

Women's Studies in Malaysia: A Bibliometric Study with Implications for its Bibliographical Control

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Abstract

Research activities on women in Malaysia are traced through literature produced on the topic. Descriptive statistics are derived from bibliographic data collected from two published bibliographies covering the pre 1970 and 2004 years. The results indicate a sharp increase in research activities between the years 1990 and 2004 totaling 3346 publications, averaging about 258 titles per year compared to 36 titles for the pre 1970 and 1989 years. Analyses by 12 broad subject areas indicate heavier activities in economic studies, social-cultural studies, women's health and welfare and women in literature. The main types of publication produced are research reports in the form of final year academic reports, master dissertations and doctoral theses. Conference presentations and journal articles are equally popular. Most authors in this field are one time contributors and a total of 18 authors produced 10 or more publications each. The majority of authors work alone indicating low collaboration rate.

Keywords: Bibliometrics; Women studies; Publication productivity; Authorship pattern.

1. Introduction

Compiling bibliographies or creating listings of documents to support research activities or to enable acquisition and collection development is a traditional role of libraries. Bibliography itself is an ancient genre and considered a scholarly practice (Hendry and Carlyle, 2006). This scholarly practice encompasses, scoping the collating of items to a specific domain, using clear rules about what to include or exclude, organizing the items into logical categories, using a standard unit of what should be included in describing the items and packaging it in the form of a published monograph, weblogs or web bibliographies. This article will trace bibliographies compiled on the subject of women in Malaysia, use the bibliographic data to infer trends and patterns and implicate the role of librarians in sustaining the research activities in this area of study.

The earliest identified bibliography compiled on women in Malaysia was published in 1981 by the National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 1981). In the same year Fan (1981) compiled a "Bibliography on women in Malaysia" as a chapter in a book published by Hing, Rokiah and Nik (1981). This was followed by a 77-page bibliography published in 1984 by the National Development and Family Planning Malaysia, a government agency and this may be the bibliographical manuscript which Jamilah (1991, v) had mentioned that she had found at the National Family Planning and Development Board library. Fan's 1981 bibliography was reproduced in Jamilah's 1991 publication, which in itself extended the coverage of literature produced up to 1989. A sequel to Jamilah's bibliography was published in 2006 (Zainab, 2006) covering literature on women's studies in Malaysia produced between the period 1990 and 2004.

This article used the bibliographic data compiled from both Jamilah's (1991) and Zainab's (2006) bibliographies, both of which provide information about the publication activities about women in Malaysia. Both bibliographies had excluded popular articles published in magazines and the newspapers and focused on research-based publications. Jamilah's bibliography had listed titles under two separate chapters, where chapter 2 was the reproduction of Fan's 1981 bibliography entitled, "Women studies in Malaysia: a

bibliography covering the period prior to 1980” and chapter 3 was her own contribution entitled, “Women studies in Malaysia – a bibliography covering the period 1980 – 1989”. The bibliographic information will be used to ascertain the trends and growth of the body of literature produced on women published after 1989 and up to 2004, make comparisons with the findings described and discussed in Jamilah’s “Introduction” to her bibliography published in 1991, determine the authors productivity, authorship pattern and subject coverage. Applying descriptive statistics to bibliographic data or bibliometrics, the development, growth and pattern of published literature in any fields can be carried out (Debruin et al, 1993; ODLIS, 2005).

The records compiled by Zainab’s (2006) bibliography were classified under 13 categories and this is only slightly different from the classifications scheme used by Jamilah (1991) and Fan (1981) who had categorized the literature under 12 broad subject areas as indicated in Table 1. As such, it was possible to make comparisons between the bibliographic information provided by both bibliographies. Zainab had however, excluded the category “miscellaneous” as most citations collected could be placed within the 13 categories and had instead included a new category “Technology and science” as there was a growing number of works produced under this category in the recent years. Due to the similarity in basic classification used it was possible to compare literature produce before 1970 and those after.

