

The Impact of Gender Studies on Work, Life and Relationships: A Study of the Graduates of the Gender Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya

By

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1.1 Executive Summary

The Gender Studies Programme (GSP) began in the 1994/5 academic year. It was set up under the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The number of students fluctuated in the early years, but since 2003/4, there has been an upward trend in the number of students enrolled in GSP (Thambiah, 2004). In 2006, the idea of doing an assessment of the GSP and the impact it had on its students was first mooted. A study was carried out on 110 students (88 females and 22 males) in the second semester of the 2006/7 academic year (the First Study). The results suggested that some personal, social and intellectual development and transformation took place as a result of studying in the GSP. The students wanted to make changes to their relationships and their everyday practices as they were more gender aware, could articulate the inequalities they experienced and had become more self-confident (Merican & Padzil, 2007).

This report documents the impact of students' participation in Gender Studies Programme, University of Malaya. We surveyed all those students that we could locate from the Dean Office Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences database and focusing on graduates who minored in Gender Studies Programme since session 1996/97 when the programme was established, through the 2006/07 academic session. The graduates were given 73 item questionnaires that incorporated elements of several widely used and validated research instruments. We asked them about the impact of the programme on their work and career choices, their personal lives and relationships, and on their contributions to civil society. We also asked their reasons for choosing Gender Studies. Of the 87 graduates of the Programme that we were able to locate 43 returned completed questionnaires for a response rate 49.4 percent. The study found that participation in the Gender Studies Programme had a significant and positive impact on their lives of the graduates in the following areas:

i) Employment and graduate studies

- Almost all the graduates (93%) were employed full time.
- Over half (53.5%) had jobs that were related to gender studies.
- Just under half (46.5) reported that the Gender Studies Programme had opened up job possibilities for them.
- Close to one third (28%) had pursued graduate studies since graduating from the University of Malaya.

ii) Personal lives

- Almost all of the graduates (88%) felt that Gender Studies Programme had had a positive impact on their lives. Most (83%) also believed that their studies at the Gender Studies Programme were relevant to current social or political issues.
- Most of the graduates scored extremely high on measures of self-esteem as well as on egalitarian attitudes.

iii) Awareness of discrimination

- The graduates scored very highly on two measures of awareness of discrimination: discrimination against women, and discrimination against others. Nearly seventy-five percent scored "strongly agree" or "agree" on the two scales.

iv) Impact on social activism

- Over half the graduates have kept themselves informed about women's rights issues (56%) and have been actively seeking to influence other about these issues (51%). Over a third (35%) reported contributing time to women's rights causes.

- About half the graduates (51%) had sought to influence others about the situation of various marginalized groups. Slightly less than half had contributed time to improve the conditions of marginalized groups (42%), and had kept informed about marginalized groups (44%).

v) *Reasons for choosing Gender Studies*

- Most of the graduates (88%) had selected Gender Studies after enrolling in the University.
- For most (86%), their enrollment in Gender Studies was a deliberate decision based on their interest in gender issues.
- Almost half of the graduates (48.4%) found out about the Gender Studies Programme at the briefing during orientation week. The other two major sources of information were the faculty course book (25%), and friends and family (25%). Only one had learned about Gender Studies from an academic advisor.

2.1 Research Objectives

As stated in the research proposal submitted to the Institute of Research Management and Consultancy, University of Malaya, the objectives of this study are:

1. to examine to what extent the knowledge and skills acquired by students during their undergraduate studies in the Gender Studies Programme has impacted their work and their career;
2. to determine to what extent the gender/feminist perspective has influenced the Gender Studies graduates personally;
3. to determine whether the knowledge and skills acquired from the Gender Studies Programme has had an impact on their daily lives and their relationships with their families, friends and partners;
4. to assess the role of the Gender Studies Programme in contributing to the progressive social transformation of society.
5. to assess the motivations for, and visibility of the Gender Studies Programme, and the practicum experience of students.

3.1 Significance of the Study

This study is a contribution to the discussions at the national level on knowledge, skills and employability of our graduates. It is important to determine the correlation between the knowledge and skills acquired and the employment patterns

of graduates of the Gender Studies Programme. The study seeks to learn how students of the Gender Studies Programme have benefited in terms of increasing their employability from the knowledge and skills they acquired.

This study will also contribute to our understanding of how knowledge and education in gender studies can influence gender ideologies and cultural expectations both perceived and practiced at the personal level.

The study also examines how knowledge impacts value systems through the internalization of gender equality values and a commitment to implementing egalitarian and democratic values in daily life and in relationships.

From a broader perspective, this research is in keeping with the Government's commitment to looking at national policies from a gender perspective and promoting gender mainstreaming for the human development of the country. The research will also inform the University of Malaya and the various Government Ministries about the need to facilitate and expand gender studies throughout Malaysia. It will also provide useful information for enhancing the quality and relevance of teaching in the Gender Studies Programme.

Finally, this study is a contribution to the progressive social transformation of society.

4.1 Literature Review

College and university-level women's studies classes in the United States were first offered in the late 1960s and early 1970s following the realization that academic research and teaching were based on white, middle-class male perspectives and experiences. Women's studies programmes were launched in academic institutions in Europe and Asia in the following decades. The Gender Studies Programme at the University Malaya, initiated in 1996, is the only programme in Malaysia offering a major in Gender Studies. Like its counterparts in other countries, the Gender Studies Programme explores traditional topics from alternative viewpoints and from a female perspective (see for example, Brush, Gold, & White, 1978; Macalister, 1999).

In the 12 years of the Programme's existence, it trained over 6165 students. Of these, 5,783 students took one or more elective courses offered by the Gender Studies Programme, while 358 of students enrolled the Gender Studies Programme as a minor and took at least 9-10 courses. The Gender Studies Programme has not previously conducted a systematic evaluation of the impact of the Programme on these graduates. Did the Programme impact their personal life, attitudes, and relationships with family and friends? What was their experience in the labor market?

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the Gender Studies Programme significantly impacts its graduates' personal lives, interpersonal relationships, and employment. The present study is the first systematic assessment of the impact of the Gender Studies Programme on its students.

The research was inspired by a research project on "Employment and Women's Studies: The Impact of Women's Studies Training on Women's Employment in Europe", conducted between 2001 and 2003 and financed by the Directorate General XII (Research) of the European Union. Their study examined 11 gender studies programmes in nine countries within the European Union. The findings were published in several books, articles, and monographs (See for example, Griffin, 2002; 2004; Griffin & Hammer, 2005).

4.1.1 Impact of gender studies on students' employment

Additional issues examined in relation to gender studies programmes are its impact on students' employment following their graduation from gender studies (Griffin, 2002; 2004; Macalister, 1999). Gender studies have been found to impact their students' sense of commitment and responsibility (Macalister, 1999); and both job motivation and job certainty (Macalister, 1999). Other job-related skills acquired in gender studies include critical thinking (Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Macalister, 1999); empowerment (Macalister, 1999); assertiveness and persistence (Griffin & Hammer, 2005); adaptability and entrepreneurship (Griffin & Hammer, 2005). Gender Studies training was also found to provide its students with the following knowledge and skills for the labor market: gender awareness; knowledge of equal opportunities; ability to establish and sustain complex arguments; ability to work in a communicative open style; and competence in dealing with diversity (Griffin & Hammer, 2005).

