

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
**ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst**

---

Travel and Tourism Research Association:  
Advancing Tourism Research Globally

2009 ttra International Conference

---

# Determinants of female career competencies: The role of family supportive supervisor and career mobility

Haiayn Kong PhD Candidate

*School of Hotel and Tourism Management - The Hong Kong Polytechnic University*

Catherine Cheung PhD

*School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra>

---

Kong, Haiayn PhD Candidate and Cheung, Catherine PhD, "Determinants of female career competencies: The role of family supportive supervisor and career mobility" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 18.

[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2009/Presented\\_Papers/18](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2009/Presented_Papers/18)

This is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

# **Determinants of female career competencies: The role of family-supportive supervisor and career mobility**

Haiyan Kong, PhD Candidate  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Catherine Cheung, Ph.D. Assistant Professor  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the determinants of female career competencies. Two constructs—family-supportive supervisor and career mobility are developed as the determinants, while career satisfaction is developed as the outcome. The relationship between each constructs will be examined by structural equation modeling. The findings of this study will help hotel operators to practice strategic human resources management and encourage female hotel managers to improve their career competencies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women working in the hospitality industry constitute a significant proportion of labor force, and most of them are working in lower and middle management positions. Despite the increasing number of women pursuing hospitality-related careers, only a few of them succeeded to reach top executive positions. For example, only three of 72 hotels in Hong Kong, and only two of 77 hotels in Singapore, had female general managers (Li & Leung, 2001; Pine, 1997). In China, the general manager position is also dominated by males although female are the dominant majority of many hotel programs. Despite the phenomenon of women's failure in competing with their counterparts may exist outside the hospitality industry, the issue of women careers is of particular importance given the large number female workforce in the hospitality industry. Therefore, this study aims to examine the factors that are important for women career competencies.

Despite the numerous studies on women careers, rare study has been found exploring career competencies, and very few have addressed the factors that influence their career competencies. This study, therefore, will differentiate itself from previous studies by exploring the determinants and outcome of women career competencies. The specific objectives of the study include:

- To explore the effect of family-supportive supervisor on career competencies
- To explore the influence of career mobility on career competencies
- To examine the relationships between career competencies and career satisfaction

- To test the relationship between family-support supervisor/ career mobility and career satisfaction
- To test the mediating effect of career competencies

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Family-supportive Supervisor**

Work and family constitute the dominant life roles for most employees. Although researchers have discussed work-family conflict in both women and men, women are more likely to experience such conflict because they often assume greater responsibility for dependent care than do men (Hattery, 2001). It has been found that commitment to family responsibilities is a common barrier to women's advancement to senior levels (Lyness & Kropf, 2005).

The supportive supervisor is one who emphasizes with the employee's desire to seek balance between work and family responsibilities (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The application of supportive supervisor represents the organization's effort to support workers with family responsibilities- those who must provide for the daily care and the management of immediate, dependent, or blended family members. Organizational supportive activities help reduce the stress the workers experience from work-family conflicts, and also contribute to employees' high productivity (Clifton & Shepard, 2004). A family friendly work environment has several positive effects on employees' work and life. For example, Thomas & Ganster (1995) found that work-family support program, especially supportive supervisors, is positively related to employees' job satisfaction and family matters. With the help of supportive supervisors, women workers may balance life and work, and concentrate to their career management.

In summary, work-family support ensures women career development and achievements. A supportive relationship with superiors and networks can be balanced to maximize career success (Ferris, Perrew, Anthony, & Gilmore, 2000; Igbaria & Wormley, 1992). As a result of high quality family supportive management, women may perform higher career competencies and, ultimately, achieve higher career satisfaction. Based on the discussion mentioned above, it is predicted that:

H1: Family-supportive supervisor has a positive effect on career competencies

H2: Family-supportive supervisor has a positive effect on career satisfaction

### **Career Mobility**

Career mobility is identified to consist of two different systems: one based on a contest-mobility norm and the other based on a sponsored-mobility norm (Turner, 1960). A system which follows the contest-mobility norm allows for a fair and open contest for each promotion decision, while under the sponsored-mobility norm, selected individuals receive high levels of support and guidance from superiors. The contest-mobility norm assumes that employees' attainments are largely a function of how hard they work and the ability, education, and training they possess (Rosenbaum, 1984). This implies that the

contest-mobility norm is represented by the employee's effort on the job and by human capitals (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). This study focuses on contest-mobility norm, and examines employees' desire for mobility.

