THE EFFECT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BARRIERS ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT AMONG WOMEN AND THE ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM AS A MODERATOR

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Science (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Management
UniversitiTeknologi Malaysia

SEPTERMBER 2014

To my late father, Mansor Bin Embong, mother,siblings and friends

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, all grateful and thanks to Allah SWT, the Lord of Universe, the most gracious and mercifulon blessing.

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Norashikin Mahmud for her guidance, advice and precious supervision. I would like to express my gratitude to my examiners, Dr. RabeatulHusnaAbd Rahman and Mdm. HamidahAbd Rahman for their assistance in completing my thesis.

Tribute all appreciation goes to my family especially mum and sisters, for their support, wish and sacrifice directly or indirectly towards the end. Last but not least, to all my friends, sisters and brothers, thanks for all moments. Not to forget, Hakimi who is always there for me.

May our heart written on HIS bless. Amin.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to identify the effect of self-esteem in moderating the relationship between the internal and external barriers and career advancement among women. In this quantitative study, a set of questionnaire focusing on the barriers, career advancement and self-esteem was used for data collection. A total number of 263 women employees among the women executives at OCBC Bank (M) SdnBhd was selected to participate in the study. Inferential statistics (multiple regression and hierarchical regression) were used to analyse the data. The findings showed that the overalllevel of internal and external barriers in career advancement among women executives was at a high level and career advancement among women was at moderate level. Besides that, the research findings shown that there was a significant effect of the barriers (except for role conflict and discriminatory attitudes and sex-role stereotypes) on career advancement among women. The findings also shown that self-esteem moderated the relationship between the internal and external barriers and career advancement. It is recommended employer should provide training that can improve women executives' self-esteem.

ABSTRAK

Matlamat utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti kesan penghargaan kendiri dalam menyederhanakan hubungan antara halangan-halangan dan perkembangan kerjaya di kalangan wanita. Dalam kajian kuantitatif ini, borang soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data yang mana berfokuskan halangan-halangan, perkembangan kerjaya di kalangan wanita dan penghargaan kendiri. Seramai 263 orang pekerja wanita di kalangan eksekutif di OCBC Bank (M) Sdn Bhd telah dipilih untuk terlibat dalam kajian ini. Statistik inferensi (regresi berganda dan regresi berhierarki) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa halangan dalaman dan halangan luaran dalam kalangan eksekutif wanita adalah berada pada tahap yang tinggi manakala perkembangan kerjaya di kalangan wanita berada pada tahap yang sederhana. Selain itu, dapatan kajian membuktikan bahawa terdapat kesan yang signifikan terhadap halangan-halangan (kecuali konflik peranan dan sikap diskriminasi dan stereotaip peranan seks) terhadap perkembangan kerjaya di kalangan wanita. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kesan penghargaan kendiri menyederhanakan hubungan antara halangan-halangan perkembangan kerjaya. Organisasi dicadangkan agar menyediakan latiha yang boleh memperbaiki tahap penghargaan kendiri eksekutif wanita.

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NAM   Non-Aligned Movements

OCBC   Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the study and the problem statement will be explained. Besides that, this chapter will further discuss about research objective and significance of study. At the end of this chapter, the conceptual and operational definition will be clarified.

1.2   Background of the Study

Rapid growth of technology has been widely discussed by everyone. Technology advancement has always be the first thing when it comes to organization (Samulewicz, 2012). Technology has been the key to success for the organizations to achieve their goals. It is because; recently everyone has been bonded with technology (Wesley, 2009). Technology advancement has created the trend where organizations go paperless. The medium of communication in business transactions are mainly based on the internet, emails, social networking and many more. These medium have helped the organizations in shorten the time it takes to do a business transactions, thus help organization to achieve their goal. When the length of services become shorten, employees that work in the organizations are assumed to be fast, responsive and dynamic in order to catch up with the rapid growth of technology.

This is where the employees and the organizations need to look at the career advancement within them. As a result, the term career advancement will appear in individual's working life. Career advancement is about growth and development of career. Career advancement is a process of developing, improving and broadening knowledge, skills, and abilities (Pompper, 2011). Therefore, from this point of view, it can be seen that career advancement is one of important factor in an organization. Organizations are the place where employees find ways of advancing in their career ladder. Career advancement is important because it helps the employees to gain recognition and build up reputations.

