.3%	46.8%	31.8%

Figure 5.9.b: What will be the level of impact of the following economic results of meaningful participation of women in leadership? (Male Survey Responses)

- 80% of female respondents deemed to have a high impact on the income of households as it will lead to more **financially stable households** followed by **inclusive and representative policies** (75.95%) **and a boost in economy and workforce productivity** (74.9%).
- Male respondents had a similar response, with a majority (66.3%) of male respondents choosing high impact on **financially stable households.** Followed by **a boost in economy and workforce productivity** (62.1%) and **inclusive and representative policies** (60.45%).

Social Implications

Level of impact of the following social results of meaningful participation of women in leadership

High Impact • Moderate Impact • Low Impact

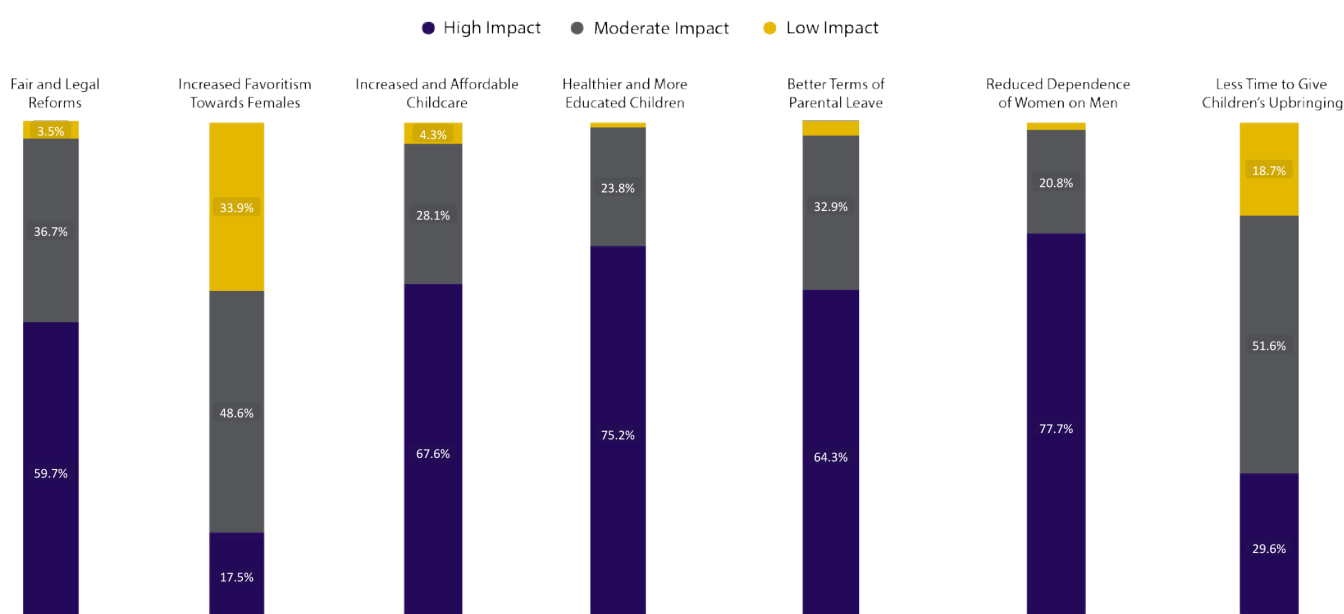|	Fair and Legal Reforms	Increased Favoritism Towards Females	Increased and Affordable Childcare	Healthier and More Educated Children	Better Terms of Parental Leave	Reduced Dependence of Women on Men	Less Time to Give Children's Upbringing
Low Impact	3.5%	33.9%	4.3%				18.7%
Moderate Impact	36.7%	48.6%	28.1%	23.8%	32.9%	20.8%	51.6%
High Impact	59.7%	17.5%	67.6%	75.2%	64.3%	77.7%	29.6%

Figure 5.10.a: What will be the level of impact of the following social results of meaningful participation of women in leadership? (female survey responses)

Level of impact of the following social results of meaningful participation of women in leadership

● High Impact   ● Moderate Impact   ● Low Impact

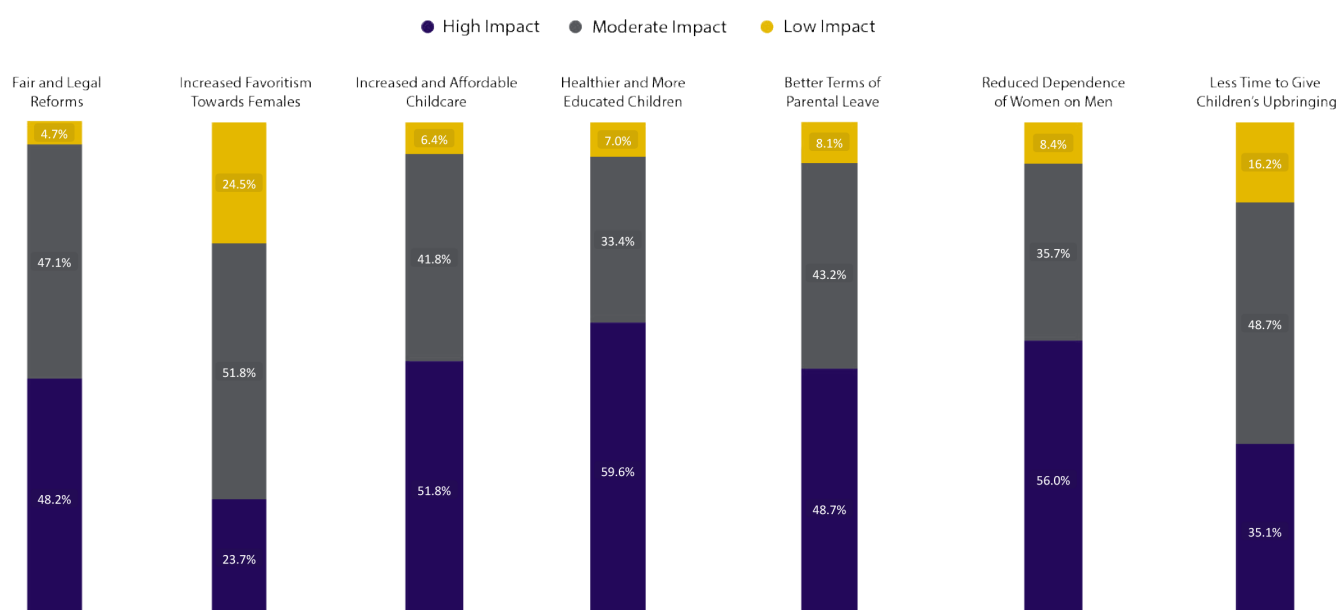| Fair and Legal Reforms | Increased Favoritism Towards Females | Increased and Affordable Childcare | Healthier and More Educated Children | Better Terms of Parental Leave | Reduced Dependence of Women on Men | Less Time to Give Children's Upbringing |

Figure 5.10.b: What will be the level of impact of the following social results of meaningful participation of women in leadership? (male survey responses)

- Majority (75.2%) of female respondents believed there will be **reduced dependence of women on men** followed by having **healthier and educated children** and **increase in affordable childcare** (67.6%).
- Male respondents highlighted similar concerns however their ranking of implications was different. Maximum proportion (59.6%) of male respondents deemed to have a high impact is **healthier and more educated children** followed by **reduced dependence of men on women** (56.0%) and **increase in affordable childcare.**

It is important to note that women are making crucial contributions to the society and economy and their presence in leadership roles has a highly positive impact on organisational outcomes, which goes toward suggesting that a gender-balanced organisational structure surpasses political views and outdated ideologies, since it is supported by the relevant economic indicators. Reema Cheema's responses and story reflects the positive implications of including women voices and having female presence in all sectors.

