

## TEACHER TRAINEES' ANXIETY TOWARDS TEACHING PRACTICE

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### Abstract

Practical teaching plays a fundamental role in preparing teacher trainees for their pre-teaching exposure as teaching profession is often revolved with the feeling of tension and nervousness. Many researchers have found that teacher trainees experience anxiety or anxiousness during their practical teaching which affected their performance. This paper examines a research conducted among 20 teacher trainees using the Student-Teacher Anxiety Scale (1) to determine their anxiety level based on gender. The factors being measured in the questionnaires include classroom management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, school environment and staff and finally self-efficacy. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version 24.0 for frequency, mean, standard deviation and t-test. The results of the study show significant differences were found among teacher trainees based on gender for classroom management, teaching skills, teaching planning, school environment and staff. However, no significant differences were discovered for teaching planning and self-efficacy among teacher trainees.

Keywords: Gender, anxiety, teacher trainees, teaching practice

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Practical teaching refers to the actual experience provided to teacher trainees when they are required to participate in real school situations as part of the requirement in their curriculum. According to Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2), practical teaching is an important module of becoming a teacher in a teacher education program. The major purpose of practical teaching is to offer actual involvement and practice to teacher trainees and to familiarize them with teaching skills so that they would not feel awkward when facing the real situation in the school setting. Thus, practical teaching is an authentic environment whereby teacher trainees are given the opportunity to practice their knowledge and apply the information that they have learned as required by their program (3, 4). Osuala (5) stated that as teacher trainees are exposed to the reality of classroom experience, they are able to experiment methods of teaching and improvise their teaching under the supervision of their supervisors selected by the university. In terms of the evaluation of the teacher trainees' performance, it is significant that they are provided with feedback from the expert in the teaching area. Therefore, as suggested by Al-Magableh (6), during practical teaching, in addition to being observed and evaluated by the school principal, teacher trainees would be encouraged to be assessed simultaneously by either supervisors or experienced teachers.

Many researchers have found that teacher trainees experience anxiety or anxiousness during their practical teaching which affected their performance. Anxiety is defined as feeling uncomfortable or afraid in anticipation of threatening conditions (7). Anxiety is a relatively complex concept which involves one's feelings about his/her abilities and the assessment an individual has to face in a situation which can result in high degree of anxiety. High anxiety can cause stress in a person and this stress varies. Mostly it is derived from feelings such as tension and pressure towards something that is complex and involves psychological aspects (8). Anxiety could lead to severe negative effects if an individual does not know the effective ways to cope with these feelings. It can cause such distress that a person's ability to lead a normal life could be severely impaired.

Black-Branch and Lamont (9), insisted that teaching is a profession that often involves high stress, and teacher trainees are not exempt from such stress. On the other hand, Hart (1) asserted that there are four causes of anxiety that teacher trainees face during practical teaching which are evaluation, dealing with fellow professionals and students, classroom management and the assessment of practical teaching. Similarly, Morton et al. (10) identified four factors of anxiety which are common among teacher trainees, which are evaluation anxiety, pedagogical anxiety, classroom management anxiety and partnership anxiety.

Hirschfeld (11) claimed that the teacher trainees may not recognise the symptoms of their psychological distress, which if untreated would pose serious repercussion to teacher trainees. This is significant as the presence of anxiety is considered as the single biggest clinical

risk factor in the development of depression. Hence, anxiety among teacher trainees needs to be taken into consideration as it is part of the problems experienced by these teacher trainees.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### Respondents and Instruments

20 fourth year TESL undergraduate students in Education Faculty, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) had been chosen as the respondents of this study as these students had undergone the teaching practical in their third year of studies at various schools in Johor area. In this survey, a set of questionnaires adapted from Hart (1987, Student-Teacher Anxiety Scale) were distributed to the respondents to evaluate their anxiety towards teaching practice. The questionnaire is comprised of items that state the teacher trainees' concerns on the aspect of anxiety towards practical teaching. It consists of six factors – Class Management (7 items), Teaching Planning (8 items), Teaching Skills (11 items), Language Skills (14 items), School Environment and Staff (5 items) and Self- Efficacy (5 items). The 5-point Likert Scale was chosen to express teacher trainees' level of agreement represented by 5-Strongly Disagree, 4-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 2-Agree and 1-Strongly Agree. From this scale, the anxiety level for the factors of the teacher trainees was determined. The anxiety levels were divided into high, moderate and low. The value for high anxiety level is between 1.00 -2.33. The moderate anxiety mean value is from 2.34 - 3.66 and the low anxiety level ranges from 3.67 - 5.00. The Cronbach's Alpha Value of 0.86 was calculated for the questionnaire. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 24.0 for frequency, mean score and standard deviation, while t-test was used to determine the significant difference between the mean of the two independent samples to achieve the objective of this study, which were to determine the teacher trainee's anxiety level based on their gender differences.

