



Factors Influencing 'Glass Ceiling' Theory on Female Administrative People in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT: In this world, female denizens cover the half of the total population like male counterparts. However, the societal norms and the inhabitants of this society have been undermining the capability and the achievements of women. It also includes their high efficiency and outstanding performances in the higher education sector. Women have successfully surpassed the 'glass ceiling' theory, which acted as an added benefit for the male persons in the society. This theory can be defined as an invisible obstacle that was formulated with an intention to restrict the progress and access of women in the higher ranking jobs and designations. The gap remains wide in the matter of leadership in the field of higher education as women are not on the same footing as men. The current study investigated the information on factors influencing glass ceiling with a focus on the administrative jobs for women in higher education in Malaysia. This study will be analyzed on the basis of qualitative research techniques using in-depth interview.

Keywords: Career expectancy, glass ceiling, higher education, Malaysia.

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Atlas of Gender Equality in the field of Education, Edition-I provides evidence about the significant raise in the women participation in terms of higher education, politics, and corporate organization. However, the count is not equivalent to that of the men [1]. In a review of women as leaders in academia, Nidiffer [2] in Gender and Women's Leadership handbook states that women are still behind their male colleagues in progressing towards leadership roles. Although a few women excel in the leadership roles in universities, a gender imbalance among senior university academics is an acknowledged problem in many countries (p. 44) [3]. A statistical snapshot of women Vice-Chancellors across the globe shows that, Hong Kong has the worst figures in women participation with no female Vice-Chancellor. This list contains more countries with Kuwait (2%), Japan (2.3%), India (3%), Turkey (7%), European Union (13%), and United Kingdom (14%).

Accordingly, Malaysia and Australia reported that 15% and 18% of the Vice-Chancellor positions are held by women, respectively. Universities in East Asia are rapidly climbing up the ranking ladder, for example, eight universities in Hong Kong are included in the top 50; three universities in Japan are in the world's top 50; and another three universities in Mainland China are in the global top 50 lists. However, gender disparity remains highly noticeable. It should be noted that there is a high number of women exceeding greatly in academia but most of them are unable to break the ceiling to the top leadership positions. According to Singh [4], women comprised only 22.3% of the senior management team in the Commonwealth countries. He presented a pattern among these countries that suggested the number of women and men are equal at the lecturer position; however, as the occupational and academic ladder moves up, the proportion of women decreases significantly.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Acquiring Tertiary form of Education

However, the societal norms and the inhabitants of this society have been undermining the capability and the

achievements of women. It includes their high efficiency and outstanding performances in the higher education sector. Women have successfully surpassed the 'glass ceiling' theory, which acted as an added benefit for the men. However, the data collected from Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) is against this statement. It says that, the gender ratio in Malaysia is 107 males: 100 females (as of 2016), which means 16.4 million males: 15.3 million females [5].

There has been big alteration in the gender balance system because the women have surpassed all the men counterparts in the enrollment system of the universities. This trend is also witnessed in developed countries (America and Europe) and Asian countries (Brunei, China, Philippines, and Indonesia). It is more prevalent in Malaysia. In 2015, nearly 280, 296 females took over nearly 55 percent of higher education positions (including public & private universities, community, and polytechnic colleges) compared to the count of 230, 858 males. In public universities, nearly 106, 277 females (63%) stepped in for the administrative dominating designations compared to 61,850 males.

However, the male opponents have crossed the numbers in terms of the private universities and reached to the ratio of 50: 50. Nearly 169, 198 females graduated in their higher education degrees in comparison to 120, 596 males. These factual data proves that women have outperformed men in terms of higher education. However, the same impact is not witnessed in the field of labor market. Besides teaching field, women are not active participant in the corporate, legal, academic, economic, and political decision-makings [5].

B. Influence of 'Glass Ceiling'

Knutson and Schmidgall [6] highlighted about 'glass ceiling' theory and denoted it as one of the obstacles in the path of the career advancements of a woman. It has become a trend that the women are considered to be more competent in the junior-level administrations, where in the senior-level administrations they are termed as less competent compared to men. It has shown a negative impact on the economical status of the organization [7]. Hence, the count of women in the senior-level jobs is less compared to the total count in the organization.

