

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION MAKING: THEIR PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN ENHANCING THE UNIVERSITY'S GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a university, "woman administrator" refers to a woman who holds an administrative position within the academic institution. These positions can vary widely, encompassing roles in different departments and at various levels of responsibility. The involvement of women in decision-making processes is a critical aspect of promoting gender equality and diversity across various sectors. Moreover, women's participation in university governance refers to their involvement in decision-making processes, leadership roles, and other influential positions within higher education institutions. The active participation and engagement of women in university governance is not only a matter of fairness and representation but is also linked to improved organisational performance and the development of policies that address the needs of the entire academic community. This research aims to examine the influence of women's participation and engagement in decision making to enhance university good governance in Malaysian public universities. Due to its importance, gender equality has garnered attention in recent years. To remove systematic prejudice and promote fairness and justice for everyone, gender equality studies must be understood. Research on gender equality highlights gender gaps in school, work, politics, and healthcare. Gender equality studies help make gender equality policies and initiatives by evaluating these discrepancies and their causes. For these reasons, a quantitative approach using an online survey was adopted in this study. A total of 161 female respondents were acquired, involving the arbitrary selection of nine public universities located in Malaysia. These higher education institutions were chosen to represent three distinct categories: comprehensive universities, focused universities, and research universities. Based on Linear Multiple Regression analysis, the findings revealed that women's participation and engagement in decision making related to "strategic management" has significant influence on enhancing the university's good governance ($p < 0.01$, $p = 0.008$). While their participation and engagement in the other aspects of decision-making (institutional management, financial management, and human resource management) have no significant influence on university good governance. In conclusion, this study suggests that women administrators' participation and engagement in decision making to enhance the university's good governance were limited. The university should encourage more participation and engagement among women administrators and further enhance their effective decision-making skills through training and development.

Keywords: *Decision-making; good governance; public universities; woman administrator*

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in decision-making has long been an issue. Numerous studies show that women's participation and engagement in decision-making boosts national growth and empowerment (Baba et al., 2019). These advantages are acknowledged, but women still face considerable hurdles to decision-making areas. Cultural norms and preconceptions, lack of leadership representation, insufficient knowledge and information, and gender-based discrimination are these impediments (Kebede, 2019). Women's participation and engagement in mixed organisations should be promoted to remove obstacles to decision-making. Devolving decision-making to the community via community-based adaptation is crucial (Patnaik, 2021). However, it is not enough to assure meaningful engagement for women. Future community-based adaption projects should identify and operate within local gender dynamics to ensure women can express their demands, participate and engage to decision-making.

The participation of women in the workforce has undergone significant changes over the years, and the status of women in the workforce varies across different countries and regions. Women's participation in the workforce has increased globally over the last few decades; however, significant gender gaps persist in many regions. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are advocates of gender equality for society (UNESCO IESALC, 2022). The global data regarding the position of women in governance and leadership is disconcerting.

As of January 1, 2023, the number of countries with 34 women serving as heads of state or heads of government is limited to 31 on a global scale. Ahead of the government, only 19 nations have a woman in the position of head, while 17 nations have a female head of state (two leaders occupy the dual position of head of state and head of government). A policy area with shared portfolios including Family and Children Affairs, Women and Gender Equality, Social Protection and Social Security, Social Inclusion and Development, and Indigenous and Minority Affairs is led by women, who comprise nearly 29% of cabinet members who oversee ministries. Achieving gender parity in the topmost echelons of authority would prove arduous under such circumstances, requiring an additional 130 years (United Nations Women, n.d.).

According to the International Labour Organization, in some developed countries, women now make up a substantial portion of the workforce and have made progress in accessing higher education and professional roles (International Labour Organization, 2017). Again, there are substantial variations in women's workforce participation rates across regions. The participation of women in the workforce at universities has increased significantly over the years, reflecting broader societal changes and efforts to promote gender equality (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

Women are now actively engaged in various roles within universities, including faculty positions, administrative roles, research positions, and leadership roles. While the number of women in leadership roles at universities has increased, there is still work to be done to achieve equitable representation. In addition, women may hold positions such as deans, department chairs, and university presidents, but their numbers are often lower compared to men. Women contribute significantly to research and scholarly publications across disciplines. Thus, efforts are being made to address gender disparities in research funding, publication opportunities, and recognition for academic achievements. Hence, women are also well-represented in administrative roles within universities, including roles in human resources, admissions, finance, library management, student affairs, and other administrative departments (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

An international objective set by nations and international development organisations is to ensure that women and men participate equally in administrative processes and that authority is shared during the decision-making process (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2005). Creating opportunities for greater representation of women in professional settings is a commitment to advancing a peaceful, equitable, and just agenda. By any process that will ultimately affect their lives, families, and communities, women and girls have the right to participate in civil society, influence public policy, serve their country, vote in elections, have their rights protected, and even be elected to government office.

