



GENDER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PHYSICAL
MODULE OF *PROGRAM LATIHAN KHIDMAT
NEGARA* (PLKN): A STUDY OF PLKN'S TRAINEES
AT JUGRA CAMP, BANTING

BY

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the application of the concept of equity is very crucial especially in educational course. In the case of physical education, equal opportunity in the sense of offering each student equal access to the programmes while ignoring individual differences is not an alternative in achieving gender equity. What is more appropriate is equality of outcome, which recognises that each student gets what is necessary to be educated. This study seeks to understand the module of PLKN's physical activity with respect to trainees' perceptions toward the concept of equity in physical activity. The purpose of the study is to find out whether the physical module of PLKN is seen as equitable by both genders. A stratified sampling has been applied whereby 160 PLKN trainees at Jugra Camp Banting were given a questionnaire. The study employed an adapted version of Life Effectiveness Questionnaires which comprises seven dimensions (Neill et al., 2003). A total of 159 trainees responded, comprising a 99.4% return-rate. Quantitative analysis of the data was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The quantitative findings of the study on the seven dimensions of Life Effectiveness Questionnaire show that no statistically significant difference exists between male and female trainees in the physical module with the exception on self-confidence and course values.





خلاصة البحث

يُعدُّ فهم مبدأ المساواة وتطبيقه أمراً بالغ الأهمية، خاصة في المقررات التربوية، فالمساواة بين الطلاب في حالة التربية البدنية مثلاً بتوفير فرص متساوية للجميع، دون مراعاة للفروق الفردية لا يُحقق ذلك المساواة المنشودة بين الجنسين مثلاً. والأنسب من ذلك هو العمل على المساواة في المخرجات التعليمية؛ حيثُ يتاح لكل طالب ما يحتاج إليه في تعليمه. وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم الأنشطة البدنية في برنامج الخدمة الوطنية الماليزي فيما يتعلق بتصوير المتدربين لمبدأ المساواة في الأنشطة البدنية؛ فتهدف هذه الدراسة إذن إلى الكشف عن نظرة الذكور والإناث إلى الأنشطة البدنية في برنامج الخدمة الوطنية الماليزي، وهل يحقق المساواة بين الجنسين، أم لا؟ تم تطبيق نظام العينة الطبقية حيثُ تم توزيع استبيان على 160 متدرب في معسكر بانتج بجقرا. واستخدمت الدراسة كذلك نسخة معدلة من استبانة فعالية الحياة التي تحتوى على سبعة أبعاد، والتي طورها نيل مع آخرين عام 2003م. واستجاب للاستبيان ما يعادل 99.4% من المتدربين، أي 159 متدرباً. وتم استخدام الإحصاء الكمي في الدراسة عن طريق برنامج الإحصاء للعلوم الاجتماعية، وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة على استبانة فعالية الحياة في أبعادها السبعة عدم وجود دلالات إحصائية فارقة بين الجنسين في وحدات التربية البدنية وذلك باستثناء الثقة بالنفس، وقيم البرنامج.





APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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GENDER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PHYSICAL MODULE OF *PROGRAM LATIHAN KHIDMAT NEGARA (PLKN): A STUDY OF PLKN'S TRAINEES AT JUGRA CAMP, BANTING*

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GLOSSARY

Coeducation.	The integrated education of male and female students/trainees in the same institution/place where both genders participate together in the education class.
Gender equity.	Provision of equality of opportunity and access, and the realisation of equality of results for all students based on individual aptitudes.
Sex segregation.	The separation, or segregation, of people according to sex or gender. In education environment, it refers to the practice of conducting education where male and female students attend separate classes or schools. Sometimes, it is also called as sex-separation or single-gender class.
Title IX.	A clause in the 1972 Educational Act of the United States stating that no one shall because of sex is denied the benefits of any education program or activity.





CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Equal opportunity to education is a right of everybody regardless of their gender, religion or ethnicity/race. In fact, in Islam, seeking knowledge is considered as an honoured and respectable act. Islam encourages its followers, men and women, to develop their mental power so that they become useful members of society. Sadly, at the interface of certain principles and practices, tensions arise and cost the position of women in acquiring their rights (Benn, 2002). Fortunately, in Malaysia, women's position has become a main concern in the national development policy especially within the equal opportunity in education which has totally changed the social landscape of the country.



In relation to this, there are laws on education which categorically forbid discrimination against gender. Malaysian Constitution under article 12 (1) states that there shall be no discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, descent or place of birth:

- In the administration of any educational institution maintained by the public authority and, in particular, the administration of pupils or students or the payment of fee; or
- In giving out of the funds of a public authority financial aid for the maintenance of education of pupils or students in any educational institution (whether or not maintained by a public authority and whether within or outside the Federation) (Zaleha Kamarudin, 2008: 86).





