

Abstract

This paper draws on British Council commissioned research in response to concerns about women's absence from senior leadership positions in higher education in South Asia. The study sought existing knowledge from literature, policies, and available statistics and collected original interview data from 30 academics in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. A central finding was that gender is not a category of analysis in higher education policy, research or statistical data in the region. Our interview data suggest that leadership was frequently not an object of desire for women. Being associated with particular types of masculinities, leadership often carried a heavy affective load for those women who transgressed patriarchal socio-cultural norms and disrupted the symbolic order of women being led by men. Leadership was frequently perceived and experienced by women in terms of navigating a range of ugly feelings and toxicities that depleted aspirations, well-being and opportunities.

149 words

Key words: women's leadership; higher education leadership; affect; South Asia; patriarchy

The Knowledge Economy and the Asian Century: Does Expansion Mean Inclusion?

South Asia is characterised by its expansion of higher education (HE) systems. As in the Global North, there has been a movement from the planned scarcity of higher education to a demand-led and claimed form of citizenship. The citizen is now constructed as an economic maximiser, governed by self-interests as well as aspirations for nation-building and wealth creation (Biesta, 2006). Economic growth, the resulting enlargement of the middle class, and global interconnectness mean that higher education increasingly represents entry to the good life, and in Asia is often equated with providing citizens with higher incomes and more fulfilling work (Bhandari & Lefébure, 2015). Knowledge is understood as a form of capital, and capitalism is increasingly about services, or higher-order production rather than production of goods (Deleuze, 1992). Knowledge is linked to individual and social advancement. It is a national economic asset that is believed to drive innovation and competitive advantage and also an insurance against personal poverty and a passport to social and geographical mobility.

While there is much discussion about the power of the Asian Century in the knowledge economy (Ong, 2006), South Asian universities currently do not have any universities in the Top 100 in international rankings/ league tables. Consequently, quality, rather than equality dominates policy discourses in this highly aspirational region, with the priority to raise standards and compete more effectively in the global marketplace (THE, 2015). League tables, as installations of power, brand and stratify institutions and are a major influence in the definition of the field of higher education, offering positional advantage, esteem and material rewards in the form of student

recruitment and research funding. It is important to ask what league tables do not measure. For example, a notable silence is any data about gender equality, as this is not a key performance indicator in the global academy (Matthews, 2012). Gender, in South Asian higher education, appears to be a disqualified discourse in policy unless it relates to female students' participation rates which have played a significant part in increasing overall enrolment rates in the region.

The population size of this region makes it a major higher education market. The six countries in this study account for 25% of the world's population (EIU, 2013a). It is estimated that there are currently 31 million undergraduate students in tertiary level education in the region- a participation rate of 43%, of which 13 million are women (EIU, 2014b). Ramachandran (2010) suggested that there are 74 females enrolled in tertiary education for every 100 males. The expansion is largely attributed to the rise of the middle classes in the region, with increasing aspirations for higher education and professional lifestyles. Other features include the expansion of private higher education institutions, increasing school enrolments, and the development of women-only provisions including the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh and the Fatimah Jinnah Women's University in Pakistan (Morley & Crossouard, 2015).

This paper reports from research conducted in 2014 into women's leadership in higher education in South Asia, focusing on six countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. After describing our research methodology, we present an analysis of relevant literature and available statistics for each country. We then draw upon the interview data to highlight the heavy affective load for women in leadership positions, and how this obliged them to negotiate and navigate a range of

ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005) and toxicities that depleted aspirations, well-being and opportunities.