Beti

Ramma Shahid, a strong independent woman in her 30s, hails from Chichawatni, a small town in Pakistan, just ahead of Sahiwal. She was one of three daughters and without a brother, they were constantly reminded that they were not good enough. She has been rebelling against social norms and restrictions placed on women, especially in small towns, ever since she was a young girl forbidden to go sit at the dera[8],[7]the place where the men in a village meet, socialize and make decisions. As an adult, Shahid was diagnosed with Endometriosis and went through infertility for 9 years. Her frequent trips to the gynecologist meant she came across many couples there:

"As I went through many IVF cycles, couples I came across never said they wanted a healthy baby; they would say to the doctor: 'please try it's a son'. This is very deeply embedded that a girl child is a financial and social liability and burden."

This, along with other external events in Pakistan, lead to her belief that girls are discriminated against even before they are conceived. **She founded Beti[98]in 2019, a media and advocacy organisation, which highlights the plight of women, and strives against the patriarchy and misogyny prevailing in society. She aims to break stereotypes with this campaign and uplift the status of women:**

"I have been working for 15 years in the Media, and I saw the same views displayed for a very long time. Change is coming but very slowly. I have harnessed this feeling since I was a child. I want to socially elevate the girl child. Whether micro, macro, social, economic; women are victims at every level and must deal with prejudice and inequality"

As the founder of Beti, Shahid speaks on many important, difficult and controversial topics regarding women including period poverty, female infanticide, female malnourishment by holding interactive workshops with government and private educational institutes along with curating relevant social media content to spread awareness.

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8 Informal discussion with community elders and leaders – decision making on several important local issues
9 Urdu for "daughter"

Workplace Policies

Shahid believes **women are excluded from decision making which means that important policies impacting women are usually formulated by less relevant people.** She cited her experience at the Population Welfare Department of Punjab Government:

"I was working for the Population Welfare Department of the Punjab Government and one day I realised that we were discussing what contraception should be made available to those who are married but only 2 women were present in the discussion. None of the participants there were even in their fertile years. I am a 30-something woman, making policies for those in the age bracket of 20 to 30- I believe the people for whom policies are being made should be present there. This becomes a vicious cycle."

At Pakistani organisations, girls tend to leave their jobs when they are getting married or starting a family. Shahid is of the view that instead of complaining, companies should find a solution where the woman can still work:

"Offer part-time opportunities, a lot of women will stay for those. When formulating recruitment policies, the panel should have a diverse body with women as well so at least 2 to 3 women are included in decision making. For instance, in factories, women are not working because companies find it difficult to take care of them. In the beginning, it will be difficult but if you impose strict rules and regulations such as financial penalty if someone misbehaves, the environment can be better. We have to start somewhere; so, your own company can act as a catalyst for other companies. Offer support systems for women to achieve diversity."

Recognition of Women

Shahid mentions that women have three designated careers in Pakistan: teacher, CSS officer or doctor. If a woman chooses anything else, she is shamed and not understood. Not everyone can keep fighting, we need to start supporting diversity and inclusion through strict actions instead of just talking about it. Shahid is of the view that women are made to feel guilty about their achievements and their good ideas are not recognised in the same manner. Thus, women will shy away from leadership roles if this is the response they get:

"Problems will arise when women work as we have the burden of responsibilities. It's not like we get to come home and relax. We are made to feel guilty about our achievements. In the boardroom, I have given ideas and men rejected them but if a man gives the same idea they jump on board as they strike them as brilliant ideas. Socialization in our society is such that we do not think women can be leaders."

Working hours are also not conducive to female participation, according to Shahid. She is of the view that someone cannot be productive for more than 6 hours, but the current culture encourages 10 hours per day spent at the office. Furthermore, they must achieve their dreams within only the same city/country. They are not allowed to dream further than that: "Men stay at work from 8 A.M -10 P.M, while women must leave at 6 P.M. to tend to house related work because of the social and family burdens. Their families are

expecting them to come home and attend to them. If a man gets promoted in another city, no one says a word and the family just gets up to go with him disregarding the fact that you are uprooting all the women in your family. If a woman does the same thing, she is labelled as "ambitious" with a negative connotation. We have very different terms like "bitch bosses". Every act of ours is interpreted differently."

Female Role Models and Mentors

Shahid has noted that there is a lack of female mentors. Growing up, she has not seen any strong example of a woman around her. This was a concept that was limited to history texts where strong women have been highlighted but in real life, there was no one to follow in terms of building a career. As a result, Shahid emphasises on the importance of having female mentors for girls.

Speaking of this lack of female role models, Shahid comments on why, even with the existence of some females in leadership roles, women still might prefer to have male bosses because simply put, **men have less burden at home and are easily less stressed/happier as a result in comparison to women.**

Shahid believes that meaningful participation of women in leadership in policy making and other areas will truly address the issues women face in society. They generally make the environment more empathetic and can put an end to the vicious cycle of women getting stuck at home and made to fit specific gender roles.

She gives the example of Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, with regards to the quality of empathy; and how generally, women leaders are more mindful: "The Prime Minister of New Zealand exudes empathy, she understands what she's saying. The chance of war breaking out is lower when there is a woman leading a country because she can think like a mother and is caring. She is mindful of the degree of danger there exists for war. Women who are leaders are only 2% in Pakistan. The woman has had to work 5 times harder to get to that position where a man is, and her achievements are 3-fold. Promotions are linked to not her merit, and it is speculated that she must have done something bad to get it. Their work is completely disregarded. They must prove themselves 10 times more."

She strongly believed that if women came in leadership roles, we will see protective measures for women in organisations and basic facilities kept separately for women. Girls will be more literate, at least have passed nursery. Diversity goals of organisations will change and they will start to include women in roles other than marketing and PR. We will see women included in STEM research and an increase in part-time work opportunities. Shahid emphasises that not just females, but minorities will be more included which goes hand in hand with the aforementioned empathetic environment.

Recommendations for Nurturing Female Leadership

While female leadership is a rising trend in modern society, however, there is still a considerable gap regarding this subject in the context of Pakistan's cultural landscape. Advancement of Pakistani women in their careers and onto the position of leadership is still largely defined by the 'indigneous' culture of the country- a culture which places certain barriers on the advancement of women in professional fields (Manzoor, 2015). However, a subtle cultural shift regarding perceptions about female advancement is underway and to support that shift individuals and organisations need to identify pragmatic and localized solutions to ensure meaningful participation of women in leadership.

The aim of this section is to discuss strategies, incorporating perspectives of both men and women, with respect to various sectors to promote the advancement of female leaders. To understand these perspectives, questions related to nurturing female participation in leadership in organisations and overall the society were addressed at all stages of the research process, which also resulted in identifying the role of workplace, communities, families and male counterparts supported by best case practices in promoting female leaders and their meaningful participation in leadership roles.
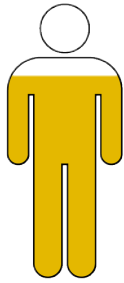
74.1% of survey respondents agreed that **anti-harassment policies and workshops** will be a highly impactful method of increasing meaningful participation of women in leadership roles

Followed by **safe workplace and commute facilities** (73.3%). Both of these need to be introduced in workplaces and as a policy level change by governments.

