Faculty of Economics and Business

WOMEN, CAREER, BARRIER AND PERFORMANCE
(A STUDY ON MNCs IN MALAYSIA)

NAGARANI SEENIVASA

Bachelor of Business Administration with Honours
(Marketing)
2011

WOMEN, CAREER, BARRIER AND PERFORMANCE
(A STUDY ON MNCs IN MALAYSIA)

NAGARANI SEENIVASA

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration
with Honours
(Marketing)

Faculty of Economics and Business
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2011

Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled
"WOMEN, CAREER, BARRIER AND PERFORMANCE"
(A STUDY ON MNCs IN MALAYSIA)
is to the best of the author's knowledge that of the author except
where due reference is made.

_____   _____

(Date submitted)   (Student`s signature)
                                                                   Nagarani Seenivasa
                                                                   21655

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although I am the sole author of this thesis, I am by no means the sole contributor. Many people have contributed to my thesis, to my education, and to my life, and it is now my great pleasure to take this opportunity to thank them. First, I would like to take this opportunity to express my praises to God as He grants grace, wisdom and patience to accomplish this research. By His guidance, I manage to go through all the hard times in order to complete this project.

I would forward my appreciation and sincere thank to my thesis supervisor, Miss Irma Yazreen Md Yusoff who read my numerous revisions and helped make some sense of the confusion, for her support, encouragement, inspiration, and guidance throughout the project and for the confidence she has shown in my work. This thesis would not exist at all without her, who accepted me as a research student, despite my time constraints, and who believed in my project and in my declaration of dedication.

In addition, it gives me great pleasure to thank Dr Jamal Abdul Nassir for his support and guidance throughout the project and for the confidence; he has shown in my work. Also thanks to all of my lecturers during my time as a student at UNIMAS, and thanks to all my beloved seniors and friends for discussing this thesis and providing me with valuable feedback.

TABLE CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIXES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

WOMEN, CAREER, BARRIER AND PERFORMANCE
(A STUDY ON MNCs IN MALAYSIA)

By

Nagarani Seenivasa

In Malaysian organizations mostly, the circumstances of promoting professional women to top management positions remains a sensitive subject over time. Even though the percentages of women entering the labor force are rising, the percentages of those who are holding higher managerial positions are still low. Hence, this research is important to find out the barriers to women career progression and determine how the barriers impact toward the employees' job performance as well. The study is focusing at the Multinational Companies in Malaysia. Questionnaires were distributed and analyzed through frequency distribution, the Mean, Correlation, Regression as well as Factor Analysis; used to identify the interrelations and significant relationship between perceived barriers to women career progression and its impact toward job performance. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between dependent variables and job performance. There are five dependent variable factors were found to be a reason for barriers to women career progression. They are Glass Ceiling, Gender Stereotype, Sexual Discrimination, Lack of Mentorship and Gender Wage Gap.

ABSTRAK

WANITA, KERJAYA, HALANGAN DAN PRESTASI KERJA

(KAJIAN DI SYARIKAT MULTINASIONAL DI MALAYSIA)

Oleh

NAGARANI SEENIVASA

Di Malaysia, situasi mempromosikan golongan perempuan yang berprofesional ke tahap atau posisi pengurusan yang tertinggi di dalam sesebuah organisasi tetap menjadi topik yang peka dari masa ke masa. Walaupun peratusan golongan perempuan memasuki tenaga kerja meningkat, peratusan mereka yang memegang kedudukan pengurusan yang lebih tinggi masih rendah. Oleh kerana itu, kajian ini penting untuk mengetahui halangan untuk kemajuan kerjaya perempuan dan menentukan bagaimana kesan halangan terhadap prestasi pekerja juga. Penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada pekerja-pekerja di Syarikat Multinasional di Malaysia. Borang soal selidik diedarkan dan dikajinya melalui frekuensi pengedaran (Mean, Correlation, Regression dan Factor Analysis). Penggunaan teknik-teknik ini bertujuan mengenal pasti perhubungan antara halangan yang dihadapi untuk kemajuan kerjaya oleh golongan perempuan dan kesannya terhadap prestasi kerja. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perhubungan antara "dependent variables" dengan prestasi kerja. Terdapat lima "dependent variables" iaitu "Glass Ceiling", "Gender Stereotype", "Sexual Discrimination", "Lack of Mentorship" and "Gender Wage Gap".

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

A famous quote, "*Behind every successful man, there is a women"* has been greatly debated and interpreted. One of its interpretations is that women are always seen to be the assistant for the men whereby their position are always placed behind men instead of in front or on top of them. This, has somewhat triggered the author to investigate some of the barriers that may prevent women from progressing in their career and how these perceived barriers affect their job performance. This chapter will give a brief overview of the study where it covers the research background, problem statement, research objectives, significance of the study, as well as the research scope.

1.2   Research Background

Women are seen to be keener to expose new ideas that are better suited for teamwork and also possess good qualities (Vinas, 2003). Although societies mentality about women are shifting from its strong traditional religious value to modern value (Koshal, Gupta, & Koshal, 1998), the number of misconceptions towards women in management still exist (Mavin, 2001). For instance, many organizations still assumed that men make a more efficient managerial leaders

compared to women (Cecilia & Shanthi, 1999). This is further supported by Hofstede's cultural dimension where *"masculinity values such as assertiveness, performance, success and competition prevail over feminine values such as quality of life"* (Huang & Smith, 2010). Therefore, it has believed that employees in organization with higher masculinity will be more aggressive in achieving their goal compared to employees in organization with lower masculinity.

Although it has been more than 20 years since women entered the labour force (Koshal *et al.,* 1998), women are still placed in lower skilled jobs while men in higher managerial positions (Curran, 2001; Carli & Eagly, 2001). This situation has aroused the need to investigate the existence of barriers that may prevent women from filling up the top management positions. Barrier can be defined as tangible or intangible factors that act as an obstacle for individuals to progress (Maskell-Pretz & Hopkins, 1997). Even though some organizations encourage women for top management positions, the existence of barriers such as discrimination, negative attitudes and stereotyping could make it difficult.

In Malaysian organizations mostly, the circumstances of promoting professional women to top management positions remains a sensitive subject over time (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008). Even though the percentages of women entering the labor force are rising from 44.7% in 2000 and 45.7% in 2005 to 48.6% in 2008 (Ninth Malaysian Plan, 2006-2010), the percentages of those who are holding higher managerial positions are still low. Apart from this, Ismail (2007) indicated that male managers mainly characterize the managerial workforce in Malaysia. This is

because, the society still remains conservative and negative feeling and stereotypes do exist against women employees. The view of "think leader think male" (Sczesny, 2003) mentality be likely to believed that men are more qualified to higher managerial positions than women even though women available with the right academic qualifications.

This view of perception might lethal especially for women working in Multinational Companies (MNCs) since foreigners' prejudice against women managers could be the primary barrier to their career advancement. Thus, many women might not be involved in upper-level positions of multinational companies due to the effect of stereotyping. Besides that, home country's reluctance in selecting women for international assignments and the difficulties faced by global dual-career couples could be the second and third most important barriers for women's career progression (Adler, 1993). Global companies believe that men are more apt to international assignments where it could be less risky investment for the MNCs. Thus, MNCs offer few opportunities for women's career progression than in domestic management.

There are many researches investigate on barriers to women's career progression across various industries (Abidin & Rashid, 2009; Abidin, Penafort, & Marzuki, 2008; Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008; Simpson, Sturges, Woods, & Altman, 2004). The literatures offer many explanations on factors that prevent women's career advancement. Thus, this study identified glass ceiling, gender stereotyping,

sexual discrimination, lack of mentorship and gender wage gap as perceived barriers that could affect women's job performance differently.

Glass ceiling found to be real and act as a strong barrier that impedes women from getting higher managerial positions (Morrison & Glinow, 1990). Many researchers investigate the women's presence in management level and existence of glass ceiling in organizations (Weyer, 2007; Koshal *et. al.,* 1998; Nath, 2000; Merrell & James, 2001). Although glass ceiling phenomena helps to explain the reasons for lower representation of women in the decision making level, it is also important to know why glass ceiling exists. Glass ceiling occurs due to limited promotional prospects for women at top management level even though they have similar qualifications as men.

Other than glass ceiling, gender stereotyping is also one of the impediment to women career progression (Heilman, 2001; Schein, 2001, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003) which remains consistent over time and recognized across all various way of life (Williams & Best, 1990). Gender stereotyping can be defined as prejudice against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion, and training decisions (Schein, 2001). Moreover, he characterized gender stereotype as "think manager-think male" phenomena since men generally hold managerial positions.

Besides that, gender wage gap also act as a major barrier for women career progression. It could prevent women from reaching high wages (Albrecht, Bjorklund, & Vroman, 2003). For instance, employers believe that women are more

likely to have lower level of productivity since women discontinue their careers after they gives birth or become more specialized in family responsibilities. Consequently, firm employ women at lower position by offer them lower wages since firm take risk of facing their poor job performances.

Moreover, sex discrimination is also one of the obstacles to women's career advancement (Armstrong, 2000). Sexual discrimination is making difference or prejudice based on gender or sex. This includes management decisions of compensation, assignments, promotions, job advertisements, recruiting, testing, and use of company facilities. Besides that, lack of mentorship also prevents women from reaching top management level and being a strategic decision maker. Mentoring provides career guidance and psychosocial support from experienced employee (mentor) to a less experienced peer (protégé or mentee) (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Noe, 1988; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Thus, lack of mentoring will negatively affect employee's job performance (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1998).

As a result, the barriers that stated could leads to fewer opportunities and might slower women's career development. More importantly, it could affect and limit opportunities for positive job performance. Job performance involves employees' contributions towards organizations goals and objectives. Thus, women might be less motivated in acquiring job knowledge and in achieving organizations goals since women treated differently than men.

1.3   Problem Statement

In Malaysia, women's population account for approximately 13.9 million and have participating in public and private sectors such as manufacturing, commerce, service and agriculture. According to Malaysia Department of Statistics, the participation rate of women in the Malaysian labor force slowly increased from 44.7% in 1995 to 46.4% in 2009, which is relatively low compared to neighbouring countries such as Thailand (70%), Singapore (60.2%) and Indonesia (51.8%) (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006).

In public sector, women's involvement in decision making level drastically increased from 5.3% in 1990 to 10.4% in 2009 and women continuously achieve 30.5% of top management positions in 2010 (Tenth Malaysian Plan, 2010). It is in contrast with private sector since women's involvement in decision-making level is only 6.1% (Tenth Malaysian Plan, 2010). Table 1 below shows the tabulation percentage of women in top management positions in private sectors from year 2001 to 2009.

Table 1: Corporate Sectors, 2001-2009

POSITION	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Members of Board Directors	10.1	10.5	10.1	9.9	10.2	7.6	5.3	7.41	6.1%

Source: Statistics on Women, Family and Social Welfare 2008, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD)

6

Thus, the lower representation of women in decision-making level in private sector is in contrast with the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010-2015) since it's introduced a policy entitled ***"Towards Achieving at Least 30% women at Decision making Levels in Malaysia"*** which is the original target over the Ninth Malaysia Plan period. This policy helps to redress the gender imbalances across all sectors by 2015 (Shukri, 2009).

Therefore, this study could be reveals the reasons for why women are still far behind in the private sector compared to public sector even though they having better educational opportunities and improved health status. Hence, by realizing the lower representation of women in top management level, this paper embarked on the barriers that could prevent women career progression and its impacts towards job performance.

1.4   Objectives

This study examines the barriers to women career progression and its impact towards job performance. In particular, it aims to explore the nature of the barriers to women career progression in MNCs and how does those barriers influence the job performance of employees.