

# Gender Marginalization in Student's Academic Culture in the Higher Education at Portugal

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## Gender Marginalization in Student's Academic Culture in the Higher Education at Portugal

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**Abstract:** This research aimed at analyzing gender marginalization on students academic culture in the higher education at Portugal. This current research, mainly employed quantitative supported by qualitative approach, was conducted at University of Minho and the population consisted of 177 students in the university. The data were collected through ktp research questionnaires interview and documentation. The data analysis was done by the followings open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The simple statistical analysis, parity index was used. The qualitative analysis covered careful analysis and contextualization of the phenomena. The results of data analysis were presented in narratives, tables and others. The findings suggest there were gender inequalities that disadvantage male students in the academic activities. Female students get benefit from and are easier to get access to a variety of academic activities and facilities. Male students are less involved in academic activities and facilities. Indirectly, there has occurred gender-based marginalization. It can be concluded that there is gender-based marginalization that has put male students at disadvantages in academic activities and facilities.

**Key words:** Academic culture, students, gender-based marginalization, Portugal, coding

### INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination in education leads to inequality of opportunities in employment. Even with the same educational background, the income of the female labor force is consistently lower than that of men in most countries. On the other hand the higher the education level of workers the smaller the income differences are between men and women. This point suggests that the longer the educational intervention, the greater the impact is in reducing the divergence of productivity among men and women. The most important actor in the field of higher education and who needs attention is student. In addition, inherent to their position in academia, students also are expected to be agents of change, presenting meaningful contribution to both social and cultural lives at their educational institution.

One of the countries in Europe in which the gender gap exists is Portugal. This country displays a drop of twelve places (from the ranking of 35 in 2011-47 in 2012) in the global gender gap index, mainly caused by the decrease of the ratio of primary and tertiary education as well as by the percentage of women in ministerial positions (from 31% in 2011-18% in 2012) (Hausman *et al*, 2012). One of the gender disparities in Portugal is in the area of education especially in higher education.

To obtain a clearer picture of the gender marginalization among students in Portugal, a research on "gender marginalization in the students academic culture in the higher education at Portugal" was conducted. This research aimed to investigate and solve the gender marginalization problem. Therefore, the formulation of the research problem is as follows: Was there gender-based marginalization in the students academic culture in the higher education at Portugal starting from the aforementioned research problem the purpose of this research was to analyze gender marginalization on the students academic culture in the higher education at Portugal.

**Literature review:** In university of minho, Portugal, some departments have unbalanced number of students by sex. Some departments have a high number of female students such as education, sociology, psychology, etc. While some departments have more number of male students such as engineering, Physics, communication science, etc., However, the opportunity of female students to pursue higher education is still overshadowed by the perceived fields of study that are considered to be more suitable for women (Widodo, 2013).

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Sex segregation across fields of study, for example, can be more easily reconciled with “equal but different” cultural principles (espoused even by some feminists) than can segregate across a hierarchy of tertiary levels. Even in the most egalitarian cultural contexts, man and woman distributions across fields of study are highly gendered. The extent to which these distributional differences reflect anticipated work/family conflict, taken-for-granted gender labels or deeply rooted curricular preference, has not yet been empirically resolved. Structural features associated with economic and social modernization-in particular, diversified tertiary system and high rates of female employment-exacerbate some forms of sex segregation in higher education and partially offset equalizing effects of egalitarian ideals. Interestingly, there is no direct effect of either female tertiary participation rates or tertiary system size on gender distributions. It appears that the “massification” and feminization of higher education are themselves less relevant to the structure of tertiary sex segregation than are the specific forms that these trends take. Sex segregation will generally be more extreme where large size is achieved through disproportionate growth of non-university institutions and where female “access” is achieved through women’s concentration in vocational colleges or stereotypically female fields of study (Charles and Bradley, 2002).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This current research was conducted by means of quantitative supported by qualitative approach. This research had been taken place in the University of Minho, Portugal from May-August 2015. This university has large number of students which influence the student’s academic profile. The population in this research consisted of 177 students of University of Minho. The sample was based on the presence of sharp gender gap in some departments.

The data were collected through several ways, namely desktop research questionnaire interview and documentation. The questionnaires were distributed to the research samples to obtain the information about the student’s academic culture. Then, the interview was performed to obtain a comprehensive opinion about gender gap in the students academic culture from academic staffs in university of Minho. These data were used to provide information about the academic activities of University of Minho. The documentation included notes, quantitative data as well as research results that had been published and provided significant information to this research. The data analysis was carried out by

following several stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The open coding phase was the assessment stage which was aimed to obtain more in-depth information in accordance with events or situations in the field thus, it could expand the understanding of the phenomenon under research. In this phase, the data from the interview with Portuguese were translated into English for the purpose of easy comprehension. The axial coding phase was the phase of the development of open coding. In this phase, the data from the interviews were grouped based on the similar answers and reasons inferred. The selective coding was the final step. In this phase, the data from the interviews were prepared to support the research results. Furthermore, the data in the percentage were calculated into the simple statistical analysis by using the parity index; then they were interpreted and summarized to gain the understanding about the problem. The results of qualitative analysis were in the form of descriptions.

