

# Gender Equality In Education And Student Participation In A Higher Education Institution : A Case In The Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

Amidst positive developments on gender equality in the Philippine educational system, this study focused its lenses on a private higher education institution (HEI) ran by a religious congregation. It analyzed the gender equality in the university's student population and participation. It utilized secondary data from pertinent units of the HEI, analyzed by the researcher using frequency distribution, percentage and ratios. The realization of gender equality is difficult in the context of existing cultural practices, norms and perceptions which affect the life of individuals and groups. As consistently observed from data, technical courses appeal more to boys while education and communication attract more girls. Women are assumed to be naturally inclined to listen, talk or facilitate conversations, or attend to details like recording and budgeting. There are tasks associated with motherhood. The career choices made by female students, or by parents for their daughters, like teaching, reading, toddler education, tourism and entertainment are anchored on the assumption that females possess nurturing instinct. Therefore, more girls than boys prefer education courses, nursing, psychology, communication, accountancy, management and tourism.

**Keywords :** Gender Equality, Female-Male Ratio, Student Population, Student Participation

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the Philippine educational system, increasing percentage of females had availed of schooling opportunities. The 2008 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) showed that the basic literacy rate among females was 96.1% while 95.1% among males. Functional literacy among females in the same period was likewise higher at 88.7% as against 84.2% among males. The completion rates for 2008-2009 indicated that more girls were able to complete the prescribed number of years in both elementary and secondary education. The completion rate of females at the elementary level was 77.89%, while male completion rate was 69.13%. The completion rate of female in the secondary level was higher at 79.94% compared with that of male at 70.44%, with gender disparity at 1.13 GPI or equivalent to 113 girls in every 100 boys. There was also a gender gap in achievement levels in favor of girls as shown by the performance of a cohort of children in the National Achievement Test (NAT). Test results, disaggregated by sex, show that the

female advantage widened as the children moved up to higher grades in primary school.

For higher education enrollment during the school year 2005-2006, females accounted for more than half of the total 2,483,645 enrollees at 54.48% compared with males at 45.52%. In terms of school preference, six in every ten women and seven in every ten men preferred to enroll in private universities and colleges than in public. Among the 263,634 graduates for school year 2005-2006, female graduates accounted for 56.61% while males accounted for 43.39% (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012).

Amidst all the positive developments to promote gender equality in the Philippine educational system, this research hoped to examine how gender equality is promoted in a private higher educational institution (HEI) ran by a religious congregation. Top private colleges and universities in the country are managed by religious organizations.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The HEI selected as subject of this study is one of the five universities in the Philippines ran and managed by a religious organization. This congregation of priests has always been one of the few liberal and progressive Catholic organizations in the country. In its 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation (1995), the organization has espoused the following principles: (a) explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men in their ministries; (b) appropriate presence of women in their institutions; (c) genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision making in their ministries; (d) respectful cooperation with female colleagues in shared projects; (e) promotion of the education of women and, in particular, the elimination of all forms of illegitimate discrimination between boys and girls in the educational process.

The selected HEI has six colleges: (1) College of Arts and Sciences (CAS); (2) College of Business and Accountancy (CBA); (3) College of Computer Studies (CCS); (4) College of Education (CED); (5) College of Engineering and (CENG); and (6) College of Nursing (CN). It accepts girls and boys who would like to pursue baccalaureate degrees after a systematic procedure of academic and personal screening.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the extent to which the philosophies of this congregation of Catholic priests have been promoted and institutionalized in the specific university under study. Its main objective was to examine the gender equality in the university's student leadership and participation. To attain this general objective, the research collected and examined sex-disaggregated data on the following aspects of the HEI: (a) student population by college and department; (b) scholarship grants; (c) leadership and participation in student organizations; and (d) leadership and participation in campus politics. The study covered the period 2012-2013.