In addition to this, in August 2001, to ensure that there would be no laws discriminating against women, article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution which is the supreme law of the land, was amended by the Malaysian Parliament to include the word 'gender' as one of the prohibited grounds for discrimination. Consequently, all existing laws are being reviewed to ensure gender equality, including the article 12 of the Federal Constitution (Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, 2008). This is actually in relation with article 10 of CEDAW that requires governments to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in education. Hence, equal access to educational opportunities is granted to both female and male Malaysians. This somehow proves that the Malaysian government, although has made reservations on certain provision of CEDAW, is committed in protecting the human rights of women (Zaleha Kamarudin, 2008). The reservation is made since Islam is an official religion in Malaysia and the accession of the provision of the convention is according to the understanding of *Shariah*. In *Shariah*, human rights and dignity are embedded justice in its definition of rights, which in turn, is closely connected with obligation. Therefore, obligation is the main focus of *Shariah* which often takes priority over right (Mohammed Hashim Kamali, 1999). However, it does not at any point neglect the fact that Malaysia is a multi-racial society. In fact, the country does not violate the humanitarian standards of human rights.

For this purpose, under the National Education System, female and male students in school, regardless of their religion and ethnicity/race, are taught in a common curriculum and are required to sit for the same national examination. This practice is extended to almost all education activities and programmes for youths. The recent programme initiated by the Malaysian Government which focuses on youths known as *Program Latihan Khidmat Negara* (PLKN), also takes into consideration





these equality aspects. The article 628 of Malaysian Constitution states the requirements of Malaysian youths, males and females, aged between 16 – 32 years old to join PLKN. The participants are randomly selected and therefore, not all Malaysian youths are involved in the programme. However, those who have been selected are compulsory to join. To be fair, the selection is made based on the percentage of a general portion of each ethnic group in Malaysia.

The curriculum of the programme is constructed in order to achieve its objective to produce high spirited youths who love their country and willingly serve their nation in the future. At the same time, this programme intends to enhance unity among multi racial communities in the country as well as to produce a generation with sound values and strong characters (Abdul Hadi Awang Kechil, n.d). In achieving the objectives, the authority has structured four main modules that are implemented in the programme; physical, nation building, character building, and community service modules. In addition to these modules, several other components that focus on spiritual and cultural aspects are introduced from time to time (Jabatan Latihan Khidmat Negara [JLKN], 2006).

Within the broad and inclusive curriculum, physical module is recognised as having a unique role to play in catering for particular aspects of youths' learning and development. It is believed that this module which is based on physical education promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of youths and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The fact about the importance of physical education in the development of youth is never disputed in Islam. In fact, it is recognised as important in helping Muslim youths to acquire healthy lifestyles and promote active participations (De Knop, Theeboom, Wittock& De Martelaer, 1996). More than that, the Quran and Hadith encourage





physical activity as an important part of development (Daiman, 1995; Sfeir, 1985). For example, Prophet Mohammed SAW instructed Muslims to be health conscious (Sfeir, 1985). Moreover, as far as the law is concerned, everybody is granted the right to have equal access to the activities in the programme regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity. This evidently shows that no one is disregarded when it comes to equal access.

However, equality actually goes further than ensuring equal access to the curriculum. While access issues are important to consider, the understanding and the practice must go beyond the issues of access if equity is to be achieved. Vertinsky (1992) mention about the socially constructed power relationships in school and in society that continue to define the female and male experience in education. According to her, even though diversity has become an accepted concept in education to promote the coexistence of differences, the moral and legal obligation to provide equality of opportunity in the sense of recognising each students, including their experiences, values, ethnic background, and socioeconomic background are absent from the educational system. In the case of physical education, equal opportunities in the sense of offering each student equal access to the programmes while ignoring their individuality is not an alternative in achieving equity. What is more appropriate is equality of outcome, which recognises that students have different needs and backgrounds, and to receive equal outcomes, each must receive a treatment as he or she should be received (Shakeshaft, 1986). All these are significant in achieving gender equity, particularly in physical education.





1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The issue before us today, is no longer about whether females should be given opportunity to join education programmes and activities or not. That issue has been settled long ago with the implementation of laws concerning gender equality and the acceptance of all Malaysians on these regulations. However, little is known about how one can be certain that gender equity is also being practised in educational courses. To interpret gender equality in an educational course such as in physical education as an acknowledgement that all students are the same and entitled to the same treatment is unhelpful since they are not the same. They differ in many ways, physically, cognitively and affectively, and do not enter the course equally equipped to take advantage of the opportunities available (Piotrowski, 2000).