Table 1: The Categories Used to List the Bibliographies on Women

Categories Used by Jamilah (1991), Fan (1981)	Categories Used by Zainab (2005)
1. Crime and delinquency	1. General Works and History
2. Economic conditions, employment aspects, status, and women’s role in development	2. Crime and delinquency
3. Education	3. Economic conditions, employment aspects, status, and women’s role in development
4. Feminism and women’s rights	4. Education
5. General works and history	5. Feminism and women’s rights
6. Health and welfare	6. Health and welfare
7. Legal status, women and family law	7. Legal status, women and family law
8. Literary aspects, women in literature	8. Literary aspects, women in literature, mass media and the arts
9. Marriage and divorce, fertility and demographic studies	9. Marriage and divorce, fertility and demographic studies
10. Muslim women and Islam	10. Muslim women and Islam
11. Political activities and public life	11. Political activities and public life
12. Socio-cultural conditions, status in society, sociological and anthropological studies	12. Socio-cultural conditions, status in society, sociological and anthropological studies
13. Miscellaneous	13. Technology and science

2. Publication Productivity: 1990 – 2004 Versus the Earlier Years

There was a substantial increase in the publication output of works on women in Malaysia within the 15-year period between 1990 and 2004 compared to those produced before this year span (Figure 1). The quantity of publication refers to the number of publications produced by a researcher or individual in a given field and is used to assess publication productivity (Baraun, Glanzel and Schubert, 1990, Budd, 1995). There is a definite growth in published literature on women studies in Malaysia totaling 3346 publications, which constitute 80% of total publications produced between the pre 1970 years and 2004. For most years the number of published literature totals over 200, except for the year 1991 and 2004. The most productive year was 1999 with 296 publications. The low count for 2004 is expected as it would take around two years before the body of literature

produced in a particular year gets published and recorded in secondary reference resources such as periodical indexes, databases and online or printed bibliographies. Libraries would also take time to receive and process all research publications deposited by academic staff, undergraduates, postgraduates and those purchased from commercial vendors. The average publication was computed to be about 258 per year between 1990 and 2004. Figure 2 clearly indicated the substantial growth of studies when compared to the pre 1990 years.

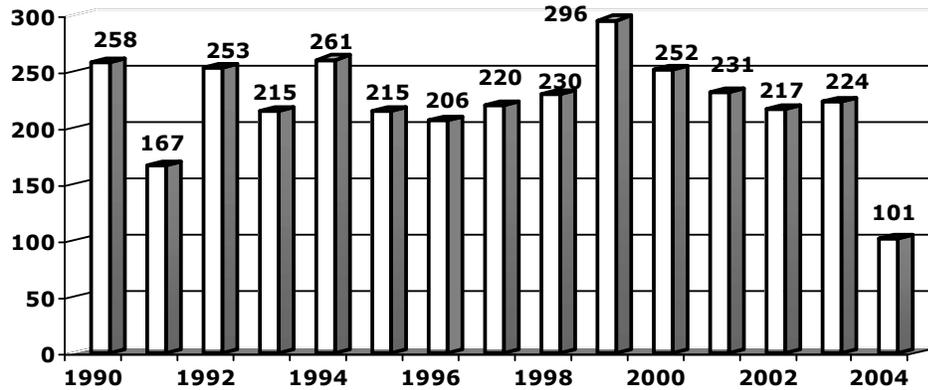


Figure 1: Publication Productivity by Year, 1990 - 2004 (n=3344)

