

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **AND**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY**

This chapter is divided into two main topics. The chapter begins with literature on working women in general and followed by literature on the important elements of the study - sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation, human capital and wage discrimination. The first part concludes with a literature review on Malaysian working women in relation to sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation, human capital and wage discrimination.

The section on working women provides an overview of women's domestic role in the family and their participation in paid work in the work force. It guides us to a brief understanding of the history of women working in and outside the home. The next section, highlights sex-role stereotypes of men and women's role in and outside the home. The section on gender-related job segregation relates the various occupational categories women are segregated into as they enter the work force. Gender differences in human capital highlights how limited access and opportunities to education and training lead to lower wages for women. The role of sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation

and human capital as causes for wage discrimination are also provided. Lastly, this section concludes with literature on Malaysian working women and provides literature on the causes of wage discrimination as stated above, in the Malaysian setting. The Malaysian setting discussed includes the country's colonial background, federal constitution and labour laws, government policies and education system.

The second part of this chapter provides a conceptual framework of the study. This framework is presented in a diagram and shows the link between the two approaches and the variables of the study.

## **2.1 Working Women**

Prior to women's entry into the work force, "women on the land" worked alongside their families tending the farms.<sup>67</sup> Women "were responsible for educating and rearing their children".<sup>68</sup> These responsibilities were added on to the existing agricultural chores and other household responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning.<sup>69</sup> It is also found that women in traditional societies were food producers, midwives and healers and exhibited skills in weaving, spinning, tanning of leather and building of shelter.<sup>70</sup> The multiple roles assigned to women "enabl[ed] communities to advance from mere

---

<sup>67</sup> Sadik, opcit, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Hong, Evelyn, "Rural Women in Development". In Hong, Evelyn (Ed), *Malaysian Women: Problems and Issues*, Penang, Malaysia: Consumer Association of Penang, 1983.

existence and survival".<sup>71</sup> Women were seen as important contributors to the family and community's well being.

Women's entry into the work place began during both the World Wars. "Women in large numbers were drafted into the labour force to take the place of the men" who had gone of to war.<sup>72</sup> However, when both the wars ended, women were sent home, only to return in the 1960s on their own accord.<sup>73</sup> Women who returned were prompted "not only by [the growing] male unemployment and squeezed family incomes but also by social changes such as rising divorce rates, easy access to birth control and [the] wider acceptance of a role for women outside the home".<sup>74</sup>

At the start of the Second World War, "married women over the age of 35 began to work outside the home in large numbers and by 1980s, a majority of married women with young children joined the labour force".<sup>75</sup> With the participation of married women in the work force, the trend indicated that women were beginning to contribute longer years in paid work and also continued working even after marriage.<sup>76</sup> Women all over the world were following in the footsteps of men and were "entering and staying in the paid labour force for most of their adult lives".<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Hong, opcit, 10.

<sup>72</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "A Gentle Invasion", *The Economist*, (June 18 1998).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Staggenborg, Suzanne, "Gender, Family and Social Movements", Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1998.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Lynn, opcit, 41.

The present women, "are doing better than they were [before] and more of them are reaching middle management, [however, even then] they are not about to storm the world's boardrooms or parliaments".<sup>78</sup> Literature shows that the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon "keeps many women from moving up in management and [into] leadership positions".<sup>79</sup> The occurrence of the 'glass ceiling' and other obstacles facing working women such as bias, prejudice and discrimination will be explained with the help of the study's first variable; sex -role stereotype.

## 2.2 Sex-role Stereotype

Sex-role stereotypes along with prejudice have been identified as among the most identifiable barriers to women's advancement.<sup>80</sup> Some of the sex-role stereotypes associated with women are their "lack of career commitment, are not tough enough, don't want to work long hours or unusual hours, are too emotional, won't relocate, lack quantitative and analytical skills and have trouble making decisions".<sup>81</sup> It is these sex-role stereotypes and many more, that influence employers' behaviours towards women. It is discrimination based on sex-role stereotype which "motivates employers to pay women less than men even when [men and women] perform the same work and although [when] there is no consistent evidence that the aggregate productivity of women is lower than

---

<sup>78</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "For Better, For Worse", *The Economist*, (June 18 1998).

<sup>79</sup> Crampton, *opcit.* 87.

<sup>80</sup> Crampton, *opcit.* 91.

