An Insight into Gender Bias in the Practice of Architecture: Agha Khan Award and the Women Laureates Between 1979 and 2025

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Abstract

It is known that women are under represented in the practice of architecture. The Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture (AKAIA) is one of the highest honors in the world in the architectural profession, recognizing outstanding contributions to the field. Notably, only a few women have received the award over the decades suggesting a gender bias, although the number of women winning the AKAIA has gradually improved since its inception. Given this, this paper examines if the representation of women in the AKAIA is proportional to the numbers of women in architectural education and profession worldwide.

The research employs a quantitative research methodology with case studies as its primary strategy. It utilizes data from the AKAIA website (https://www.akdn.org/architecture) to identify trends of AKAIA-winning women across various nationalities worldwide. By tabulating these findings and triangulating data with other extant sources, the study compares data on women's representation in the educational and professional spheres pertaining to architecture, with that of their growing emergence as AKAIA laureates. Conducted in June 2025, this research analyzes 15 AKAIA award cycles between 1978 and 2022. It identifies that out of the 130 winning projects from 1978 to 2022, only 11 have been done by women, accounting for approximately 14.3% of the total number of the recipients. While recent years have seen a rise in the female laureates, the slow rate of change suggests that there may be a gender bias within the profession. Further, a clear correlation can be shown between the growth in the number of women in architectural education and profession, with that of emerging as AKAIA laureates.

Consequently, the research demonstrates that there is a correlation between the growth of the number of women in architectural education and profession, and ones emerging as the AKAIA laureates.

Keywords: Architectural awards, Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture, Gender Bias, Women Architects.

Introduction

It is no secret that the number of women entering into active practice of architecture is far less that those who acquire architectural education. In fact, those who succeed and become celebrated architects is even less. Recently, Zaha Hadid came to lime light but until then, no female architect had been celebrated in the practice of architecture. In fact, In 2004, she became the first woman recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the world's highest honour awarded to architects annually (https://vincentloy.wordpress.com/2015/10/03/zaha-hadid-the-woman-behind-many-fantastic-architecture/).

Among the numerous evaluative frameworks of global architecture, the AKAIA stands out as one of the most esteemed, particularly within the discourse surrounding the non-Western architectural traditions (Salama, 2011). It is a triennial prize established in 1977 by His Highness the Aga Khan, the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, a spiritual leader of Persian origin born in Switzerland, known globally for his philanthropic work and for founding the Aga Khan Development Network to improve quality of life in Muslim communities worldwide. The idea behind the award was to identify and reward architectural excellence in communities with significant Muslim populations. The award emphasizes projects that enhance the quality of life and uphold cultural and environmental values, beyond mere technical or aesthetic achievements. The award is administered from Switzerland, specifically by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture**,** which is headquartered in Geneva (Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2022).

The AKAIA has historically faced criticism for its gender imbalance, with women largely absent from the ranks of lead laureates (Pickens, 2022). Since its inception in 1978, only a small fraction of winners have been women, reinforcing traditional hierarchies within the profession (akdn.org, 2025). Given this, it is hypothesized that women's representation in the AKAIA is proportional to the growth of their numbers in architectural education and profession worldwide.

In this context, this research examines the extent to which the Agha Khan Award for Architecture deals with the issues of gender in its evaluations. Its aim is to establish that global architecture prizes, including the AKAIA, have exhibited gender bias by historically favoring male architects over their female counterparts. The objectives of this study are as follows.

1. To ascertain the historical representation of women in the AKAIA throughout its cycles from its inception to the present.
2. To identify if there is a trend that indicates a shift toward greater inclusivity of women in terms of Award winners.
3. To incorporate if this trend parallels the growing trend of women in architectural education at the global level and thus, the profession.

Theoretical Background

Definitions for Gender

Gender refers to the socially-constructed roles, behaviours and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for individuals based on their perceived sex. Unlike biological sex, which is assigned at birth and rooted in physical and genetic characteristics, gender is shaped by cultural, historical, and social contexts (Butler, 1990). It encompasses identity, expression and the norms that govern how individuals interact within a gendered framework. Scholars such as West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not something one is, but something one does – an ongoing social performance. Moreover, gender is deeply entangled with systems of power, often reinforcing hierarchies and institutional inequalities (Connell, 2009). The contemporary understandings also recognize gender as fluid rather than binary, allowing for a spectrum of identities beyond the traditional male-female dichotomy (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Thus, gender is both a personal identity and a structural force influencing access to rights, opportunities, and recognition.

