



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**BARRIERS TO WORKING MOTHER'S CAREER PROGRESSION
OF GOVERNMENT SECTOR IN KUCHING: THE MODERATING
ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT (POS)**

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This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
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2010

The project entitled '**Barriers To Working Mother's Career Progression Of Government Sector In Kuching: The Moderating Role Of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)**' was prepared by Nasphia Kuyun and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours Human Resource Development.

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**“Barriers to Working Mother’s Career Progression of Government Sector In Kuching:
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ABSTRACT

BARRIERS TO WORKING MOTHER'S CAREER PROGRESSION OF GOVERNMENT SECTOR IN KUCHING: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT (POS)

Nasphia Kuyun

This study investigated the direct effect relationships between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and, insufficient training and career development towards working mother's career progression at a government sectors in Kuching. Furthermore, this study also investigated the effect of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a moderator on the relationships between independent variables and dependent variable. This study was a quantitative research and carried out using a questionnaires survey. A total of 76 questionnaires were usable and returned out of 160 questionnaires distributed to the selected government sectors in Kuching. This study revealed that there was existed a high belief of POS among working mothers in selected government sectors in Kuching. The findings also showed inverse relationship between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping, insufficient training and career development with working mother's career progression. In addition, the findings also revealed that POS can lower the effect of work-family conflict and, insufficient training and career development with working mother's career progression. In contrast, POS was not acts as a moderator in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and working mother's career success in this study. These findings contradicted with findings by Gary and Donna (2000) as well as Gutek, Cohen and Tsui (1996). It showed that working mother's in selected government sectors in Kuching had perceived high organizational support, but they still perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping. Thus, POS was crucial for working mother's career progression. Therefore, both human resource practitioners and managers of the government sectors should work together to maximize organizational support by focus on organizational governance in term of its policies and practices that could facilitate working mother's career progression.

ABSTRAK

HALANGAN KEMAJUAN KERJAYA IBU YANG BEKERJA DI SEKTOR KERAJAAN, KUCHING: PERANAN PENERIMAAN SOKONGAN ORGANISASI SEBAGAI MODERATOR

Nasphia Kuyun

Kajian ini meninjau hubungan secara langsung di antara konflik kerja dan keluarga, penerimaan diskriminasi jantina atau stereotaip dan, latihan serta pembangunan kerjaya yang tidak mencukupi dengan kemajuan kerjaya ibu yang bekerja di sektor kerajaan di Kuching. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga meninjau kesan penerimaan sokongan organisasi (POS) yang bertindak sebagai moderator dalam hubungan antara pembolehubah tidak bersandar dan pembolehubah bersandar. Kajian ini merupakan kajian kuantitatif dan dijalankan menggunakan borang kaji selidik. Sebanyak 76 soal selidik dapat diguna dan dikembalikan daripada 160 soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada sektor kerajaan terpilih di Kuching. Kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa wujud kepercayaan yang tinggi terhadap penerimaan sokongan organisasi di kalangan ibu yang bekerja dalam sektor kerajaan terpilih di Kuching. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan terdapat hubungan songsang antara konflik kerja dan keluarga, penerimaan diskriminasi jantina atau stereotaip dan, latihan serta pembangunan kerjaya yang tidak mencukupi dengan kemajuan kerjaya ibu yang bekerja. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga mendapati bahawa POS boleh mengurangkan kesan konflik kerja dan keluarga dan, latihan serta pembangunan kerjaya yang tidak mencukupi dengan kemajuan kerjaya ibu yang bekerja. Sebaliknya, POS tidak bertindak sebagai moderator dalam hubungan di antara penerimaan diskriminasi jantina atau stereotaip dan kemajuan kejayaan ibu yang bekerja. Hasil kajian ini bertentangan dengan keputusan kajian oleh Gary dan Donna (2000) serta Gutek, Cohen dan Tsui (1996). Ini menunjukkan bahawa, ibu yang bekerja dalam sektor kerajaan terpilih di Kuching menerima sokongan tinggi daripada organisasi tetapi mereka masih menerima diskriminasi jantina atau stereotaip. Maka, POS amat penting dalam kemajuan kerjaya ibu yang bekerja. Oleh itu, pengamal sumber manusia dan pengurus sektor kerajaan haruslah bekerjasama dalam memaksimumkan sokongan organisasi dengan memberi tumpuan terhadap pentadbiran organisasi dari segi dasar dan amalan organisasi yang boleh membantu meningkatkan kemajuan kerjaya ibu yang bekerja.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The numbers of women involve in the paid workforce has increased dramatically since the 1970s. Over the past few decades, women stay at home rather than work outside. But recent statistic from Labour Department, Ministry of Human Resource (2008), in Malaysia, women are now being employed 58 percent around the country, while statistic for women in Sarawak represents about 52 percent in working age population of 15 to 64 years. Despite the increase in numbers of women being employed in workforce, however, women appear to be stuck at the lower level especially at middle and junior management roles within organizations. In addition, according to Wan Hasmah Wan Mohd (March, 2010) in her speech in fourth world conference on women in New York stated Malaysian women's involvement in labour force for year 2008 is 45.7 percent with 3.95 million in the labour market that is out of 36.0 percent of total labour force.