Everyone has the desire to improve, upgrade and extent their knowledge and skills, and when involving career advancement, it requires the additional responsibilities and accountabilities. The employees will equip themselves with trainings and skills to adapt with the organization needs while the organization need to maintain and improve their system and the human capital in order for them to keep on surviving in this technology advancement era. The current situation has make the employees aware of the importance of knowledge, skills and abilities in order to keep on survive in the organization. This helps the organization in improving their human capital. Back to the 1980s, the employees are given only specific task because it was the era of traditional work, which means, men will do the men work and vice versa to women (Hartl, 2004). Nevertheless, starting in the 1990s, where the technology started to enter the career life, men and women were treated equally (Burke, 2006). There were no more men or women's work.

Career advancement requires participation from both the employers and employees, in order for it to commence successfully. Career advancement is all about the ways in motivating employees and the process of enhancing satisfaction in career life. According to Jenny (2011), men and women possess different desires and needs. Therefore, there are also differences between men and women's career advancement. Men are more favourable to be appointed in the top management positions instead of women employees.

Women employees were usually found to be seated in the middle to lower management positions. Comfort-zone is the reason of the scenario mentioned before, women employees clearly showed that they have other considerations in deciding of their career planning and career advancement, and the considerations include the childcare, the parental care, the flexible working hour and salary (Burke, 2006). In Malaysia's labour market, it shows that salary is one of the dominant factors that lead to the women's career advancement. There are 65 percent of women employees in Malaysia's renowned retail pharmacy agrees to salary is the reason why they decided to climb up the career ladder. There are 30 percent of women employees agree that locations of the workplace is a contributing factor and the rest stated that work comfortably in the workplace is the reason why they decided to climb the career ladder (Broadbridge, 2007).

Women these days have their own roles in either the public or private sector. To achieve the Vision 2020, women needed to contribute in the highest position of the careers. Promotion of the equal opportunity to women's career advancement is necessary in realizing the Vision 2020. According to Mooney (2009) most of the organization is promoting equal opportunity to their employees regardless of their gender. Currently, women are climbing up the ladder to the top where, there are women that lead a country (Jogulu, 2011). It shows that women can lead, and the taboo that claimed women are not a good leader is invalid.

In Malaysia, the diversity in organisations drives innovation because diversity provides organisations with richer experience, background and different perspectives to make better decisions. So, women employees are needed in filling the management level positions. Nevertheless, women employees always encounter conditions that stop them from climbing the career ladder. According to Swanson (1997), there are two types of barriers which are the internal and external barriers. Conferring to Maimunah(2008), internal barriers may include, self-perception, spousal supports, and role conflict, while, external barriers may include stereotypes, discrimination, socialisation and last but not least, networking. These barriers have impede the career advancement among women, and again, it is depends on the women employees of how they deal with the barriers. In a nutshell, it can be clearly

viewed that self-esteem play as an important role in creating perception and effect how people perceive.

1.3   Problem Statement

Career advancement has been recently been discussed critically among the employees (Isabel Metz, 2001). Many issues rose year by year in career advancement. The issues are mainly focuses on women. The issues include unfair treatment that women employees receive and perceptions towards women employees. The issues are not made up baseless, to support the statements, NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women had published a report which state, the work opportunities given to women employees is inadequate (Forum, 2008). Based on this report, a few questions been brought up where, is there any barriers exist in women career advancement?

According to Huang (2006), women career advancement has been always limited by the barriers that usually involving the gender. Mavin(2000) states that these barriers came from the way of thinking and the generalization by others about the women nature. Generally, women employees also claimed that it is difficult for them to climb up the career ladder. This situation needs to be catered or it will surely make the job talent wasteful. These barriers will bring up issues to the organizations in utilizing the women employees' job talents and skills in contributing back to the organizations. Therefore, Back (2007) states that these barriers need to be analyse and evaluate its effect towards career advancement among women. In solving these issues, Swanson (1997) states that there are two types of barriers, and they are internal barriers and external barriers.

