

# Acquisition of Program Graduate Traits of Teacher Interns in a Philippine State University: Implications for Elementary Teacher Education Management

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi korelasi antara akuisisi sifat lulusan program (PGT) dan kinerja skolastik magang guru sekolah dasar di sebuah universitas negeri di Leyte, Filipina, serta untuk membandingkan kinerja skolastik dan akuisisi PGT antara responden pria dan wanita. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah korelasional dan komparatif, melibatkan 40 responden yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert 5 poin untuk mengukur PGT dan kinerja skolastik responden. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan koefisien korelasi peringkat Spearman untuk menguji hubungan antara PGT dan kinerja skolastik, serta Tes Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon untuk memeriksa perbedaan gender dalam akuisisi PGT dan kinerja skolastik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak terdapat korelasi signifikan antara akuisisi PGT dan kinerja skolastik. Selain itu, tidak ada perbedaan gender yang signifikan dalam akuisisi PGT, menyoroti pentingnya mengakui keterampilan individu tanpa memperhatikan stereotip gender. Namun, hasil menunjukkan bahwa responden laki-laki menunjukkan kinerja skolastik yang lebih unggul dibandingkan dengan responden perempuan, menunjukkan bahwa pilihan pendidikan mungkin lebih sesuai dengan kekuatan individu. Implikasi dari temuan ini dapat mendorong pengembangan program pendidikan yang lebih inklusif dan mendukung perkembangan potensi individu tanpa memandang jenis kelamin.

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the correlation between program graduate trait acquisition (PGT) and the scholastic performance of elementary school teacher interns at a public university in Leyte, Philippines, and compare scholastic performance and PGT acquisition between male and female respondents. The research design was correlational and comparative, involving 40 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to measure respondents' PGT and scholastic performance. Data analysis was performed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between PGT and scholastic performance and the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon Test to examine gender differences in PGT acquisition and scholastic performance. The results showed no significant correlation between PGT acquisition and scholastic performance. Additionally, there were no significant gender differences in PGT acquisition, highlighting the importance of recognizing individual skills without regard to gender stereotypes. However, the results showed that male respondents demonstrated superior scholastic performance to female respondents, suggesting that educational choices may be better suited to individual strengths. The implications of these findings can encourage the development of educational programs that are more inclusive and support the development of individual potential regardless of gender.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of higher education, the imperative is not only to contribute to economic development but also to foster educational advancements that align with the evolving demands of the labor market. The critical role of higher education institutions in ensuring that graduates possess specific traits

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essential for meeting economic and societal needs. Graduate traits are the remarkable characteristics, skills, and viewpoints students should develop throughout their academic careers and college experiences. These traits extend beyond mere skills and encapsulate qualities desired in graduates, which can be applied beyond the academic setting (Osmani et al., 2015; Wald & Harland, 2019). However, one pressing challenge is ensuring that elementary teacher candidates not only acquire essential traits but also effectively apply them in real-world settings. Integral to this concept is the notion that graduate traits represent measurable outcomes, indicating a graduate's readiness to apply acquired knowledge and skills at the expected level (Baporikar & Sony, 2020; Hudson et al., 2016; Ipperciel & ElAtia, 2014). These traits serve as benchmarks for accredited programs, offering explicit statements about essential competencies and relevant indicators within the program's specific context. As the demand for qualified graduates intensifies, educational institutions globally have implemented initiatives to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency (Pazil & Razak, 2019; Sunderji et al., 2018). These initiatives include the establishment of state-of-the-art teaching facilities, recognition of teaching distinctions, continuous curriculum refinement, and the promotion of innovative teaching practices, all geared towards improving the delivery of high-quality instruction (Belwal et al., 2017; Hopkins et al., 2014; Modić Stanke et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the study by previous research underscored the alignment between the expectations of both public and private sectors and the graduate attributes of professional competence and global orientation (Ginoy et al., 2024; Santillan et al., 2020). They further identified teacher-applicants' most sought-after qualities: mastery of subject matter, strategic teaching skills, and effective classroom management. Similar research likewise pointed out that the absence of a comprehensive graduate attributes profile for science teachers hinders these essential qualities' effective instruction and evaluation (del Carmen Gómez & Jakobsson, 2015; Kayima, 2022). Meanwhile, previous research also delved into pre-service teachers' perceptions of their teacher preparation, revealing that students' teaching experiences played a crucial role in fostering their technical expertise, personal values, and attributes (Masood et al., 2022; Pop, 2015). Similar research investigated the self-perceptions of early pre-service teachers, revealing that service-oriented teachers characterized themselves as individuals who receive ample learning opportunities, engage in productive interactions with their students, and exude self-assurance in their teaching abilities (Beltman et al., 2015; Ó Gallchóir et al., 2018).

In the Philippines, where the demand for competent teachers is ever-growing, various teacher education programs are offered to meet these needs (Alogar & Itaas, 2021; Tavakoli & Baniasad-Azad, 2017). With a long history of producing proficient teachers, Filipino educators undergo rigorous training through a bachelor's degree in education, specializing in a specific subject area or general education, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical skills for effective teaching. Teacher education graduates in the Philippines must also pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) as a prerequisite for teaching in public elementary and high schools nationwide. The performance of graduates on the licensure exam indicates the quality of instruction and preparation provided by the teacher training school. In addition, the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program exemplifies this commitment to excellence, as it consistently produces highly skilled and dedicated teachers (Clemente et al., 2021; Manning, 2021). This four-year program specifically caters to the requirements of elementary school teachers in the Philippines, aiming to develop versatile educators capable of teaching across different learning areas.

Since 2016, a public institution of higher learning in Leyte has dedicated its BEED program to preparing and training elementary teacher interns. The program aims to provide them with comprehensive knowledge and skills in foundational general education, a theoretical understanding of teaching and learning, effective methodologies, practical experiences, professional ethics, and subject matter expertise. As one of the institution's newest programs, the need to determine the acquisition of the program graduate traits in elementary teacher candidates could help ensure continuous enhancement of the degree program and enable prompt resolution of potential challenges that may arise in the future. While there are existing studies on graduate attributes in national and international settings, they primarily emphasize other fields and are limited in their coverage of teacher education, specifically addressing the acquired graduate traits of BEED teacher candidates within the local context (Bellew & Gabaudan, 2017; Daniel & Johnstone, 2017).

Given the abovementioned discussion, this study examined the correlation between the acquisition of program graduate traits (PGT) and the scholastic performance of elementary teacher interns at a state university in Leyte, Philippines, and compared the scholastic performance and acquisition of PGT between male and female teacher interns. Specifically, it examined (1) the teacher interns' level of scholastic performance; (2) the perceived level of acquisition of PGT; (3) the correlation between the acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance; and (4) the difference between male and female teacher interns' acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance. This present study advanced the null hypothesis of no significant correlation between the acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance and no significant gender difference between the teacher interns' acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance. Further, the study

aims to provide BEED students, teachers, program supervisors, and the entire academic community with valuable insights into the expectations and requirements for a successful teaching career, serving as an empowering catalyst for self-realization and introspection. By clearly understanding the expectations of pursuing a BEED degree program, students can cultivate the motivation to meet these expectations actively. As a result, they can effectively enhance their preparation and personal growth within the teaching profession.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach, specifically correlational and comparative research designs. The descriptive method was also used to illustrate the respondents' scholastic performance and perceived level of acquisition of PGT. Meanwhile, the correlational method was employed since this study examines whether a significant correlation exists between the acquisition of PGT and the scholastic performance of the respondents. Plus, the comparative method was applied as the study is also concerned with investigating the gender difference between the respondents' scholastic performance and acquisition of PGT. The study was carried out at a state university in the Philippines that offers a teacher education degree program, particularly the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED). The university is a regional state higher education institution in the Province of Leyte, and it holds the distinction of being the oldest higher educational establishment in the Eastern Visayas region. Purposive sampling was applied, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria included teacher interns (teacher candidates in the concluding year of their teacher education journey) enrolled in the BEED program, full-time or regular students who have completed coursework since the beginning of their college education, not a transferee or a student who changed a degree program or major within the college, and most importantly, elementary teacher interns who are willing to participate in the study. With the approval of the university authorities, the researcher requested the complete list of the group population from the dean's office of the College of Teacher Education. The researcher invited all qualified BEED teacher interns to participate in the study; however, only 40 (composed of 6 males and 34 females) out of 88 teacher interns expressed their willingness to participate.

The study utilized a survey questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale on the acquisition of PGT among the respondents. The researcher constructed 29 items based on the PGT and program learning outcome statements of the College of Teacher Education's Outcomes-Based Education syllabi. Likewise, the researcher reviewed and checked valid sources and literature to ensure that the included items accurately measured the respondents' PGT (Ludwikowska, 2019; Magulod Jr et al., 2020). The self-made questionnaire was validated before administration to minimize measurement errors. Three BEED program instructors with more than five years of teaching experience evaluated the questionnaire to ensure its alignment with the research topic. Their suggestions were crucial in revising some of the questionnaire's items. Further, a pilot test was conducted involving a group of 20 teacher interns who were not part of the sampled population. The internal consistency or reliability of the survey questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a good reliability coefficient of 0.891. The scholastic performance of the respondents was classified into five categories as presented in Table 1 and the acquisition of PGT by the respondents was then grouped into five categories as contained in Table 2.

**Table 1. Respondents' Scholastic Performance Scale**

Range of Grades	Category
1.0 – 1.4	Excellent
1.5 – 1.9	Superior
2.0 – 2.4	Very Good
2.5 – 2.9	Good
3.0	Pass

**Table 2. Respondents' Acquisition of the PGT Scale**

Score Range	Category
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Acquired
3.41 – 4.20	Acquired
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
1.81 – 2.60	Not Acquired
1.00 – 1.80	Pass

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout this study. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents to ensure that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and rights as the study's respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, as all data collected were treated with the utmost confidentiality and were used only for this study. The respondents were assured that their identities would remain undisclosed and that their responses would be reported in an aggregated and anonymous manner. Furthermore, the researcher strongly emphasized voluntary involvement, upholding that the study conforms to the university's ethical rules and regulations and the values of authenticity and regard for the respondents' well-being. For this study, the researcher collected data using Google Forms, an online survey platform enabling the study's respondents to conveniently complete the survey at their discretion. Respondents could access and respond to the survey using various devices, omitting the need for physical paper surveys, and increasing the flexibility and convenience of their participation. Furthermore, the researcher coordinated with a teacher adviser who was crucial in disseminating the survey questionnaire to the respondents. The teacher adviser facilitated the distribution of the online survey link to the respondents through email and other appropriate communication channels. Upon receiving the survey link, the respondents were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives and procedures. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent to ensure voluntary participation and ethical considerations. The obtained data were secured in a Google Drive folder that was only available to the researcher. Meanwhile, the researcher collected data on the respondents' scholastic performance by retrieving their average grades from the registrar's office at the university. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher remained aware of adhering to the university's ethical guidelines and regulations. The researcher maintained ongoing communication with the respondents and ensured that any questions or concerns were promptly addressed. Further, the survey was administered in the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

Tabular presentations summarized the collected data for this study. Frequency counting, standard deviations, and percentages were employed. The weighted mean was utilized to describe the respondents' acquisition of PGT. Additionally, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) tested the correlation between the acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance. Meanwhile, the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon Test examined the gender difference between the acquisition of PGT and the scholastic performance of the respondents. The choice of these tests was based on the normality test performed on the data obtained from the respondents. The normality test revealed that the data for both variables deviate from a normal distribution, as evidenced by the kurtosis and skewness values, as well as the Shapiro-Wilk test results. Specifically, the kurtosis values of 1.42 for the scholastic performance and 0.919 for the acquisition of PGT suggest that the data are not perfectly symmetrical. Additionally, the skewness values of -0.793 and -1.09 further indicate a departure from normality. Moreover, the significance levels obtained from the Shapiro-Wilk tests ( $W = 0.938$ ,  $p = 0.031$  for scholastic performance;  $W = 0.906$ ,  $p = 0.003$  for acquisition of PGT) provide additional evidence that the data deviate from normality. Given these deviations, non-parametric tests were used in this study. The researcher formally conducted the analyses of the collected data using the JAMOV statistical analysis software.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

Table 3 presents the teacher interns' level of scholastic performance. As shown in the table, four-fifths (80%) of the teacher interns, displayed a superior level of scholastic performance. Meanwhile, four teacher interns (10%) exhibited very good performance, while another four (10%) demonstrated excellence in their chosen fields of expertise.

**Table 3.** Distribution by Level of Teacher Interns' Scholastic Performance

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Excellent	4	10.00
Superior	32	80.00
Very Good	4	10.00
Good	0	0.00
Pass	0	0.00

N = 40; Std. Dev. = 0.21; Mean Grade = 1.69 (Superior)

The PGT level of acquisition perceived by elementary teacher interns is outlined in Table 4. Based on the table, nearly half (50%) of the teacher interns claimed to have acquired the necessary graduate traits, demonstrating their ability to impart a clear, sufficient, and in-depth understanding of the subject matter

knowledge, which they also gained from their practice teaching experience. Along with this, nine teacher interns (22.50%) said that they had strongly grasped the graduate qualities for elementary teacher training.

**Table 4. Distribution by Level of Acquisition of Teacher Interns' PGT**

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Acquired	9	22.50
Acquired	18	45.00
Neutral	8	20.00
Not Acquired	3	7.50
Strongly Not Acquired	2	5.00

N = 40; Std. Dev. = 0.93; Mean Score = 3.59 (Acquired)

Table 5 displays the correlation analysis between the elementary teacher interns' acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance. The Spearman's rho result of 0.039 indicates a very weak positive correlation between the two variables. This correlation, however, is not statistically significant as indicated by the p-value of 0.813.

**Table 5. Correlation between Teacher Interns' acquisition of PGT and Scholastic Performance**

Variable	Spearman's rho	
	$r_s$	p
Acquisition of PGT	0.039*	0.813
Scholastic Performance		

\*Not Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); df=38; N=40

Table 6 shows the difference in the acquisition of PGT and scholastic performance of male and female teacher interns. As presented in the table, the Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that the variation in the acquisition of PGT between the male and female teacher interns is not statistically significant (Z-value = -1.114, p-value = 0.926). Regarding scholastic performance, the result indicated a notable difference (Z-value = -3.882, p-value = 0.000) between the performance of male and female groups.

**Table 6. The Gender Difference between Teacher Interns' acquisition of PGT and Scholastic Performance**

Group		Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U test	
				Z	p
Acquisition of PGT	Male	21.00	126.00	-1.114**	0.926
	Female	20.41	694.00		
Scholastic Performance	Male	37.50	225.00	-3.882***	0.000
	Female	17.50	595.00		

\*\* Not Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*\*Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); F=34; M=6; N=40

## Discussion

The teacher education institutions in the Philippines are committed to nurturing competent and highly qualified graduates who will adeptly address the growing demand for skilled educators. Fostering the development of essential traits in teacher interns is crucial for enhancing the quality of the degree program and students' learning. The result of this study entails the teacher interns' commitment to improving their self-efficacy, grade consciousness, and study skills, as well as how actively they engage in their school-related activities. This also confirms the statement of Miñano and Campo (2014), who emphasize the important role of intrinsic drive in achieving extraordinary academic achievements (Martínez-Ariza et al., 2022; Miñano & Campo, 2014). A strong desire to learn could contribute to increased performance and academic achievement (Cabuquin & Abocejo, 2023; Liu & Chiang, 2019). Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that students could experience issues that could limit their potential to perform at their best. These concerns include various factors, including effective time management, a thorough comprehension of difficult subjects, and the desire to succeed. If not addressed, it can adversely impact scholastic performance. Meanwhile, the teacher interns' PGT level of acquisition indicates their competence and readiness to become capable and successful teachers. Their learned skills provide a solid basis for their professional progress and help them effectively assist their future students while fostering an environment that is conducive to learning. The result could further indicate that the teacher interns were able to augment the teaching and learning process by using real-life examples to create meaningful knowledge in their

students. The use of relevant and real-world examples in classroom settings could enhance the outcomes of learning and make them more meaningful and effective. When abstract concepts are applied in practical situations, learners are more likely to understand and retain what they learn because they can experience how the lessons that they are learning are relevant and have practical implications (Hasan et al., 2023; McRae et al., 2018).

Moreover, policymakers and the entire academic community express deep concerns about classroom preparedness and the theory-practice gap among prospective teachers, making it crucial to actively ensure the development of basic competencies in students (Chaney et al., 2020; Heni et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). To further enhance elementary teacher interns' readiness in the classroom and their ability to apply professional knowledge effectively, it is essential to strengthen the links between theoretical knowledge gained in teacher education courses and practical learning experiences during school placements (Phillips & Chetty, 2018; Pu et al., 2020). Previous research argued that the systematic acquisition of professional knowledge is imperative for teachers to attain the status of "responsible, qualified teachers" and drive significant improvements in the quality of teacher education to foster sustainable development (Masood et al., 2022; Wang & Shih, 2022). Meanwhile, similar research specified that graduate traits extend beyond mere employability, containing a broader scope that incorporates the development of academic, citizenship, and career competencies (Bitzer & Withering, 2020; Hill et al., 2016). However, other studies indicated that embedding these seemingly generic graduate traits into curricula and pedagogies across disciplines poses challenges, as different disciplines may attribute distinct meanings to similar characteristics (Osmani et al., 2015; Smith, 2016).

In addition, this present study revealed that there is a very weak link between PGT acquisition and scholastic performance, meaning that acquiring PGT may not have a significant influence on scholastic performance and that other factors may play a more important role in determining academic success. This result aligns with the similar study who underscored that the perceived development of graduate traits is significantly influenced by three key factors such as students' performance motivation, teacher support in fostering critical and creative thinking, and students' inclination to engage in the honors track as a cohesive learning community (Jansen & Suhre, 2015; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). Prior studies also stressed that graduates lack critical skills development in the areas of communication, creativity, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and comprehension, confirming the need to incorporate these qualities in the teaching process (Mainga et al., 2022; St. Louis et al., 2021). Regardless of the teacher interns' performance in school, they can still develop and possess the characteristics vital for an elementary teacher education graduate. Scholastic performance alone does not limit the teacher interns to acquiring the necessary graduate traits as motivation and attitude toward the BEED program could likewise enable them to achieve the desired attributes. Practical communication skills among graduates are necessary for their ability to convey ideas and collaborate with colleagues, raising their potential for career advancement in today's interconnected and globalized professional environments. Graduates must have cultivated specific generic skills that will enable them to collaborate with others, communicate effectively, act ethically, and continue their education. Previous research emphasized that graduate traits should be linked across the curriculum in the learning activities, assessment items, and assessment criteria to enable students to build skills in these areas (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Kim et al., 2019). Educational institutions can actively promote the development of essential employability skills and graduate attributes among students and prepare them for success in their future careers by integrating graduate traits into various aspects of the curriculum (Abelha et al., 2020; Hooper et al., 2014; Shivoro et al., 2018).