A pyramid structure in the Fig. 1 describes the management status of women and the impact of the 'glass ceiling' theory [8]. As per the data, 46.8% women are employed in the US labor force, followed by 51.4% in management and professional field. The women in the management category never thrive to become the executive officers. Hence, the more we climb the ladder, the more is the decrease in the number of women participation and their selection in administrative jobs. McKinsey and Co highlighted in their research that nearly 52% of women work as the entry-level professionals but 11% of them reach the senior management level [9]. It further decreases to 7% by the time the women reach CEO or Board members level of designations.

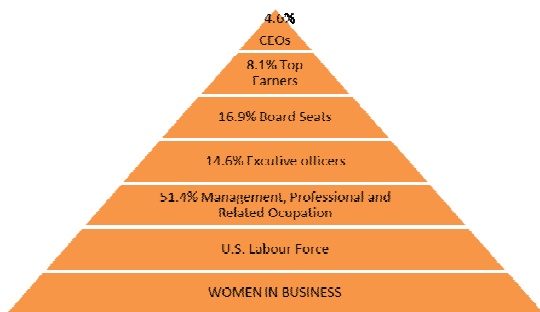


Fig. 1. Management Pyramid of Women Workforce.

Note. From Catalyst Inc. [8]. U.S. women in business: Management pyramid.

III. EDUCATION LEVEL IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia is gradually becoming an industrialized country. The expansion in finance and service fields is generating new job opportunities for the Malaysian citizens. The labor force witnesses an increase in its women employees from 46.8% in 2010 to 54.1% in 2015. This also includes the female citizens of the economic and urban area. Hence, the emerging issue in Malaysia is mostly about generation of female designation in the managerial level as well as the decision-making standards. Due to better education opportunities, the Malaysian women are potential enough to show their caliber in the management level. However, this department still comprises more men compared to women employees.

IV. METHODOLOGY

To justify this study, the qualitative research methodology i.e. in-depth interview was used for individual focus. It was experimented that, whether it is feasible to have a large quantity of interviews in order to interpret satisfactory reports on the qualitative research methodology used in this study, which focused on discovering a durable pathway for specific research abroad. The current research discussed the factors influencing 'glass ceiling' on women's higher education in Malaysia. Consequences of this study exposed the effectiveness of the in-depth interviews with experts in academic level respondents where they disclosed their perceptions and ideas on barrier or challenges and how to overcome the obstacles in women's higher education. Thematic methodology was followed for this study with topical investigation technique for the analysis of the subjective information. Braun and Clarke [11] proposed that it is the main subjective technique that ought to be learned as 'it gives center aptitudes that will be valuable for leading numerous different sorts of investigation's (p.78)'. As a further advantage, especially from the point of view of learning and instructing, it is a technique instead of a strategy [11,12]. This implies, in contrast to numerous subjective

systems, it isn't attached to a specific epistemological or hypothetical point of view. This makes it an entirely adaptable strategy, an extensive preferred position present the decent variety of work in learning and educating. There are a wide range of approaches to topical investigation [13-15]. Nevertheless, this assortment implies that there is likewise some disarray about the idea of topical investigation, including how it is unmistakable from a subjective substance analysis [16]. In this model, we pursue Braun and Clarke's [11] 6-advance system. This is seemingly the most compelling methodology, in the sociologies at any rate, presumably in light of the fact that it offers such a reasonable and usable system to perform the topical investigation.

The objective of a topical examination is to distinguish subjects, for example designs in the information that are significant or intriguing, and utilize them to address the exploration or say something regarding an issue. This is significantly more than just condensing the information; a great topical investigation deciphers and comprehends it. A typical entanglement is to utilize the primary inquiries as the topics [12]. Ordinarily, this shows that the way that the information has been abridged and composed like being opposed to break down.

V. FINDING

Our first participant Assistant Professor Dr. Asma Akli explained her work experience, higher education, and her personal experience of handling her children during her career and study. She had a total of nineteen years of work experience and ten years in the current higher administrative position. She attained the highest Ph.D. degree. She was ethnically Arab, Algerian. Answering about higher education and the glass ceiling concept, she said that she worked, married and had children. She had to support both with grace. She also mentioned that balancing both situations was difficult in the meantime full of challenges. But she had to fight and continue because both were important.