Gender and Discrimination

Gender discrimination arises from historically entrenched patriarchal systems that have positioned men as the normative standard in social, educational and professional domains. Historically, women were denied access to formal education and excluded from public life, reinforcing a gendered division of labor that relegated them to domestic roles (Lerner, 1986). This exclusion extended into professional spheres, where women's intellectual and technical contributions were systematically undervalued or rendered invisible (Oakley, 1974). Even as legal barriers diminished over time, structural inequalities – including biased curricula, gendered expectations and unequal access to mentorship – have continued to marginalize women in fields such as science, architecture and leadership (Acker, 1990; UNESCO, 2021). These patterns of discrimination are not merely residual, but persist through institutional practices that reproduce gendered hierarchies, limiting women's full participation and recognition in education and professional advancement (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004).

Gender Disparities and Institutional Bias in Architecture

Architecture has historically been a male-dominated profession, with women often excluded from formal recognition (Kasun's paper). Feminist architectural theorists such as Hayden (1981) and Rendell (2000) argue that architecture has reinforced patriarchal values through its institutions, awards, and professional networks. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity provides insight into how female architects negotiate their roles within these structures. Additionally, Ahmed's (2017) concept of 'gendered space' helps explain how architectural institutions and awards reinforce gender norms. Studies on professional awards in architecture (Smith, 2015; Cheng, 2017; Wijetunge, Gayantha, Chandrasekara and Jayadas, 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, another one?) suggest that recognition is often biased toward dominant social groups, limiting opportunities for marginalized communities, including women. Given this, Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital provides a lens through which to analyze how gendered biases shape architectural prestige.

Representation of Women in Global Architectural Education and Profession

Historically, women's access to formal education was limited and socially discouraged until the late-19th to early-20th centuries, with widespread inclusion – particularly in higher education – only becoming common by the mid-20th century in many parts of the world (Kelly, 1981; Levine, 1986; Unterhalter, 2005). Further, women have been underrepresented in architectural education and the profession too. Studies indicate that the percentage of women enrolling in architecture schools has steadily increased from approximately 5% in the 1950s to 50% in 2025 (Anthony, 2001; Stratigakos, 2016). However, professional practice has lagged behind, with women comprising only 1% of the field in 1950, rising to 35% in recent years (Adams and Amp; Tancred, 2000; Fowler & Wilson, 2004). The disparity between education and practice highlights systemic barriers aforesaid (Sanders, 1996; Grant & Rigotti, 2007). The following graph illustrates the trend in women's representation in architectural education and practice over time.

Review of Literature

Unfortunately, review examining this issue is very rare, although some do exist. Among them, the book published by Matrix (1984) Stand out. Written collaboratively by the feminist collective Matrix, the book provide a full blown critique of the patriarchal built environment both in the home and in public space, and outline alternative forms of practice that are still relevant today. Making Space remains a path breaking book pointing to possibilities of a feminist future. It challenges us to look at how the built environment impacts on women's lives. It exposes the sexist assumptions on gender and sexuality that have a fundamental impact on the way buildings are designed and our cities are planned.

In fact, Matrix defined feminist architectural practice in twentieth century Britain. It exerted a long-lasting international influence and expanded the discipline's reach.

More recently, Haliru & Abdullahi (2025) have examined the gendered dimensions of architectural practice in the developing world. They have explored the role and representation of Women in Architecture and cnclude that By documenting lived experiences, institutional critiques, the study adds to the expanding body of scholarship advocating fortransformative change in architecture. Stead (2014) adds that the image of the architect is undeniably gendered. She explores the working lives and aspirations of women in architectural practice. She also explores how popular media–newspapers, magazines, and websites–serve to define and describe who a woman architect should be, what she should look like and how she should behave. She further looks into the way that professional characteristics are reinforced through awards like the Pritzker Prize, and demonstrates how idealised characteristics such as sensitivity and vision are seen to be neither entirely masculine nor feminine. Indeed, she says that;

> "While the male architect might be celebrated as the ideal man in Hollywood romantic comedies, blessed with practicality and creativity in equal measure to impeccable taste and an enviable lifestyle, the image of the woman architect is not so clear cut."
>
> Stead, 2014:114

In contrast, Brown (2011) focuses on various forms of architectural investigations employing a range of feminist methods of design research and practice by women designers, Architects and architectural historians. She raises awareness for those both within and outside the profession about the ways feminist methodologies impact design and our relationship to the built-environment

Kern (2020) on the other hand, asks the question what should a metropolis for working women look like? And through this highlights the role of women in the built-environment. She points out that it would create a city of friendships with a transit system that accommodates mothers with strollers on the school run.