Gender studies students are more willing to go into less established, innovative work environments where work cultures are less entrenched. Gender studies students also reported a willingness to 'invent' their own jobs - that is to think creatively about making employment for themselves.

Gender studies training facilitates students' understanding of the gendered power asymmetries they routinely encounter in their working lives, enabling them to make sense of those experiences. Further, gender studies training changes the graduates' understanding of equal opportunities issues and equips them to address a variety of issues at work: refusal to put up with sexist behavior at work; introduction of gender issues into the workplace; working in a non-sexist manner; fighting discrimination at work; feeling more confident in making applications for promotion; being more sensitive to issues of diversity; being more supportive of female colleagues (Griffin & Hammer, 2005).

4.1.2 Impact of gender studies on the student's personal life

Literature on the impact of gender studies has found that gender studies have a central and powerful impact on the lives of its students (Jackson, 2000; Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Macalister, 1999; Thambiah, 2004). It affects the students' self-expression (Macalister, 1999); self-identity (Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Price & Owen, 1998); feminist identity (Macalister, 1999); and the connection between women's studies and feminist identity, feminist attitudes and feminist politics (Jackson, 2000; Macalister, 1999).

Several studies found that gender studies impacted the students' self-esteem (e.g., Jackson, 2000; Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Macalister, 1999). In at least in one study (Zuckerman, 1983) the impact of gender studies on its students' self-esteem was inconclusive. As Macalister (1999) suggests, however, it is possible that the difference between students' scores on the self-esteem measure is associated with the number of courses they have taken in gender studies (e.g., elective courses, major, minor) - data that was not presented in the study. Interestingly, an empirical study by Stake and Gerner (1987) suggests that gender studies enhanced both the women's and the males' self-esteem.

Students have been found to become more aware of diversity (Macalister, 1999) and to have enhanced their tolerance toward diversity (Griffin & Hammer, 2005). Their participation in gender studies programmes enhanced their openness and tolerance of other people's situations (Griffin & Hammer, 2005); decreased dogmatism and narrow-mindedness (Griffin & Hammer, 2005); and led to more liberal attitudes toward women (Macalister, 1999; Scott, Richards & Wade 1977).

4.1.3 Impact of gender studies on the student's interpersonal relationships

Gender studies has been found to impact the students' interpersonal relationships with their family (e.g., Griffin & Hammer, 2005); friends (e.g., Griffin & Hammer, 2005); and their relationships with their partners (e.g., Griffin & Hammer, 2005). The cross-European research by Griffin and Hammer (2005) found that the changes students experienced in their relationships with family, friends, and partners as a result of gender studies were usually positive and viewed as an improvement or as not harmful. Only rarely did gender studies have a negative impact on the student's interpersonal relationships (Griffin & Hammer, 2005, p. 155).

4.1.4 Impact of gender studies on the students' stance with respect to transforming society

Previous studies found a connection between gender studies and feminist identity, feminist attitudes and feminist politics (Jackson, 2000; Macalister, 1999). Gender studies students usually identify themselves as feminist, and value the politicized and feminist nature of women's studies as a subject (Jackson, 2000). For example, Griffin & Hammer, (2005) found that gender studies impacted the students' gender awareness; enhanced their feminist identity; enhanced resistance toward intolerance as expressed in sexism and discrimination; generated a goal to dismantle patriarchy, inequality and discrimination; and led to a perception of political feminism as a lived philosophy. Similarly, Bargad and Hyde (1991) found that gender studies students increased their feminist identity.

4.1.5 Motivations to enroll in Gender Studies

The original proposal did not include motivations to enroll in the Gender Studies Programme among the project's objectives. However, based on the analysis of a preliminary study of students in the Gender Studies Programme at the University Malaya, we decided to add this dimension to our research. The literature identified four main reasons why students take Gender Studies courses (Griffin & Hammer, 2005):

1. Chance. When the gender studies programme / department is located exclusively within traditional disciplines, most of the students, especially the undergraduates, enter the gender studies by chance rather than by plan. The students tend to discover the courses rather than have an articulated conscious agenda (Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Jackson, 2000).
2. Choice. This usually happens when gender studies as a discipline is visible and there is a specific undergraduate programme in gender studies. These students make more proactive choices and are mostly graduate students (Griffin & Hammer, 2005, p. 141).
3. Political / activist background. These students are committed to gender studies due to a prior history of activism or educational exposure (Griffin & Hammer, 2005; Jackson, 2000).

4. Personal history (Griffin & Hammer, 2005, p. 142; Jackson, 2000). These students choose gender studies due to particular events, most often a negative experience of social exclusion. Choosing gender studies may reflect a reaction to family background, and a desire to transcend these experiences (e.g., inequality in parental relationship; sexual identity).

5.1 Method

This study uses quantitative method. In the first stage of the research, we focused on the quantitative assessment, constructing a questionnaire that was administered to all graduates of the Gender Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya.

In the next phase of the study, we will administer the same questionnaire to a comparison group of undergraduate students in the Gender Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya.

5.1.1 Sample

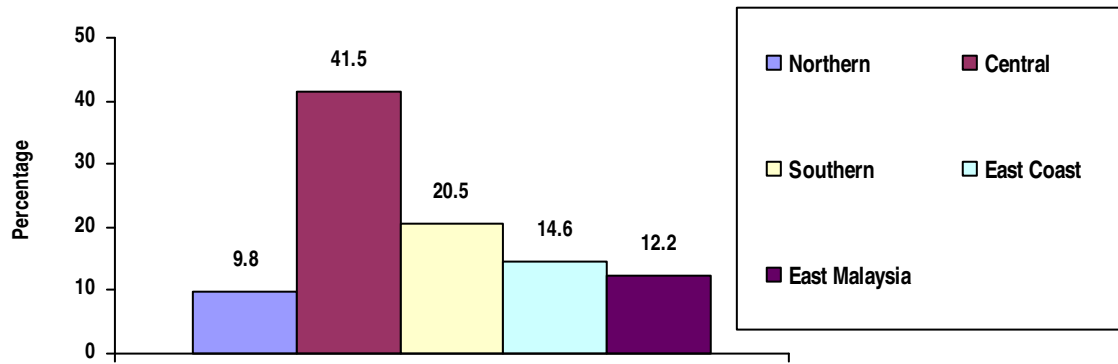
The questionnaire was administered to all the graduates of the Gender Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya that we could locate from the academic sessions 1996/1997 to 2006/2007. The sample consisted of 43 graduates who graduated between 1999/2000 – 2006/2007.