Figure 6.1: Level of Impact of Anti-Harassment Policies and Workshops to Increase Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

Figure 6.2: Level of Impact of Safe Workplace Commute Facilities to Increase Meaningful Participation of Women in Leadership

Workplace Gender Equality

Level of impact of the following methods to increase meaningful participation of women in leadership in your organisation

● High Impact   ● Moderate Impact   ● Low Impact

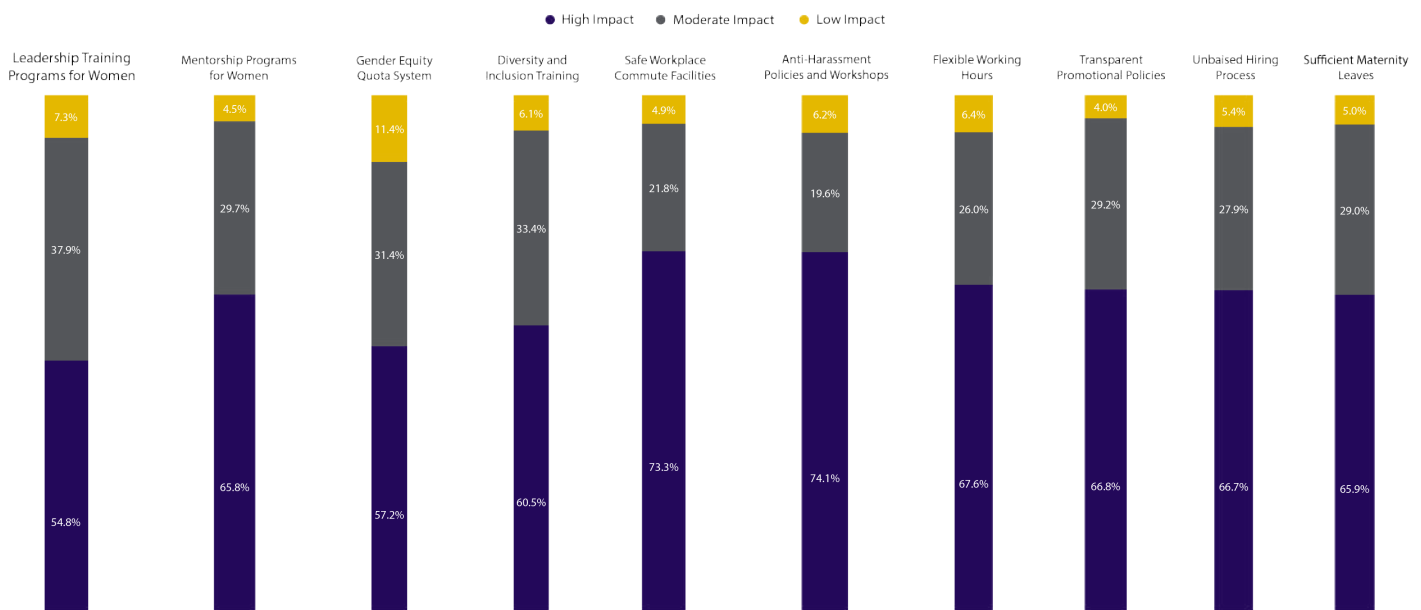|	Leadership Training Programs for Women	Mentorship Programs for Women	Gender Equity Quota System	Diversity and Inclusion Training	Safe Workplace Commute Facilities	Anti-Harassment Policies and Workshops	Flexible Working Hours	Transparent Promotional Policies	Unbaised Hiring Process	Sufficient Maternity Leaves
Low Impact	7.3%	4.5%	11.4%	6.1%	4.9%	6.2%	6.4%	4.0%	5.4%	5.0%
Moderate Impact	37.9%	29.7%	31.4%	33.4%	21.8%	19.6%	26.0%	29.2%	27.9%	29.0%
High Impact	54.8%	65.8%	57.2%	60.5%	73.3%	74.1%	67.6%	66.8%	66.7%	65.9%

Figure 6.3: As per your beliefs select the level of impact of the below mentioned list of possible methods that can be used to increase meaningful participation of women in leadership within your organisation. (survey responses)

Research indicates that formal changes – in law, organisations and processes – are necessary foundations for women to have decision making power (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016). Therefore, workplace gender equality is highlighted as the most important strategy to overcome hindrances in achieving meaningful participation of women in leadership. This form of equality can only be achieved when employees can access to the same level of opportunities, rewards and resources without any discrimination based on their gender.

As per the implications of the presence of women in meaningful leadership roles highlighted in the previous section, its high time to realise that **inclusive work policies and gender equity** are not just detrimental to the well-being of women but have an impact on workforce productivity and overall economic growth of a nation. Methods to achieve this equality highlighted by respondents included:

- Better recruitment procedures
- Zero tolerance policy on cases of sexual harassment & abuse and strong referral mechanism to handle such complaints
- Provision of childcare support and services
- Flexible hours & work from home options

- Salary transparency, forming a support system and sufficient pay packages
- Training and development of women and men
- Job security
- Pension or retirement plans
- Mandatory & transparent cross-organisational rotation/secondments to give females more exposure
- Access to decent work and equal opportunities
- Job postings closer to their hometowns providing study leaves

Alongside this, participants highlighted that giving women the flexibility of hours is not enough, and such policies should be implemented on an organisational level for everyone, to ensure that **working hour flexibility is not frowned upon.**

"Actual structural changes in company policies go a long way. The most effective would be to put your money where your mouth is. Proper maternity leaves and accommodation for women. Flexible working hours. Companies need to start holding the problematic men in the company accountable. We all have these stories or heard rumours of these men and we underestimate how far these stories can go in terms of encouraging women to join. So, companies should have active anti-harassment policies", (Female, journalist at a renowned newspaper group).

Case in Focus

Dr Mariam Nauman, leading sports industrialist hailing from South Punjab, shared how she applied flexible working conditions at her office premises to improve productivity of women and to offer them safe spaces. She mentioned that,

"We started with 16 women and 300 men. Even then, a **separate hall was made for women with different lunch times as they felt comfortable with complete segregation,** not just the bathroom and entrance. They (female employees) **wanted to come in early and leave early, and have a female supervisor and cleaner.** (Provided these facilities) Now they are very comfortable and confident in speaking with men even. **Under the leadership of women, the confidence of the female workforce increases and male colleagues act appropriately as well;** Their loose talk stops in front of women. **Harassment policies are in place with strict actions taken against anyone who breaks them**. These women do more work in less time and there is an overall change in attitude of men even at managerial level."

Reducing the **gender pay gap** was highlighted in both the Sports and Law and Justice sector consistently; "Women are still being paid less and there is no implementation of law. I quote half a million for a case and they keep renegotiating it 150k or 200k. One of my clients owed me 1.3 million and he kept delaying the payment, hearing after hearing. After the case ended, he gave me 350k and straight out said that I can do whatever I like but he won't pay more" (Irum Mahmood, Balochistan's first Law Chamber Founder). Similar issues were highlighted in the Sports sector where prize money and fees for female athletes could differ by 50% (or more) in various local tournaments.

Respondents highlighted that workplace **gender equality can be achieved through gender mainstreaming in decision-making.** Policies need to be considered from a gender perspective to ensure that concerns of women are accommodated be it in terms of flexible working hours or daycare facilities. Furthermore, laws pertaining to harassment and safety should be enforced and organisations should also provide facilities to women with regards to commute and flexible working hours.

"Organisations need to acknowledge that women will have differing biological needs and if they want to take a day off for their period, it should be accepted. Period

holidays should be normalized. Flexible working hours for women with children should be allowed. Acknowledgement of women having different and more responsibilities than men and Extending support to them should happen. And it is only possible, once women get to these decision-making positions and make these policies", (Momina Abid, early career professional, Development Sector).

Organisations must also make a conscious effort to **provide equal access to opportunities and highlight female role models.** Survey respondents from the **business sector** suggested providing equal opportunities across organisations through giving exposure to top management decision making and special projects and roles so they are inspired to do more.

