



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VOCATIONAL INTERESTS OF
MATRICULATION STUDENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC
UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL
COUNSELORS**

BY

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**KULLIYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA**

August 1997

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VOCATIONAL INTERESTS OF MATRICULATION STUDENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

This study examined gender differences in the vocational interests of matriculation students at the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Since it is believed that origin plays an important role in the development of gender differences in vocational interests, origin differences in vocational interests were also examined. The dependent variables were scores on vocational interests, gender-occupation stereotypes and congruence between students' vocational interests and their respective programs.

The major hypotheses of the study were that (a) there are significant differences in the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students according to their gender, (b) there are significant differences on the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students according to their rural-urban origin, (c) there are significant differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes of IIUM matriculation students according to their gender, (d) there are significant differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes of IIUM matriculation students according to their rural-urban origin, (e) there are significant differences in the degree of congruence between the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students and their respective programs of study according to their gender, and (f) there are significant differences in the degree of congruence between the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students and their respective programs of study according to their rural-urban origin.

Data was collected from a sample of matriculation students at the International Islamic University, Malaysia Matriculation Center (N = 352). The instrument used was

the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI). Modification was made in the answer sheet of the VPI for measuring gender-occupation stereotypes. The degree of congruence was determined by comparing the each student's profile of vocational interests, as expressed in response to the VPI, with the characteristics of the field of study he/she is enrolled in.

Statistical analysis by using Multivariate Analysis Of Variance (MANOVA) revealed that there were significant gender differences in the vocational interests of the students. Males had higher scores than females on the realistic and on the Masculinity/Femininity scales of the VPI. There were also significant differences between the scores of male and female IIUM matriculation students on gender-occupation stereotypes. Females considered most of the occupations to be equally suitable for both males and females. On the other hand, males considered most of the occupations to be suitable for males only. However, there were variations in both cases in the percentage of items considered suitable for males or females in each of the VPI scales.

On the variables of congruence between vocational interests and programs of study, there were no significant differences between male and female students. It was found however that there was generally a low degree of congruence between vocational interests and programs of study for the whole sample. This could be an indication of problems with the career development of the concern students. It was also found that there were no significant origin differences on any of the dependent variables. The findings have important implications for school counselors. They show areas where counselors need to pay attention in doing their work. Some suggestions are made to that effect.

خلاصة البحث

الفروق الجنسية في التفضيلات المهنية لدى طلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، ودلالاتها للموجهين النفسيين بالمدارس

قام هذا البحث بدراسة الفروق الجنسية في التفضيلات المهنية لدى طلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، كما قام بدراسة الفروق البيئية في التفضيلات المهنية حيث يعتقد أن البيئة (الريف/المدينة) التي نشأوا فيها تلعب دورا مهما في نمو الفروق الجنسية في التفضيلات المهنية. ولقد تمثلت المتغيرات التابعة للمتغيرات الثابتة سالفة الذكر في عدد ونوعية المهن التي يتطلعون إليها، وآرائهم العامة في ملائمة هذه المهن لأي من الجنسين (ذكورا أم إناثا) وتطابق برامج دراستهم مع تطلعاتهم المهنية.

أما فروض البحث فكان أهمها: (أ) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين التفضيلات المهنية لطلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا نسبة إلى متغير الجنس (ذكور- إناث)، (ب) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين التفضيلات المهنية لطلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا نسبة إلى متغير البيئة (خلفية ريفية- خلفية مدنية)، (ج) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الآراء العامة لطلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا في ملائمة مهن معينة لجنس دون آخر نسبة إلى متغير الجنس (ذكور- إناث)، (د) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الآراء العامة لطلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا في ملائمة مهن معينة لجنس دون آخر نسبة إلى متغير البيئة (خلفية ريفية- خلفية مدنية)، (هـ) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين طلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا في مدى تماثل برامج دراستهم في المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا مع تفضيلاتهم المهنية نسبة إلى متغيري الجنس، (و) توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين طلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا مع تفضيلاتهم المهنية نسبة إلى متغير البيئة.

وقد تكونت العينة موضوع الدراسة من ٣٥٢ طالبا وطالبة من طلاب المركز الإعدادي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، جمعت عنها المعلومات باستخدام قائمة التفضيل المهني (Vocational Preference Inventory) بعد تعديل كراسه إجابته ليتمكن الباحث من قياس الفروق

الجنسية والبيئية فيما يتعلق بالآراء العامة للطلاب عن ملائمة مهن معينة لجنس دون آخر، وقد تم تحديد درجة تماثل تفضيلات الطلاب المهنية مع برامج دراستهم في المركز الإحصائي بالمقارنة بين خصائص المهن التي يفضلونها وخصائص برامج دراستهم في المركز الإحصائي.

