

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

During the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who are pursuing managerial and professional careers (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Many of these women have prepared themselves for careers by undertaking university education where this comprise almost half of the graduates of professional schools such as accounting, business and law. The growing number of women who manage to find their way to the top of the corporate ladder, in spite of the predominately male environment and the constraining influence of traditional values and notions, is one of the major reasons for this increased attention. Despite such progress, research evidence suggests that these graduates enter the workforce at levels comparable to their male colleagues and with similar credentials and expectations, but it seems that women's and men's corporate experience and career paths begin to diverge soon after that point (Morrison et al., 1987). The progress made in education level does not commensurate with the number of women making into senior managerial level.

Generally this experience appears to have similarities worldwide. The only differences are that in the West early attention and exposure of this issue has been highlighted. As such women in the industrialized nations have advanced a little more as compared to women from other regions. In addition to that attempts have also been made by the Government and the organizations to address this matter.

2.0 The International Scenario of Women In Management

2.1 Women in General Employment

Between 1985 and 1991, the percentage of women managers increased in 39 of the 41 countries that report comparative labor statistics (ILO, 1993). Yet at the same time, studies found that among those countries where gender-based statistics are collected no country treats its women as well as its men (UN, 1993). These reports demonstrate two themes to be explored in the following review of research and practice for women in management; progress has occurred, but much more progress is possible both within and across nations.

According to statistics compiled by the European Community 40% of the European workforce is female. Yet women's entry into the workplace has by no means guaranteed them access to top jobs on a similar scale. With accurate figures hard to come by, an optimistic estimate suggests that just 10% of European managers are female (Vinnicombe and Sturges, 1995). When one considers senior management positions, the figure is far smaller.

By the end of the century in many European countries, half the workforce will be female, although there are still significant differences in the number of women employed in the various EU member states (Commission of European Communities, 1993).

Countries where the number of women in the labor force is above average, that is more than 40% of those employed, include the United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Portugal. Those where women account for a much lower proportion of the workforce (between 34% and 37%) in general are those whose national

cultures reflect the strong influence of the Catholic Church and its attitude to the family especially in Southern Europe. They include Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Luxembourg.

EU figures for women's participation in the workforce are likely to be lower than those for Western Europe as a whole, as they do not include Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Finland, where the number of employed women virtually equal the numbers of employed men (Hanninen-Salmelin and Petajaniemi, 1994).

According to the European Community Labor Force Survey, women's share of the workforce increased almost continuously in all EC member states between 1983 and 1991, with those countries with the lowest shares tending to experience the highest rates of increase.

Such statistics are deceptive, however; barriers to women in the workplace have not disappeared in Europe, for most women are still employed at a relatively menial level and many work part time. While the proportion of women in the workforce has increase, this increase has not been either in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as engineering, construction and transport or in traditionally male-dominated jobs such as management.

2.2 Women in Management

Although the number of women in the workforce has doubled in the last decade their involvement in management has not increased as significantly. Women occupy only about 10% of management positions in Europe. Furthermore, women managers remain concentrated in junior and middle management positions: a few have managed to break through the "glass ceiling" to occupy the

top jobs. With all levels of management taken into consideration United Kingdom has the highest number of women managers at 26%, compared with France at 25% and Ireland at 17.4%.

The growth in women's jobs in Europe has occurred in a few sectors of employment and in a small number of jobs seen as being traditionally feminine. The sectors where jobs have been created over the past 10 years have tended to be those where women were already an important part of the labor force. The biggest increase in the number of women employed within the EU has been in clerical and service jobs, and while there has been a significant proportion of women with good education qualifications moving into more senior positions, these jobs remain concentrated in public sector such as teaching.

3.0 The Malaysian Scenario of Women in Management

3.1 Malaysian Women in Employment

This effect is seen in the labor market as many women are represented in various areas of occupation and employment. The labor force participation rate between 1993 and 1995 indicates that the percentage of women in the labor market decreased from 46.5% in 1993 to 44.75 in 1995.

Table 1.1: Labour Force Participation Rate, 1993 and 1995 (%)

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)
1993	86.0	84.3
1995	46.5	44.7

Source: Ministry of Social Development and Unity

Of that number in the labor force it appears that women are well represented in sectors which are traditionally deemed feminine like the service works, sales and related work and clerical and related work and professional and technical work whereby women proportionately outnumber their male counterparts. Despite all the progress women have made in education and other sectors they still lag behind in the administrative and management whereby only 1.8% are in this category.

