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## **Damascus University**

# **Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability at Universities in Mediterranean Region: towards 2030 Agenda – FREE**

**Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education  
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Prepared by:

Riad Abdulraouf

Abdulsalam Zidan

Mayssa Sioufi

Hiba Alawad

Suhad Omran

Hanan Moustafa

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## **Executive Summary**

This report presents a situational analysis of female academics' environment and factors impacting female academics experience and career progression at Damascus University. In addition, the report highlights female academics' needs for training, which support the introduction of Gender Equality and Sustainability centre at Damascus University. To achieve the above-mentioned analysis, a questionnaire survey was administered at the project target groups. Project FREE target groups comprise academics, administrative staff, decision makers and female students at DU. The sample design employs nonprobability sampling techniques. A Quota sampling strategy is employed at DU. The sizes of the samples varied from 62 observations for academics, 59 observations for administrative staff, 24 cases for decision makers, and 92 observations for female students. The findings of the analysis are reported across individual, group, and institutional levels, examining the project target groups. A SWOT analysis is performed investigating internal and external factors characterizing DU environment identifying areas of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The limitation of the diagnosis analysis is reported highlighting the lack of adequate technological infrastructure in Syria including internet connection and technological compatibility.



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## Introduction

Based on their crucial role in the development process and the competitive academic environment, universities become more interested in sustainability. Equality is considered one of the important drivers of sustainability, particularly for the gender issue. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. United Nations and European Union have ascertain on the importance of gender equality and they proposed strategies and agenda to achieve this objective as one of the sustainable development goals. Different countries adopt this objective and advancements have been realized in what concern equality issue. In the academic field, female academics need to be empowered as providing women with equal access to higher education, management of HEIs, and to decision-making processes will fuel sustainable universities and enhance their contributions in societies.

For the universities in the Middle East and Mediterranean region, there is evidence that more equality is needed. Social and cultural factors may explain some of this trend. Female academics need to be empowered to have equal representation and more access to the management of higher education institutions. Moreover, a greater number of female academics in the different scientific fields is required as the majority of female academics specialized in theoretical scientific fields like literature, law, economics ...etc. On the other hand, female academics are underrepresented in the applied scientific fields like medicine, engineering, information technologies... etc. This unequal distribution of female academics may undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of universities.

Consequently, female academics in this region need to be empowered. This is to be realized by analysing the academic environment in the universities to identify the obstacles towards more representation of female academics in the HEIs and the skills they need in order to have a leading role in these institutions. In addition, the regulations adopted by the universities need to be reviewed to highlight any rules may boost inequality.

Project FREE aims to enhance female academics empowerment in the Middle East and Mediterranean Region through universities in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. This objective is to be realized by working on specific work-packages with the partnership of EU universities to achieve measurable positive outputs toward female empowerment in the HEIs in the concerned countries. Providing female academics with the required skills related to scientific research methods or to decision making and leadership are crucial to enhance their representation in the management of HEIs.

This institutional report provides a situation analysis on academic environment at Damascus University in Syria. Factors influencing female academics experience and career progression and lack of academic representation at senior management levels are identified. Moreover, the required training topics to enhance the representation of female academics in Damascus University are marked. The project target groups comprise academics, administrative staff, decision makers and female students both graduates and post-graduates.



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## 1. Damascus University Profile

Damascus University (DU) is the largest and oldest university in Syria, it is a public university located in the capital Damascus and has campuses in other Syrian cities. It was founded in 1923 through the merger of the School of Medicine (established in 1903) and the Institute of Law (established in 1913). Until 1958 it was named the Syrian University, but the name changed after the founding of the University of Aleppo. There are nine public universities and more than ten private ones in Syria. Damascus University is one of the most reputable universities in the Middle East.

The University of Damascus consists of several faculties, higher Institutes, intermediate institutes and a school of nursing. One of the institutions specializes in teaching the Arabic language to foreigners, which is the largest institution of its kind in the Arab world. Damascus University awards graduate (Master, Ph.D. Professional Training and Qualification) and undergraduate (Bachelor) degree programs. The period of study for the bachelor's degree ranges from 4 to 6 years, based on the need for each discipline of study. The Master programs combine course work and research, and require a minimum of two years and a maximum of a three. The Ph.D. degree is a fully research program. The period of research is not less than two years and not more than five years. Damascus University has many cooperation agreements with many international HEIs, and DU is a very active partners in many Erasmus+ (previously Tempus) projects.

The number of academic staff disaggregated by gender at DU is 1484 for male academics, and 1208 for female academics, with total number of 2692. Female academics account for 45%, whereas male academics 55%. Consequently, number of administrative staff disaggregated by gender at DU is 1836 for male administrative staff, and 2725 for female administrative staff, with a total number of 4588. Female administrative staff account for 60%, whereas male administrative 40%. As for the number of students disaggregated by gender at DU, 118700 are male students, and 151516 are female students, with total of 270216. Female students account for 56%, whereas male students 44%.

## 2. Higher Education Environment in Syria

Universities at Syria definitely need the knowledge and expertise of social and technical innovation skills to create a sustainable future for Syria. Before 2011 Higher Education sector was expanding as the introduction of private universities in Syria through a legislation which was applied in 2001 allowed the operation of Syrian private HEIs. Before the devastating war in Syria and between 2001 and 2010 private universities in Syria were growing gradually and were competing to win and recruit students primarily undergraduates. At 2011 a long-term crisis has torn Syria over the past eight years, which has created a devastating situation on a social, economic, environmental and political levels including both private and public sectors. Higher education is still operating; however, it has gone through significant declination and worsening through the past eight years of struggle and devastation. Many people in Syria either lost their jobs, their assets and properties or in the worst cases their lives. The devastating situation drove many individuals including students and academics to leave Syria seeking safer and better living conditions. Currently and after 8 years of war, destruction and devastation on human, social, economic and environmental levels the subject of equality and sustainable development is even more vital than previously, considering the economic background and context which

characterizes Syria, particularly reflecting on the social and economic environment. Before 2011 Syrian Higher Education was going through a development phase, characterised by modernising teaching and research environments and knowledge transfer, accreditation with international and mainly EU partners.

### 3. Methodology

The methodology section covers the sampling design and the questionnaire design.

#### 3.1 Sampling design

Project FREE Questionnaire is designed taking into consideration the project target groups, which comprise of four target groups. The sampling unit of analysis comprises of academic staff, administrative, decision makers, and female students. An operational definition is provided for each of the following target groups.

The adopted sampling strategy at DU is a non-probability sampling. A quota sampling is applied to improve representativeness (Cooper, D. and Schindler, 2014). A proposed quota sampling strategy, has divided the sample into different subgroups indicating 9 faculties operating at DU. Within these faculties 4 subgroups are identified a quota sample from decision makers, academics, administrative and female undergraduate students is selected. Figure 1 illustrates the sample size for each target group at DU.

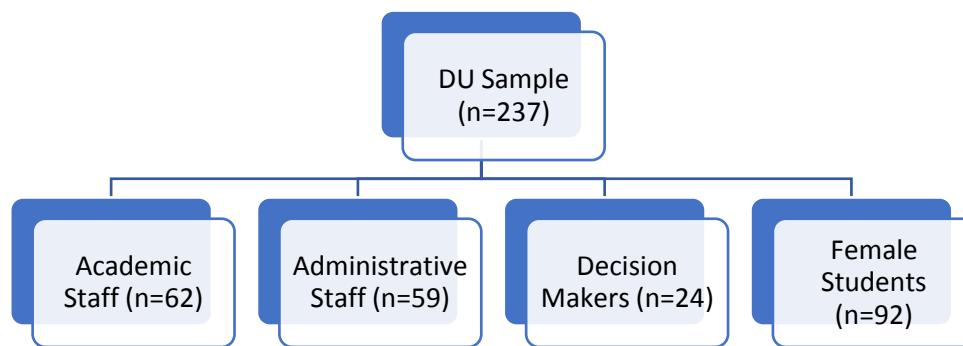


Figure 1 DU Target Groups and Sample Size (Source: FREE Questionnaire Survey)

#### 3.2 Questionnaire Design

Project FREE encompasses four target groups which are under examination, namely academics, administrative staff, decision makers, and female students. Based on project FREE unit of analyses, a proposed approach will take into consideration 4 prototypes of the questionnaires. The first model questionnaire is for academics. This prototype will be oriented for academic staff. The questions will be customized taking into consideration the field of expertise, research and teaching, as well as training needs for this category. The academics prototype questionnaire is designed addressing the individual, professional, group, and institutional characteristics, as well as training needs of this target group.

The second questionnaire model is for administrative. This prototype is focused on administrative staff. The questions are customized taking into consideration the characteristics of this target group. The third prototype is for decision makers. The questions are customized taking into consideration the field of expertise, knowledge and strategic scope of this target group, as well as training needs for this category. The fourth model is for female students. The questions are focused to take into consideration individual characteristics and training needs.



In the process of designing FREE questionnaires, three main task-oriented groups were assembled for the purpose of questionnaires development. Each group was assigned to develop a questionnaire based on the draft sent by the work package leader. Consequently, four questionnaires were designed to collect primary data targeting project target groups. The questionnaire design was based on development of mainly close-ended questions employing nominal, ordinal and interval scales. The response types employed in project FREE questionnaires comprise of rating, ranking and categorization scales. The four questionnaire prototypes were designed taking into consideration the appropriate type of scale required to perform the analysis, type of response strategy required, type of communication approach required, and questionnaire layout. The questionnaire design examined classification questions (demographic), administrative questions, and topic questions.

## **4. Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Descriptive Analysis for Academics**

Academics are teaching and research staff, who are associated with developing research in the scope of gender equality, equity and curriculum development. In elite EU HEIs, education is a process which turns knowledge into action and develops innovative teaching methods addressing social and global problems. Academic staff analysis is examined on different levels, including demographical, individual, group, professional and institutional levels.

#### **4.1.1 Demographic profile**

The demographic profile comprises academic staff members from all faculties, providing data about age, gender, educational level, position, and work experience. At faculty level, 25% of respondents are from the Faculty of Education, 13% from the Faculty of Mass Communication, 13% from Higher Institute for Languages, 11% from Literature and Human Sciences, 10% from Economics, 6% from the Civil Engineering, and finally 5% from the Higher Institute for Population Research and Studies, and the rest is from other faculties. The majority of respondents (30.6%) were between 40-50 years old, while 29% were between 30 and 40 years old. 11.3% were between 60 and 70 years old, whereas the least goes to age group under 30 years old with 3.2%.

Females account for 61.3%, compared to 37.1% males, and 1.6% who prefer not to say. Most of the academic staff are married (74.2%), while 18% are single. 3.3% are either divorced or widows. 62.9% of academic staff are PhD holders, 24.2% are holders of Master's degree, while 8.1% are Bachelor holders.

Respondents' academic levels range between lecturer and professor. Most of them are instructors (34%), while 11.3% are lecturers. 12.9% of respondents are assistant professors compared to 1.6% only professors, while the rest say to have another academic level. In terms of work experience, 27.4% of academic staff have work experience between 5-10 years. 24.2% have work experience between 10-15 years, while 14.5% have 1-5 years of experience. 12.9% have 30 and above years of experience, while 9.5% have between 20 years and under 30 years, and 6.5% have work experience between 15-20 years.

#### **4.1.2 Individual Level: Motivation and work-life balance**

When asked about their motivation behind entering academia, respondents' answers signified that 28.5% are motivated by intellectual challenge, followed by 29%, motivated by autonomy/self-direction. 35.5% are driven by self-esteem, while 12.9% by salary level. Social prestige of the job takes 12.9%, compared to 51.6% motivated by interest in research.

In their answers to how far they were satisfied with their career, academic respondents' answers signified that 48.4% are satisfied. 16.1% are dissatisfied, while 6.5% are strongly dissatisfied. Those who are very satisfied represent 9.7% while 19.4% of the sample are neutral.



Respondents were asked whether they have achieved their career ambitions. The majority of them (58.1%) have not yet achieved their ambitions, while 40.3% have done so. Respondents who answered with “No” were asked to identify the reason that hinders achievement of goals. The highest rating (25.8%) goes to pay and security, followed by 19.4 % to working conditions, and 14.5% to university policies. 12.9% explained it by the need for the right experience and skills, while 11.3% goes similarly to lack of motivation and to the difficulties in managing both work and family. 9.7% believed that there is no clear relationship between administrative and academic staff, while 8.1% prioritize family over work. 8.1% also goes similarly to that senior level male managers are more likely to assign or promote someone with a style similar to their own and to interpersonal relationships. 6.5% have no interest to higher positions, and the same percentage goes similarly to difficulties in building networks and immediate manager. The lowest rating (3.2%) goes to missed opportunities earlier in the careers. Another question tackled satisfaction with work-life balance reflected that 40.3% are satisfied, compared to 16.1% dissatisfied. 19.4% are very satisfied, 21% are neutral and only 1.6 % are very dissatisfied.