Interestingly however, the number of women in architectural education and the practice are now on the increase and the need to examine the issues more thoroughly prevails urgently without any doubt.

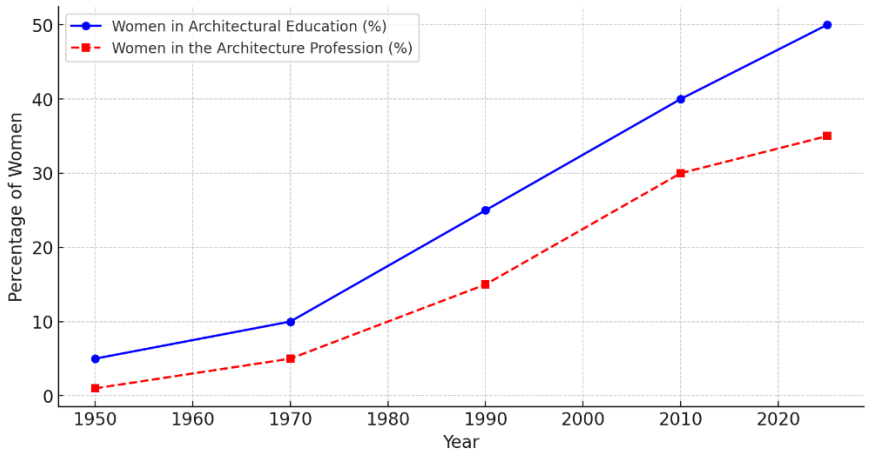


Fig. 1: The trend in womens' representation in architectural education and practice over time
Source: RIBA Statistics

The literature demonstrates that the issue related to women and the environmet continues to draw the interest of the researchers. However, there is very little written about the women and the celebration of them in the practice of architecture. In this context, this research contributes to fill that gap.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative case study approach, analyzing the history of AKAIA winners to determine gender disparities. The data is gathered primarily from the official AKAIA website (https://www.akdn.org/architecture) for 15 cycles beween 1978 and 2022. For triangulation, secondery sources in the form of academic literature are resorted to, in order to identify patterns of inclusion and exclusion. The study categorizes trends based on the following.

- Number of women versus men awarded the AKAIA
- Yearly trends in recognition of women architects by AKAIA

The analysis is carried out using tables to draw conclusions through discussion. The study was conducted from home institutions in Sri Lanka and the USA between June 1st and 30th, 2025.

Case Studies

The case studies delve into the official AKAIA website (https://www.akdn.org/architecture) to derive data from 15 cycles between 1978 and 2022.

Findings and Analysis

Cycle (Years)	Winning Project	Location	Architect(s) Involved (in Different Capacities) & Institutions they Represented	Year
1st (1978–1980)	Agricultural Training Centre,	Nianing, Senegal	UNESCO / Breda Dakar	1977
	Ali Qapu, Chehl Sotoun & Hasht Behesht	Isfahan, Iran	Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente / Eugenio Galdieri	1977
	Conservation of Sidi Bou Saïd	Tunis, Tunisia	Municipality Technical Bureau / Mohamed El-Aziz Ben Achour, Sanda Popa	1973
	Courtyard Houses	Agadir, Morocco	Jean-François Zevaco	1965
	Ertegün House	Bodrum, Turkey	Turgut Cansever	1973
	Halawa House	Agamy, Egypt	Abdel Wahed El-Wakil	1975
	Intercontinental Hotel & Conference Centre	Makkah, Saudi Arabia	Rolf Gutbrod & Frei Otto	1974
	Kampung Improvement Programme	Jakarta, Indonesia	KIP Technical Unit / Darrundono?	1969
	Medical Centre	Mopti, Mali	André Ravereau	1976
	Mughal Sheraton Hotel	Agra, India	ARCOP Design Group / Ramesh Khosla, Ranjit Sabikhi, Ajoy Choudhury, and Ray Affleck	1976
	National Museum	Doha, Qatar	Michael Rice & Co. and Design and Construction Group / Michael Rice, Anthony Irving	1977