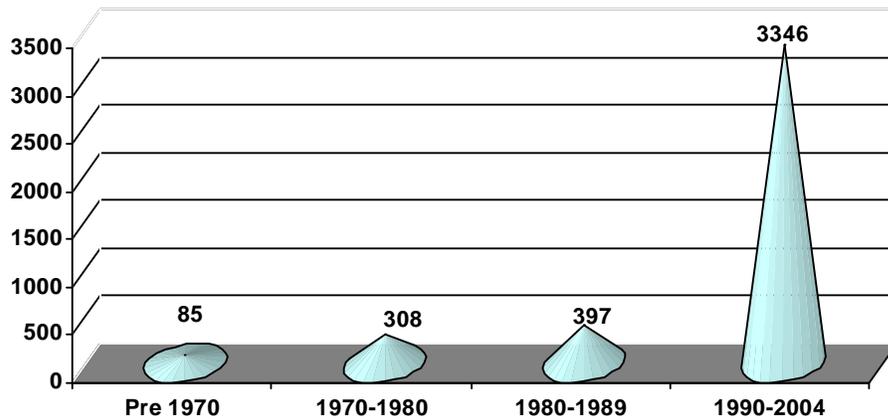


Figure 2: Publication Productivity, Pre-1990 and the Years 1990-2004

3. Publication Productivity by Broad Subject Categories

In all broad subject categories the growth of literature published between 1990 and 2004 increased manifolds (Table 1). Under “General works and history”, a substantial amount of works were published on biographical studies of women personalities. A rough count revealed about 45 biographical works. Bibliographical listings were also substantially represented in this category, totaling about 18. The historical aspect of women’s social, economics, health and welfare during the colonial period and Japanese occupation were also included in this section. The section on “Crime and delinquency”, included discourses on sexual harassment, domestic violence, abusive and violence acts upon women, wives and girls (>58 titles). There were substantial studies on rape victims (>17 titles) and drug

abuse among women (13 titles). These topics seemed to be of great concern of researchers publishing between 1990 and 2004.

There were changes under the category “Economic conditions” for the years 1990 to 2004 as the total number of studies on women in business (108 titles) was the main focus in this category followed by studies about women as managers and executives (>80 titles), career women (53 titles), the economic contribution of the working women (especially the factory workers - 89 titles) in general, wage differences (12 titles), women as consumers (24 titles), working wives, working mothers (>200 titles), women in retail trade (>23 titles) and the relationship between the working women and their families (>72 titles).

Table 1: Publication Productivity by Subject Categories Pre 1970 - 2004

	Broad Subject Categories	Pre 1970	1970- 1980	1981- 1989	1990- 2004
1	General Works and History	5	12	15	226
2	Crime and Delinquency	2	12	2	205
3	Economic Condition, Employment Aspects, Status and Women’s Role in Development	7	70	154	667
4	Education	4	19	9	226
5	Feminism and Women’s Rights	1	3	8	81
6	Health and Welfare	4	17	38	396
7	Legal Status, Women and Family Law	28	60	18	132
8	Literary Aspects, Women in Literature	1	7	6	319
9	Marriage and Divorce, Fertility and Demographic Status	15	30	30	217
10	Muslim Women and Islam	3	16	22	202
11	Political Activities and Public Life	2	21	19	102
12	Socio-cultural Conditions and Status in Society; Sociological and Anthropological Studies	13	41	72	474
13	Technology and Science	-	-	-	99
14	Miscellaneous	-	-	4	-
	Total	85 (2.0%)	308 (7.4%)	397 (9.6%)	3346 (81.0%)

This is a shift in interest as research activities in the earlier years had focused on women in the workforce in general especially their contribution in the agricultural and industrial sectors as farmers and factory workers. The studies between 1980 and 1990 also dwelled on rural-urban migration issues as a higher number of young girls were moving to the urban areas to work in factories.

Educational issues prior to 1990 cover mainly issues on women’s involvement in education in general, which became more focused between 1990 and 2004 to issues concerning female students in higher education (>65 titles), women teacher’s attitudes, burnout and stress issues among women teachers and the academic performance among female students in schools as well as in higher educational institutions. Under the category “Feminism and women’s rights” for both pre and post 1990 covered issues such

as women's emancipation, feminism and rights of women in general and in particular the rights of divorcees and wives.

There was an increase in published literature on women's health and welfare, especially on issues concerning breast cancer (37 titles) and cervical cancer among Malaysian women. There was substantial coverage on practices of breast feeding (30 titles), dietary habits, tobacco use, the condition associated with menopause (23 titles) and general maternal health and welfare. A large body of literature in this category was published in journals.

There was also a substantial body of literature on women and the mass media (87 titles) and the portrayal and characterization of women in literary works. There was also a large number of studies on women and advertisements and advertising (33 titles), women in fiction (29 titles), and studies of magazines for women (17 titles) in the post 1990 years.