وقد أظهر التحليل الإحصائي باستخدام طريقة تحليل التباين متعدد المتغيرات (Multivariate Analysis of Variance/ MANOVA) وجود فروق جنسية ذات دلالة إحصائية في التفضيل المهني لدى طلاب المركز الإحصائي للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، فقد كان متوسط عدد المهن التي أبدى الطلاب فيها رغباتهم، من المهن المندرجة تحت تقسيم "واقعي" أعلى عند الذكور، كما كان متوسط رغبات الذكور أعلى من متوسط رغبات الإناث في المهن المندرجة تحت تقسيم "الذكورة/ الأنوثة"، وفيما يتعلق برأي الطلاب في ملائمة مهن معينة لجنس دون آخر، فقد وجدت فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية أيضا؛ فقد اعتبرت الفتيات أكثر المهن مناسبة للذكور والإناث بنفس الدرجة، أما الذكور فقد رأوا أن أكثر المهن مناسبة للذكور فقط.

وفيما يتعلق بالتطابق بين تفضيلات الطلاب المهنية وبرامج دراستهم في المركز الإحصائي، فقد أظهر التحليل الإحصائي باستخدام طريقة "مربع كاي" (Chi-Square) أنه لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكور والإناث، وبين الذين نشأوا في الريف والذين نشأوا في المدينة، إلا أن درجة التماثل بين التفضيلات المهنية والبرامج الدراسية كانت منخفضة جدا لدى جميع الطلاب المعنيين، وقد يدل ذلك على وجود قصور ما في برامج الإرشاد والتوجيه المهني في المدارس بماليزيا، مما يستدعي اهتمام الموجهين النفسيين بالمدارس.

APPROVAL PAGE

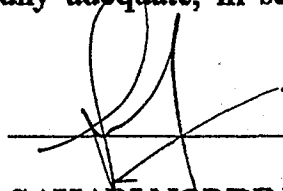
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10/4/97

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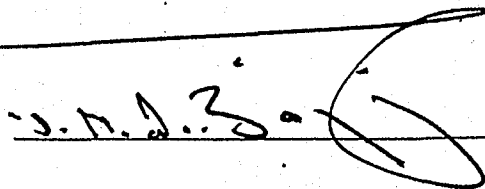
This thesis was submitted to the Department of Education and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education



12/4/97

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended

NAME..... SEKAMANYA SIRAJE ABDALLAH

SIGNATURE.....  DATE..... 18/4/1997

To my grand father,

AL-MARHUM ALHAJ ABDULLAH MALIDA

**.....for his companionship, love, encouragement and all his personal sacrifices
to make my educational aspirations a reality.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to record my appreciation of the excellent help and guidance accorded to me by my supervisor Dr. Zaleha Izhah. Dr. Zaleha gave me considerable guidance and a great amount of correct and useful criticisms. I am also thankful to my second supervisor Dr. Sahari Nordin for his assistance with statistical analysis as well as his helpful suggestions at various stages of this study. I also wish to thank the Head of the Department of Education Dr. Rosnani Hashim, the coordinator M. ED program Dr. A. M. Hassoubah, academic and non-academic staff at the department of education IIUM, as well as fellow students in the Master of Education program for their advice, support and fruitful companionship.

I would like to thank the Malaysian government which financed my masters study at IIUM under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program. I wish to extend my thanks to staff at the Training Unit, Public Service Department (JPA) for their cooperation and understanding during the tenure of my scholarship.

My deepest thanks and gratitude to my parents who sacrificed so much for my education. Special thanks and prayers are for my grand father the late Alhaj Abdullah Malida who contributed so much in making me the kind of person I am. May Allah bless him.

I wish to thank sister Salwa Haj Mahalle and my wife Jamilah for their assistance with translating the instrument to Malay language. I thank my wife Jamilah once again for her assistance in organizing the pilot study and typing the manuscript. Moreover, she offered me many fruitful suggestions and encouragement throughout the course of this study.

I would also like to thank Dr. John Holland and the Psychological Assessment Resources Inc. for granting me permission to translate, adapt and use the Vocational Preference Inventory as the main instrument for data collection.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the counselor, IIUM Matriculation Center, Brother Ishamuddin Ismail, for his assistance organizing the sample frame as well as collecting the data. I would also like to thank those students at the IIUM Matriculation Center who participated in this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

The purpose of education in all societies includes helping the youngsters to grow up into productive adults who can contribute to the progress of society (Super, 1957). It is believed that people are oriented at an early stage in their life toward specific occupations either consciously or unconsciously (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990). It has been recognized that gender is a major factor in this early development of vocational interests (Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1993). Many societies tend to teach their children at an early stage the roles and occupations which are considered suitable either for males or females. Such an early orientation, which is in many cases reinforced by such important social institutions like schools, leaves many young men and women unable to fully utilize their potentials in contributing to the progress of their society.