The results of data analysis based on the problem and the objective of the research was presented in the form of narratives, tables as well as data presentation. The presentation of data was created systematically and efficiently to be better understood and to provide optimal clarification for the readers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of gender marginalization can be seen by calculating gender equality by the parity index. If the calculation results have shown more unequal number, then gender marginalization has occurred in certain academic activities. According to Widodo (2013), parity index is the index of gender equity. In parity index, numbers close to number one indicates the occurrence of gender equality. While numbers that are away from number one indicate gender inequality. If the numbers are above number one, gender inequalities occur on men; if the numbers are below number one it means that there is an inequality that does not benefit women. Both sexes are active in visiting lecturers in the classroom. This result is supported by the opinion of three academic staffs stating that there is no difference in the study in the classroom. The parity index of parent’s profession and parent’s education of the student at University of Minho can be seen in Table 1. Parity index table can be seen in Table 2. There is gender equality that is not favorable in father’s profession of low level with the number of parity index 0.97. However, there is a gender inequality of male students in father’s profession of high level with parity index number of 1.11. There is a gender inequality of male students in mother’s profession of low level with the number of parity index 1.18. While female students are put

Table 1: Parity Index of parent's profession and education of the students at University of Minho

Degree	Father's profession	Mother's profession	Father's education	Mother's education
<b>Female (%)</b>				
Low level	75.57	78.89	91.02	90.11
High level	24.43	21.11	8.98	9.89
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<b>Male (%)</b>				
Low level	77.92	66.68	76.79	76.78
High level	22.08	33.32	23.21	23.22
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<b>Parity index</b>				
Low level	0.97	1.18	1.19	1.18
High level	1.11	0.63	0.39	0.43

Table 2: Parity Index of marginalization gender of the student's academic activities at University of Minho

		No. of question													
Chosen answer		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
A	0.93	#	1.00	0.40	1.29	1.23	0.87	1.24	0.61	0.70	1.73	1.27	0.98	1.17	
B	5.08	0.42	0.00	0.38	0.72	1.23	2.30	0.46	2.46	1.14	1.48	0.34	0.50	0.80	
C	#	0.64	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.45	#	0.00	1.24	0.00	0.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	
D	0.54	0.81	0.00	4.51	0.00	2.21	0.00	0.00	2.56	0.00	1.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	
E	1.10	1.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
F	0.48	#	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
G	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Undefined; 1, 2, ...

more at disadvantages in term of mother's profession of high level compared with males in the rate of parity index 0.63.

In general, female students are more active in academic activities compared with male students. Female students are more diligent in approaching the learning experience such as student's attitudes toward school, as seen from the student's attention, task persistence, eagerness to learn, craft, flexibility and neatness. The phenomenon is not related to the student's intelligence, but more on the involvement of students in the class-how often the students submit the income and accept the problem, how often students are out of control and how well students develop their social skills.

The behavior of female students in the classroom makes the lecturers give better grades to female students than male students. Female students at the university are usually scored better than male students. Even when they scored bad on certain quizzes, the final grades are still better than male students. Moreover, lecturers will give an extra mark for males who behave like females. The distinction of this assessment could have long term effects. This will affect the female student's ability to proceed to the academic opportunities and an opportunity to pursue further education.

Most female students are more diligent than male students to make use of academic facilities. Female students use their extra time to do an extra work or anything worthwhile by utilizing supporting academic facilities, compared to male students who prefer taking the time to play with his friends that they forget their

obligations. Male students are more unruly because they are more aggressive and intrusive than female students who have calm, shy and self possessed natures. Male students usually do not like to set up and are free to do what they want without thinking of the coming risks.

These results were supported by student's style of living. Mostly male students live in a rent room in another student's house and other types of living than female students. While female students mostly stay in their parent's house, friend's house and rent room in the university flat. Living in their parent's house has a positive consequence for female students; whereas male students need more freedom, especially living in a place without any strict rules like the university flat that are preferred by most female students.

Female students usually prefer to organize because if they have leisure time, they always use it for taking a rest and do useful activities; compared to male students who are lazy and do not like complicated activities, they would rather spend their time with their friends. This research shows that many female students are active to be participants in the seminar, the organizing committee and speakers than male students. This research reveals that more male students show their interest by joining civil movement, demonstration, association nucleus (in the courses) and other activities. Differently, female students show their interest by joining political parties and university associations. The organizations that are joined by male students are generally not well-structured; while more female students join more well-structured organizations.