<sup>81</sup> Caudron, S., "The Concrete Ceiling", *Industry Week*, (July 4, 1994).



that of men".<sup>82</sup> Sex-role stereotypes leads to the "devaluation of the work [which] women do" which subsequently leads to "comparable-worth discrimination, where employers underpay female workers in different (for example not in predominantly male occupations) but equally valued jobs".<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, employers also believe that men and women "differ in types and levels of characteristics which [the employer values as] indices of potential productivity".<sup>84</sup> Therefore, men and women "will be hired for different jobs and paid different wages".<sup>85</sup> Research into this field has also shown that a portion of the pay gap between female and male physicians can be attributed to discrimination caused by sex-role stereotype.<sup>86</sup> In one such study "despite including a range of human capital and structural variables, in [the researcher's] analysis of the effect of gender on income, 39 percent (39%) of the effect remain[ed] unexplained".<sup>87</sup> Researchers point towards sex-role stereotype in order to explain the cause of the remaining effect (39%) towards the pay gap between male and female physicians.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Glass, J., "The Tangled Web we Weave: Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue on Ethnicity, Race and Gender in the Workplace", *Work and Occupations: An International Sociological Journal*, Vol. 26,(1999), 415-421.

Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, "An Establishment-Level Test of the Statistical Discrimination Hypothesis", *Work and Occupations: An International Sociological Journal*, Vol. 26, (1999), 422-455.

<sup>83</sup> Hinze, S.W., "Inside Medical Marriages: The Effect of Gender on Income", *Work and Occupations: An International Sociological Journal*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, Vol. 27(4), (November 2000), 464-497.

<sup>84</sup> Lloyd, *opcit*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>86</sup> Hinze, *opcit*, 469.

<sup>87</sup> Bird, C.E., "An Analysis of Gender Differences in Income Among Dentist, Physicians and Veterinarians in 1987", *Research in the Sociology of Health Care*, Vol. 13A, (1987), 31-61.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*.

Furthermore, sex-role stereotype has also played a role in "restricting the upward mobility of women".<sup>89</sup> This is associated with women managers seeking to climb the corporate ladder. A study conducted revealed that "organisations tend to look less favourably upon female managers with children".<sup>90</sup> "It appeared that the number of mothers are few in top management positions, whereby 60 percent of top women executives have no children, while only 5 percent of men in top management are childless".<sup>91</sup> This indicates that sex-role stereotypes have led employers to prefer men with children rather than women with children for management positions. Stereotypes lead employers to believe that women with children may not be able to pursue organisational goals to the fullest, due to family responsibilities. Women may not be able to participate in "after work meetings, socialising with clients, travel and [put in] overtime"<sup>92</sup> because they also have to fulfil their family responsibilities. Therefore sex-role stereotypes have led employers to offer men and women different jobs, with women usually being provided jobs with lower wages.

### **2.3 Gender-related Job Segregation**

Gender-related job segregation due to gender roles assigned to both men and women, exists in all societies and cultures and has led women into specified occupational categories and nature of work such as part-time or temporary work. Pre-defined gender

---

<sup>89</sup> Falkenburg, Loren and Mary Monachello, "Dual-Career and Dual-Income Families: Do They Have Different Needs?", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 9(4/5), (April/May 1990), 339-351.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Chusmir, Leonard, and Victoria Franks, "Stress and the Women Manager", *Training and Development Journal*, (October 1988), 66-70.

<sup>92</sup> Crampton, *opcit*, 92.

roles are engraved in the lifestyles and minds of males and females in societies around the world. Even "in traditional subsistence economies, the division of labour within the family was a very basic division, based on differences between sexes".<sup>93</sup> Therefore, job segregation in the work place followed the pattern of division of labour within the household.

The traditional view looks at "the public role of women [as] largely consigned to the private sphere where women held and still hold little power".<sup>94</sup> Women were "often given roles which have an element of 'caring' almost as an extension of the traditional female role as housewife and mother".<sup>95</sup> In Russian society, "a strong concept of the 'good women' also exist" where women are viewed as the "ethical, caring, responsible and nurturing" group.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, "'good women' are [also] expected to choose family over work".<sup>97</sup> Therefore, as women entered the work force, they participated in paid work similar to their given roles and responsibilities as homemakers or caregivers.

Women also participated in part-time employment in order to care for their children, fulfil their domestic responsibilities and continue to contribute financially towards the family income. Literature has termed part-time work as a "career killer [which is mostly] available at the lower levels of the organisation, where it offers no

---

<sup>93</sup> Hong, opcit, 11.

