



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AMONG  
WOMEN LEADERS AT PRIVATE SECTOR**

**Nur Azreen Bt Ab Hadi**

**Bachelor of Science with Honours  
(Human Resource Development)  
2019**

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

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Final Year Project Report

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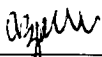
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
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**EXPLORING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AMONG  
WOMEN LEADERS AT PRIVATE SECTOR**

**NUR AZREEN BT AB HADI**

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

The project entitled 'Exploring Career Advancement Opportunities Among Women Leaders at Private Sector' was prepared by Nur Azreen bt Ab Hadi and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (*Human Resource Development*)

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(Associate Professor Dr. Abdul Halim bin Haji Busari)

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **EXPLORING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AMONG WOMEN LEADERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR.**

**Nur Azreen bt Ab Hadi**

This study aims to explore the career advancement opportunities among women leaders in public sector in Malaysian perspective. Women also can achieve career advancement if they be treated fairly. Three research questions were outline based on the objectives and researcher has come out with five questions as the interview guire for data collection through semi-structured interview. Four informants were purposely chosen to fit the criteria as a women leader in private sector. The study was conducted using qualitative research design where the informants' understanding and perspectives about career advancement opportunities among women leader in Malaysia were gathered. The women leaders that had been interviewed in the public sector mostly well aware of career advancement. This study has provided the barriers and strategies that informants use to achieve career advancement. Generally, future research need to be done to construct a proper research for the career advancement opportunities in Malaysian perspective.

## ABSTRAK

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka peluang kemajuan kerjaya di kalangan pemimpin wanita di sektor swasta dalam perspektif Malaysia. Wanita juga boleh mencapai kemajuan kerjaya jika mereka dilayan dengan sama rata dan adil. Tiga soalan kajian dikeluarkan berdasarkan objektif kajian dan pengkaji telah menegluarkan lima soalan sebagai temubual untuk pengumpulan data melalui semi-struktur temubual. Empat orang informan yang terlibat dipilih mengikut kriteria iaitu pemimpin wanita yang bekerja di sektor swasta. Kajian ini dijalankan menggunakan kajian kualitatif di mana pemahaman dan perspektif informan mengenai kemajuan kerjaya di kalangan pemimpin wanita di Malaysia. Hasil kajian yang dikumpulkan daripada temu bual telah menjawab soalan kajian. Para pemimpin wanita yang telah ditemu bual di sektor swasta kebanyakannya menyedari tentang kemajuan kerjaya. Kajian ini telah memberikan gambaran tentang halangan dan strategi yang telah digunakan untuk mencapai kemajuan kerjaya. Pada amnya, penyelidikan untuk masa depan perlulah dilakukan untuk kemajuan kerjaya dalam kalangan pemimpin wanita dalam perspektif Malaysia.*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, background of study, problem statement, research objective and questions, significance of study, research framework, limitation of research and definition of terms have been discussed. Based on this, it guides the researcher to develop more idea about the research. Definition of terms are crucial element in order to explain the key points of the research. The objectives of this research used as an underlying to see the view as clear as crystal.

The number of women that enter the professional workforce has increasingly rapid over 30 year ago. However, women in senior executive jobs is decreasing. This is because, some men perceive women as group that less committed with their work. So, they become comfortable to work with the same gender.

The investigation about what is career advancement opportunities is all about has not been highlighted and emphasized. It is very important to know about women career advancement opportunities.

The main purpose of this study is to look more about career advancement among women leaders within the context of public sector.

## **1.1 Background of Study**

There are several factors that can help women to advance their career. For instance, their education, interpersonal skills, experience and leadership styles. The studies about career advancement among women also reveal the barriers. For example, lack of confidence, gender bias, and lack of qualification. Many women cannot achieve higher education positions because of the own lack self-confident, the pressure to maintain a professional image (Lam, 2016) and lack of self confidence in their ability to lead (Lam, 2016). Until recently, most of the scholarly work on leadership, both inside and outside the organization, was conducted by men and focused on male leader. As a result, male behavior and characteristic in leadership role have been standard against which female leader (Kruse & Prettyman, 2008). While many studies look closely at factor that hinder women from advancing in their career, only a few studies have attempted to examine various factor that facilitate women to achieve higher education (Beck, 2003).