Even though in academically women are excel than men, but still it is not guaranteed for them to be employed at the higher level of management. Female graduates are higher than male. Based on statistic on 2007 by Kajian Pengesahan Graduan IPT (Kementerian Pengajian

Tinggi Malaysia, 2007), about 61.6 percents female's students graduate from public universities and 53.5 percents are graduated from private universities. Worth of equality in workplace is still low among Malaysian society especially towards women and its career in management level.

But, some of the women do put themselves at upper level as men do. Yet, the possibility to women access to the higher level of management positions or senior level still limited or very rare (Oakley J.G, 2000). In Malaysia, the incidence of management positions among women is 65.91 percents in 2008, but decrease to 50 percents in 2009 (MasterCard Worldwide Index of Women's Advancement, 2009). It reveals that women are generally represented in the lower management. This phenomenon becomes a popular issue among researcher. They were interested in investigated the factors that preventing women to expand their career ladder into the top management level or senior management position.

1.1 Background of the study

As the issues of under-representation of women in senior management position keeps remaining in Malaysia, there is a need to further explore on the potential factor effecting and preventing the movement of executive women's career progression. Thus, this research is concerned more on the dominant factors that effecting working women in Sarawak especially working mother. Most Malaysian previous studies reveal that work-family conflict (Nasurdin, A.M. & Hsia, K. L., 2008), perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping (Maimunah & Mariani, 2008) and lack of training and career development (Wood, 2006) as a dominant factor prevents the movement of women's career based on the experiences of women in Peninsular Malaysia (Maimunah & Mariani, 2008).

Thus, this research will specifically look into career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching, in accordance with literature; a few studies focus on this issue has been conducted in Sarawak (Women's Economic Policy Analysis Unit-WEPAU, October 2004). This research tends to explore on the potential issues arise among working mother in government sector in Kuching as they try to balance the work demand with family commitments, coping with gender discrimination or stereotyping as well as provides

sufficient training and career development in order to for them to move on in their career advancement.

Additionally, this study also intend to highlight the importance of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) that acts as a moderator that significance to the positive relationship between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development on women's career progression. So far, there is none of the similar studies in Malaysia found in the literature that used the POS to moderate the consequences of those three factors toward women career's movement to the senior management position (refer study: Maimunah, 2003; Maimunah & Mariani, 2008; Zubaidah, Frances, Kamaruzaman & Marzlin, 2008; Zubaidah, Azwan & Kamaruzaman, 2009). Moderation effect of POS was broadly used in western and Asian studies (Park & Yoo, 2005; Jung & Tak, 2005).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In order to change this phenomenon and increase the numbers of executive women to hold the higher position in the management field especially in Sarawak context, several research need to be done in understanding the work-family conflict, perceiving gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development that faced by working mother's career progression. The findings of similar studies done in Malaysia might be different in Sarawak especially in the government sector. In order to enhance the future evidence, further research on consequences of work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development should be considered.

Aminah Ahmad (1998), stated that there is a regional imbalance in socioeconomic development reflected in greater gender disparities in Sarawak. This is supported by International Women's Right Action Watch (IWRAW), stated that working women in Sarawak are facing in low participation of women at the decision-making level and at senior positions and discrimination or stereotyping towards women (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia-SUHAKAM, 2005). Thus, this study arises from the need to increase the numbers of women representative in senior management position, specifically working mother in government sector in Kuching.

According to official statistics (Malaysia, 2008), about 63.1 percent of women working aged between 15 and 64 years, and about 47.3 percents have joined workforce. Among working women, a married woman numbered is about 2.1 million people or 58.1 percents. These statistics showed that more than half of the working women in Malaysia played dual-roles such as at home as well as at workplace. Past studies had found and reveals through meta-analysis that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) act as a moderator influence on the work outcomes, job performance as well as career success (Park & Yoo, 2005; Jung & Tak, 2005).

Thus, this study investigates the direct and moderating effects of POS on the relationships between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development on career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching in order to know the differences in term of result compare to western literature.