<sup>94</sup> Rhein, Wendy, "Feminization of Poverty: Unemployment in Russia", *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall 1998.

<sup>95</sup> Evetts, opcit, 75.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

opportunities of advancement".<sup>98</sup> Part-time work "commands relatively low salaries and restricts employee benefits such as pensions".<sup>99</sup> Some women opt for part-time work because they want to balance their role and responsibilities at home with their responsibilities at work. Their working hours are also affected because women are known to "take on the most of the burden for infant and child care."<sup>100</sup> The fact that there are more women undertaking part-time employment compared to men (within the European Union workforce) clearly highlights the difficult task women solely face in combining work with child care and home responsibilities.<sup>101</sup> It also indicates the "menial nature of most women's work [whereby] it is undertaken as a job rather than a career".<sup>102</sup> "Some women may [also] work temporarily -[until their child reaches school going age or until they are more independent]-while men consider working, [a] permanent state of affair".<sup>103</sup> The fact that women rather than men undertake part-time or temporary employment to combine work and home responsibilities only serves to reiterate society's assumption and bias of women's primary role as caregivers and homemakers.

Studies also highlight what "labour-market economists label [as] "atypical employment" which are often better suited to service industries, part-time, temporary, involving irregular or unusual hours or done on a contract basis".<sup>104</sup> The nature of "atypical employment" appeals to women who are "anxious to find a way of combining a

---

<sup>98</sup> Vinnicombe, Susan and N.L. Colwill, "The Essence of Women in Management", London: Prentice Hall, 1995.

<sup>99</sup> Vinnicombe, opcit, 55.

<sup>100</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Gender Issues Range from Salary Disparities to Harassment", InfoWorld, (November 1, 1999).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Killian, R.A., "The Working Woman: A Male Manager's View", American Management Association, 1971.

job with a family [and it is also women] whom have prove[n] to be more flexible and adaptable to this new way of working than men".<sup>105</sup> Alternately, because women's jobs typically pay less than men's jobs, few men can afford to quit work while their wives support the family or to work part-time so that they (men) can spend more time at home".<sup>106</sup>

As women's participation in the labour force increased, they entered both traditionally female and traditionally male occupations.<sup>107</sup> Blue-collar occupations, which include production jobs, craft jobs such as carpenters, electricians, transportation-related jobs and less-skilled jobs such as garbage collectors and construction labourers, remained the most male dominated occupations.<sup>108</sup> Studies show that there are "disproportionately small gains" in the number of women entering blue-collar employment.<sup>109</sup> Studies also point out to segregation among men and women in the manufacturing and service sectors. Studies suggest that occupations in the manufacturing sector such as steel-making or shipbuilding have traditionally [been] undertaken by men while occupations in the service sectors such as sales, clerical or care-giving have been undertaken by women.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Killian, *opcit*, 21.

<sup>105</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "For Better, For Worse", *The Economist*, (June 18 1998).

<sup>106</sup> Staggenborg, *opcit*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Jacobsen, *opcit*, 102.

<sup>108</sup> Jacobsen, *opcit*, 105.

<sup>109</sup> Reskin, B.F. and Patricia A. Roos, "Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations", Philadelphia: Temple University, 1990.

<sup>110</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "For Better, For Worse", *The Economist*, (June 18 1998).

Further data also indicate occupations favoured by women were clerical and service occupations in which women continue to enter in large numbers.<sup>111</sup> By 1970, these occupations were already feminised with further feminisation continuing throughout 1970s and 1980s. Women also participated in large numbers in office work.<sup>112</sup> "Modern office work [consisted of] the process of acquiring, storing, transforming, presenting and sending information. It become women's work to transform, store and send information and men's work to acquire information, assimilate and manipulate existing information and generate new information".<sup>113</sup> Women's participation in this feminised occupational category "did not improve their position in society [because] they were paid less, there was no career ladder for them and they were given the routine and less responsible tasks".<sup>114</sup> Their segregation into the world of office work and "their position in the office became a reflection of the patriarchal society they lived in".<sup>115</sup>

Gender-related segregation also persists within jobs. Women employed in male-dominated jobs such as blue-collar jobs "are more likely to be employed as semiskilled machine operators than as skilled craft-workers".<sup>116</sup> Research has also showed that "even when women are employed in the same occupational category as men [such as in blue collar work], they tend to be located in different industries. Women are more likely to be

---

<sup>111</sup> Schwartz, F.N., "Management Women and the New Facts of Life", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 67(1), (January - February 1989).