Methodology: Creating Knowledge from Sounds and Silences

Our research utilised three methods of data collection: critical review of literature and policies: statistical analysis of available datasets, and 30 semi-structured interviews with academics (19 women and 11 men). We sought statistical data, not out of ‘method anxiety’ (MacLure, 2013:664) that suggests an emerging ‘disciplining’ of qualitative research and a repositivisation of the field and consequent remarginalisation and mistrust of qualitative work (Lather, 2013). We are aware that gender cannot be reduced to number and that it is a verb as well as a noun i.e. we *do* gender via everyday transactions and relationships. Gender equality is not just about increasing quantitative representation. However, we needed to get a sense of the scale of women’s (non) participation in leadership. Hence, our research assembled both tabular and textual elaborations. The literature and policy review and statistical analysis highlighted multiple silences and absences of data e.g. lack of gender disaggregated statistics or attention to gender in higher education policy or research studies. We are not advocating a descriptive turn (Savage, 2009) that suggests people can be made more knowable and governable via the collection of digital data. We are suggesting that the silences in the statistics and literature suggest a lack of policy or research attention to gender in relation to leadership. In this sense, there is a relationship between political economy and knowledge production. The knowledge economy, while presented as an economic conceit, is deeply embodied and frequently insensitive to gender differences (Walby, 2011).

Women's Leadership as Continuing Absences

A finding of the study was the lack of systematic national-level data gathering across the region on women's leadership of higher education. Before turning to a review of literature and available statistics for each country context, we first present a review and secondary analysis of relevant statistics from previous studies. Three surveys of women academics in Commonwealth Universities were reported by Lund (1998) and Singh (2002, 2008), with Singh (2013) and Singh & Garland (2013) providing overviews. Figures 1-3 below suggest little improvement over that period in women's representation in leadership in higher education in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

[Insert Figures 1-3 here]

These surveys also showed South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) as having the second lowest percentage (22.1%) for female participation in senior lecturer positions and above after East Africa (15.8%), although the range was wide, e.g. between Pakistan (15%) and Sri Lanka (34.9%). It seems that while women's participation at undergraduate level is increasing in the region, there is still an absence of women in senior academic positions.

Higher Education in the Six Countries: Gender Gaps and Generating Growth

While women's under-representation in leadership is a pattern across the six countries in this study, the higher education systems vary significantly. In **Afghanistan** it is re-emerging from conflict-torn damage to its infrastructure and human resources in the 1980s and 1990s. It is a case study of a fragile state, dominated by the logic of securitisation (Newman, 2009). Education attainment levels declined and now higher

education enrollment in Afghanistan is one of the lowest in the world at 3% (World Bank, 2013). Women comprised 19% of all students enrolled in public universities and higher education institutions in 2012 (MoHE, 2013). It is estimated that there are 19 public universities and 12 public higher education degree -awarding institutes and approximately 68 private higher education institutions (MoHE, 2013). The EIU (2014b) suggest that the proportion of women Vice-Chancellors is currently 0.04%. Afghanistan is unranked in the 2014 Global Gender Gap (WEC, 2014), but is cited as being the third worst country in the world (149th out of 151) for gender parity in a parallel ranking (UNDP, 2014).

The higher education system in **Bangladesh** is characterised by expansion of the private sector. Of its 87 universities 32 are public. There is an 11% gross enrolment rate, (GER) described in UNESCO Bangkok (n.d) as one of the lowest in the world; they also report that only 31% of students at public universities are female (excluding the National University). The EIU (2014b) estimate that currently 0.01% of Vice-Chancellors are women. However, there are no women Vice-Chancellors at co-educational public universities, only one at a co-educational private university, and one at a women-only university (EIU, 2014b). Bangladesh is home to the Asian University for Women (AUW). This is an independent, international university for women. Currently, students come from 12 countries in Asia and the Middle East. Bangladesh is ranked 68 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014).

