HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG FEMALE THAN MALE STUDENTS: THE INTERVENTION TO INCREASE ENROLMENT OF MALE STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTION

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify why academic performance differs between male and female students; to investigate why more females than males are at tertiary institution; and to assess current initiatives taken to increase male students’ enrolment in Malaysian tertiary institution. This qualitative and quantitative method of research utilizes data analysis from respondents from a matriculation centre of University Malaya students. The design of the study is cross-sectional and comparative in nature, and the instruments used are self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The analysed data utilizes frequency and percentage. The results revealed that male students’ level of maturity is slower than that of female students and thus it affects their academic performance; male students should be monitored, be motivated and given better educational opportunities in order to perform better in their studies. Female students have different characteristics that influence their educational attainment such as having better inspiration in their studies; females are more determined, dedicated, patient, ambitious and highly aspirated than males in achieving education. In light of these results, several suggestions were proposed for the solution and implication to increase the number of male students in tertiary institutions.

Key words: gender inequalities, gender characteristics, educational attainment, enrollment
1. **INTRODUCTION**

This study examines different factors that contribute to different educational attainment among male and female pre-university students. The good performance at matriculation level then qualifies them to enroll into universities. Previous study have indicated the major constraints for gender’s unequal achievement in education as follows:

- Secrets of successful behaviors between male and female students
- Different characteristics and positive values between male and female students towards success in education
- Time management, self management and attitudes towards their studies
- Motivation, vision, inspiration, aspiration and accomplishing them
- Different level of maturity between male and female students.

Due to gender differences in their characteristics and behaviors, therefore these factors affect their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination, and their matriculation examination results and hence their entry qualification and requirements to enter tertiary institutions.

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Previous studies have analyzed on gender inequalities of enrollment in tertiary institutions in different countries including in Africa by Bunyi (2003), entitled “The Interventions that Increase Enrolment of Women in African Tertiary Institutions”.

According to Dweck, and Licht (1980), gender characteristics determine how well boys and girls adapt to their academic tasks. They suggest that certain academic tasks and academic areas in general may possess characteristics that are compatible with girls’ achievement orientation and that is likely to facilitate their performance. Similarly, boys’ achievement orientation may make them better suited for certain academic pursuits. They found that mathematics is an area that, in general, possesses the characteristics that best fit the male achievement orientation, whilst language-based subjects seem to possess those qualities that best fit the female achievement orientation.

Pickering (1997) and Bleach (1998) claimed that one of the reasons why boys in the UK did less well than girls are that boys considered schooling and the selection of stereotypically female subjects as effeminate. As a result, British boys tended to be less motivated to do well in schools. Wong, *et al.* (2002: 827) examined gender differences in educational achievements based on a longitudinal sample of more than 45,000 secondary school students in Hong Kong who took a public examination in 1997. The results coincided with the findings from recent British studies (Pickering, 1997; Bleach, 1998) that boys did less well than girls in all areas of the school curriculum. The multilevel analyses of the effects of schooling, after controlling initial ability, indicated that schooling did have an effect on gender differences. Girls achieved better results studying in single-sex schools whereas boys achieved better in co-educational schools.
In Malaysia, girls trumped boys for the second year running in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination. Of the 7,987 students who excelled in the examination, 4,683 (58.63 per cent) were girls. The nation's top two students were females (New Strait Times: 12/3/2010).

3. **OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

This study aims:

i. to identify why academic performance differs between male and female students

ii. to investigate why more females students are qualified to enroll into tertiary institutions

iii. to assess current initiatives taken to increase the male students’ enrolment in tertiary institutions

iv. to propose and to make recommendation to policy makers particularly the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia of how to overcome and increase the number of male students in tertiary institutions.

4. **METHODOLOGY**

The sample for this study comprises of 389 matriculation students. The pilot study has been conducted to the first year students at the Centre for Foundation Studies in Science, University of Malaya. Further survey research will then be conducted further to the undergraduate students of public and private universities in Malaysia.

The design of the study is cross-sectional and comparative in nature, and the instruments used are self-administered questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The analysed data utilize frequencies and percentage.
5. RESULTS

From the interview survey, respondents give various reasons and factors that contribute and influence the success in educational attainment. Table 1 and 2 show the different characteristics that may influence their gender success in educational attainment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: The Characteristics That Contribute For Educational Attainment Among Female Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Females students are hard working in their studies.</td>
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<td>2. Female students are determined in achieving their visions.</td>
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<td>3. Female students have clear life goals.</td>
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<td>4. Female students are serious in their work.</td>
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<td>5. Female students have better self discipline.</td>
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<td>6. Female students listen to advises and are highly motivated.</td>
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<td>7. Female students are more dedicated.</td>
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<td>8. Female students have long sighted views.</td>
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<td>9. Female students give priorities in their studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Female students getting matured faster than male students.</td>
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Table 2: The Reasons Why Male Students Did Not Perform Well in Their Educational Attainment

1. Most male students are not serious in their studies.
2. Most male students are not determined in their work.
3. Most male student did not aware of the life goals that they are going to achieve.
4. Some male students prefer to work earlier rather than pursuing their tertiary education.
5. Male students prefer technical work and more males specialize in engineering.
6. In school, male students focus more in co-curriculum activities.
7. Male students spend more time in sports.
8. Male students’ maturity is slower than females.

Table 3: The Outcomes If More Female Than Males Are Highly Educated

1. More females will become leaders of the country.
2. More highly educated females will not marry.
3. Female are superior to males either at home or at working place.
4. Males in exchange play as female roles at home.
5. More Males need not go to work. Instead wives play vital roles to find money.

Table 4: Implication And Overcoming The Phenomenon For Balance Gender Enrollment At University

1. The government should set up a balance quota, for entry to university.
2. The Ministry of Education should set up motivational programs to make male students to make them aware of their lagging in educational attainment.
3. The policy of university intakes should give priority and flexibility to male students.
4. The entry requirement into university is not based entirely on academic merit only. Consideration should be given more to students’ co-curriculum activities and leadership abilities.
5. The reasons for more females at university are due to more females in Malaysian population.

Table 1 and 2 show the different characteristics of gender that contribute for the imbalance of enrolment in Malaysian universities. Table 3 reveals the outcome if more females to be dominated in tertiary education. Table 4 shows the implication and solutions to create a more balance of gender enrolment at the university.

6. IMPLICATION

Male students’ level of maturity is slower than that of female students and thus it affects their academic performance, and their entry requirement to university. Male students should be monitored, be motivated and be given better educational opportunities in their studies. Female students have different characteristics that influence their educational attainment.
7. CONCLUSION

Malaysia needs a balanced enrollment of male and female students at tertiary institutional levels. In order to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020 to be a developed country, Malaysia needs the quality human resource in Science and Technology. In Malaysia, it is obvious that men play a more vital role in leaderships and decisions makings. If men were not as highly educated as females, and lagging behind women in term of academic achievement, then these phenomena would destruct the social harmony and stability of Malaysian society. Effective measures should be taken in order to overcome the trends where females are more superiors than males in terms of the educational attainment.

REFERENCES

This study aims:

i. to identify why academic performance differs between male and female students,

ii. to investigate why more females students are qualified to enroll at tertiary institutions,

iii. to propose to the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia on how to intervene and change the policy of entry requirement for male students to tertiary institutions.