GENDER AND CIVIC TALK ENGAGEMENT AMONG FINAL YEAR UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study was carried out to determine whether there were gender differences in the civic talk engagement among final year undergraduate students from selected local public university. Less explored are gender differences in civic talk, especially in Malaysia. According to Casey A. Klofstad (2010), civic talk is the informal discussion of politics and current events that occurs within a social network of peers: the friends, colleagues, family members, and other individuals who are present in our social environment. A total of 30 self-administered survey questionnaires collected from the respondents were usable and included in the analysis. Random sampling was conducted from the sampling frame. Independent t-test was used to analyse. The result of the study showed that there no significant differences between male and female in civic talk engagement. Even though the result of the study never clearly states the differences but it's indicated that both gender involve in civic talk. The presence of such engagement has been found to be positively associated with youth sense of civic engagement. Additionally, university is an environment where students are able to discuss openly between different opinions. So, universities should create more chances to student's engagement in civic talk.

Keywords: Gender, Civic talk, Civic engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

Research on the gender gap in civic involvement has focused primarily on finding and explaining differences among men and women in civic engagement, civic attitude, civic behaviour and civic participation (Ahrari, Seyedali, Jamilah othman, Salleh hassan, Bahama Abu Samah, 2015; Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012; Da Silva, Sanson, Smart, & Toumbourou, 2004; Lenzi, Vieno, Santinello, Nation, & Voight, 2013). Less explored are gender differences in civic talk, especially in Malaysia.

According to Casey A. Klofstad (2010), civic talk is the informal discussion of politics and current events that occurs within a social network of peers: the friends, colleagues, family members, and other individuals who are present in our social environment. A variety of examples of this type of behaviour exist, including talking about the news of the day over a family dinner, discussing the economy during a coffee break at work, chatting among patrons at a bar about the current election, and other such informal discussions. Typically, these types of interactions are not purposively sought. Instead, civic talk is usually an unintended by product of people going about their normal daily routine. Civic talk can allow citizens to exchange information, elaborate on problems facing the community, and learn about opportunities to participate in civic activities. Conversation about society is understood as the fundamental activity in the public sphere. It is also assumed to foster knowledge and democratic values, contribute to people's identity as citizens and encourage various forms of civic practices (Polletta, Ching, & Chen, 2014). Students in higher education have opportunity to participate in the open talk and have opportunity to express their opinion to public. Universities environment contributed towards major impact on civic involvement among the students. How these civic involvements are develop not by attending civic lessons but engagement in civic talk also among member will develop civic participation. As mentioned by Claes, Maurissen, & Havermans, (2017), that people who are frequently involve in civic talk will know more facts about society, are more actively engaged in community and bolster cognitive complexity. Even though civic talk will develop better society engagement, on the other hand there exists of differences in male and female in the involvement in civic talk. Previous research has shown that there are biggest differences between men and women and their style of communication boils down to the fact that men and women view the purpose of conversations differently (Merchant, 2012; Mohindra & Azhar, 2012). Academic research on psychological gender differences has shown that while women use communication as a tool to enhance social connections and create relationships, men use language to exert dominance and achieve tangible outcomes.

Thus, study offer following the hypotheses:

H1a: there is a significant difference among male and female in civic talk engagement.

H1b: there is no significant difference among male and female in civic talk engagement.

Bearing this fact in mind, therefore this study examines whether there are differences between male and female in the civic talk involvement. Second if there are differences we sought to explore why the issues are existing. The problem are addressed in this article with new data were collected from a selected university. This study sought to answer the following research question.

RQ1.Will male and female differ in civic talk involvement?

II. METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

A total of 30 self-administered survey questionnaires collected from the respondents were usable and included in the analysis. The respondents were randomly drawn from a list of undergraduate students from the university campus. Random sampling was conducted from the sampling frame. Trained researchers and assistants met the respondents to invite their voluntary participation in the survey. Prior to data collection, approval to carry out the study was first sought from the residential college directors and student affairs department. Ethics approval from the college directors was granted and with their review of the survey questionnaire contents. Respondents received a small amount of money for their participation. The sample consisted of 15 Malay, 9 Chinese, 4 Indian and 2 other ethnic minority students. There were more female (63.3%) than male respondents (36.7%). Respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 31 years, with a mean of 24.22 years (SD=1.34). The questionnaire was in Malay language and took approximately twenty-five minutes to complete. Students who gave their informed consent completed the measures in their classrooms or residential college, supervised by researcher and research assistant. The Likert-scale format of items was explained, and participants were informed that they could ask for clarification of items.

III. MEASUREMENT

The respondents were required to state their year of birth and the number of semesters they had completed at the university, and to indicate their demographic details such as gender, ethnicity, program of study, and type of secondary school attended.

An index of civic talk was specifically developed for the purpose of the study. The index consisted of 8 questions related to civic talk. This is measured by asking respondents to indicate how often they talk about social, economic, political and environmental issue with peers and adults outside their family members. Civic talk were each measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always. The main question asked for civic talk is how often do you talk with peers and adult outside your family members about the following topics?

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

This study determines whether there is a difference between male and female in civic talk engagement, by using independent t-test to analyse data.

IV.RESULT

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability test has been conducted to examine the internal consistency of the data. Table 1 shows reliability coefficient of the study instruments.

Study Instruments	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Civic attitudes	8	0.877

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Study Instruments

4.2 Independent test analysis

H1b: there is no significant difference among male and female in civic talk engagement.

An independent t-test was conducted to determine if female (M=27.00, SD=6.06) and male (M=30.63, SD=3.35) reported engaged in civic talk are differed. The Levene's test for equality of variances reported there was no statically significant differences between male and female (F= 1.81, p<.19), so equality of variances are assumed, t (28) =1.82, p=.08. Table 2 shows the t-test analysis of the study.

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Male	11	30.63	3.35			
Female	19	27.00	6.06			
Total	30	57.63	9.41	1.82	28	0.08

Table 2: t-test of civic talk engagement between male and female

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to determine whether there were gender differences in the civic talk engagement among final year undergraduate students from a selected local public university.

The role of gender in civic engagement has been the focus of considerable theoretical and empirical interest and debate in the literature on adult population, but relatively minor attention has been devoted to the investigation of such differences. The result of study showed that there no significant differences between male and female in civic talk engagement. Even though the result of study never clearly state the differences but it's indicated that both gender involve in civic talk. The presence of such engagement has been found to be positively associated with youth sense of civic engagement. Additionally, university is an environment where student are able to discuss openly between different opinions. In such involvement students will feel more ease to engage in the civic activities. Students are able to develop a familiarly with society issues and build confidence to work for community development. According to Ekström & Östman,

(2013), if young people do not feel sufficiently confident to engage in society issues, they will tend to avoid interaction regarding social system and therefore be civically less engaged. Universities should create more chances for students to be engaged in civic talk. A limitation of the study is only focus in the one public university with limited respondent. Researcher must explore more respondents and different types of universities that will create a concrete evidence to show the disparities between male and female in civic talk engagement.

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