Other than that, The Duality of Race and Gender for Managerial African American Women: Implications of Informal Social Networks on Career Advancement talk about the percentage of African American in the managerial position in the private sector. African American women faced lower promotion rates than White women managers and they comprise 7% only from the managerial position

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In this era, the number of women engagements in the world of employment is increasing every time. The number of women that high educated is increasing nowadays compared to men. There are many researches that have been conducted about women career advancement. Even though there are many researches about women career advancement, but there are also problems that researcher found regarding the past research.

Studies on career advancement opportunities in Malaysia are still lacking and rare to do. There are only few researchers on the subject women career advancement were done in Malaysia. Majority of past research were conducted overseas such as Nebraska (Combs, 2003), Indonesia (Abdul Ghani Azmi, Syed Ismail, & Basir, 2012) and United States of America (McGuire, Bergen, & Polan, 2004). Based on the past research, there is only one research conducted in Malaysia context have been done by Izmayani Saadin, Khalijah Ramli, Husna Johari & Nurul Akmar Harin (2016).

Problem also arise when past studies more focus on quantitative study to do research about women career advancement. This method has been used by the past researcher in order to obtain information about women career advancement. Additionally, the strongest method also provides regular questions and information that can also not be directly from the informant's mouth. This situation makes it difficult for researchers to get information on the women career advancement opportunities as the researcher study the qualitative method and obtain information on the women career advancement from the women leaders itself.

Subsequently, problems also arise when the past studies only focus about career advancement only and not specifically stated the opportunities of career advancement. Meanwhile, past studies also have very little research on women career advancement opportunities. Additionally, studies on the women career advancement that have been



previously examined focus more on the barrier of women career advancement. This situation makes it difficult for researchers to add more detailed information on the women career advancement opportunities.

Therefore, this study focusses on the women career advancement opportunities among the leaders. Stripping that available during interview is expected to help researchers identify factors that influence the opportunities of women career advancement to that they contribute boldly to pursue their career advancement.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

1. To investigate career advancement opportunities among women leaders.
2. To identify what kind of barriers that women leaders faced.
3. To explore the strategies to achieve career advancement.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Do women leaders have the opportunities in career advancement?
2. What kind of barriers that women leaders faced?
3. What are the strategies to achieve career advancement?

### **1.5 Significance of Study**

The significance of the study is beneficial for people and the most important thing is it can give benefits to Human Resource Development field. There are several significances of the study. For example, for the organization, research methodology and to the field of thought.

The first significance goes to the organization. When we stand up for the women career advancement, we can see that this is one of the significances of the study. This is because, the organization will have the audacity to improve and trust women in order for them to achieve

their career. The organization also can perceive that women also have the potential to pursue their career, not men only. On the other hand, the organization with women leaders are also more effective in ensuring that organizational management runs smoothly.

Next, by doing qualitative study for this research, the researcher can get information in detail about career advancement opportunities. This is because, during the interview session, the researcher interacts directly with the interviewee and she can get in depth information. The information provided will be more accurate rather than answer by questionnaire.

Lastly, this research can help next researcher to get information about women career advancement opportunities. This information obtained based on experience and been explained well by the women leaders. So, in the next research, this ease the next researcher as reference about women leaders in increased.

### 1.6 Research Framework

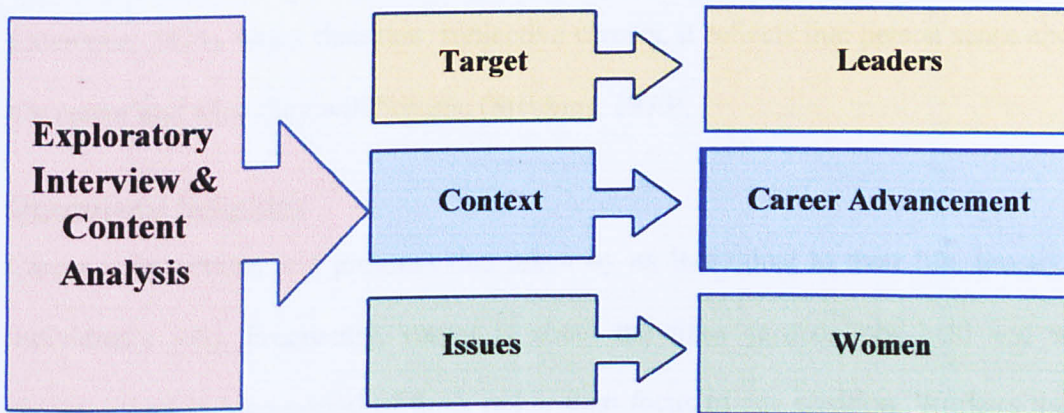


Figure 1.0: Research Framework

## **1.7 Limitation of Research**

The major weakness connected with qualitative method is time-consuming. Second, qualitative research could go problematic because of unnoticed (Bowen, 2006). Next, the clarification of the researchers is partial. Their personal knowledge and experience can affect the interpretations and conclusions which are relate to the research. The whole procedure will take a few weeks or months. Besides that, the diverse perspectives recorded will be analysed based on the limited understanding of the researcher. Since qualitative study investigates about personal interaction for the collection of data, the discussion often strays away from the main issue that the researcher wants to study.

## **1.8 Definition of Term**

### **1.8.1 Career**

#### **Conceptual Definition**

Definition of career is about one's person work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 2005). Other than that, subjective careers, it reflects that person sense about his or her career and what they will become (Stebbins, 1970).

#### **Operational Definition**

Career is an actions and progress that taken by an individual in their life, mostly, for that individual's jobs. Frequently, career is about the titles earned, jobs held and work that accomplished in long period of time, rather than focus to one position. Workers that change their jobs more frequently can easily to advance their career

### **1.8.2 Career Advancement**

#### **Conceptual Definition**

According to (Miner, Chen and Yu, 1991) career advancement is usually conceived as in the management ranks there is promotions and increasing in salary, and it was explained by the organizational, interpersonal, and individual theories.

### **Operational Definition**

Career advancement is referring to the upward progression of one's career. An individual can advance by moving from low level in the organization to higher position within the same field. In order to achieve the career advancement, they need to overcome the barrier and plan the strategies to achieve the career advancement.

### **1.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, it is focuses on introduction, background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, definition of terms and problems that the researcher faced. the problems that researcher faced is included in limitation of study part.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The study about women career advancement have gain people's attention. It is significant to do a research based on article and journal that have been written by the famous author. This chapter also will focus about career advancement among women regarding the past research that related.

#### **2.1 Career Advancement**

Employee's used career advancement to fulfil the needs on organization. Career advancement can be defined as one-person behavioural process and influence can lead to the feature that include role integration, job's choices, decision-making styles, work values and career pattern (Kow, 2012). As cited by ( Parsa, Idris, Abu Samah, Abdul Wahat, & Parsa, 2014), career advancement can guide to efficiency and success of universities and educational centre. According to (Lipman, 2013), career advancement is an important element for the satisfaction and retention of employee at a company. Career advancement can be defined as a someone is reaching for the top position at one's company. It also means the people gained experienced in the multiple profession field in order to create a multitalented and unique role for one self. Based on (Lipman, 2013) in forbes.com site, a clear opportunity for career advancement are an "Especially Powerful", motivator for the employee. The indispensable part about effective of career advancement plan are providing employees additional tasks that lead to a progression or a reforming their roles, developing their skills, give career advancement plan to the employees that supports goals, and adjusting their accomplishments roles and acknowledging through promotions. Based on (Siew Yien Koh, 2012), in Asia, it is culture when power is usually favoured for men. It is hard to found women who is CEOs in Asian

organizations or successors of family-owned business. From the website, Koh say that when she does the survey, only 45% of Malaysia women agreed that they can advance their career because they have been program (Siew Yien Koh, 2012). According to Clare Muhiudeen, Managing Director, Talent & Rewards, Asia Pacific, Towers Watson said that nowadays women are more ambitious, improved the flexibility to unite work and family accessible through the advancement of the technology in order to higher the standards of living of their family and focused by the higher level of educations. It is expected women can have higher potentials of their employers now, particularly programs that can help them to have career advancements and in terms of leadership evolution too (Siew Yien Koh, 2012).