Career mobility is one of the most commonly used strategies in individuals' career advancement (Akrivos, Ladkin, & Reklitis, 2007). Traditionally, careers were viewed as stable, upward, and based on linear progression in one or two firms (Driver, 1982; Schein, 1979). However, dynamic working environment and flatter organizations have changed this model to one where unpredictable, lateral and multidirectional development both within and across organizations (Hall, 2003). Hence, both the internal and external labour markets are the vehicles for mobility (Ladkin & Riley, 1996).

Findings of previous studies indicated that a high degree of international mobility was the dominant route of hotel general managers' career development. Hotel managers involved in self-manage of careers and tended to look for career advance opportunities both within their existing companies and at other companies (Ladkin & Juwaheer, 2000). According to Ladkin (2002), the career strategy which was used by nearly three quarters of hotel managers was "always being prepared to relocate", followed closely by the agreement that they had to "move around to gain knowledge and experience". Together, these theoretical predictions and empirical findings led to the study hypothesis:

H3: Career mobility has a positive effect on career competencies

H4: Career mobility has a positive effect on career satisfaction

### **Career Competencies**

According to Arthur, Clama & Defillippi (1995), personal competencies reflect different forms of knowing, and intelligent careers reflect the application of these forms of knowing. Career competencies comprise three components, namely, 'knowing why', 'knowing whom' and 'knowing how'. The application of career competencies is related to career satisfaction.

The 'knowing-why' competency is related to career motivation, personal meaning, and identification (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). People who know themselves well exhibit a very strong career identity. They are able to identify what kind of jobs they are interested in and clarify their career aims (Suutari & Makela, 2007). People with proactive personalities tend to identify opportunities and take action on them, and they do not yield to setbacks but bring about meaningful changes in their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). In summary, proactive personality demonstrates significant positive correlations with career satisfaction (Chiaburu, Baker, & Pitariu, 2006; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). The trait of openness to experience broadly reflects the degree to which individuals are curious, imaginative, creative, reflective, independent, willing to accept changes, and accepting of diversity (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Mignonac, 2008). Individuals high on this trait tend to enhance job performance (Moss, McFarland, Ngu, & Kijowska, 2007) by means of challenging obsolete practices, proposing creative suggestions, introducing novel practices, and developing additional skills (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Given the reality of dynamic working conditions and individuals' taking charge of their careers, it is expected that openness to experience contributes greatly to career satisfaction.

“Knowing whom’ competency refers to career-related networks and contacts both inside and outside organizations (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). The practice of mentoring brings together a person with valuable advice and important sources of learning for those who need the advices (Baruch, 2003). As individuals who involve themselves in a mentoring relationship shows great effectiveness in self managing their own careers (Murphy & Ensher, 2001), we predict that mentoring relationships are positively related to individuals’ career satisfaction. Since both internal and external networking provides non-redundant sources of support (Raider & Burt, 1996), it is assumed that networking is important in predicting career satisfaction.

“Knowing how’ competency consists of two dimensions: career/job-related skills and career identity. Career identity is the degree to which people immerse themselves in activities related to skill-enhancing and in professional activities (London, 1993; Noe, Noe, & Bachhuber, 1990). As such, people who have a strong career identity tend to seek regular training, acquire portable skills, and construct networks (Suutari & Makela, 2007). Furthermore, ‘knowing how’ performance enhances self-confidence and occupational identity, and enables an individual to recast his/her career even if it had been in danger of faltering (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). Given the unstable employment situation and the need to constantly be on the lookout for ways to build new skills sets, it is predicted that ‘knowing how’ competency is important predictor of career satisfaction. In light of this, it is predicted that:

H6 Career competencies have positive effects on career satisfaction

### **Career Satisfaction**

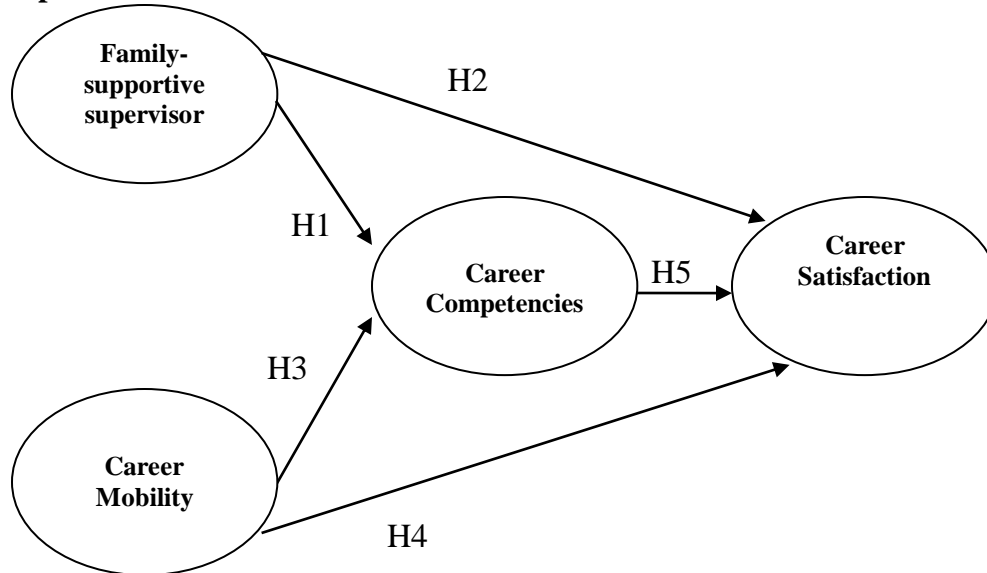
Career satisfaction is defined as the satisfaction individuals derive from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of their careers, including pay, advancement, and developmental opportunities (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). Consistent with the transfer of responsibility for career management from organizations to individuals (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hall & Mirvis, 1995), career satisfaction has become increasing important. For example, Parker & Arthur (2000) discussed the notion of the “intelligent subjective career”, suggesting that how one feels about one’s career accomplishments, is more important than external indicators like salary growth. A good understanding of employees’ career satisfaction may enable organizations to develop motivated and committed workforces (Judge et al., 1995).

## **THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The present study will examine the determinants and outcome of female career competencies. In the conceptual framework, family-supportive supervisor and career mobility are conceptualized as exogenous variables, and are hypothesized to positively affect career competencies individually. They are also postulated to indirectly affect career satisfaction through their impacts on career competencies. Accordingly, career competencies and career satisfaction are hypothesized as endogenous variables in the framework. The construct of career competencies is also hypothesized to play a mediating role between family-supportive supervisor/ career mobility and career

satisfaction. On the one hand, career competencies are influenced by family-supportive supervisor and career mobility; on the other, career competencies exert their own effects on career satisfaction. A theoretical model can be drawn as follows.

**Fig. Conceptual Framework**



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study will draw a picture of career competencies of female managers. About 700 questionnaires will be distributed through human resource managers of both international and China's state-owned hotel. The respondents will be asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire which will be collected on the spot by the researchers to ensure confidentiality of the information provided. For practical reasons, a convenience sampling method will be used. Target samples are hotel managers in China who share the following characteristics, female managerial staff, in a managerial position, and with over 2-years working experience in four to five-star hotels in China.

Two ways will be conducted to collect final data. First of all, the researcher will approach some international and state-owned hotels in China. The human resources managers of selected hotels will then be contacted to assist with the distribution of the questionnaire. All questionnaires will be collected on spot by the researcher. Secondly, training courses offered by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and various kinds of hotel conferences will also be accessed. Necessary survey will be conducted in the training class and conference sites to collect sufficient data.