To establish gender equality, fairness, and equity in effective governance, it is essential to invest in the right of women to participate in governance. Effective governance participation is, in fact, the epitome of inclusive development, and university leadership can assist in harnessing the power of diversity to construct inclusive democracies worldwide. There is evidence that greater participation of women in (public and private) decision-making processes improves the efficacy, transparency, and accountability of the public sector in a nation (United Nations Women, n.d.). Particularly as all nations attempt to recover from and respond to the effects of COVID-19, this is crucial. Frequently, women assume the role of dynamic change agents who inspire both men and women to participate, assert their rights, and fortify their communities to achieve resilience (Asuako, 2020).

Indeed, Malaysia has made significant progress in increasing women's participation in the workforce over the years. In recent decades, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women pursuing higher education and entering various professional fields. The government and various organisations have also implemented policies and initiatives to promote gender equality in the workplace (Parasuraman, 2022).

The implementation of Malaysia Madani lies on the shoulders of women, as they are called the owners of the hand that can 'shake the world'. Understanding the role of women and putting them in the right place is the key to the success of Malaysia Madani, without denying the role of other groups. Globally, women comprise 43 percent of the world's agricultural labour force, with this statistic rising to 70 percent in some countries. Women, especially mothers, play the biggest role in making decisions about meal planning and the diet of a family. In fact, women also take their own initiative in preserving the health and nutrition of their children (Abdullah, 2023).

Moreover, from an educational point of view, the percentage in the education system remains ahead of men, where the percentage at the primary level is 98.4 percent, the secondary level is 94.5 percent, and the tertiary level is 47.5 percent. With the ratio between Malaysian men and women at around 109:100 in mid-July 2022 and almost 70 percent of those in the country's main higher education institutions consisting of women, the potential they have should be used to educate the Malaysian civil society. In addition, education is the key to the country's ability to develop and achieve sustainability targets, as found in the Malaysian Civil Code. The contribution of women in the context of education to the transition of society from pre-literacy to literacy is undeniable (Abdullah, 2023).

Hence, women have played a significant role in advancing Malaysia's development strategy, which is now backed by the Madani framework under the leadership of the Malaysia tenth Prime Minister. As a result, this research will supplement existing information by delving deeper or finding empirical evidence to support the role that women have played in collaborative achievement. Furthermore, this research will offer noteworthy statistical significance in furnishing pertinent information or data to pertinent stakeholders, including the government, ministry, and other pertinent government agencies, concerning endeavours to formulate novel policies or revitalise current ones to guarantee their pertinence and capacity to sustain Malaysia's sustainable growth, as mandated by the recently implemented Madani framework.

WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA

The Finance Minister of Malaysia declared that the Civil Economy Framework has established a standard for women's participation in the workforce to reach 60% under the recently presented Budget 2024. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) reported in June 2023 that the country's female labor force participation rate is currently 56.3%. Compared to the male labor force participation rate of 82.9%, this is a substantial deviation. According to educational attainment, the participation rates for women in 2021 are as follows: higher education (64.1%), secondary education (52.2%), and primary education (43.6%). Since many women enroll in institutes of higher learning, women with higher education have a high labor force participation rate (Adnan, 2023).

The Minister of Higher Education reports that 357,087 female students attended public higher education institutions in 2020, making up 61% of all registered students. While 537,434 female students (53%) are enrolled in private higher education institutions overall. For instance, as of August 2023, the Sabah Chief Minister has reported that the statistics and data pertaining to women in positions of authority within the Sabah State Government are as follows: Thirteen department heads are female (30.23%), one is female (33.3%) among the Sabah Deputy State Secretaries, one is female (9.09%) among the eleven Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry, eight are female (40%), and eight are among the twenty Deputy Permanent Secretaries of Ministries (Adnan, 2023).

On March 8, 2021, Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad wrote in Bernama, stated that the younger generation of Malaysians is no longer susceptible to gender stereotypes or traditional beliefs. In keeping with this year's World Women's Day theme, *#ChooseToChallenge*, which captures the spirit of millennials and Generation Z, women are now viewed as more independent, strong, and courageous, no longer weak and merely doing what they are told. Approximately half of Malaysia's population, or 32.7 million people, are women, with 48.6% of them being female. Malaysian women have a significant impact on both the nation's growth and the socioeconomic stability of family structures (Ahmad, 2021).

The rise in the number of women entering the workforce has been one of Malaysia's biggest developments. While it was just 46.4% in 2007, the percentage of women participating in the labor force (LFPR) rose to 55.6% in 2019. Women in higher education institutions (HEIs) have actively contributed to Malaysia's status as a global center for higher education. In public higher education institutions in 2021, there were more female employees (56.8%) than male employees (43.2%), as well as more female students (61%) than male students (39%). Furthermore, women make up nearly 60% of the Higher Education Ministry's (MoE) workforce of over 15,000 employees. These numbers anticipate further accomplishments by Malaysian women soon (Marisah, 2022).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducted a study on gender inequality, and the findings showed that over the previous 50 years, the increase in women's education has contributed to higher economic growth of about 50% in OECD countries. This is a testament to the fact that women are empowered. The success of women's empowerment and equality in the Malaysian higher education ecosystem is undeniable. In public higher education institutions, 56.5% of the 31,584 academics are women. These female academics have dominated positions as language instructors (72.4% of 1,105) and lecturers (60% of 22,571) (Ahmad, 2021).

