GENDER DISPARITY IN CAREER MOBILITY IN URBAN CHINA: A STUDY ON THE BARRIERS IN THE WOMEN’S CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN HARBIN, THE CAPITAL OF HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE

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The materials in this dissertation are original except for quotations, excerpts, summaries and references which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Although with the word’s economy development, the society evolves, and the basic education improves, more and more female workers enter the job market have created a trend, the proportion of female top managers is uncoordinated. When women became important human resources, equal working rights emerges as an important issue. In China’s organization, the high level position has less females comparing to the lower positions. This paper analyzes gender disparity in career mobility in Urban China. This search, taking the female executive leaders and male managers as the subjects, is aiming to understand the sexual discrimination difference of the superiors, and understand the different perceptions of Glass Ceiling of employees. The data used in this study contains a cross section of urban residents from the Women managers’ directory in Heilongjiang province of China, and sample of male managers. The investigation intends to shed light on the following questions: 1) what is the pattern of gender differences in career mobility in Urban China? 2) What are the main determinants of gender disparity in career mobility? Multiple regression analysis is estimated. The empirical result shows that gender disparity is not associated with gender differences in human capital endowment, instead, Glass Ceiling, male stereotyping, family commitment, and women’s negative attitude have significant negative effects on women’s upward and downward career mobility.
ABSTRAK

PERBEZAAN JANTINA DALAM PERGERAKAN KERJAYA DI KAWASAN BANDAR DI CHINA: KAJIAN MENGENAI HALANGAN DI DALAM PEMBANGUNAN KERJAYA WANITA DI HARBIN, BANDAR UTAMA WILAYAH HEILONGJIANG

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview
Like so many developing countries, China is in the midst of a cultural revolution. These societal changes are especially noticeable for the Chinese managerial and professional women. Since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, the population of employed women has risen constantly. Although Chinese women legally enjoy equal rights with men in employment, Chinese women are vastly underrepresented in the managerial arena.

Several factors explain this minimal representation of Chinese women in management positions. Especially in Harbin, as in many other cities, there is a cultural stereotype belief of male superiority, defining management as a masculine domain. China’s culture in fact emphasizes women’s roles and responsibilities in the family. Historical cultural constraints about the nature of women often serve to perpetuate discrimination and do not allow women to be leaders. Given the Confucian adage that states “It is a virtue if woman doesn’t have ability” it is not surprising that in the past, Chinese women were socialized to be “shy” and “unassertive”. Although these values have undergone change, they still have a major influence in society’s behavior.

Today, in spite of this traditional cultural influence, the model woman in China “does not see herself as just tender, virtuous, and obedient according to traditional Chinese values.” Educated women no longer accept Mao ZeDong’s description that women are “the moon reflecting the sunlight” (De Mente, 1999). Rather than be subservient to males, today’s Chinese women are known as “half the sky” referring to
the fact that women can make the same contribution to society as men, and enjoy
the gender equality and social status assured them since the establishment of the
People’s Republic in 1949 (Public Information Committee of the China Organizing
Committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995).

Yet despite these statistics, women are still rarely seen in the upper ranks of
management or in board rooms in urban China, especially in Harbin. The Glass
Ceiling describes the intangible barriers that hinder the female to reach the top. In
Harbin’s organization, the high level position have less females comparing to the
lower positions, and in the empowerment, female still lower than male (Li Chun Ling,
2005). The Glass Ceiling continues to separate men form women. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1 : Gender Disparity in Career Mobility: Layoff and Obtain Employment (%)**

![Graph](image)


In Korari’s paper entitled “Managerial Women in the People’s Republic of
China: the long march continues”, (Korari, 1994) lists several factors currently
affecting women’s access to managerial jobs. Issues like entrance into the
Communist Party which leads to the better positions, different acceptance standards
for women into the prestigious universities, and workplace practices in terms of job
opportunities have limited women’s movement into upper management positions.
Negative attitudes toward women leaders are not unusual in China. Women managers are believed by many people, to be "unfair, hard to work with, and narrow-minded" compared to their male counterparts (Rajerison, 1996) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Women Corporate Leaders as a Proportion of Corporate Leaders

China has one of the highest labor force participation rates for women in the world (United Nations, 1995). The education of women has also improved drastically in China, with the enrollment of females in post-secondary education increasing tenfold in the last 50 years. However, China still lags behind Western industrialized countries in the university education of women and in their integration into all levels of organizations. In fact, as recently as 1994, despite the rapid improvements, still only half as many women as men were enrolled in China's post-secondary education compared to Canada, the USA and the UK where the women constitute 56 per cent, 55 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively, of the university students.

