

**DETERMINANTS OF CAREER
SUCCESS BETWEEN
MEN AND WOMEN
EXECUTIVES**

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DECLARATION

The materials in this thesis are original except for quotation, accepts, summaries and references, which have been dully acknowledged.

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ABSTRAK

KAJIAN TERHADAP PERAMAL KEJAYAAN KERJAYA DI ANTARA EKSEKUTIF LELAKI DAN WANITA DI SABAH

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki hipotesis terhadap perbezaan di antara lelaki dan wanita di dalam kejayaan kerjaya. Tiga ukuran bagi kejayaan kerja iaitu keyakinan diri, struktur peluang organisasi dan perhubungan kerjasama telah digunapakai sebagai peramal bagi kejayaan kerjaya, manakala 'gender' dan umur digunakan sebagai penyederhana kepada kejayaan kerjaya. Sampel kajian ini adalah terdiri daripada 150 kakitangan sektor swasta di Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Sebanyak tujuh hipotesis telah dibentuk. Hasil dapatan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa 14.5 peratus daripada variasi yang ada menyokong bahawa kejayaan kerjaya mereka dipengaruhi oleh keyakinan diri, struktur peluang organisasi dan perhubungan kerjasama. Ini menunjukkan bahawa perhubungan yang sederhana di dalam menentukan peramal bagi kejayaan kerja di antara lelaki dan wanita. Hasil kajian utama menunjukkan struktur peluang organisasi merupakan faktor yang mustahak untuk meramal kejayaan kerjaya bagi wanita, manakala keyakinan diri dan perhubungan kerjasama merupakan faktor yang mustahak untuk meramal kejayaan kerjaya bagi lelaki. Manakala, 'gender' dan umur tidak menyederhana perhubungan hipotesis. Kejayaan ini diharap dapat memberi faedah dalam melaksanakan pengurusan sumber manusia. Implikasi keputusan kajian dibincangkan.

ABSTRACT

DETERMINANTS OF CAREER SUCCESS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN EXECUTIVES IN SABAH

The aim of the present paper is to investigate hypotheses pertaining to the determinants of career success between men and women executives in Sabah. Three measures of career success, self-confidence, organization's structure of opportunity and supportive relationship were employed as determinants of career success and gender and age act as moderators. Questionnaire data was collected from 150 administrative full-time employees of private sector in the Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Seven hypotheses were used. Results provided modest support for the differential predictive power of the above predictors of career success for men and women. These variables were able to explain that 14.5 percent variances in career success amongst the executive's employees of the private sector. The main results suggested that organization's structure of opportunity was a more powerful determinant of women career success, whereas self-confidence and supportive relationship was a more powerful determinant for men's career success. Nevertheless, career success was not moderated by gender and age variables. It is hoped that this research will benefit the human capital development for the private sectors. The implications of these findings are discussed, together with avenues for further research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In this dynamic business environment nowadays, where human capital has become one of the critical important elements to gain competitive advantages in the globalisation epoch, organisation is now facing new challenging in managing its human capital. As the organisation grows ahead with its competitive advantages, thought must be given not only to the recruitment, selection, retention of human capital, but also for the organisation to focus its attention towards enhancing and creating more equal career opportunities for men and women in achieving their career success.

In Malaysia, the National Labour Policy promised both men and women to have gender equality in all levels of employment. The policy also emphasize that men and women should be provided with opportunities for training and advancement, equal pay for work of equal value and be integrated into mainstream of development as well as increasing participation in country labour force. This was made possible through equal opportunity to education fuelled by the openings due to the rapid economic growth and the New Economic Policy that attempts to correct racial imbalances in Malaysia while eradicating poverty within the Malaysian economy.

Nevertheless, most researchers into gender development in Malaysia still believes that gender stereotyping still prevailing, which both men and women continue to face obstacles in their career development. For instance, even though the population of women employees has increase from 2.5 million in 1995 to 3.3 million in 2001 (Malaysia Department of Labour, 2004),

it is noted that there is less than 15 percent of that population involve women as decision makers either in private or public sectors. Consequently, women feels that their career development programme are mere copies of men' programme and not designed with the need of women in mind from the beginning (Marlow and Arnold, 1995), which suggest that women apparently are not receiving the same opportunities for career success as men. Clearly, even though the government policy emphasizes equal partnership between men and women, women success can hardly match the success achieved by the men counterparts (Ong Foon Sim and Sieh Lee Mei Ling, 2002).