There are two types of barriers in career advancement among women. The barriers are, internal barriers, and external barriers. Internal barriers is the critical barriers which involve personality, psychology, experiences and the employees' self-concept towards her capabilities and abilities in achieving success in the career life

(Swanson, 1997). However, these internal barriers can be catered if women employees possess high inner strength and high confidence level. Nevertheless, these internal barriers can be evaluate accordingly to the barriers that used to be studied by the previous researchers (Maimunah, 2008; Samulewicz, 2012; Shinnar, 2007; Weber, 2008). The internal barriers are, perceptions regarding skills and abilities, perceptions regarding job and positions, role conflict and aspiration and support.

The additional skills and knowledge among employees are very crucial in maintaining a good level of career advancement. According to Vinnicombe(2002), women employees usually face difficulties in climbing up the career ladder because it is assumed that they are incompatible employees. This situation occurs because women employees are perceived as a weak employee. Afraid of carrying more tasks and responsibilities has led to be the barrier to women employees in climbing up the career ladder. Other than that, it is stated that women employees are lack of confidence in themselves, they feel that they are incapable to take accountability if they were asked to do more than what is in the job description (Ballout, 2009). Therefore, perceptions regarding skills and abilities that closely related to lack of confidence and perceptions regarding job and positions that closely related to self-esteem are the factors that have contributed to the barriers in career advancement among women.

Based on a survey made by the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women, mostly, women are restricted to dual role, which means, role as an employee and role as a wife/mother (Forum, 2008). Role conflict makes women employees do more work, in the workplace and at home. Long hours working has led to over-exhausted which made women employees unable to perform well at the workplace (Ambrose, 2012). This has block their way in career advancement. Family and spouses that give inadequate support to women is contributing to the barriers, which, women employees unable to focus in their career where they tend to take care of the childcare and parental-care (if necessary) instead of having keep up-to-date of what they need to do at the workplace. From this, it can be seen that this is where role-conflict and support has led to be the barriers to career advancement among women.

Other than that, external barriers are the barrier that should be taken seriously by women employees. It is because, according to Zhao (2008) these barriers are out of control of the employees themselves. These barriers are depending on the organization's awareness towards their employees benefits in their career advancement without differentiation of gender. Based on the previous study done by Huang (2006), these external barriers are general and it is typical in career advancement among women. It is because stereotyping is a very general barrier that occurs to every organization. This statement is supported by Back (2007) where the external barriers are including job promotions, motivation and reward system.

In organization perspective discrimination and stereotyping are synonym with the career world. These issues are well-known among the members in the labour market. Discrimination always involve not only skin colour but it also involves gender. According to (Ryan, 2007), women are always being generalized by the male employers, which, the male employers tend to take his previous experience in evaluating the current situation. For example, a male employers assumed that all of his women employees love gossiping after he caught one of his women employees keeps on gossiping at the workplace. This kind of attitude has impede the women career advancement. In addition, non-supportive working environment also makes the women employees feel uncomfortable at the workplace. This discomfort may lead to discouragement of women employees to climb up the career ladder. These scenarios has explained why the discriminatory attitudes and sex-role stereotype and discrimination at the workplace has been the barriers to career advancement among women employees (Lisa, 2011).

To continue, women employees also feel isolated when the working environment is not what they expected. Women employees are less in participating in the organization's events or activities (Suutari, 2012). For instance, the organization that dominated by the male employees tend to do events that are only suitable for male employees. They are not involving their female colleagues. This situation has led to social isolation where women employees are not being mingled around by the male employees and colleagues. Other than that, relationships between the women employees and her employers, colleagues and subordinates also are very important.

With a good relationship around her, she can climb up the career ladder successfully, this is what it is usually called networking (Kang, 2005). The reason why the women employees difficult to progress in her career life is because, she does not have a good rapport between herself and the people around her. Women employees need to take initiatives in building up this networking.

It is inevitable that the barriers came from the employees itself. According to Kundu(2007), perceptions and attitudes of women employees towards the barriers in career advancement are originated from them. These perceptions and attitudes were triggered by the way of thinking of women employees towards a certain matter. However, the perception is created from the self-concept of the women employees which is the self-esteem. Self-esteem is a value that carries by each individuals in evaluating and appreciating themselves (Hartl, 2004). Low self-esteem will create nuisance to an individual's perception. This statement is supported by Lavish (2007) which states, when women employee has low self-esteem, they usually feel burdened to express themselves. This shows that their perceptions towards the barriers were influenced by the negative way of thinking.