Similar to previous years, the years between 1990 and 2004 continue to cover issues on women's legal protection or lack of, family laws and legal rights. In the "Marriages and divorce, fertility and demography" category there was over 200 published literature covering marriage and divorce issues, reproductive rights, child birth (20 titles), child care (17 titles) birth control and family planning rights and attitudes. Over 400 studies were concerned with socio-cultural issues such as traditional practices during child birth and pregnancies, the problem of late marriages and unmarried women, the obstacles faced by single mothers and the support systems available for them. Psychological aspects of the urban women were also the focus of studies, such as stress and women's ability to cope with their work and their home responsibilities. A new category which warrants a section was studies on women's role in the science and technological world especially in academia and the school system. Table 2 indicated the total count of published literature between the pre 1970 years and 2004 according to the broad subject categories, which totaled to about 4,136 publications (some publications were slotted in more than one category).

Table 2: Total Publication Productivity by Broad Subject Categories: Pre 1970-2004

	Broad Subject Categories	Count	Percent
1	General Works and History	25	6.2
2	Crime and Delinquency	221	5.3
3	Economic Condition, Employment Aspects, Status and Women's Role in Development	898	21.7
4	Education	258	6.2
5	Feminism and Women's Rights	93	2.2
6	Health and Welfare	455	11.0
7	Legal Status, Women and Family Law	238	5.8
8	Literary Aspects, Women in Literature	333	8.1
9	Marriage and Divorce, Fertility and Demographic Status	292	7.1
10	Muslim Women and Islam	243	5.9
11	Political Activities and Public Life	144	3.5
12	Socio-cultural Conditions and Status in Society; Sociological and Anthropological Studies	600	14.5
13	Technology and Science	99	2.4
14	Miscellaneous	4	0.1
	Total	4136	100

5. Types of Publications Produced

The bibliographic data collected revealed the type of publications produced by authors of women studies in Malaysia. The highest type of publications produced were academic research reports generated by staff and students of universities, especially in the form of final year academic exercises, Masters' dissertations and Doctoral theses (Table 3). This form of publications amounts to 38% of total types of materials produced.

In all instances, Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia were the main contributors, indicating active research in these universities. The number of academic reports, dissertations and theses from UM, UKM and UUM was high because these items were catalogued and given access in a separate database, accessible from the respective main library catalogue under sections identified as "Theses" or "Dissertations". The other types of publications produced by rank order were conference proceedings, journal articles, books and book chapters.

Table 3: Types of Publications Produced on Women in Malaysia: 1990-2004

Types	Count	%	Details
Audio-visuals, Web Resources	21	1	
Book	392	12	
Book Chapter	325	10	
Conference Proceedings	750	22	
Journal Articles	587	18	
Master Dissertations	202	6	Universiti Malaya - 124 Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia - 7 Universiti Sains Malaysia - 27 Universiti Putra Malaysia - 18 Universiti Utara Malaysia - 6 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia - 1 Universiti Malaysia - Sabah - 1 Universiti Malaysia Sarawak - 2 International Islamic Universiti - 13 Multimedia University - 1 Foreign University - 2
Academic Exercises	1000	30	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak - 21 Universiti Malaysia Sabah - 5 Universiti Putra Malaysia - 6 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia - 42 Universiti Utara Malaysia - 77 Multimedia Universiti - 5 Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia - 265 Universiti Malaya - 579
Doctoral Theses	69	2	University of Malaya - 11 Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia - 4 Universiti Sains Malaysia - 2 International Islamic University - 2 Universiti Putra Malaysia - 1 Foreign-based Universities - 49
Total	3346	100	

6. The Contributing Authors: 1990-2004 Versus Pre 1970-1989

The bibliographic data collated between 1990 and 2004 identified the authors who actively contributed to women’s studies in Malaysia (Figure 3). A list of authors’ names were obtained and against each name the number of publications contributed.