Career success can be defines as the integration of the terms "career" and "success", which refer to the objective and subjective elements of achievement progress of an individual through the vocational lifespan (Judge et al, 1995; Melamed, 1996; Nabi, 2001). Objective career success has been measured in terms of society's evaluation of achievement with reference to extrinsic measures, such as salary and managerial level (Melamed, 1996). Subjective career success has been measured in terms of an individual's feelings of success with reference to intrinsic indices, such as perceptions of career success and future prospects. Based on the above literature review, it would seem that aspiring men and women involves in the labour market would be suggesting to expect career success in throughout their vocational life-span (Judge et al, 1995). Contradiction to what has been suggested, women still faced difficulties in succeeding in their career compared to the men counterparts (Wilson, 1998).

Many explanations have been offered as to why, relative to men, women still have limited career success. Among the common reasons faced by women's to achieve career success is the difficulty in balancing work and family, unequal access to promotion, sex stereotyping, discrimination,

segregation in job areas, more specialized jobs and interrupted careers (Davison and Cooper, 1987; Heilman, Block and Martell, 1983). On the other hand, researches have also acknowledged that men experienced higher variances progression compared to women's (Tharenou, 1994), which explained women to have less success career path compared to their men counterparts. Melamed also supported this finding in his research into men and women career success in United Kingdom, which he reveals that the two sexes cannot be considered as one group when attempting to explain career success (Melamed, 1996). He noted that strong specific predictors which includes human capital attributes of the employee, career options and opportunities structures open to the employee (Melamed, 1996) predict career success.

All in all, result of his research indicates that since women face barriers to their career success not experienced by men, it seems reasonable to suggest that their routes to career success vary from the ways used by men to achieve career success (Melamed, 1996). However, Horgan in his research did not account for the differences in men and women's career success rates by looking at gender-based discrimination, biological or social differences, or demands of family life.

Therefore, what factors lead some individuals to be more successful in their careers than others? As the paths to career success vary between men and women, evidently it is indeed important to know what are the specific determinants of career success that predict men and women career success and at the same time to know whether gender and age moderates men and women career success.

1.2 Human Capital Developments and Gender Development In Malaysia

Human capital development is central to development. So is wealth of a nation, which today is not only measured in terms of the amount capital a nation has, but also of human capital. A more populous nation therefore has the potential to be wealthier than one with a relatively smaller population. However, a big population alone will not guarantee that a nation's economic strength. It is the human capital, which will eventually determine the economic potential of the nation.

In Malaysia, the government has always continued to invest more in human capital development in anticipation of new challenges of the future. The strategic investment from the government began in 1999 during the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000), which focuses on increasing the supply of manpower to support the country's restructuring programmes efforts towards capital-intensive and knowledge based activities. The restructuring human capital development efforts has helped to reduce the dependency on foreign workers as continued employment from them was likely to lock the country into unskilled and labour intensive activities. In order to improve education and skill levels of the labour force and increase its productivity, continued investment was made in education and training by the government throughout the five-year plan.

Human capital development continued to be given priority under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001 – 2005) in support for the implementation of productivity - driven growth for the human capital, which required highly skilled, trainable and knowledge workers. For this purpose, the government has built many advanced skills training centers, which offered courses in specialized trades such as mechatronics, industrial engineering technology, computer engineering technology, telecommunications and multimedia

development technologies. At the state level, selected skills development centers (SDC's) also provide pre-employment training programmes.

In 2000, Malaysia has a population of 23.3 million (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2000) with almost equal distribution of men (50.90 per cent) and women (49.10 per cent). Although 48 per cent of the women population falls within the working age category, they accounted for only one third of the labour force. Women participation in the labour force sector is relatively lower comparing to men. Among the major factors that hinder women to participate in labour market is the problem of attention to children/family and inflexibility of the working rules. In 1970, the level of women labour force in Malaysia is 38.90 percent and increased to 64.70 percent in 1990. During the period also, the percentage of women as homemaker decreased from 39.7 percent (1970) to 18.90 percent (1990). Overall, the percentage of women labour force has revealed impressive improvement from 1980 to 2000 in terms of participation, type and job category. Nevertheless, most of their attention to unskilled job, semi-skilled, labour intensive in agricultural sector and low wages as shown in Table 1.1.

As noted in Table 1-1, only 2.32 percent of women involve in management and administration works compared to 4.87 percent for men. In addition to that, most of the women were trap in jobs that contribute lower income and lack of career success compared to men. Meanwhile in Sabah, report have also shown that men are still monopolizing the labour force market with distribution of 67.00 per cent compared to women at 33.0 per cent (Berita Harian, 2004). According to the President of Sabah Women Council, Datuk Noni J Saad, women participation in jobs sectors in Sabah is at slow growth rate. She observed that the number of women employed in the job category of administrative and managerial workers, professional, technical

and related workers and clerical and related workers is still lower compare to men (Berita Harian, 2004).