<sup>112</sup> Schwartz, *opcit*, 65.

<sup>113</sup> Morgall, Janine, "Typing Our Way to Freedom: Is it True That New Office Technology Can Liberate Women?: The Changing Experience of Women", London: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>115</sup> Morgall, *opcit*, 12.

<sup>116</sup> Reskin, *opcit*, 25.

employed in the non-durable goods sector whereas men are more likely [to be] employed in manufacturing, where wages and job benefits have traditionally been higher".<sup>117</sup>

A study on American working women and their entrance into the professional arena, revealed that in 1956, only 3 percent of law degrees were awarded to women.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, women of that time were discovered to be "over-represented among the less well paying jobs in law, such as jobs in the legal clinics".<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, in recent years, "women's presence in the professions have increased although they are still a numerical minority in many of the most senior positions".<sup>120</sup> The United States Department of Labour's (USDL) statistics for 1995, indicate though women constitute "half of all professionals", they only make up "8 percent of engineers, 22 percent of physicians, 13 percent of dentist, 31 percent of scientist and mathematicians, 11 percent of clergy, 25 percent of lawyers and 22 percent of professional athletics".<sup>121</sup> These figures compared individually for each occupational category show a small percentage of women's participation in the professions. The USDL statistics for that year also revealed that a substantially high percentage of women engaged in traditionally female work. The statistics reveal that women constituted 84 percent of nurses, 92 percent of dieticians, 98 percent of pre-school teachers, 84 percent of librarians, 69 percent of social workers and 81 percent of educational and vocational counsellors.<sup>122</sup> Meanwhile, further scrutiny also

---

<sup>117</sup> Reskin, *opcit*, 26.

<sup>118</sup> Chesanow, Neil, "The Mommy Track: What It Means to Women", *Women*, (October 1989).

<sup>119</sup> Kantrowitz, Barbara, "Advocating a 'Mommy Track'", *Newsweek*, (March 13, 1989).

<sup>120</sup> Anderson, *opcit*, 220.

<sup>121</sup> United States (US) Department of Labour, 1995.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*.

revealed that women were further segregated within the professions whereby they were "concentrated in the lower ranks and less prestigious specialities".<sup>123</sup>

Therefore literature clearly indicates that the work force is divided along the gender lines. Segregation among others inhibits competition for jobs which men have suffered with women's entry into the work place.<sup>124</sup> More importantly for my study is that gender-related job segregation causes wage discrimination among working women.

## **2.4 Human Capital**

The human capital variable provides an alternative explanation in understanding the gap between the earnings of men and women. Human capital theory provides a theoretical explanation towards women's relatively low wages by associating wage levels to the levels of human capital such as education, training and experience which are embedded in men and women.<sup>125</sup> In short, the theory explains "wage differentials as a result of different characteristics of workers".<sup>126</sup> Literature tells us that human capital "consists of the things workers can do to make themselves more productive".<sup>127</sup> The theory assumes that, wage differences reflect differences in human capital in a competitive economic system.<sup>128</sup> "According to this perspective, the quality of labour

---

<sup>123</sup> Anderson, opcit, 240.

<sup>124</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Balancing Act", *The Economist*, (June 18, 1998).

<sup>125</sup> Redclift, opcit. 5.

<sup>126</sup> Anderson, opcit, 240.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.



supplied by men and women varies because of such things as different patterns of labour-force participation, levels of education and prior training and experience".<sup>129</sup>

However, there is literature, which provides contrasting views regarding wage differentials and working women. These views indicate that women "take up jobs that are less demanding in terms of 'skill' or time commitment due to domestic responsibilities, [which leads to] lower wages in women's jobs [due] to their lower human capital".<sup>130</sup> However, other literature also states that "women workers were initially placed in jobs that utilised few prior skills, be they mental [or] physical [but] as they learned, they became more productive".<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, we learn that studies provide us with three explanations towards understanding the link between human capital acquired by women and lower wages they receive. The first view states that women invest less in education, training and experience, which affects the quality of work they produce therefore leading to lower wages. The second view indicates that women participate in less demanding jobs which pay low wages because they want to balance work with the role as homemaker and child-raiser. The last view states that women are first placed in jobs that utilise few prior skills they have, therefore initially they may receive lower wages than men, but as they progress and learn through continued working, their quality of work improves. These views are essential in tackling the influence of human capital on wage discrimination.

---

<sup>129</sup> Anderson, *opcit*, 240.