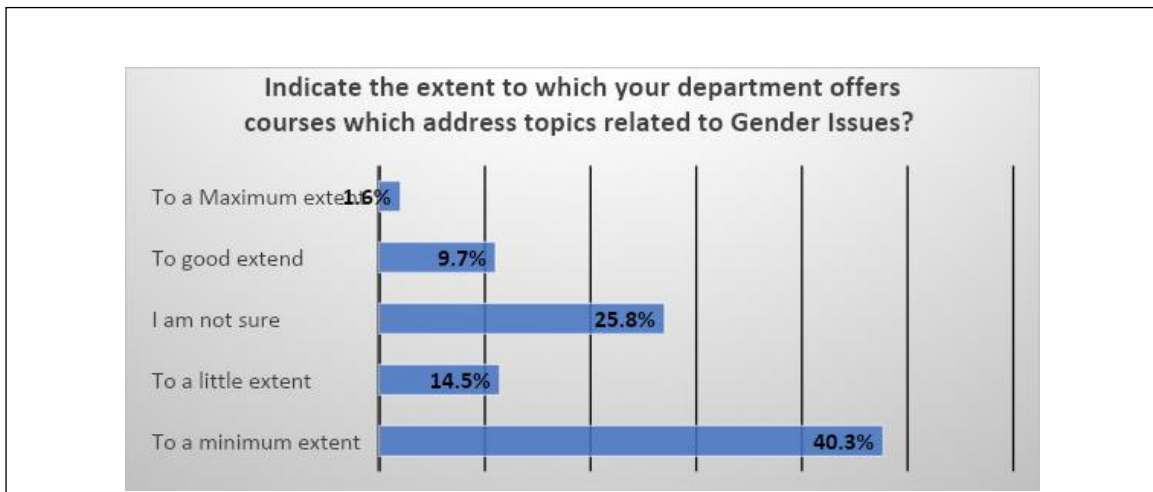
When asked about the reasons behind their inability to achieve this balance, 51.6% said it is due to family responsibilities, 11.3% relate the issue to social environment which assigns traditional roles to men and women. 16.1% said it is due to children care while only 6% said that marriage is the reason. Respondents were asked to suggest ideas that help them achieve work-life balance. 56.5% suggested time management, while 38.7% proposed spousal support. 32.3% goes to supportive institutional policies, while 24.2% to flexible distribution of roles between men and women. Only 8.1% suggested reducing social life and activities.

When answering a question about whether respondents have taken any family related leave while working at the institution, 67.7 % answered no while 30.6% answered yes. 16.1% of respondents took maternity leaves, while only 8.1% of respondents took parental leaves. 14.5% took leaves for other caring responsibilities. The analysis indicates that 50% of respondents found no difficulty in going back to work after such leaves, compared to 9.7% who did. When asking about the kind of these difficulties 4.8% said to feel excluded from the new tasks or projects, while 3.2% said that their responsibilities were taken away from them.

When asked about the kind of support they receive from the institution after family related leaves, 11.3% received clear information about their rights and responsibilities during or prior to break, and a similar percentage said they were given flexible working options after break. 6.5% have got a reduction in teaching or services to allow them focus on research, publication and/or funding application, and another 6.5% had a provision for continuation of research.

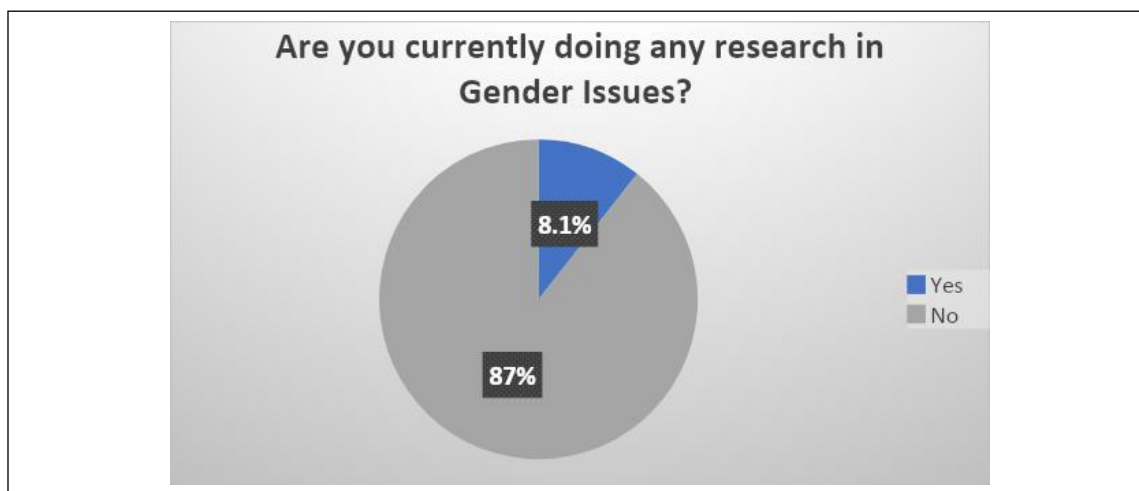
#### 4.1.3 Professional Level – Curriculum and Research:

40.3% of the respondents signified that courses address gender issues in their departments are provided to a minimum extent, while only 1.6% indicated opposite. 25.8% were not sure, whereas 9.7% said that gender issues are addressed to a good extent and 14.5% indicated to a little extent. Figure 1 illustrates percentages on extent to which Gender Equality is integrated at faculty courses at Damascus University.



**Figure 1 Integration of Gender Equality in faculty courses at DU (Source: FREE Questionnaire Survey)**

Descriptive analysis proves that there is little awareness about gender issues since 83.9% of respondents are not aware of any student's research related to gender issues, compared to only 13% demonstrating otherwise. Furthermore, 87% are not currently doing any research that address gender issues, compared to only 8.1% who are doing so. Figure 2 illustrates percentages on academics performing research in gender issues at DU.



**Figure 2 Research production in the Gender Issues at DU (Source: FREE Questionnaire Survey)**

#### **4.1.4 Group level - building a network of professional relationships and support**

There is no department or center at the university that deals with the gender equality issue, based on the respondents answers which refer to 92%. 6.5% of respondents didn't answer. Even though 6.5% of the respondents admitted that they are familiar with some groups and organizations in the city that are concerned with gender equality or gender issues in general. This refers to the lack of awareness regarding gender issues.

The analysis of respondents' answers indicates that 45.2% do not receive the correct guidance support they need, whereas 48.4% mentioned that they received it.

-31% indicated that they need an opportunity to communicate, 16% indicated that they need professional training and 10% indicated that they need training.

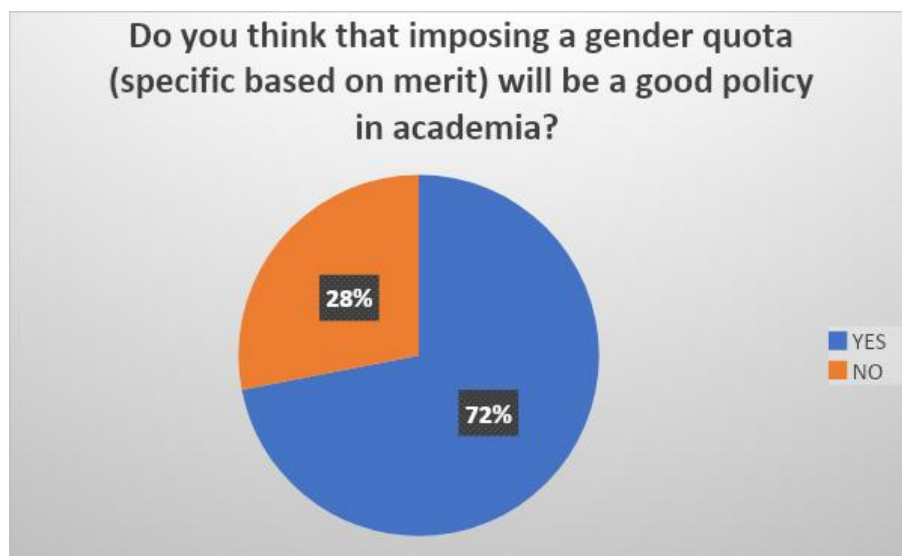
-Regarding providing support and proper supervision, 48.4% indicate that they receive this support, whereas 43.5% do not receive this support. 37% of those who did not receive this support indicated that they need managerial training, whereas 8% indicated that they need the support of their direct manager.

#### 4.1.5 Institutional Level - Empowerment and Equality

##### 4.1.5.1 Gender Inequality- Human Resources Practices at Institutions

When respondents were asked whether the gender quota, based on merit, would be a good policy in the higher education sector, 43.5% agreed and 46.8% disagreed.

-40% of those who did not agree indicated that positions should be given on the basis of capacity, not gender. 6.5% believed that this may be considered unfair. The same percentage said that this would not be beneficial and also not necessary. Figure 3 illustrates the percentages of imposing gender quotas in Higher Education.



**Figure 3 Merit-Based Gender (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

-The metadata analysis generally shows the respondents perceived agreeing levels towards human resources practices at Damascus University, the highest median (4.95) was for women who get appropriate maternity leaves according to the law. Whereas the lowest median (2.82) was for providing training programs for women. This indicates to the lack of training programs for women and to the urgent need for such training. Table 2 illustrates the median and standard deviation of the factors associated with human resource practices at Damascus University.

**Table 2 Human Resources Practices at University**

HR Practices at Institution	M	SD
1. Training programs for women	2.82	1.39
2. Equal opportunities for promotion for both men and women	3.82	1.23
3. Common recruitment & selection policy which is equal	3.68	0.99
4. Performance appraisal is independent of gender	3.86	1.03
5. This university has Gender Equality at workplace	3.77	0.91
6. This university is a women friendly workplace	3.65	0.97

7. Equal vacations all employees	3.83	0.94
8. Common training and development policy for all.	3.43	1.04
9. Fair reward and recognition policy	3.48	1.25
10. Women get proper maternity leaves as per the law	4.95	6.86
11. Women are allocated the same rewards as men	3.76	1.00
12. Women are allocated the punishments as men	3.91	0.82
13. Women are given leadership roles	3.80	1.09
14. I feel included in decision-making processes	3.32	1.15

#### 4.1.5.2 Sexual harassment, sexism, stereotypes

When respondents were asked whether they were exposed to any kind of sexual harassment, teasing, observations or joking, respondents' answers indicated that 63% of them did not experience or observe such behaviors. 24% of respondents only observed, and 1.6% experienced only.

- Descriptive analysis shows higher percentage of respondents who have not experienced or observed sexual behavior. However, the sexual harassment behavior is a complex issue that is interpreted differently across cultures. Moreover, the highest percentages that refer to non-observation or experience is associated with the conservative culture in the Middle East. These issues are seen as taboos.

- Few respondents indicated that they requested consulting and support from the university, including the required support from colleagues (18%), from direct managers (8%), HR and syndicate representatives (3%) for each of them, and (2%) from the private expert.

Moreover, a few respondents reflected the perceived negative or positive impact of the support they may have requested. Percentages range from 13% to those who felt safe when they reported to 2% for those who felt worse during reporting. 2% for those who indicated that the behavior stopped and 3% for those who said it didn't make a difference. Again, low response rates for this section may also be associated with cultural barriers and sensitivities. When they were asked about the reason that prevented them from asking consulting, or support, the answer was as follow: 13% said that they didn't think that anything was going to change, 10% said that they felt ashamed, and the percentage of those who were prevented by fear was equal to the percentage of those who thought it was not important to report was 3%, 2% of them were uncomfortable, and with the same percentage the reasons were the fear that they would not be believed and they didn't know where to go.

-When the respondents were asked about the kind of support that they had hoped for, 11% indicated to the psychological support and only 3% indicated to the emotional support, whereas 21% indicated to the legal support and 10% wished clear actions to be taken by the university or faculty.

- For the test of bullying behavior from a manager within the university, 13% indicated that they observed bullying behaviors, while 8% experienced and observed, whereas 53% did not observe or experience bullying behavior by the manager. 11% indicated that they observed a colleague practicing bullying behaviors, while 3% of them had an experience and observed bullying from a colleague. And the same percentage for those who had only experienced that, and 57% of those, did not observe or experience such behaviors from a colleague. Similarly, the responses concerning the students who had experienced bullying

behaviors were as follows, 12% observed these behaviors, 8% observed and tested, and 52% hadn't observed or tested.

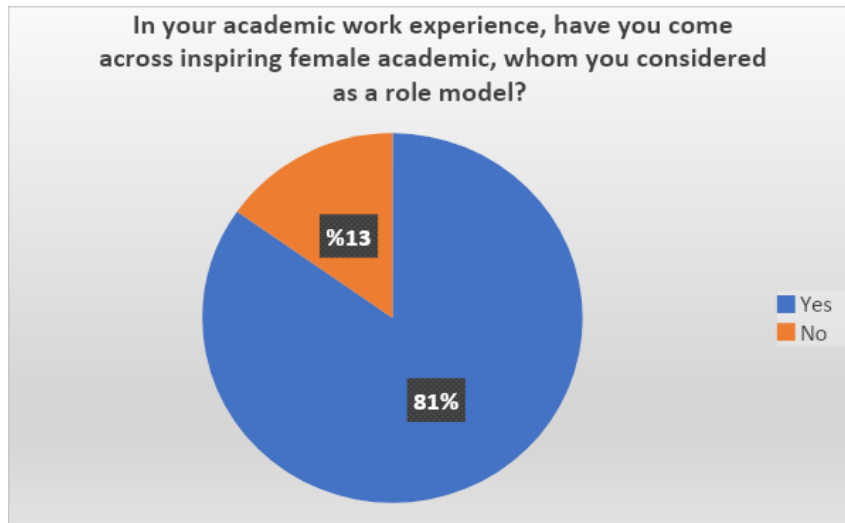
- For the issues related to stereotypes, 27% % mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to lead, 19% mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to perform effectively and achieve significant results, 18% mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to make decisions, and 10% mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to solve problems.