Academic activities are mostly done by female students. It is supported by the option to choose a religion and practice it. Catholic religion teaches its followers to do good things in life such as searching for knowledge and learning as one of good deeds. Catholic religion teaches them to work hard, make sacrifices for a better future, respect others and try to move ahead. All things regulated in the religion have led the female students to be more assertive/aggressive in life including learning.

Female students who are more involved in academic activities may also be supported by the conditions of profession and education of their parents. There are more female students who come from low-level workers than male students. This may lead to accelerate female students to raise the degree of their own lives in the future. Parent's education is also likely affecting female students' academic activities. There are more female students who come from low-level educated parents. This led them to a desire to change their lives to pursue higher education and learn more diligently. Female students get benefit from a variety of academic activities and academic facilities. Female students are easier to get access to get themselves involved in academic activities and use academic facilities. In contrary, male students are less involved in using academic activities and academic facilities. Indirectly, there has occurred gender-based marginalization in the academic field. In general it can be seen that there is gender-based marginalization that has put male students at disadvantages in academic activities and facilities.

Although, female students seem to have a brighter future and are portrayed to be more diligent and successful in college, Arnot and Alison (2003) stated otherwise. Female student's educational performance has been written by the UK media as an indication that 'the future is female. At one level such media hype is right. There is an evidence of a shift in the role of education related to gender issues. The principle of gender differentiation which has shaped the class is divided by school system that is clearly not as explicit as legitimate. It is more likely to be hidden within the individualizing processes of learning (micro-inequalities) rather than be found in the formal structures of schooling. Although females in the UK seem to be strengthening their economic and social positions by gaining the access of higher status and doing well themselves, there is no guarantee that such an academic capital could be inverted into academic and economic privilege. The conditions for sustaining gender inequalities, although different, are still in place.

Another opinion that is stated by Charles and Bradley (2002) in their research has showed that national educational system is different in their patterns of gender inequality and this variability cannot be summarized related to differences in the overall "amount" of sex segregation. Although, a multidimensional approach to understand women's status has been advocated before, our analysis proves the empirical validity with the same approach.

There have been suggested two reasons for the complex, sometimes counterintuitive patterns of variability in tertiary gender segregation revealed here and the other place. First, the impact of gender-egalitarian cultural norms is uneven. This is true most importantly because the universal mandates directly undermine more vertical inequalities than horizontal inequalities. Sex segregation across fields of study, for example, can be more easily reconciled with "equal but different" cultural principles (exposed by some feminists) than the segregation across a hierarchy of tertiary levels. Even in the most egalitarian of cultural contexts, male and female distributions are there across the fields of study based on gender. How far the difference of the distribution reflects anticipated work/family conflict, taken-for granted gender labels, or deeply rooted curricular preferences has not been empirically resolved yet.

Second, the finding suggests that structural features related to the economic and social aspects-especially modernization, diversified tertiary system and high rates of female employment-exacerbate some forms of sex segregation in higher education and partially offset equalizing effects of egalitarian ideals. The result is reminiscent of occupational sex segregation, which has also pointed to the operation of partially countervailing cultural and structural pressures. The pattern of cross-national variability in dividing tertiary sex is also related to the independent structural influence and some cultural variables which impact female's representation in level and/or field in specific ways.

Moreover, there is no direct effect of either female tertiary participation rates or tertiary system size on gender distributions. It seems that the "massification" and feminization of higher education are less relevant than the structure of tertiary sex segregation. Sex segregation will generally be more extreme where the large size is achieved through disproportionate growth from non university institutions and where female "access" is achieved through female's concentration in vocational colleges or stereotypically female fields of study.

The strong cultural effect that is found provides the support for evolutionary models that emphasize the importance of universalistic norms and attitudes in



opening up elite male-dominated domains to female. However, the unevenness of cultural effects and the weak co-variation among common indicators of females tertiary status suggest that gender egalitarianism undermines some forms of tertiary gender stratification more than others. Neo-institutionalist scholars have pointed out the attention to the influent of equalization of universalistic cultural ideals on modern educational systems. What is needed now is a greater appreciation for the multidimensionality of gender stratification within higher education and for the uneven multifarious process where sex segregation is generated and maintained. In cross-national level, the differences in tertiary sex segregation cannot be understood as simple function of the "female status" or the level of modernity in any national or historical context.

### CONCLUSION

In general, there were gender inequalities that disadvantage male students in the academic activities. Female students get benefit from a variety of academic activities and academic facilities. Female students are easier to get access to get themselves involved in academic activities and to use academic facilities. Male

students are less involved in using academic activities and academic facilities. Indirectly, there has occurred gender-based marginalization in the academic field. It can be seen that there is gender-based marginalization that has put male students at adverse position in academic activities and facilities.

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