3.3 Education Level Among Malaysian Women

In 1998, girls formed 65.3% of pre-university education students (UNESCO Report, 1999). In university education, out of 79,014 students enrolled in public sector institutions in 1995, 50.4% were girls. The proportion has steadily increased through 1996 (54.3%), 1997 (54%) to 1998 (54.5%).

In addition to that most girls (64.8%) were in Arts and Humanities in 1995, this proportion has been gradually decreasing because more of them are going into the Sciences. In fact since 1995, the number of women has steadily exceeded that of men in the Sciences (pure, applied, medical and allied health).

3.3 Malaysian Women in Management

Ten years ago women filled a mere 11% of managerial or administrative posts. Today, that figure stands at 19.2%. In other words, according to the latest Labor Force Survey (1997), women do approximately one in every five of these jobs. In 1995, there was an increase of 20,000 women in the management and administrative stratum, the largest in the past 10 years. This was due in part to a significant rise in the number of women joining the labor force that year.

Table 1.2 : Women in Administrative and Management Positions in Malaysia between 1988 to 1997.

Year	Total No. Of Management Positions	No. of Women ('000)	Percentage	Percentage of female labour Force in management
1988	128.0	14.7	11	0.7
1989	131.3	14.1	10	0.6
1990	144.8	17.5	12	0.7
1992	187.9	28.2	15	1.1
1993	219.9	26.1	11.8	1
1995	247.7	46.6	18.8	1.8
1996	298.2	47.9	16	1.6
1997	329.5	63.4	19.2	2.2

Source : Labour Force Survey, Department of Statistics

*The survey was not conducted in 1991 and 1994.

The National Policy on Women, formulated in 1989, made women more visible by opening public discourse on gender related issues. The surveys from 1988 onwards show that the managerial and administrative stratum of the female labor force enjoyed the highest rate of increase. The actual number of women in this category (defined as supervisors with degrees or decision making power) quadrupled from 14,700 to 63,400. However this tremendous increase does not reflect the same in women's representation in management.

Because while that seems a commendable increase in itself, women in management barely make up 1% (the number wavers around 0.7%) of the entire labor force, compared with men who

constitute a far more striking 3.1%. Meanwhile we still lag behind our target for next year in which women must hold at least 30% of key positions in both the private and public sectors.

This critical mass is what experts say will enable women to wield real social, economic and political influence.

In 1995, Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali led the Malaysian delegation to Beijing to attend the United Nations (UN) conference on women, she said that we should strive to reach that target by the year 2000. This aim was subsequently echoed in the Seventh Malaysia Plan, which covers the period from 1996-2000. In the Plan, the Government intended to attract labor from non-traditional sources like women and retirees, to reduce the demand for migrant workers. In 1997, the Government proposed amendments to the Employment Act of 1955 because it specifically wanted to increase the number of women in the job market. The changes would include among others incentives for employers to allow flexible working hours which is seen as crucial to help balance professional and domestic roles.

The amendment was later tabled in the April sitting of Parliament last year. By that time, however, jobs had become depressingly scarce. The Human Resources Ministry consequently became more concerned with the laws surrounding retrenchment, and re training of employees made redundant. Since there was no longer a need to attract people to the job market, there were no clear incentives for employers to allow flexible working time. This obviously made it more difficult for women to pursue careers. With the economic downturn, more women lost their jobs due to retrenchment.

This would gravely hamper women's efforts to achieve the 30% target by next year and put us far behind other countries like Sweden and the Netherlands.

4.0 Problem Statement

The limited studies that has been conducted on this issue indicates that despite the progress made by women in employment and the labor market there appears to be a very small percentage of women in managerial level.

This research will study the reasons behind the lack of women participation in managerial levels despite increasing number of women receiving higher education and entering the labor force. Several questions will be raised to achieve the purpose of this study. The questions raised are as follows: -

- 4.1 The reasons behind the lack of women in managerial position.
- 4.2 If the differences in managerial skill forces women to be ineffective in the organization.
- 4.3 If the organization is not conducive enough for women to achieve such levels in management.
- 4.4 If women and their multiple roles in society create barriers for them to succeed in the corporate ladder.

5.0 Scope of Study

The study of women in management is diverse in nature. As such for the purpose of this study certain limitation will be set. They are as follows: -

5.1 Gender

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary gender refers to the grammatical grouping of words into classes. The

classes are feminine, masculine and neuter. For the purpose of this research the groupings that will be considered are feminine and masculine.