As the prototypical definition of meaningful participation of women in leadership necessitates, Organisations are recommended by both genders to give their female employees **autonomy and decision making authority.** Fauzia Viqar, Punjab Commission on the Status of Women as its first Chairperson believes "it's necessary for organisations to have women represented in decision making positions and give them an opportunity to be leaders by building them towards those positions so they can prove themselves". She herself has tried to empower women through ensuring they are included effectively in the legal system as those positions are critical to creating acceptability through gender sensitization and capacity building. Furthermore, women should be given training support from organisations to develop their potential for both professional and personal development. Organisational policies should support them and facilitate them in navigating their structural barriers towards achieving their full potential.

Capacity Development Programs for Women

Capacity Development programs focusing on skill development and leadership were consistently highlighted as a successful strategy to ensure female workforce and employees are equipped with necessary tools and strategies to move forward.

"Leadership and Development Programs specifically for women. Empowering women to take up projects out of their scope of work...through succession planning and encouraging them to apply for leadership roles that come up and recommending them for training and development programs. Giving them exposure to the Executive Team" – First-line manager from civil society sector.

Most of the participants who attended such sessions were either part of an external program abroad (e.g. US, Sweden etc.) and only a few participated in local programs offered by their organisation via third parties; a learning development firm, training institutes or consultants to promote leadership, effective communication and team management.

Some of these programs were also specifically designed for women and their development. Respondents commented on the effectiveness of these programs and suggested to make them more impactful by:

- **Curriculum including development of relevant and necessary technical and soft skills,** such as financial literacy, decision-making, negotiation, improving self-image, work-life balance and other areas to overcome challenges they face as women inside and outside of the workplace
- **Clear objectives and agenda** of workshop and programs to be communicated to participants
- **Ensure participation of people from different backgrounds** to highlight diverse experiences and opportunities
- **Involving participants in an actual change** or **social action planning** rather than just have speakers' delivery sessions
- **Presence of female role models** who conduct experience sharing sessions and inspire other people

- **Follow up mentoring and coaching** to ensure that participants are utilizing their learnings, monitor their performance and to offer guidance periodically

Even in the **Entrepreneurial sector**, a focused approach towards negotiation and marketing skills building needs to be adopted, as a female business head of a travel startup shared her views on the existing mentorship programs. "What I have seen during my two years in this ecosystem is that there are programs available but those are very tech focused and have very little to do with coming up with and pitching an idea which is economically profitable. That is where the mentorship is lacking right now.

Asma Hamid, female partner of **a law firm** in Central Punjab elaborates on the power and **influence of a good mentor:** "Align yourself with someone who is a well-known name and is also willing to impart that knowledge to help you appear in court and opinion drafting (corporate law). They can teach you the jurisprudence and judicial principles that go into drafting the documents. Choose your guide after research and wisely because that will lay down the foundation for your own practice." She also adds some advice for women to never play "the woman card" as that lets down other women in the profession; even if she is usually the only woman in law courts and government meetings, she has to make the choice to forget gender, remain professional and put her point across.

Romina Khurshid Alam, Member of National Assembly also highlighted the importance of **political schools and academies**; "where individuals can be properly groomed; after a thorough assessment of the individual and then properly training them on how to face the media, how to conduct themselves in sessions and so on".

The **importance of inculcating basic digital literacy skills was also highlighted,** especially due to the onset of the global pandemic of COVID-19 when people transitioned from on-ground work to utilizing digital platforms and tools. Our observations during this research reflected that the Sports **sector** and people hailing from **Balochistan, Interior Sindh and Gilgit Baltistan** faced several challenges in either access or usage of technology. Therefore, a strong recommendation is to include **digital literacy and citizenship** for women hailing from these sectors and areas.

Thus, capacity building programs are deemed necessary to improve women's confidence so women can overcome the feelings of inadequacy that persist despite success in their fields **and transfer their knowledge to other young women accordingly.**

In 2018, Sana Mahmud, Ex-Pakistan Football Team Captain and Fulbright Scholar, participated in the first Asian Mini Basketball Convention in Sri Lanka, and had a wonderful experience knowing more about best practices to promote sports at an early age and encourage play-based learning. She was eager to return to Pakistan and replicate a similar program to promote sports development among the youth and women.

Upon her return, she applied for a small grant opportunity at Pakistan-U.S Alumni Network (PUAN). And from June till August 2019, Sana ran 3 separate Basketball for Good programs for women and children under the project 'We Got Game: An Initiative for Women and Youth Basketball Development'. Young girls were also given an opportunity to collaborate with the Federal Basketball Association to conduct a tournament - which offered them a hands-on learning experience to play their favorite sports while encouraging other young women to play. 14 teams, approximately 70 young girls were given a chance to play and get coaches by the 20 young female leaders of the Leadership Camp.

Sana Mahmud strongly advocates such programs and suggests including "activities to engage participants, focus on self-belief and get participants to share and reflect on their struggles and journeys as peer to peer motivation is essential."

For women, **mentoring and training programs** can be a very effective way to polish their leadership skills and prepare them for future leadership roles. Some of the programs that were highlighted are mentioned below:

- International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), USA
- Together for Tolerance and customized leadership programs, Carnelian

- Elevate and customized leadership programs, CIRCLE Women
- Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

To learn more about these programs, please refer to *Appendix A: Leadership Development and Training Programs* for an overview and other relevant information.

Implementations of Laws and Policy Level Changes

Policy level changes and implementation of laws on federal and provincial levels were consistently highlighted as an effective strategy to encourage women coming forward. There was a focus on improving **accountability mechanisms for harassment cases,** and the need for governments to intervene to ensure that laws that have been enacted to uphold women's rights are translated into action at organisational level. Following laws and acts need to be implemented effectively:

- The Pakistan Penal Code (1860) Sections: 509, 496C, 366A, 354A, 294, 510, 371, 375 and 376, 336A, 336B
- Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2010)
- Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act (2011)
- Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act (2012)

For details on relevant sections of these acts, and relevant centers to contact for further support please refer to *Appendix B: Pakistan Women Friendly Laws and Acts:*

Engaging local and international organisations to roll out strategies as basic as **issuing ID cards to women over the age of 18,** in combination of basic education and orientation on women friendly laws were suggested as necessary interventions that governments need to take into account.

Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan (CDIP) is an initiative funded by The U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) which works to increase accountability, and responsiveness of Pakistan's political institutions. One of the major successes of the program included provision of technical assistance to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) to ensure that women's CNIC and voter's registration was conducted at a large scale resulting in 184,000+ women voters to be registered via the program.

Social Development Advisor at DFID, Jawaira Jillani while speaking to the team highlighted the importance of the work being done and mentioned that ECP has a gender unit and the issue of women voters lagging behind was highlighted by CSOs and ECP in collaboration which really helped promote the importance of this unit. It was significant for opening up dialogue and championing inclusion of women's voices.

Other government level interventions and policy changes highlighted by various respondents that are deemed effective included:

- Employing **gender budgeting** a methodology to understand budgetary impacts on men and women and then creating policies accordingly. These budgets ensure that the needs and interests of individuals from different social groups (sex, age, race, ethnicity, and location) are addressed in expenditure and revenue policies (Qureshi et al., 2013).