Zaleha Kamarudin (2010) once pointed that the challenge for women today is not only to improve their knowledge but also to increase their visibility and have real access to the opportunity. Take for example physical education courses that involve complex interactions. The interactions are affected by such variables like verbal behaviours, perceived gender differences in physical ability, teaching styles and strategies, class management, curricular issues and cultural expectations. Above all, cultural issues still present a major barrier. Daiman (1995) points out that the fear of 'defeminisation' is one of the reasons that constrains women's participation in sport and physical activity. She further explains that defeminisation refers to women entering a traditionally male public domain and they become physically stronger and perhaps take on 'masculine' characteristics and thus affect their biologically feminine traits. This is where the problem concerning gender equity in physical education usually arises.





In fact, this issue has become a major concern among Muslims. According to Benn (2002), Muslim women's lives are usually affected by the socially constructed attitudes, values, beliefs, actions and behaviours expected, adopted and embodied because of their sex. Thus, it is not alien that in the area of physical education, myths and assumptions exist about constraints surrounding participation, particularly of Muslim girls.

Still, a major concern is on the nature of the physical education course in relation to gender. Although there have been many studies on PLKN, few has discussed this issue. Yet, it is important to examine this issue since in the last six years of implementation, PLKN has never been silent from problems especially in relation to gender interactions and safety of trainees. With the number of casualties among trainees which continues to rise every year, parents and family as well as other concerned parties have been questioning the credibility of this programme.

Furthermore, many other unsuitable issues that are related to the professionalism of training personnel and discipline problems of the trainees continue to be of main concern (Chua Soon Bui, 2010). Female trainees especially, always have doubt whenever they have been selected to join the programme since there are many incidents involving gender issues such as sexual harassment and rape. In addition to these, still visible are cultural stereotypes and expectations of females that diminish their self-esteem and confidence. Since PLKN is a coeducational programme, gender bias which is the result of not achieving equal benefits for both sexes, particularly females, is not supposed to exist.

As such, this study examines the curriculum of PLKN's physical module with respect of both genders' attitude toward the equitability of the programme. That is, an





examination of the method of teaching, trainees' experience and perception as well as the contents of the module.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

Two key elements exist in this study. Physical education in which it refers to outdoor/experience-based activity is believed to have the ability to encourage a person to look beyond him/her self and to work towards a future (Stenger, 2001). It could be measured through aspects like self confidence, teamwork and interpersonal relation, personal development and surrounding. PLKN's physical module therefore, viewed as consisting these total spectrums of outdoor education. Life effectiveness is an instrument proposed by Neill (2000) to measure of how competent a person perceives and associates him/herself in a variety of situations (Neill et al., 2003) and is measured by using the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (Neill, 2000). The instrument measures the following seven dimensions: Self confidence, course values, course organisation, personal development, instructor's approach, trust and encouragement, and coeducation values.

For the purpose of this study, the seven dimensions are defined to fit both key elements of this study. Further elaborations of the defined dimensions are as follow:

Self confidence: this dimension is defined as "an individual's general confidence of success in work and personal situations. Closely related to self-esteem, self efficacy, and self-concept" (Neill et al., 2003: 8).

Course values: this dimension is defined as "a person's ability to appropriately adjust their views to accommodate and act upon new information from changing conditions and different perspectives or the ideas of others" (Neill et al., 2003: 7). This new perspectives emerged from the experience of the course (physical education/module).





Course organisation: this dimension is defined as the arrangement and management of the physical course activities which include pre and post instructions, safety and time use.

Personal development: this dimension is defined as “how motivated a person is to achieve some goal or objective”(Neill et al., 2003: 6). External and internal factors could be the contributing factors in completing the physical task.

Instructor’s approach: this dimension is referred to instructor’s role in motivating and guiding the trainees during the physical activities. His/her action could influence the field towards either the feeling of favourable or unfavourable by the trainees to the activity.

Trust and encouragement: this dimension is defined as “the ability to function effectively in social situations, also called interpersonal competence and social skills” (Neill et al., 2003: 6). This is an important aspect in group activities.



Coeducation values: This dimension is defined as the ability to respect each gender values through the integrated education of male and female students in the same institution. PLKN is a coeducation programme although it separated the trainees according to gender during grouping for the activity.

