

GENDER ISSUES IN MALAYSIAN EDUCATION: FACTORS INFLUENCING MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Gender issues in the field of education has been a continuous debated issue for generations. In the present context, the gender issue is being debated heatedly based on the differences in the achievements among male and female students in public exams. The objective of this study is to obtain views from (N=120) secondary school students randomly selected from various location in Malaysia. Hermeneutic analysis was used in order to analyse the students' written essays on the factors which contributed to the achievement of the two genders in examinations. The findings of the study clearly indicated that female students outperform male students in examinations. The sample also summed up the factors leading to the failure of male students in performing well and ways to overcome this setback.

Keywords: Gender issues, Academic achievement, Hermeneutic Analysis, text, public examination

Introduction

Women and men are far more similar in terms of cognitive ability and academic achievement than they are different (Hyde, 2007). There are no gender differences in overall intelligence or achievement in most school subjects, from English literature to psychology, but there are some areas in which women excel and some in which men excel. On average, women perform somewhat better than men do in language skills, verbal memory, perceptual speed, and fine motor skills, whereas men perform slightly better than women in mathematics, science, and social studies on average (Halpern, 2004; Hyde, 2007). Of course, according to Lahey (2009), no one should assume that a given person is or not proficient in reading and spelling on the basis of gender. Knowing a person's gender is not a reliable indicator of his or her cognitive abilities or personality.

Gender is a new perspective that yet to be explored fully in Malaysia. Gender issue is also considered as a relative and new issue to the society till sometimes it brings various evaluation and thoughts at which most are inaccurate on gender. Understanding on gender has become an important concept to all including those under government, private sector or individuals so as to make sure that any discussions related to this issue is focused towards its establishment. In Malaysia difference on gender is not a serious issue that required to be discussed in community. This issue will only become serious if the differences create inequality in social lifestyles. Many inequalities have been recorded till it draws the attention of many to join in to discuss this matter.

The Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010) [9MP], which is much bolder than previous 5-year plans in terms of its targets for gender equality and women's empowerment, proposes new policies and strategies to deepen the mainstreaming of women in development. These include, *inter alia*, equipping women with necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to be more competitive and versatile to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy; reviewing the legal and institutional constraints that inhibit women's greater participation in the economy; and perhaps, most critically, setting a target of 30 per cent of women in decision making positions in government (UNDP, 2007).

Nowadays, gender issue is important in educational aspect. There is a gap on the result of examination achievement in Malaysia between male and female students. The inequality of educational status between male and female is the cause and effect to the emergence of gender issue in society. Quality equality between genders is impossible because it is hard to be achieved due to status quo inequality in those days.

This research is to examine on how male and female approach academic excellence issues based on their views through essay writing, whereby students will explain the factors that influence their academic excellence in public examination in Malaysia. Apart on that, this research could outline factors of male and female students' success in public examination in Malaysia. Even though there are many research and analysis conducted based on quantitative and qualitative methodology, researches based on essay analysis from students' perspective is rare. Hence, this research is assumed to be important in investigating from the viewpoint of students via essays that should be interpreted precisely and wholly. This research is expected to voice out students' opinions on ways to achieve excellently in academic, especially in examination. This is because students could write suggestion to improve mistakes and failures by both boys and girls academically and thus, suggest ways to overcome it. Maturity in analysing students' ideas is taken into account fully in this research to be interpreted using the approach of Hermeneutic analysis.

Furthermore, this research could also evaluate psychology aspects of the education, especially information processing which is stored in students' subconscious mind. Writing of ideas by students requires deep thinking to explicit ideas in producing essays. Students who have experienced the process of living experiences directly or indirectly could give impact to the elaboration of ideas while writing. Students manage to elaborate their live experiences through information processing which is stored in their long term memory (subconscious level).

Hence this study was primarily aimed to answer these two research questions: (i) What are the factors of male and female students' academic achievement? (ii) What are the recommendations suggested by students to improve their academic achievements for male and female students?

Hermeneutic Approach as Methodology

Hermeneutic method prioritises narrative text interpretation process in the context of socio-culture and history by revealing the implied meaning in the studied text or material. Researches based on Hermeneutic interpretation as developed by Gadamer (1976) suggest one to do self reflexion and analyse critically using research and scientific method.