## **2.2 Barrier in Women Career Advancement**

Career advancement is an employee's goal in order to achieve success in their career. According to Kow Kwah & Lee (2012) as cited by (Saadin, Ramli, & Johari, 2015), individual that can influence their behavioural process which can move towards about career pattern, occupation's choice role integration and decision making can be call as career advancement. Moreover, Karen (2013) stated that, women are rarely promoted to the top management positions in certain areas such as financial department and public relations. Generally, Chief Executive Officer always consist of male employees since the women role in senior position still low. When many women started involving with the workforce, women that fail to reach to the highest management become the causes for debate and considerable debate.

According to (Morrison et al., 1987) as cited by (Oakley, 2000) the metaphor "the glass ceiling", is a transparent obstacle that hinder women to move forward and prevent women from increasing to higher position in large corporations. However, Auster (1993) stated that gender bias that happen always can lead to glass ceiling. For those people that their careers had been affected, they perceive glass ceiling is very visible (Auster, 1993). There are two types of causes that explain the theories about lack of women in senior management positions. The first

category is, the barrier had been created by the corporate practices. This is because, the gender imbalance that always happen in retention, promotion and recruitment and it favour male employees instead of female employees in order to be in senior manager positions. Second category is about female employees behavioural and cultural causes which are leadership styles and power.

Major components of the glass ceiling that hinder women from pursuing their career are corporate practices in compensation benefits and training and promotions. Manufacturing, marketing and operations are the experience that women need regularly not offered to young women managers. In Canada, one study had been found at vice president level. The author said that female executives earn 46% less than men and 42% than male in United States (Solomon, 1990). Generally, women are paid less than men and receive less at every level of organization. On the other hand, women also are likely to get a lesser share of stock options (Fagenson and Jackson, 1993). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, women started to enter the corporate world as managers. People expected few will pursue their career that leading to senior management path.

In business world, many companies are fighting to keep their best women workers. However, with the presence of glass ceiling, this will make it more difficult to hold their women workers, (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2008). To removes the glass ceiling, people need to understand well what is the barrier that women face, and people also need to plan strategy to overcome the things that can hinder women to pursue their career. Women always face barriers in their progression of upward career within organization, and this barrier are not faced by male. In other countries, while women are obtaining their managerial experiences, they still confront with glass ceiling. According to (Barker & Monks, 1998) as cited by (Saadin, Ramli, & Johari, 2015) they concluded that barriers in career advancement is up to a certain level that may be broken down women and the barriers will hard to overcome.

The next research is from Indonesia and the authors are Ilhaamie Abdul Ghani Azmi, Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail & Siti Arni Basir and the title is *Women Career Advancement in Public Service: A study in Indonesia*. The authors found that the factors that can subscribe to their career success were education, experience, interpersonal skills, leadership styles and seniority. On the other hand, they also believe that there are several factors that can inhibit them to keep moving forward. For instance, preference for their family, personality, limited access to professional training, lack of confidence, gender bias and lack of qualification. The *Duality of Race and Gender for Managerial African American Women: Implications of Informal Social Networks on Career Advancement* has been studied in Nebraska. The author for this research is Gwendolyn M. Combs. This research focus about managerial of African American faced barrier in order to advance their career. (Catalyst, 1999) Women in managerial and administrative positions in the private sector, the population of African American is 7% only while white women monopolize 86% from the group. African American women experienced lower promotion rates rather than White women managers.

Talent management can be one of the barriers to women career advancement too. Talent management are focuses on a group of employees that have high potential as a future leader (Brouwer, Sonnerberg, & Bovee, 2009). Talent management is a process that have staffing and employing, retaining and appraising, but it clearly focusing on the employees that guarantee to continue the competitiveness in the organization (Berke, Kossler, & Wakefield, 2008) Research has shown that women tend to be overlooked in many talent management initiatives. This is because, women are considered as not interested in this activity and may not be worth in investing it because they might leave the job because of family (Schein, 2007).