<sup>130</sup> Bacchi, C. L., "Women, Policy and Politics: Pay Equity: On Whose Terms?", London: SAGE Publications, 1999.

<sup>131</sup> Goldin, Claudia, "Understanding the Gender Gap", New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Formal education consists of primary or elementary, secondary or junior and senior high school and college or university education. The role of education and wage received is shown in the trend whereby "men and women working upon graduation from college or university will receive a yearly salary which is higher than a yearly salary received upon graduating from high school but they will receive a lower salary than if they had worked continuously since high school".<sup>132</sup> It has been noted that while "both men and women make substantially higher yearly incomes than do high school graduates of the same age, women receive a greater relative [wage] than do men".<sup>133</sup> This indicates that investing in extended formal education influences wages received by women as they enter the workforce. Women with higher academic qualification command higher wage than women with less academic qualifications. Even though women's education level play a part in determining the wage she receives as she enters the work force, the wage she receives at each entry point is lower than her male colleagues. Studies show that even "the best educated and best trained women earn the least in comparison with their equally trained male counterparts. Wage discrimination widened with each year of job experience and each year of education beyond high school" among men and women.<sup>134</sup>

Literature further indicates that when "women do not receive the education and training needed to qualify for [certain] jobs" they are "denied access to [certain] jobs which social scientist have acknowledged be a "form of institutionalised discrimination".<sup>135</sup> Discrimination against women results in them receiving less or no

---

<sup>132</sup> Jacobsen, *opcit*, 244.

<sup>133</sup> Jacobsen, *opcit*, 244.

<sup>134</sup> Goldin, *opcit*, 131.

<sup>135</sup> Anderson, *opcit*, 242.

education and training. The likelihood of attaining work experience in skilled work is hampered by discrimination in education. Furthermore, "differences between the earnings of males and females can be attributed to the considerably longer work and occupational experience of the male in the labour force. Males also have longer job ladders and garnered skills valued across forms and occupations".<sup>136</sup> With no work experience and training from previous work, employers are less willing to offer women skilled jobs, which usually demand higher wages.

## 2.5 Wage Discrimination

During the period of the booming economy and tight labour market in America, women were saviours to many employers.<sup>137</sup> Working women "usually cost less to employ than men and are more prepared to be flexible and less inclined to kick up a fuss if working conditions are poor".<sup>138</sup> "Women all over the world, on average are paid less than men - typically 20 percent to 30 percent less - for similar kinds of work".<sup>139</sup> When women earn "lower pay, [it] usually means [they receive] lower or no benefits and [therefore receive] a smaller pension on retirement".<sup>140</sup> In Canada, where shifts in labour force participation points towards more women engaging in full-time and part-time employment, "the majority of working women are still found in only a few occupations [which are] the lowest paid with the fewest opportunities".<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, "women who

---

<sup>136</sup> Goldin, *opcit*, 131.

<sup>137</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "For Better, For Worse", *The Economist*, (June 18, 1998).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Lynn, *opcit*, 42.

have entered previously male-dominated occupations still earn less money than their male colleagues".<sup>142</sup>

In addition, women employed "in occupations where lots of women [and] few men work; pay levels tend to be low".<sup>143</sup> This has been noted to occur in occupations such as "sales, cleaning and catering, [while] slightly less so in jobs such as nursing and teaching, where the main employer is the public sector".<sup>144</sup>

Women also encounter lower wages when they start a family. Literature confirms this with studies revealing that as "women start having children, their relative pay drops and the more children they have, the more their pay falls behind".<sup>145</sup> The rationale for this tendency is that women shoulder the main responsibility of caring and raising the children therefore leading "women on average put in far fewer hours at their jobs than men, so their weekly or annual pay lags even further behind men's than their hourly pay".<sup>146</sup>

## **2.6 Malaysian Working Women**

This section deals with literature specific to Malaysian working women. The

---

<sup>142</sup> Lynn, *opcit*, 43.

<sup>143</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "A Gentle Invasion", *The Economist*, (June 18, 1998).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

discussion will show trends in the local setting which is similar to the plight of working women around the world. Wage discrimination is a serious equality problem, which is also faced by local working women.

This section will proceed with highlighting the influence and existence of sex-role stereotypes, gender-related job segregation and gender differences in human capital in various settings in the country which effect working women everyday. The colonial background in Malaysia's history provides one explanation for the emergence of sex-role stereotypes. Current settings such as the federal constitution and labour laws, government policies and education system indicate that sex-role stereotype acquired earlier on and developed and reinforced along the way resulted in gender-related job segregation and gender difference in human capital acquired. However, the consequences of the ~~pass~~<sup>†</sup> and current settings still plague Malaysian women with the dilemma of wage discrimination.