-Within their answers on the question about who is obstructing their way, 27% of respondents referred to the managers, whereas 15% indicated to the family members, 10% indicated female colleagues, and 7% referred to their male colleagues, and 5% referred to human resources staff and students.

#### 4.1.5.3 Academic female: Role models and empowerment

Within the test of the academic role and empowerment model, respondents were asked to present their perception about the academic female whom they considered as a role model. The results show a positive attitude as 81% agreed that they faced such a female character, whereas only 13% indicated to the contrary.

Figure 4  
the  
of  
perception  
female  
role



illustrates  
percentages  
academic  
about the  
academics as  
models.

**Figure 4 - Academic Inspiration of female as a Role Model (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

- The test concerning the distinctive features that lie beyond their points of views, a large percentage 60% mentioned that this was because of expertise in the academic field. 48% indicated to Charisma, 45% indicated to her ability to influence or inspire, 40% indicated to self-confidence and independence, 29% indicated to her ability to be strict, 27% indicated to her ability to lift the level of her students, and then 19% indicated to Resilience.

- Another approach was applied, the ordinal scale, where the respondents were asked to sort their choices according to importance. The highest rank was for expertise in the academic field, where 29% mentioned it as their first option. This finding is consistent with the previous findings where the academic experience of

female in this field had been emphasized. Self-confidence came in the second rank according to importance with a percentage of 18%. The ability to Influence was classified as a third option with a percentage of 21%.

Table 3 shows the data related to the characteristics of the female role model, arranged according to importance.

Characteristics for Female Role Model	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eight	Ninth	Missing	Total
1. Ability to inspire	17.7%	6.5%	21.0%	12.9%	3.2%	4.8%	6.5%	4.8%	17.7%	22.6%	100%
2. Ability to uplift her students	4.8%	16.1%	4.8%	14.5%	14.5%	6.5%	8.1%	6.5%	4.8%	24.2%	100%
3. Assertiveness	1.6%	6.5%	8.1%	6.5%	6.5%	12.9%	19.4%	9.7%	1.6%	28.8%	100%
4. Independence	1.6%	6.5%	6.5%	9.7%	11.3%	14.5%	19.4%	6.5%	1.6%	24.0%	100%
5. Expertise in her academic field	29.0%	12.9%	9.7%	3.2%	9.7%	3.2%	3.2%	4.8%	29.0%	24.3%	100%
6. Charisma	14.5%	8.1%	8.1%	11.3%	8.1%	9.7%	8.1%	8.1%	14.5%	24.0%	100%
7. Confidence	6.5%	17.7%	11.3%	11.3%	16.1%	4.8%	9.7%	0.0%	6.5%	22.6%	100%
8. Resilience	1.6%	3.2%	6.5%	8.1%	6.5%	17.7%	1.6%	30.6%	1.6%	24.2%	100%

**Table 3: Characteristics of female role models arranged according to importance**

- During studying the academic perception among females, whether they felt able to work in academia, 84% of females answered “yes” while the remaining 5% said the contrary. This percentage has interesting results as females feel empowered based on their experience at Damascus University.

#### 4.1.6 Training areas of the FREE project

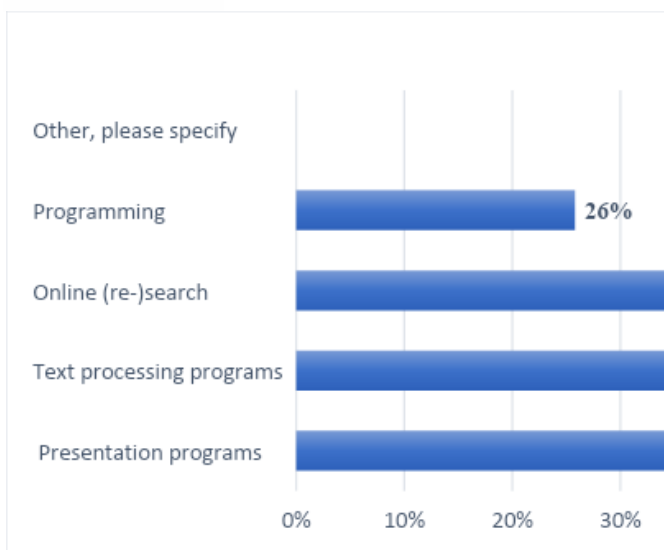
The test of training areas for the FREE project includes a set of digital, administrative, leadership and personal features. In addition, training in the field of empowerment and critical thinking groups.

##### 4.1.6.1 Digital skills

Due to analysis of questions related to digital skills, respondents emphasized on the importance of presentation skills training with a percentage of 52%, 57% emphasized on online search skills, 37% emphasized on text processing programs and 26% emphasized on programming.

Figure 5 illustrates the percentages of digital skills that are critical to a career in academia.





**Figure 5 Digital Skills (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

- The test related to ordinal scale which focuses on the importance of digital skills topics, shows similar results, where 21% of respondents identified the importance of presentation skills as their first option, and 21% identified text processing as their second and third option, so we adapt the highest percentage that is followed and the skill that hadn't been chosen before. Therefore, the third option is for search on the Internet with a percentage of 13%.

**Table 4 Digital skills**

Digital Skills	First	second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Missing	Total
<b>Presentation programs</b>	21.0%	16.1%	17.7%	6.5%	0.0%	38.7%	100%
<b>Text processing programs</b>	4.8%	21.0%	21.0%	9.7%	1.6%	41.9%	100%
<b>Online (re-)search</b>	19.4%	14.5%	12.9%	9.7%	1.6%	41.9%	100%
<b>Programming</b>	16.1%	4.8%	3.2%	30.6%	3.2%	42.1%	100%
<b>Other, please specify</b>	1.6%	3.2%	1.6%	33.9%	0.0%	59.7%	100%

#### 4.1.6.2 Management and Leadership Skills

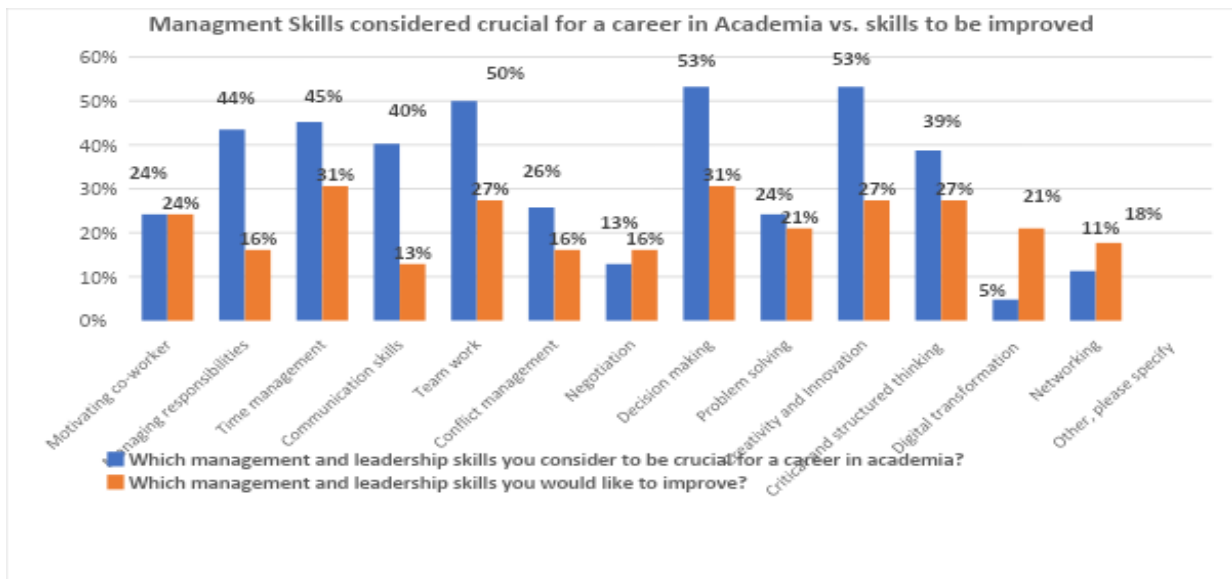
FREE project tests a set of management and leadership basis that will be provided to the project stakeholders with a focus on academics as a key target group in the field.

- Metadata analysis shows that 53% of respondents, which is the highest percentage, identified decision-making skills with the same percentage for creativity and innovation, and about 50% identified teamwork skills, 45% identified time management, 43% identified managing responsibilities, and 40% identified communication skills due to its importance for a career in academia. And 39% identified critical and structured thinking. 26% identified conflict management skills, 24% identified the motivating of co-workers, the same percentage identified problem solving, 13% identified negotiation skills and 11% identified professional networking, and 5% identified digital transformation.



- In comparison, the highest rating, concerning the skills that should be improved, emphasized on time management as a critical management skill that should be improved and the skill of making decision with a percentage of 30% for each, and a percentage of 27% for each of teamwork, creativity, innovation and critical and structured thinking since these skills are critical for improvement. 24% were to motivating the co-work, whereas 21% identified problem solving skills and digital transformation, 18% were given to the skills of creating a professional network, 16% were identified for the skills that are in need to be developed, which are managing responsibilities, conflict management, and negotiation skills. 13% were for communication skills. Figure 6 illustrates the classification of management and leadership skills that are critical to academia and the skills that should be improved.

**Figure 6 Management skills (Source: FREE online survey)**



The FREE Project Training tested widely the leadership behaviors. The first leadership behavior, that was significantly evaluated, is the democratic leadership behavior. Participatory leadership was at the second rank according to importance, and supportive leadership was at the third rank by the respondents.

**Table 5 The order of leadership behaviors.**

Leadership Behaviours	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Missing	Total
Autocratic leadership	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%	4.8%	6.5%	41.9%	43.6%	100%
Democratic leadership	21.0%	9.7%	9.7%	4.8%	11.3%	0.0%	43.5%	100%
Participative leadership	11.3%	21.0%	16.1%	8.1%	3.2%	0.0%	40.3%	100%
Supportive leadership	12.9%	17.7%	16.1%	8.1%	1.6%	1.6%	42.0%	100%
Charismatic leadership	6.5%	6.5%	8.1%	19.4%	14.5%	4.8%	40.2%	100%
Directive leadership	9.7%	3.2%	6.5%	12.9%	19.4%	6.5%	41.8%	100%

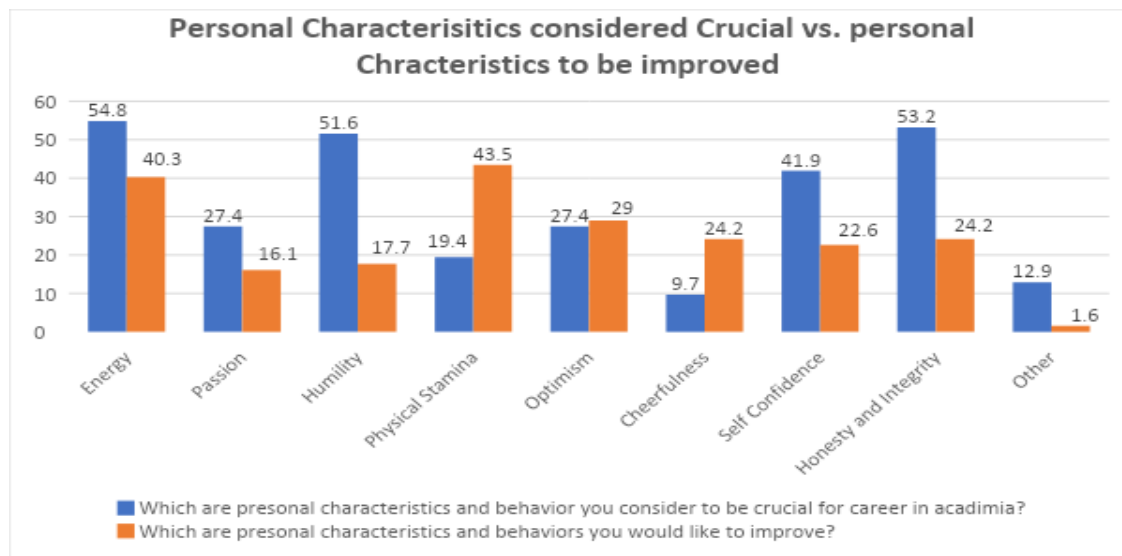
#### 4.1.6.2 Personal characteristics

The training areas test illustrates a set of personal, social and work-related characteristics that are widely considered crucial to effective managers. Descriptive analysis illustrates a set of personal characteristics, which are considered crucial for management in the higher education sector versus improving personal characteristics.

