



A Study on the Achievement Difference of Gender Minority Students in Chinese Top Universities with Gender Imbalance

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• Research Objectives

Does the gender in scarcity receive preference or neglect?

In China, the gender ratio of undergraduate students is stable at about 47% for males, and that of postgraduate students is about 49%. Among the top universities in China, due to the differences in disciplinary setting, educational philosophy and cultural atmosphere, there is a diversity of students' gender ratios; furthermore, there are universities where the gender ratio is seriously imbalanced.

In terms of individuality, gender differences, as a common sense of gender research, have a significant impact on the achievement of college students; but focusing on the university as a whole, does the gender imbalance have an impact on the male or female students' achievements? Will the gender minority students receive special attention or neglect? Furthermore, how does this impact occur?

• Conceptual Operationalization

In this study, two top universities in China are selected as samples: University A is a science-engineering university with a male ratio of 79.01%; University B is a normal university with a female ratio of 71.12%. Both are listed in the Double First-Class Initiative in China, selected as 2 of the 36 A-Level World-Class Universities in China, and this study focuses on the achievements of female students in University A and the male's in University B.

As the gender differences in alumni's achievements are largely influenced by the gender factors in the working environment, this study selects three indicators of students' achievements at school to measure the impact of gender differences: top-level scholarships (2019 National Scholarship), presidiums of university-level student organizations (2017-2019 Student Union, Volunteer Association, Art Troupe, Science and Technology Association, Club Union) and the highest personal comprehensive honorary titles (2017-2019 "Students of the Year" & "Top Ten Students").

• Methodology

This study chooses the method of mixed research.

(1) Quantitative research, using the methods of descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance and regression analysis, reveals that among the male and female achievers, the proportion of gender minority students is significantly higher than its ratio in the whole school, and the gender imbalance in universities does have an impact on the achievement of gender minorities. In specific words, the rare female students in University A or the rare male students in University B, are more likely to achieve success than the gender majority students in their respective universities. (The data is from the official websites of the two universities)

(2) Qualitative research is used to analyze, with the principle of "equity, justice and publicity", how standard-setters, voters, judges or interviewers manage to show partiality for the gender minorities, in the process of scholarship selection, organization election and honorary title evaluation. The evaluation criteria of students' three-type achievement in both universities, are fair for each gender, at least including no requirement to control the gender composition of achievers. The impact method is microscopic and unofficial, and is presented through the interview with the persons in charge of the three sample activities.

• Results and Conclusions

Firstly, as for the achievement of obtaining scholarships, the path of influence is hidden and even highly legitimate. In most cases, the criteria for selection are mainly the curriculum scores of one academic year, supplemented by the participation of collective activities, the performance of extracurricular studies, the awards in competitions and more. Exactly, gender minorities are concerned in the daily activities of the school. In particular, a course teacher may, with a high probability, naturally pay more attention to the gender minority students in the classroom, such as boys in literature courses or girls in engineering courses, which may happen in the process of teaching interaction, reviewing assignments and giving grades.

Secondly, as for the achievement of acceding positions of student associations, preferences for gender minorities are sometimes unrealized, but still have an overall impact to the university. In terms of statistics, there are cases where student organizations are completely led by one single gender (gender majorities). The data show that the gender minority has been significantly neglected, but the conclusions drawn from qualitative research are contrary to this. In the recruitment elections of student organizations, members of the incumbent presidium (as the judges) and members of the entire organization (as the voters) actually intend to pay extra partiality to the gender minorities, which is acknowledged frankly; but sometimes in extreme cases, as a result of such serious imbalances in candidates' gender structure, the rare boys/girls can hardly surpass the gender majorities in the election, causing the judges and voters failing to be partial to them. Meanwhile, this exactly explains why the gender minority proportion of the presidium indicator is higher than that of the scholarship indicator, and is still lower than the overall gender ratio.

Thirdly, as for the achievement of acquiring personal honorary titles, the gender minority had received obvious and intense preference. In the recent three years, for University A, the proportion of female achievers each year exceeds that of female graduates; for University B, there are even more male achievers than female ones, and even more, the evaluating result in 2018 realized a male-female ratio of 6:4. The judges or interviewers, usually assumed by the middle-level leaders of the university, claimed that such honorary students as the "facade" of the university should be gender-balanced if possible, otherwise it is not conducive to the school's reputation, therefore they will be intentional bias towards gender minorities in the selection process. It is worth mentioning that there is no communication among the judges about the candidates' gender, according to the evaluation principle, but each of the judges interviewed acquiesced that all the judges would prefer the gender minority students to some extent, which belongs to the phenomenon of social psychology or organizational culturology.

In conclusion, the achievement of gender minority students have indeed received extra attention and partiality in the universities with gender imbalance, and the methods of influence in scholarship, student organizational positions and personal honorary titles have been clarified in this study. Based on the research findings, as the practical significance, this study advocates that universities avoid preferential treatment for gender minorities and, in other words, protect the gender majority from unfair treatment, because for top universities, to create an equal and just environment for students' achievement, is to be responsible for social qualified practitioners and professional development.

Figure 1: Number and Proportion of Achievement Acquisition of Male and Female Students in University A (Overall 79.01% Male)

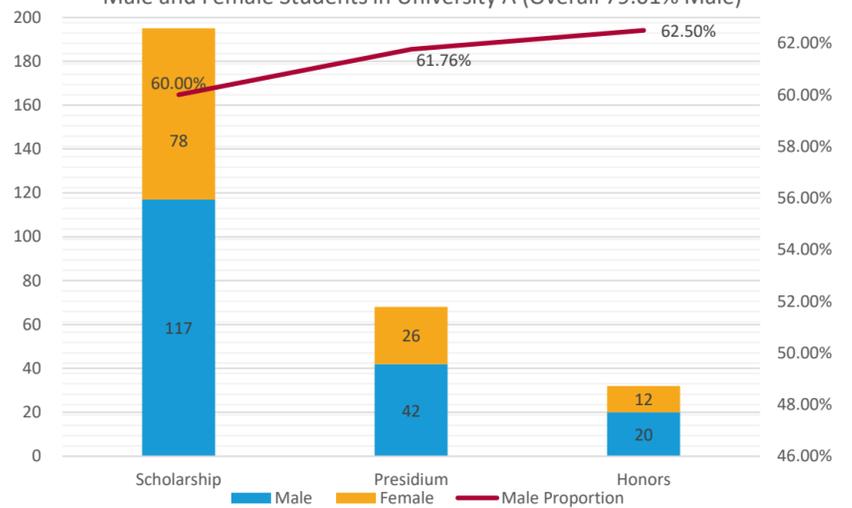


Figure 2: Number and Proportion of Achievement Acquisition of Male and Female Students in University B (Overall 71.12% Female)