### **2.6.1 Sex-role Stereotype**

Sex-role stereotype is evident in Malaysia. The Malaysian women's "own image of what [her] roles and behaviours should be and the stereotypes others have about women are the primary explanation for advancement problems unique to [them]".<sup>147</sup> Literature highlights the "preference of 'masculinity' over 'femininity' in Malaysian

---

<sup>147</sup> Jamilah Othman, "Handling Conflicts with Organisational Members: The Experience of Malaysian Malay Women Human Resource Managers in the Banking and Finance Industry". In Maimunah Ismail and Aminah Ahmad (Eds), *Women & Work: Challenges in Industrialising Nations*, London: Asean Academic Press Ltd, 1999.

organisations which seems to put women at a disadvantage in the organisations".<sup>148</sup> It is also found that in small foreign companies in Malaysia, "there are clear divisions between what is defined as men's work and women's work".<sup>149</sup> This preference indicates the inferior value placed on feminine qualities. Malaysian organisations may look at the skills, knowledge and capabilities women bring into the work place as lower value than that offered by men. This in turn is translated into lower wages for women.

### 2.6.2 Gender-related Job Segregation

The "employment structure [in Malaysia] is intensely segregated by gender".<sup>150</sup> Similar to women in other countries, Malaysian women also "predominate [occupations] which portray low skills, low wages and little opportunities for career advancement".<sup>151</sup> In addition, they have also been observed to concentrate in more "low-skilled jobs and manual intensive operations and [work] as secretaries"<sup>152</sup>. A study conducted in the local telecommunication industry, indicates that the "clerical workforce is slowly becoming feminised and that lower level data operators are largely women".<sup>153</sup> This trend implies that local women are also subjected to occupational segregation because of their gender. Values and pre-assigned roles dictate women be segregation into occupational categories which best reflect these stereotypes. This trend is important to this study as it highlights

---

<sup>148</sup> Asmah Omar, "Unequal Access to or Inadequate Educational and Training Opportunities at All Level. Post Beijing National Conference, 6-8 May 1996. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

<sup>149</sup> Lie, Merete and Ragnhild, "Renegotiating Local Values: Working Women and Foreign Industry in Malaysia", Surrey: Antony Rowe Ltd., 1994.

<sup>150</sup> Aminah, *opcit*, 9.

<sup>151</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 18.

<sup>152</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 15.

<sup>153</sup> Ng, C.S Cecilia and Carol Yong, "Information Technology, Gender and Employment: A Case Study of the Telecommunication Industry in Malaysia", The United Nations University.

the on-going plight of women being segregation into low skilled jobs, which provide no opportunities for increasing human capital and subject them to low wages.

Their participation by industry shows that they are mostly "concentrated in the light industries, such as the garment and electronics industries, [while] men are associated with heavy industries".<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, it also observed that the sexual division of labour is very prominent in industries in terms of the distribution of male and female workers by industrial branch".<sup>155</sup> Therefore indicating that Malaysian women are segregated into and within occupational categories.

The government of Malaysia "is the single largest employer in the country".<sup>156</sup> However, even in the public sector, it is found that women are not "represented to the same extent as their men counterparts in the occupational structure at [the] professional and sub-professional levels".<sup>157</sup> Overall, Malaysian women "constitute one third of the labour force".<sup>158</sup> "Though majority of Malaysian women are still involved in low-skilled [and] labour intensive jobs, their participation in professional and technical occupations is [however] increasing".<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Ng, *opcit*, 2.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 16.

<sup>157</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 15.

<sup>158</sup> Sha'ban Muftah Ismail, "Women, Economic Growth and Development in Malaysia", Petaling Jaya, Selangor: IBS Buku Sdn Bhd, 1997.

<sup>159</sup> Sha'ban, *opcit*, 100.

### **2.6.3 Human Capital**

"Sex-based socialisation and stereotyping of women's education and skills training is declining, but it is still a reality today" in the country.<sup>160</sup> In Malaysia, the "lack of educational opportunities have limited women's occupational possibilities in areas such as higher education".<sup>161</sup> "The challenge for Malaysian now has shifted towards the quality of work sought by women rather than to work or not".<sup>162</sup> The quality of work produced by women is improved through investing in skill and training.