- The highest rating for personal characteristics was for the activity and vitality, and 55% of respondents emphasized this characteristic. 53% of respondents identified honesty, whereas 52% identified humility, 42% of respondents emphasized on self-confidence.

- In contrast, personal characteristics, that are in need to be improved and considered by academics, were identified, 44% acknowledged with the importance of physical stamina, 40% for energy, 29% for optimism, 24% for cheerfulness and the same percentage for honesty and integrity.

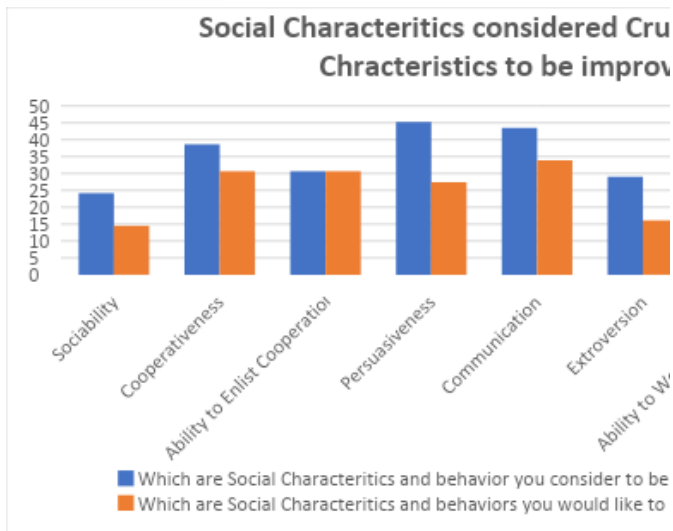
Figure 7 illustrates personal characteristics that are considered crucial for management in the higher education sector versus personal characteristics that should be improved.



**Figure 7 Personal characteristics (Source: FREE online survey)**

- The areas of training test illustrates a set of social characteristics that are considered critical to the management career in the higher education sector. Descriptive analysis shows that 47% of the sample identified the ability to work in a team as an important characteristic, whereas 45% identified persuasiveness, 44% identified communication, 38% identified the ability to collaborate with others, and 32% identified the ability to create a professional network. In comparison, social characteristics that require improvement are identified, where 40% identified the ability to create a professional relationship network, 34% identified the ability to communicate, and 31% identified the ability to cooperate and the same percentage identified the ability to enlist cooperation. This emphasizes the importance of developing these qualities.

Figure 8 illustrates the social characteristics that are critical versus social characteristics that need to be improved.

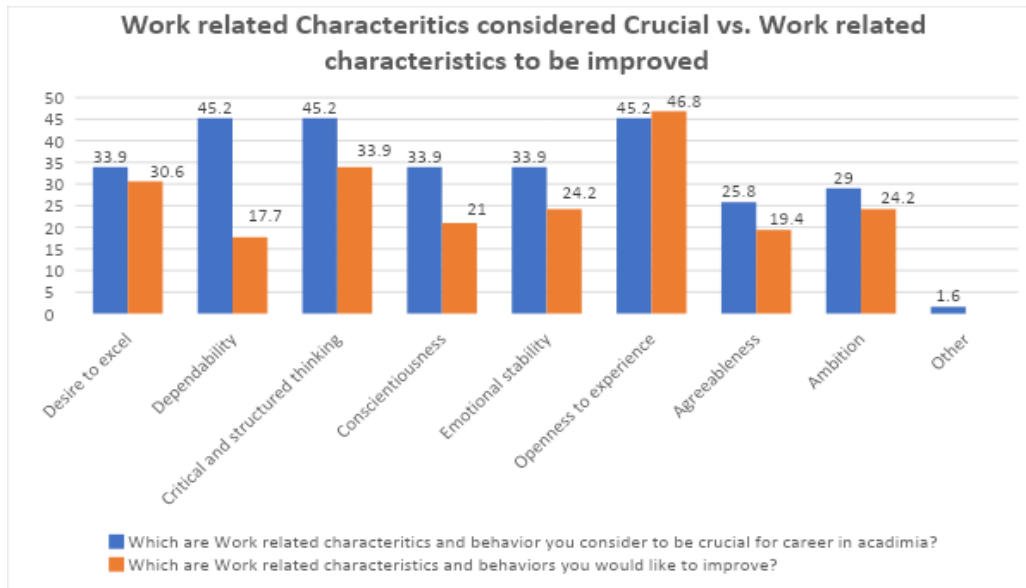


**Figure 8 Social characteristics (Source: FREE online survey)**

- The analysis shows a set of work-related characteristics that are also considered critical to management versus those that need to be improved. Merit, critical thinking and openness to new experiences are the characteristics that got the highest rank, as identified by 45% of respondents. The desire for excel, consciousness and emotional stability were also critical.

On the other hand, the characteristics that need to be improved are openness to new experiences, followed by critical and structured thinking and then the desire to excel.

Figure 9 illustrates the set of work-related characteristics that are considered critical versus work-related characteristics that need to be improved.



**Figure 9 Work-related characteristics (Source: FREE online survey)**

#### 4.1.6.3 Challenging Mind Sets and Empowerment

Training in the field of empowerment and challenging thinking groups is tested in the FREE project which is also considered important for the female academics empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean region. Table 6 illustrates the arranging of training fields for challenging thinking groups. The highest rank was for self-empowerment and considered as critical training courses, which was ranked as first option with a percentage of 31%, and the second training was for gender studies, which was ranked as a second option with a percentage of 27%; the third rank was for decision-making abilities, with a percentage of 22%.

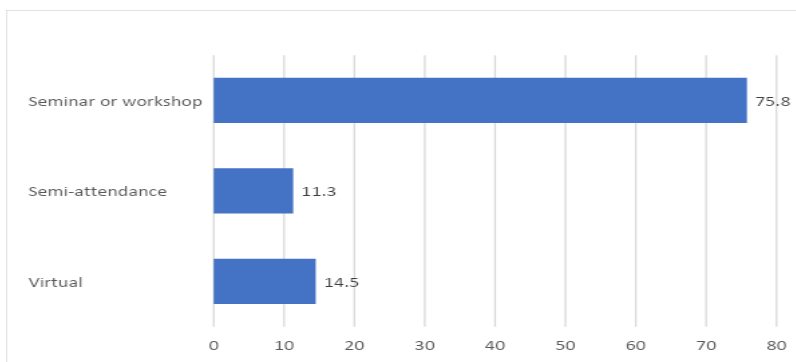
Table 6 illustrates training on Challenging Mind Sets and Empowerment according to importance.

**Table 6 Mind Challenging and Empowerment Training**

Challenging Mind Sets and Empowerment	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eight	Missing	Total
Learn how to empower female students	11.3%	11.3%	3.2%	11.3%	9.7%	3.2%	9.7%	16.1%	24.2%	100%
Introduction to Gender Studies	3.2%	8.1%	14.5%	8.1%	12.9%	9.7%	12.9%	6.5%	24.1%	100%
Learn how to get decision-makers on board for gender equality at universities	4.8%	12.9%	17.7%	11.3%	9.7%	6.5%	4.8%	9.7%	22.6%	100%
Self-empowerment	25.8%	3.2%	3.2%	17.7%	8.1%	11.3%	3.2%	4.8%	22.7%	100%
Learn how network	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%	14.5%	14.5%	4.8%	8.1%	11.3%	22.5%	100%
Learn how to raise awareness for gender issues	9.7%	6.5%	6.5%	9.7%	8.1%	24.2%	9.7%	3.2%	22.4%	100%
Learn how to integrate gender perspectives in education and research	8.1%	16.1%	12.9%	3.2%	8.1%	12.9%	12.9%	3.2%	22.6%	100%
How to turn the university into a gender aware and welcoming space	6.5%	11.3%	11.3%	1.6%	6.5%	4.8%	14.5%	21.0%	22.5%	100%

#### 4.1.6.4 Types of training

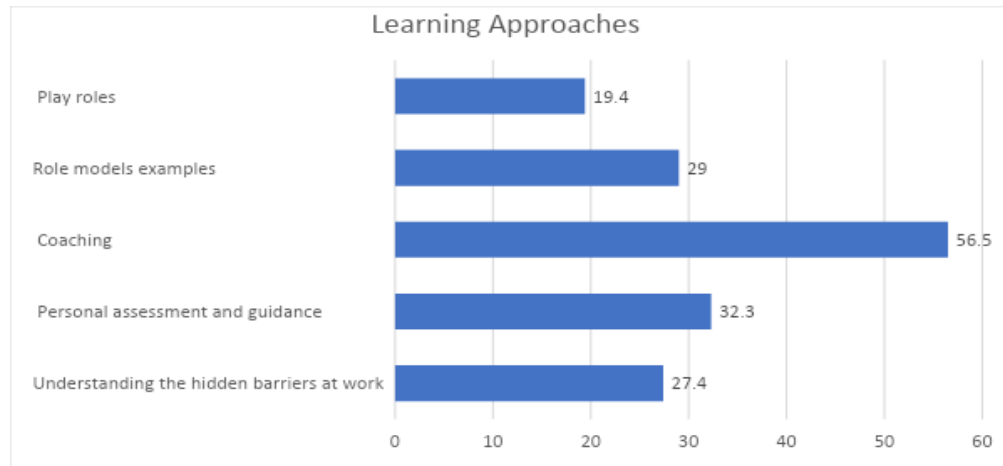
- Types of training were tested, respondents identified workshops and training at the highest rate, with a percentage of 76%, and 11% for the part- time training, and 15% for virtual training. Figure 10 shows the data related to the type of training as the respondents rated.



**Figure 10 Types of training (Source: FREE online survey)**

Learning Approaches, that are considered appropriate for acquisition the specific skills and features, were also tested.

57% emphasized on training, whereas 32% emphasized on the importance of providing models for typical professional examples, 29% chose role-based training, and 27% emphasized on understanding the hidden barriers at work.



**Figure 11 Learning Approaches (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

## 4.2 Analysis of the questionnaire addressed to Administrative staff

This questionnaire includes the administrative staff, who are the second target group identified in the FREE project.

Administrative staff perform a wide set of tasks including supportive, administrative, financial and human resources. Administrators will be provided with various sets of skill (technical skills and problem solving skills).

### 4.2.1 Personal and functional information

The demographic profile of administrative staff provides data about age, gender, educational level, position and work experience.

- Descriptive analysis shows that 5% are less than 30 years old, 29% are between the ages of 30 and 40, whereas only 36% are between the ages of 40 and 50. 19% are between the ages of 50, 60 and 10% for those who are over 60 years old.

- The gender distribution shows that the percentage of female participants is higher than males, the percentage of females was 54% while 42% of the respondents were males.

- According to the educational level, most of the participants hold a doctoral degree with a percentage of 34% followed by 32% hold a bachelor degree and then 17% have other backgrounds, only 10% hold a master degree and 2% are less than a bachelor degree.

- 70% of the respondents indicated that they held administrative positions, 22% of them were members of staff, and 32% were heads of departments.

- Work experience at the university was as follows: 2% were for administrative staff with less than one year experience and 12% with experience between 1 and 5 years, 19% have experience between 5 and 10 years,



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7% between 10 and 15 years, and 15% between 15 and 20 years experience, 29% with an experience between 20 and 30 years, and 17% were for more than 30-year experience.

#### **4.2.2 Individual Level Analysis**

The individual level analysis of administrative staff includes some factors such as stability, self-esteem, financial stability, social status of the job and balance between work and family.

##### **4.2.2.1 Motivation**

- This section shows the factors that motivate staff to work at the university. Interestingly, two factors exceeded the other factors as follows: 36% for the factor of interest in scientific research and 34% for the social prestige of the job, 27% for the stability factor, 17% for the self-esteem factor and 15% for balance between work and family, and the least motivating factor was for the financial income with a percentage of 12%.

- 60% of respondents mentioned that the university does not provide the necessary conditions to achieve their career goals compared to 37% who mentioned that the university provides those conditions.

- Descriptive analysis shows that 59% of the administrative staff look forward to upgrading at their career, while only 37% do not take this into consideration.

When respondents were asked about the jobs they would like to occupy, 20% chose to be academic staff, 19% chose to be department heads, and 12% wanted to be managers or to occupy any other positions. Only 9% wanted to occupy technical staff position.

When they were asked about their job satisfaction and financial income at the university, the answers were as follows: 70% were satisfied with the job, only 3% were satisfied with their salaries, whereas 29% were dissatisfied with their work and 93% weren't not satisfied with their salaries. This shows that internal satisfaction of the job itself outweighs satisfaction of the salary.

##### **4.2.2.2 Achieving a balance between work and family life**

This descriptive analysis was conducted to discover the factors that prevent balance between work and life. These factors include: flexibility in schedule work, reducing work hours, working from home, on campus special family services and financial help for families.

- Flexibility factor in the schedule and work comes first with a percentage of 68%, then 59% of the administrative respondents chose financial help for families to help them achieve balance between work and life. 56% chose on campus special family services, 39% chose reducing working time, and 30% of respondents who believe that working from home is appropriate.