1.3 Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to gain better understanding on dominant factors affecting career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching. The direct effects of individual factors are work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient in training and career development toward working mother's career progression in government sector in Kuching are investigated. Furthermore, POS is a moderator that influence either negatively or positively the progress of working mother's career. Generally, there are three purposes of this research:

- i) determine the effect of work-family conflict on career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching
- ii) determine the effect of perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping on career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching, and

- iii) determine the effect of insufficient training and career development on career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching

Specifically, this study will determine the indirect effects of POS on the relationship between individual factors and career progression/success of working mother:

- iv) The lower level of organizational support working mother perceive, the stronger the relationship between work-family conflict and their career progression/success
- v) The lower level of organizational support working mother perceive, the stronger the relationship between perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and their career progression/success
- vi) The lower level of organizational support that working mother perceive, the stronger the relationship between insufficient training and career development, and their career progression/success

1.4 Research questions

This study examines the following research questions:

1. Does work-family conflict affect career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching?
2. Does gender discrimination or stereotyping affect career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching?
3. Does insufficient training and career development provides by organization affect working women's career progression/success in government sector in Kuching?

4. Does organizational support influence the strength relationship between work-family conflict and career progression/ success of working mother?
5. Does organizational support influence the strength relationship between gender discrimination or stereotyping and career progression/success of working mother?
6. Does organizational support influence the strength relationship between insufficient training and career development and career progression/success of working mother?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

This research has six research hypotheses based on the research questions stated. Based on the study conducted by Nasurdin, A.M. Hsia and K.L. (2008) on 185 accountants with 65 percent married females in Malaysia, found that work-family conflict affecting their career. Hence, it is proposed:

H_{A1}: Work-family conflict will be negatively affecting the career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching.

Stereotyping toward working mother can lead to discriminatory behavior and create obstacle to their career advancement (Maimunah & Mariani, 2008). Hence, it is proposed:

H_{A2}: Perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping will be negatively affecting the career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching.

According to Martinez (1997), provides enough training and career development is important for career advancement because the goal of training is to prepare the employees especially women for their promotion. Hence, it is proposed:

H_{A3}: Insufficient training and career development will be negatively affecting career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching.

Eden (2004) found that high POS will reduce the work-family conflict that faces by women in their career progression. Hence, it is proposed:

H1a: The lower level of organizational support that working mother perceives the stronger relationship between work-family conflict and their career progression/success. Work-family conflict will be negatively related to career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching if POS is higher.

Based on the study conducted by Gary and Donna (2000), they found that females of medical technologists with lower POS likely to perceived greater gender discrimination. Hence, it is proposed:

H2a: The lower level of organizational support that working mother perceives the stronger relationship between perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and their career progression/success. Perceived gender discrimination or stereotypes will be negatively related to career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching if POS is higher.

Ongoing training is necessary for promotion as found in Wood's study (2006) in order to gain advantage in women's career advancement. The role of organizational support is important here in order to provide sufficient and ongoing training and career development toward working mother in order to enhance their career progress. Hence, it is proposed:

H3a: The lower level of organizational support that working mother perceives the stronger relationship between insufficient training and career development, and their career progression/success. Insufficient training and career development will be negatively related to career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching if POS is higher.

1.6 Research Framework

Figure 1.1 illustrates direct and moderating effects of POS on the relationships between work family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and

career development on career progression/success of working mother. The moderating model by which POS (moderator) affect the relationship between the cause variable (independent variables) and the effect variable (dependent variable) investigated in the study.