Table 1-1: Percentage of Distribution of Employed persons By Occupation and Gender, 1980-2000

Occupations	1980		1990		2000	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Professional, technical and related works	8.50	6.40	6.40	9.40	8.96	13.50
Administrative and managerial workers	0.30	1.40	2.80	0.60	4.87	2.32
Clerical and related workers	6.80	11.1	7.00	14.10	6.88	17.66
Sales Workers	7.20	10.3	11.40	11.40	10.76	12.24
Service Workers	9.00	9.00	9.90	14.10	9.54	17.59
Agricultural Workers	35.90	46.3	29.40	28.10	20.76	13.91
Production and related Workers	17.60	30.20	33.10	22.30	38.23	22.70
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

In consequences to this, both the federal and state government has introduced several policies to tackle the problem of inequality in employment both for men and women. For example, the Government's commitment to the advancement of women has been incorporated in the country's five-year development plans. The National Policy on Women formulated in 1989 emphasizes equal partnership between men and women and that all efforts should be undertaken to focus on development that integrates and benefits women and at the same time ensure that women are active participants and

contributors to development. Efforts have also been undertaken to improve women's access to information and communications technology as well as to bridge the digital divide between the rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated, and also the divide between men and women.

Unmistakably, the Government of Malaysia is against all discrimination based on gender. Its National Labour Policy emphasises that men and women are provided with opportunities for career success and equal pay for work of equal value. Malaysian women nowadays made several developments in various fields of development particular with the provision of equal access to educational and training programmes and employment opportunity. As the Prime Minister puts in his speech 'incentives and programmes can only do so much to ensure a gender-equal society. The need for a more gender-equal mindset and attitude is not merely the concern of one social group alone. It is the concern of our society as a whole. Eventually, the push for equality between the sexes, must be embraced not just because it is right for human capital development, but simply because it is the right thing to do (Lukman Z. Mohamad et al, 2002).

1.3 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, gender inequality is measured through Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Effort Measurement (GEM). The United Nations in its Human Development report 1995 introduced both of this measurement. GDI measured the level of inequality between men and women in terms realising basic amenities. GEM measures the opportunities of men and women participation in economies, politics and in the decision and policymaking processes (United Nations, 1995). If the figure in GDI is closer to the Human Capital Development Index (HDI) means that the differences of gender

inequality in the nation are getting smaller. In 1999, Malaysia was at the 52 placed for GDI (0.763) and at 56 placed for GEM (0.451) from 174 nations that was short-listed in the United Nation, 1999. The indexes revealed that Malaysia compared to the other developing nations was classified well, as both men and women have the equal treatment in all respects of living.

Nevertheless, some report have suggested the quality of life in Malaysia in terms of gender inequality phenomena still prevail in the nation (Norlaila and Nor Aini, 2002). Among the major gender inequality in terms of quality of life, which need further improvement includes the distribution of employed person by occupation and gender in Malaysia. In Malaysia, women participation in management and administration can be described as slow compared to men counterparts. This is evident that in 2000 reveals that only 2.32 percent women involve in compared to 4.87 percent for men. In Malaysia, career success for women is made difficult by a wide spectrum of specific predictors such as values, self-perception of women themselves, cultural and economic forces (Ong Fong Sim & Sieh Lee Mei Ling, 2002). According to Mohamad Nasir (2002), women's upward mobility in Malaysia is hindered by success obstacles such as lack of guidance from their leaders, inexperience in office politics and lack of career success strategies.

Differences in cultural, social, legal and practical gender-specific barriers (Adler, 1993; Burke & McKeen, 1992; Cannings, 1988; Cassell & Walsh, 1993; Melamed, 1995a; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990) continues to hinders the career development for both men and women, especially in their career success (Brannon, 1999). In addition to that, evaluation of research into men and women's career progress indicates that the two sexes cannot be considered as one group when attempting to explain career success (Melamed, 1996). He further suggest that specific predictors such as human

capital attributes of the employee, career options and opportunities structures open to the employee (Melamed, 1996) must be taken into consideration by organisation in determining career success for both men and women. Without any doubt, acquiring the knowledge to what extend men and women career success varied will definitely aid the human capital managers of an organisation in developing equal career development programme and eliminate any inequality in promotion and advancement for men and women employees.

According to Melamed (1996) while the need to examine the specific predictors that predict career success, the moderating factors also exist simultaneously. Among the well research moderating factors in career success literature is gender and age. In her research of gender career paths, Wilson (1998) reveals that the concept of career is a deeply gender construction and disagrees that it were gender free. For example, gender role expectation influences the occupation men and women choose, which eventually promote gender role identification and hinders career success of both men and women (Brannon, 1999). At the same time, several studies have found that age positively predicts objective success (Cox & Nkomo, 1991; Gattiker & Larwood, 1988, 1989) presumably because extrinsic outcomes accrue over time.