(Q1-10)- 97% of the respondents were female (N = 41), and 3% were males (N=2). Their ages range was between 20-40 with a mean age of 26. 37.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 20-25; 55.8% were between the ages of 26-30; 4.7% were between the ages of 36-40; and 2.3% were between the ages of 36-40. The enrollment trend of male students in Gender Studies Programme from the year 1996/1997 to 2006/2007 has always been small with an average of 5 male students. Therefore, the total number of 2 male respondents is representative and reflects the enrollment trend of male students in Gender Studies Programme.

In terms of ethnicity, 20% of the respondents were Malay, 62.9% Chinese, 8.6% Indian and 8.6% Pribumi. It was also reported that 86% of the respondents were single while 14% were married. Also, only 2 respondents reported to have a child.

The sample was recruited from the 14 states in Malaysia. The state of Selangor had the highest respondents (23.8%), followed by Johor (11.9%), then Kuala Lumpur (9.5%). This represents a more urban population as a whole. The distribution of respondents throughout Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia are illustrated in Figure 1.0 (Northern: 9.8%, Central: 41.5%, Southern: 20.5%, East Coast: 14.6%, and East Malaysia: 12.2%)

Figure 1.1 Distribution of respondents' locations



Majority of the graduates enrolled in the year 2004/2005 (23.3%), followed by the year 1999/2000 & year 2002/2003 (18.6% respectively). Refer to Table 1.1 for more details.

Table 1.1 Respondents' year of enrolment

Year of enrolment	Frequency	Percent
19997/98	1	2.3
19998/99	2	4.7
1999/00	8	18.6
2000/01	2	4.7
2001/02	7	16.3
2002/03	8	18.6
2003/04	5	11.6
2004/05	10	23.3
Total	43	100.0

Majority of respondents therefore graduated in the year 2003/2004 & 2005/2006 (23.3% respectively), followed by the year 2004/2005 (18.6%). For more details refer to Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Respondents' year of graduation

Year of graduation	Frequency	Percent
99/00	1	2.3
00/01	2	4.7
01/02	3	7.0
02/03	4	9.3
03/04	10	23.3
04/05	8	18.6
05/06	10	23.3
06/07	5	11.6
Total	43	100.0

In terms of respondents' major & minors, majority of respondents (50%) majored in Media, Languages or Literature while 100 % of respondents minored in Gender Studies.

6.1 Scales

There are numerous scales addressing gender roles reflecting the interest in gender differences, gender stereotypes, gender-typed attitudes and behaviors, and sex-role attitudes brought about by the women's movement and societal changes

(Ashmore, Del Boca & Bilder, 1995). Two very different approaches to assessing gender attitudes have predominated: scales assessing global sex-role ideology, and scales assessing beliefs about very specific gender issues (Ashmore et al., 1995). The measures of global sex-role ideology yield a single score that places individuals along a dimension that is variously described as traditional-nontraditional, conservative-liberal, or sexist-egalitarian (Beere, 1979, 1990a; Brannon, 1978; Del Boca, Ashmore & McManus, 1986). These measures are exemplified by the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), which is the most widely used gender attitude measure (Beere, 1990a). The measures assessing evaluative beliefs about very specific gender issues include, for example, Attitudes toward Women as Managers (Peters, Terborg & Taynor, 1974), and Attitudes toward Feminism and the Women's Movement (Fassinger, 1994). Beere (1990a, 1990b) has collected, organized, and evaluated many of these issue-specific instruments.

For this study, we selected some global measures (e.g., Gender-role Egalitarianism Scale, adapted by Sevelius and Stake (2003) from Spence and Helmreich Attitude toward Women Scale (1972), and some specific scales (e.g., Attitudes toward Feminism and the Women's Movement by Fassinger, 1994).

In addition to gender role, the questionnaire we constructed includes items addressing the respondents' planned and actual employment and their assessment of courses taught by the Gender Studies Programme. For this purpose, we used several items from Griffin et al. who conducted a very large comparative study assessing eleven gender studies programmes in nine European countries (Griffin 2002; 2004; Griffin & Hammer, 2005).

In constructing the questionnaire, we considered several criteria:

- (1) Our search for existing scales was guided by the degree to which the scales were relevant to the Gender Studies Programme and culturally appropriate for use in Malaysia;
- (2) We drew upon several valid and reliable scales that have been used internationally to facilitate international comparisons;
- (3) Potential scales were assessed to insure that they addressed a wide range of issues relevant to the Gender Studies Programme; and
- (4) The final questionnaire was then evaluated in terms of its scope and ease of administration.

The instruments employed for this study are listed as they apply to the study's objectives, as follows:

6.1.1 Objective 1: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates' work and career

i) Impact of gender studies on employment

The 15 items measure, designed by Griffin and colleagues (Griffin, 2002; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Hammer, 2005), addresses types of employment; satisfaction with employment; reasons for not being employed; level of income; and how the employment is related to gender studies.

6.1.2 Objective 2: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on the personal life of graduates

i) The quality of the impact gender studies had on the respondents

The quality of the impact Gender Studies had on the respondents' was developed by Stake and Rose (1994), to measure whether enrollment in the gender studies had a positive or negative impact on the respondents' lives, and to assess the relevance of gender studies to current social or political issues. The 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (very little) to 4 (very much).

ii) Performance Self-Esteem Scale (PSES)

The Performance Self-Esteem Scale (PSES) was developed by Stake (1979), and Stake and Noonan (1985). The 15-item short form of the scale is a self-evaluation of the respondents' confidence to perform in achievement situations such as educational and career settings (Stake 1979; Stake & Gerner, 1987). The scale consists of 9 positive and 6 negative statements on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not true) to 4 (always true). A sample positive item, "Assertive". A sample negative item, "make mistakes when flustered". Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .83, .85, and .86, respectively (Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

iii) General Egalitarianism Scale

Egalitarian attitudes toward others were adapted by Sevelius and Stake (2003) from the Equal Opportunities / Rights Scale (Miller, Kinder & Rosenstone, 1993). This scale measures the extent to which students express an acceptance and appreciation for diverse perspectives, cultures, and life-styles. A sample positive item, "We should be accepting of people with different beliefs and ways of living". A sample negative item, "Newer lifestyles are contributing to social breakdown". The 8-item measure includes 4 positive and 4 negative statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Variability of responses on this scale was adequate (range = -15 to 24; SD = 7.13). Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .80, .80, and .82, respectively (Sevelius & Stake, 2003;

Stake & Hoffman, 2001). Scores were derived for this and the Gender-role Egalitarianism Scale (below), by summing the positive and negative items separately and subtracting the negative from the positive sum.

iv) Gender Role Egalitarianism Scale

Egalitarian attitude toward women and gender issues was adapted by Sevelius and Stake (2003) from the Attitude toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmrich, 1972). On the basis of empirical relationships between the Attitude toward Women Scale (AWS) scores and scores from various feminism scales, several researchers have concluded that the AWS may be considered a measure of liberal feminism (see for example, Frieze & McHugh, 1998). The Attitude toward Women Scale was adapted by Sevelius and Stake (2003) “to address the problems of low response variability and ceiling effects in the original scale” (p. 2344). The 10-item measure includes 6 positive and 4 negative statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample positive item, “Women should assume an equal place in business and all the professions along with men.” A sample negative item, “There are some jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted”. At pre-test, the adapted scale yielded adequate reliability of responses (range = -12 to 30; SD = 6.49). Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .74, .71, and .74, respectively (Sevelius & Stake, 2003; Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

6.1.3 Objective 3: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates’ relationships

i) Awareness of Discrimination against Women Scale (i.e. sexism)

Awareness of Discrimination against Women was adapted by Stake and Hoffman (2001) from the Social Order Scale (Worell & Worell, 1977). The 6-item measure consists of 4 positive and 2 negative statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample positive item, “Women have more to gain than to lose by asking for complete equality.” A sample negative item, “Most women have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life”. Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .73, .70, and .71, respectively (Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

ii) General Awareness of Discrimination against Others Scale.