Analysis of said indicators would help determine if there is gender equality in the university particularly in the promotion of the education of women. This inquiry hoped to find out if female students have actually availed of the educational opportunities provided to students through course offering, if girls were involved

in consultation and decision-making, if there was cooperation between girls and boys in shared projects, and if there was gender equality in opportunities for leadership and participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities, including campus politics. Furthermore, the concept of gender in this study was limited only to female and male, and did not consider lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIAL

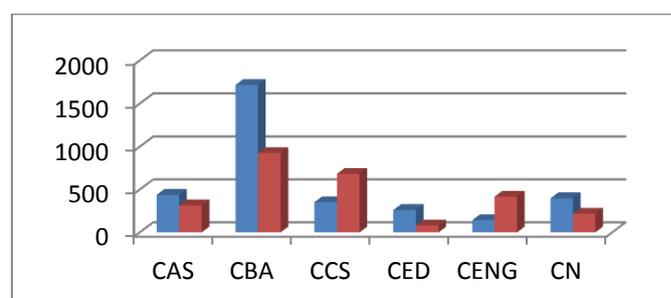
This research utilized secondary data accumulated by pertinent units in the selected HEI and consolidated by the researcher. The data was analyzed using frequency distribution and percentage. Female-male ratios were used to analyze gender sharing on areas of student enrolment by college and course, scholarship grants, membership and leadership in student organizations, and participation in student decision-making bodies, especially the student government.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The investigation aimed to provide empirical data on statuses and roles of girls and boys in the selected HEI in school year 2012-2013. The sex-disaggregated data were analyzed to determine if there was gender equality in student leadership and participation in the university based on the indicators enumerated above.

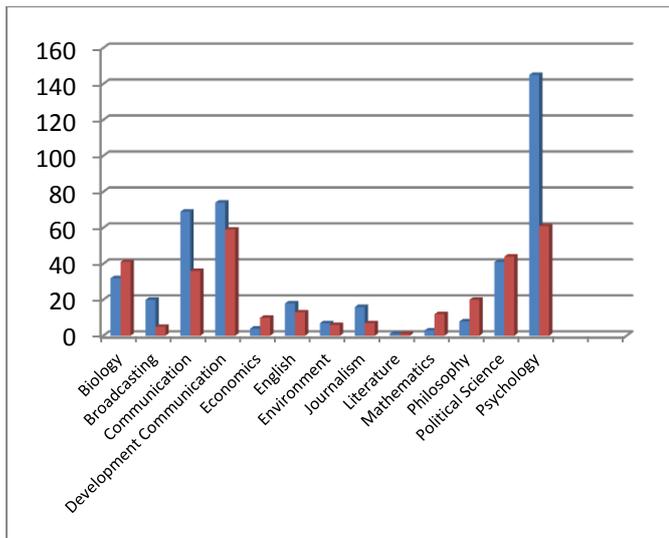
### 3.2 Student Population by College and Department

The following graphs and figures present the sex-disaggregated data of the student population in the six colleges of the university within the period of study. The blue bars represent the female student population while the red bars represent the boys.



**Figure 1: Student Population By Gender and College, 2012-2013**

Of the total college student population of 5,950 in the university, 56% were girls. The College of Education had the highest percentage of female population at 76% or a female to male ratio of 3:16. In the Business and Accountancy, 65% were girls, Nursing 65% also, and Arts and Sciences, 58%. The Colleges of Engineering and Computer Studies were dominated by boys at 75% and 66%, respectively.