- Provide funding opportunities to **women-led businesses** through loans and small grants as 67% of the female participants of our FGD with entrepreneurs said women did not have equal access to marketing and funding opportunities for their business/products

- **Tax relaxations** and incentives to organisations including more women in C-suite and leadership positions:

" "There should be tax relaxation for having women on board. When they are paying dividends to women, that should be at a different tax tariff. For example, 10% tax per woman instead of 15%. We will need to do these practices for another 10-20 years...So, people are motivated and inspired to bring more women to the workforce. Not just (spread) awareness or (hold) seminars, a businessman knows the language of finance better than anyone else and so if it's financially profitable then everyone will go for it." (Male Business Company Owner, South Punjab)

- Checks and balances on **sports federations** to ensure that they are providing **adequate and quality of training facilities, access to equal opportunities**

- **Positive Discrimination,** in the form of **quotas for women** to be allocated across organisations at different levels

Research indicated that a significant number of both men and women believe that the **quota system is an effective strategy** to cultivate meaningful participation of women in leadership.
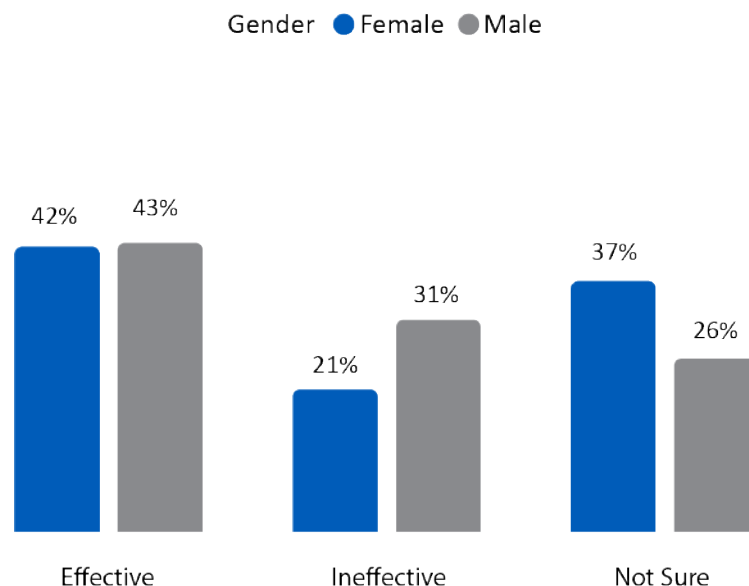
Gender ● Female ● Male

Figure 6.4: Is positive discrimination and quota systems in place to encourage female participation an effective strategy to encourage meaningful participation of women in leadership? (FGD responses segregated by gender)

Compared to 21% of women, 31% of men think of it as a non effective strategy. 26% males and 36% females were unsure of the effectiveness of quota systems. Some respondents suggested implementing the quota system and after females have been inducted, the focus can shift to developmental programs.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action called on governments to take measures to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making bodies, and to set specific targets and implement measures to increase substantially the number of women, through positive action, among other means. Therefore, the introduction of gender quota systems is highly influenced by recommendations from international organisations and due to varying contexts, is under debate at different levels.

Responses reflected that in many instances, "reserved seats" or quotas promoted a tokenistic form of leadership, and women were hired to fill the numbers but still not given autonomy or decision-making authority. A female HR manager from South Punjab adds that it's not enough to hire 50% females, rather, one needs to move beyond that. A female interviewee from Balochistan's political party highlighted that the quota system fails because it leads to only the name of the woman, while she is being dictated by some male family member who included her in politics. It was also the team's observation while reaching out to district level female politicians that some of them were being represented by male members of the family who took decisions on their behalf in their respective committees.

However, data reflects that the **introduction of the quota system has been effective in giving space, participation and visibility to women hailing from different backgrounds.** It is however critical to have a quota for women at senior levels of the organisation.

'..In order for a merit based system to be successful you need to have equal participation of women in leadership positions. There should be allocated quotas as far as the superior judiciary is concerned. And those very women who are occupying leadership roles should encourage other women to do the same. Similar approach should be used for bar associations', (Kaswar Gardezi, Individual Contributor, Law & Justice)

The necessity of party level quotas forcing political parties to give more party tickets to women, legislative quotas and reserved seats, and compulsory education quotas put in place by the government were appreciated as the introduction in 2002

added more than 80 women in Parliament, a decision highly appreciate by women's rights activists. Arguments against the quota system were mostly the question of merit and the fact that due to the negative connotation attached with the quota system, even women who are competent are not taken seriously just because they are chosen on quota. However, there was agreement especially when referring to the **political sphere** that such systems have brought forward women from various income backgrounds, religions and sects to be heard that might have remained unnoticed if quotas were not given to women.

Gender Sensitisation for Men

Respondents also believe male counterparts play an important role in the advancement of women. Therefore, research suggests gender sensitization training and workshops for men rather than just for women, so the male members of the community can learn more about women's rights and how they can support to integrate female companions and colleagues into meaningful leadership roles. As previously indicated, there is an overall lack of gender, diversity and inclusion orientation and policies at an organisational level.

Umbreen Arif, educationist and public sector consultant emphasised the importance of gender sensitization in these trainings as she came across men who repeatedly claimed that women in Pakistan are not oppressed and domestic abuses and acid attacks are "cooked up by the NGOs" despite having been to several training sessions. It was also observed at different research stages that some male respondents felt that there is no need to encourage meaningful participation of women in leadership roles as it is already in place. Therefore, creating awareness to change the mindset of the men of the society is critical as they can be champions of advancing women ahead in their fields. It is integral to raise awareness in them to see **women as contributors in the economy rather than confining them to the domestic sphere** or to certain professions to bring about a societal shift.

"Male mindset needs to change; even as fathers, men are talking about marriage and brothers are thinking about their sisters as only someone who will get married. Men should start thinking that a woman can be more than a partner, or can be someone more than just a teacher", (Sana Naeem, First-line Manager, Business Sector)

Gender sensitization for male employees, especially senior leadership was highly encouraged to incorporate:

- Creating awareness regarding **unconscious biases** that hinder women's progress
- Sensitize men regarding the everyday **challenges and barriers women face**
- Establish **trust and effective communication** with women and give them equal opportunities
- **Respecting women** and creating a conducive environment for them to work in
- Unpacking the advantages of **diversity and inclusion** through empathy, teamwork and dialogue

A lot of the male survey respondents from the **Development sector** stated that their organisation already has a lot of females in leadership positions or there is a female majority. Thus, there is no need for suggesting anything further to nurture female leadership. The **phenomenon of positive discrimination** was further explored when a gender justice program lead, and safeguarding committee member from an INGO highlighted that this **creates a resentment in men, and none of these policies would work until their mindset is transformed**

- Understanding male **privileges** within the organisation and how they can utilize them better to create a **safe and equal working space for women.**

- Provide **technical and emotional support** to female counterparts that are trying to move forward

Well known coaches should train female coaches and dedicate some time out of their schedules to support training programs for female coaches so the sector can get female coaches (Mustafeez Ahmed, Individual Contributor, Sports).

- Detailed understanding of **abusive behaviours; physical and mental** both.

"A well-known cricketer said something like women are linked only with the kitchen. If you cannot support women then at least do not say such things", (Saireen Badar, Individual Contributor, Sports).

- Orientation on **anti-harassment** laws and policies
- **Female speakers** sharing their experiences that highlight the importance of women participating equally in the workplace
- Importance of sharing workload **inside and outside of the workplace,** and taking women as equals

Nayab Jan, civil society actor, anchor and women rights activist added that men need to stop thinking they are in competition with women and become comfortable with being led by women. She says that men need to "Respect workplace boundaries and culture that enable the environment that is free of harassment and ridicule. (They should be) Understanding the value of the diversity of opinions that women bring in and not be threatened by someone just because they are female. Be empathetic that perhaps female colleagues have had to jump through many more hoops than they have had to. This understanding is really lacking right now about how many subtle and overt ways women are stopped from having meaningful participation."

Case in Focus

Justice Ayesha Malik's initiative to conduct gender sensitivity training sessions in the 3rd Punjab Judges' Conference surprised many people once they realised the challenges women are facing in the judiciary in Punjab. Male members of the law community were also oriented and really appreciated the understanding of these issues.

As quoted by law sector respondents, the initiative was appreciated by Punjab Judicial Academy (PJA) Director General Habibullah Amir and Programs PJA Director Jazeela Aslam, and is being encouraged to make courts and legal systems more accessible for women.