The General Awareness of discrimination Against Others Scale was adapted by Stake and Hoffman (2001) from the Equal Opportunities / Rights Scale (Miller, Kinder & Rosenstone, 1993). The 6-item measure consists of 4 positive and 2

negative statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample positive item, “We would have fewer problems in this country if all people were treated more fairly.” A sample negative item, “We have gone too far in pushing equal rights”. Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .76, .75, and .77, respectively (Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

6.1.4 Objective 4: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates’ contribution to social transformation of society

To examine whether graduates of the Gender Studies Programme are positioned to transform society and / or believe in the importance of their active contribution to transforming society, we included two sub-scales: one addressing feminist activism and one addressing activism on behalf of such populations as Orang Asli, people with disabilities, the elderly, refugees, migrant workers, people facing health and sexuality challenges, and the poor.

i) Feminist Activism Scale

The 3-item Feminist Activism Scale, designed by Stake and Rose (1994) addresses involvement in women’s rights activism. The Feminist Activism Scale captures a range of activist behaviors which attempts to operationalize activism on behalf of women’s rights. Respondents rate how often they engaged in each of the following behaviors: (a) kept informed about women’s rights issues; (b) talked with others to influence their attitudes about women’s rights issues; and (c) contributed time to women’s rights cause (e.g., attended a meeting about women’s rights issues, circulated a petition related to women’s rights, attended a rally related to women’s rights). The 5-point rating scale ranges from 1 (never); 2 (once or twice); 3 (three or four times); and 5 (on a regular basis). Alpha coefficients of internal consistency at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up were .88, .88, and .89, respectively (Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

ii) Change in Feminist Activism

Change in Feminist Activism was a one-item measure adapted from Stake and Hoffman (2001). It measures whether the involvement in feminist activism has increased since studying in Gender Studies. The responses scale are 1 (Yes) or 2 (No).

iii) General Social Activism Scale

The 3-item General Social Activism Scale, designed by Stake and Rose (1994) parallels the Feminist Activism Scale (Stake & Rose, 1994). The General Social Activism Scale addresses activism on behalf of the rights of marginalized groups

(e.g., people with disabilities, immigrants, and the elderly). The General Social Activism Scale captures a range of activist behaviors which attempts to operationalize activism on behalf of marginalized groups. Respondents rate how often they engaged in each of the following behaviors: (a) kept informed about the rights of marginalized groups; (b) talked with others to influence their attitudes about the rights of marginalized groups; and (c) contributed time to the marginalized groups cause (e.g., attended a meeting about marginalized groups issues, circulated a petition related to the rights of marginalized groups, attended a rally related to the rights of marginalized groups). The 5-point rating scale ranges from 1 (never); 2 (once or twice); 3 (three or four times); and 5 (on a regular basis). Alpha coefficients of internal consistency were .90 at pre-testing, post-testing, and follow-up (Stake & Hoffman, 2001).

6.1.5 Objective 5: Motivations and visibility of the Gender Studies Programme, and practicum experience

i) Motivations for studying Gender Studies

The 2-item measure, designed by Griffin and colleagues (Griffin, 2002; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Hammer, 2005), addressed the time the respondent decided to enroll in gender studies (e.g., before entering the University; while at the University; while working; or whether they “did not purposefully choose it – it just happened”). The motivations measure also included a question asking the respondents to identify which factors influenced their decision to enroll in the Gender Studies Programme. This item listed 11 factors including interest in gender issues; technical considerations (e.g., convenience, timetable constraints); professional considerations; and peers’ influence.

i) Visibility of Gender Studies Programme

The 1-item measure, designed by Griffin and colleagues (Griffin, 2002; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Hammer, 2005), examined how the respondents found out about the Gender Studies Programme. This measure listed the following 5 factors: orientation week at the University; faculty course book; friends; relatives, and family members; and academic advisor.

ii) Extent practicum was taken in Gender Studies Programme

Extent practicum was taken in Gender Studies Programme was assessed by a 2-item measure was designed by the researchers. The first measure examined whether the respondents undertook a practicum placement while studying in the

Gender Studies Programme. The measure, aimed at those who undertook a practicum, examined the type of agency in which the practicum took place. The 3 response options were NGOs, government agency and a private company.

7.1 Procedure

The first task is to identify the total number of minor graduates of Gender Studies Programme from 1996/1997 – 2006/2007. The data were derived from the database provided by the Dean's Office of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Some of the information provided by the Dean's Office was outdated and incomplete which makes it difficult to contact and communicate with the graduates. There were instances where the contact numbers given were those of the parents of the graduates. Therefore they were reluctant to divulge the contact details of the graduates. However, after explaining to them the purpose and objective of the research, a few of them agreed to cooperate and provide the contact details of the graduates.

There were several steps taken in completing the final questionnaire. Based on correspondences and discussions with co-researchers, we decided to use numerous scales and criteria to initiate the research. The criteria chosen for the research was guided by the degree to which the scales are relevant to Gender Studies Programme and to what extent the scales were culturally appropriate and fit for use in Malaysia. We drew upon several valid and reliable scales that have been used internationally. This will allow us to compare our findings with those of other international studies; potential scales were assessed to ensure that they addressed a wide range of issues relevant to the Gender Studies Programme. The scales that have been agreed for final questionnaire were impact of women studies (Griffith et al), personal change scale (Stake), performance self-esteem scale (Stake), self-esteem (Rosenburg), feminism activism scale (Stake), general egalitarian scale (Stake), gender role egalitarian scale (Stake), awareness of discrimination against women scale (Stake and Hoffman), general awareness of discrimination against others scale (Stake and Hoffman), change in feminist activism (Stake and Hoffman), general social activism scale (Stake and Rose), motivations for studying gender studies (Griffiths et al), and visibility of Gender Studies Programme (Griffiths et al).

After completing the final questionnaire in English, there were discussions on the whether the questionnaire will be administered in English or Malay language. After considering that the students will be more familiar with the Malay language, we decided to translate the final questionnaire from English to Malay language. We face challenges in the process to translate the final questionnaire in terms of suitability of certain concepts and words chosen to reflect the true meaning of the question. The translation was not done literally from English to Malay but was done according to the meaning of certain concepts and culture in Malaysia. Finally, the questionnaire was completed after much discussion and amendment in terms of selection of

scales, the usage of language and translation and the formatting of the questionnaire to facilitate the data entry for the purpose of data analysis.