India is one of the global economic rising powers, reflected in the development of scale and complexity of its higher education sector (Altbach, 2013). India had a nine-

fold increase in planned higher education expenditure between 2007-12 (EIU 2013b). EIU (2013b) estimate that there are 313 public and 154 private universities. The GER is reported to be 19.4% (for those of 18-23 years of age), with variations between district, and by scheduled caste and tribe and gender. The GER for males is 20.8%; females 17.9%; for Scheduled Castes 13.5% and for Scheduled Tribes only 11%. Women constitute 44% of the 27.5 million students in Indian HE (Government of India, 2013: iii-ix), and 3% of Vice-Chancellors (Banerjee & Polite, 2011). In most Indian universities, the representation of female academics is less than 40%, comprising 25.5% of Professors, 31.1% of Readers and Associate Professors, and 38.5% of Lecturers or Assistant Professors (Government of India, 2013). India is ranked 114 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014).

Higher education in **Nepal** has a short history. Tribhuvan University was established in Kathmandu in 1959. The Ministry of Education (2010) reports the existence of 6 HEIs in Nepal, with 3 more about to be opened. The GER is 14%: 18% for males, and 11% for females (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2014). When gender is mentioned in higher education planning, it invariably relates to the need to increase access for female students. As an emerging sector, higher education in Nepal is now characterised by expansion (Sijapati, 2005). Glencorse (2014) reports that in 2013 a massive 370,000 students enrolled at Tribhuvan University. The government's focus is on quality enhancement and scientific research and development. However, Glencorse argues that universities are under-equipped to handle the size and the needs of the student body, pointing to challenges including lengthy power cuts, lack of internet access, lack of classrooms, outdated and ill-equipped libraries, lack of drinking water and clean bathrooms. These features have been exacerbated by the 2015 earthquake. EIU (2014b) estimate that there are no women Vice-Chancellors.

Nepal is ranked 112 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014).

Like the other countries in South Asia, **Pakistan** is rapidly expanding its higher education system. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) (2012) reports that there are 138 degree awarding institutions, of which 75 are in the public and 63 in the private sector, with six new universities established in 2010-2011, four of which are in the private sector. It reports enrolment to have risen from 276,000 students in 2001-02 to 869,000 in 2009-10, with a further 16% increase in 2011-12. While this report suggests that in 2010-2011, 45% of HE students were female, AEPAM (2011) puts female participation at 33%, with GER around 0.5%. This low enrolment rate reflects socio-economic, gender and regional inequalities. While single sex colleges are developing, there is little attention to issues of women in HE leadership (Agarwal, 2013). The EIU (2014b) estimate that 0.04% of Vice-Chancellors are women.

Pakistan is ranked 141 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014).

Sri Lanka has 15 universities (public) and a 16% GER. More women than men are enrolled at the undergraduate level (54,000 women and 38,500 men at end of 2011). Gunawardena (2013) shows that almost 50% of lecturers/probationary lecturers in Sri Lankan universities were women at the end of 2011, against only one in four professors. Women are entering leadership and the EIU (2014b) estimate that 21.4% of Vice-Chancellors are women. Sri Lanka is ranked 79 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (WEC, 2014).

Explanatory frameworks for women's absence from leadership in the global academy have included the gendered division of labour, gender bias and misrecognition, management and masculinity and greedy organisations (Morley, 2013). These themes emerged in our interviews. However, we found few studies in South Asia that focused specifically on women and higher education leadership, with the exception of Pakistan. Leadership discourses were frequently posed in the gender-neutral language of the knowledge economy with the emphasis on quality assurance, good governance, internationalisation, the digital economy, widening participation and concern for development of capacity in science and technology (STEM).

The studies that did exist were often small-scale and unfunded inquiries. However, they highlighted issues at macro, meso and micro-levels. At the macro-level (society and policy), a theme related to structures of inequality. Gender inequalities in women's academic career progression were seen to intersect with other structures of inequality including social class, caste, religion, ethnicity and language. For example, Sijapati (2005) argued that the mass expansion of education in Nepal without giving due consideration to the issue of accessibility to disadvantaged groups, has meant that instead of reducing social cleavages along gender and caste/ethnic lines, educational attainments have only helped reinforce traditional hierarchies. Considering the scale of Indian HE, there are surprisingly few studies that highlight gender (Agarwal, 2013; Bal, 2004). However, Chanana (2000) discussed gender inequalities in women's participation, up to doctoral level, the wide regional disparities, linked to caste, ethnic group/ language, religion, and wider socio-cultural barriers associated with these structures. Chanana (2003) also focused on women HE faculty through the concept of

‘visibility’ (or invisibility) in this context, as opposed to their visibility in others, as sexual object/passive beings.