Initial document explains that a philosopher, Martin Heidegger uses Hermeneutic method during the years 1889-1976. However, Hermeneutic is firstly explored by Schleimarcher and Dilthey since 17th century and continued by Habermas, Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur others during 20th century. Schleiermacher stated the importance of interpreter in the interpretation process. Schleiermacher give focus towards text understanding from the point of view of interpreter and the interpreter knows when to conduct the interpretation of a text. For Schleiermacher, understanding does not exist

just through the reading of text merely. In the interpretation process, knowledge is gained from the historical context of the text and the psychological aspects of the writer.

According to Mueller (1997), Hermeneutic is an art of understanding and not a material already understood. Hermeneutic is also a part of thinking art and based upon philosophy. Thus, it is important to understand the knowledge possessed by an individual before conducting interpretation on the knowledge of language. However, in fact, it is hard to analyse psychological aspects of an individual. The success of the art of interpretation depends on the linguistic expertise and the ability to understand the studied subjects.

Hermeneutic focused on text as data resource, that is, examples of data comprises interview transcripts, diary, essays, and letters and so on. One has to remember meaningful experience that has occurred to him or her directly or indirectly. The method used in Hermeneutic approach starts with text. Then, meaningful information in text is detected and used to generate theme or category from a group of (Suppiah, 2003).

Traits of Hermeneutic

Text as Research Subject (Essay)

Text is something produced by man in spoken or written format used to channel intended meaning like attitude, feeling and human thought. According to Rickman (1967), whatever mode that gives out feeling and thought could be assumed as text and it could be analysed and interpreted through Hermeneutic approach.

Gadamer (1976) stated that it is not desire that reconstruct the text from the actual intend of the writer. However, it is a medium or interpretation of meaning from past to present situation. In this situation, understanding can be quoted as something that is produced in current and not something that is re-created nowadays. Hermeneutic process is a creative force that is capable of revealing meaning in a given situation at which the researcher would want to conduct study and interpret the text.

According to Asmah Hj. Omar (1980), text is related to language and linguistic system like sentence and phrase. Its functions as to show a purpose or situation that wanted to be portrayed by the writer. Hence, while studying a text, aspects that are related to text nature is also important and worth to be studied. For instance, language style, voice pressure, tone and intonation, rhythm, sound frequency, movement and symbols that could be found within the text with the language used. According to Gumbang (1998), text is said to be able to channel meaningful internal and psychological aspect to understand the hidden intention in text. Some of the internal and psychological aspects found in the text are as follow:

Hermeneutic Circle

According to Gadamer (1976:117), Hermeneutic circle refers to dialectic between understandings of a text as a whole with interpretation of parts in the text, whereby the elaboration is as assumed (expected). Then, it goes on from the context that has meaning before. Movement towards this understanding is from the whole part to certain parts before it goes back again to whole part. Gadamer (1976) explains that, it is a circular relation. With the hope to explore the meaning as a whole into explicit understanding in parts, at which it is determined as a whole, and even the parts will also determine the whole part.

According to Gadamer (1976:117), Hermeneutic circle is as follow:

The hermeneutic circle describes the process of understanding a text hermeneutically. It refers to the idea that one's understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole. Neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another, and hence, it is a circle. However, this circular character of interpretation does not make it impossible to interpret a text, rather, it stresses that the meaning of text must be found within its cultural, historical, and literary context (Gadamer (1976:117).

Ricoeur (1974: xiv), suggests that, "Interpretation is a cognitive task contains aspects that reveal implied meaning as well as explicit meaning in actual meaning context. Hence, Hermeneutic circle involved in the interpretation between parts of text and the whole part of bigger text.