	Pondok Pesantren Pabelan	Muntilan, Indonesia	Amin Arraihana & Fanani, LP3ES (Abdurrahman Wahid)	1965
	Rüstem Pasa Caravanserai	Edirne, Turkey	Ertan Çakirlar	1972
	Turkish Historical Society	Ankara, Turkey	Turgut Cansever and Ertur Yener	1966
	Water Towers	Kuwait City, Kuwait	VBB, Sune and Joe Lindström, Stig Egnell, and Björn & Björn Design (Malene Björn)	1976
2nd (1981–1983)	Azem Palace	Damascus, Syria	Michel Echochard & Shafiq al-Imam	1965
	Darb Qirmiz Quarter	Cairo, Egypt	Egyptian Antiquities Organization and German Archaeological Institute / Michael Meinecke, Philip Speiser, and Muhammad Fahmi Awad	1980
	Great Mosque of Niono	Niono, Mali	Lassina Minta	1973
	Hafsia Quarter I	Tunis, Tunisia	Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis	1977
	Hajj Terminal	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill / Fazlur Rahman Khan	1981
	Nail Çakirhan Residence	Akyaka, Turkey	Nail Çakirhan	1971
	Ramses Wissa Wassef Arts Centre	Giza, Egypt	Ramses Wissa Wassef	1974
	Residence Andalous	Sousse, Tunisia	Serge Santelli, Cabinet Gerau	1981
	Sherefudin's White Mosque	Visoko,Bosnia-Herzegovina	Zlatko Ugljen	1980
	Tanjong Jara Beach Hotel	Terengganu, Malaysia	Wimberly, Allison, Tong & Goo, and Arkitek Bersekutu	1980
	Tomb of Shah Rukn-i-'Alam	Multan, Pakistan	Awqaf Department / Muhammad Wali Ullah Khan	1977
3rd (1984–1986)	Bhong Mosque	Rahimyar Khan, Pakistan	Local Master Masons and Craftsmen	1982
	Conservation of Mostar Old Town	Mostar,Bosnia-Herzegovina	Stari Grad Mostar / Dzihad Pasic, Amir Pasic	1978
	Dar Lamane Housing	Casablanca, Morocco	Abderrahim Charai and Abdelaziz Lazrak	1983
	Historic Sites Development	Istanbul, Turkey	Touring and Automobile Association of Turkey / Çelik Gülersoy	1974
	Ismaïliyya Development Project	Ismailiyya, Egypt	Culpin Planning / David Allen	1978
	Kampung Kebalen Improvement	Surabaya, Indonesia	Surabaya Kampung Improvement Programme, with the Surabaya Institute of Technology, and the Kampung Kebalen Community	1981
	Restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque	Jerusalem, Jerusalem	Isam Awwad, and ICCROM - International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments	1983

	Saïd Naum Mosque	Jakarta, Indonesia	Atelier Enam Architects and Planners / Adhi Moersid	1977
	Shushtar New Town	Shushtar, Iran	DAZ Architects, Planners, and Engineers / Kamran Diba	1977
	Social Security Complex	Istanbul, Turkey	Sedad Hakki Eldem	1970
	Yaama Mosque	Tahoua, Niger	El Hadji Falké Barmou	1982
4th (1987–1989)	Al-Kindi Plaza	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Beeah Group Consultants / Ali Shuaibi and Abdul-Rahman Hussaini	1986
	Citra Niaga Urban Development	Samarinda, Indonesia	Antonio Ismael Risianto, PT Triaco Widya Cipta, and PT Griyantara Architects	1986
	Corniche Mosque	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Abdel Wahed El-Wakil	1986
	Grameen Bank Housing Programme	Bangladesh, various locations, Bangladesh	Grameen Bank / Muhammad Yunus, Mohammed Ashraful Hassan	1984
	Great Omari Mosque	Sidon, Lebanon	Saleh Lamei-Mostafa	1986
	Gürel Family Summer Residence	Canakkale, Turkey	Sedat Gürel	1971
	Hayy Assafarat Landscaping	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Bödeker-Wagenfeld & Partner Abroad	1986
	Institut du Monde Arabe	Paris, France	Jean Nouvel, Pierre Soria and Gilbert Lezénés, with the Architecture Studio	1987
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Henning Larsen	1984
	National Assembly Building	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Louis I. Kahn, with David Wisdom and Associates	1983
	Rehabilitation of Asilah	Asilah, Morocco	Al-Mouhit Cultural Association / Mohammed Benaïssa and Mohammed Melehi	1978
	Sidi El Aloui Primary School	Tunis, Tunisia	Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis / Samir Hamaici, Denis Lesage	1986
5th (1990–1992)	Cultural Park for Children	Cairo, Egypt	Abdelhalim Ibrahim Abdelhalim	1990
	Demir Holiday Village	Bodrum, Turkey	Turgut Cansever, Emine Ögün, Mehmet Ögün, and Feyza Cansever	1987
	East Wahdat Upgrading Programme	Amman, Jordan	Urban Development Department	1980
	Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India	Ahmedabad, India	Bimal Hasmukh Patel	1987
	Kairouan Conservation Programme	Kairouan, Tunisia	Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Kairouan / Brahim Chabbouh, Mourad Rammah, and Hedi Ben Lahmar	1979
	Kampung Kali Cho-de	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Yousef B. Mangunwijaya	1985
	Palace Parks Programme	Istanbul, Turkey	Regional Offices of the National Palaces Trust	1984