A dominant concern throughout the South Asian literature was the power of the socio-cultural. Societies amplified messages about what constitutes gender appropriate behaviour. Social backgrounds and cultural belief systems were reported as significant constraints to women pursuing academic careers. Ahmed-Ghosh’s (2013) study of Afghanistan identified a long history of social traditionalism and patriarchal kinship arrangements; power of tribal rulers in defining the place of women, tribal traditional law taking precedence over constitutional law; confining women to the private sphere and debarring them from education, despite attempts at reform throughout modern monarchies and later regimes (Mujahedeen then Taliban). In Pakistan, Rab’s (2010) interviews with 15 senior women academics revealed how their professional experiences were framed by patriarchal cultures. Shah (2006) described how cultural backgrounds (including faith/religious beliefs and systems) within any context shapes how leadership is understood and performed. She also highlighted the patriarchal nature of Pakistani culture, within which sex-segregated education is an important feature.

Family featured in the literature, as an enabler- especially where social capital, class/caste privilege, and support intersected with educational and professional opportunities (Rab, 2010). Family was also a major constraint. Ghaus (2013) reported that women managers in HE in Pakistan encounter both familial and organisational barriers. Shah’s study (2001) also suggested that the primary identification of women is with the private, domestic sphere, stereotypically associated with caring/nurturing family roles, and that women leader respondents took up these norms. The societal

attitudes to women in HE management from this study were also reported in Khan (2013).

At the Meso-level (institutional), issues raised corresponded to concerns in the global literature including how organisational cultures and institutional practices are patriarchal and discriminate against women (van den Brink & Benschop, 2010). This refers to their unfriendliness to women and women's needs and extends into concerns in some cases about gender discrimination and gender violence on HE campuses. In Sri Lanka, Gunawardena (2013), Goonesekere (2013) and Wickramasinghe (2007) report major disquiet about gender-based violence on campus. Women's mobility and well-being were seriously constrained by the existence of physical and symbolic violence against women

Recruitment and selection problems were widely reported (Agarwal, 2013; Bal, 2014; Glencorse, 2014; IFUW, 2013). Batool et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study of women's representation in HE management in Pakistan and found that structural factors such as lack of mentoring, networking, discriminatory selection and promotion practices and gender equity are barriers to the career advancement of women.

Appointment and promotion processes for leadership positions were critiqued for their political and/ or precarious nature, their lack of transparency and gender biases. Women only spaces and the preference for sex-segregated education in some contexts (often associated with religious belief systems) means that some single-sex higher education institutions are emerging including the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh and the Fatimah Jinnah University in Pakistan (see AUW n.d.; FJWU, n.d). These create some opportunities for women to enter leadership positions. However, these leadership positions are often viewed as less prestigious than those in the co-educational sector.

At micro-level (individual/ relational), the interaction between socio-cultural beliefs, the consequential second- class citizenship and gender discrimination meant that many women did not think of themselves as leaders. Nor did their colleagues consider them as leadership material. A UNESCO/UNDP supported study in three Afghan universities (Kabul, Balkh, Herat) conducted by the Gender Studies Institute, Kabul (2010) found that gender discrimination was prevalent, and some women felt treated as ‘second class citizens of the university’ (p.18). The study also concluded that women had:

less engagement in university activities and were given fewer roles to play. Compared to men, women (students and staff) [had] less access and opportunities at the universities’ (p.18).