In the West, although men and women have been graduating in relatively equal numbers from universities, they have not achieved equivalent organizational success (Cao Yang, 2001). Organizations in China are still in the process of learning
how to deconstruct the Glass Ceiling and make the most of the talents of their managerial and professional women (Li Ruo Jian, 1995).

The empirical result shows that gender disparity is not associated with gender differences in human capital endowment; instead, the Glass Ceiling, and some other factors have significant negative effects on women’s upward and downward career mobility (Lu Xue Yi, 2003).

1.2 Rationale of This Study

The Glass Ceiling considered a myth by many is real and is nurtured besides women’s own inadequacies. Only the most decentralized organizations, characterized by a culture that supports women’s top positions, will help in breaking down the Glass Ceiling, along with women’s own efforts to grow, develop and empower themselves through academic and career development (Guo Fan, 1995). Present research seeks to examine the reality of the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon in current urban China, especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province of China.

In China, women are considerably more “visible” than men in major organization since almost all women are assigned to first-line sales or customer service jobs. Furthermore, evidence suggests that women are not readily welcomed into managerial ranks although government policy is viewed as favorable for a woman’s career. Therefore, sexual division of labor is relatively more dominant. The employment pattern of sexual division of labor within organization can be traced back to the history of the revolution which occurred during the 1940s. The barrier affected the women’s career development by Glass Ceiling and attitude (Guo Fan, 1995).

On the other hand, more men monopolized the managerial and technical positions which were regarded by management as central to strategic decision-making. The division of labor as a result of the organization led to a polarized wage
structure, with a majority of low-skilled high-turnover female workforce occupying the bottom, and a highly-trained male professional-managerial group occupying the top of the pyramid. It sheds some light on how women are employed in different hierarchical positions and functional responsibilities, and how the company's human resource management practices have affected women's employment status in Harbin of China.

Female employees are likely to be discriminated against by senior management from the perspectives of horizontal and vertical job segregation. Identifies two major categories of constraints arising from organizational barriers (Glass Ceiling, male stereotyping, family commitment) and societal barriers (women's negative attitude) posit that these asymmetries are influenced by the Chinese women's career development.

This paper seeks to examine the relationship between the barriers women faced and their career development by female and male senior managers in a major organization for which barriers is now a strategic corporate objective. A majority of female employees are employed in lower hierarchical positions at the bottom of the organizational and managerial pyramid, while male employees occupy most of the professional and managerial positions at the top.

1.3 Research Problem

Realistically, one problem does not have only one cause. Therefore, by focusing on professional women are faced (Glass Ceiling, male stereotyping, family commitment, and women's negative attitude), and find how these phenomenon in these fields affect women's career development, and also may find some solution to problems meted by especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province of China.
1.4 Research Objectives

Examines the situation faced by women in Harbin of China, finds that women are confronted by a significant number of barriers, beginning with difficulties in joining the industry. In addition, the administrative or human resource management roles traditionally occupied by women do not lead to mainstream roles and senior management roles. To increase prospects, women need to able to take on the more mainstream roles in the industry. The main investigation of the study is therefore into the barriers preventing women from taking good position, conclusions and suggestions for reform are made.

Therefore, the objectives of this research are divided into two parts. The first part consists of the main objective while the second is the supplementary objectives.

The main objectives of this research are as follows:

To examine whether factors of these phenomenon professional women faced (Glass Ceiling, male stereotyping, family commitment, and women's negative attitude) has a negative impact on women's career development.