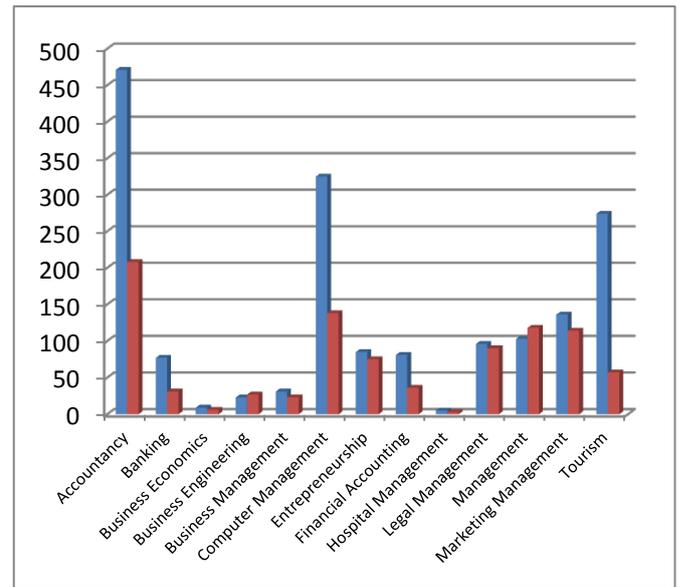


**Figure 2: Student Population By Gender and Course, College of Arts and Sciences, 2012-2013**

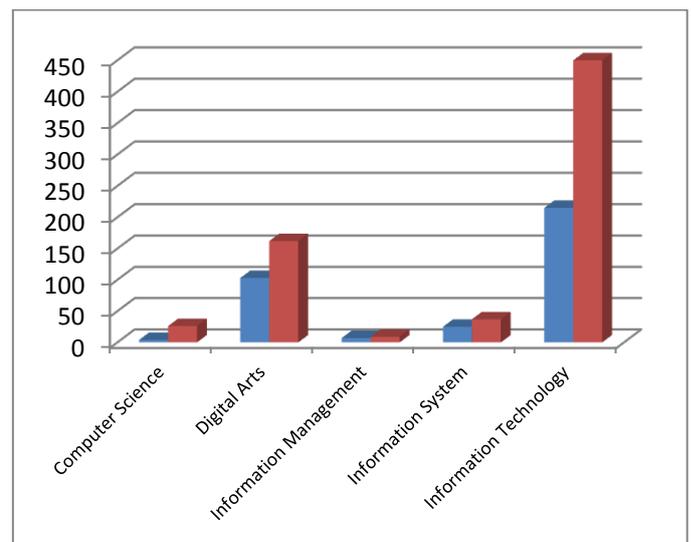
In the Arts and Sciences, girls preferred psychology, development communication, and communication courses. In terms of female-male ratio in each discipline, the highest female percentages were in broadcasting with 80% girls, journalism and psychology both with 70%. The lowest female percentages were in mathematics with 20%, economics and philosophy both with 29%.

In Business and Accountancy, the highest female populations were in accountancy, computer management, and tourism. More girls than boys chose tourism with 83%, banking with 71%, and computer management with 70%. The latter is a course that accommodated students who did not pass the retention requirement for accounting. The least female percentages were in

business engineering with 46% women and management with 47%.

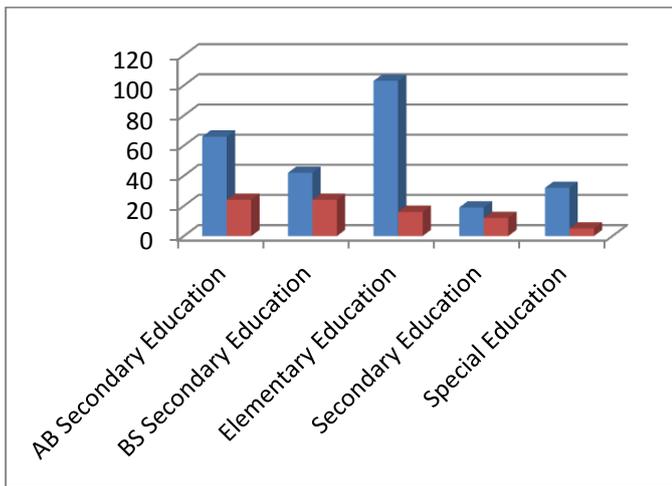


**Figure 3: Student Population By Gender and Course, College of Business and Accountancy, 2012-2013**



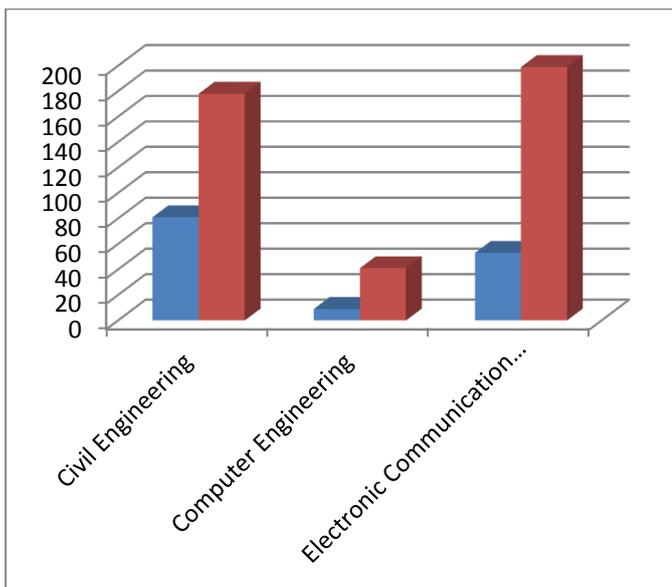
**Figure 4 : Student Population By Gender and Course, College of Computer Studies, 2012-2013**

All the six courses in Computer Studies were dominated by boys. Most girls flocked in information technology but female percentages were highest in information management with 44% girls and information system with 40%. The smallest female percentage was in computer science with only 13% women.