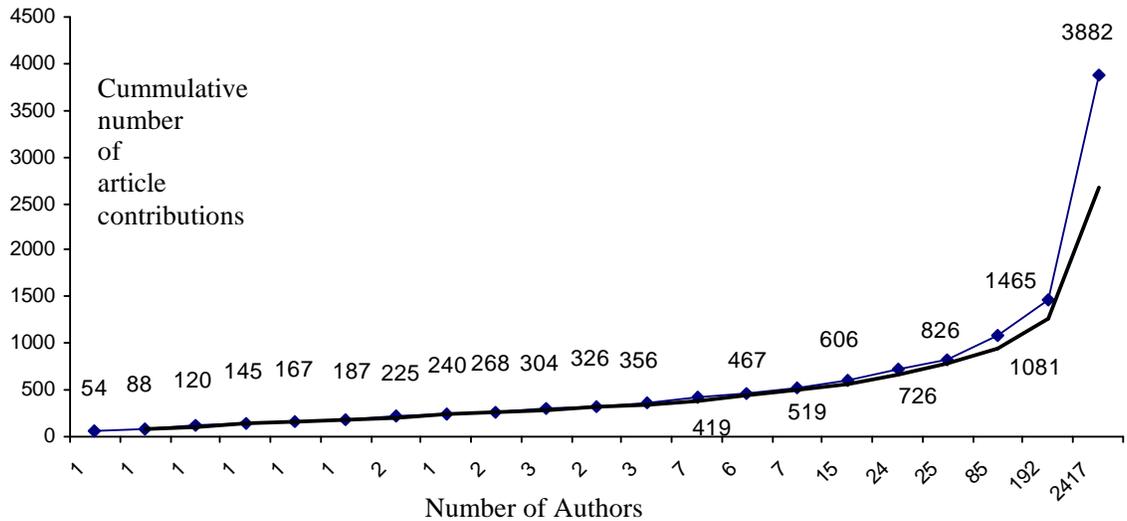


Figure 3: Number of Authors Contributing to Total Works on Women in Malaysia

A total of 2797 authors contributed works on women in Malaysia, either as single authors, joint authors, editors or compilers. Multiple counting of publications was unavoidable as a large number of the single authors also jointly authored works. An overwhelming majority of authors were one time contributors (2417 or 86%). This is a common trend among researchers in the social sciences and humanities. Those producing 4 or more articles constituted merely 4% (108) of total authors involved. A total of 18 authors contributed between 10 to as high as 54 publications. Wazir Jahan Karim who was with the Universiti Sains Malaysia tops the list with 54 publications followed by Jamilah Arifin and Cecilia Ng from Universiti Malaya with 34 and 32 publications respectively. This indicated that the existence of research centres did help to promote and activate women studies. In Universiti Sains Malaysia, the Kanita Project (Projek Kanak-Kanak dan Wanita or Children and Women Project) was started in 1978 and had successfully spearheaded research activities on matters concerning women. At the University of Malaya, The Population Studies Unit, at the Faculty of Economics had successfully initiated a number of research activities and generated a large body of literature in the form of conference papers, books and journal articles. The strength of research in women studies at the University of Malaya have further progressed with the setting up of the Gender Studies Department at the Faculty of Arts and Social Science. The information detailing the names of authors who contributed to four or more publications is given in Table 4.

In comparison, the bibliographic data from Jamilah’s bibliography (1991) for the period pre 1970s to 1989 revealed that a total of 450 personal authors contributed to published works during the said period. Authors who were productive during those early years remained productive after 1990s. This is exemplified by individuals such as Jamilah Arifin who contributed the highest number of publications (18), followed by Nik Safiah Karim (17), and Ahmad Ibrahim (9) (Table 5). Similar to the period 1990-2004, most authors (370 out of 450, 82%) were one time publishers in this field. Only 10 authors published 5 or more publications, which comprises 2% of total authors.

