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Gender Correlates on Knowledge, Skills, Competencies Gained From and Impact of a Graduate Degree

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Abstract

The 2019 Philippine Statistics Authority report on education equality in the Philippines based on CHED data shows that more females were getting advanced degrees than males. This study aimed to determine the gender correlates on knowledge, skills, and competencies (KSC) gained and the impact of a graduate degree on the graduates of a College in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. Specifically, a comparison of the KSC gained, and the impact of their graduate degree on the personal lives and careers of male and female graduates was performed. Findings reveal no significant difference in the KSC gained and the impact of a graduate degree on the male and female graduates, except on interdisciplinary learning, with females being more knowledgeable in this area. In terms of effects, males experienced a higher impact on their graduate degrees than females in most areas of their personal lives and careers. However, statistically, such a difference was not significant. The researcher concluded that interdisciplinary learning is the only gender correlate for KSC and none for the impact of a graduate degree earned at a College in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. It is recommended that this study be replicated with more indicators for KSC and the impact and inclusion of other factors for the revised graduate school curricula.

Keywords: Gender-correlates, Knowledge, Skills, Competencies, Impact

INTRODUCTION

Filipinos consider education as a social vehicle for a better quality of life. They put a premium on education (Bernardo, 2003). After earning a bachelor's degree and landing a job, the graduates are motivated to pursue graduate education for various reasons. To name a few, graduate students desire to enhance their knowledge and competencies in their specialization and increase their chances for promotion, particularly for a supervisory or administrative position (Austin, 2002). A graduate degree provides graduates with more points in the ranking system of their organization. Higher points mean higher rank and salary (Zhou, 2019). Maslow's theory on motivation can explain this. According to him, motivation forces a person to fulfill five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (King-Hill, 2015).

One of the priority items in the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for global sustainable development is access to high-quality education, and there should be no disparity among the beneficiaries as to gender (UN Global Compact, 2023). The graduate school contributes to further the quality of education that the country's workforce possesses. Developing leaders in education or any organization is also an objective (Swensen *et al*., 2016). Another priority concern of the SDGs is gender equality. Access to quality education is complemented by the goal of gender equality (Merma-Molina *et al*., 2024). For the years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, more females are enrolled in graduate programs in the Philippines than

males (San Buenaventura, 2019). This study compared the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained by the male and female graduates of the Graduate School of a College in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. It determined if there is a difference in the impact of a graduate degree on the personal life and career of male and female graduates.

METHOD

The descriptive study involved graduates of a College in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines with the degrees of Master of Arts in Education and Doctor of Education for the school year 2018-2019 and earlier years. It identified the gender correlates on the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained and the impact of a graduate degree on the personal life and careers of male and female graduates. The 42 participants are products of the 2012 curricula of the Graduate School. The curricula of the different degree programs were revised in 2016; thus, the school year 2018-2019 graduates belong to the old curriculum as it takes at least three years and five years to finish a master's degree and a doctoral degree, respectively. The revised curricula were implemented for entering graduate students of 2017-2018.

A questionnaire constructed by the researcher was used to gather data from the graduates and, therefore, was subjected to the limitations of the data-gathering instrument. It included items that determined the extent to which the participants gained knowledge, skills, and competencies from their graduate degree program. In addition, statements that elicited the impact of the participants' graduate degrees on their personal life and careers formed another part of the questionnaire. The data-gathering instrument was distributed to the respondents personally or through graduate students who have contact with any qualified graduate. The extent to which the KSC was learned and the impact of a graduate degree was measured utilizing the weighted mean, and the t-test for independent groups was performed to determine significant differences with probability ≤ 0.05 (Kim, 2015). An indicator significantly differing between males and females is considered a gender correlate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Extent of Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies Gained by Male and Female Graduates.

Table 1. Comparison of the extent of knowledge, skills, and competencies the male and female graduates gained.

Areas	Male	DI	Female	DI	t-value	p-value
1. Overall program courses	4.80	VHK	4.80	VHK	0.17	0.87
2. Thesis/Dissertation	4.77	VHK	4.79	VHK	0.17	0.87
3. Foundation Courses	477	VHK	4.69	VHK	-052	0.61
4. Major Courses	4.92	VHK	4.76	VHK	-1.25	0.22
5. Cognate Courses	4.92	VHK	4.69	VHK	-1.66	0.11
6. Network with peers, professors, etc.	4.69	VHK	4.72	VHK	0.20	0.90
7. Experience with peers	4.62	VHK	4.76	VHK	0.94	0.35
8. Interdisciplinary Learning	4.31	HK	4.79	VHK	2.08	0.04*
9. Relevance of subject requirements	4.69	VHK	4.72	VHK	0.21	0.84
10. Enhancement of competencies	4.77	VHK	4.79	VHK	0.17	0.87
11. Problem-solving skills	4.69	VHK	4.72	VHK	0.20	0.80
12. Communication skills	4.69	VHK	4.79	VHK	0.70	0.49
13. Technology Skills	4.46	VHK	4.52	VHK	0.28	0.78
14. Critical Thinking Skills	4.69	VHK	4.83	VHK	0.98	0.34
15. Analytical Skills	4.76	VHK	4.76	VHK	-0.07	0.94
OVERALL MEAN	4.70	VHK	4.74	VHK	0.34	0.74