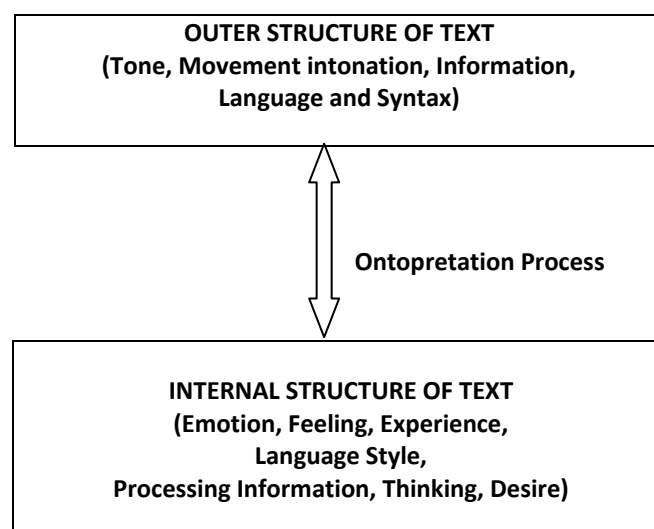
Traits of Openness

Researcher's openness in accepting text is an aspect of Hermeneutic analysis. Text should be viewed as an open situation to interpret the studied element inside. Bernstein (1982) sees text openness in Hermeneutic analysis as contextual aspect whereby students are producing the essays. Elements that are usually found throughout the text like culture, personal history and the experience of text creator are important while studying the openness trait. Gadamer's theory of understanding explains the general process that is involved with text and the interpreter which go hand-in-hand to study the content, or the meaning that becomes the focus. This theory helps to look into the past not as an investigation object, but as a source to detect meaning endlessly.

Traits of Ignorance in Text (Ontoenigma)

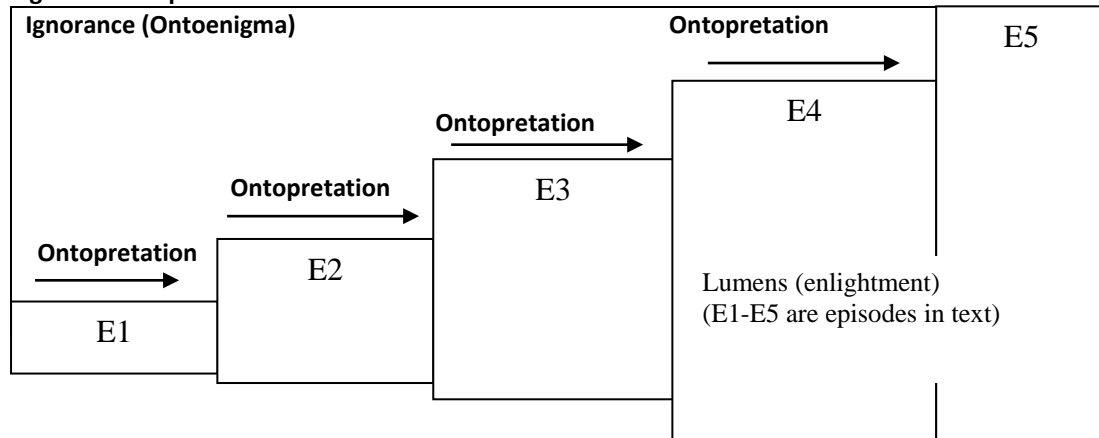
The term ontoenigma on studied text is basically unclear and creates various doubts to researchers who are eager to go in-depth on the text. Loganathan (1992) uses the term ontoenigma to describe researchers' mental state while confronting the content of studied text. A text is viewed (read) through outer structure (explicit). Then, researchers will read between the lines to bring out the implied meaning through internal structure. The process of connecting outer and internal structure of text is called the process of Ontopretation (Loganathan, 1992, 1996).

Figure 1: Detailed Ontopretation Process



When going through a text, Ontopretation process will take place and get understanding from the text. After analysing all the aspects needed to be studied in the text, Ontopretation process will take place repeatedly till one can understand and interpret text clearer. Finally, researchers could detect and understand the implied meaning in the studied text and it is called lumens by Loganathan (1992, 1996). Till to date, researchers could manage to come out from ignorance (ontoenigma) about text and then manage to achieve understanding and clearer picture about the studied text.