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoE) has 15,164 employees, which comprise more than half of the workforce (56%), which is another example of Malaysia's support for women's equality and empowerment. This unequivocally shows how crucial the contributions made by women to Malaysia's higher education system have been in establishing our country as a center for higher learning on a global scale (Ahmad, 2021).

The United Nations has set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of these, Malaysia is entirely in favor of the 4th and 5th objectives, which are about attaining gender equality through the empowerment of more women and girls and high-quality education. The growing number of women who succeed in higher education is proof that the country is progressing toward these SDGs. In 2020, the number of women enrolled in higher education institutions was 357,087, representing 61% of the total number of undergraduates enrolled in public institutions as well as nearly 53% of the 537,434 undergraduates enrolled in private institutions (Ahmad, 2021).

Women's participation in societal roles is currently on the rise, and numerous advancements have been achieved on a global scale to improve the quality of life for women. Nevertheless, even though there are more women working than men, they still face significant obstacles in obtaining managerial positions. In 2016, for example, 79.6% of men continued to occupy most positions within organizations (Mokhtar, 2020).

An analysis of the proportions of men and women holding board-level positions within an organization revealed that the number of women occupying decision-making positions is growing. Even though the growing number of women in decision-making positions is an encouraging sign for women's empowerment, it remains undeniable and conspicuous that there is a significant disparity in the opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions within an organization (Mokhtar, 2020).

This is a prevalent issue that affects numerous professional domains, including the higher education sector. Marques and Dandan (2017) argued that numerous governments have made pledges to incorporate women into the development process and eliminate any type of discrimination that may be directed at them.

Although most of them achieve success, this does not apply to higher education administration or top-level positions. There is a claim that there is a gender leadership gap in higher education institutions, which Badrolhisam et al. (2022) further substantiated

by stating that Malaysia's proportion of female academics who hold senior leadership positions, such as vice chancellor, deputy chancellor, dean, and others, continues to lag that of other nations.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

Higher education in Malaysia is characterized by expansion, internationalization, transnational education, and privatization. This is the Asian Century, with the continent seeing the highest growth rate in HE enrolments globally. The gross undergraduate enrolment ratio of men in the Asia Pacific region increased from 11% in 1970 to 26% in 2009. The ratio for women in the same period tripled from 8 to 28%, now exceeding male participation (Morley, 2013).

However, the enhanced participation and engagement of women in higher education is not in itself an indicator of women's participation in wider civil society. Women comprise a large part of the academic labor market in Malaysia, of which 26.2%, or 511 out of 1,953 in 2012, are professors in public universities (Bernama, 2023).

It is important to note that in Malaysia, like many other countries in Asia, the posts of Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor are political appointments. Women are noticeably absent from senior leadership posts. A question relates to what level of work is available to women in Malaysia's knowledge economy, especially when there is a policy to have women occupy 30% of decision-making positions (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2011-2015). Malaysia is following a global trend: high rates of women's participation in higher education have yet to translate into proportional representation in the labor market or access to leadership and decision-making positions (OECD, 2010).

Women's participation and engagement in decision-making are crucial aspects of promoting gender equality and achieving a more inclusive and diverse society. Decision-making processes occur in various contexts, including government, businesses, community organizations, and households. Women's participation and engagement in decision-making at public universities are crucial for fostering a more inclusive and diverse academic environment. Promoting women's participation in decision-making at public universities requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving leadership commitment, policy changes, and cultural shifts within the academic community. By creating an inclusive and supportive environment, universities can harness the full potential of their diverse talent pool (Ishak, 2021).

Moreover, up until last October, only 25.4% of the top 100 businesses listed on Bursa Malaysia were able to fulfil the requirement of having at least 30% female board members. The accomplishment, according to former Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, demonstrated how women were involved as decision-makers in several areas that still needed more focus. For instance, the government is aware that several government-linked corporations (GLCs) and investment firms (GLICs) do not currently have any female board members. Just 25.4% of the top 100 businesses listed on Bursa Malaysia as of October of last year have fulfilled their pledge to appoint at least 30% female directors to their boards (Ishak, 2021).

To maintain social stability and a developed country, women must be better represented in the ranks that make crucial national decisions. The Association of Commonwealth Women MPs (CWP) Chairperson, Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad, highlighted this point after seeing that there was still a low proportion of women participating in critical decision-making processes and that initiatives to empower women were moving slowly. For women to participate in politics and the economy and ensure that they will contribute to a stable society, which will ultimately result in a developed nation, women must be empowered. More women should be encouraged to work in the commercial or public sectors of the economy in every nation. These days, women are crucial decision-makers in both conflict and post-conflict environments at higher economic levels (Sinar Harian, 2019).