5.2 Management

Several approaches have been used to analyze the job of management. One common approach examines management by categorizing the functions (work) managers perform. A second approach analyzes the roles managers perform. A third approach analyzes the skills required of managers (Rue and Byars, 1997). For the purpose of this research the function that is performed by managers and the skills required to perform them will be focused. More specifically the study will compare differences and similarities of these skills and the performance of those functions between men and women. The evaluation of such functions and skills will be determined on a qualitative basis.

Three basic skills that a manager should have are as follows: -

5.2.1 Conceptual Skills

This skill involves understanding the relationship of the parts of a business to one another and to the business as a whole. This includes the ability to make decisions, plan, and organize activities that require conceptual skills.

5.2.2 Human Relations Skills

This skill involves understanding people and being able to work well with them, motivate them and coach them.

5.2.3 Technical Skills

This skill involves being able to perform the mechanics of a particular job.

5.3 Organizational Type

For the purpose of this research a statutory body has been selected. The reason for this is because predominantly based on past research women who are in the public sector have a better chance at achieving managerial status as opposed to women in the business sector. Women appear to have better chances of going up the corporate level because of the organizational structure which is more service oriented.

This organization is selected because of the nature of the core business which is very service oriented in nature. Besides that, women's role and representation in management may vary depending on the sector.

6.0 Research Methodology

6.1 Data Collection

Using the following methods data will be collected for this research:

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6.1.1 Primary Data

Questionnaires will be distributed equally among 100 men and women. The respondents will be at the Executive level ranging from Senior General Managers to Assistant Managers in Employees' Provident Fund (EPF). The population of the executive level in EPF is 437. Samples will

be selected using the proportionate stratified sampling method. The samples are selected from those who work in the Headquarters of the EPF Office.

This research will use the Management Excellence Inventory (MEI) developed by the Office of Personnel Management in the early 80s (Flanders & Utterback, 1985). Twelve of the indices assess the functions of management and nine indices represent effectiveness characteristics. Because the MEI was constructed using information from job incumbents, it possesses face and content validity.

6.1.2 Secondary Data

Data will be collected from the various reports and statistics generated from Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and the Ministry of Social Development and Unity.

6.1.3 Personal Interview

Personal interviews will also be conducted.

6.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis will be conducted using T-test and Chi Square to determine the validity of the hypotheses.

6.3 Hypotheses

Several hypotheses will be studied for the purpose of this research. The test used primarily to determine the results of this research is the T-test. The hypotheses formulated are as follows: -

6.3.1 Performance of Management Functions

Ho = Gender does not have an effect on performance of managerial functions.

H1 = Gender does have an effect on performance of managerial functions.

6.3.2 Skills in Performing Management Functions

Ho = Gender does not have an effect on the importance placed on skills required to perform management functions.

H1 = Gender does have an effect on the importance placed on skills required to perform management functions.

6.3.3 Organizational Barriers Within EPF

Ho = Gender discrimination does not exist in EPF

H1 = Gender discrimination does exist in EPF

6.3.4 Womens' Multiple Roles in Society

Ho = Women are more inclined towards family obligations.

H1 = Women are more inclined towards career

7.0 Limitations

This research is conducted under several constraints and as such the results may not reflect the actual findings. The limitations to the study are as follows: -

7.1 Selection of industry

The research will only be conducted based on one single industry, which is the public sector. However, based on a single unit of

organization, which is inclined, as a public sector is not enough to make a conclusion on the study. In addition, the results will also differ from industry. It is expected that an industry which is more male dominated will have different findings as compared to an industry which is either balanced gender wise or more inclined towards female participation.

7.2 Impartial Response

Most of the respondents might not be truthful in their opinions. Perhaps those of whom who have had a smooth career would not see the occurrence of gender biases. On the other hand those who have been affected will have different opinions on the matter.

7.3 Lack of Time

This research will be completed within 3 months and as such the findings may not reflect the true situation. This does not allow a more detailed research to be conducted.

7.4 Data Collection Method

The data collection method that is used for this research is not comprehensive. It is highly inclined towards the perception of the managers involved in their job functions. This would limit the findings and the results of the research. For a more comprehensive study a 360 degree study whereby the supervisors, peers and subordinates will participate as well. However, the cost and time taken to ensure a comprehensive study will not be possible in this situation.