Therefore, gender sensitization, diversity and inclusion programs can be extremely useful to create a better understanding among organisations regarding their role in promoting women's meaningful participation in leadership. Some of the programs that were highlighted are mentioned below:

- Women, Peace and Security (WPS), United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
- Gender Diversity Program, INSEAD
- Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Workshops, Carnelian
- Gender Sensitization Workshops, Aurat Foundation

To learn more about these programs, please refer to *Appendix A: Leadership Development and Training Programs* for an overview and other relevant information.

Gender Sensitisation for Families and Communities

Existing literature indicates that family relations and life influence women's ability to take on responsibilities outside the home (Tadros, 2014). The reasons vary by context and socioeconomic status but include women's primary responsibility for domestic work and childcare, restrictions on women's mobility or access to education and employment and their economic dependence on their husband. A supportive family can therefore be a critical resource for women's leadership – whether this is a father who supports his daughter's education or encourages her to speak up, or a husband who is willing to share domestic responsibilities (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016).

This research also highlighted that **families have a huge impact on a woman's confidence, self-esteem and motivation to pursue leadership roles.** Therefore, many women highlighted family members or close friends as their role models and mentors because of the necessary support they offered to help them achieve their goals.
"My role model is my father who has always been very supportive of me. First time I stepped out of my home a lot of people did not expect any girl to leave like this. A majority of girls in my family were from the education sector or were doctors. I was the only one who joined the social sector and even left pursuing further studies. My father has been supportive from then till this day" (Senior Professional, Development Sector, Federal Area)

Thus, both male and female respondents also mentioned sensitization for families and communities to understand the importance of their part in a woman's personal and professional development. Methodologies suggested include the following:

- **Early career professionals should be allowed to invite a family member to workplace** so they can see what women are capable of and the importance of female participation
- **Public encouragement of women's achievements** to gather support from their families and communities, as it plays a pivotal role in shaping the aspirations of a woman and how she views herself.
- **Media plays a vital role** in bringing about this change through **creating television shows and films** that display women as strong figures and **role models** rather than just housewives.
- **Engaging religious communities and faith groups** to change the narrative of women being restricted to households
- **Awareness campaigns and sessions held for parents on gender balance and equality** to create a mindset that women are an equal pillar in the development of society to men
- **Participatory activities** to allow communities and families to share roles, experiences and understand the importance of women in public and private spheres.

"A woman's inclination to lead doesn't begin in adulthood - it begins years earlier, in her childhood. Providing opportunities to lead – and training on how to do so – could offer a sound foundation for future leadership" (KPMG Women's Leadership Study, 2015). Thus, the role of families is also highlighted in educating young girls and ensuring that the quality of education received is at par with a boy's education. Participants highlighted the necessity to start **developing women to be leaders from when they are in schools and colleges and show them their power and potential "beyond being a daughter -in-law or a mother".**

Even during the focus group discussions, most individual contributors and early career professionals highlighted that awareness and training begins at an early age and change needs to originate from that point. Young girls should be given decision making responsibility early

on in various ways to make them more confident. Haroon Rashid, a journalist based out of KPK highlighted the necessity of training from home in terms of being given charge of finances rather than just adhering to the same gender roles of the father earning/buying and mother cooking was highlighted.

Myra Mufti, an early career professional at Pakistan Skills for Development Fund (PSDF) also highlighted that education is the first step towards becoming a leader for any person. Curriculum changes were suggested as well by some respondents but there was also a focus on skills-based education. Improving linkages to markets and training women to take the next step in their career was highlighted by a male respondent who runs a Sports Good Manufacturing factory in South Punjab. He said, "Girls are the best at and at the forefront of academia. There should be a linkage between academia and industry, as the government and companies need to work together to develop curriculum based on the industry work of that area so that they can be integrated and get jobs easily...(industry relevant) skills should be taught to hundreds of thousands of students in universities so that in the job market we candidates can fulfill the need of the organisation."

highlights that without education such intervention will only target the privileged strata of society, but women are repressed in rural areas, who are in a position to help communities and bring grassroots level change. Kumar, Advisor and Member at Sindh Human Rights Commission further elaborated on the inclusion of marginalized groups by stating that "We have 1 million minority females who have no CNICs. At the village level, women are not involved in any decisions even in giving birth to children. It is important that they need to be involved. In urban areas, they are still involved to an extent. 70% of the population of minorities in rural areas, they are not included in the decision making."

The importance of family support, especially male family members, and including woman's aspirations and goals hailing from different backgrounds can allow inclusion of diverse perspectives in policy making and allow a woman leader to stand against all odds as reflected by Mangla Sharma.

> **Some changes in curriculum suggested by respondents included:**
>
> - Introducing new story books at primary levels which do not portray as women as "damsel in distress" or "princesses that need protection and saving" only
> - Life skills-based education (LSBE) as part of the curriculum along with mandatory leadership courses at university level regardless of the major.

It is also the responsibility of both the public and private sector to ensure that the impact of these initiatives reach the most vulnerable and marginalised groups among women. Shaista Bukhari, Executive Director at Women's Rights Association

The Iron Lady with a Bindi

Born in the city of Larkana, **Mangla Sharma is the first Pakistani minority woman nominated for a women's reserved seat in Sindh Assembly.**This city of Larkana is also home to Pakistan's (as well as the world's) first female prime minister - Benazir Bhutto. Given this association of a globally renowned female politician, one would perhaps assume the women of this area to be politically emancipated. However, this assumption is nowhere near reality. Far from being politically active, many women in the region do not even participate in the voting of general elections, much like Sharma herself, who cast the first ever vote of her life at the age of 34.

Before pursuing politics in 2001, Sharma identified herself as a housewife only. Until then, while she had been involved in community and social work, she had little idea about the political process and absolutely no desire to be a part of it. However, even long before stepping into the political world, Sharma was a woman of great tenacity and a natural tendency to meet challenges head on. **With her husband's support,** she decided to contest for the union council election and despite resistance from local political workers, she went on to secure herself a place in the district council.

"Before any of this started, I was a housewife. My journey started in 2000 when the local body elections were conducted. Since I was generally involved with social work in my community, my husband motivated me to contest for the elections. At that point, I was clueless about the electoral processes in politics and how everything is conducted generally. With my husband's support, I decided to go for it, but the local political powers asked my husband to withdraw my nomination. However, I have always had this natural tendency to deal with challenges head on. So, I decided to stand my ground and go for it and went on to contest that election at the union council level. This was also the first time I ever cast a vote in my life. This vote was for myself".

Prior to joining politics, Sharma has little idea about the various procedural barriers that pose as limitations for many women from coming forward. **These barriers become even more acute when these women belong to minority groups.** After gaining a seat at the district council table, Sharma began her extensive journey of advocacy for various minority and women centric issues - an effort for which she was awarded the prestigious **Fatima Jinnah Award; the first for a minority woman in Pakistan.**

Case Study

"As part of the council, I started raising my voice regarding issues such as forced conversions. At that point in time, it used to be very difficult for minorities to speak up. Luckily for me, when I started speaking about these issues, people started listening to me and I was able to successfully deliver on my duties. At the end of five years, our mayor gave a speech in which my name was taken amongst one of the five women who performed exceedingly well. On the basis of this, I also became the first minority woman to receive the national Fatima Jinnah Award".

Being a woman, and that too from a minority group, posed a series of challenges for Sharma in advancing her political career. Belonging to a locally prominent Hindu Brahmin-Pandit family, her political stride was met with extreme criticism from both men and women alike. Her prominence in the public domain was a new sight in the patriarchal setup of the society. **With support from her husband and father in law, Sharma continued her political ambitions and later went on to establish 'Pak Hindu Welfare Association'- one of the very few minority organisations in Pakistan back in 2005.** Having known the struggles of minority groups herself, Sharma made sure to include individuals from multiple minority communities even including people from various Hindu castes as well which was unheard of at that time.