Currently, women hold 38.8% of positions with decision-making authority in the public sector. Nonetheless, Women, Family, and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri stated that the goal of having 30% of women in positions of decision-making in the corporate and private sectors has not yet been met. According to Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, the discussion also covered strategies and tactics for motivating women to go back to work to accomplish the Civil Economy Framework's goal of 60% of women participating in the workforce (Bernama, 2023).

More room and opportunity must be provided for women in this nation to meet the goal of having 30% of women in government decision-making positions. Former Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin stated that while women had demonstrated their aptitude for economics and education, it was equally critical that they take their political participation seriously to have their voices heard. This matter was brought up at the Women in Political Challenges event for Statesman's Week, which was present today and included former prime minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. "When we make policies, we will complement the views of men in developing the country," she stated. Women will have more say, and the policies that are implemented will empower women, according to her, when they are included in organizations that make decisions. According to Zuraida, women have distinct viewpoints when making decisions, but if it were possible, the choices made could enhance the lives of women by working in harmony (Noor, 2023).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN ENHANCING UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

University governance refers to the structures and processes through which universities are organized, managed, and make decisions. Effective governance is essential for the successful functioning of universities, ensuring accountability, transparency, and the pursuit of academic excellence. Moreover, university governance embraces multiple disciplines in governance, such as governing bodies, leadership, committees, shared governance, academic freedom, strategic planning, financial management,

institutional policies, stakeholder engagement, legal compliance, diversity and inclusion, quality assurance, risk management, continuous improvement, and communication. Effective university governance is dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of higher education. It requires collaboration, strong leadership, and a commitment to the core values of academic freedom, accountability, and excellence. This study focuses on four aspects of decision-making to enhance university governance, which are: governance and institutional policies, human resource management, financial management, and strategic management. "Governance and institutional policies" are establishing and enforcing policies related to academic standards, student conduct, research ethics, and other important areas. "Human resource management" is a critical function within organizations that focuses on managing the people who work for the organization. It encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at effectively utilizing and developing an organization's human resources to achieve its goals. Creating effective human resource management is crucial for organizational success, as it contributes to employee well-being, productivity, and overall organizational effectiveness. Human resource professionals play a strategic role in aligning human resources with business objectives and creating a positive workplace culture.

In addition, "financial management" is a critical aspect of organizational management that involves planning, organizing, controlling, and monitoring an organization's financial resources to achieve its objectives. It encompasses various activities related to budgeting, financial planning, analysis, and decision-making. Effective financial management is crucial for organizations to achieve financial stability, make informed strategic decisions, and fulfill their mission and objectives. Financial managers, CFOs (Chief Financial Officers), and finance teams play key roles in driving financial success within an organization.

Moreover, "strategic management" is the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating the decisions and actions that enable an organization to achieve its long-term objectives. It involves setting a direction for the organization, making choices on resource allocation, and aligning internal capabilities with external opportunities and threats. It is important to ensure the implementation of an ongoing, dynamic process that requires continuous adaptation to changing internal and external conditions. Effective strategic management enables organizations to navigate uncertainties, capitalize on opportunities, and achieve sustained success in a competitive landscape.

A public university is a higher education facility that receives funding and management from a government or public authority, typically at the state or national level. Public universities are part of the public education system and are established to provide affordable and accessible higher education to the public. Governance structures for public universities vary by country and region. In many cases, a board of trustees or governors oversees the university's operations, and administrators, faculty, and student representatives may be involved in decision-making processes. Public universities play a vital role in providing accessible and affordable higher education, conducting research, and contributing to the development of knowledge and society. They are integral components of the public education system in many countries.

To guarantee that public universities can acquire a reputation for possessing dynamic and competitive capacities, as well as the ability to anticipate future issues and be ready to act decisively in accordance with global changes, the higher education system was developed. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoE) will keep working to increase public universities' ability to carry out their duties and obligations in a more effective, transparent, and efficient manner to build a top-notch higher education system. Malaysian universities are divided into three types based on these goals: research universities, comprehensive universities, and focused universities (technical, education, management, and defense). Currently, the nation has twenty universities: five research institutions, four comprehensive universities, and eleven targeted universities, and women play vital roles in enhancing public universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2022).

Indeed, women can play a vital role in enhancing university governance by contributing diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences. Here are several ways in which women can actively participate in and enhance university governance. 1) Leadership Roles: Encourage and support women to take on leadership roles such as university presidents, vice chancellors, deans, and heads of academic departments. 2) Promote the inclusion of women on university governing boards and committees, and this diversity can provide a broader range of viewpoints in decision-making processes. 3) Involve women in the development, review, and implementation of university policies; this includes policies related to academics, research, diversity and inclusion, and gender equity. 4) Include women in financial decision-making processes to ensure a well-rounded perspective on budgeting, resource allocation, and financial planning, and encourage women to participate in discussions related to fundraising, grants, and philanthropy to diversify funding sources. 5) Ensure that women are well-represented among faculty and staff in various departments and administrative roles (Sinar Harian, 2019).