The overwhelming association of leadership with particular forms of masculinities also meant that leadership was frequently not an object of desire for many women in the region.

Where are the Women?

The absences in policy and literature were mirrored in uneven availability of statistical data, and discrepancies across the data that were available. Whereas some regions, including the European Union, have comprehensive databases such as the She Figures (EC, 2012), South Asian countries appear to have few publically accessible statistics on women staff in universities. Our extensive searching demonstrated that, with the possible exception of Sri Lanka, public reporting of such data was not common practice in this region. Where gender disaggregated data did exist for different academic employment categories, this excluded data on women in leadership positions such as Vice-Chancellors, or Deans. In a context of considerable

expansion of higher education leadership, the numbers of female academics may have increased, but this has not changed the gender distribution of male to female academics. Where some gender-disaggregated data were available for different categories of employment at institutional level, there was also no evidence of uniform or linear improvements. Increases in women's representation in one year could be followed by decreases the following year. Where data were available there are significant differences by disciplinary field of studies, with social sciences/humanities and medicine being feminised, while other STEM fields remain male domains (Morley & Crossouard, 2015).

Ugly Feelings: Patriarchy, Power and Propriety

Unlike our statistical review, the interviews generated a wealth of rich and original data. We are aware that qualitative research is not epistemologically innocent and has also been subjected to critique in relation to representation, explication, interpretation and categorisation (MacLure, 2013). Debates on post-qualitative representational logic have problematised the trap of representation as a stable real (Jackson, 2013). However, we noted that our interviews revealed multiple engagements with the concept and enactment of leadership. These were often informed by affective considerations e.g. women's anxieties, fears, and resistance to the roles in their current form. These corresponded to Ngai's (2005) theorisation of ugly feelings, that is, the aesthetics of negative emotions in what has become a fully administered world. Ugly feelings are not operatic life or death emotions, but the quotidian irritations, jealousies, resentments and hostilities that obstruct and frustrate agency, self-efficacy and well-being.

Respondents were from: Afghanistan (1 female, 1 male); Bangladesh (2 female, 3 male); India (7 female, 3 male); Nepal (3: all female) Pakistan (2 female, 3 male) and Sri Lanka (4 female, 1 male). In terms of occupational status, they included 5 Vice-Chancellors (2 female, 3 male), 1 President (male), 2 Deputy or Pro Vice-Chancellors (both female), 4 Deans (all female), 2 Associate or Vice Deans (1 female, 1 male), 5 Directors (3 female, 2 male), 4 Professors (2 female, 2 male), 3 Assistant Professors (1 female, 2 male), 1 Associate Professor (female), 2 Senior Lecturers (both female) and 1 Lecturer (female). We asked respondents about what they believe enables and impedes women from entering senior leadership positions, their experiences and aspirations for leadership, their views on women's under-representation and their change recommendations. Our interview data were full of narratives of ambiguity. A notable finding was that participants - especially the women- had more to say about the disattractions than the attractions of leadership, and these were often posed in the vocabulary of the affective economy (Ahmed, 2004; Morley & Crossouard, 2016). While some identified power, recognition, influence, making a difference and financial rewards as attractions, the majority of female participants associated leadership with the affective burden of dealing with conflict and negativity in competitive professional and patriarchal cultures. Those women who had become Vice-Chancellors or Pro Vice-Chancellors described how they had done so with no formal leadership development or preparation for the task. They had also negotiated a range of hostilities and negative power relations throughout their careers. There were numerous observations about toxic organisational cultures, occupational stress and interpersonal tensions as a consequence of being a woman in seniority. Patriarchal social structures and cultural practices served to limit opportunities and prescribe women's roles in all countries. The gendered division of labour, with

women responsabilised for the domestic sphere was widely discussed. It was assumed that women would be distracted by family responsibilities even if they were single and child-free. A female Vice-Chancellor in India describes how this prevents women from participation in public life:

I think we live in a world where the male view of the world is very strong...Traditionally, our women have, for very many reasons, been absent from the public view. A woman has to shoulder domestic responsibilities, and often she is without support.