Based on this awareness, the researcher chooses to see how self-esteem act as a moderator in the relationship between the internal (individual) barriers and the external barriers with the women career advancement. There are so many issues and barriers been brought up in the worldwide, so, the researcher choose to focus on the relationship between the barriers and self-esteem as moderator together with the women career advancement. The researcher chooses OCBC Bank because banking industry is suitable for both genders not like the heavy industry. Heavy industry is more or less based on the traditional career and by nature, women are weak in terms of physical. That is the researcher select banking industry. In addition, the reason why the researcher chooses OCBC Bank is because of its ranking in the strongest bank. It is second strongest bank in the world after DBS Bank (Bloomberg Market, 2013). Even though OCBC Bank (M) Sdn. Bhd. Is one of the branch of the parent OCBC Bank Private Limited, but it managed to be categorized as one of the best employer in Malaysia (HR Weekly, 2013) OCBC Bank practices performance based instead of tenure of service. Because of that the researcher is interested to conduct

the study at OCBC Bank (M) Sdn. Bhd. From this, the researcher can look at the level of barriers in career advancement among women as a whole.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 What is the level of career advancement among women employees?

1.4.2 What is the level of barriers (internal and external) experienced by women employees?

1.4.3 What is the effect of barriers (internal and external) towards career advancement among women?

1.4.4 What is the effect of self-esteem in moderating the relationship between the barriers (internal and external) and the career advancement among women?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate self-esteem in moderating the relationship between the barriers (internal and external) in career advancement and career advancement among women at OCBC Bank (M) Sdn. Bhd.

1.6 Research Objectives

1.6.1 To identify the level of career advancement among women

1.6.2 To identify the level of barriers (internal and external) experienced by women employees

1.6.3 To identify the effect of barriers (internal and external) towards career advancement among women

1.6.4 To identify the effect of self-esteem in moderating the relationship between the barriers (internal and external) and the career advancement among women

1.7   Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is divided into several sections. The first section is where the study is focusing on the three main variables which are the barriers in career advancement among women, career advancement among women and self-esteem. The self-esteem instrument used is Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSES) that constructed by Rosenberg (1965). The barriers in career advancement among women instrument used is Internal Barriers Scale that constructed by Maimunah(2008) and Al-Ahmadi (2011) and the External Barriers Scale that constructed by (H. Tlaiss, 2010). The career advancement among women instrument used is Career Advancement Scale that constructed by Mihail(2008). The second section is related to the research design and the instrument of study. The research design is descriptive and relationships. The method used is cross-sectional and the data collection is done via questionnaires. Next, the random sampling or purposive method will be used in this study. The next section is the location of the study. This study will be conducted at OCBC Bank (M) Sdn. Bhd. The study conducted will focus on the middle management women. The researcher chooses middle management because, women employees in the middle management are a mixture of those who have lots of working experiences, and those who have a high level of qualification. Because of that, the researcher can study the deeper about the reliability of qualification and working experiences.

1.8   Significance of the Study

This study is hoped to expand and add up the knowledge closely relating to the barriers in career advancement among women. There are several variables that give significant effect between the barriers and the career advancement. This effect can be added to the field of study. This study conducted to make the women aware of what has gotten into their path in order for them to moving up in the career ladder. All this while, people would find it normal for women to stay at home and maintain the happiness of their family, but, in this age, women and career inseparable because of the equal opportunity given among male and female employees. So, with this

study, it may open the eyes of those who assumed that women are more suitable to stay at home rather than working. Instead of the women, this study also may assist organizations in identifying the factors that caused the pause in a woman's career advancement. With this study, it helps organization to tackle their problems. This study is important to the organization involved because, it can help the organization in re-evaluate the practices that why used to practice before. Ways of solving the barriers in career advancement among women help the organization in increasing their productivity. The researcher hopes that this study can be the reference to all. Other than that, the researcher would like to propose to the future researchers to conduct this study in another industry.

1.9   Conceptual and Operational Definition

1.9.1   Career Advancement

Career advancement can be defined as the result of the individuals and the organizations. It includes career mobility, career barriers, career stages and career compromise. (Weber, 2008). According to Varkey(2012), career advancement is a process that nurture employees' knowledge and abilities growth.