## 3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	148.33	0.58	2.753	.013
Female	141.29	4.33	2.753	.013

$p \leq 0.05$

**Table 1: Overall Anxiety Level towards Practical Teaching**

Table 1 showed that the mean for the male students was 148.33 (SD = .58) and the mean for female students was 141.29 (SD = 4.33). The t-test analysis indicated that there was a slight significant difference between males and females regarding their anxiety level towards practical teaching with  $t(18) = 2.753$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	22.67	1.15	-8.991	.000
Female	27.41	0.80	-8.991	.000

$p \leq 0.05$

**Table 2: Classroom Management Anxiety**

The result for the classroom management anxiety among male students was 22.67 (SD = 1.15) and 27.41 (SD = 0.80) for female students. The result confirmed that there was a significant difference between males and females regarding their classroom management anxiety towards their practical teaching with  $t(18) = -8.991$ ,  $p < .05$ . The result demonstrated that female students experience higher anxiety in managing their classes compared to male students.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	52.67	1.15	7.963	.000
Female	46.06	1.34	7.963	.000

**Table 3: Teaching Skills Anxiety**

The outcome revealed that the mean for the teaching skill anxiety among male students was 52.67 (SD = 1.15) and for female students was 46.06 (SD = 1.34). The result indicated that there was a significant difference between males and females regarding their teaching skill

anxiety towards their practical teaching with  $t(18) = 7.963$ ,  $p < .05$ . Thus, it can be concluded that male students experience higher anxiety towards teaching skills as compared to female students.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	41.33	2.08	.576	.572
Female	40.47	2.43	.576	.572

$p \geq 0.05$

**Table 4: Language Skills Anxiety**

The result in Table 4 revealed that the mean for the language skills anxiety among male students was 41.33 ( $SD = 2.08$ ) and the mean of female students anxiety was 40.47 ( $SD = 2.43$ ). The result proved that there was no significant difference between males and females regarding their language skills anxiety towards their practical teaching with  $t(18) = .576$ ,  $p > .05$ . Thus, it validated that both male and female students face the same level of anxiety in terms of their language skills.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	19.00	0.00	6.894	.000
Female	14.18	1.19	6.894	.000

$p \geq 0.05$

**Table 5: Teaching Planning Anxiety**

Table 5 pointed out that the mean for teaching planning anxiety among male students was 19.00 ( $SD = 0.12$ ) and 14.17 ( $SD = 1.19$ ) for female students. It showed that there was a significant difference between male and female regarding their teaching planning anxiety towards their practical teaching with  $t(18) = 6.894$ ,  $p < .05$ . It demonstrated that male students have higher anxiety than female students when it comes to teaching planning.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	4.47	0.58	-3.703	.002
Female	6.88	0.99	-3.703	.002

$p \leq 0.05$

**Table 6: School Environment and Staff Anxiety**

The mean for the school environment and staff for male students was 4.47 ( $SD = 0.58$ ) and 6.88 ( $SD = 0.99$ ) for female students. The result showed that there was a significant difference between male and female students regarding their anxiety of school environment and staff during their practical teaching with  $t(18) = -3.703$ ,  $p < .05$ . It can be concluded that female students experience higher level of anxiety compared to male students when it is related to the environment of the school and the staffs themselves.

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	6.00	1.00	-.476	.640
Female	6.29	0.98	-.476	.640

$p \geq 0.05$

**Table 7: Self-Efficacy Anxiety**

Table 7 show that the mean for the male students' self-efficacy anxiety was 6.00 ( $SD = 1.00$ ) and the mean of female students' anxiety was 6.29 ( $SD = 0.99$ ). The result pointed out that there was no significant difference between male and female students regarding their self-efficacy anxiety during their practical teaching with  $t(18) = -.476$ ,  $p > .05$ . It can be concluded that both male and female students possess almost the same level of self-efficacy during their practical training.