A male President in India describes how patriarchal privilege cuts across social class:

Men are gallivanting around, at a bar wherever, chit chatting with friends, buddies and then come home, get food and go to sleep. It happens the same way for senior professors and university readers as it happens for rural villagers. No difference.

Patriarchy also means that authority, power and leadership are associated with a particular type of masculinity that is aggressive and ruthless, as a female Assistant Professor in India explains:

But the way society understands is probably for certain roles a person has to be really aggressive or something, which the woman could have handled in a different way, not showing that kind of aggression per se. But then you are not selected for the role in the interview if you don't look like you can kill something.

Authority does not stick to women (Ahmed, 2004). A potent symbolic order exists in which women must never overtake or lead men. If they do, this provokes a range of ugly feelings, as a female Dean in Nepal outlines:

The men they also do not like the female to be a leader, that I have also faced the problem...They want to see the male as the leader, not the female.

The male as norm was widely discussed. A female Vice-Chancellor in India comments on how, as a young academic, she was seen as having usurped a male entitlement to a job:

It happened to me when I got my first job. I was all of twenty-three years old and I got a job in a college as an assistant professor, and one gentleman, he must have been about fifty or fifty-five, told me, 'You know that you are taking away livelihood from a boy, who will support his family, but for you it is pocket money'.

The practice of men appointing in their own image, or cloning themselves (Gronn & Lacey, 2006) was noted by a female Dean in Sri Lanka:

Some of the senior male academics who always want to have it go, even for an acting position, to another male...I think it is something to do with this gender power relationship...A lot of males in Sri Lanka believe that for women administration is not right.

A female Professor in India believes that the cloning is based on fear and risk-aversion:

They are used to seeing men as leading, right? So they are uncertain how it will be if it is a woman? Because they have not seen many. So I think it's a fear of uncertainty. And the society is not ready to take that risk so a known evil is better than unknown.

Exclusionary mechanisms were also seen to function in universities' selection procedures as a female Dean in India described:

First and foremost, most of the selection committees have only men on them. Very, very few have any women. Most of the selection committees that I've gone through, they've been all men on the committee, for any position.

Institutional practices frequently worked against women's socialised dispositions. Women, in many societies, are encouraged not to draw attention to themselves, often as a strategy to avoid unwanted attention or gender-based violence. This can professionally translate into a reluctance to engage with selection procedures that require self-promotion and high visibility, as a female Professor in Sri Lanka explains:

It's the old boys... the networking thing is very important. If you don't know people, you're not going to get anywhere and here everybody is appointed by the president. The president appoints all the vice-chancellors. There's only

one decision-making ... so if you're not good with them, you're not going to get there and females I don't think are generally pushy. They won't go and rub shoulders with the president or with important, ministerial people. They tend to be far more reserved.

Patriarchy prescribed and policed gender appropriate behaviour. The referrals to pushiness imply gendered spatialities and the imperative for women to stay in their socially prescribed places. A female Lecturer in Nepal saw gendered spaces and networks as purposefully exclusionary devices:

And the place they have chosen, the restaurant, the bar and the informal meetings and drinks and the longer hours, continuous discussions and all the things...that...maybe after some years that would be...that would fit with women, but now, culturally or socially also, it's very difficult for women to adjust with that atmosphere.

As the above participants indicate, patriarchy produces and sustains a range of socio-cultural practices and belief systems about what is considered gender appropriate behaviour and lifestyles. Women seeking authority outside the domestic domain transgress socially prescribed boundaries and represent a major challenge to the *status quo*.