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = Not Knowledgeable (NK), 1.50-2.49 = Fairly Knowledgeable (FK), 2.50-3.49 = Moderately Knowledgeable (MK), 3.50-4.49 = Highly Knowledgeable (HK), 4.50-5.00 = Very Highly Knowledgeable (VHK); (0.05 level of significance)

Graduates were asked to provide the extent of knowledge, skills, and competencies that they gained while pursuing their graduate degree. Females claimed they are highly knowledgeable in all areas, as presented in Table 1. The same holds for males except for interdisciplinary learning. In this concern, the difference between females and males is significant, with a p-value of 0.04. The findings show that male and female graduates do not manifest a gender gap in the extent of knowledge, skills, and competencies gained in graduate school, except in interdisciplinary learning. Female graduates are better at interdisciplinary learning, which is learning a single topic from different viewpoints. This is contrary to Albert's (2013) findings, who claimed that several studies have resulted in better performance of girls than boys in school. Voyer & Voyer (2014) have a similar finding from their meta-analysis research involving students from all levels, including graduate school, where females performed better than males, as reflected in their school marks. This study's results support that the Philippines ranked 7th in the world in terms of gender equality and has the highest gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region (Schwab, 2018).

Impact of Graduate Degree on the Personal Life and Career of Male and Female Graduates.

Table 2. Comparison of the impact of graduate degree(s) on male and female graduates' personal life and career.

Areas	Male	DI	Female	DI	t-value	p-value
1. Financial Stability	4.57	VHI	4.28	HI	1.09	0.28
2. Higher prestige in the academic community	4.85	VHI	4.66	VHI	-1.13	0.27
3. Children can pursue dream course	4.62	VHI	4.20	HI	-1.38	0.18
4. Work Promotion	4.46	HI	4.55	VHI	0.38	0.71
5. Recognition from Employer	4.54	VHI	4.31	HI	-0.83	0.41
6. More respect from family members	4.77	VHI	4.55	VHI	-1.05	0.30
7. Travel to local destinations	4..31	HI	4.10	HI	-0.69	0.49
8. Travel to foreign destinations	3.69	HI	3.03	MI	-1.56	0.13
9. More savings	3.92	HI	3.62	HI	-1.18	0.25
10. Other investments	4.01	HI	3.40	MI	-1.85	0.07
11. Acquisition of house and lot	3.85	HI	3.55	HI	0.75	0.46
12. Acquisition of appliances and electronic gadgets	4.01	HI	3.76	HI	-1.03	0.31
13. Acquisitions of a vehicle (car, motorcycle, etc.)	4.23	HI	3.50	HI	-1.92	0.06
14. More luxuries in life (like jewelry, etc.)	3.69	HI	3.24	MI	-1.18	0.24
15. Increased membership in civic organizations	4.23	HI	4.00	HI	0.79	0.43
16. Wider circle of acquaintances	4.69	VHI	4.48	HI	-1.15	0.26
OVERALL MEAN	4.28	VHI	3.96	HI	-1.67	0.10

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = No Impact (NI), 1.50-2.49 = Fair Impact (FI), 2.50-3.49 = Moderate Impact (MI), 3.50-4.49 = High Impact (HI), 4.50-5.00 = Very High Impact (VHI); (0.05 level of significance)

Table 2 contains data that compares the impact of the graduate degree on the personal lives and careers of male and female graduates. Generally, the males obtained a higher mean value (WM = 4.28) than the females (Wm = 3.96), but the difference was not significant *(p-value = 0.10)*. Specifically, the males got higher mean values than the females in all areas except work promotion. Graduate Schools provide opportunities for professionals to enhance the knowledge, skills, and competencies they acquire in their undergraduate courses. Regarding the impact of the graduate degree on personal life and career, the males perceived themselves to experience a higher impact on their earned graduate degree (De Gayardon *et al*., 2018). Macalalad *et al*. (2016) studied the impact of a graduate program, specifically an MBA. They found that having a graduate degree gave them better chances of regularization in their work status as well as work promotion until they attained managerial positions. Having a master's or

doctorate is a requirement to be able to teach in a higher educational institution (Vural & Başaran, 2021).

King *et al*. (2012) found that gender differences exist in their social goals. The boys performed better in social affiliation, while the girls outperformed the boys in social concern, social responsibility, and social status goals. This study found that the graduate degree of both males and females greatly impacts their social status, as shown in the recognition, prestige, and respect from their family, friends, employers, and academic community.

CONCLUSION

The study's results determined the extent of knowledge, skills, and competencies gained by male and female graduates in various areas of their graduate programs. Results revealed that males and females demonstrated high levels of knowledge and proficiency with no significant gender gap except in the interdisciplinary learning area, where females exhibited significantly higher knowledge. Regarding the impact of graduate degrees on the personal lives and careers of male and female graduates, males generally perceived a higher effect, though not statistically different from females. As observed, graduate education was found to contribute positively to financial stability, academic prestige, work promotion, and various aspects of personal and professional development for both male and female graduates.

SUGGESTIONS

The statistical difference between male and female graduates in interdisciplinary learning suggests that Higher Education Institutions should consider promoting multidisciplinary approaches in their graduate programs to give way for incorporating or integrating diverse perspectives, encouraging collaborative projects, and providing opportunities for students to engage with various disciplines.

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