- In comparison, when testing what respondents actually get from the university and enables them to achieve balance between work and life. 44% mentioned that they have flexible working hours, whereas 40% shows the opposite. Only 7% said that they get a reduction in their working hours. Only 10% mentioned that they are able to work from home, and 36% mentioned that they get on campus special family services. Moreover, only 7% said that they were receiving financial help for families.

Descriptive statistics indicate that 45% of respondents were very satisfied and satisfied with the current balance in their professional and personal life, 24% were neutral and 29% were dissatisfied and never satisfied

##### **4.2.2.3 Working Conditions**

Based on the metadata, the contract of 49% of the administrative staff stipulates to work 21 to 30 hours per week. However, those who actually work this number of hours do not exceed 31% to complete the assigned



work, and 32% of those whose contract stipulates to work 31 to 40 hours a week, but those who work within these hours are only 27%, and 37% of those who work less than 20 hours a week although those whose contracts stipulates to work for such hours do not exceed 15%, only 2% of employees have more than 40 working hours.

- Consequently, 46% of the sample have tendency to work at the weekends/ evenings in addition to their normal working hours, whereas 54% do not work outside their working hours.

- 83% of administrative staff indicated that they have additional household chores when they return after working hours, and 14% mentioned that they do not have chores.

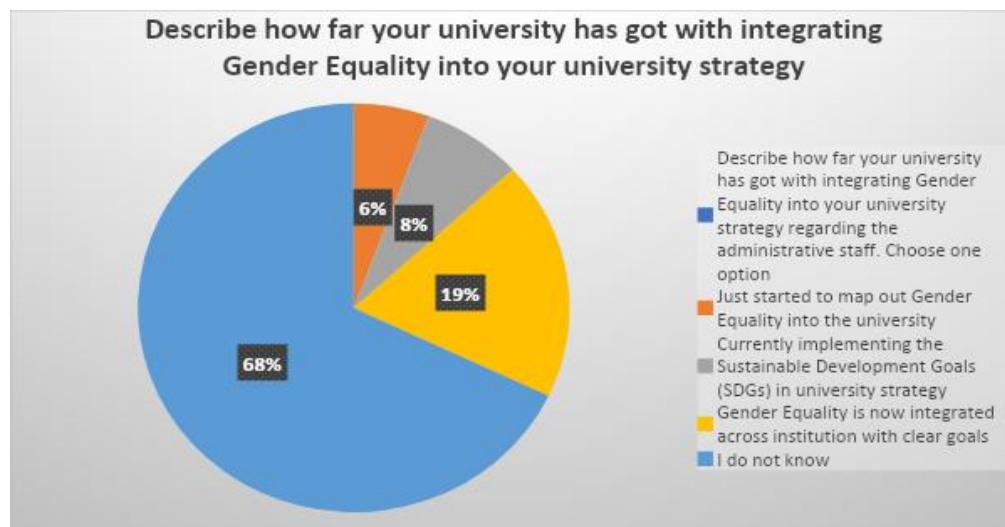
- For traveling by the aim of work, 85% mentioned that they have never traveled for work, whereas 10% travel once or twice a year, 2% travel between 3 and 4 times a year and the same percentage travel between 5 and 9 times a year, and even 10-12 times a year

- 61% of the administrative staff mentioned that they took family vacation leaves, while 37% did not, and only 14% mentioned that they faced difficulties to return to work.

### 4.2.3 Institutional level

#### 4.2.3.1 General dimensions of gender equality

According to the data analysis, 61% of respondents do not know to what extent the university succeeded to integrate gender equality into its management strategy. This indicates to the lack of awareness regarding gender equality issues. 7% responded that they are currently implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the university strategy. Only 5% said that they have just started mapping gender equality at university, whereas 17% said that gender equality is now integrated across institutions with clear goals. Figure 12 shows the percentages of integrating gender equality into the university strategy.



**Figure 12: Gender equality integrated into university strategy (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

When they were asked whether their universities have indicators for gender equality, 58% of respondents mentioned that they did not know if there were any indicators for measurement, 29% confirmed that there were no such indicators and only 7% said that there were indicators to measure gender equality.



- Respondents were asked about the availability of interdisciplinary units for research, education and policy development on gender issues. 42% of them said that these structures aren't available, while 51% were unsure about the availability of these units. Statistics show that it is necessary to establish interdisciplinary units at the university to raise awareness regarding gender equality.

- When they were asked whether they agree with their universities work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and gender equality policies into their strategies, 41% agreed, whereas only 5% opposed. 48% do not know whether the strategy should be implemented or not.

- However, the highest percentage, (63%) of respondents would like to be part of the strategy while 29% have no desire to be.

Respondents' reactions, regarding how the SDGs can be implemented at the university, varied. The largest percentage of participants (36%) chose training activities to be integrated into the SDGs and gender equality policies. 32% chose conferences, seminars, and the other options showed the choice of 27% for the training of trainers on SDGs and mobility and secondment with a percentage of 10%.

When respondents were asked whether the university provide courses related to the implementation of the SDGs and gender equality, 53% said that the university provides these curricula at a minimum. This confirms the importance of providing such topics. 19% of them said that these curricula are given to an intermediate extent, and the same percentage said that these curricula are given to a good extent.

#### 4.2.3.2 University Management, Goals and Strategic Planning

The median mean is calculated at 2.75 equivalent to 55% which indicates to the range that gender equality is reflected within university goals. Moreover, the study of the range in which gender equality is reflected into the University strategic plan, also means a small range where the median of 2.86 is equivalent to 57%.

#### 4.2.3.3 Infrastructure

The highest rating of respondents was associated with scheduling policies that include Flexible work for family employees with a median of 3.9 equivalent to 78%, followed by availability of appropriate transportation where the median score was 3.71 equivalent to 74%. However, policies related to work from home were considered to be the lowest (2.96) equivalent to 59%, whereas suitable facilities on campus for families were rated at median of 3.5 equivalent to 70%.

Table 7 shows the median score and standard deviation of the factors related to university infrastructure.

**Table 7 University infrastructure**

Institution's Infrastructure	M	SD
Policy of working from home	2.96	1.34
Proper transport facilities	3.71	1.29
Adequate in campus facilities for families	3.50	1.30
Flexible work timings policy for families	3.90	1.22

#### 4.2.3.4 Human resource practices at your university

Respondents rated human resources practices as over intermediate. The highest rating was to equal opportunities for promotion for both men and women with a median 4.06 equivalent to 81%. A median of

4.02 equivalent to 80% was for performance-independent and gender-sensitive performance appraisal criteria. The lowest rating was that university has Gender Equality at workplace with a median of 3.66, equivalent to 73%, and the rest of the practices got ratings. This is shown in Table 8: Median scores and standard deviation of the factors related to HR practices.

**Table 8 Human Resources Practices at University**

<b>Institution's Human Resources Practices</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. Training and development programs for all workers	3.79	1.09
2. Equal opportunities for promotion for both men and women	4.06	0.98
3. Common recruitment & selection policy which is equal	3.87	0.99
4. Performance appraisal is independent of gender	4.02	0.83
5. This university has Gender Equality at workplace	3.66	0.92
6. This university is a women friendly workplace	3.78	1.11
7. Equal vacations all employees	3.88	1.15
8. Fair reward and recognition policy for employees	3.47	1.26

#### **4.2.3.5 Organizational Climate:**

The optimal classification was revealed through the answers related to the appropriate care of health and safety, provided to all workers (3.09), equivalent to 62%. Moreover, the institution work culture was represented by respondents with an average of 3, equivalent to 60%. Participants were "Satisfied" due to feeling safe and comfortable in their workplace with an average of 3.28, equivalent to 58%, whereas the minimum classification average was 3.6, equivalent to 53% due to the office layout and design

This is illustrated in Table 9, the scores average and the standard deviation of the factors related to the organizational climate at Damascus University.

**Table 9: Organizational climate**

<b>Organizational climate</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. The office layout and design is comfortable	2.66	1.22
2. All workers feel safe and comfortable in their workplace	2.91	0.97
3. Organizational work culture is good	3.00	1.11
4. Proper care of health and safety of all workers is provided by institution	3.09	1.13

#### **4.2.3.6 Female empowerment at institution:**

The descriptive analysis illustrates the spending levels (from intermediate to good) that are related to female empowerment at the institutional level. An average of 3.91 indicates to female involving in the decision-making process, equivalent to 78%, whereas the minimum level indicates to the fair reward and

recognition policy (3.26) , equivalent to 65%. Table 10 shows the average scores and standard deviation of the factors related to female empowerment at Damascus University

**Table 10: Female empowerment at institution**

<b>Female empowerment at institution</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. Women are included in decision-making process	3.91	0.861
2. Women are given leadership roles	3.77	0.993
3. There are fair reward and recognition policy	3.26	1.146

#### **4.2.3.7 Sexual harassment, discrimination and stereotypes**

Sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and stereotypes are focused within the scale of FREE project. The metadata analysis illustrates that 64% of the administrative body reported that they had not observed or experienced any sexual behavior, including teasing or sexual jokes, whereas 17% mentioned that they observed it, 5% mentioned that they had experienced and observed such behavior, and 3% mentioned that they had experienced such behavior.

- A few participants mentioned that they requested consulting and support from the institution, this included support from colleagues (17%) and from direct managers (15%), whereas no one asked for support from human resources, a syndicate representative or even a private expert.

Moreover, a few respondents revealed the remarkable negative or positive impact of the support they had requested. The percentages were 14% for those who felt safe when they reported, 2% for those who mentioned that the behavior stopped, and 7% for those who mentioned that it didn't make any difference, and the same percentage was for those who expressed their happiness for being reported. Once again, low response rates for this section may also be associated with cultural barriers and sensitivities.

When they were asked about the reason for not requesting consulting or support, the answer was as follow: 9% mentioned that they did not think that anything would change, 5% mentioned that the reason was their feeling ashamed, and the percentage, of those whose fear prevented them and thought that they would not be believed, was equal to the percentage of those who thought that it was not important to report 7%. 2% out of them weren't feeling comfortable and the same percentage was for those who did not know where they should report.

-When they were asked about the kind of support they would like, only 7% referred to psychological support, 22% referred to legal support, and 24% indicated that the institution should make clear actions regarding this phenomenon, and no one indicated to the emotional support.

Bullying test, within the organizational level where the administrative body practices this behavior, illustrates that 12% mentioned that they observed and experienced this behavior by the manager, 39% mentioned that they did not observe this behavior and did not experience it by the manager, and 20% observed bullying by the manager. 39% did not observe and were not experienced the bullying behavior by a colleague, 15% mentioned that they observed and experienced this behavior, 20% observed bullying behavior from a colleague.

Similar results, related to the perceived bullying behavior by the student, were tested, 32% out of them mentioned that they had not observed or been experienced to bullying behavior by a student, whereas 20%



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observed and were experienced, 14% observed such behavior, and only 2% out of them had been experienced to bullying behavior by a student.

- For sake of studying the issues related to **stereotypes**, 19% mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to lead, 22% mentioned that it was suspected in their to perform effectively and achieve significant results, 10% mentioned that it was suspected in their ability to make decisions, and 9% mentioned that it was suspected in ability to solve problems.

- Within their answers on the question about who is obstructing their way, 20% of respondents referred to the managers, whereas 9% indicated to the family members, 12% chose female colleagues, and 17% referred to their male colleagues, and 7% referred to students, whereas no one indicated to human resources staff.

### **4.3 Questionnaire Analysis related to decision makers and top management**

The decision-makers consist of the top level of management which is the executive level. This target group is essential to support the gender equality and sustainability management initiatives at the highest levels, especially at the strategic levels. It consists of senior executives that include the CEO, the Chairman, the Rector and the Vice-Presidents for Scientific and Administrative Affairs. In addition, the decision makers consist of intermediate management which includes the managers of HR, international relations, quality, accreditation, vice-deans and the heads of departments. Thus, the intermediate management level is critical to achieve gender equality in both directions of the organization hierarchy, ( up and down management) since the intermediate management level is in direct contact with both the university students and stakeholders. Thus, the intermediate management will then share directly with the objectives of the FREE project.

FREE project will provide objectives for the intermediate management within a framework that defines gender equality. Damascus University sample of the decision makers is 24 cases.

#### **4.3.1 Personal and functional data**

The demographic section of the decision-makers questionnaire reveals age, gender, level of education, administrative position and work experience. The descriptive analysis illustrates that only 4% are within the category are between 30 - under 40 years, 42% between 40 - 50 years, 25% between 50 - 60 years, and 17% between 60 - 70 years.

- The gender distribution of respondents shows that 38% are male, 50% are female. The rest did not answer.

- Education level shows that 58% hold doctorates, 4% hold master degrees, 8% hold a bachelor degree, and 13% hold other degrees.

- The administrative positions reveals that 13% are Dean, 29% are Heads of Departments, 4% are vice-dean, and 25% hold other positions.

- Work experience at the current institution ranges from 4% for the decision makers with less than one year experience, and 21% have experience between one and 5 years, 13% between 10 and 15 years, 8% between 15 and 20 years, and 29% have experience between 20 and 30 years, and the percentage of those whose experience is over 30-year, was 13%.