The challenges described above outline how institutional processes and practices are designed and executed in relation to male norms - something that gender-mainstreaming policies attempt to address (Morley, 2010). These norms provide

powerful exclusionary messages to women and can seriously deplete their aspirations and opportunities. Universities, like many large organisations with a diversity of interests and roles, were represented as intensely political sites of struggle, with complex and competitive micropolitical relations. Gender was relayed and produced through everyday social relations and transactions that stimulated powerful affective responses. Hostility and lack of confidence in female leaders is noted by a female Professor in Nepal:

I could sense it, there is a sixth sense also, sometimes you can sense it that they don't want to help you out, and if you just request for help they never say no, it's fine, but the things are not being done rightly or on time, so you know that by the time you'll come to know that they are reluctant to help you out.

This narrative is evocative of Massumi's (2002) observation that affect is in excess of conscious states of perception, pointing to a pre-conscious 'visceral perception'.

Women sensed that they were not respected even when these ugly feelings were left unstated. However, ugly feelings were verbalised, as a female Pro Vice-Chancellor in Bangladesh reported:

We have got one lady Vice-Chancellor, she's the first one - but it's like I said it's not even a month and already there are murmurs that she won't be able to do it...Instead of saying, 'Let's all, you know, help her to do it' - it's from her colleagues - mostly male.

A female Assistant Professor in India outlines the negativity she received from a male

colleague who felt uncomfortable with women in authority:

One thing I noticed, I don't know whether that is typical of India or not, men don't like to work as much under women as they would like under men... I had one research associate working with me, he was very good at his job but he didn't like me as a leader just because I was a woman.

A female Senior Lecturer in Pakistan describes the ugly feelings of envy and jealousy that she received from colleagues in response to her evolving international career:

I have presented three papers abroad... People get jealous instead of feeling pride that's she growing...I realised that people are so jealous of people, especially women, who were growing and getting out of the institution.

As the above narratives suggest, toxic relations and dealing with ugly feelings were a source of stress and anxiety for many of the female participants in the study. The symbolic violence and lack of confidence in their leadership abilities and potential and the desire to keep them in subordinate and often sexualised positions, corroded their sense of self-efficacy and represented an additional burden that depleted their energy and aspirations.

In Conclusion

Our study discovered an overwhelming absence of statistical data in the region on women and leadership, with most countries, with the exception of Sri Lanka, not keeping or reporting systematic disaggregated staff data. It also found that gender was

an absent category of analysis in most of the higher education policy documentation in the region. When gender was included, it related to students, rather than to staff. There was a lack of substantive scholarship and research on the topic of women and leadership in higher education in the region. The studies that did exist were largely small-scale unfunded postgraduate inquiries.

We conclude that women's absence from seniority is a complex combination of factors. A key question is whether women are being rejected or disqualified from senior leadership through discriminatory recruitment, selection and promotion procedures, gendered career pathways and exclusionary networks and practices in women-unfriendly institutions or indeed whether women are refusing, resisting or dismissing senior leadership and making strategic decisions not to apply for positions which they evaluate as unattractive, onerous and undesirable. Our study found that women are not being identified and prepared for leadership. There is also evidence globally of the misrecognition of women's capital. When women do aspire for leadership, they are often rejected from the most senior positions (Jarboe, 2013; Manfredi, 2014). However, we also found that many women academics are reluctant to aim for senior leadership and perceive the affective load and the management of ugly feelings that it entails as an unattractive career option. While some women are entering and flourishing in senior leadership positions, they are few in number and need to make strenuous efforts to integrate into male-dominated communities of practice (Burkinshaw, 2015). Without wishing to essentialise women or their contributions to organisational life, we suggest that there are consequences of women's under-representation including depressed employment and promotion opportunities, democratic deficit, under-representation in decision-making fora and

the reproduction of cultural messages to students, staff and wider society that suggest that women are unsuited to leadership. There is an urgent need to re-vision leadership to make it more attractive and hospitable to women and men, rather than focusing simply on counting more women into existing highly masculinised and patriarchal systems and structures.

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