Figure 2: Ontopretation scheme



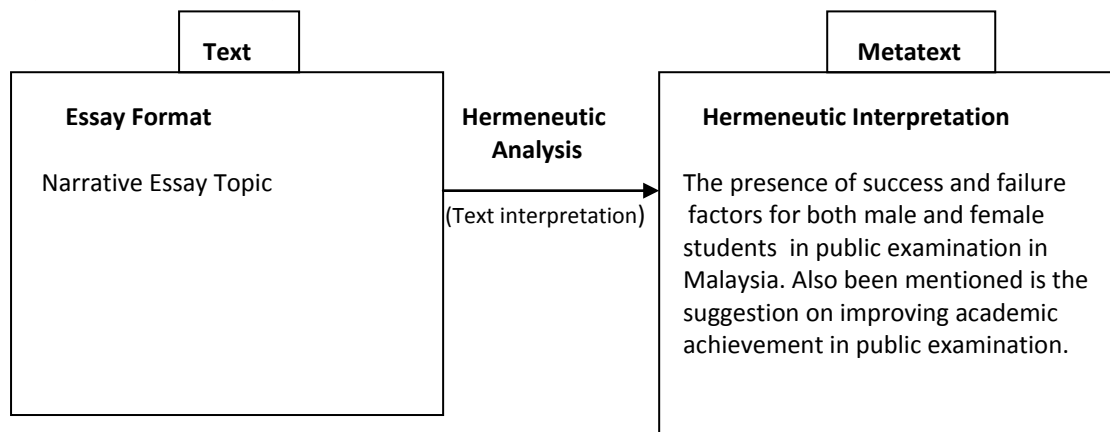
This Ontopretation scheme shows the ontopretation process takes place several time and comprehension is achieved in progress till all text is become clear (level of lumens) of the researched aspects for instance. Through the ontopretation process that happened, ignorance (ontoenigma) on the research text has been eradicated.

Methodology

Research Design

According to Hermeneutic method, students' essays are called as text and after interpretation, the final product is called metatext. Metatext in this research is all the factors that contribute to students' failure as well as success in public examination and their recommendation in improving their academic achievement.

Figure 3: Research Design



Participants

The sample comprised 120 Form 4 school children (male = 162, 45%, female = 198, 55%) randomly selected from 12 secondary schools in three location of Peninsular of Malaysia; Northern, Central and Southern, which are divided into three categories. Category 1 represents Northern of Peninsular of Malaysia, Category 2 represents Central of Peninsular of Malaysia and Category 3 represents Southern of Peninsular of Malaysia. A total of 10 students were randomly selected from each school, giving a total of 120 participants. A total of 120 samples of research essays by Form 4 students are collected.

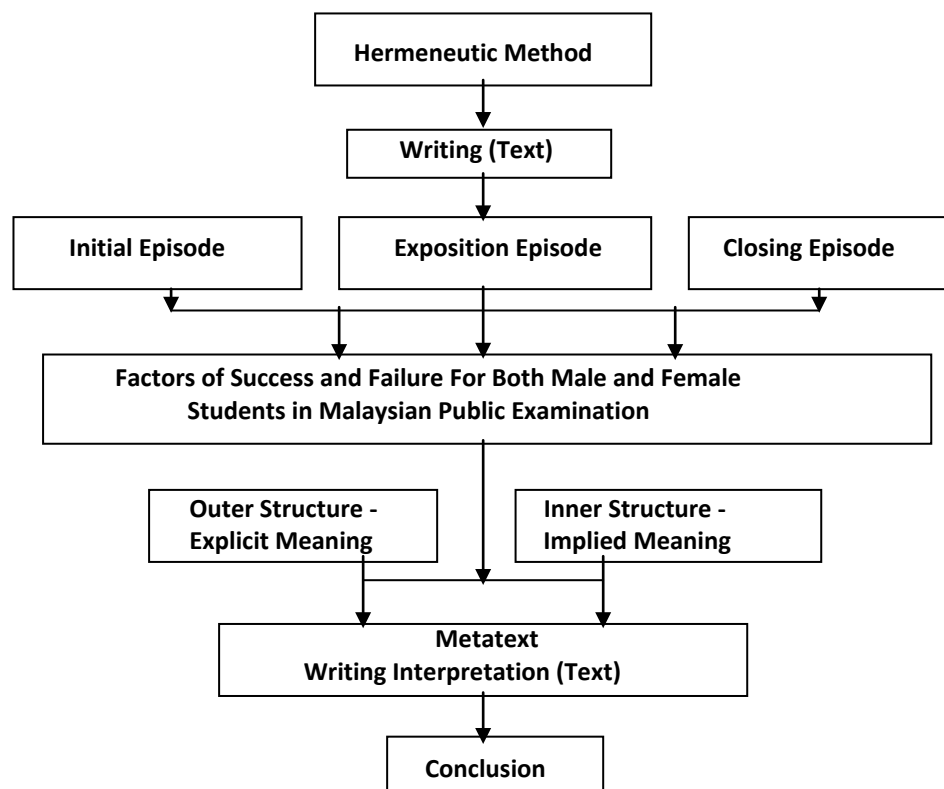
Procedure and Analysis

Figure 4 explains the procedure applied to conduct research on 120 sample essays till the process of text interpretation done on them. The topics that given to be written by the students are as follow:

- a) Female students are getting excellent results in public examination in Malaysia compared to male students. Discuss.
- b) Give suggestions on how to improve students' performance in those examinations.