In this study, career advancement can be defined as an individual's progression in their career life within a period of time together with the knowledge, skills and abilities they gain during the progression of the career life.

1.9.2   Barriers in Career Advancement among Women

1.9.2.1 Internal Barriers

Internal barriers can be defined as the internal conflicts that hinder the women employees in progressing in their career life. The internal conflicts may

include self-concept and also motivation (Swanson, 1997). In addition, internal barriers also can be defined as the emotional and mental issues that inhibit an individual from doing a certain thing (Han, 2010).

In this study, internal barriers are defined as the internal conflicts that originate from the women employees themselves. The internal conflict includes perceptions regarding skills and abilities, perceptions regarding job and promotions, role conflict and aspirations support.

1.9.2.1.1 Perceptions regarding skills and abilities

According to Al-Lamky(2007), women employees tend to perceive their own skills and abilities as inadequate. This is because, women employees is lack of confidence and has been provided inadequate training programs. According to Jackson (2009), women employees lean towards to inhibit their own skills and abilities.

In this study, the researcher is focusing on the women employees' perceptions towards their skills and abilities. It is stated that women has lack of self-reliance and that what makes the women employees perceive that they are lacking in skills and abilities.

1.9.2.1.2   Perceptions regarding job and positions

Women employees feel incapable to tolerate job promotions because they perceive job promotion as a process that is out of their control. This is because, women employees claimed that the new position is too heavy for them (Ryan, 2007). According to Kalev(2006), women employees perceive the higher positions are not suitable for them because they believe higher positions requires higher commitment.

In this study, perceptions regarding job and positions here are meant to say that women perceive their job as treating them unfairly.

1.9.2.1.3   Role Conflict

Hamidi(2013) states that role conflict is a conflict among the roles corresponding to two or more statuses. It occurs when people are confronted with incompatible role expectations in the various social statuses they occupy.

In this study, role conflict is focusing on women that have dual career which, her career at the workplace and her career at home.

1.9.2.1.4   Aspiration and Support

Aspiration and support can be defined as the aspiration given in motivating peoples (Litzky, 2007). Aspiring can also be defined as driving others to do a certain thing or matter (Sümer, 2006).

Aspiration and support in this study is referring to women employees that desire supports from her family members include, the parents and spouse.

1.9.2.2 External Barriers

External barriers can be defined as the preventing conditions that hold up the women employees' career advancement. The preventing conditions may include the gender bias and stereotypes (Swanson, 1997).

In this study, external barriers are defined as the hindering conditions that block the women employees from career advancement. The external barriers include discriminatory attitudes and sex-role stereotypes, discriminations at the workplace, social isolation and networking.

1.9.2.2.1 Discriminatory attitudes and sex-role stereotypes

Stereotyping is to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristics are the same (Ginige, 2007). Generalization is also a part of stereotyping where it categorizing, labelling and judging others to what they believe, not the real situation (Smith, 2012).

Stereotyping is a way of thinking which classify the same characteristics of people having the same personality. In this study, stereotyping is focusing on how women being perceived.

1.9.2.2.2 Discrimination at the workplace

Discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or category (Isabel Metz, 2001). It can also be defined as an unfairly treatment given to a certain group of people. According to Akpinar-Sposito(2012), the most discriminated group are the black people and women.

Discrimination at the workplace can be defined as an unfair treatment received by the women employees at the workplace, such as, attention given by the male superiors and organizations' policies.

1.9.2.2.3   Social Isolation

Social isolation refers to a complete or near-complete lack of contact with society for members of a social species (Batacharya, 2010). in addition, social isolation is where the individual is avoiding to get contacted (Back, 2007).

In this study, women employees are isolated socially, which means, the male employees are not interested in making contact with them.

1.9.2.2.4   Networking

Networking refers to the relationship made between the individuals with professional terms (Kang, 2005). Plus, networking is about the mutual benefits gained from those involved in it.

Networking means relationships that bound in the workplace. In this study, networking is focusing on women's networking with the male employees in the organization.

1.9.3   Self-Esteem

According to Maslow (1970), self-esteem is an inner value that leads to self-appreciation that influence the behaviour for self-protection. It is a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth.

In this study, self-esteem can be defined as an appreciation and value of themselves that drive the individuals to create perceptions that is accurate towards a matter and parallel with what they desire.

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