Based on previous studies, such as Aryee, Chay, & Tan (1994), Judge et al.(1995), and Noe (1996), several control variables are included in the present study. Since age, gender, education, and pay may be associated with perceptions of career satisfaction, these variables will be controlled in all subsequent analyses. Likewise, career competencies may vary based on an individual job tenure (measured in years), and organizational family supportive activities may be different based on the size of the hotel

(measured by the number of employees and star rate). Thus, these variables are also treated as control variables.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be used to examine statistically the specified relationships for this study. It is a powerful statistical tool that can examine the extent to which the model fits the data and the level of statistical significance of the hypothesised relationships. The essence of applying SEM is handling structural relationships, especially relationships between latent constructs or variables, by means of integrating two statistical methodological traditions: factor analysis and path analysis (Hox & Bechger, 1999). Factor analysis, especially confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) specifies the relationships of the observed indicators to their posited underlying factors, while path analysis specifies the causal relationships among the latent variables as posited by the underlying theories (Segars & Grover, 1993). By combining the two streams of statistical traditions together, SEM overcomes the methodological limitations of both factor analysis and path analysis. It is therefore a useful statistical tool for understanding interrelationships among several latent variables.

The present study involves the test of the relationships between latent constructs that cannot be directly observed and measured. These latent constructs—family-supportive supervisor, career mobility, career competencies, and career satisfaction, will then be measured by some observable variables or items. Following the principles of SEM, a total of 650 questionnaires is deemed appropriate for this study.

## References

- Akrivos, C., Ladkin, A., & Reklitis, P. (2007). "Hotel managers' career strategies for success." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 19(2): 107-119.
- Arthur, M. B., Claman, P. H., & DeFillippi, R. J. (1995). "Intelligent enterprise, intelligent careers." *Academy of Management Executive*, 9(4): 7-20.
- Arthur, M. B., Inkson, D., & Pringle, J. (1999). *The New Careers: Individual Action and Economic Change*. London: Sage.
- Aryee, S., Chay, Y. W., & Tan, H. H. (1994). "An examination of the antecedents of subjective career success among a managerial sample in Singapore." *Human Relations*, 47(5): 487.
- Barnett, B. R., & Bradley, L. (2007). "The impact of organisational support for career development on career satisfaction." *Career Development International*, 12(7): 617-636.
- Baruch, Y. (2003). "Career systems in transition." *Personnel Review*, 32(2): 231-251.
- Bateman, T. S., & Crant, J. M. (1993). "The proactive component of organizational behavior: A measure and correlates." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14(2): 103-118.
- Chau, P. Y. K. (1997). "Reexamining a model for evaluating information center success using a structural equation modeling approach." *Decision Sciences*, 28(2):309-334.
- Cheng, E. W. L., & Ho, D. C. K. (2001). "The influence of job and career attitudes on learning motivation and transfer." *Career Development International*, 6(1): 20-27.
- Chiaburu, D. S., Baker, V. L., & Pitariu, A. H. (2006). "Beyond being proactive: What (else) matters for career self-management behaviours?" *Career Development International*, 11(7): 619-632.