Independent Variables

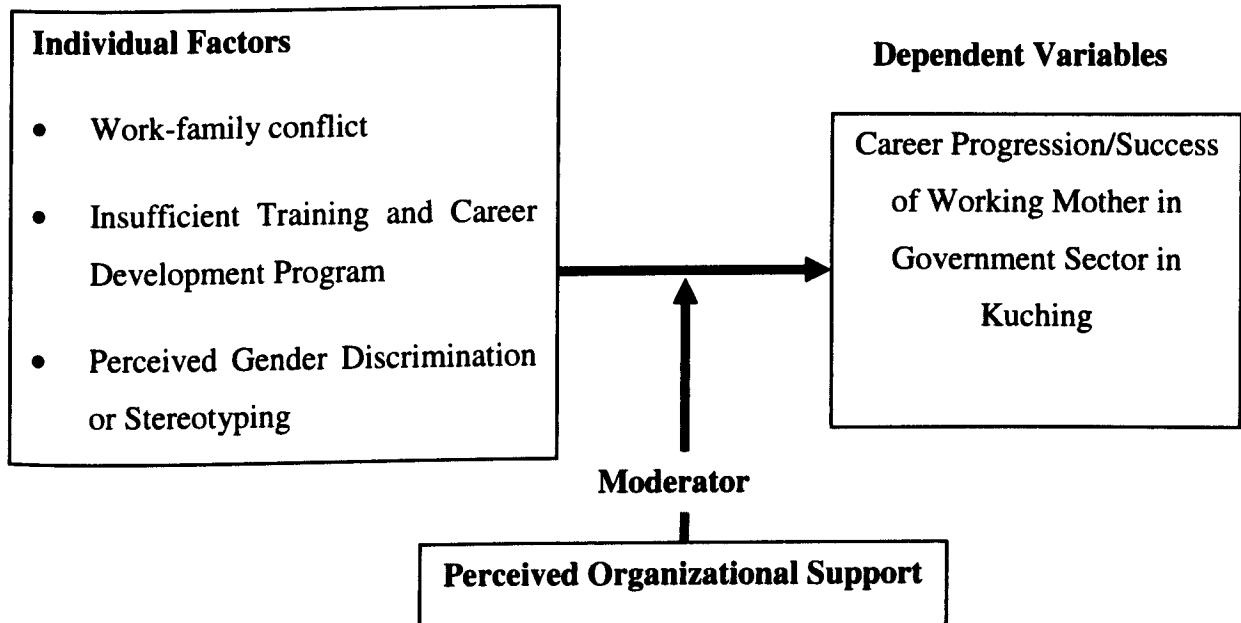


Figure 1.1 Research Framework of the study

In this study, moderator is referring to a third variable that affects the relationship of the independent variables (work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development) and the dependent variable (career progression/success of working mother in government sector in Kuching).

Moderators also can be defined as variables that affect the form (slope) or strength of a relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable (Arnold, 1982; Stacy, A.W., Newcomb, M.D. & Bentler, P.M, 1991). Existence of moderators may influence the strength of relationship between those variables. According to Chiaburu D.S. and Tekleab A.G. (2005) independent variable is an individual factor. In this study, individual factors are; work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development program.

Based on the research framework in Figure 1.1, the independent variables of this study consists three individual factors; work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development. The dependent variable is career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching. The existence of POS as a moderator effects influence relationship between independent and dependent variables either moderately low or high.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to contribute theoretical knowledge and to the human resource practitioners. In the aspect of theoretical knowledge, this study can find out about executive women's career progression especially working mother and barriers that they faced. In spite of that, it could determine the direct relationships between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and, insufficient training and career development of career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching.

Furthermore, it also investigates whether POS will influence the strength relationship between work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development on career progression of working mother. Besides, this study also intends to further the previous research regarding barriers on career progression of working of government setting especially in Kuching. Relevant to the statement above, this study intends to generate a new research framework for further research regarding work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development on career progression of working mother with the existence of POS as a moderator.

In term of practical contribution, this study can offer human resource professionals to better implementing planning initiatives, training programs on gender sensitivity, introducing work life balance practices, implementing Family Friendly Workplace (FFW) practices and Equal Opportunity Practices (EOP). Practitioners can use these ideas as their guidelines to develop and design appropriate set of interventions to address the priority gender issues in the organization's policy toward expanding working mother's career progression in government sector in Sarawak that equivalents to men.

Besides, this study also provides awareness to practitioners regarding issues of working mother in term of their career progression, especially role of Malaysian government and specifically organization in Sarawak to improve or enhance the existing human resource policies and practices that concern on working women's equality, minimize or reduce the issues of stereotyping or gender discrimination that is keep arising and implementation of FFW practices.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on career progression of working mother in government sector in Kuching, specifically in Padawan Municipal Council (MPP) and Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia Negeri Sarawak (JPM). The scope of the respondents consist of various demographic characteristic such as age group, marital status (single mother and married having children), education level, work department and length of service.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

There are several limitations in this study. The respondents in this study are among working mother that from various positions that are randomly selected from various departments in government sector in Kuching. Considering the fact that these respondents are selected from MPP and JPM, the result of the study might not be representative of the entire population of working's mother and women in Sarawak.

Besides, this study only took into account three variables; work-family conflict, perceived gender discrimination or stereotyping and insufficient training and career development with one moderator effect that is POS. There could be other dominant factors and other moderator variable affecting the executive women's career progression that is not considered in this study. Furthermore, the result of the study might not portray the existing working environment of all organization in Malaysia because different organization could have different workplace practices.

Another limitation is the study is conducted by using questionnaires; therefore, the success of this research depends on the honesty of the respondents in answering and understanding the