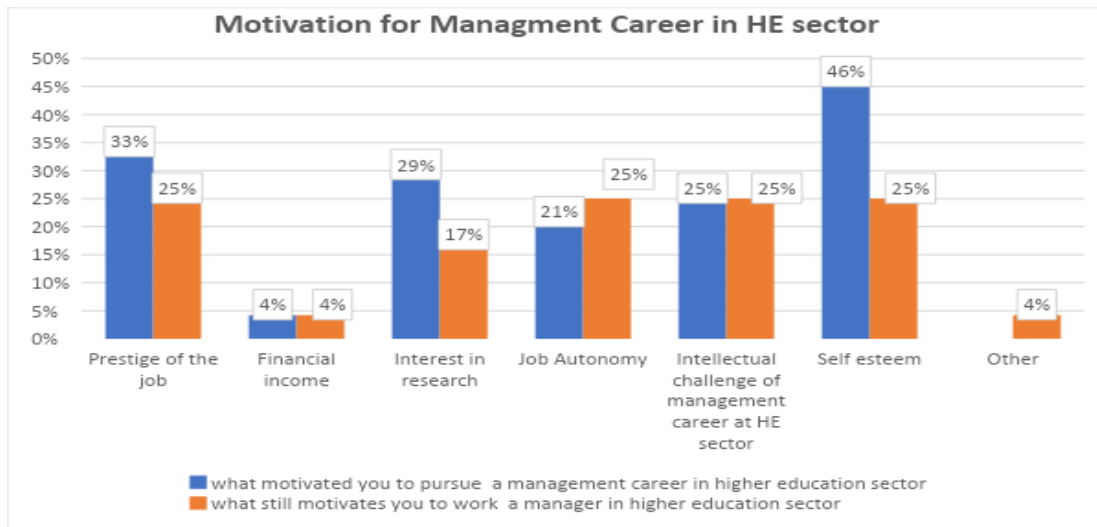
### 4.3.2 Individual Level Analysis

#### 4.3.2.1 Motives and Incentives

Descriptive analysis illustrates the motivations that lie beyond knowing about the management career in the Higher Education sector. The survey conducts a comparative descriptive analysis between the factors that motivated participants to pursue management career in higher education and the factors that are still motivate participants to work in management career in higher education sector.

Descriptive analysis illustrates that 33% of respondents identified the prestige of the job as the catalyst that motivated them to work, and 25% confirmed that this factor is still the one that led them to pursue the management career in the higher education sector, whereas 29% mentioned that one of the motivating factors for them is their interest in scientific research, and 17% confirmed that this factor is still the one that motivates them to continue. Only 4% of respondents identified the financial income as a catalyst to accept and continue work, 21% mentioned that this factor is job autonomy and 25% confirmed that this factor is still the one that still motivates them to work. 25% of the survey participants identified the intellectual challenge of the management career in higher education sectors as their factor that motivated them at the beginning and still motivates them to work, Whereas 46% confirmed that the factor is self-esteem and this factor still motivates 25% to work.

**Figure 13 illustrates the percentages of the functional motivations of management career in Higher Education.**



**Figure 13 Motivation for management career in HI sector (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

The analysis also identifies that there are motives for participants according to the perceived importance. Descriptive analysis illustrates that their first choice which was the prestige of the job, was the first option, with a rate of 20.8%. The intellectual challenge of the management career in the Higher Education sector was the second option, with a rate of 16.8%, although the prestige of the job also occupied the second option with the same percentage for the first option.

The third option was for both job autonomy and self-esteem with the same percentage with a rate of 20.8%.

Table 11 shows the average of mean scores and standard deviation on the factors that are related to the functional motivations of management career in Higher Education sector at Damascus University.

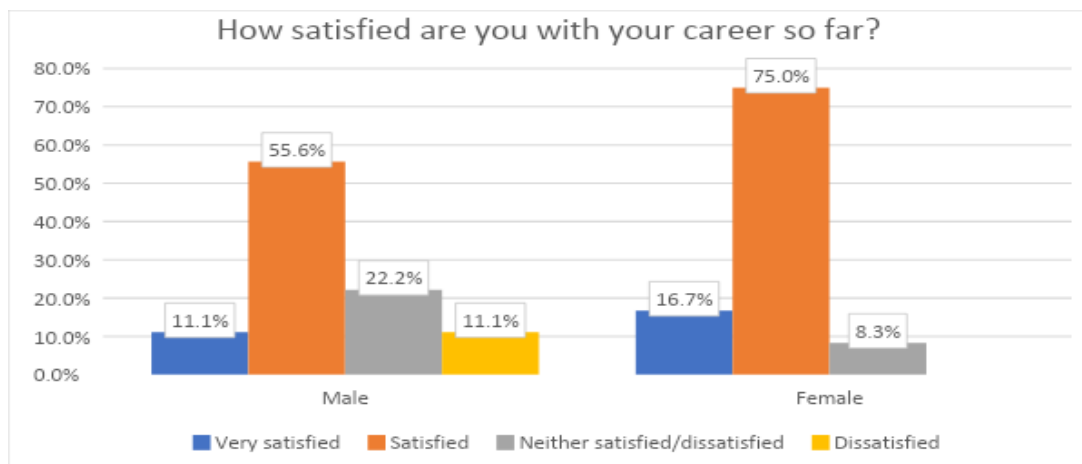
**Table 11 The motivation for the management career in Higher Education sector**

Factors	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Missing	Total
1. Prestige of the job	20.8%	20.8%	8.3%	4.2%	20.8%	0.0%	25.1%	100%
2. Financial income	4.2%	4.2%	12.5%	4.2%	8.3%	37.5%	29.1%	100%
3. Interest in research	16.7%	12.5%	4.2%	20.8%	4.2%	16.7%	24.9%	100%
4. Job Autonomy	4.2%	12.5%	20.8%	29.2%	8.3%	0.0%	25.0%	100%
5. Intellectual challenge of management career at HE sectors	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	20.8%	4.2%	25.0%	100%
6. Self esteem	12.5%	8.3%	20.8%	8.3%	12.5%	12.5%	25.1%	100%

- Career satisfaction was measured at the individual level within the decision makers analysis. A cross-functional satisfaction chart was conducted due to gender, which shows that female participants have higher levels of career satisfaction with management, It has been shown that 17% of female respondents reported high levels of job satisfaction, while only 11% of male respondents reported higher levels of career satisfaction. 56% of male respondents mentioned that they were satisfied with their careers, while 75% of female respondents reported the same level of satisfaction. 22% of male respondents reported that they were dissatisfied, while only 8% of female respondents reported that they were dissatisfied. 11% of males were dissatisfied, while none of the female respondents reported dissatisfaction, which is considered a positive indicator.

Figure 14 shows the results related to administrative career satisfaction between the two genders.

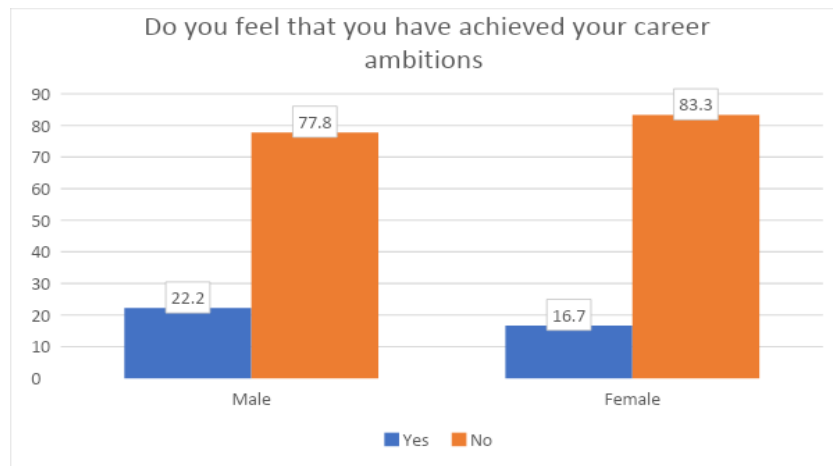
**Figure 14 Management, career satisfaction due to gender. (Source: FREE Online Survey)**



The survey tested the perception of decision makers to achieve career ambition. Descriptive analysis illustrates that 78% of respondents reported “no”, 22% reported “yes”, all are male respondents, and 17% of female respondents reported that they achieved their career ambition whereas only 83% answered “no”. This indicates that career ambition for both male and female decision-makers at Damascus University have not been achieved. It is also notable that the results do not differ significantly between the two genders and this means that there is a relationship between gender and achieving of career ambition.



Figure 15 illustrates the career ambition for decision makers between the two genders



**Figure 15: Achieving career ambition (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

#### 4.3.2.2 Balance between professional and personal Life

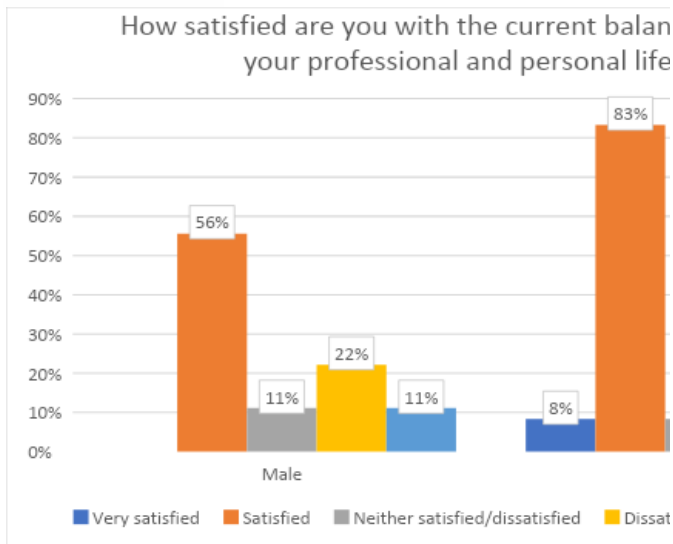
The balance between professional work and personal family life is one of the factors that was tested at the individual level for decision-makers.

- Descriptive statistics indicate that 71% of respondents chose flexibility in the work schedule as a factor that reflects the balance between professional work responsibilities and family life. However, only 46% of respondents confirmed the existence of this flexibility in their institutions, 29% mentioned that reducing working hours time as a factor reflects the balance between work and family life and only 17% mentioned that their institution applies this factor. 54% were tested based on the importance of the availability of private family services inside the campus, 25% mentioned that services were available at their institution, 46% from the selected financial aid for families and only 8% mentioned that they are available, 42% agreed that work from home reflects the balance between work and family life but only 2% have this factor.

- Satisfaction about the current balance between professional and personal life is tested in the individual level analysis. Descriptive analysis indicates that only 4% mentioned that they were very satisfied, 62% satisfied, 8% neutral, and 8% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

- Cross-tabulation analysis due to gender indicates to a higher level of satisfaction for female respondents, It shows that 8% reported that they are very satisfied, 83% satisfied. 8% reported that they were neutral, and none of the female respondents stated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. On the other hand, male respondents reported about the low level of satisfaction with the balance between career and personal life, none of them were very satisfied, 56% were satisfied, 22% were dissatisfied, and 11% for both neutral and very dissatisfied.





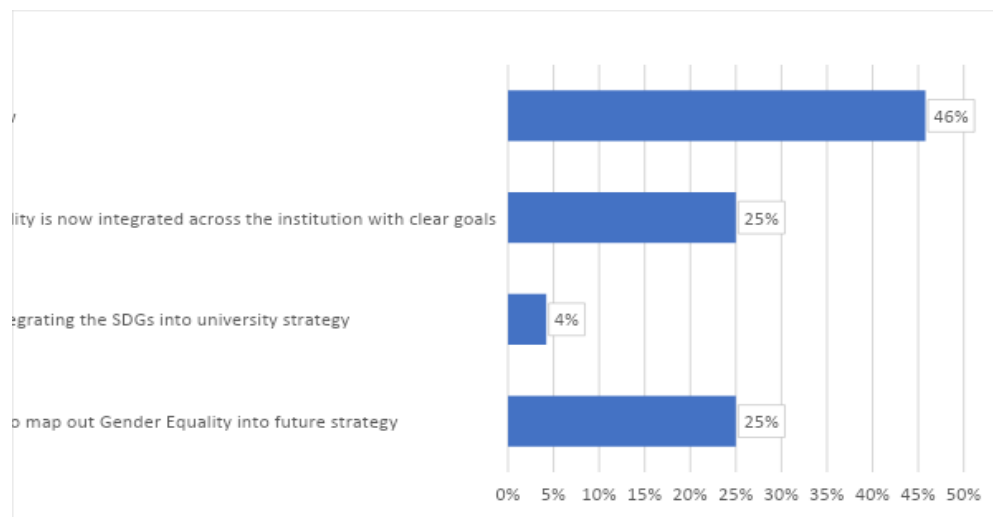
**Figure 16 Satisfaction about balance between professional and personal life (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

### 4.3.3 Institutional Level Analysis

#### 4.3.3.1 General dimensions of gender equality

Metadata analysis shows that 46% responded that they have no idea about gender equality, whereas 25% of the respondents mentioned that gender equality is now integrated across the institution. 4% responded that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are currently integrated into the university strategy, whereas 25% responded that the university has just started to map out gender equality into the future strategy.