"I belong to a Brahmin-Pandit family, and people used to call me out on the fact that women of the Brahmin-Pandit family do not get involved in public activities. I would say that my husband faced more problems than I did. I had a lot of women come up to me and comment on my participation in political and public activities. But through this all, I always had my husband's support. In 2006, when my father-in-law passed away, he especially called my husband and said to him: 'Always take care of her, and do not ever stop her from going as far ahead in life as she wants to go'. I think of this as a compliment for myself that he saw my work and my dedication, and it was his blessings due to which I continued moving forward".

While barriers to women's advancement in political leadership are countless, Sharma particularly holds the attitude of men as one of the biggest deterrents. As someone who was motivated by her husband and supported by her father in law, she knows well how much male support in a patriarchal society can mean to a woman. When talking about her own struggles, she mentioned how even though she faced criticism and problems, **she still thinks that her husband faced a greater chunk of backlash and he always had her back.** As a woman leader in the political domain, Sharma highlights the deep insecurity which men often feel when a woman voices her opinions or gives them order. According to her, this sentiment has its root in the traditional societal fabric which tunes men to believe that women are a degree below them. This can often lead to women's voices being drowned and their presence ignored at the decision making table, which in the grander scheme of things affects the outcome of our policies.

It was only after she stepped into politics that she realised that politics too is a kind of social work. Commenting on the unfortunate connotation of corruption that is now often associated with politics, Sharma still thinks that if done with honesty, this profession allows you to serve your community like no others. **She hails Benazir Bhutto as a champion for female representation in politics in Pakistan, along with many other women who have displayed excellent leadership on national and international fronts.** Sharma highlights that women have an innate ability to manage well

and to multitask which makes them well adept at handling the pressures of a leadership role. More than that, more women in political leadership can serve as role models for other women - the lack of which Sharma herself felt.

"In my opinion, female leaders are more committed and possess greater analysis skills, because every woman is keeping a track of even the smallest possible thing at her house, and I think this is a quality which is innate in women by birth. So, in female leadership, you will not find corruption, rather more commitment and dedication towards her work", Sharma believes that meaningful participation of women in political leadership is critical to advancing women in every other field.

As a woman who herself has been engaged in the political front for the last 20 years, Sharma has experienced the climb to the top as well as the view from it. **Today as she sits in the Sindh Assembly with her iconic red bindi in place, and makes a case for women in general as well as from minority groups, she knows that the only way to promote women in this country is by giving more women the decision making authority.** It is only through meaningful female political leadership that meaningful change can be brought about.

Conclusion

The role of public private stakeholders, such as government, organisations and individuals have been deemed as extremely important for women to participate in leadership roles meaningfully across all sectors. The most effective strategy to ensure that women are given decision making authority and can lead freely with a vision is to realise a woman's potential and encourage gender equality at workplaces with a preference for talent, consideration for women's role in society and an active effort towards changing the mindset of the masses.

Respondents also suggest that women should have their CNICs and education must be made mandatory for everyone, at least till matriculation so girls have their basic education covered. Early exposure to political ideas, debate and connections within the family or university are often the foundations of women's 'political entrepreneurship' – as is the opportunity to practice these new skills and build new social capital afforded by membership in, or leadership of, voluntary associations. Without such education, most women are not even aware of their rights let alone pursue leadership roles. **Once in leadership positions, women's ability to influence decision-making processes depends heavily on whether they are able to gain access to, and negotiate within and around, the informal processes and spaces where alliances are built and backroom deals made (O'Neil & Plank, 2015).**

Overall, the study indicated that **women have immense potential to become effective leaders and bring diverse and inclusive perspectives to different spaces.** The recent pandemic has also revealed that the common trait among all countries that have successfully contained the spread of the virus or have responded efficiently were led by women. Media has highlighted individual strengths, celebrating Angela Merkel's data-driven trustworthiness, Jacinda Ardern's empathetic rationality, and Tsai Ing-wen's quiet resilience (Chamorro-Premuzic & Wittenberg-Cox, 2020). However, the pandemic has also shown that women face further threat of being marginalised, especially as their challenges of unpaid labor and exclusion from the formal economy aggravated during this time.

Therefore, state and non-state actors need to promote alliances for advancing women's rights and advocate for more meaningful engagement of women in leadership roles. A gender centric lens towards leadership in society and economy is needed from all sectors to ensure that the world builds back better and friendlier for women.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A:

Leadership Development and Training Programs

1. International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), USA
Various programs which are part of IVLP are designed as an opportunity for participants to expand their professional knowledge base, as well as develop leadership skills through interactive workshops, speaking engagements, casual and formal events, and cultural activities.

- **Target Audience:**
Current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields
- **Website:**
https://www.iie.org/en/Programs/IVLP/Our-Work
https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/international-visitor-leadership-program-ivlp

2. Elevate, CIRCLE Women
ELEVATE, an initiative by CIRCLE to promote gender diversity and grow women leaders, aims to mobilize CEOs and gain commitment from leading corporations to build a gender diverse workforce, all while addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 17, internationally recognised markers of progress.

- **Target Audience:**
CEO's of various firms, Female entrepreneurs
- **Website:**
http://circlewomen.org/elevate/#about-elevate

3. Customized Leadership Programs, CIRCLE Women
Customised leadership training programs by CIRCLE for women are conducted to build their capacity and equip them with tools needed to succeed. With over 90 women being part of such leadership trainings, these programs aimed at building confidence, allies and a resilient mindset of female employees

- **Target Audience:**
Corporate Sector Female Employees
- **Website:**
http://circlewomen.org/elevate/#about-elevate

4. Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

BRACE focuses on to empower citizens and communities and provide them with means enabling them to implement community-driven socioeconomic development interventions, an increased voice and capability to influence public policy decisions, and civic-oversight; to foster an enabling environment for strengthening the capacities of local authorities.

- **Target Audience:**

Under BRACE, the population of 300,000 poor rural households in 249 union councils are to be mobilised and organised into a network of people's own institutions: 19,129 Community Organisations (COs), 3,103 Village Organisations (VOs), 249 Local Support Organisations (LSOs) and 31 LSO Networks at tehsil level and eight at district level.

- **Website:**

http://www.rspn.org/index.php/current-projects/eu-rspn-balochistan-rural-development-a nd-community-empowerment-programme-brace/

5. Gender Sensitization Workshops, Aurat Foundation

The purpose of these workshops, which are held with collaboration with AAWAZ Consortium, is gender sensitisation of the political party leaders and legislators by unpacking the understanding of gender concepts, understanding the legislative process and dynamics with various experiences and initiating discussion on "Violence Against Women" policy framework.

- **Target Audience:**

Political Party Office Bearers

- **Website:**

https://www.af.org.pk/activity-detail.php?nid=86

6. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Workshops, Carnelian

The primary aim of these workshops is to equip individuals - be it executives, managers or individual contributors- with the skills they need to create an inclusive and equity based environment. These workshops are conducted as a combination of training, coaching and
consulting by leading experts in the field to deliver high quality and lasting impact in an organisation.

- **Target Audience:**

Organisations from all sectors

- **Website:**

http://carnelianco.com/

7. Together for Tolerance by Carnelian

Together for Tolerance, a social and community engagement initiative by Carnelian, aims to develop muscles of tolerance in all corners of Pakistan. This program is conducted in 35 cities across Pakistan where youth teams are mobilised to promote tolerance through skill building (Learning/teaching regional languages and building skills to take the message further), events (Seminars, theater, discussions, or anything else that promotes tolerance) and Travel, Internships and Exchange.

- **Target Audience:**
 Young men and women hailing from universities, schools and communities
- **Website:**
http://carnelianco.com/a-movement-for-tolerance-and-harmony/

8. Customised Leadership Programs by Carnelian

The primary purpose of these customised leadership programs is to equip participants with the knowledge and tools to harness their leadership potential, along with applying that knowledge to lead in a VUCA world that is similar to their organisation's culture and context.