Notably, enhancing university governance through the active participation and engagement of women involves addressing structural barriers, promoting inclusivity, and recognizing the value of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. Finally, by actively involving women at all levels of university governance, institutions can benefit from a more comprehensive and equitable approach to leadership and administration.

DEFINATION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance relates to how a community or organisation is constituted, works, and makes choices (Srivastava, 2009). Good governance, on the other hand, is a collection of ideas and practices that encourage openness, accountability, involvement, and effectiveness in decision-making and the general operation of a society or organisation (Yu, 2017). Good governance focuses on people's demands and interests while also promoting fairness, justice, and equality (Srivastava, 2009). Good governance is the practice of making effective and responsible decisions, being accountable, transparent, and inclusive in both the public and

commercial sectors. It entails ensuring that power is used in a way that benefits the people and promotes their well-being (Yu, 2017).

Moreover, good governance is seen to be participative, transparent, responsible, effective, equitable, and upholds the rule of law (Yu 2017). Good governance is the public administration process that maximises public interest while including collaborative management between the state and people. Good governance is an idea that seeks to make public administration more open, honest, and accountable. Good governance also entails establishing democratic institutions, providing efficient service delivery, upholding the rule of law, and eliminating corruption (Yu, 2017). As a result, good governance includes many components such as openness, accountability, involvement, effectiveness, equality, and the support of the rule of law.

Hence, good governance is crucial for making effective and responsible decisions, fostering fairness and justice, and safeguarding people's well-being (Yu, 2017). Good governance is defined as the practice of making effective and responsible decisions, being accountable, transparent, and inclusive in both the public and private sectors (Kiener-Manu, 2018). Good governance is a notion that seeks to optimise the public interest via transparent, accountable, and participatory decision-making. Good governance is an important aspect in development since it is related to society and human rights. Good governance is a notion that seeks to optimise public interest via open, accountable, and participatory decision-making processes (Yu, 2017). Overall, good governance is the process of making effective decisions that are participatory, transparent, accountable, equitable, and uphold the rule of law.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study adopted a quantitative approach using an online survey. Hence, online surveys have become increasingly popular in research studies due to their unique capabilities (Jedinger et al., 2018). They offer several advantages over traditional paper surveys, such as convenience for participants, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to reach a larger and more diverse sample (Jedinger et al., 2018). A set of questionnaires was developed to measure each construct used in this study, which were: decision-making related to (1) governance and institutional policies; (2) human resource management; (3) financial management; (4) strategic management; and enhancing the university's good governance.

Furthermore, this study has received UiTM research ethical approval (REC/03/2023 (PG/MR/95), and thus, the data collection for this study was undertaken within a three-month period (May 21 until July 30, 2023). Based on stratified random sampling techniques, the respondents were divided into three main strata: research universities, focused universities, and comprehensive universities. The analysis of these findings was undertaken using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0. Finally, descriptive analysis was carried out to describe the profile of respondents; exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to examine the validity of the instruments; Cronbach alpha was examined for reliability; parametric assumptions tests were performed (normality and linearity tests); and finally, linear multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of participation and engagement in decision-making in influencing the university's good governance.

Data Collection Process

A sample size of 161 questionnaires were completed by the respondents who are among the women administrators affiliated with public universities. Consequently, surveys were administered to the governing bodies of nine public universities in Malaysia, consisting of three universities from research universities, three universities from focus universities, and three universities from comprehensive universities. Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Putra Malaysia are examples of research universities. Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris are considered comprehensive universities, whereas Universiti Teknologi MARA, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak are considered focus universities.

Data Analysis Process

In research, data analysis is the systematic collection, organisation, interpretation, and transformation of raw data into relevant insights (Hicks & Peng, 2019). It entails using numerous statistical and analytical tools to identify patterns, trends, linkages, and correlations in the data. These insights are then utilised to reach conclusions, make educated choices, and formulate suggestions. Data analysis in research is the systematic process of gathering and organising raw data, using statistical and analytical tools to reveal patterns and trends, and interpreting the results to acquire insights and form meaningful conclusions (Simpson, 2015). In research, data analysis is the systematic process of gathering, organising, analysing, and interpreting raw data to gain relevant insights, draw conclusions, and make educated choices or recommendations (Rahul et al., 2020).

Moreover, for this study, multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data because multiple regression analysis is a statistical strategy that investigates the connection between one dependent variable and many independent variables (Simpson, 2015). It enables this reseerach to assess how much variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent factors, as well as which independent variables have a substantial influence on the dependent variable (Simpson, 2015). Multiple regression analysis may help this research to compensate for confounding variables and comprehend the complicated interaction of numerous elements that influence the result.

Furthermore, multiple regression analysis allows for the development of focused hypotheses and the assessment of theories based on empirical evidence (Tu et al., 2005). It offers a framework for examining the link between explanatory factors and response variables, enabling this research study to decide if the relationship is statistically significant or merely due to chance. Additionally, multiple regression analysis assists researchers in developing ideas regarding the nature and direction of the link between variables (Simpson, 2015).