Table 4: Authors who contributed 6 or More Publications, 1990-2004

Cohort	Name of Authors	Count	Cumulative Count
1	Wazir Jahan Karim	54	54
1	Jamilah Ariffin	34	88
1	Ng Cecilia	32	120
1	Aminah Ahmad	25	145
1	Maznah Mohamad	22	167
1	Maimunah Ismail	20	187
2	Rashidah Shuib Rohana Ariffin	19	225
1	Tey Nai Peng	15	240
2	Jariah Masud Tan Poo Chang	14	268
3	Husna Suleiman Noraini Mohd Noor Rashila Ramli	12	304
2	Nik Safiah Karim Roziyah Omar	11	326
3	Raihanah Abdullah Sabitha Marican Siti Rohani Yahaya	10	356
7	Azzan Baharuddin Chee Heng Leng Norma Mansor Rashidah Abdullah Ravindran, J Rosnah Baharuddin Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan	9	419
6	Fatimah Hamid Don Nagaraj, Symala Nor Aini Abdullah Nor Aini Haji Idris Stivens, Maila Zaleha Kamarudin	8	467
7	Chan Lean Heng Faridah Shahadan Intan Osman Rahmah Hashim Rokiah Talib Sieh Lee Mei Ling Siti Aishah Murad	7	519
15	Ackerman, Susan Amarjit Kaur Chee H L Da Vanzo, Julie Fatimah Ali Hanafiah Mohd Salleh Hew Cheng Sim Khoo Siew Mun Loh Lee Lee Noor Rahamah Hj Abu Bakar Norani Othman Shamsuddin K Siti Fathilah Kamaluddin Yip C H Zulkifli Ahmad	6	606
24	25 Authors	5	726
25	25 Authors	4	826
85	85 Authors	3	1081
192	192 Authors	2	1465
2417	2417 Authors	1	3882

Table 6: Authors who contributed Publications, Pre 1970s - 1989

Cohort	Name of Authors	Count	Cumulative Count
1	Jamilah Ariffin	18	18
1	Nik Safiah Karim	17	35
1	Ahmad Ibrahim	9	44
2	Hirschman, Charles	6	63
	Tan Poo Chang		
4	Azizah Kassim	5	83
	Fatimah Daud		
	Ng Cecilia		
	O'Brien, Leslie		
9	Abdul Hadi Zakaria	4	119
	Nik Zainab Abdul Karim		
	Noor Farida Ariffin		
	Nor Laily Azi		
	Rohana Ariffin		
	Rokiah Talib		
	Stivens, Maila		
	Strange, Heather		
	Wazir Jahan Karim		
13	13 Authors	3	58
48	48 Authors	2	254
377	377 Authors	1	624

7. The Authorship Pattern

A brief glance at the authorship pattern revealed that about 87% of total publications produced was singly authored (Figure 4). As most of the studies encroached on the fields of Humanities and Social sciences, this authorship pattern is not surprising, as humanities researchers often prefer to work alone (Stone, 1982; Stevens, 1956; Zainab and Goi, 1997). Most of the publications which were authored by 5 or more authors were in the field of “health and welfare of women in Malaysia”. For publications listed in Jamilah’s bibliography (1991) this authorship pattern remains. Only 32 (4%) titles were jointly authored by 2 or more authors (32 out of 790 published works). The majority of works were singly authored.

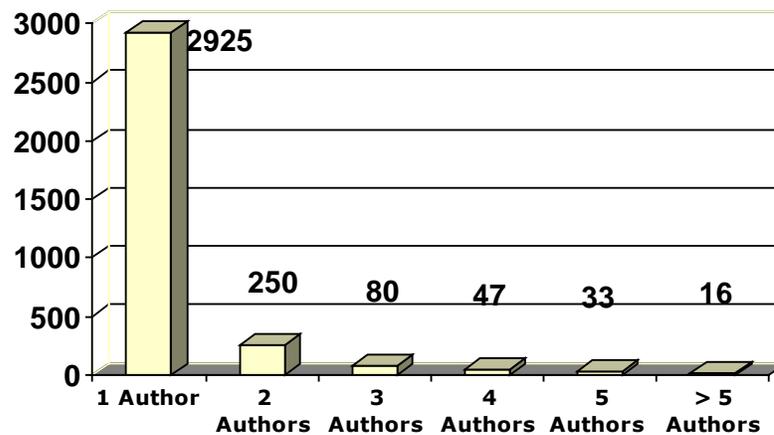


Figure 4: Authorship Pattern of Publications on Women in Malaysia, 1990-2004

7. Conclusion

The data provided by the bibliographical works (Jamilah, 1991; Zainab, 2006) indicated the following. Firstly, there was a substantial increase in the number of literature produced on women in Malaysia between the 1990s and early 2000s. From totals of over 300 publications every 10 years in the pre 1989 years, the amount of publications generated has increased about 8 times to 3,346. This indicates a healthy and active research environment. Secondly, there continued to be high interest in studying women in the work place and the focus was on the economic status of those working in factories on the assembly lines and the entrepreneurial ventures and support systems for women. Two other areas that continued to be of high interests were the social-cultural aspects in terms of rites and ceremonies where women were the key players especially in marriage ceremonies amongst the diverse ethnic groups in Malaysia. The problems faced by single mothers and the community support systems available were also highlighted in graduate research studies.