**Figure 5 :** Student Population By Gender and Course, College of Education, 2012-2013

In Education, girls dominated all the five courses offered by the college. Moreover, courses which were totally occupied by women within the period of study were Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education major in General Science, English, Filipino, and Library Information Science with 100% each. Courses with high percentage of female students were Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education with 91% girls, Bachelor of Secondary Education in Computer Application with 88%, and Bachelor of Science in Special Education with 86%. Courses dominated by boys were Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Physics, Social Studies and Physical Education, all with no female enrollee.



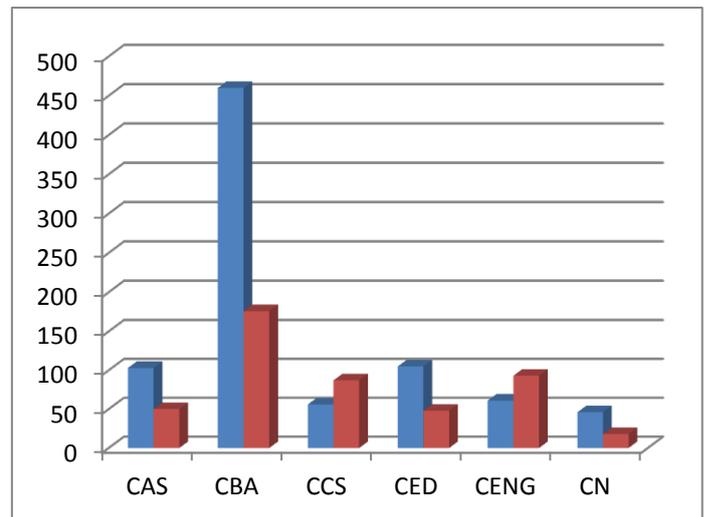
**Figure 6 :** Student Population By Gender and Course, College of Engineering, 2012-2013

All the three courses offered by the College of Engineering were invaded by boys. Nevertheless, more girls preferred civil engineering over the other two courses. In terms of female-male ratio, the highest female percentage was likewise in civil engineering with 31%. The smallest female percentage was in computer engineering with only 18% girls.

There was only Bachelor of Science in Nursing course during the period of study under the College of Nursing so the graph is the same as shown in Figure 1 where there were 399 girls and 219 boys.

### 3.3 Scholarships

The succeeding figures present the distribution of scholarship opportunities and grants for students in the selected HEI.



**Figure 7 :** Students with Scholarship Grants By College, 2012-2013

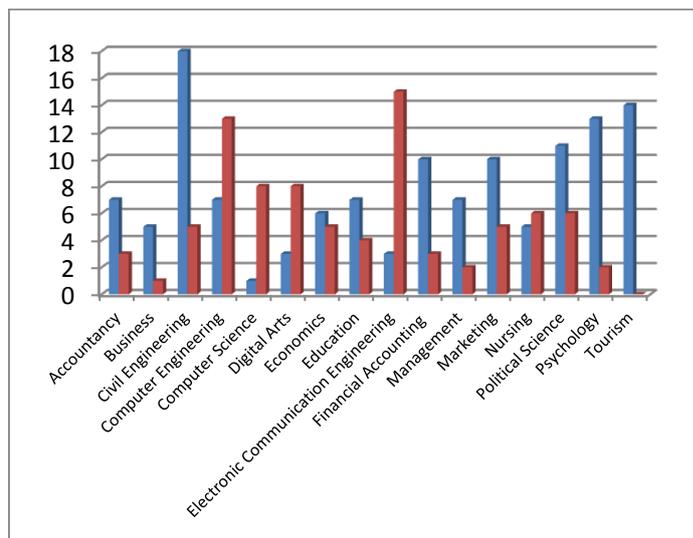
Generally, there were more girls (64%) than boys who benefitted from the university's total scholarships. There were 831 female scholars and 472 male. This was consistent, understandably, with the observation that the student population was composed of more girls (59%). In the college level, the largest number of female beneficiaries was in Business and Accountancy (460), Education (105), and Arts and Sciences (103). In terms of female-male ratio, the high percentages of women scholars were in Business and Accountancy and Nursing, both with 72% female beneficiaries.