When we realize that the response of reply from the respondents were low, we adopted a more rigorous strategy by making telephone calls to each and every respondent as a follow up and reminder. We were then given several e-mail addresses in order to forward the questionnaire as a small number of them did not receive it via postal mail. There were 4 reminders done to get the respondents to fill out the questionnaire. After the fourth reminder, we managed to get 50 percent reply from the total number of respondent via postal mail and email. Finally the total number of respondent agreed to participate were 87 graduates. A total of 87 questionnaires were sent out, out of 289 numbers of graduates given by Dean Office database. Out of these 87 graduates who agreed to participate, only 43 graduates reply the questionnaire after many times contacting them via email, telephone, and mobile.

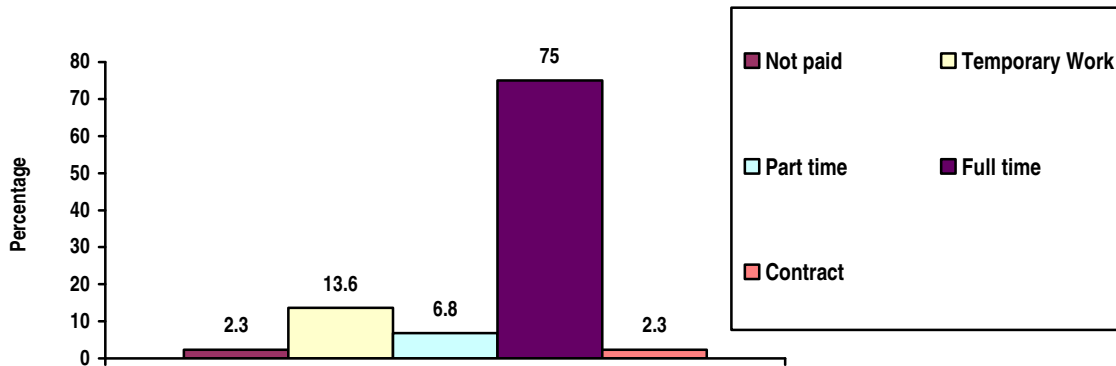
8.1 Findings

The findings show that participation in the Gender Studies Programme had a major positive impact on the lives of the students. Below, the findings are presented in relation to each of the study's objectives.

8.1.1 Objective 1: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates' work and career

Of the 43 respondents, 40 reported to be employed (90.9%) while 3 others were unemployed (7%). Details of those who were employed are as illustrated in Figure 1.2. 75% of employed individuals were working full time, followed by 13.5% who engaged in temporal work, and 6.8% engaging in part time work. Further details are illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Details of Employment Status



Respondents that were employed were engaged in a variety of job sectors. Majority of respondents worked in the education sector (38.5%), followed by jobs related to business, finance, sales and marketing (12.8%), and 10.3% engaged in administration or clerical work. Other jobs sectors disclosed by respondents are reported in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Kind of paid employments

Job sector	Frequency	Valid Percent
Health Services	1	2.6
Administration and Diplomatic Officer	1	2.6
Education	15	38.5

Law	2	5.1
Business, Finance, Sales and Marketing	5	12.8
Administration and Clerical	4	10.3
Social work and NGO	2	5.1
Agriculture and related industries	1	2.6
Media, Entertainment and Sports	2	5.1
Others	1	2.6
Customer Services	1	2.6
Publisher	1	2.6
Social	1	2.6
Logistic	1	2.6
Photographer	1	2.6
Total	39	100.0

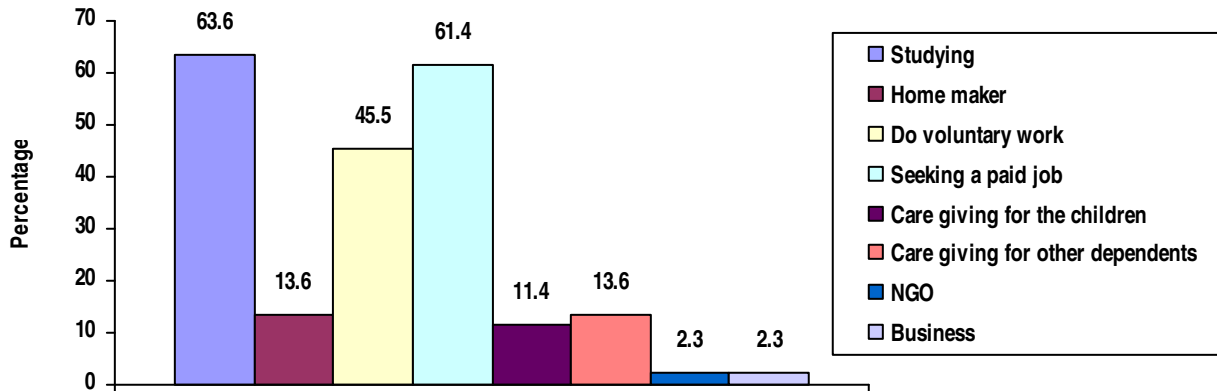
The income of working respondents were mainly in the range of RM1000 – RM 1999 (40%), followed by RM2000 – RM2999 (35%) and >RM1000 (10.0%). Table 1.4 provides additional details on employed respondents' income level.

Table 1.4 Income levels of employed respondents

Income Level	Frequency	Valid Percent
>1000	4	10.0
1000-1999	16	40.0
2000-2999	14	35.0
3000-3999	3	7.5
4000-4999	1	2.5
5000-5999	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Further analysis revealed that those who were unemployed engaged in activities as illustrated in Figure 1.3 as follow.

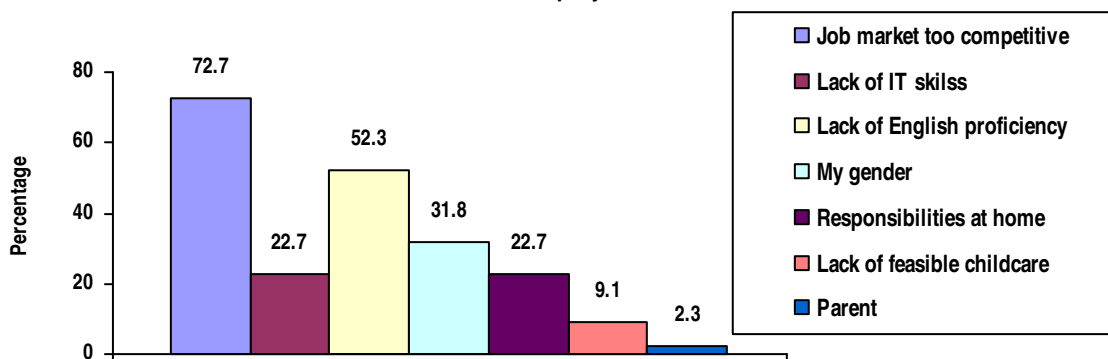
Figure 1.3 Activities unemployed respondents engaged in



Of the 61.4% unemployed respondents seeking paid employment, majority of them associated their unemployed status with the competition in the job market (72.7%), followed by the lack of English proficiency (52.3%) and gender (31.8%). These findings suggest that a degree in Gender Studies per se, does not provide an individual seeking employment a competitive edge in the job market, since respondents perceived the competition in the job market as the primary reason why they were unemployed.