Women in the mass media were actively addressed by researchers in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Malaya. One area highly studied was the problems faced by women who were subjected to abuse and harassment in the home and the work place. This is a matter of grave concern as, if this situation emerged as the result of economic progress and emancipation, then it is an area that warrants further study to ascertain why this is happening and how women's organisations and governance can provide adequate support. One contributing factor to the growth of studies on women is the setting up of centres for research and learning on women studies such as the KANITA project centre in Universiti Sains Malaysia and the Gender Studies Programme at the Universiti Malaya. These two moves have made it possible for women's studies enthusiasts to initiate greater research activities to sustain the current and future interests.

Malaysia has an estimated population of over 26 million and on the whole men outnumbered the female to about 104 males to every 100 females. However enrolments in schools and universities indicated higher percentages for females (74%) compared to males (67%). Female's life expectancy is also higher than males especially for those within the 60-64 age groups. The statistical data also indicated that the proportion of single women aged between 20 and 34 increased from 43.2% in 1991 to 49.1 % in 2000 and the proportion of young adults tended to marry at a later age (Dept of Statistics, 2005;). This trend is expected to remain in 2006. This statistics indicate that the female population form nearly half of Malaysia's population, a higher percentage of them are enrolled in secondary and higher educational institutions, a higher percentage of those between 20 to 34 are unmarried and tend to marry late. This picture makes women's studies essential in order to ensure that women contribute productively to the Malaysia's economic growth as they form a large proportion of the nation's potentially available labour force.

The business of libraries in this situation is in making sure that serious literature on women in Malaysia is controlled bibliographically. Although there have been various bibliographies compiled by individuals there is no collaborative institutional effort and this should be considered seriously since it is viable in the Net environment and extremely important in sustaining research activities in any subject fields. Instead of making bibliographical compilations unnecessary and static the Net provides a complimentary avenue in the purposeful effort of collating, building and linking "like" and "related" resources. In reality collaborative bibliographical initiative is the way of the future where serious bibliographer partners to create and update listings in specific subject fields for use by other people and provides access to a wide variety of materials for the benefit of a community of compilers and users. Such collaboration could be initiated by a single compiler or a group who would rigorously select items bound by a topic (Bates, 1976). The framework for such a collaborative bibliographic system was proposed by Hendry and Carlyle (2006) who

highlighted the main characteristics of such a system. Firstly, the system would (a) allow for groups of people to participate in the selection decisions, to decide what to include or exclude; (b) enable incremental contributions and growth; (c) support a structured collections of impressive overall size; (d) organize contributors into a structured division of labour; (e) select items based on clear selection policy; and (f) design the system to support an “open bibliography” (allowing anyone to submit and rate items) or a “moderated bibliography” where a single reviewer or a group of reviewers blind-review submissions. Bibliographies are usually compiled by professional librarians or scholars and therefore could be easily differentiated from the listings compiled by amateurs or lone enthusiasts. Kirriemuir (1999) and Bawden and Robinson (2002) evaluated subject gateways and lamented on the large number of people and organizations creating lists or links to resources without any quality control criteria, standard of descriptions and often do not meet the normal standard of bibliographic creations.

Clearly academic institutional collaboration is possible in the case of women’ studies in Malaysia, since for the period 1990 to 2004 38% (1271) of the 3346 titles came from research activities at the universities in the form of Ph.D theses, Masters dissertations and final year academic reports. The rest were also churned out from academic research activities in the form of journal articles and conference papers (40%) and books and book chapters (20%). Collaboration and professional intermediation therefore becomes necessary to support purposeful bibliographic compilations to support effective information seeking amongst library and information users and researchers.

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