	Panafrican Institute for Development	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	ADAUA Burkina Faso / Jak Vauthrin, Ladji Camara, Philippe Glauser	1984
	Stone Building System	As-Suwayda, Syria	Raif, Rafi & Ziad Muhanna	1990
	Alliance franco-sénégalaise	Kaolack, Senegal	Patrick Dujarric	1994
6th (1993–1995)	Aranya Community Housing	Indore, India	Vastu-Shilpa Foundation, Balkrishna V. Doshi	1989
	Conservation of Old Sana'a	Sana'a, Yemen	General Organisation for the Protection of the Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY)	1987
	Great Mosque	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Rasem Badran	1992
	Hafsia Quarter II	Tunis, Tunisia	Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM) / Abdelaziz Daoulatli, Sémia Akrouche-Yaïche, Achraf Bahri-Meddeb	1986
	Kaedi Regional Hospital	Kaedi, Mauritania	Association pour le Développement naturel d'une Architecture et d'un Urbanisme Africains (ADAUA), Jak Vautherin, Fabrizio Carol, Birahim Niang, and Shamsuddin N'Dow	1992
	Khuda-ki-Basti Incremental Development Scheme	Hyderabad, Pakistan	Hyderabad Development Authority, Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui	1989
	Landscaping of Soekarno-Hatta Airport	Cengkareng, Indonesia	Aéroports de Paris, Paul Andreu	1994
	Menara Mesiniaga	Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia	T.R. Hamzah and Yeang Sdn. Bhd.	1992
	Mosque of the Grand National Assembly	Ankara, Turkey	Behruz & Can Cinici	1989
	Grand National Assembly Mosque	Ankara, Turkey	Middle East Technical University Re-Forestation Directorate, Alattin Egemen	1960
	Restoration of Bukhara Old City	Bukhara, Uzbekistan	Restoration Institute of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, and the Restoration Office of the Municipality of Bukhara	1975
	Alhamra Arts Council	Lahore, Pakistan	Nayyar Ali Dada	1992
7th Cycle (1996–1998)	Lepers Hospital	Lasur, India	Per Christian Brynildsen and Jan Olav Jensen	1995
	Rehabilitation of Hebron Old Town	Hebron, Palestine	Engineering Office of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee	1995
	Salinger Residence	Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia	CSL Associates / Jimmy CS Lim	1992
	Slum Networking of Indore City	Indore, India	Himanshu Parikh	1997
	Tuwaiq Palace	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	OHO Joint Venture, Atelier Frei Otto, Buro Happold, Omrania	1985
	Vidhan Bhavan	Bhopal, India	Charles Correa	1996

	Aït Iktel	Abadou, Morocco	Ali Amahan	1995
8th Cycle (1999–2001)	Bagh-e-Ferdowsi	Tehran, Iran	Baft-e-Shahr Consulting Architects and Urban Planners	1997
	Datai Hotel	Pulau Langkawi, Malaysia	Kerry Hill Architects, Akitek Jururancang Sdn Bhd	1993
	Kahere Poultry Farming School	Koliagbe, Guinea	Heikkinen-Komonen Architects	2000
	New Life for Old Structures	Iran various locations, Iran	Urban Development & Revitalization Corporation, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization	1995
	Nubian Museum	Aswan, Egypt	Mahmoud El-Hakim	1997
	Olbia Social Centre	Antalya, Turkey	Cengiz Bektas	1999
	SOS Children's Village	Aqaba, Jordan	Jafar Tukan & Partners	1991
	B2 House	Canakkale, Turkey	Han Tümertekin	2001
9th Cycle (2002–2004)	Bibliotheca Alexandrina	Alexandria, Egypt	Snohetta Hamza Consortium	2002
	Old City of Jerusalem Revitalisation Programme	Old City, Jerusalem	OCJRP Technical Office / Shadia Touqan	1996
	Petronas Office Towers	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Cesar Pelli & Associates	1999
	Primary School	Gando, Burkina Faso	Francis Diebedo Kéré	2001
	Restoration of Al-Abbas Mosque	Asnaf, Yemen	Marylène Barret, Abdullah al-Hadrami	1996
	Sandbag Shelters	Ahwaz, Iran	Cal-Earth Institute, Nader Khalili	1995
	Central Market	Koudougou, Burkina Faso	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	2005
10th (2005–2007)	Moulmein Rise Residential Building	Singapore, Singapore	WOHA Architects / Wong Mun Summ, Richard Hasse	2003
	Rehabilitation of the Old City	Shibam, Yemen	GTZ Technical Office	2005
	Rehabilitation of the Walled City	Nicosia, Cyprus	Nicosia Master Plan Team	1997
	Restoration of the Amiriya Complex	Rada, Yemen	Selma Al-Radi	2005
	Royal Embassy of the Netherlands	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Dick Van Gameren, Bjarne Mastenbroek	2005
	Samir Kassir Square	Beirut, Lebanon	Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture	2004
	School in Rudrapur	Rudrapur, Bangladesh	Anna Heringer, Eike Roswag	2005
	University of Technology Petronas	Tronoh, Malaysia	Foster + Partners	2004
	Bridge School	Xiashi, Fujian Province, China	Li Xiaodong (Atelier)	2008
11th Cycle (2008–2010)	Ipekyol Textile Factory	Edirne, Turkey	Emre Arolat Architects	2006
	Madinat al Zahra Museum	Cordoba, Spain	Sobejano Architects S.L.P, Fuensanta Nieto & Enrique Sobejano	2008