- Clifton, T. J., & Shepard, E. (2004). "Work and family programs and productivity: Estimates applying a production function model." *International Journal of Manpower*, 25(7/8): 714-728.
- Crant, J. M. (2000). "Proactive behavior in organizations." *Journal of Management*, 26(3): 435-462.
- DeFillippi, R. J., & Arthur, M. B. (1994). "The boundaryless career: A competency-based perspective." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(4):307-324.
- Driver, M. J. (1982). Career concepts: A new approach to career research. In R. Katz (Ed.), *Career Issues in Human Resource Management*: Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Eby, L. T., Butts, M., & Lockwood, A. (2003). "Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24(6): 689-708.
- Ferris, G. R., Perrewe, P. L., Anthony, W. P., & Gilmore, D. C. (2000). "Political skill at work." *Organizational Dynamics*, 28(4): 25-37.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). "Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes." *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1): 64-86.
- Hair, J. J., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (2002). *Multivariate Data Analysis (6th ed.)*: Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hall, D. T. (2003). *Careers In and Out of Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications.
- Hattery, A. (2001). *Women, Work, and Family*: Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage.
- Hox, J. J., & Bechger, T. M. (1999). "An introduction to structural equation modeling." *Family Science Review*, 11: 354-373.
- Inkson, K., & Arthur, M. B. (2001). "How to be a successful career capitalist." *Organizational Dynamics*, 30(1): 48-61.
- Ladkin, A., & Juwaheer, R. (2000). "The career paths of hotel general managers in Mauritius." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12(2): 119-125.
- Ladkin, A., & Riley, M. (1996). "Mobility and structure in the career paths of UK hotel managers: a labour market hybrid of the bureaucratic model?" *Tourism Management*, 17(6): 443-452.
- Li, L., & Leung, R. W. (2001). "Female managers in Asian hotels: Profile and career challenges." *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13(4): 189-196.
- London, M. (1993). "Relationships between career motivation, empowerment and support for career development." *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 66(1): 55-69.
- Lyness, K., S , & Kropf, M. B. (2005). "The relationships of national gender equality and organizational support with work-family balance: A study of European managers." *Human Relations*, 58(1): 33-60.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1987). "Validation of the five-factor model of personality across instruments and observers." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(1): 81-90.



- Mignonac, K. (2008). "Individual and contextual antecedents of older managerial employees' willingness to accept intra-organizational job changes." *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(4): 582-599.
- Moss, S. A., McFarland, J., Ngu, S., & Kijowska, A. (2007). "Maintaining an open mind to closed individuals: The effect of resource availability and leadership style on the association between openness to experience and organizational commitment." *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(2): 259-275.
- Noe, R. A. (1996). "Is career management related to employee development and performance?" *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 17(2): 119-133.
- Noe, R. A., Noe, A. W., & Bachhuber, J. A. (1990). "An investigation of the correlates of career motivation." *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 37(3): 340-356.
- Oberfield, A. (1993). "A proposed model of career satisfaction." Paper presented at the 1993 Academy of Management Annual Meetings.
- Parker, H., & Arthur, M. B. (2000). Careers, organizing, and community. In M. A. Peiperl, M. B. Arthur, R. Goffee & T. Morris (Eds.), *Career frontiers: New conceptions of working lives* (pp. 99-121). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pine, R. (1997). "Hong Kong's changing hotel industry and the current and potential utilization of women in management and leadership roles." *Working Papers*.
- Raider, H. J., & Burt, R. S. (1996). Boundaryless careers and social capital. In M. B. Arthur & D. M. Rousseau (Eds.), *The Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenbaum, J. E. (1984). *Career Mobility in A Corporate Hierarchy*: Academic Press, Orlando FL.
- Schein, E. H. (1979). *Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs*: Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Segars, A. H., & Grover, V. (1993). "Re-examining perceived ease of use and usefulness: A confirmatory factor analysis." *MIS Quarterly*, 17(4): 517-525.
- Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., & Crant, J. M. (2001). "What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success." *Personnel Psychology*, 54(4): 854-874.
- Suutari, V., & Makela, K. (2007). "The career capital of managers with global careers." *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(7): 628-648.
- Tett, R. P., & Burnett, D. D. (2003). "A personality trait-based interactionist model of job performance." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(3): 500-517.
- Thomas, L. T., & Ganster, D. C. (1995). "Impact of family-supportive work variables on work-family conflict and strain: A control perspective." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80(1): 6-15.
- Turner, R. J. (1960). Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system. *American Sociological Review*, 25, 855-867.
- Wayne, S. J., Liden, R. C., Kraimer, M. L., & Graf, I. K. (1999). "The role of human capital, motivation and supervisor sponsorship in predicting career success." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(5), 577-595.

**Contact information:**

Ms. Haiyan Kong, PhD candidate  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Fax: (852) 2362-9362; Tel: (852) 3400-3149  
Email: [hy.kong@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:hy.kong@polyu.edu.hk)