- **Target Audience:**
Organisations from all sectors
- **Website:**
 http://carnelianco.com/work/learning/

9. Women, Peace and Security (WPS), United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

The women, peace, and security (WPS) framework—an effort rather than a formal program—calls for enhancing women's participation in peace processes and applying a gender lens to post conflict reconstruction. Implementation of the WPS agenda in Pakistan requires concrete measures at social and political levels that would challenge existing gender stereotypes and pave the way for greater participation among women in peacebuilding and peace processes.

- **Target Audience:**
Youth, Media, Local & Regional Women's Networks
- **Website:**
https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PB218-Women-Peace-and-Security-in-Pakistan.pdf

10. Gender Diversity Program, INSEAD
The INSEAD Gender Diversity Programme provides the understanding, concepts and tools that will allow individuals to develop a strategic and practical plan to reach gender balance in their organisation. Based on cutting-edge research, the programme will support individuals in building a business case for change. It will enable them to diagnose the key blockers women face in their organisation and allow them to develop a suite of multi-level interventions that work.

- **Target Audience:**
The INSEAD Gender Diversity Programme is primarily designed for people leaders at two levels:
1) Executives who are in traditional leadership positions – of teams, business units, products or functions – and who are committed to driving gender balance in their area
2) Senior executives who are responsible for driving the diversity and inclusion agenda of their organisations
- **Website:**
https://www.insead.edu/executive-education/open-online-programmes/insead-gender-d iversity-programme

Appendix B:

Pakistan Women Friendly Laws and Acts:

- **The Pakistan Penal Code (1860)**
 Sections: 509, 496C, 366A, 354A, 294, 510, 371, 375 and 376, 336A, 336B
MLA Citation:
Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860),
www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/1860/actXLVof1860.html.

- **Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2010)**
http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1300929288_550.pdf

- **Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act (2011)**
http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1324275504_382.pdf

- **Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act (2012)**
The domestic violence bill makes violence against women and children and offense, punishable by time in jaila and imposition of fines. The law classifies acts of domestic violence as acts of physical, sexual, or mental assault, force, criminal intimidation, harassment, hurt. Confinement and deprivation of economic or financial resources.
http://bolobhi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/The-Domestic-Violence-Prevention-Protec tion-Act-2012.pdf

- **496C. Punishment for false accusation of fornication.**

  Whoever brings or levels or gives evidence of false charge of fornication against any person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and shall also be liable to fine not exceeding ten thousand rupees.

  > **Provided** that a Presiding Officer of a Court dismissing a complaint under section 203C of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 and after providing the accused an opportunity to show cause if satisfied that an offence under this section has been committed shall not require any further proof and shall forthwith proceed to pass the sentence.

- **366-A. Procuration of minor girl:**

  Whoever by any means whatsoever, induces any minor girl under the age of eighteen years to go from any place or to do any act with intent that such girl may be, or knowing that it is likely that she will be, forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine.

- **354-A. Assault or use of criminal force to woman and stripping her of her clothes:**

  Whoever assaults or uses criminal force to any woman and strips her of her clothes and in that condition, exposes her to the public view, shall be punished with death or with imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.

- **294-A. Keeping lottery office:**

  Whoever keeps any office or place for the purpose of drawing any lottery not being a State lottery or a lottery authorized by the Provincial Government shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.
  And whoever publishes any proposal to pay any sum, or to deliver any goods, or to do or forbear doing anything for the benefit of any person, on any event or contingency relative or applicable to the drawing of any ticket, lot, number or figure in any such lottery shall be punished with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees.

- **294-B. Offering of prize in connection with trade, etc.**

    Whoever offers, or undertakes to offer, in connection with any trade or business or sale of any commodity, any prize, reward or other similar consideration, by whatever name called, whether in money or kind, against any coupon, ticket, number or figure, or by any other device, as an inducement or encouragement to trade or business or to the buying of any commodity, or for the purpose of advertisement or popularising any commodity, and whoever publishes any such offer, shall be punishable, with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.

- **371A. Selling person for purposes of prostitution, etc.**

    Whoever sells, lets to hire, or otherwise disposes of any person with intent that such a person shall at any time be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person shall at any time be employed or used for any such, purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to twenty-five years, and shall also be liable to fine.

    Explanations:-
    (a) When a female is sold, let for hire, or otherwise disposed of to a prostitute or to any person who keeps or manages a brothel, the person so disposing of such female shall, until the contrary is proved, be presumed to have disposed of her with the intent that she shall be used for the purpose of prostitution.
    (b) For the purposes of this section and section 371B, "illicit intercourse" means sexual intercourse between persons not united by marriage.

- **336A. Hurt caused by corrosive substance:**

    Whoever with the intention or knowingly causes or attempts to cause hurt by means of a corrosive substance which is deleterious to the human body when it is swallowed, inhaled, comes into contact or received into the human body or otherwise shall be said to cause hurt by corrosive substance.

    Explanations:-
    In this subsection, unless the context otherwise requires, "corrosive substance" means a substance which may destroy, cause hurt, deface or dismember any organ of the human body and includes every kind of acid, poison, explosive or explosive substance, heating substance, noxious thing, arsenic or any other chemical which has a corroding effect and which is deleterious to human body.

- **336B. Punishment for hurt by corrosive substance:**

   Whoever causes hurt by corrosive substance shall be punished with imprisonment for life or imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than fourteen years and a minimum fine of one million rupees.

- **371B. Buying person for purposes of prostitution, etc**

   Whoever buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of any person with intent that such person shall at any time be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person will at any time be employed or used for any such purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to twenty-five years, and shall also be liable to fine.

   Explanations:-
   Any prostitute or any person keeping or managing a brothel, who buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of a female shall, until the contrary is proved, be presumed to have obtained possession of such female with the intent that she shall be used for the purpose of prostitution.".

- **375. Rape:-**

   A man is said to commit rape who has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the five following descriptions,

   I. against her will
   II. without her consent
   III. with her consent, when the consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt,
   IV. with her consent, when the man knows that he is not married to her and that the consent is given because she believes that the man is another person to whom she is or believes herself to be married; or
   V. With or without her consent when she is under sixteen years of age.

   Explanations:-
   Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

- **376. Punishment for rape**

   (1) Whoever commits rape shall be punished with death or imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than ten rears or more, than twenty-five years and shall also be liable to fine.
   (2) When rape is committed by two or more persons in furtherance of common intention of all, each of such persons shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life.".

- **509. Insulting modesty or causing sexual harassment:**

    Whoever,-

    (i) intending to insult the modesty of any woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, or exhibits any object, intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or that such gesture or object shall be seen, by such woman, or intrudes upon the privacy of such woman;

    (ii) conducts sexual advances, or demands sexual favours or uses verbal or non-verbal communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature which intends to annoy, insult, intimidate or threaten the other person or commits such acts at the premises of workplace, or makes submission to such conduct either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or makes submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual a basis for employment decision affecting such individual, or retaliates because of rejection of such behaviour, or conducts such behaviour with the intention of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years or with fine up to five hundred thousand rupees or with both.

    Explanation 1:-
    Such behaviour might occur in public places, including, but not limited to, markets, public transport, streets or parks, or it might occur in private places including, but not limited to workplaces, private gatherings, or homes.

    Explanation 2:-
    Workplace means, the place of work or the premises where an organisation or employer operates, this may be a specific building, factory, open area or a larger geographical area where the activities of the organisation are carried out. Sexual advances may occur after working hours and outside the workplace. It is the access that a perpetrator has to the person being harassed by virtue of a job situation or job related functions and activities.