Students are given one hour 30 minutes to answer the essay question by writing not more than 350 words. The essays are then analysed using Hermeneutic method in the form of essay text interpretation. Thus, results are obtained based on factors of success and failure of students in public examinations in Malaysia as suggested by students.

Figure 4: Research Procedure



Source: Suppiah, N. (2003)

Results and Discussions

Factors of female students' success

Based on the essays' analysis, majority opt that female students achieve better in public examination than male students. There are many factors contribute to female students' achievement. The following are the factors of female students' success. Table 1 shows the factors which contribute to the success of female students in public examination in detail as follow:

Table 1: Factors of female students' success

Category 1:

- female students' natural characteristics
- more diligent than male students
- always obey teachers' instructions
- can be easily moulded by parents
- know how to differentiate good or bad
- rare to be seen loitering late at night
- always a positive thinker
- won't hesitate to ask questions in classroom
- always represent schools in competition either in state or national level
- higher female students' number bring to competitive habit
- always seek for good name
- they did not want to be undermined or embarrassed
- always look for opportunity or seek challenges
- a tough competitive attitude among the same gender
- more mature than the male students
- always look forward for a luxury future
- exposed to not depend on guys
- have big ambition
- determined to achieve their ambition
- they realized they have to compete with men in working field
- good in making learning strategy
- know how to manage and balance time
- better self-discipline
- their emotion could help in improving their weakness
- found to be open-minded and not easily give up
- always learn from mistakes
- female students' emotion could be the catalyst for them to learn
- their sensitive nature will make them learn from past experiences
- they strive hard to learn

Category 2:

- give fullest attention while studying
- determination of female students
- successful women like Dato Seri Rafidah Aziz become idol
- won't easily quit in studies
- smart time planning
- smarter in dividing time for studies and other activities
- less interest in activities related to sport
- more incline to studies
- favour to group study
- self effort

- positive thinking towards self betterment
- won't take matters easily
- always get attention from parents
- study hard, always do revision, do not waste time
- female students are better in dividing time for activities through schedule
- the level of effort and awareness of girl is higher
- more sensitive to their surrounding and personal matter
- can be easily taught and motivated
- more matured thinking
- rationale and positive thinking
- smart in dividing time
- have daily schedule
- going for tuition
- highly determined to study
- buy extra workbooks to study
- work hard to achieve success
- easily get their focus on something
- diligent in reading
- always question in class
- do not like to waste time
- do revision
- diligent in studying
- make early preparation
- maturity factors
- natural trait
- more hardworking
- give attention while studying
- ware of the importance of studies
- natural traits
- communication among them is better
- good in decision-making and think positive ly for self betterment
- hardworking and always eager to succeed
- high spirit and determination
- incline to enrol in self motivation in learning programs
- eager to succeed
- a woman's characteristic is diligent
- work hard
- have high determination to succeed
- competitive in nature
- allocate more time being at home
- influenced more by timidity
- strive till succeed
- prioritize education
- girl work harder than boy
- think more on the future
- will work a bit by bit
- do revision earlier
- not too exposed to non-beneficial activities
- dislike being confined
- more open to studies
- give more important to studies
- have fixed schedule to study
- won't easily quit

- give fullest attention in classroom
- go for tuition
- work harder
- ask teachers
- more confident while answering exams
- do revision and always opt for group revision
- more discipline
- improving weakness
- ask more
- give more attention while answering exams
- do revision at home
- thought far
- have good attitudes
- gentle and graceful
- diligent
- more aggressive and proactive
- their attitude is more organised

Category 3:

- prone more to study
- girls are more than boys in numbers
- more diligent in doing revision
- smarter in dividing time
- won't hesitate to ask to their teachers
- high self-motivation
- determined
- more diligent and self-dependent
- have more pity towards their parents
- more determined to attain success
- work harder
- think of the future
- give more attention while studying
- smart in using time, independent
- always early
- serious in studies
- learn to be more organised
- focused in studies
- instil with diligency since childhood
- sensitive
- work hard to fulfil their parents' hope
- manage to put aside the question of gender to succeed
- more concern on studies
- earlier to be matured
- try to change the perception of male
- early preparation
- more hardworking
- prioritise education and respect teachers
- more hardworking and interest
- work harder
- give fullest attention
- smart in using opportunities
- go for tuition and extra classes

- use time wisely
- more diligent in reading
- more discipline
- like to compete among themselves
- closer to teachers
- always ask questions
- the character of wanting to succeed
- graceful, independent, and timid
- diligent and won't easily quit
- won't hesitate to ask questions
- have strong support from parents
- more focused while studying
- won't hesitate to ask question
- sit in the front row
- more matured
- like to ask questions
- have vision to succeed
- more matured
- smart in managing time
- willing to sacrifice anything

Factors of male students' success

There are factors contributing to male students' success. The following are the factors of male students' achievement in public examinations. Table 2 shows the factors which contribute to the success of male students in public examination in detail as follow:

Table 2: Factors of male students' success

Category 1:

- male students are more hardworking than female students
- higher self motivation
- not easily influenced by peers
- aware of being independent
- stronger memory

Category 2:

- none

Category 3:

- none

Factors of Female Students' Failure

There are factors contributing to female students' failure. The following are the factors of female students' failure in public examinations. Table 3 shows the factors which contribute to the failure of female students in public examination in detail as follow:

Table 3: Factors of female students' failure

<p>Category 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are still immature girl - not good in taking care of oneself - easily influenced into non-beneficial activities - still did not know how to differentiate good or bad - prone to talk more than focus on studies in class - prone to indulge into activities apart from studies - always put more effort in knowing the latest gossips involving artists - parents' mentality that children do not have to study higher - low-income family - only boys are given priority to go to schools than girls <p>Category 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none <p>Category 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none

Factors of Male Students' Failure

There are factors contributing to male students' failure. The following are the factors of male students' failure in public examinations. Table 4 shows the factors which contribute to the failure of male students in public examination in detail as follow:

Table 4: Factors of male students' failure

<p>Category 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - easily exposed and influenced by non-beneficial activities - most of their time are spent to be among their friends - seek something new to be done with friends - will get bored to be at home and do revision - parents have full of trust on their sons (the thought is wrong) - assume that they should not be controlled by parents as they can look after themselves - easily fallen into temptation to do non-beneficial activities - lack of discipline - did not give a deep thought on future - spent their time doing non-beneficial things - laziness - urge from parents and teachers - boys dislike to be forced to do something - boys prefer to be independent rather than studying hard - they are more interested to work and get own salary - hey did not pay attention to the subjects been taught in class - think more on what to do after school - think examination as an easy thing - did not look highly on education - boys have a high sense of egoism - there are not many boys who will come forward to ask questions - shy to admit mistakes done while learning - fail to do revision

- like to sleep during class
- did not pay attention while studying
- it is as if the boys are not interested in education
- always skip classes
- easily give up and no effort on trying to improve oneself
- not disciplined both in class and school
- disobey teachers' instruction
- involve in vandalism
- did not prioritise the future
- their life are meant to be happy-go-lucky

Category 2:

- spend time by doing nothing
- laziness, attitude of did not care of what is happening around them
- seek for entertainment alone without any care for studies
- no concern on studies
- wasting time by doing non-beneficial activities
- aggressive boys did not even think on getting knowledge by studying
- want to have a free life
- teachers' teaching style
- lack of attention
- social activities like smoking, drugs, loitering
- less competition in examination
- like to waste time
- disciplinary problems
- play truant
- do not like to be confined
- spend most of time in sports
- like to play truant
- like to procrastinate
- involve in social activities
- active in sports
- did not like to do revision
- did not concentrate while teachers are teaching
- always look tired
- look more for entertainment
- lack of interest on studies
- loitering
- egoistic and hard to be moulded
- do not want to think
- do not want to work hard because assume having property only is important
- get away with playing
- busy doing non-beneficial activities
- give up
- laziness
- tired of playing
- uncomfortable surrounding
- a boring learning style influences them on studying
- enjoy
- copies others' homework
- did not any revision before examination
- boys will easily get bored
- more prone to do heavy works

