

Negotiation with Patriarchy in Women's Lives: A Case Study in a Malaysian Public University

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Abstract

Objective - While women make up almost 65% of undergraduates in public universities in Malaysia, only in the last three years their labour force participation rates have gone beyond the 50% mark. In addition, women form less than 20% of the legislature and Cabinet of Ministers in Malaysia. What pushes women in their achievements in education and what factors pull them back in other areas? How do patriarchal gender norms underpin their ability and decisions in life's choices and how have they understood and negotiated these norms? This paper aims to explore these questions through narratives of women in a public university.

Methodology/Technique - The paper is based on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 12 women who are staff and postgraduate students of the university. The respondents were divided into two groups: one consisting of the university's academic and administrative staff and the other postgraduate students. Separate discussions were conducted for each group. The discussions were transcribed and analysed.

Findings - Findings show that women have confidence in their ability to contribute effectively and in the same manner as men in different spheres of their lives such as work, home and community. However, often they have had to negotiate their ways around various beliefs, practices and norms about the superiority of men in society.

Novelty - The study researches factors that affects woman achievements in life.

Type of Paper: Empirical

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