1.2.1 PLKN’s Physical Module

Physical Module is based on the military-style regimentation elements which involve many outdoor/adventure activities. However, this does not mean that PLKN’s physical module is a military programme. The programme can be considered as military-type aspects of an outward-bound programme (Netto, 2004). The activities are based on experienced-learning based to instil confidence, courage and discipline among trainees (Yahya Don et al., 2005). It provides activities such as camps, marching, kayaking,





flying fox, ropes obstacles course, and a variety of trust-building games. Its goal is to boost self-motivation and increase the confidence and beliefs in one self. Also, it is to nurture the spirit of cooperation and togetherness among the trainees.

Physical module become a part of *Program Latihan Khidmat Negara* and assumed to be the most anticipating module by the trainees. The curriculum has been developed by the Curriculum Sub-Committee chaired by the General Director of National Civic Bureau (*Biro Tatanegara*). The introduction of article 628 of Malaysian Constitution states the requirements of Malaysian youths, males and females, aged between 16 – 32 years old to join PLKN. However not all Malaysian youths are involve since the participants are randomly selected using the Selective Technique Without Replacement (STWR) based on the percentage of a general portion of each ethnic group in Malaysia.

During the physical module activity, initial training was given in the areas of belaying and safety. The trainees usually operate in groups of 40 to 45, and according to gender. While physical activity was part of the programme, the primary goal was not fitness. Rather, the claim was that through these activities, trainees learn the key skills of life that is about confidence, goal-setting, choice and consequence, responsibility, teamwork, craft, and skills in an enjoyable manner. Neill (2000) and Hattie et al. (1997) classified these aspects of 'key skills' as life effectiveness. Essentially, it refers to how an individual acts, responds and perceive in a variety of situations. Indeed, outdoor education and adventure-based programmes provide excellent opportunities for these key skills of life effectiveness to be taught and caught (Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Neill & Heubeck, 1998).

In order to meet the needs for safety and quality programmes for trainees, National Service Training Department (JLKN) upgraded all PLKN camps to provide





adventure facilities to cater to the needs of physical module programmes. These facilities include: team-building/creative problem-solving stations, a high tower for flying fox/zip-line, challenge ropes course, and ample space for orienteering.

1.3 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study, therefore, is to find differences in attitude towards PLKN's physical module on the basis of seven constructs of LEQ; self confident, course values, course organisation, personal development, instructor's approach, trust and encouragement and coeducation value, among PLKN trainees on the basis of their gender.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

In response to the research objective, a research question has been developed.



- Are there any differences in female and male PLKN trainees' attitude towards PLKN's physical module on the basis of seven constructs of LEQ; self confident, course values, course organisation, personal development, instructor's approach, trust and encouragement and coeducation value?

1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This study looks for possible differences in attitude between male and female trainees of PLKN towards PLKN's physical module. This study is guided by directional hypothesis which is:

Male trainees are likely to have positive attitudes towards the curriculum of PLKN's physical module as compared to female trainees.





This hypothesis is further elaborated based on the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ) which consists of seven specific hypotheses. There are:

Hypothesis one –Male trainees are likely to have higher level of self-confidence in the physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis two - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards the values of physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis three - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards the course organisation of physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis four - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards personal development in physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis five - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards instructor's approach in physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis six - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards trust and encouragement in physical module as compared to female trainees.

Hypothesis seven - Male trainees are likely to have better attitudes towards coeducation values of physical module as compared to female trainees.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study is highlighted due to the lack of study on this issue in the Malaysian context especially with regard to physical education. While many studies have been done which focus specifically on the equal right to access, there are many other issues that need to be understood. Furthermore, in today's situation where established laws already exist to protect each gender's rights, an understanding that goes beyond the laws is important.





Another significance of this study is on the fact that in Malaysia, where the official religion is Islam, many myths still exist about Muslim's participation in physical education especially for Muslim girls. The fact that they are supposed to show their modesty in appearance and behaviour, becomes a constraint for them to join this activity when it is normally associated with aggressiveness. More than that, the perception that this activity is detrimental to girls' health and safety has become a concern among parents.

By studying the physical module of PLKN, a better understanding on each gender's involvement in outdoor physical education can be understood. It provides information on the proper treatment towards each gender. As promoting understanding by treating everyone in a same way does not necessarily mean that it has sufficiently met the specific needs of each gender.



1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the physical module of PLKN and how it affects PLKN's trainees. Also, it examines the relevance of physical activity's setting in promoting better understanding among youths about the issue of gender equity. The assumption that the lesson from this programme is transferable into participants' life in general is also the concern of this study. Therefore, the trainees' perceptions towards the programme's curriculum are highlighted. Purposely, this study only focuses on PLKN's physical module.