#### ■4.0 DISCUSSIONS

This study focuses on six factors, which were the Classroom Management, Teaching Planning, Teaching Skills, Language Skills, School Environment and Staff and Self-Efficacy among TESL undergraduate teacher trainees based on gender differences. Results show significant differences were found among teacher trainees based on gender differences for classroom management, teaching skills, teaching planning, school environment and staff while no significant differences were observed for the teaching planning and self-efficacy factors (refer to Table 1-7). Both genders have been reported as experiencing high anxiety and difficulty in managing the classroom with female trainees experiencing higher anxiety ( $t = -8.991$ ;  $p = 0.00$ , refer to Table 2). Some of the difficulty that they faced are highly related with the noise level that the school students' make in the classroom, dealing with students' action and thoughts and losing control of students' behaviours in the classroom. To be specific, classroom management is about teacher trainees' ability in gaining authority throughout the duration of their teaching practise. This result is similar to Wambugu, Barmao and Ng'eno (12) study that displayed that the female teachers were worried and concerned with their skills and abilities to ensure that the teaching and learning processes could be done smoothly while fulfilling the requirements needed by the school as well as the university authorities. The female trainees have higher anxiety since they are under the impression that most of the school students could be easily handled by the male trainees since the males normally possessed good social skills. They believed that they lacked the skills to control the school children effectively. However, the result of this study contradicted the findings of Dibapile (13) study which claimed that female teachers experienced lower anxiety in managing classroom because they knew how to tackle students' attention better compared to male teachers.

Significant gender difference was found in terms of teaching skills and teaching planning where males showed high scores in teaching skills ( $t=7.963$ ;  $p=0.00$ , refer to Table 3) and teaching planning ( $t=6.894$ ;  $p=0.00$ , refer to Table 5). These findings signified that the male trainees were more anxious about evaluations as they were fearful of not being able to meet the expectation of their school teachers or supervisors as compared to female trainees. This finding rejected the results of Merc (14) which found that female teacher trainees scored higher anxiety in teaching skills compared to the male trainees as they were more concerned about not fulfilling the expectations from those who were in charge of observing and evaluating them during their practical teaching. Danner (15) findings supported the result of this study, as it was clearly mentioned that male teacher trainees would experience higher teaching planning anxiety because they were proven not to be organised and less prepared with regards to their activities, lesson plan, or hands on tasks for the school students. This result was also aligned with Wambugu, Barmao and Ng'eno (12) findings where the anxiety of teaching planning was frequently felt and experienced by male teachers. Female teacher trainees are projected to successfully start preparing and planning for their lessons, performing teaching and assessing their students during the period of practical teaching as compared to their male counterparts who were assumed to be not well prepared.

It was also discovered that there was a slight significant difference between male and female teacher trainees for the school environment and staff factor ( $t = -3.703$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ) with female trainees having higher anxiety as compared to male trainees. From the result, it could be assumed that the male trainees in this study have better social skills than female trainees. Hence, it eases them to socialize and communicate with the school authority. The female trainees might find it difficult to adapt with the new environment causing them to have higher anxiety towards the school environment and staff. Another possibility could be due to their vulnerability to negative emotional experiences triggered by perceptions of self-doubt or bullying (16) which resulted in their loss of self-confidence and higher anxiety in regards to the school environment and staff. However, the result of this study was not supported with the finding of Merc (14) which indicated that neither genders was affected by the school environment and staff throughout their practical teaching period since both genders believe that they were only temporarily placed in a particular school for certain period of time and the short period of time did not increase their anxiety.

#### ■5.0 CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to determine the anxiety level of TESL undergraduate teacher trainees based on six contributing factors which were the classroom management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, school environment and staffs as well as self-efficacy centralizing on gender. Results demonstrated significant differences were found among teacher trainees based on gender for classroom management, teaching skills, teaching planning, school environment and staff while no significant differences were observed for the teaching planning and self-efficacy factors. To sum up, irrespective of gender, teacher trainees should learn how to adapt the best method to deal with their anxiety, no matter how insignificant it is in order to minimize their anxiousness. It is paramount for them to learn the strategies that suit them in reducing their fear or nervousness thus becoming more effective teacher trainees to take on more responsibility for their own teaching and learning.

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