Figure 17 illustrates the percentages of gender equality and integration into the University strategy.



**Figure 17 Integrating Gender Equality into University Strategy (Source: FREE Online Survey)**



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- Institutional level analysis tested whether the University uses gender equality as a framework to report the impact of sustainability. 58% responded that they have no idea whether their institution uses gender equality as a framework to report the impacts of sustainability, whereas 21% responded “no”, while 17% believe that their institution uses gender equality as a framework to report sustainability impacts.
- When they were asked whether the University measures actions for gender equality, 21% responded “no”, and 67% responded that they do not know.
- The analysis shows that respondents' positive attitudes towards the university seeks to achieve gender equality, It shows that 38% agreed that they expect that their institution will initiate to achieve gender equality, whereas 38% mentioned that they don't know.
- Concerning the development of equality plans for 2030, 67% responded that they do not know whether the university has developed equality plans for 2030, and 29% responded “no”.

#### **4.3.3.2 Management, Mission and Strategic Planning**

University management, mission and strategic planning were tested at the institutional level. Descriptive analysis shows that 25% believe that gender equality is revealed within Damascus University mission at a minimum, and 29% in the short extent, 25% are not sure, 4% to a good extent and 4% to the maximum limit.

- 46% of respondents mentioned that they are not sure whether gender equality is revealed in the University's strategic planning, 17% believe that gender equality in case it is revealed to the minimum, 8% to some extent, 13% to a good extent and 4% to the maximum extent. The largest percentage reveals the lack of awareness and uncertainty regarding gender equality.

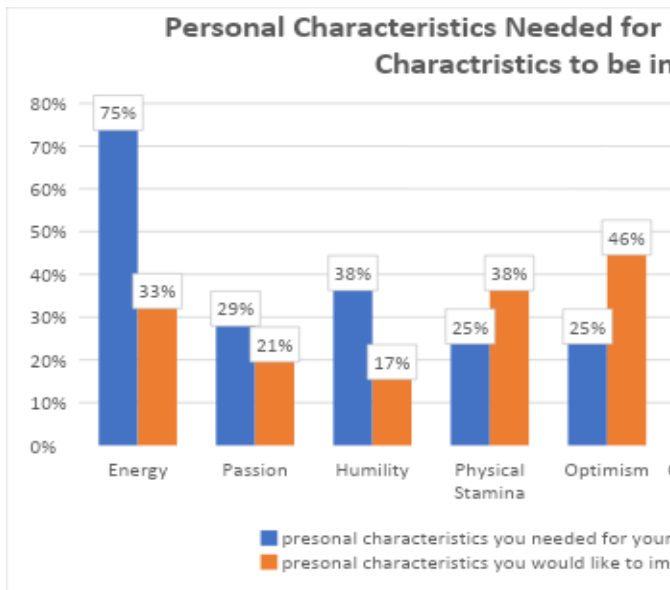
Responses about the University's commitment towards sustainability issues ranged as (13%) through creating specific positions and committees, such as appointing focal point for gender issues, (13%) through a coordinator of sustainability and equality programs, and (33%) through orientation programs related to gender equality and justice.

#### **4.3.4 Areas of Training for the FREE Project**

##### **4.3.4.1 Personal Characteristics**

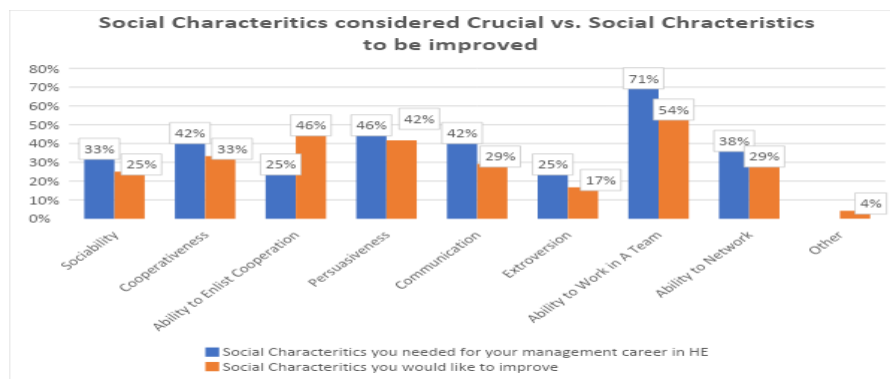
Training areas test illustrates a set of personal characteristics needed to pursue the management career in the higher education sector versus characteristics to be improved. Descriptive analysis shows that 75% of respondents identified energy as a personal characteristic, which is essential for the management career in higher education sector, 67% confirmed on honesty and integrity. 38% on humility, 29% on passion, 25% on physical stamina, and self-confidence was emphasized by 56% who chose this characteristic. In comparison, personal characteristics, that are in need to be improved, were also tested, where the majority of respondents identified optimism since it is a personal quality that they would like to improve, 44% identified physical stamina, and 22% identified self-confidence.

Figure 18 illustrates the percentages of personal characteristics related to managerial careers in higher education.



**Figure 18 Personal characteristics of the management career (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

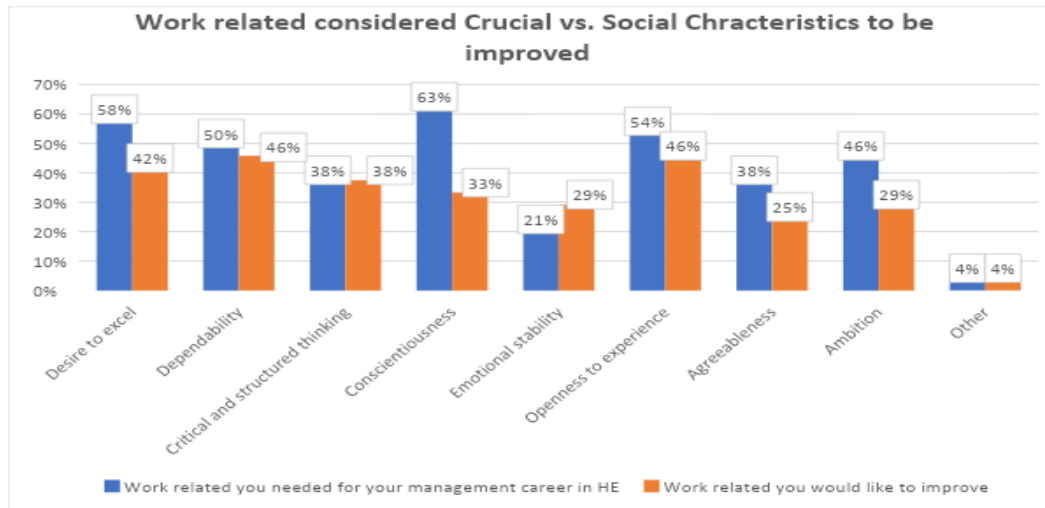
- Training areas test illustrates a set of social characteristics needed to pursue the management career in the higher education sector vs. improving the characteristics. Descriptive analysis shows that 71% of the sample identified the ability to work in a team as a social characteristic, which is considered necessary to work in management career in higher education. In the second rank, the ability to persuade was as an important characteristic, and the ability to communicate and cooperate was in the third rank of importance, which were identified by 42%. 38% identified the ability to form a network of professional relationships, 33% identified the ability to sociability and extroversion, 25% was for the ability to enlist cooperation and the same percentage for social networking. In comparison, the social characteristics that are in need to be improved are also tested, where the majority of respondents identified the ability to work in a team as a critical social characteristic should be improved, which was chosen by 54%. 46% were identified for the ability to enlist cooperation, 42% for the ability to persuade, 33% for the cooperation with others, and 29% for both communication and the ability to build a professional relationship network. Figure 19 illustrates the percentages of social characteristics related to managerial careers in higher education.



**Figure 19 Social characteristics of the management career in Higher Education (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

The work-related characteristics were tested as a set of characteristics needed to pursue a management career in the higher education sector vs. improving characteristics. 63% of the sample identified

consciousness as work-related quality, 58% identified the desire to excel, 50% identified dependability, 46% identified ambition and 38% identified both critical and structured thinking and agreeableness y since these two elements are critical to improvement. Figure 20 illustrates the percentages of work characteristics related to managerial career in Higher Education sector.



**Figure 20 Work-related characteristics of the management career in Higher Education (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

#### 4.3.4.2 Leadership Behaviors

The areas of training survey for decision makers focuses on leadership behaviors that are considered essential for professionals in senior management positions such as decision makers. Metadata analysis shows that it is focused on Participative, Directive and Supportive leadership since they are important for decision-makers who work in the higher education sector. Participative, Directive leadership were ranked as the first leadership behavior due to importance, whereas Autocratic leadership behavior was classified as the least important dimension. Democratic and charismatic leadership were moderately rated as important dimensions for the decision-makers at university. This highlights the need to create training courses in the framework of training that target the category of executive leadership

Table 12 illustrates the results of the abovementioned leadership dimensions arranged by importance.

**Table 12 Leadership behaviors arranged by importance**

Leadership Behaviours	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Missing	Total
1. Autocratic leadership	4%	0%	0%	8%	4%	50%	33%	100%
2. Democratic leadership	17%	13%	13%	13%	8%	4%	33%	100%
3. Participative leadership	17%	33%	13%	4%	0%	0%	33%	100%
4. Supportive leadership	4%	17%	33%	13%	0%	0%	33%	100%
5. Charismatic leadership	4%	4%	4%	17%	29%	8%	33%	100%
6. Directive leadership	21%	0%	4%	13%	25%	4%	33%	100%

#### 4.4 Questionnaire Analysis of female university students

Female students were identified as the fourth target group in FREE project. Damascus University provides undergraduate programs. The sample size of the female students consists of 52 cases distributed across 6 faculties. The analysis tested the demographic variables of students, personal and institutional levels and training needs.

##### 4.4.1 Personal and functional information

The study sample was distributed in several faculties at Damascus University as follow, 28% at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, 19% at the Faculties of Arts and Humanities, 12% at the Faculty of Media, 8% at the Faculty of Informatics Engineering, the rest was at the other colleges. - 21% of the sample are at the age of 30 years and older, and 76% are between the ages of 20 and 25 years. 71% are not married, 26% are married. Female students were distributed at several academic levels, 37% are undergraduate, 51% are at master stage and 8% are at doctorate stage.

##### 4.4.2 Personal level: Motivation, Education and Inspiration

- During testing the potential reasons that may prevent them to be motivated to choose this career path, 2% mentioned that they may find better opportunities outside the academia field, while 3% believe that the higher education sector is not the place where they belong to, 1% are not interested in this career, while other 1% think that it isn't good enough.

- The test gender at Damascus University got the minimum of results, where 92% mentioned that there are no supportive courses for female students in their university, while 8% mentioned unlike that.

This indicates to the non-availability of courses related to gender equality, women's entrepreneurship, and training on empowerment.

- For the test of the female students preferences for gender-related courses, 59% responded positively that they were interested in studying this subject, while 39% mentioned that they were not interested in these courses.

- Due to the female students' preferences for gender-oriented courses, 26% emphasized on social justice as an exciting course to be studied, while 17% identified gender equality, 24% selected the empowerment training, and 28% for female entrepreneurship, and 8% for gender studies.

- The analysis tested female students' perception about female role models. Descriptive analysis shows that 84% of female students met female role models academically or professionally and considered them a role model, 14% indicated unlike that.- During testing the motivations of female students and the reasons beyond making this role model inspiring, 46% mentioned that the reason is due to the expertise in the academic field, whereas 39% identified the trust, 47% referred to charisma, while 29% chose the ability to uplift their students .

- The same test of students' perception for female role models and their characteristics that are associated with female role models, shows similar results, where 37% consider that due to their expertise in the academic field which is an important initial fact. Confidence was ranked the second by importance, which was identified by 30% as the second.

Table 13 illustrates the results regarding the characteristics of the female role model classified by importance.

**Table 13 The characteristics of the female role model classified by importance**

Characteristics for Female Role Model	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eight	Missing	Total
1. Ability to inspire	18.70%	17.60%	14.30%	13.20%	8.80%	9.90%	7.70%	3.30%	6.50%	100%
2. Ability to uplift her students	8.80%	15.40%	14.30%	9.90%	16.50%	9.90%	13.20%	6.60%	5.40%	100%
3. Assertiveness	3.30%	2.20%	8.80%	12.10%	8.80%	18.70%	17.60%	22.00%	6.50%	100%
4. Independence	1.10%	2.20%	5.50%	9.90%	15.40%	13.20%	22.00%	24.20%	6.50%	100%
5. Expertise in her academic field	24.20%	27.50%	12.10%	9.90%	11.00%	3.30%	4.40%	1.10%	6.50%	100%
6. Charisma	17.60%	8.80%	17.60%	13.20%	7.70%	14.30%	7.70%	7.70%	5.40%	100%
7. Confidence	18.70%	16.50%	13.20%	15.40%	11.00%	8.80%	6.60%	4.40%	5.40%	100%
8. Resilience	2.20%	4.40%	8.80%	11.00%	15.40%	14.30%	14.30%	24.20%	5.40%	100%
9. Other	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.10%	98.90%	100%

#### 4.4.3 Institutional Level – Challenges

Sexual harassment was tested at the institutional level in the female sample. Descriptive analysis shows that larger percentages are identified for a choice that hadn't been observed or experienced. On the other hand, 6% of the sample mentioned that they observed and experienced sexual behavior as teasing, observations, or questions, 26% observed this type of behavior, whereas 57% have not observed and did not experience it.

