

Influence of gender on academic performance: an empirical study of management students (undergraduates) in the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Amali Nisansala¹ and WAS Weerakkody¹

Many researches have been carried out in many countries of the world on the factors affecting the students' academic performance in university examinations. Some of these factors have been identified as attendance of lectures, knowledge of English, income of the parents, perceptions of learning, attitudes of students and lecturers towards education, teaching aids and methods, and environmental factors. In countries such as United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and USA, it has been recorded that gender has a significant relationship with the examination performance. According to this, it can be identified that there are theoretical explanations in respect of influence of gender on university students' academic performance. Most of studies examining the relationship between gender and university students' academic performance have been conducted in the Western context. To fill this gap, it is important to conduct research in non-Western context. However, no substantive empirical study has been conducted to investigate, the influence of gender on university students' academic performance in Sri Lanka. This is the research gap that was primarily addressed in this research. Further this study focused the gap of not having conduct a research before, to find out the influence of gender on academic performance of management undergraduates at the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya. The objective of the research was to investigate whether there is a significant difference on the Bachelor of Business Management (Human Resource, Accountancy, and Marketing) Special Degree Examination's performance of university students with respect to variables are neither manipulated nor controlled for the study. Hence, the study was conducted in a non contrived setting. As the data for this study was collected at a several point in time, the study was longitudinal in time horizon. Sample for this study was selected from the Department of Human Resources Management, Department of Accountancy and Department of Marketing at University of Kelaniya. The survey was carried out using 5 years' data which are related to the period, from 2002/2003 academic year to 2006/2007 academic year. The sample was consisted with 600 students (300 females and 300 males). Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. The unit of analysis was at the individual level. For this study, independent sample T-Test was used to compare the academic performance of two gender categories. Results indicated that significant differences exist between the academic performance of the male and female students in this study. Exploratory data analysis indicated that in all the course units considered, female students tend to perform better at university examinations than their male counterparts.

Key words: Gender, Academic performance, Management students, Examination, University of Kelaniya

¹Department of Human Resources Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka