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AN EMPIRICAL BIVARIATE CASE STUDY ON ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SELECT FACTORS CONCERNING POST GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an attempt to examine the associations between certain set of chosen independent and dependent variables concerning post graduate students and their academic performance in respective courses. This study has been undertaken on 76 Post-Graduate (PG) students in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. A set of independent variables, viz.; educational background, gender, employment sector, sponsorship status, marital status were identified and their strength of association was individually checked with the only dependent variable(i.e., academic performance of students) in the study. Chi square test was used to test whether the two variables (dependent and independent) are statistically associated with each other significantly. Since Chi square test helped us to look only at statistical association, we examined Contingency Coefficient C, Cramer's V, Phi Correlation Coefficient and Lambda Asymmetric Coefficient (indexes of agreement) to test the strength of the association between the select pair of variables.

KEYWORDS
Academic performance, cross tabulation, chi-square test, higher education, indexes of agreement.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, data pertaining to 76 students of full time and part time post graduation courses was collected and cross tabulated. For pass-out students, Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) was considered to be the measure of their academic performance, whereas for the current students, their academic performance was gauged by Grade Point Average (GPA) achieved in the preceding semester/trimester. A bivariate cross tabulation has been done by combining dependent and independent variables, taking one variable of each type at a time and subsequently the data have been tabulated together. It is not necessary that the independent variables specified in the study shall cause a change, proportionate or otherwise, in the respective dependent variables specified. The direct effects tested here are assumptions made by us based on information obtained through discussions, both formal and informal with faculty members of different departments at our college, as well as discussions with faculty members of other colleges and based on background information obtained from review of a number of articles. We intended to check the level of significance of association (if any) between the said variables at 95% confidence level. The results have been interpreted as per the values obtained on application of the said tests.

LITERATURE REVIEW
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
A limited number of studies have been undertaken to establish a relationship between educational background and academic performance. Woodley and Parlett (1983) found that previous educational level of students is highly associated with their persistence and academic performance. Through this study we intend to find out the association (if any) between educational background and academic performance among students in Sultanate of Oman.
GENDER AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
Another demographic variable that appears to discriminate student's academic achievement is gender (Sheard, 2009). Association between gender and academic performance has been studied a lot and results obtained have been diverse in nature. A study done on 211 Omani students enrolled in undergraduate-level educational measurement courses in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University revealed statistically significant group differences on gender and education major. (Al Kharusi, 2009). Research has revealed that the female undergraduate grade point average (GPA) was generally higher than that achieved by their male counterparts after the first year of study (Strahan, 2003) and across 3 years of their undergraduate study (Baker, 2003; Woodfield, Jessop, & Mcmillan, 2006). Several studies have concluded that female students quickly and easily adapt to higher education and accepted learning behaviors (Smith, 2004). As per Hyde and Kling (2001) women have outperformed men in higher education. A study done by Meltem & Serap (2007) in Turkey reveals that the female undergraduate students outperformed their male counterparts during their college years. Most of the studies have confirmed that women outperform men in higher education. Through this research work we are trying to investigate whether it holds true for Sultanate of Oman.
EMPLOYMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
Many studies have been conducted to establish the relationship between students' employment and academic performance. It has been observed that students who work for 40 hours or more per week have lower grades than students who do not work (Astin, 1993). Moreover, some of the earlier studies have been indicative of a positive effect or no effect of student's employment and academic performance. An analysis of students at University of Brighton found that majority of the students confirmed that working had either a positive or no effect at all on their academic performance (Watts, 2002). However, few studies done on similar lines have suggested that employment upgrades various skills, viz.; time management, experience etc. (Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson 1989). The authors couldn't find any study concerning examination of associations of academic performance with the employment sector of the students, viz.; public sector or private sector. But, based on discussions with a number of academicians in Gulf region, esp. in Oman, it was felt necessary to examine such an association.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT (SPONSORSHIP/ SCHOLARSHIP/ AID) AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
Few studies have examined the relationship between financial support and academic performance. Alon (2005) suggested that the amount of financial aid a student receives influences students performance. Similarly, in a study done on students in Dutch higher education (Belot, M., E. Canton, and D. Webbink. 2007),

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it was found that public aid had a significant effect on the academic performance of student since 1st year of study. This research, therefore, focuses on the examining the impact of sponsorship/scholarship/aid on academic performance of students in Sultanate of Oman.

MARITAL STATUS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Powell et al. (1990) established that marital status contributes significantly to learners' academic performance. A study on nursing diploma students in Pakistan (Ali, 2008) did not reveal any association between age, marital status and academic performance of the students. However, a similar study (Mehdi & Marcus, 2008) confirms that there is a strong association between marital status and academic performance. It is therefore felt important to investigate similar associations (if any) with reference to higher education in Oman.

In the light of the review of literature mentioned above, this paper examines the following associations between the said independent and dependent variables for the students of PG courses (enrolled/ pass outs) in full time and part time programmes:

Association between educational background (independent variable) of PG students (full time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

Association between gender (independent variable) of PG students (full time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

Association between educational background (independent variable) of PG students (part time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

Association between employment sector, viz.; public & private sector (independent variable) of PG students (part time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

Association between sponsorship/ scholarship/ aid, whether partial/ full (independent variable), of PG students (part time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

Association between marital status (independent variable), of PG students (part time) and their academic performance as exhibited by cumulative grades (dependent variable) achieved by them.

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS
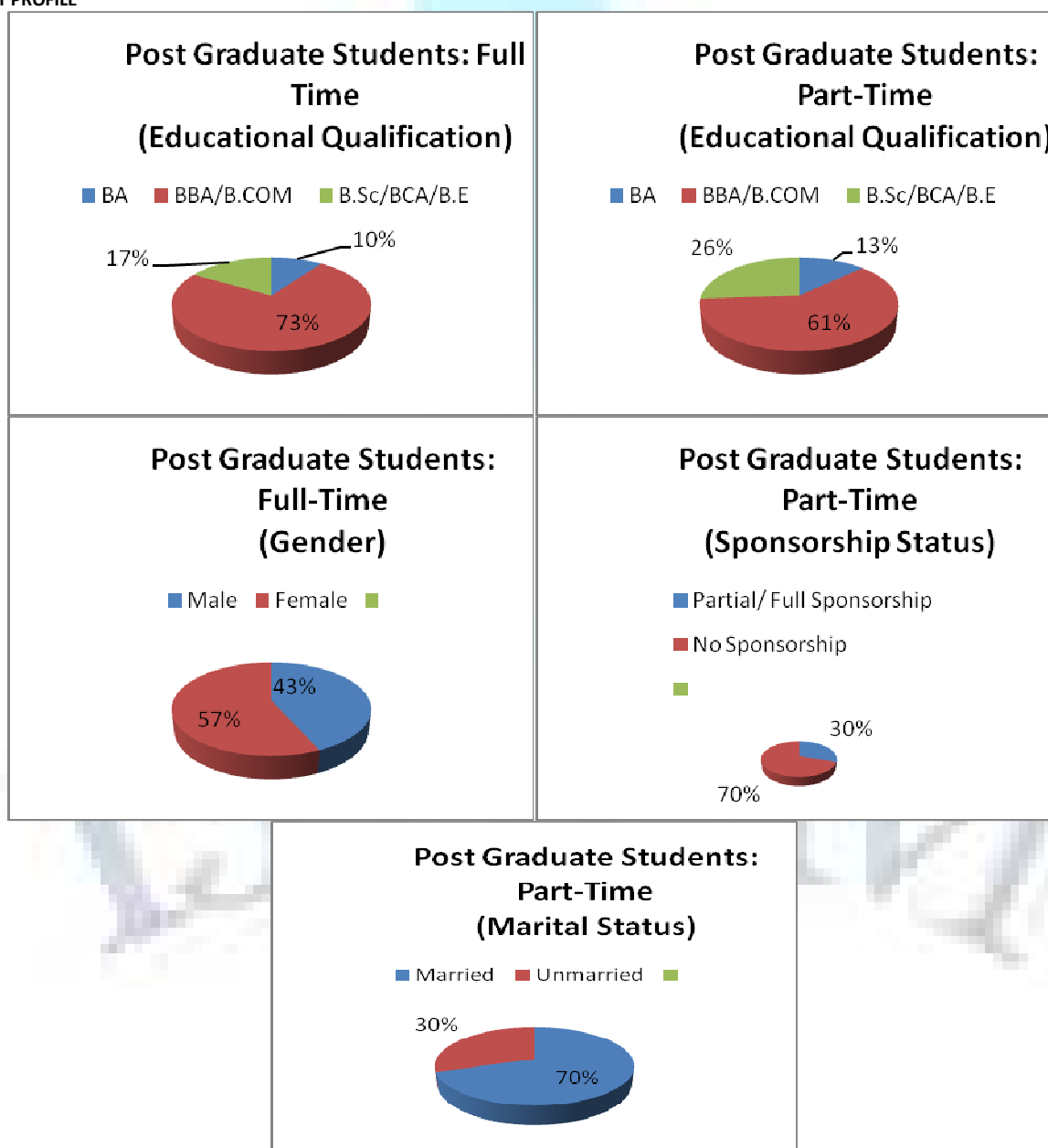**RESPONDENT PROFILE**

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INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 1
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 8.943 (p-value = 0.347), indicates that the results are not statistically significant. The educational qualification of the students prior to joining full time PG programme and their academic performance in the programme is not significantly associated with each other. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value (p-value = 0.068) and Cramer's V (p-value = 0.347) value has been observed to be insignificant.

INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 2
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 10.341 (p-value = 0.035), indicates that the results are statistically significant. Therefore, the gender of the student and the academic performance of the candidate in full time PG programme are observed to be significantly associated with each other. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value (p-value = 0.156) has been observed to be insignificant.
(3)   The Cramer's V value at 0.587 (p-value = 0.035) being closer to 1 is indicative of a moderately strong association between the dependent and independent variable in study.

INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 3
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 19.577 (p-value = 0.003), indicates that the results are statistically significant. Therefore, the educational background of the student and the academic performance of the candidate in PG programme (part-time) are observed to be significantly associated with each other. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value is indicative of a 30.8% reduction in error (p-value = 0.003) in predicting the measure of grade obtained by a PG student for part-time programme when the academic background of the candidate is known.
(3)   The Cramer's V value at 0.366 (p-value = 0.003) being closer to 0 is indicative of a weak association between the dependent and independent variable in study.

INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 4
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 19.782 (p-value = 0.000), indicates that the results are statistically significant. Therefore, the employment sector of the student and the academic performance of the candidate in part-time PG programme are observed to be significantly associated with each other. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value (p-value = 0.144) has been observed to be insignificant.
(3)   The Cramer's V value at 0.521 (p-value = 0.000) being closer to 1 is indicative of a moderately strong association between the dependent and independent variable in study.

INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 5
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 3.485 (p-value = 0.323), indicates that the results are not statistically significant. Therefore, the sponsorship status of the student and the academic performance of the candidate in PG programme (part-time) are observed not to be associated with each other significantly. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value (p-value = 0.654) and Cramer's V (p-value = 0.323) value have been observed to be insignificant.

INTERPRETATION: OUTPUT TABLE 6
(1)   Pearson Chi-Square value i.e., 1.693 (p-value = 0.639), indicates that the results are not statistically significant. Therefore, the marital status of the student and the academic performance of the candidate in PG programme (part-time) are observed not to be associated with each other significantly. The values for the G test reinstate the said argument.
(2)   The lambda value (p-value = 0.616) and Cramer's V value (p-value = 0.639) have been observed to be insignificant.

CONCLUSIONS
(1)   Based on Chi-square test for Cross-tabs, the educational qualification of the students prior to joining the full time PG programme and their academic performance in PG programme is not found to be significantly associated with each other, tested at 95% confidence level.
(2)   At 95% confidence level, the gender of the full time PG students and the academic performance of the candidates in PG programme (full time) are observed to be significantly associated with each other, with the academic performance of the student being the dependent variable and the gender of the student being the independent variable.
(3)   Based on Chi-square test for Cross-tabs, the educational qualification as well as the employment sector of the students prior to joining the part time PG programme are observed to be significantly associated with their academic performance in said programme, tested at 95% confidence level.
(4)   The sponsorship status as well as the marital status of the students prior to joining the part-time PG programme is not found to be significantly associated with their academic performance in the said programme.

The results of this study have highlighted significant differences in the nature and degree of association amongst select variables applicable commonly to the students of full time PG programme as well as to the students of part time PG programme.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY
Every research study is bounded by certain constraints and limitations. The limitations delimiting the scope of application and analysis in this study are as follows:
(1)   For current students, their academic performance in the preceding semester/ trimester has been taken into account, whereas for the pass-out students, their cumulative performance across all trimesters/ semesters has been considered.
(2)   This study encompasses only select variables, viz.; educational background, gender, employment sector, sponsorship status and marital status as independent variables and academic performance as dependent variable. There may be other variables affecting the academic performance of students in the said courses.
(3)   This study has been carried out only for the post graduate students (full-time and part-time) and the results of our statistical analysis may not provide insights into academic performance of students (passed out or enrolled) in bachelors' level programmes or other courses.
(4)   This study has not examined select associations, viz.; associations between gender and academic performance of part time PG students, associations between employment and academic performance for full time PG students; associations between sponsorship status and academic performance for full time PG students, and associations between marital status and academic performance for full time PG students.

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APPENDIX

The following tables present the codification scheme for the select variables as a part of our study:

CODIFICATION SCHEME

Educational Background	Code	Gender	Code	Sector of Employment	Code
B.A.	1	Male	1	Public Sector	1
B.B.A/ B.Com.	2	Female	2	Private Sector	2
B.Sc./ B.E./ B.C.A.	3				

Sponsorship Status	Code	Marital Status	Code	CGPA Obtained	CGPA Code
Partial/ Full	1	Married	1	9.0 and above	1
No Sponsorship	2	Unmarried	2	8.0-9.0	2
				7.0-8.0	3
				6.0-7.0	4
				5.0-6.0	5

OUTPUT TABLE 1: PG STUDENTS (FULL TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA * EQ_1	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.943[a]	8	.347
Likelihood Ratio	11.449	8	.178
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.982
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 13 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.111	.054	1.826	.068
		CGPA Dependent	.158	.084	1.826	.068
		EQ_1 Dependent	.000	.000	.[c]	.[c]
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA Dependent	.128	.024		.061[d]
		EQ_1 Dependent	.097	.045		.688[d]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.179	.050	3.001	.178[e]
		CGPA Dependent	.139	.048	3.001	.178[e]
		EQ_1 Dependent	.252	.044	3.001	.178[e]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Cannot be computed because the asymptotic standard error equals zero.

d. Based on chi-square approximation

e. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.546	.347
	Cramer's V	.386	.347
	Contingency Coefficient	.479	.347
N of Valid Cases		30	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

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OUTPUT TABLE 2: PG STUDENTS (FULL TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA * GENDER	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.341[a]	4	.035
Likelihood Ratio	12.664	4	.013
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.041	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 8 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43.

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.281	.178	1.418	.156
		CGPA Dependent	.211	.175	1.090	.276
		GENDER Dependent	.385	.263	1.173	.241
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA Dependent	.104	.059		.017[c]
		GENDER Dependent	.345	.109		.040[c]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.205	.078	2.526	.013[d]
		CGPA Dependent	.153	.058	2.526	.013[d]
		GENDER Dependent	.308	.122	2.526	.013[d]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on chi-square approximation

d. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.587	.035
	Cramer's V	.587	.035
	Contingency Coefficient	.506	.035
N of Valid Cases		30	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

OUTPUT TABLE 3: PG STUDENTS (PART TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA_COD * EQ	73	98.6%	1	1.4%	74	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.577[a]	6	.003
Likelihood Ratio	22.815	6	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.960	1	.015
N of Valid Cases	73		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .82.

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.276	.094	2.647	.008
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.308	.091	2.997	.003
		EQ Dependent	.243	.108	2.018	.044
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA_COD Dependent	.161	.061		.000[c]
		EQ Dependent	.154	.058		.001[c]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.145	.050	2.931	.001[d]
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.139	.048	2.931	.001[d]
		EQ Dependent	.151	.051	2.931	.001[d]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on chi-square approximation

d. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

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Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.518	.003
	Cramer's V	.366	.003
	Contingency Coefficient	.460	.003
N of Valid Cases		73	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

OUTPUT TABLE 4: PG STUDENTS (PART TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA_COD * Pub./Pvt.	73	98.6%	1	1.4%	74	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.782[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.439	3	.000
N of Valid Cases	73		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.32.

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.143	.092	1.462	.144
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.026	.098	.258	.796
		Pub./Pvt. Dependent	.333	.096	2.997	.003
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA_COD Dependent	.068	.035		.002[c]
		Pub./Pvt. Dependent	.271	.061		.000[c]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.167	.050	3.129	.000[d]
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.131	.038	3.129	.000[d]
		Pub./Pvt. Dependent	.232	.074	3.129	.000[d]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on chi-square approximation

d. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.521	.000
	Cramer's V	.521	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.462	.000
N of Valid Cases		73	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

OUTPUT TABLE 5: PG STUDENTS (PART TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA_COD * Sponsored/	73	98.6%	1	1.4%	74	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.485[a]	3	.323
Likelihood Ratio	4.560	3	.207
N of Valid Cases	73		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.21.

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Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.033	.072	.448	.654
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.051	.112	.448	.654
		Sponsored/ Dependent	.000	.000	.[c]	.[c]
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA_COD Dependent	.016	.022		.325[d]
		Sponsored/ Dependent	.048	.037		.329[d]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.036	.023	1.540	.207[e]
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.028	.018	1.540	.207[e]
		Sponsored/ Dependent	.051	.033	1.540	.207[e]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Cannot be computed because the asymptotic standard error equals zero.

d. Based on chi-square approximation

e. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.218	.323
	Cramer's V	.218	.323
	Contingency Coefficient	.213	.323
N of Valid Cases		73	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

OUTPUT TABLE 6: PG STUDENTS (PART TIME)

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
CGPA_COD * MS	73	98.6%	1	1.4%	74	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.693[a]	3	.639
Likelihood Ratio	1.697	3	.638
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.292	1	.256
N of Valid Cases	73		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.10.

Directional Measures

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error [a]	Approx. T [b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.034	.066	.501	.616
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.051	.100	.501	.616
		MS Dependent	.000	.000	.[c]	.[c]
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	CGPA_COD Dependent	.013	.020		.428[d]
		MS Dependent	.023	.035		.644[d]
	Uncertainty Coefficient	Symmetric	.014	.021	.656	.638[e]
		CGPA_COD Dependent	.010	.016	.656	.638[e]
		MS Dependent	.020	.030	.656	.638[e]

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Cannot be computed because the asymptotic standard error equals zero.

d. Based on chi-square approximation

e. Likelihood ratio chi-square probability.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.152	.639
	Cramer's V	.152	.639
	Contingency Coefficient	.151	.639
N of Valid Cases		73	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

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Thanking you profoundly

Academically yours

Sd/-

Co-ordinator

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