FINDINGS

Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Profile of Women Administrators (N=161)

Profile	Demographic	Frequency (%)
University Administrators Category	Registrar	70 (43.47%)
	Bursar	52 (32.29%)
	Librarian	39 (24.22%)
University	Universiti Malaya	15 (9.31%)
	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	22 (13.6%)
	Universiti Putra Malaysia	18 (11.1%)
	Universiti Teknologi MARA	82 (50.93%)
	Universiti Malaysia Sabah	6 (3.72%)
	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	3 (1.86%)
	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris	6 (3.72%)
	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	5 (3.10%)
	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan	2 (1.24%)
Position Grade	Public Sector Key Positions (JUSA C)	1 (0.62%)
	Grade 54	8 (4.96%)
	Grade 52	32 (19.87%)
	Grade 48	50 (31.05%)
	Grade 44	70 (43.47%)
Age	30 to 35 years old	4 (2.48%)
	36 to 40 years old	29 (18.01%)
	41 to 45 years old	48 (29.81%)
	46 to 50 years old	31 (19.25%)
	51 to 55 years old	35 (21.73%)
	56 to 60 years old	10 (6.21%)
	60 years old and above	4 (2.48%)
Level of Education	Diploma	1 (0.62%)
	Bachelor's degree	90 (55.90%)
	Master's degree	67 (41.61%)
	Doctor of Philosophy	3 (1.86%)

Table 1 shows the socio-demographics of 161 respondents who had participated in this research. The study demonstrated that a significant proportion of female university administrators hold positions for grades 44, 48, 52 and 54, according to the data. The data also revealed that one female respondent was a member of the university's Executive Management Group and held a critical position in the public sector (JUSA). The data unequivocally demonstrates that female university administrators hold a superior educational standing (master's and doctoral degrees) in comparison to their male counterparts.

Table 2: The influence of participation and engagement in decision-making to enhance university good governance. (Multiple Regression Coefficients)

	Beta	t	Sig.	Tol.	VIF
(Constant)		6.685	<0.01		
Institutional Management	0.012	0.177	0.907	0.474	2.108
Financial Management	0.144	1.584	0.115	0.608	1.646
Strategic Management	0.324	2.682	0.008	0.345	2.901
Human Resource Management	0.038	0.330	0.742	0.372	2.691

a. Dependent Variable: Good Governance

Table 3: The influence of participation and engagement in decision-making to enhance university good governance (Multiple Regression Model Summary)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.463 ^a	.214	.194	.49502	1.933

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV_HR, IV_FM, IV_IM, IV_SM

b. Dependent Variable: DV

Table 4: The influence of participation and engagement in decision-making to enhance university good governance (Multiple Regression Anova)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.432	4	2.608	10.643	<.001 ^b
	Residual	38.227	156	.245		
	Total	48.660	160			

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV_HR, IV_FM, IV_IM, IV_SM

Table 2, 3 and 4 portrayed the influence between decision-making (governance and institutional policies; human resource management; financial management; strategic management) and enhancing the university’s good governance based on Linear Multiple Regression analysis. Multiple regression enables a more in-depth analysis of the interactions between variables, despite being based on correlation (Pallant, 2013). A single outcome can be predicted from several factors using multiple regressions, which can also reveal details about the overall model and the relative contributions of each variable (Pallant, 2013). There is a small autocorrelation problem in this instance (Durbin-Watson=1.933). Furthermore, there was no issue with multi-collinearity in this study (tolerance values greater than 0.3 and VIF values less than 4). Next, the R-Square value indicates the percentage of the dependent variable (good governance) variance that the model explains. The value in this instance is 0.1933, which translates to 1.933% of the variance in female administrators' participation and engagement in improving university good governance in Malaysian public institutions. Based on Linear Multiple Regression analysis, the findings revealed that women’s participation and engagement in decision making related to “strategic management” has significant influence on enhancing the university’s good governance ($p < 0.01$, $p = 0.008$). While their participation and engagement in the other aspects of decision-making (institutional management, financial management, and human resource management) have no significant influence on university good governance.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data and analysis, multiple regression demonstrates that the models and studies presented are mathematically and statistically relevant. Furthermore, the study's findings led to the development of a new application in which only "strategic management" has a significant influence or contribution to the relationship between participation and engagement to enhance university good governance in Malaysian public universities among female administrators at Malaysian public universities in four aspects: institutional management, financial management, strategic management, and human resource management.

Moreover, from a domestic standpoint, particularly within the Malaysian, Ministry of Higher Education, the organization is propelled by the progressive movement of women, according to information disclosed by the former Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia. According to Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad, the country's public higher education institutions had 43.2% of their workforce being female in 2021, while 56.8% of them were male (Marisah, 2022).