Malaysia has also recognised the link between education and higher wages for women. The government has formulated policies to "expand the education opportunities and services via formal and non-formal systems of learning. Through education, women's work[ing] skills have also improved significantly allowing them to earn higher salaries".<sup>163</sup>

### **2.6.4 Wage Discrimination**

As a result of sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation and gender differences in human capital, Malaysian women are facing wage discrimination in the workforce. Gender-related job segregation not only exists "in terms of occupation and position but also in terms of wage and earnings whereby women receive lower wages and

---

<sup>160</sup> Sha'ban, opcit, 100.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ng, opcit, 2.



earn less for the same occupation in the private sector".<sup>164</sup> It has also been reported that "in the industrial sector, gender differences in wages exists in favour of males, especially higher up the hierarchy of occupations".<sup>165</sup> A survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Manpower highlighted that in "1980, the average monthly wage rate paid to female workers were between MYR9 and MYR209 less than that paid to male workers in similar occupations".<sup>166</sup> "This position was, however, an improvement though marginal, compared with the differential in 1974 of between MYR27 and MYR243".<sup>167</sup> In 1992, figures on average monthly salaries among men and women in the manufacturing industry in the country indicated that women received an average monthly salary of 15 percent to 22 percent less than men in the clerical, supervisory, technical and managerial occupations".<sup>168</sup> All these figures convey a message of wage discrimination facing working women.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework of Study**

This section provides a conceptual framework of the study. The literature review presented above on the various important variables of the study will be presented in a diagram and the link between each variable to wage discrimination will be emphasised. The basis of this study begins with two approaches - early childhood socialisation and socio-structural coercion while the variables of the study are sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation, human capital and wage discrimination. The diagram also further

---

<sup>164</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 15.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Malaysia: Treasury, "Economic Report 1982/1983.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

outlines the link between the variables and the equality clauses (*like work, work rated as equivalent and work of equal value*) used in the research methodology.

For clarity and continuity the link between the basis of the study (the two approaches) and the variables are presented in Diagram 1.1. The discussion will begin with establishing a link (1) between the two approaches and the first variable, sex-role stereotype. I will then proceed to discuss the sex-role stereotype - wage discrimination link (2a). The sex-role stereotype - gender-related job segregation - wage discrimination link (2b) and the sex-role stereotype - human capital - wage discrimination link (2c) will follow accordingly.

The first link (1), relates how early childhood socialisation and socio-structural coercion causes sex-role stereotype to form among children and men and women. Children learn through observation, behaviour associated with both their parents.<sup>169</sup> "Eventually, through differential reinforcement from parents, teachers and peers, children begin to know what they can and cannot do".<sup>170</sup> They begin to "anticipate the consequences of various behaviours which leads them to value gender 'appropriate' behaviours because they are rewarded and gender 'inappropriate' behaviours because they are punished or ignored".<sup>171</sup> During this stage also, they will learn the "label ('boy' or 'girl') appropriate to the rewarded behaviours and learn to apply that label to him or

---

<sup>168</sup> Maimunah, *opcit*, 15.

<sup>169</sup> Kessler, Suzanne and Wendy McKenna, "The Changing Experience of Women: Development Aspects of Gender", London: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

<sup>170</sup> Kessler, *opcit*, 75.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*.

herself".<sup>172</sup> Through generalisation, children learn to value that label since it stands for valued behaviours".<sup>173</sup> It is also during this period that male and female personalities are created as children internalise their capacities, values and motivations appropriate to their gender roles".<sup>174</sup> Though there are several theories housed under this general approach, all argue that the most important causes of adult gender difference are located in the early childhood experiences or especially those that take place within the nuclear family.<sup>175</sup> Gender appropriate and inappropriate behaviours learnt during this stage among boys and girls are the basis of stereotypes associated with gender.

As boys and girls grow to become men and women, the second approach plays an important role. The socio-structural coercion approach stresses the ways in which social institutions, which are created and controlled by men, shape women's option and thus coerce their behaviour.<sup>176</sup> The approach "begins with the assumption that men as a group dominate women as a group."<sup>177</sup> Women also constitute what social scientists refer to as "'muted groups' while men constitute 'dominant groups'".<sup>178</sup> The phenomenon of muted and dominant groups is obvious within the labour market when women occupy the same occupation but are employed at different tasks from men.<sup>179</sup> The muted position of women can be used to "control [them] and direct the focus of people working in the

---

<sup>172</sup> Kessler, *opcit*, 76.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Gerson, *opcit*, 22.