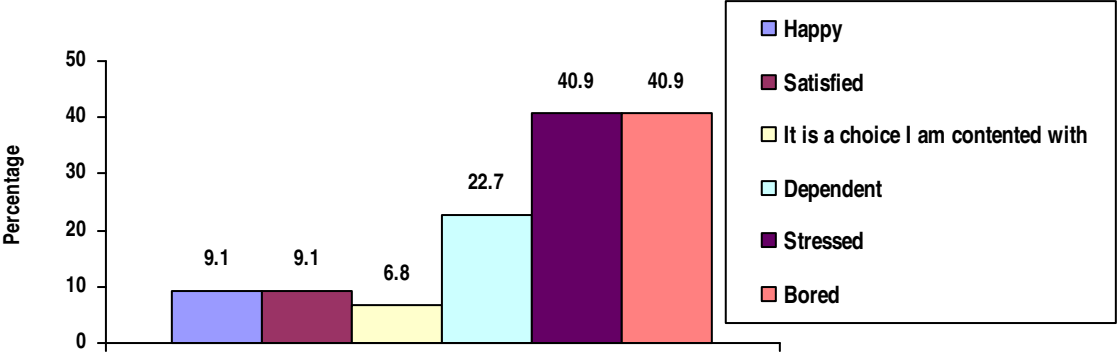
It is interesting to note that since 97% of the respondents are female, these findings suggest that there seem to be either some form of gender discrimination in the employment arena, or that the recruited sample perceived their gender as a disadvantage when seeking employment. Figure 1.4 elaborates on other reasons why respondents seeking paid employment have failed thus far.

Figure 1.4 Reasons why respondents seeking paid employment remained unemployed



Unemployed individuals displayed mixed emotions about their employment status. 40.9% of respondents felt stressed and bored, 22.7% felt they were dependent on others, while 9.1% felt happy and satisfied with their employment status as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5 How participants felt about being unemployed



Further investigation on the impact and relevance of Gender Studies to and individuals’ work and career revealed that 53.5% of respondents felt what they have learnt was relevant to their work while 46.5% felt otherwise.

When asked whether Gender Studies opened up job possibilities, 46.5% responded “Yes” while 53.5% checked “No”. Respondents were also asked whether they considered work as career, regardless of whether it was paid, unpaid or voluntary work. 88.1% of respondents replied “Yes” while 11.9% indicated “No”.

In summary, findings from this segment suggest that although, 90.9% of subjects were employed only half of the respondents thought Gender Studies were relevant to their work. Furthermore, majority of the respondents worked in educational field (38.5%) (perhaps the most closely related to gender studies of all the job sectors respondents were employed in) while other fields respondents were employed in were non gender studies related. The fact that 53.5% of respondents answered “No” to Gender Studies opening up job possibilities lend further support to the relevance of a pursuit in this area to one’s work or career. Nonetheless, unemployed individuals, did not specifically indicate their degree (in Gender Studies) as a reason why they were unemployed, one can only infer that the competitive nature of the job market, which 72.7% of respondents indicate as the cause of unemployment is linked to the fact that their qualifications are less sought after therefore implying a lack of relevance in the job arena (apart from the educational sector).

8.1.2 Objective 2a: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on personal life of graduates

To evaluate how the Gender Studies Programme affected the graduates' lives, we examined the quality of the impact Gender Studies had on the respondents; the respondents' performance self-esteem; their attitudes toward gender-role egalitarianism; and their attitudes toward general egalitarianism.

Data analysis revealed that 88.4% of respondents felt that Gender Studies had a positive impact on their personal life, where as 11.6% felt that Gender studies had little impact on their personal lives. Also, 93% felt that Gender Studies was relevant to current issues while 7% felt otherwise.

Nonetheless, when asked about the negative impact Gender studies had on their lives, all respondents agreed.

Results from the Performance Self Esteem Scale-Item 23 (Table 1.5) revealed that respondents performance self esteem was generally high with a mean of 38.95, standard deviation of 4.09 (total score = 60). The minimum score was 30 which was at neutral point while the highest score was 48. These findings indicate that respondents generally had high confidence in achievement situations (such as educational and career settings).

Table 1.5 Performance Self Esteem Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Performance SE	43	30.00	48.00	38.95	4.09
Valid N (list wise)	43				

8.1.3 Objective 2b: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on gender roles/gender identity

i) Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on gender-role egalitarian attitudes

The Gender-Role Egalitarianism Scale (revised version of Spence & Helmrich, Attitude toward Women Scale, 1972) is essentially a measure of liberal feminism. Findings revealed that respondents scored on the higher end of the scale with a mean score of 28.60 (standard deviation = 2.71) out of a total of 40. The lowest score was 24 which were above the neutral point and the highest score was 35.

Table 1.6 Gender Role Egalitarian Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender Role Egalitarian Scale	43	24.00	35.00	28.60	2.71

Table 1.6 Gender Role Egalitarian Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender Role Egalitarian Scale	43	24.00	35.00	28.60	2.71
Valid N (list wise)	43				

ii) Impact of the Gender Studies Programme general egalitarian attitudes

The General Egalitarianism Scale (adapted by Sevelius and Stake (2003) from the Equal Opportunities / Rights Scale (Miller, Kinder & Rosenstone, 1993) is a measure of acceptance and appreciation for diverse perspectives, cultures and life-styles. Findings from the current study revealed that respondents scored towards the higher end of the scale, (mean score = 30.93, standard deviation 4.25, Table 1.7) indicating a general acceptance and appreciation of diversity.

Table 1.7 General Egalitarian Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
General Egalitarian Scale	43	14.00	42.00	30.93	4.25
Valid N (listwise)	43				

8.1.4 Objective 3: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates' relationships

To evaluate the impact of the Gender Studies Programme on the graduates' relationships, we focused on two types of awareness of discrimination which presumably impact all types of relationships: awareness of discrimination against women, and awareness of discrimination against others.

Respondents scored slightly above neutral point for the Awareness of Discrimination Against Women Scale (mean = 20.09, standard deviation = 2.44, total score = 30, see Table 1.8)

Table 1.8 Awareness of Discrimination Against Women Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ADAWS	43	12.00	25.00	20.09	2.44
Valid N (listwise)	43				

On the General Awareness of Discrimination against Others Scale which consisted of 6 items, respondents also scored slightly above neutral point (mean = 22.33, standard deviation = 2.13). Refer to Table 1.9

Table 1.9 Awareness of Discrimination Against Others Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ADAGS	43	18.00	26.00	22.33	2.13
Valid N (listwise)	43				

In summary, findings suggest that respondents were generally non discriminative against women or others as a whole. It is difficult to infer whether this is a result of pursuing Gender Studies unless its compared to a control group, nonetheless, findings reveal a low level of discrimination amongst graduates of Gender Studies.