	Revitalisation of the Recent Heritage of Tunis	Tunis, Tunisia	Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis	1998-2007
	Wadi Hanifa Wetlands	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Moriyama & Teshima Planners Limited / Buro Happold in joint venture	2004-2007
12th Cycle (2011–2013)	Islamic Cemetery	Altach, Austria	Bernardo Bader Architects, Dombirn, Austria	2011
	Rabat-Salé Urban Infrastructure Project	Rabat, Morocco	Marc Mimram Architecture, Paris, France	2011
	Rehabilitation of Tabriz Bazaar	Tabriz, Iran	ICHTO East Azerbaijan Office	2006
	Revitalisation of Birzeit Historic Centre	Birzeit, Palestine	Riwaq - Centre for Architectural Conservation, Ramallah, Palestine	2009
	Salam Cardiac Surgery Centre	Khartoum, Sudan	Studio Tamassociati, Venice, Italy	2010
	Bait Ur Rouf Mosque	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Marina Tabassum	2012
13th Cycle (2014–2016)	Superkilen	Copenhagen, Denmark	Superkilen / Topotek 1 + BIG Architects + Superflex	2012
	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs	Beirut, Lebanon	Zaha Hadid Architects	2014
	Friendship Centre	Gaibandha, Bangladesh	Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury	2011
	Tabiat Pedestrian Bridge	Tehran, Iran	Diba Tensile Architecture / Leila Araghian, Alireza Behzadi	2014
	Micro Yuan'er Children's Library & Art Centre Beijing, China	Beijing, China	ZAO/standardarchitecture / Zhang Ke	2014
	Zaha Hadid Architects	Muharraq, Bahrain	Bahrain Authority for Culture & Antiquities Conservation Department, Bahrain	2013-
14th Cycle (2017–2019)	Wasit Wetland Centre	Sharjah, United Arab Emirates	X-Architects, Dubai, UAE	2012
	Arcadia Education Project	South Kanarchor, Bangladesh	Saif Ul Haque Sthapati	2016
	Public Spaces Development Programme	Tatarstan. Various locations, Russian Federation	Architecturny Desant Architectural Bureau, Kazan, Tatarstan	2017-
	Palestinian Museum	Palestinian Museum	Heneghan Peng Architects, Dublin, Ireland	2016
	Alioune Diop University Teaching and Research Unit	Bambey, Senegal	IDOM, Bilbao, Spain	2017
	Banyuwangi International Airport	Blimbingsari, Indonesia	Andra Matin	2018
15th (2020–2022)	Argo Contemporary Art Museum & Cultural Centre	Tehran, Iran	ASA North / Ahmadreza Schricker Design	2020
	Community Spaces in Rohingya Refugee Response	Teknaf, Bangladesh	Rizvi Hassan, Khwaja Fatmi, Saad Ben Mostafa	2019
	Renovation of Niemeyer Guest House	Renovation of Niemeyer Guest House	East Architecture Studio / Nicolas Fayad, Charles Kettaneh	2018

	Urban River Spaces	Jhenaidah, Bangladesh	Co.Creation Architects / Khondaker Hasibul Kabir, Suhailey Farzana	2019
	Kamanar Secondary School	Tionck Essil, Senegal	Dawoffice / David Garcia, Aina Tugores	2020