<sup>175</sup> Gerson, *opcit*, 23.

<sup>176</sup> Gerson, *opcit*, 25.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Ardener, S., "Perceiving Women", London: Malaby Press, 1975.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

organisation and reinforce the unequal power structure of work and the work place".<sup>180</sup>

"The domination of men in most sectors in the labour force, means that they have great advantage over women in determining the definition of work and occupational divisions". Therefore, sex-role stereotypes developed and learnt during the early childhood socialisation stage is continuously reinforced during the socio-structural coercion stage because of man's dominance as a group in and outside the work place. Therefore, the result of these two approaches on boys and girls and men and women is the formation of sex-role stereotypes. The following highlights the sex-role stereotype - wage discrimination link (2a).

<sup>181</sup>Link (2a) shows that the "political consequences of male dominance are such that women learn the role of subordinate and that role can become self-perpetuating".<sup>182</sup> Sex-role stereotype causes women's labour to be devalued and thus they are poorly paid.<sup>183</sup> Even when men and women perform 'similar' or 'broadly similar work' under the instance of *like work*, women receive lower wages compared to men because of the devaluation of women's work. The instance of *like work* is important towards the discussion of the sex-role stereotype - wage discrimination link because it points towards the role of sex-role stereotype in devaluating women's work in relation to men's work. The muted position or subordinate role or position of women as a result of the socio-structural coercion approach, translates into a lesser value assigned to the work women

---

<sup>180</sup> Sachs, Judyth, "Experiencing Hegemong: Women, Work and Education". In Poole, Millicent (Ed), Education and Work, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd., 1992.

<sup>181</sup> Sachs, opcit, 170.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

do compared to men. Therefore, women receive lower wages than men even when engaged in *like work*, simply because women do it. This is wage discrimination.

In the sex-role stereotype - gender-related job segregation - wage discrimination link (2b), sex-role stereotype causes women to be excluded from certain jobs because these occupations are defined in masculine terms.<sup>184</sup> Stereotypical assumptions regarding women's domestic role segregates them into feminised occupational categories or into part-time or temporary employment. Therefore, gender-related job segregation directs women to undertake work that are different from men. However, the work they do may be *work rated as equivalent* if characteristics such as decision-making or amount of supervision are thought to be comparable or equivalent to the work performed by the man. Legal case reviews indicate that even when this is the case, women receive lower wages than men. This is wage discrimination. The instance of *work rated as equivalent* is important towards the discussion of gender-related segregation and wage discrimination because it acknowledges that men and women perform different work. Importantly, it stipulates that even when they perform different jobs, their work can be compared. The method of comparing the work performed by men and women in different jobs is carried out through a job evaluation scheme or study. More information on the job evaluation scheme or study will be explained in Chapter 3.

In the sex-role stereotype - gender differences in human capital - wage discrimination link (2c), sex-role stereotypes also influence women's access and opportunities into education and training. Women's options and opportunities are limited

towards pursuing extended formal education as it is presumed that they will stay at home and care for the children. As a result, women acquire lesser human capital than men. The fact they are concentrated in low-skilled jobs, repetitive or manual labour jobs does nothing to help them acquire on-the-job training. Stereotypes regarding women, which view them as only care givers and homemakers also prevent employers from training them as they (employers) assume women will either quit her job when she gets married or that she will spent less time at work due to domestic responsibilities. The gender differences in human capital acquired among men and women most certainly results in women working in jobs, which require lesser skill than men. Jobs that require lesser skill will also award lower wages. This is wage discrimination because women access to education and training has been limited due to stereotypical assumptions. However, this still allows her to equal pay for *work of equal value* if the demand the work makes on her is of equal value to that of a man in the same employment.<sup>185</sup> The instance of *work of equal value* is important to the discussion of gender differences in human capital because it acknowledges that men and women have invested and acquired varying degrees of human capital but the demand it takes to perform and complete these individual jobs are of equal value.

The links between in the variables of this study highlights two paths leading towards wage discrimination. The first path shows sex-role stereotype as a direct cause of wage discrimination (2a) while the second path shows sex-role stereotype as an indirect cause of wage discrimination (2b and 2c). In the second path, gender-related job

---

<sup>184</sup> Sachs, opcit, 171.

<sup>185</sup> Smith, opcit, 396.

segregation and gender-differences in human capital, (as a result of sex-role stereotype)  
directly causes wage discrimination against working women.

Diagram 1.1

The link between sex-role stereotype, gender-related job segregation and human capital with wage discrimination.