Furthermore, women make up roughly 60% of HLIs workforce of over 15,000 employees, and Malaysia has become a global center for higher education thanks in large part to the efforts of women. In addition, according to research by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), women's higher levels of education have also led to an approximate 50% rise in economic growth in OECD nations during the last 50 years. Furthermore, women will own over 180,000 small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Malaysia in 2021, accounting for 20.6% of all SMEs. The industry creates approximately 800,000 jobs worth more than RM11.1 billion and adds nearly RM70 billion to the GDP. Moreover, to ensure that women's voices, opinions, and issues are given priority, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CWP) brought a proposal to the CPA's executive committee meeting. Despite this, in the context of our nation, the Dewan Rakyat is currently represented by 33 women, or 14.9% of its 222 members. When you consider that women make up almost half, or 47.7%, of Malaysia's population of 32.5 million, this number is still insignificant (Manzor, 2022).

In addition, a group of researchers from HSBC Business School, Peking University, Shenzhen, China, organized a study entitled Women's Corporate Leadership and Firm Growth Strategies: A Global Perspective in 2022 and found that the relative advantage of female top managers compared to their male counterparts was found to be different across exploitation and exploration measures. More specifically, female top managers were found to perform better on exploitation measures and worse on exploration measures compared to their male counterparts. The impact of female top managers on the exploitative and explorative growth strategies of firms from a global perspective. The study provided exploratory results for an important aspect to consider in future research on the relationship between gender and the exploitation and exploration strategies of firms (Laidoja et al., 2022).

Hence, in practice, the research findings offer guidance for electing top managers. On the one hand, female top managers were found to have a significant positive effect on the exploitation measures of firms, such as capacity utilization. Therefore, firms that wish to improve their overall capacity utilization could benefit from female top executives. On the other hand, female top executives were found to have a significant negative effect on exploration measures such as sales growth, employment growth, and buying fixed assets. Therefore, if a firm’s strategy is physical expansion, it is more likely that the firm will select men as its top managers (Laidoja et al., 2022).

Next, based on the results of this research and literature from Malaysia and other countries, several recommendations can be put into practise to strengthen the role that women play in advancing higher education institution governance through more dynamic, useful, impactful, and effective participation and engagement. This will add new value to the empowering MADANI that Malaysia

is leading the way in. Hence, this study proposes:

- (1) expanded opportunities for mentoring and professional development for women, as well as additional knowledge spaces to enhance confidence;
- (2) Gender sensitization initiatives targeting both men and women, increased scholarly investigation and professional connections, and the imperative to formulate policies promoting work-life balance, affirmative action, and gender equality are all crucial measures to foster a more nuanced and efficient work environment;
- (3) Creation of a women-only network within the region or among public universities in Malaysia, serving as an affirmative forum or platform that elevates the stature of women by fostering strong brand development and facilitating the exchange of professional connections for the purpose of discussing challenges, insights, priorities, or strategic initiatives that may have an impact on women and organizations;
- (4) Mentoring initiatives designed to facilitate the initiation of career paths or networks that are biased against women based on gender, as well as exclusionary practices in institutions unwelcoming to women, or even whether women opt not to apply for positions they deem unattractive, burdensome, or undesirable on purpose, or whether senior leadership is rejected, opposed, or rejected;
- (5) Implementation of policies center on women in statistics and research, with the goal of achieving academic equality through the allocation of substantial project resources and actionable mechanisms that promote women's participation and engagement, includes effective evaluation procedures, timelines, objectives, and performance indicators. Policies ought to be comprehended with the aid of gender-neutral statistics and readily available, on a regular basis, detailed information;
- (6) An evaluation of policy studies concerning the selection and recruitment of senior leaders should be conducted to ensure accountability and transparency in decision-making;
- (7) It is crucial for all nations to prioritize the investment of women in women's capacity building. In fact, the Malaysian government has even endorsed the notion of creating a dedicated university for women in Malaysia, which would serve as an academic institution for mentoring and networking initiatives; and
- (8) Governance reforms should be examined to assess leadership governance principle in a manner that fosters an environment that is more inclusive and appealing to both men and women, thereby encouraging positive vibe.

Based on the study conducted, the researchers are quite optimistic that the proposed solution may close the gap in the issue as described at the outset of this work. According to the results and literature provided, research firmly affirms that to promote the growth and success of women in their professions, it is crucial to provide them with broader options via guidance and professional development. Mentoring initiatives may be essential in reducing the gender disparity by matching women with seasoned mentors who can provide vital advice, support, and perspectives. Mentors may provide guidance on professional development, assist women in overcoming problems and hurdles, and promote their advancement within the organisation. Structured mentorship schemes may enhance the empowerment of women by providing them access to top executives who can aid and counsel. Mentors may assist women in enhancing their leadership abilities, broadening their professional connections, and effectively navigating the intricacies of the work environment. Professional development is crucial for women in the business field to progress in their jobs and attain their objectives. Organisations should therefore provide customised training and development opportunities that cater especially to the need of women. These options include leadership training, communication skills training, and technical training in areas directly applicable to their employment.