Name of the architect	**Project**	**Location**	**Aga Khan cycle**	**Role**
Sanda Popa	Conservation of Sidi Bou Saïd	Tunis, Tunisia	1st Cycle (1977)	Co-architect with Mohamed El-Aziz Ben Achour
Emine Ögün	Demir Holiday Village	Bodrum, Turkey	5th Cycle (1987)	Co-architect and daughter of Turgut Cansever
Feyza Cansever	Demir Holiday Village	Bodrum, Turkey	5th Cycle (1987)	Co-architect, daughter of Turgut Cansever
Shadia Touqan	Old City of Jerusalem Revitalisation Programme	Jerusalem, Palestine	9th Cycle (1996)	Project director
Selma Al-Radi	Restoration of the Amiriya Complex	Rada, Yemen	10th Cycle (2005)	Project director and lead conservator
Anna Heringer	School in Rudrapur	Rudrapur, Bangladesh	10th Cycle (2005)	Lead architect
Fuensanta Nieto	Madinat al Zahra Museum	Cordoba, Spain	11th Cycle (2008)	Co-founder of Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos
Marina Tabassum	Bait Ur Rouf Mosque	Dhaka, Bangladesh	12th cycle (2012)	Principle architect
Zaha Hadid	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs	Beirut, Lebanon	13th Cycle (2014)	Principle architect
Leila Araghian	Tabiat Pedestrian Bridge	Tehran, Iran	13th Cycle (2014)	Lead designer with Diba Tensile Architecture
Suhailey Farzana	Urban River Spaces	Jhenaidah, Bangladesh	15th Cycle (2019)	Co-architect with Khondaker Hasibul Kabir
Aina Tugores	Kamanar Secondary School	Tionck Essil, Senegal	15th Cycle (2020)	Co-architect with David Garcia

Discussion

As discussed above, the woman's participation in the principal level of architectural design has historically been low compared to men, and it is indicated in many architecture educational programs. Further, it was also established that this has been clearly indicated in the architectural profession too, from the 1950s, when the proliferation of women's involvement in the aforesaid spheres happened – to date (Fig. 01). It was further established that architectural awards affording recognition from around the world also share the aforementioned trend.

The AKAIA, similarly, showcases a lack of women winners over the years. From its inception to date, although there has been a total of 130 projects awarded the AKAIA, only 11 projects seem to have involved 12 women architects in commanding positions within the architectural teams in question. These women have won the award in collaboration with partnering architect/s who are men. In very specific cases, such as in the Demir Holiday Village in Turkey, the woman architects Emine Ögün and Feyza Cansever have been involved in the project as principal architects. The 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and 8th cycles were all male-dominated. However, the women's tendency towards winning an AKAIA has been increasing since the 9th cycle, where the percentage for women to win has been gradually and constantly increasing, with an interruption in the 14th cycle, with no women architects winning. The 15th round – the last to be held – has given nearly half of the awards for women architects, making this cycle the cycle in which the highest percentage of women architect winners.

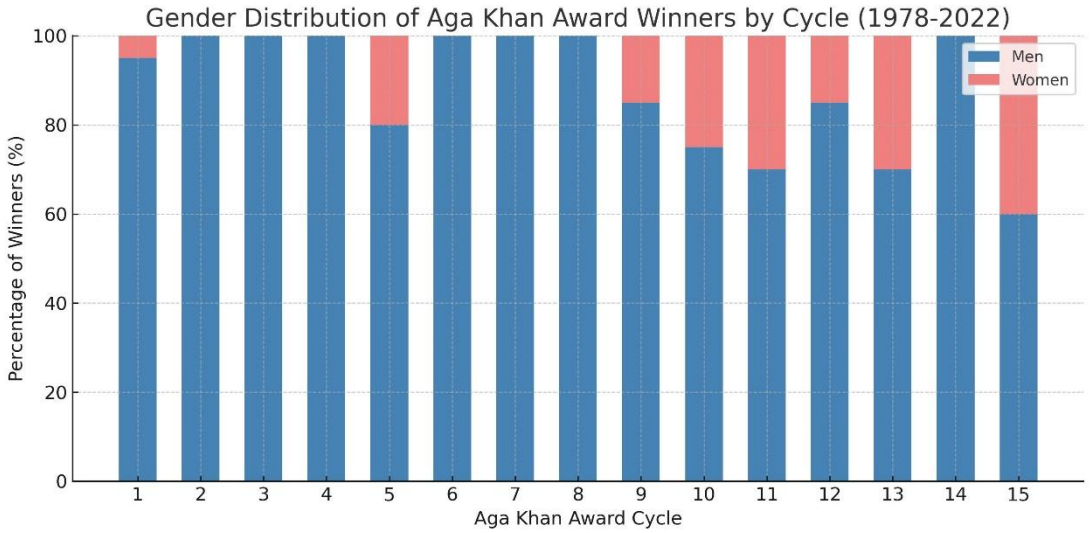


Fig. 01: Gender Distribution of Agha Khan Awards by Cycles
Source: Agha Khan Award Records

However, it is seen that considering the increase in women's participation in architectural education and the architectural profession somewhat mimics the pattern in the AKAIA award-winning women architects.

