

Modern Scientist Global

Leading with a Mission

Nadia Akseer

Founder, CEO & Scientist



Dr. Nadia Akseer is a curious, driven leader inspired by complex and multidisciplinary global health issues. She is interested in providing opportunities for junior scientists and artists and creating a powerful workplace for their nexus and integration. She takes her passion for equality and applies it in her research projects and in her company, where she strives for fairness and opportunities for scientists and artists at all levels.

Dr. Akseer is an innovative thinker and often pushes boundaries of traditional science and public health approaches to reach further and impact her company's vision of good "health and well-being of all people, everywhere." For instance, MSG has a solid social media presence on multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok – each with unique audiences and, thus, content styles. Dr. Akseer ensures her company's social and public health awareness content adapts to each style to ensure maximum reach to diverse age groups and settings. Comprised of a young generation of scientists, junior scientists, social media experts, graphic designers, videographers, and artists – MSG is uniquely positioned to understand the needs and interests of these diverse age groups, curating a mix of art and science to develop informative and entertaining social media assets that will appeal to these populations.

Dr. Akseer is a charismatic, sharp, hard-working, approachable, adaptive, and supportive colleague and leader – she attributes these characteristics to her success as a CEO and scientist. An important lesson she has learned about leadership is to have a clear

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vision and goal, which can drive and give stamina to the team. Working in global public health research, Dr. Akseer has had the opportunity to work on several meaningful projects over the years. Knowing that her work can drive policy changes and lead to real improvements in people's lives worldwide is a significant driver of her commitment and passion. "When a team can come together with a shared goal, this keeps us all on track." Often, Dr. Akseer will bring her MSG team together and narrate how far and wide their work has traveled and how important every one of their contributions has been to that success.

Her Driving Force

Deciding on a field where she felt passionate and finding gaps for meaningful contributions was essential in Dr. Akseer's leadership journey. Gaps exist in all areas, and leadership can be about finding where your skills can be most helpful in unfilled niches. Dr. Akseer found that there were gaps in data availability, data quality, data literacy and expertise in data analysis in global public health research. She used her skills as a Biostatistician and Epidemiologist to understand and address these gaps in her projects and networks.

Dr. Akseer's role model is her late father, Dr. Mir Ahmad Akseer Shinwari. As a young father of nine children, he left Afghanistan during the Soviet war in 1989 and immigrated to Canada with his wife and children. His persistent encouragement of his children to study and excel in education, with an aim towards eventually helping their poor and war-torn home country, has been central to Dr. Akseer's motivation and inspiration in life. He taught Dr. Akseer and her siblings to never give up on their aspirations. He peculiarly would say, "Nadia, there's no difference between boys and girls in what they can accomplish" – as a child, Dr. Akseer didn't understand why her father would stress this message to her and her sisters, but as an adult, she realized, he was a feminist and strong supporter of women's empowerment at heart.

Dr. Akseer has thrived under her father's support and guidance and continues to do so while never forgetting his teaching principles. Dr. Akseer completed her Ph.D. dissertation on maternal and child health and nutrition in Afghanistan in 2018; the same year was identified as a Canadian Women Leader in Global Health jointly by The Lancet, the Government of Canada, and the Canadian Society for International Health. In March

2019, Dr. Akseer was awarded the 2019 Emerging Public Health Leader Alumni Award from the University of Toronto. An early career scientist, Dr. Akseer, has published over 70 peer-reviewed papers, with the majority in high-profile medical journals such as The Lancet, The Lancet Global Health, and The BMJ – an accomplishment typically seen among senior scientists or professors.

Mission Afghanistan 2030

Dr. Akseer now leads a mission to improve the health and well-being of women, children, and families of Afghanistan through her faculty position as a Scientist at Johns Hopkins University (Maryland, USA). Dr. Akseer also works as a Scientific Advisor to the Exemplars in Global Health program at Gates Ventures (the private office of Mr. Bill Gates) and is an Associate Editor of Nutrition Reviews journal – one of the leading nutrition journals in the world.

Working towards her Mission

Modern Scientist Global began as an idea in early 2019; "I discussed with my late father that I felt there were many gaps in the sciences; young researchers trained for many years, spent important years of their lives studying, earned minimal wages – only to have to continue doing so for several years before they could lead their own research or be considered 'scientists' – it didn't sit well with me," says Dr. Akseer. "The youth are a clever and curious demographic who have been raised amid modern technology and global issues, yet they are rarely accessed or engaged in science and public health." Why not? Additionally, why is 'science' generally in a silo from 'art'? Can art not be used to share and communicate vital scientific and public health messaging to transform societies? For example, through an entertainment-style approach and platform? Thus, MSG was born. "I want to create these opportunities and network for people like myself who share this vision to come together and change the game! Of course, my father shared my vision and dream, and encouraged me to start my company and follow my dreams."

MSG is a research consulting company comprising young scientists and researchers with a drive to do good work in the space of global public health. "I strive to give opportunities to a diverse team of professionals including public health scientists, data scientists, social scientists, and health economists, to lead their own work and grow their independence as scientists quickly,"

adds Dr. Akseer. As young professionals, they are cognizant of recent developments their fields and are able to apply novel and innovative research approaches. Importantly, MSG's team of 'junior scientists' are youth between the ages of 10–18 years of age who offer a fresh perspective in the sciences and public health. "Youth are an invaluable source of information as they are intricately linked to technology, media, social platforms, and so on. These youth as the leaders of tomorrow are brought in to MSG to learn about modern science and social and health issues, and to help brainstorm on how modern tools and technologies can be used to address challenges!"

Continuing in its journey, MSG has grown immensely over a relatively short period. "We are excited and look forward to what the future holds. Currently, we are growing our research portfolio in the areas of health and nutrition modeling at global and country scale, climate change and its impacts on health and food systems, analysis of big data and machine learning/AI technologies, gender/culture/religion and impact on health, among other areas. We are expanding our social and public health awareness messaging on social media, current themes being covered include work on Covid-19, the healthcare crises in Afghanistan, the migrant crises in the USA, and local community issues such as homelessness in Niagara (where MSG is based)," elucidates Dr. Akseer. MSG is also venturing into the areas of music and pop culture, for instance, by using mediums such as songs and music videos to hip modern beats to bring light to global health issues such as Covid-19 and vaccine hesitancy. MSG will be looking to create partnerships with local artists to explore the nexus of health sciences – music further. MSG is also moving into the areas of clothing and apparel with its upcoming 'MSG Gear' line of clothing, which will have capsules for adults, junior scientists and baby scientists! "For each new team member, I ensure they have their 'MSG gear' including t-shirts, long-sleeves, hoodies etc, so that they feel part of the brand and MSG family – this is very important to me as a leader – for everyone to feel united and part of this brand".

As a parting thought, Dr. Akseer says "Anyone can be MSG – if you are curious about how the modern world works and what your unique role and impact in it is – you are by definition MSG 'Modern Scientist Global' – what else is a scientist, other than a curious and passionate student of life who seeks the truth? This is us at MSG."