Vocational interests have been defined as the activities and occupations an individual would like to be involved in (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). In the case of students, the term vocational interests may refer to the kind of work they like to be involved in after completing their studies as well as the educational programs they like to be enrolled in. A number of factors have been considered by scholars to be influential in shaping the vocational interests of individuals from an early stage. Among the strongest factors are the individual's genetic composition, the family, the school with all its subsystems, as well as the wider socio-political environment (Hotchkiss & Borow, 1990; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). Such factors determine to a large extent whether someone will be able to get involved in the type of occupation he/she is interested in.

In many cases an individual may be interested in an occupation and yet end up in a totally different field. Vocational psychologists have introduced the concept of congruence between vocational interests and the vocations people actually pursue. This basically means that there should be agreement between the occupations one is interested in and the occupations one finally gets involved in (Holland, 1966; 1985a; Hotchkiss & Borow, 1990). Such an agreement between vocational interests and the actual work someone does is believed to lead to more stable vocational and academic life, higher vocational and academic achievement as well as greater satisfaction in life (Astin, 1963; 1965; Ghei, 1960; Holland, 1966; 1985a).

Thus, among the most important objectives of school counselors would be to help their counselees to attain congruent vocational interests. This is normally achieved by a number of means which help the youngsters to understand themselves and the requirements and characteristics of different occupations (Herr & Cramer, 1992). The same researchers suggested however that the attainment of congruency in vocational interests and choices is in many cases determined by the opportunities as well as the gender-role prescriptions in a given society. In this way many youngsters end up in occupations they are not interested in just because they could not join the occupations they were interested in. Researchers have found that in most cases the vocational interests of females are less likely to be in agreement with the fields of study and work they actually pursue (Bem, 1981; Betz, 1994; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990).

The above situation partly explains the gender differences in vocational interests and choices. Many researchers have found in different societies that males tend to be more interested than females in occupations which involve manipulation of objects, mechanical, mathematical and high order intellectual reasoning. On the other hand, females tend to be

more interested than males in occupations which involve literary and artistic expression, dealing with and caring for others as well as clerical and secretarial occupations (Jamilah, 1992; Quek Ai Hwa, 1986; Tomlinson & Evans-Hughes, 1991).

Many scholars have argued however that such differences are not inherent in the nature and composition of males and females but are mostly a result of the socialization process (Betz, 1984; Gaskell, 1992). Among the most significant barriers is lack of sound background in subjects which are considered prerequisite for entry into certain fields. Gaskell (1992) argued that females are under represented in the business and engineering fields because they do not get the same encouragement to study Mathematics as their male counterparts.

In addition to the above, lack of clear self knowledge and adequate information about the world of work leaves many boys and girls seriously handicapped in vocational terms. This is where the role of the school counselor comes in. The school counselor has to help his/her counselees to develop adaptive career development by helping them to understand themselves, their aptitudes and qualifications, the demands of the world of work as well as the available opportunities. The counselor should use vocational guidance and counseling methods which have been found to help students to overcome some of the above barriers and to fully actualize their potentials regardless of whether they are males or females.

Against that background the present study was conducted on matriculation students of the International Islamic University Malaysia to determine the extent to which their vocational interests are influenced by gender, and see what school counselors have to do if the vocational interests of students are gender-stereotyped. The International Islamic University Matriculation Center was established in 1985 to prepare students for the

various undergraduate programs offered by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It was realized that since the IIUM uses English and Arabic languages as the media of instruction, and since the Malaysian system of education did not provide enough competency in the above two languages, there was need for a program to prepare the students prior to joining the university. In addition, the matriculation program would provide the students with an adequate background in the fields of study they want to join in the university.

The IIUM Matriculation Center is guided by the objectives of the university which include; revitalizing the Islamic concept of education, re-establishing the primacy of Islam in all fields of knowledge, reviving the ancient Islamic tradition of learning and widening the choices open to the Muslim Ummah in higher education (IIUM Matriculation Center Guide Book, 1994, p.8).

The university has sought to achieve those objectives by providing education leading to recognized Bachelors as well as higher degrees using Islam as the guiding principle of learning and teaching in its academic, research and student development programs.