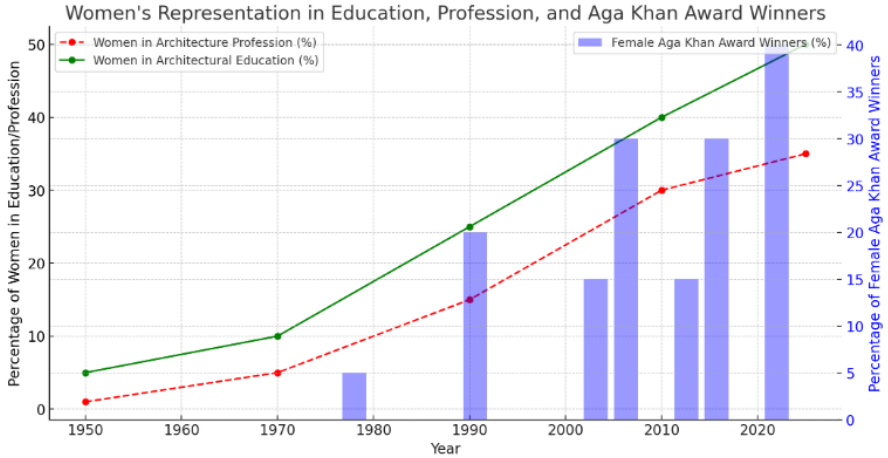


Fig. 02: Women's Representation in Education, Profession and Aga Khan Award Winners
Source: RIBA Statistics & Agha Khan

Conclusion

This paper investigated the ways in which the world-renowned architecture award Aga Khan Award deals with gender. Whether resulting from inherent achievements of the field or deliberate manipulation, it seems that women are under represented in the awards. However, with the increasing participation of women in the profession as well as education and the greater public activities, there is an increase in the women being recognized in the society as well as in the Awards for Architects. It is no great secret that architecture has traditionally been a male-dominated profession. It is contended that its male dominance is still being maintained the world over via prestigious prizes in architecture like the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture. However, in the AKAIA, there is a tendency towards awarding women architects with the prestigious AKAIA in the later cycles, with occasional interruptions in the rhythm.

It is noted that the research objectives of this paper are achieved. The first objective finds confirmation that from the beginning of the AKAIA cycles, the women's representation was there, but in a very limited proportion. The research thus concludes the following.

1. At the beginning, there have been 130 awards for various projects, but there have been only 11 winners, which makes the female percentage 14.3%.
2. The number of women-designed projects winning the AKAIA award has also been increasing with time, with the last (15^{th}) round awarding 40% of the awards to women.
3. With the gradual increase in women's participation in architectural practice and architectural education, the tendency to win the AKAIA has also indicated an increase, but the rhythm has been broken with no women winning an award in the 14^{th} cycle.
4. Therefore, the increase in the rise of women's participation in architectural education does not directly reflect the increase in the number of Aga Khan Award-winning female architects.

Despite these conclusions having been reached, this research also has its limitations as follows. First, in an architectural project, a team of experts, including a team of architects, sometimes more than one team of architects, has to be involved. Given the fact that these require long working hours, authoritative leadership and complex management systems, it is almost inevitable not to have female architects in any of the mentioned award-winning projects. Women are able to win an award, only if the principal architect was a woman and the team led by the woman principal architect executed the project. Second, some projects have been carried out by the people with the guidance of local builders and craftsmen. Although the name of the local designer or the master builder has been mentioned in the archival record, their gender is not identifiable due to the unfamiliarity of the regional names, and due to the lack of records of them as designers elsewhere.

Nevertheless, this research provides great insghts into the position of women architects in the usually male dominated practice of architecture, and how the achievements and contributions of the female archiects are recognised by word renowned award Aga Khan Award. It is suggested that further research will illuminate the recognition of female architects in other award schemes in the future.

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Ethical Practice: This research followed accepted ethical practices. It did not involve human participants, fieldwork, interviews and or any collection of personal data. Nevertheless, it followed the accepted ethical standards where relevant.

Availability of Data: This study does not report any original primary data. However, data is available for scrutiny if officially requested.

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