The supplementary objectives of this research are as follows:

a) To discuss the solution of barriers problems through finding the impact of factors of the women’s career development.

b) To help Chinese professional women get a great source of inspiration and practical advice.

The objective of this investigation was to study on gender disparity in career mobility towards the barriers in the women career development in the current urban China especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province.
1.5 Scope of the Study

The objective of this research is finding the relationship between barriers and women’s career development. The focus groups identified a number of issues in societal barriers, and organizational barriers, that women felt were the main barriers to them entering and working in urban China, especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province.

All female managers and a sample of male managers in a variety of management roles were surveyed and to lend advice and comments. These women included owners or managers, college administrators, as well as retail, service, and manufacturing managers. Some were new to their roles, others had years of experience.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an electronic questionnaire survey designed to obtain the views of female and male managers on strategies that would contribute to a better gender balance, promote diversity and raise leadership capacity in the organization, these two factors as a major issue in impeding the career progression of female managers.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This project will help women develop and use their own feminine style to its advantage. Yet this research is not exclusively for men. For men, in addition to learning about how women manage differently, they can also benefit from this paper by learning more about their own responses to women in today’s workforce. It helps bridge the gender gap, not reinforce it.

The research on the relationship between barriers and women’s career development is far from maturation, much study can be done here. This paper gives a helpful trial. It not only provides an example for further study on barriers in the
women's career development, but also improving the strategy human capital management of urban China, especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province.

1.7 Why Focus on Gender Diversity

This paper focuses on gender diversity for several reasons. First, women have attained a critical mass in the professional and managerial ranks of a significant percentage of Chinese companies, and women constitute the largest segment of the increasingly diverse Chinese labor pool. Women are a highly educated group from which corporate China will need to recruit and develop future leadership.

The second reason to focus on gender diversity is that women have had a leading-edge role in transforming the Chinese workplace. The growing dependence of US companies on women's workforce participation has been accompanied by a growing recognition that family/personal needs of all employees are legitimate concerns. Initially, conflicts related to work/family balance were seen as women's issues.

Today employees expect companies to assist them with work/life balance, including programs/policies that address individuals' needs for workplace flexibility, and dual-career couples' needs for relocation assistance.

The third reason to focus on women is that the lessons companies learn from managing gender diversity will serve them well in developing initiatives to manage other forms of diversity.
1.8 Organization of Thesis

This dissertation contains five chapters.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the study and its importance. In addition, background of gender disparity in career mobility in urban China, rationale of this study, research problem, the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, and the significance of the study is also included.

Chapter 2 elaborates the literature related to the study and the definition for the variables, evidence from this part; the key concepts will be the focus in this chapter.

Chapter 3 illustrates the research framework and methodology that is used in this dissertation. The research framework basically gives an overview of the variables included. While the methodology includes some hypotheses testing, sampling, data collection procedures, and instruments used, this chapter also described the research method used and the reason for choosing this method. The definition of terms used for this study is also included in this part.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Profile of respondents, reliability test analysis, descriptive analysis of variables, inferential analysis and hypotheses testing are included also.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications, recapitulation, limitations of study, some suggestions for future research, and conclusions draw from the study.

1.9 Summary

Although with the world’s economy development, more and more female workers enter the workforce, the proportion of female top managers is uncoordinated. Under this background, many interested researchers began to study it.
Remember the saying; ‘mother never said life would be fair?’ she was right often it isn’t fair. Do men and women really manage all that differently? And should not management techniques be universal, not gender-biased? Quite simply, the answer is at times yes and at times no. This research concentrates on those differences. Men and women may not even see the problem as the same. Women are more likely to approach a problem from a macro-perspective (seeing the big picture) while men manage in more of a microenvironment manner (assessing the most minute details) (Vickie L. Montgomery, 1996). From these situations, this research focuses on the relationship between barriers (Glass Ceiling, male stereotyping, family commitment and women’s negative attitude) women faced in their career development.

This study explores the visible and invisible barriers that have kept women from reaching upper levels of management in urban China especially in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province. It reports the results from a small but representative survey of middle managerial women’s perceptions of career barriers and the initiatives their organizations have taken to reduce or remove those barriers.


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