8.1.5 Objective 4: Impact of the Gender Studies Programme on graduates’ contributing to social transformation of society

Table 2.1 Feminist Activism Scale & General Social Activism Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FAS	43	3.00	12.00	6.47	2.73
GSAS	43	3.00	12.00	6.23	2.80
Valid N (listwise)	43				

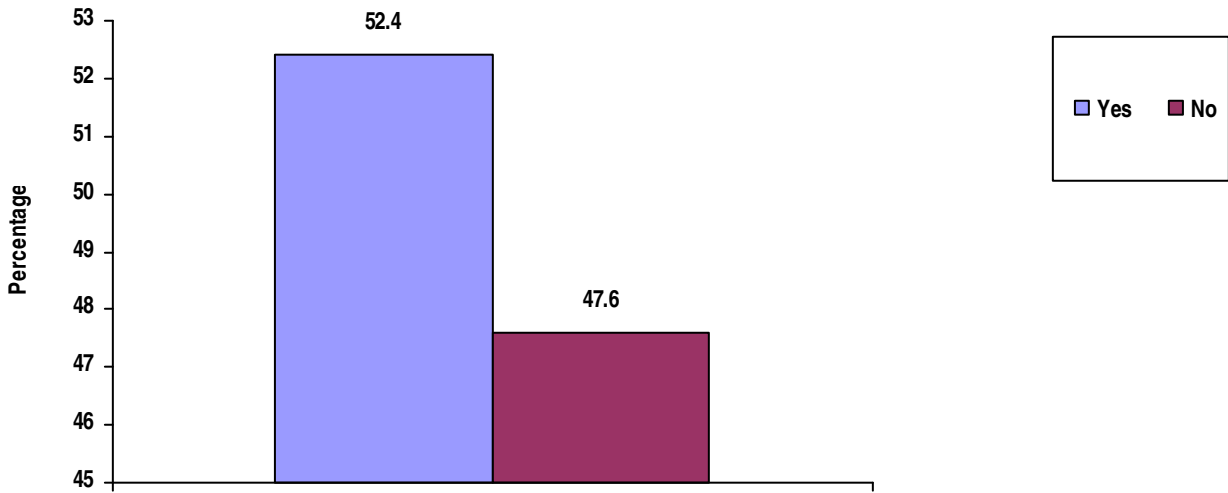
To evaluate the impact of the Gender Studies Programme on the extent the graduates contribute to social transformation, we examined three variables relating to social activism: feminist/ gender-related social activism; change in gender-related social activism; and general social activism. Refer to Table 2.1 and Figure 1.6.

Gender-related social activism as measured by items 54-56 revealed that respondents’ involvement in such activities were minimal with a mean score of 6.47 (standard deviation = 2.73). Findings from the General Social Activism Scale also yield similar results, showing only a mean score of 6.23 (standard deviation = 2.80), which is also only slight above neutral point.

When asked whether pursuing Gender Studies has increased their involvement in activism, 52.4% answered “Yes” while 47.6% answered “No”(Figure 1.6).

In summary, findings suggest that Gender Studies only has moderate effect on respondents’ involvement in activism. See figure 1.6

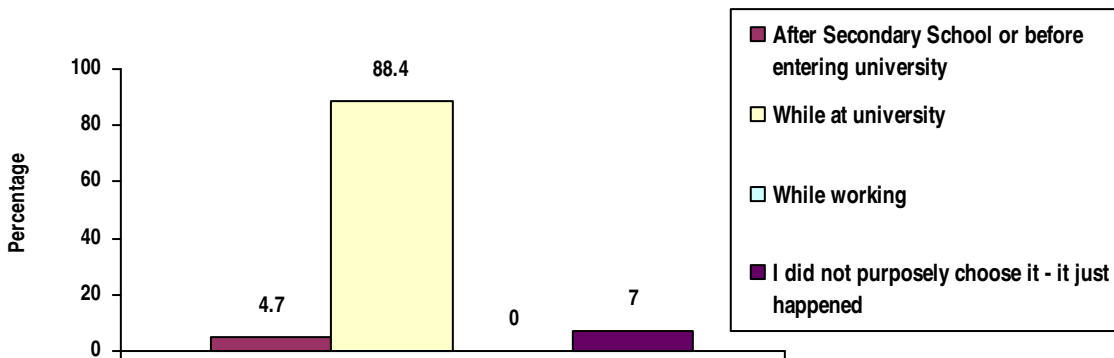
Figure 1.6 Has your involvement in activism increased since you were involved in Gender Studies Program



8.1.6 Objective 5: Motivations and visibility of the Gender Studies Programme and practicum experience

Findings from this segment revealed that majority of Gender Studies graduates only decided to take up the course while in university (88.4%), followed by 7% who ended up doing the course by accident, and lastly 4.7% chose the course prior to entering university. See Figure 1.7.

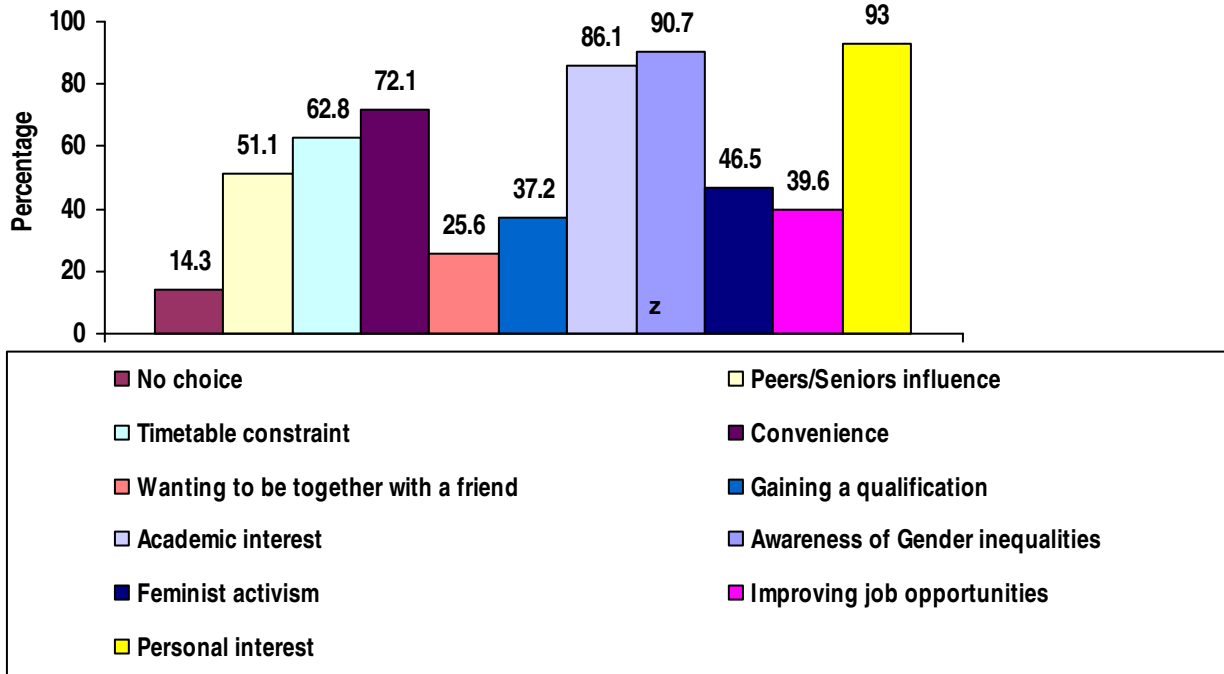
Figure 1.7 When did respondents decide to take Gender Studies