Moreover, it is crucial for organisations to provide a conducive climate that fosters the professional advancement of women to guarantee their success and growth. This entails facilitating networking, mentorship, and sponsorship prospects that may meet diverse schedules and requirements. In addition, organisations may provide family-friendly policies that offer women the opportunity to effectively manage their work and family responsibilities. Hence, upskilling and networking are crucial chances for women to advance in their jobs. These chances may include specialised training courses in certain industries, education in entrepreneurship, and the chance to learn from accomplished female entrepreneurs who may serve as role models and sources of motivation. Organisations should promote women's leadership by implementing focused development programmes that specifically meet the unique demands and obstacles women encounter in their professional progression. These courses should prioritise the development of self-assurance, the cultivation of assertiveness, and the provision of opportunity for women to acquire expertise in leadership positions.

In addition, it is essential for organization to establish mentorship programmes tailored exclusively for women in the construction sector to tackle the distinct obstacles they encounter. Facilitating the dismantling of obstacles and advancing the cause of gender equality necessitates the provision of customised professional growth prospects for women. These chances should include leadership development, communication skills enhancement, and technical training in fields relevant to their job. Finally, organisations should adopt inclusive policies and practices that promote work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and supportive maternity leave policies.

CONCLUSION

The active participation and engagement of women in decision-making processes are essential for promoting good governance. It is crucial to acknowledge that women are often marginalised in influential decision-making bodies and are denied the chance to be decision-makers for matters that directly affect them (Ilesanmi, 2018). The lack of representation is affected by a range of obstacles, such as social, cultural, religious, illiteracy, economic, and macho standards (Kebede, 2019).

Moreover, in some civilizations, women are seen incapable of managing administrative matters. To overcome these obstacles, it is essential to aid and enable women to enhance their participation and engagement in decision-making procedures. By using this approach, researcher believe the inclusion of a wide range of viewpoints and ensure that the specific requirements and concerns of women are appropriately considered. Women's participation and engagement in decision-making processes are crucial for promoting effective government (Abakah, 2018). By promoting more female presence in decision-making positions, we may effectively address the issue of low levels of women's engagement and representation in political decision-making processes.

Furthermore, to address the existing issue of low levels of women's participation and engagement in political decision-making processes and other venues, it is imperative to provide more support for women in decision-making during elections and beyond (Ilesanmi, 2018). Ultimately, it is crucial to augment the participation and engagement of women in decision-making procedures to improve the quality of governance (Ilesanmi, 2018). It is essential to confront the obstacles and difficulties that restrict women's involvement, such as societal and cultural standards, restricted educational opportunities, and uneven power relations. Women's participation and engagement in decision-making processes are essential for promoting good governance (Purwanti & Setiawan, 2020).

In addition, by including women into decision-making processes, we may provide a range of unique viewpoints, experiences, and abilities, resulting in more complete and efficacious solutions. Women's participation and engagement in decision-making processes are crucial for improving good governance, as supported by Kebede (2019). It is essential to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions and overcome the obstacles that hinder their participation and engagement. This is crucial to include a wide range of viewpoints, meet the specific needs of women, and establish a democratic system that is inclusive and sustainable (Purwanti & Setiawan, 2020). By including women into decision-making processes, we may advance gender equality, tackle the unique requirements and concerns of women, and guarantee a more comprehensive and efficient system of governance that benefits all individuals in society (Patnaik, 2021).

There are both scientific and practical implications for this research, from a socio-demographic standpoint, the results of this research contribute to our understanding of gender disparities in participation and engagement in the decision-making process with the aim of enhancing good governance in public universities in Malaysia. Therefore, from a practical standpoint, the research results provide insights into how to empower and support women, as well as foster a complete gender caliber in progressive organizations. Nonetheless, the research did uncover data indicating women's significant participation and engagement especially on Strategic Management. Thus, this study might be used as a guide by future researchers who might be able to investigate other aspects that have also contributed to Malaysia's prosperity, such women's participation and engagement in the private sector or private universities (Jacobson et al., 2010).

Moreover, existing literature provides support, indicating that women are assuming a more significant role in managerial decisions and contributing to organizational outcomes. Consequently, a government or organization seeking to increase the efficacy and productivity of the entity can benefit from women in leadership positions, even though women confront socio-family circumstances that also demand their dedication (Jacobson et al., 2010). Nevertheless, pragmatic and all-encompassing opportunities and policies have the potential to foster organizational excellence and enhance good governance practices in both the public and private domains.

Nevertheless, the generalizability of the results reported in this research is limited due to the insufficient sample size and other additional constraints. Moreover, because this research was conducted in nine (9) public institutions in Malaysia, where the number of public administrators is not distributed equitably, the background and personal circumstances of the female participants may have introduced bias into the results. Therefore, this study may serve as an initial milestone that encourages further investigation and practical implementation. Gender research that is not binary is necessary for a deeper comprehension of the effects of gender and its potential ramifications. As a result, further investigation may be warranted regarding the potential variations in leadership styles among individuals and the compilation of a catalogue of effective leadership approaches implemented by women in higher education. This compilation would serve to develop models of best practices that could benefit both male and female candidates aspiring to hold leadership positions in universities (Jacobson et al., 2010).

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