In terms of particular courses, educational funding helped 100% girls in special education, english language and environmental management which granted six, four and two scholarships respectively, as well as literature, economics, information management, and information system which provided one scholarship each. Similarly, more girls than boys benefitted from financial support in journalism (89%), political science (88%), management (83%), and elementary education (81%). This was despite the situation presented earlier that there were more male students in economics, information management, information systems, political science and management.

Courses with all-male recipients (100%) were computer science with 13 scholarships and philosophy with two. These courses were likewise dominated by boys. Other courses with academic endowment for more boys than girls included civil engineering (72%), biology (65%), and electronics communications engineering (64%).

### 3.4 Participation in Student Organizations

The following tables present sex-disaggregated data on leadership in co-curricular organizations and membership in extra-curricular organizations. Each specific course in the colleges has a co-curricular organization the membership of which is comprised of students enrolled in the discipline. For example, all students of accountancy automatically become members of the Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants, and all students of engineering are bonafide members of the Ateneo Engineering Society. The succeeding figure shows the number of leadership posts in selected co-curricular organizations and the female-male ratio.

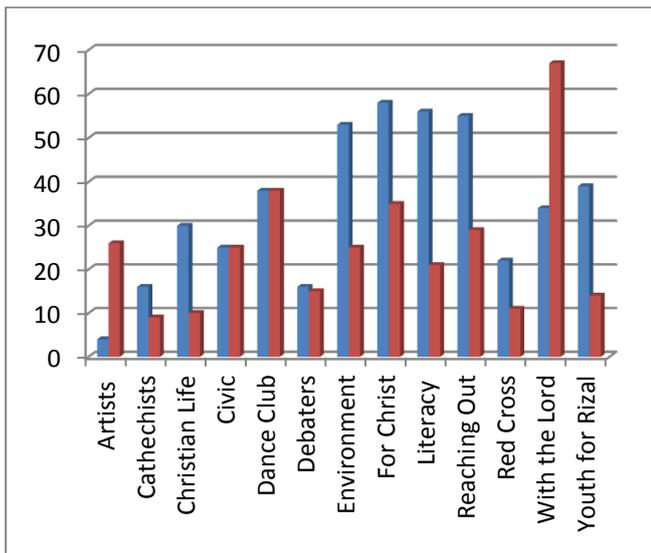


**Figure 8:** Leadership in Co-Curricular Organizations, 2012-2013

All in all, there were more female, about 59%, than male officers in co-curricular organizations. In the organization of tourism students, 100% of officers were girls. Organizations that were engaged by more girl leaders than boys were the psychology students association with 87%, business students with 83%, and junior managers with 78%. It can be noted that the institute of civil engineers was led by more girls than boys at 78%, even though its membership was widely held by boys.

By and large, organizations of traditionally male courses were led mostly by boys like the group of computer science students with 89% male leaders, electronic communication engineering with 83%, and computer engineering with 65%. This condition was consistent with the total population in said courses where majority are boys.

The next table shows the membership of students in extra-curricular organization. Membership in this type of organization is optional and open to all students regardless of course, year level and gender as long as the student is not under academic probation.

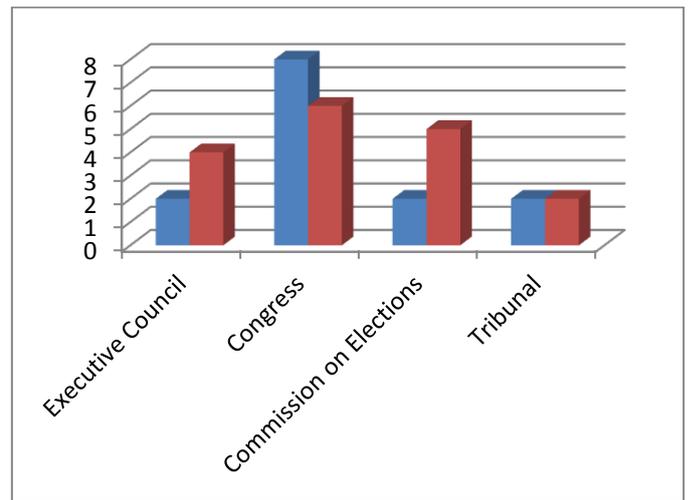


**Figure 9 :** Membership in Student Organizations, 2012-2013

During the period of study, women’s involvement in student organizations was very high at 61% or 490 girls while boys were 39% or 314. There were 23 enlisted and recognized extra-curricular organizations in the university. The study selected those with membership of 30 students and above so the figure above presents 13 organizations only. Out of this total, 9 were dominated by girls. Female percentages were highest with the Christian Life group at 75%, Youth for Rizal at 74%, and Literacy group at 73%. The latter helps improve basic literacy in remote communities in the locality. On the other hand, the girl population was lowest in the group of artists at 13% and the students With the Lord at 34%. But it can be noted that another group who called themselves youth For Christ had the highest number of 58 girl members.