- The same percentage is set for sexual letters, phone calls or emails, 7% mentioned that they noticed and experienced it, 15% observed this kind of behavior, while 68% have not observed and have not experienced it. Table 14 shows data about sexual harassment among the female students.

**Table 14 Sexual harassment at the university**

Sexual Harassment at Institution	Experienced	Observed	Observed and experienced	Neither	Total
Sexual/sexist teasing, jokes, remarks or questions	2.2%	26.4%	5.5%	57.1%	100%
Pressure for dating	1.1%	16.5%	1.1%	72.5%	100%
Sexual/sexist letters, phone calls, emails	0.0%	15.4%	6.6%	68.1%	100%
Leaning over, cornering, pinching, touching, unwanted physical contact	0.0%	20.9%	4.4%	65.9%	100%
Pressure for sexual favours	2.2%	9.9%	2.2%	76.9%	100%
Stalking	3.3%	18.7%	2.2%	68.1%	100%
Physical/sexual assault	1.1%	5.5%	2.2%	82.4%	100%

- When they were asked whether they asked consulting or support from friends, academic or administrators staff, 20% of them referred to friends, 3% to professors, the same percentage to asking help from HR, and only 1% to a specialist. This also indicates to the lack of such experience at the university.

The test of their attitudes and responses during reporting this type of behavior shows that 4% felt safe when they reported, 1% mentioned that the behavior stopped, 15% mentioned that it did not make a difference, and 6% mentioned that they were happy when they reported.

For those who did not report, and when they were asked about the potential reasons beyond not doing that, no one answered that the reason was that they were afraid or that they did not feel comfortable or even were afraid of not being believed,

In fact, the reasons were : 11% thought that reports may not change the situation, 7% did not know where they should go to report, 4% felt ashamed and 2% did not think that reporting was so important.

- The test of the types of support that female students would like to receive shows the following, 14% referred to psychological support, 1% to emotional support, 14% to legal support, and 20% to strict actions made by the university. The actions in this case will be in a form of policies, procedures and rules concerning this behavior.

- Types of stereotypes, biases, and social prediction were tested. Data analysis shows interesting results. During studying the female students' perception of common stereotypes and social predictions, 53% mentioned that they were exposed to stereotypes when they were asked about their ability to perform effectively and achieve superior scores, 7% were exposed to stereotypes such as asking about their ability to solve problems related to curricula study. 22% believed that their ability to make decisions is questionable, while 25% believed that their ability to lead a group of students is questionable. When they were asked about the factors / potential people who may stand in their way, 18% indicated to the professors and the same percentage indicated to both male and female students, 15% to the family and 13% referred to other factors.

- During testing the impact of these negative confrontation barriers, 59% mentioned that they did not care, 15% mentioned that they made them inquire about their decisions, and 19% responded that they had reduced their self-confidence.

- When female students were asked whether they felt discriminated because of their gender, 68% replied "No", while 28% replied yes.

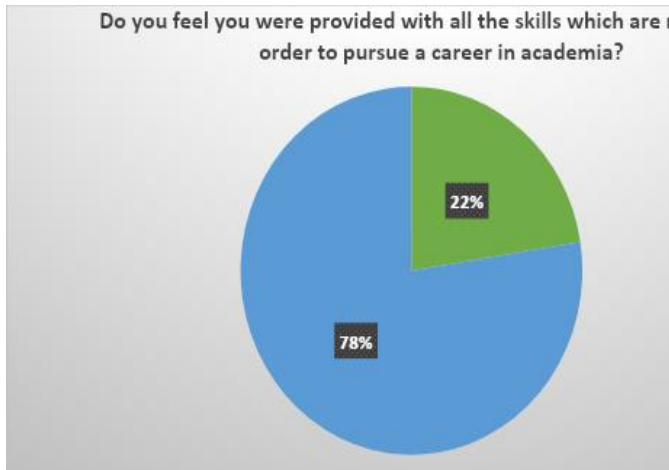
The test of the type of discrimination experienced by female students showed that 8% were not taken seriously, 8% received unfair grades, 10% responded that opportunities were given to male students, and 2% mentioned that they were exposed to disrespectful and degrading comments.

#### 4.4.4 Areas of Training FREE

The test of student training focused on female students with a myriad of skills including soft, technical, digital, problem-solving and leadership skills. The metadata analysis shows that 76% of the female students who responded, hadn't been provided with the required skills to pursue a career in academia, whereas 22% responded positively.

Figure 21 illustrates the female responses regarding providing the skills required for a career in the academia offered by Damascus University

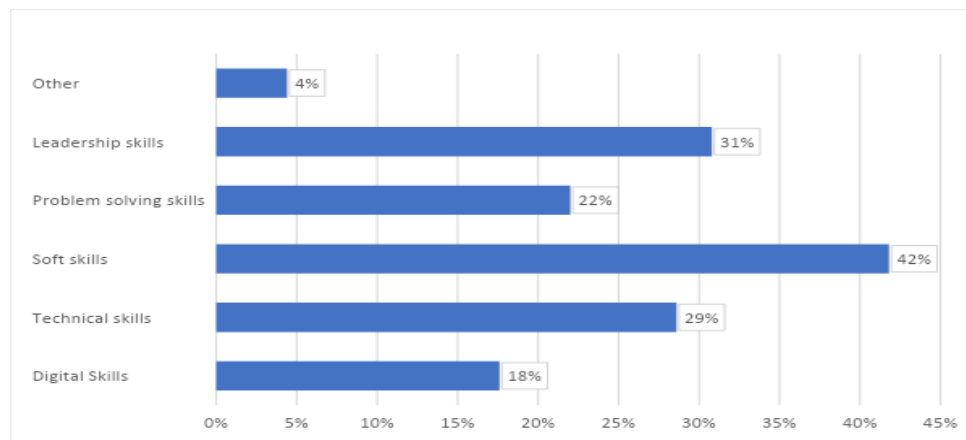




**Figure 21 The skills of Female Students to work in academia (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

- The test of skills types that are needed by female students shows the need to the following skills. 42% of the sample identified the lack of soft skills, 31% for leadership skills, 22% for problem-solving skills, and 18% identified the lack of digital skills.

Figure 22 shows data about the types of skills needed by female university students.



**Figure 22 Female Student Training (Source: FREE Online Survey)**

- In the training areas, there was another way to achieve this, through using a question about the ordinal scale, female students were requested to order courses according to the strength of importance. The analysis shows that 35.2% ranked self-empowerment as their first choice, with emphasizing on the need and importance of such training. The second rank was for communication skills. The third rank was for developing managerial and leadership skills. The analysis emphasizes on the need for training on empowerment which is at the heart of the FREE project, its scope and objectives.

**Table 15 Training courses**

Training Courses	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Missing	Total
1. Introduction to Gender Studies	7.7%	4.4%	3.3%	12.1%	34.1%	24.2%	14.2%	100%
2. Self-empowerment	35.2%	11.0%	19.8%	13.2%	8.8%	1.1%	10.9%	100%
3. Learn how to network	5.5%	31.9%	23.1%	16.5%	6.6%	4.4%	12.0%	100%
4. Improving digital skills	12.1%	13.2%	17.6%	26.4%	12.1%	5.5%	13.1%	100%
5. Developing management and leadership skills	25.3%	23.1%	23.1%	9.9%	4.4%	3.3%	10.9%	100%
6. Learn how to integrate gender perspectives into my research	2.2%	5.5%	2.2%	7.7%	22.0%	46.2%	14.2%	100%

## 5. Discussion

This project aims to strengthen the role of academies in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria through increasing the number of women involved in decision-making and top management . The FREE project aims to contribute to improving the management of the operations of higher education institutions in LB, JR & SY through promoting for the culture of gender equality and women's leadership model and empowerment. The project aims to contribute to the democratization of higher education through empowering academies. The FREE project contains a set of specific goals that aim to empowering academics and professionals in the targeted higher education institutions in LB, JR and SY through a series of training. Improving the management and operation of higher education through introducing equality and sustainability centers and services in LB JR and SY HEIs, and the development of research and innovation through the research network of gender issues in LI, JR and SY HEIs.

The project categorized four target groups: Academic staff, Administrative staff, Decision makers, and female university students. For sake of getting benefits in diagnosing the status quo of the academia at Damascus University to explore the factors that affect on the female academics experience and career promotion to process the under-representation of females at top management and university council, an analysis and a survey were conducted which targeted the four categories, as previously mentioned.

### 5.1 Academic Staff

The study results regarding the academic staff reveal results at the individual levels. For example, the motivation for working in academia indicates to several factors, the highest rate was for the motivation for research. Regarding the professional ambition of academics, the field still requires improvement, as the majority has not yet achieved their professional ambition. Satisfaction about the balance between work and-life reveals good levels of satisfaction.

At the career level, the results show that courses related to gender issues are at the minimum. This creates very interesting and predictable results that gender issues including the topic of gender equality and justice are not adequately processed at Damascus University. The findings show little awareness about gender



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equality. Furthermore, the results reveal the minimum levels of gender research conducted in this field at Damascus University. This is another result that requires attention in the FREE domain.

At the personal level, the results show that mentoring and support plans are needed, as well as the opportunity for training on the network.

At the institutional level, the results show that considering a gender-based quota based on merit would be a good policy to boost women's representation in various areas of higher education. The results show that human resources management at Damascus University is considered a strong point where the concentration of human capital is clear and important. The test of sexual harassment didn't show significant concern for Amnesty International, although the discussion of this issue is sensitive. The alternative methodology would focus more on the topic, including focus groups or depth interviews.

The training areas test reveals the critical importance of training and education in the field of digital skills and presentation programs, as well as management and leadership skills significantly, communication skills, time management skills, creativity, innovation, team leadership and teamwork skills. The results also reveal that democratic and participatory leadership behaviors are positively categorized among academics at the university. This reveals that training on leadership is important, within characteristics, behaviors and relationships. Furthermore, the results reveal that training on self-empowerment and gender equality is critical and crucial for this target group.

## **5.2 Administrative staff**

The administrative staff survey results reveal, at the individual level, administrative staff refer to high levels of motivation for advancing in their career path, this means positive satisfaction and motivation. The findings of the survey on administrative staff show that gender equality has not been adequately integrated into the strategy of Damascus University. Furthermore, the results indicate the lack of awareness in the issue among administrative staff. These results are consistent with the results of the academic sample. Gender equality has not been adequately defined at institutional levels.

At Damascus University there is no center dedicated to gender equality issues. So the FREE project will therefore play a key role in achieving gender equality at Damascus University. Gender equality is not adequately revealed in Damascus University's strategy or mission statement and vision. The results also indicate high levels of motivation for administrative staff to participate in the implementation of the SDGs and gender equality policies in the University strategy.

The results of the organization's infrastructure reveal the medium rating, this indicates that infrastructure is an area that requires more development.

The results of Sexual harassment reveal a slightly higher rating than the results achieved by academics in terms of perceived and experienced sexual harassment. However, it does not reveal much concern, although the discussion of this topic is sensitive. As it is mentioned previously, the best methodology in this issue, which is more effective is applying focus groups and depth interviews with participants.

## **5.3 Decision Makers**

The study results of the decision makers reveal results at different levels. At the individual level, the results reveal a difference between male and female decision makers regarding career satisfaction, where female decision makers have a higher level of career satisfaction. The same results are revealed regarding achieving the professional ambitions. None of the respondents reported that they had fulfilled their professional ambitions.

At the institutional level, the findings reveal that gender equality is not sufficiently integrated into the University's strategy, mission and vision. This is also consistent among the project target groups including



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academic and administrative staff. The results reveal that among the leadership behaviors which were tested, Participative, Supportive and Directive leadership are the higher-ranking dimensions. This indicates to the need to training on executive leadership for decision makers and top management levels.

#### **5.4 University female students**

The test results of female students at Damascus University reveal this motivation for female students to continue working in academia. The results also reveal that gender is not integrated into the college curriculum. Thus, there is a lack of awareness regarding the topic. The results also reveal that female students show interest in studying gender and topics including social justice, gender equality and empowerment training. The results indicate to the need for female role modeling, where academic experience is considered a critical factor in making females a role model. The results reveal the need for providing a series of training presentations for female students at Damascus University. Thus soft skills, technical skills and leadership skills are identified as a set of training that female student are in need to. Self-empowerment is critically defined as crucial training for female students.

#### **Conclusion**

This report provided a diagnostic analysis for the FREE project, which tests the theme and scope of Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability at Universities in Mediterranean Region universities, and facing the challenges towards 2030 Agenda. The report tested four categories. The analysis results are distributed at different levels. In general, the analysis identified areas of developments for DU in order to empower academic females. In addition, training needs are extracted which may direct the training courses in order to provide female academics with the required skills to conduct scientific research, and to access the top management of the HEIs.