The objectives of the Matriculation Center can be considered as results of and complement to the general objectives of the IIUM referred to above. The objectives of the IIUM Matriculation Center are spelled out in the 1994 Guide Book as follows:

1. To provide the appropriate academic and Islamic environment for the preparation of suitably qualified candidates for admission into IIUM undergraduate programs.
2. To produce the required number of suitable candidates for admission into the various Kulliyahs at the undergraduate level (p.10).

The above objectives are achieved by implementing academic programs, normally designed by the respective Kulliyahs, encouraging and organizing developmental activities

for students and providing facilities to help students play their role in line with the policies of the university.

Currently, students are grouped under eight programs which correspond to the major programs of study at the International Islamic University, Malaysia. They are:

1. Arabic Language
2. English Language
3. Economics and Management
4. Engineering
5. Human Sciences
6. Islamic Revealed Knowledge
7. Laws
8. Medicine

Like the IIUM, the Matriculation Center follows an equal opportunity policy. There is no discrimination between males and females in the provision of education and student development activities and facilities. A glance at the figures from the Admissions and Records division of the Center shows that girls actually comprise more than half of the student population at the center.

The center is equipped with guidance and counseling facilities run by professionally qualified counselors. The counseling unit provides a supportive system to help students in their process of growth and development. The major aims of the counseling unit include: helping students understand themselves, develop awareness of self-potential, develop confidence in thought and action, and develop the ability to make wise decisions. The programs also help develop students' curiosity, foster active participation in educational

processes and help students to attain gratification in their efforts to achieve academic excellence. The overall aim is to produce a responsible and pious (taqiy) individual (IIUM Matriculation Center Guide Book, 1996).

The counseling unit provides career guidance to the students. This is to help them in their career choice and development process. The counselor basically provides information and guidance to the students in that regard. Among the activities and programs of the unit are individual counseling, group counseling, peer counseling, study skills workshops, assertion and motivation training and community services. There is also a resource center to provide students with adequate and up-to-date information, especially about career-related matters.

Given the nature and composition of the IIUM Matriculation Center, and given the philosophical foundation on which it was established, it is important that counselors perform their role in a way that fosters the development of all students regardless of their gender. Unfortunately, such issues tend to be taken for granted. The distribution of students in the different programs at the IIUM Matriculation Center is a prior indication of gender-occupational segregation. The present study will help the concerned counselors to understand the nature and magnitude of the task facing them.

Statement of the Problem

According to the Educational Statistics of Malaysia (1986), about 51% of the Malaysian population are females. More than 50% of all women in Malaysia are involved in the labor force (Jamilah, 1992). However, it has been noted that there are strong gender-role stereotypes, and that occupations are very much segregated in terms of gender (D'cruz, 1966; Jamilah, 1992; Khamis, 1970). Because of that, women are employed in

less paying, traditionally feminine jobs. Is this phenomenon of gender differences in occupations an outcome of the vocational interests people hold when they are in school and the vocational choices they make as a result of those interests? Many researchers would answer that in the affirmative (e.g., Bem, 1981; Herr & Cramer, 1992; Hotchkiss & Borow, 1990). A number of researchers have indicated existence of gender differences in vocational interests of Malaysian students without trying to critically analyze those differences (e.g., D'cruz, 1966; Kigen, 1975; Quek Ai Hwa, 1986).

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the structure of vocational interests of matriculation students at the International Islamic University, Malaysia, to discover gender differences in those interests, and to determine the extent to which those differences are related to the gender-occupation stereotypes held by those students.

Place of origin has been considered by many researchers to be a major factor in the development of gender differences in vocational interests (Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1993; Quek Ai Hwa, 1986). Therefore, origin differences in vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students were also analysed.

The Sub-problems:

1. The first sub-problem is to determine if there are gender differences in the structure of vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students.
2. The second sub-problem is to determine if there are differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes held by male and female students in their perception of the suitability of certain occupations for males only, females only or both males and females.
3. The third sub-problem is to determine if there are gender differences in the degree of congruence between the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students and their

programs of study.

4. The fourth sub-problem is to determine if there are differences in the vocational interests of students who originated from rural areas and those who originated from urban areas.

5. The fifth sub-problem is to determine if there are differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes of urban and rural originated IIUM matriculation students.

Hypotheses:

1. There are significant differences in vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students according to their gender.

2. There are significant differences in the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students according to their rural-urban origin.

3. There are significant differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes of IIUM matriculation students according to their gender.

4. There are significant differences in the gender-occupation stereotypes of IIUM students according to their rural-urban origin.

5. There are significant differences in the degree of congruence between the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students and their respective programs of study according to their gender.

6. There are significant differences in the degree of congruence between the vocational interests of IIUM matriculation students and their respective programs of study according to their rural-urban origin.