- girls are more than boys in term of quantity
- lack of effort shown
- like entertainment
- man egoism
- easily give up
- students' own carelessness
- girls weaknesses is seen lowly by boys
- parents negligence in educating children
- parents' nature of getting into fights frequently
- play a lot
- do not prioritise health
- attracted to things outside the classroom
- couldn't forget problems happened at home
- lack of seriousness and think that examination is simple
- lack of attention
- laziness and man egoism
- not study hard
- did not know how to use God's gift
- prone to do unnecessary things
- hastiness
- lazy
- look for enjoyment only
- more focus given to sports
- like to do non-beneficial activities
- world luxury
- neglect important works

Category 3:

- playfulness
- more active in co-curricular activities
- interest in love affair
- lack of parental love
- only know to involve in sport and societal works
- hesitate to ask questions and fear of being embarrassed
- easily satisfied with whatever they achieved
- do unnecessary things
- take education matter simply for granted
- easily involve in immoral activities
- not serious in giving attention while studying
- prone to play more
- peer influence
- take education matter as simple as they could
- parents in Malaysia prioritise girls than boys
- easily influenced by immoral activities
- enjoy a lot
- flippancy
- problematic in schools
- fooled by immoral activities
- like to revel
- non-beneficial activities
- more to social activities
- contribute their talents to something else apart from studies

- fights among parents
- like to waste time
- did not know how to divide and manage time well
- they spend most of the time by involve in sports
- like to loiter
- play and talks
- idle
- like to waste time
- like to loiter
- not serious
- more interest on challenging task
- prone to immoral activities
- take things for granted
- like to things they prefer to do only
- assume that education is not important
- like to loiter
- idle and did not aware of self capability
- lack of interest
- negative values
- lack of attention
- did not prioritise academic
- like to waste time
- look trivial on matters involving examination
- students' attitude
- easily influenced with western culture
- wasting time
- lack of interest towards studies
- like to play a lot and fun
- did not think about the future
- laziness and idleness of the man
- did not pay attention while teachers are teaching
- never had the competitive nature in study
- more active in sports
- try something new
- involve in non-beneficial activities
- did not give adequate attention and play a lot
- take academic matter for granted
- deflect from actual path
- peer influence
- mass media
- wasting time
- take things for granted
- did not want to show their capability
- like to loiter
- involve in negative activities
- forced by parents
- teachers who did not enter the class
- lazy to further their studies
- play a lot
- lack of interest on studies
- lack of concern in living
- like to mingle around freely
- like to play and chatting

Other Factors Which Influence the Failures of Male and Female Students

There are other factors that contribute to the failure or success of both students apart from listed earlier. One of the factors is the attitude. Students should possess high intrinsic motivation to succeed and the desire to get excellent result in each and every examination they sit for. If the students have the intrinsic motivation, they will definitely work themselves towards success. Thus, students' achievement depends on the will of students wanting to succeed in each examination they sit for. Motivation factor will not come naturally in every individual. Students will get motivated when they have to do something serious. If students crave to get a good job in the future, they will definitely get moved with the inner drive to attain their ambition.

Problematic family background could result into students not being able to give attention to their studies. A divorced parent is one of the examples of problematic families. Students did not get enough love from both of their parents. They keep on thinking of the flaws happened in their families. Students could not concentrate in their studies at schools. Family problems will leave cognitive disturbance to students till it affects students' studies in the long run.

Divorced parent or parents who are busy could lead the students being uncontrolled or did not get enough attention. Those who have family problems will be more depressed. The pressure they endure will force them to be idle in their studies. No attention from the parents would make them neglect their studies and involve in immoral activities with their peers. Hence, family problems affect students mentally as well as emotionally. This situation will leave a deep mark among students. As a result, they could not precede their studies well.

Basically, family income is important in managing children's schooling expenditure by providing tuition classes, work books and so on. Students from families with higher income will have the advantage of enrolling tuition classes by experienced teachers. Besides, higher income will also provide them with perfect learning materials like computers and extra academic workbooks. The background of families with high income (rich people with plenty of assets) can also lead students to fail to achieve successfully in examination. Students from this category would feel that their family property is enough and there is no need for them to study hard. However, for a student from low-income family, he or she would always have the feeling of lacking something. There are also students who could not continue their studies and even work to support their families. This situation will further stress them and thus, these students will resort to neglect their studies.