However, according to some policy analysis, gender inequality in the employment sector does not actually exist and that the low percentages of women participation in certain job category were probably due to other factors rather than gender discrimination. In this respect, it is well noted that women's career, do not fit easily into the same framework as those of men, and men and women are likely to continue to have different career success paths. Evidently previous researchers have organized that the determinants

of career success can be accord to a variety of different, but substantively compatible, categorizations (e.g., Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Newman, 1993; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Tharenou & Conroy, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991).

Hence the research questions that need to be answered in this research is **"To examine the relative importance of self confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships for men's and women's career success and to what extent does self confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships and career success is moderated by gender and age"**.

1.4 Objectives of Research

The main objective of this research is to examine the relative importance of self-confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships for men and women's career success in the private sector in Kota Kinabalu. In addition, this research attempts to examine the determinants of career success that influence men and women's career success and to identify whether there is a significant difference in career success between men and women. This research also hopes to reveal whether gender and age moderates the relationship between self-confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships and career success.

The examination of various determinants of career success in this research would enhance our knowledge in the field and allows us to obtain a more detailed picture of career success for men and women. The findings reported may hope lead organisation to develop equal career opportunities for men and women in Sabah. Since the responsibility for equalizing the

returns seems to lie with organisation, organisation needs to continuously examine carefully their basic assumptions about women and men in management. The organisation also needs to ensure that women's human capital contributions of education and work experience are perceived as similarly conducive to productivity as men's, and thus rewarded with similar advancement (Marini, 1989). As long as organisation tend to attribute women's accomplishments to unstable, external factors, to make inaccurate predictions about women's commitments, to believe women lack the suitable traits for management, and to allow cross-sexuality to impair relationships at work, women's career success determinants probably will differ from men's.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research bears significant implications for executives employees in understanding their career success. The research also hopes to enhance both men and women perception on their career success objectively by evaluating the determinants of career success that influences their career success. This would eventually help them to decide more specific measures to improve their career success.

This research also benefits organisation as employers can articulate new solutions to provide conditions where men and women can develop fully their professional relationships and feel sufficiently self-confident to manage their career. Last but not least, the result of this research could also aim to serve as a reference for further investigation on executive's career success in government and private organisations.

1.6 Scope Of Research

The scope of this research is to reveal the impact of self-confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships for men and women's career success in the private sectors in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. It is important to know the specific predictors that predict career success among the men and women employees in Sabah.

1.7 Definitions of Term

The key variables used in this study has specific meaning and such definition in general context as well as in the context of this research are outlined below.

1.7.1 Career Success

The generic term of career success can be divided into objective and subjective forms. Objective career success (OCS) refers to society's view of achievement and success using measures such as salary, promotions and status.

Subjective career success (SCS) is theoretically more complex. It refers to an employee's evaluation of his or her own career success with reference to self-defined standards, age/career stage, aspirations and opinions of significant others (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987; Gattiker and Larwood, 1986).

1.7.2 Self Confidence

Melamed (1996) suggested that successful managers display personality profiles resemble a stereotypical masculine personality, which includes self-confident, extroverted, tough-minded, independent and self-controlled (Lord,

De Vader & Alliger, 1986). As such, it is asserted that women who have reached powerful positions are thought to have high self-confidence (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Tharenou et. al, 1994).

1.7.3 Organisation's Structure of Opportunity

Structure of opportunity can be defined as the total of policy and practice of the organisation inherent in job security, fairness across employees and structure progression (Aryee et al., 1994; Markham et al., 1987; Nabi, 2001).

1.7.4 Supportive Relationships

Supportive relationships can be broadly classified into (1) personal support (gaining support and exchanging information from friends on career-related issues); (2) peer support (gaining support and guidance from a more experienced peer); and (3) network support (gaining support from a network of contacts in powerful positions) (Nabi, 2001).

Past researchers has asserted that individuals should proactively manage their own careers by engaging in a range of informal interpersonal career support behaviours to enhance their career development and sense of success (Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994; Kram, 1988; Noe, 1996).

1.7.5 Gender

Gender is the term used by some researchers to describe the traits and behaviors that are regarded by culture as appropriate to men and women (Brannon, 1999). In her research of gender career paths, Wilson (1998) asserted that the concept of career is a deeply gender construction and disagrees that it were gender free.

1.7.6 Age

Hawkins defined age as the length of time or existence (Oxford Student Dictionary, 2001).

1.8 Organisation of The Research

This research comprises of five main chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction, background of the research, the statement of problem, objectives, research questions, and scope of research and variables definitions. Chapter 2 is mainly focused on the: literature review on the aspects of human capital development, self-confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships factors that influences career success. In this chapter the relationship between the self-confidence, organisation's structure of opportunity and supportive relationships and moderating factors were discussed. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the research. It encompasses the research framework, research hypotheses, research instrument, sample and population, unit of analysis, data collection, data analysis and expected findings. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the analysis and findings. Chapter 5 discusses the implication of the findings, recommendation and limitation of the research.