An example or illustration of her own experience asked about glass ceiling concept, she said that (1) Male egoistic nature showed through less acceptance to women work, (2) Showed ignorance to our work, (3) A lot of professors did not want to accept women's work without even knowing how it was done, (4) created a lot of dissatisfaction and demotivation among women as well as no appreciation for their work.

Any resources or tools needed to overcome the barrier when asked, she shared that (1) I always got a support group to heal my pain (2) I played in female basketball team to lessen my disappointments (3) in SICS the support group that we created and my academic workplace had also shown tremendous support.

She asked about other resources to break the glass ceiling and transition, she answered that. The support group we created was something new to heal our aches and learned to leave with peace.

Overcoming the obstacle question, she directly mentioned that (1) Showed extreme ignorance on women works (2) didn't let your voice to lead and denied badly by the superior (3) Always criticize women employees work and never had that judgment towards men"

Overcoming the obstacle by sharing a personal experience, she gladly said that she always had her female friends support and motivation.

She gave some advice when asked for it by saying that (1) be a part of a positive group (2) Surround by the most supporting men and women in university or workplace (3) Being alone will create problems.

In concluding part we asked her to share any advice if she wanted to give about breaking the glass ceiling concept, she clearly said that she always tried to make networks as

much as she could that is how you can deal with any worst situation. You have to have that strength to switch to better workplace using that network to feel relief. Also be a part of the place that would accept you and your work to give motivation and piece.

The fourth participant had a total of six years of work experience and three years in the current higher administrative position. She completed her Ph.D. in Architecture in design from the University of Edinburgh. She was ethnically a Malaysian. Answering about higher education and the glass ceiling concept, she said to complete her school in Penang, Malaysia.

She also got award a scholarship to do the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the University of New South Wales Sydney. Accordingly, she worked as an Architect at SARM in Sydney. She did freelance designing work. After that, she decided to pursue a Ph.D. and enter the academic field.

When transitioned of current position question asked, she said that (1) It was not the same work. I completed some other work in an Architecture firm in Sydney before existing to the academic field. (2) The transition made when I entered in the environment to use and improve the real world changes as opposed to teaching theories in designing architecture”

VI. CONCLUSION

This study was designed to describe the glass ceiling as perceived by women senior employees in universities. In this section the study to represent participants' opinion about glass ceiling in their workplace and family. Different types of perception of the glass ceiling and related characteristics and challenges which women faced in their career path and how they encounter those obstacles. This study also represents different types of advice into the women for their career development. Also represent political, physiological, societal, organization factor those mainly created problem in women career path. After reviewing participants and analysis, themes emerged that provided an insight regarding how the fifty participants in the study described the meaning of the phenomenon of the glass ceiling in higher education.

According to our research study, there are a lot of 'glass ceiling' for women employee to advance their career in Malaysian universities. It is sure that the women of the 21st century are way more progressive than before. The participants of our study shared varied suggestions for women who want to pursue their career in university system as women employee. They should accept change and face them in a calculative way. Make proper use of resources and utilize best practices for understanding any issues in Malaysian university. As an employee women must always open to learn new things for her personal and professional development. They should always resemble themselves for cooperation and connectivity. They should always strive for their rights to break 'glass ceiling', to overcome barriers in workplace such as inequity, pay disparity, influential people's wrong decision. The significant thing that was found from the respondent was that a person's behavior and determination is the most important contributor to break the 'glass ceiling' in university. The participants of our research study are full of positivity, unbelievable strength and integrity. They try to maintain a balance life which is more important for the women of Malaysia they assured to survive with the 'glass ceiling'. They hold a strong leadership mentality, friendly behavior in workplace, good communication skill, strong network support, extensive work experience, and knowledge about working environment. However, women

need to be outspoken to recognize her work to the people of institution. Women should be capable of maintaining their life personally and professionally. Most of our participant agreed that the most striking element to break the glass ceiling is determination. They were so focused about their goal that they don't even take a time to give consideration about 'glass ceiling' or invisible barrier which could distract them from achieving their goals. They persisted through tough supervisors, salary gaps, lack of recognition, long work hours, juggling work-life balance, unfriendly working environments, lack of family support, frantic travel schedules, and personal challenges with a smile on their face. By identifying this kind of challenge and issue organization can identify gender issue and they can find out inequity in a proper way which will help them to find out the gender balance. Moreover with the help of this study, we analyze organizational productivity in a professional way, which can create social economical positive impact in the organization.

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