The gender variation in the acquisition of PGT likewise suggests that both male and female teacher interns have similar levels of acquisition of PGT. It could further indicate that being a male or a female does not play a substantial role in determining the knowledge and skills acquired as it highlights the need for equal opportunities and recognition for the acquisition of PGT. This result differs from previous research who found that females performed better than their male counterparts in terms of the teaching skills acquired during internship (Adu-Marfo et al., 2024; Ahiatrogah, 2017). The other study also observed a small difference in how male and female interns assessed their skill development (Ang, 2015; Monogaran & Subramaniam, 2023). Nevertheless, this study underscores the significance of examining the teacher interns' capabilities rather than forming conclusions based on gender stereotypes when evaluating their learned abilities and inherent characteristics. The study's result likewise indicates that male teacher interns significantly have better scholastic performance than their female counterparts. This implies that male teacher interns may have selected a field of study that aligns well with their strengths, potentially contributing to their better scholastic performance. Females, on the other hand, may have experienced external pressures that impact their decision to pursue a career in teaching. Other factors, such as subject preferences, teaching methods, student interests, and time management, might likewise contribute to the observed gender disparity. Additionally, other research pointed out that whereas male students

outperformed females in senior high school, females outperformed males in postsecondary education (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2014; Wrigley-Asante et al., 2023). On the contrary, similar research unveiled that gender disparities in student performance vary by subject, and there is not a discernible trend indicating that males consistently excel over females (Crowther & Briant, 2022; Lockhart & Miller, 2016).

Generally, the results of this study provide significant insights into the broader theoretical framework of teacher education and the acquisition of program graduate traits (PGT) among elementary teacher interns within the context of a Philippine State University. The negligible link between PGT acquisition and scholastic performance aligns with the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020), emphasizing that academic success is influenced by a complex interplay of factors beyond the mere acquisition of specific traits. The gender variation in PGT acquisition also underscores the need for equal opportunities and recognition, challenging gender stereotypes in evaluating teacher interns' capabilities. Further, these findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on teacher preparation, offering a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between graduate traits, gender variations, and scholastic performance within the context of elementary teacher education in the Philippines.

Teacher education programs should take into account improving the quality and diversity of practical teaching experiences students have while in school internships in order to develop the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills. This can better prepare teacher interns for the demands of real-world classrooms and assist them in developing graduate-level skills. Teachers and program administrators should put methods in place to increase teacher interns' motivation and active engagement. This can involve peer support groups, mentorship programs, and chances for self-reflection to assist teacher interns in actively pursuing graduate-like qualities. Educational institutions should also support and recognize teacher interns on a gender-neutral footing. Making a more inclusive learning environment and ensuring that all teacher interns have an equal chance at succeeding can be accomplished by focusing on individual strengths and skills rather than gender stereotypes. Moreover, teacher education programs should examine and monitor the acquisition of graduate qualities on a regular basis in order to find areas for improvement. Feedback systems and continual evaluations can assist programs in adapting to changing educational requirements and expectations. This study further suggests augmenting the sample size in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the acquisition of program graduate traits among elementary teacher interns. Future studies may examine other prevailing variables like teachers' teaching methods, students' subject preferences, and individual interests that could affect teacher interns' development of graduate-level qualities. As a result, the dynamics at work in teacher education would be better understood.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results revealed that most of the teacher interns performed exceptionally well in their chosen field. The majority also claimed to have developed the necessary graduate qualities, laying the foundations for their future careers as teachers. However, the study found no correlation between PGT acquisition and scholastic performance which suggests that parameters other than scholastic performance have a more significant influence in developing graduate qualities. Further, the study found no statistically significant gender difference in PGT acquisition, emphasizing the value of focusing on one's abilities and aptitudes rather than depending on gender preconceptions to evaluate the development of graduate traits. However, the results for scholastic performance indicate that male teacher interns greatly outperform their female counterparts in this area.

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