### 3.5 Participation in Campus Politics

The studentry had set up structures within their ranks that will facilitate decision-making and governance in their sector. The Student Council is the executive branch, the Student Congress is the legislature, the Student Tribunal is judicial and the Student Commission on Elections takes charge of annual election of the officers in the Student Council. There were more women in the legislative branch at 57% while the executive branch and election commission were both occupied mostly by boys at 67% and 71% respectively. The judicial body was shared equally by girls and boys.



**Figure 10 :** Composition of Student Decision-Making Bodies, 2012-2013

There were more female leaders in the student congress with eight legislators or 57% while the student tribunal was equally shared by girls and boys. Boys dominated the commission on elections with only 29% women and the student council with 33%.

## IV. CONCLUSION

During the period of study, more than half of the student population was female. This was consistent with the general situation of the Philippine educational system where more women participate and complete formal education from elementary to higher education. On the breakdown of student population by gender and course, there were more female students enrolled in courses which are stereotyped as “women’s zone” like education courses, arts and letters and tourism while males were left to dominate the technical ones like engineering and computer-related courses. The preference of the students may be significantly influenced by cultural constructs that women are more patient and therefore effective teachers, or good-looking and hospitable therefore effective tourism personnel, while men are better with machineries and buildings therefore effective programmers and engineers. It may also be affected by the way students perceive males as good with numbers while females with letters.

Speaking of scholarships, many women students were benefited. This would be considered a fair arrangement since a high percentage of the student population was

female. Even for courses that were male-dominated, female students were awarded with financial assistance. They may be at par with their male classmates in terms of giving full time and attention to academic requirements since they did not have to worry about school fees. Scholarships for male students reached a hundred percent especially on courses which were technical in nature. This trend had been observed consistently in this study that technical courses were preferred mostly by male students.

The next category speaks of participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular organizations in which female students occupied a large percentage of membership in majority of the organizations covered by this study. Nonetheless, the membership in organizations which catered to courses that are male-dominated were expected to be male-occupied, too.

Campus politics meanwhile was shared by male and female students with the legislative branch being female-occupied while the executive being male-dominated. Given this situation, there was higher probability for female-friendly policies to be made since the student legislators were themselves girls. However, even if males were tasked with the executive roles, politics was not entirely governed by one gender alone since the students act on a shared responsibility system that allowed equal access for both female and male student leaders.

The university works on the universal mandate that development and opportunity is for all. It is committed to espouse the principles in the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation (1995) of the organization of Catholic priests that runs the HEI. This seems easier written than done. The realization of gender equality is much more difficult especially in the context of existing cultural practices, norms, mind set and perceptions which affect the life of individuals and groups.

As consistently observed from data, there is the perception that technical courses appeal more to boys while education and communication courses attract more girls. There are studies that the brains of males are more functional when it comes to logic and digits and females work more on the psycho-social aspect, and the dissemination these studies may influence the perception

of people although they come from different culture and background. Women are assumed to be naturally inclined to listen, talk or facilitate conversations, or attend to details like recording and budgeting. Furthermore, there are tasks which are associated with motherhood. The career choices made by female students, or by parents for their daughters, in line with teaching, reading, toddler education, tourism and entertainment are anchored on the assumption that females principally possess maternal and nurturing instinct. Mothers are assumed to be good in teaching, home management, and taking care of the sick. Therefore, more girls than boys prefer education courses, nursing, psychology, communication, accountancy, management and tourism.

The university is like a mini-society in which each individual has a specific role and responsibility. Gender affects greatly the mobilization of individuals and of the university since gender not only pertains to the characteristics of the individual based on one's sexual orientation but also refers to the environment of that person. The environment is composed of the relationships, the social interaction, and the experiences that the person goes through in one's stay in the society. Gender issues arise when the environment is disrupted because of people and groups which tend to dominate capitalizing on their gender and capabilities. Such problems could be prevented while institutions are created in order to address them.

## V. REFERENCES

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