Respondents were also asked what factors determined their choice in selecting Gender Studies. The top 3 factors are as follow: personal interest (93%), awareness of gender inequalities (90.7%), and academic interest (86.1%). The 3 lowest

factors were: no choice (14.3%), wanting to be together with a friend “25.6%” and gaining a qualification (37.2%) – see Figure 1.8. These findings suggest that individuals in the Gender Studies Programme were more often than not enrolled in the course because of their personal interest, awareness of gender equalities and academic interest despite the fact that many of them indicate it had low job prospects.

Figure 1.8 Factors determining respondents' decision to take Gender Studies



i) Visibility of Gender Studies Programme at Universiti Malaya

Figure 1.9 How respondents found out about Gender Studies course they took

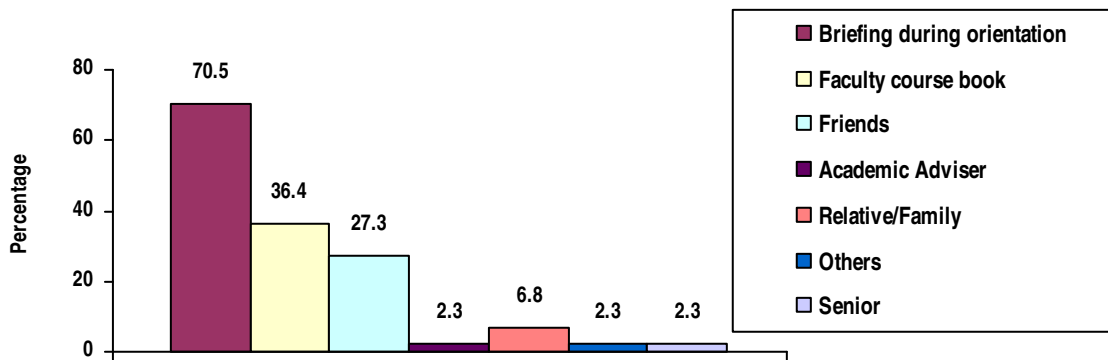


Figure 1.9 illustrates how respondents' found out about the course. Majority of the graduates found out about Gender Studies via the orientation programme (70.5%), followed by the Faculty's course book (36.4%) and thirdly friends (27.3%). Findings suggest that the academic advisors did not play a significant role in introducing Gender Studies as a choice of study (2.3%) as compared to the orientation programme given by Gender Studies Programme academic staff (70.5%) conducted by the Faculty. This is worth of further research should the Gender Studies Programme feel that the lack of enrolment in the programme or lack of involvement in activism can perhaps be inferred to the ineffectiveness of the relevant parties in communicating the availability of the course.

ii) Relevance of practicum taken in Gender Studies Programme

27.9% of respondents undertook practicum while studying in the programme, while 72.1% did not. It is to be noted that the practicum at the Gender Studies Programme has been temporary suspended since the 2002/2003. See Table 2.2

Table 2.2 Relevance of practicum taken in Gender Studies Programme

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	12	27.9
	No	31	72.1
	Total	43	100.0

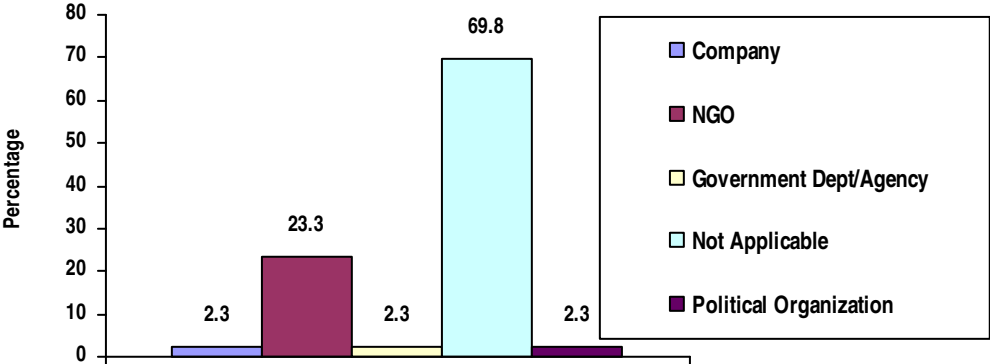
From Figure 1.9 we can also observed that majority of practicum were at NGOs (23.3%) followed by companies, government departments or agencies and political organization (2.3% respectively).

From the observations above, one can gather firstly that practicum was perhaps not particularly relevant since only 27.9% of graduates engaged in practicum work. Nonetheless, this could be due to other variables such as the lack of opportunities, or like observed before, the competitive job market or the relevance of course work in the job arena.

Secondly, the locations for practicum appears to be consistent with the initial findings where majority of graduates ended up working in the education sector as opportunities in other fields were limited, given the background of the graduate. However, this does not indicate an overall irrelevance of the course; rather, there is a need to translate its course syllabus into more applicable terms. Also, that graduates should be challenge to explore beyond the boundaries of their course work. See Figure

2.1

Figure 2.1 Practicum location



9.1 Conclusion

The Gender Studies Programme has had a significant impact on its graduates. Most of the graduates were employed; most worked full-time; and although the majority earned below 3,000 per month, most considered their work as a career. Over half of the respondents found their jobs to be related to Gender Studies; slightly less than half reported that the Gender Studies Programme opened up job possibilities for them; and nearly a third said that the Programme influenced the type of jobs they were seeking. Nearly a third of the respondents continued studying for a graduate degree following their graduation from Gender Studies.

Almost all of the respondents felt that the Gender Studies Programme had a positive impact on their lives and their relationships with others. The Programme was associated with high levels of performance self-esteem; gender-role as well as

general egalitarian attitudes; awareness of discrimination against women, and general awareness of discrimination against others.

About half of the respondents reported that their level of gender-related social activism has increased since studying in the Gender Studies Programme.

While most of the graduates found out about the Gender Studies Programme at the briefing during orientation week, most of them reported enrolling in the Gender Studies Programme because they were interested in gender and inequality issues.

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