Peer influence can help a student to attain excellent result in their examination. Good peer will always support and encourage their friends in studies. Bad peers would somehow influence students to become lazy and even encourage them to do immoral activities together. For example, the smoking habits among the students are influenced by their peers.

Guidance from parents is important in determining students' success. Students who are given proper guidance will always appreciate their parents' sacrifice and aim to get excellent result in examination. Religion will also help them to avoid them from doing non-beneficial activities. Besides, a strong will power which gained through religious teaching will help students to remain calm whenever they face tension while learning.

Steps to counter Students' Failure in Studies

One of the factors to be countered is students' attitude. Basically, if a student wants to decide intrinsically to succeed in life, surely the students will take the required steps to attain his or her ambition. Students can get help from their teachers, peers and others to solve problems relating to

their studies. Hence, the attitude towards students' perception is important. They should discard their egoism to gain knowledge. They should change their thoughts and have to find initiatives to develop themselves. They should always find a solution to way to understand their studies and be prompt in doing the homework given by their teachers. To achieve what they have dreamt, they should strive for it. Students should be smart in managing their time and be discipline. Through this practice the students' success is certain.

Teachers should conduct the process of teaching and learning in classroom by solving all academic problems faced by students seriously. Teachers should play important role in determining the appropriate method to be used in classrooms. Teachers can attract the attention of the students by engaging them into open discussion during class hours. Teachers should vary their teaching method and focus more on problem-based learning. Teachers can also divide students into small groups as a way to make sure that maximum number of students could understand the intended content of the classroom activity. In this group based study, students could brainstorm plenty of ideas as they have the platform to do so. Hence, students could enhance their thinking skills in learning.

At the same time, parental role is also vital. Parents play important role to guide their children in getting excellent result. Their encouragement can improve students' spirit to be more diligent in studying and gaining knowledge. Parents should always observe their children movement wherever they are. This is to ensure that their children do not involve or get into any immoral activities. Thus, it is parents' job to make sure their children have good attitude. Parents are responsible to give perfect teaching for their children. They should also check their children's homework and studies. By this, students will then work hard to finish their homework and do revision. Parents should play important role in securing their children's bright future. Parents are the closest people to children when they are at home. The way parents teach their children should be taken into account. The attitude of loving towards knowledge should be instilled since they are young because when they grown up, they will become aware of the importance of knowledge. Parents should pay concern on their children's education matter especially on boys as they are more exposed to non-academic activities.

The steps to overcome students' problems should be done by the students themselves. Students are responsible in improving their performance. The best way to do revision is to make smart time table. By this, they will be more organised in doing their daily chores with a condition that they should follow the time table without any interference or disturbance. By having time table, students will be more disciplined in doing their daily activities. Students will learn to manage time in a smart way. They will try to rectify their own mistake while doing revision and studying as a whole.

School authorities can organise motivational camps and give encouragement to students to gain knowledge. This could lead the schools to conduct research on their students, motivate and encourage students to do well in examination, and so on. Motivational camps are useful to improve students' performance. The school authorities can guide them from time to time and get to know about their problem through counselling session. By doing this, this could help the students to fight the problems they are facing.

Conclusion

When we narrate about gender issue in education, it quickly comes to our mind about the achievement level of both male and female students. Based on the analysis made on the essays, there are a lot of factors bring to gender inequality in academic. In this case, all parties have to work together to counter this issue. Based on this research, there are more factors contributing to male students' failure compared to that of female students. Hence, teachers have to play their role in instilling students with the interest on studies. Most teachers have the perception that male students

are problematic and the teachers should discard this bad perception on male students. Parents must be concerned in their children's academic matters. Parents should always provide their children with advice and guidance while their children are undergoing conflict moments during their teenage years. Guidance and care from parents are a must.

Government should also look into the matter of gender inequality seriously. If the male are less prominent in academic achievement, how they are supposedly going to lead the women in the society. During schooling years where self confidence should be built so as to realise many of our nation's aspirations. Gender issues in education require attention from all parties regardless of race, culture or religion. Basically, this gender issue would not be a problem if only the students realise their responsibility to study and gain knowledge as to achieve the Malaysia's precious aspiration: Vision 2020.

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