

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian labor market is interesting in that the country has grown rapidly in recent years, and changed its structure rather dramatically. The rise of export industries (often employing young, single women) has been an important component of the growth success (Jamilah et al., 1996). Prior to 1970, the labor market was characterized by extreme segmentation along ethnic lines, which the government has made strenuous attempts to change, as part of the New Economic Policy. The objectives of eradicating poverty and restructuring a multiracial society by removing the identification of economic functions with race are manifest through a number of quantitative and qualitative changes (Pramanik, 1994). Since then, Malaysian economy has undergone a rapid structural transformation from an economy primarily dependent on a few primary commodities until achieving the status of a manufacturing-based economy. The implementation of National Women Policy in 1989, Industrial Master Plan and other government policies, have eventually increases the share of women workers in various sectors. This is due to the flowing in of international capital, increasing training and educational level for women, late-marriage trend and society acceptance of women workers (Noraini et al., 1996). Considerable research focusing on female-male differences in a variety of work-related areas should accompany this fundamental restructuring of labor force.

Work either for male and female, is a central and defining characteristics of life for many people. What we do at work actually defines who we are. It is a prerequisite for

personal fulfillment and prestige in our society. Understanding the individual experience of work, individual behavior in the organization, what motivates people to accomplish this sometimes-burdensome task, and for purposes of this present research, the gender differences in work culture is important.

AN OVERVIEW ON WORK CULTURE

In present study, two main elements of work culture are work values and job satisfaction. On a conceptual level, one focus has been on work values as preferences (Pryor, 1981) or as derived from needs (Super, 1973). Other researches have focused on work values as a system of ethics. Researchers show different results in explaining gender differences in work values as work preferences. The results of one set of studies (Brief and Aldag, 1975; Brief and Oliver, 1976) suggest no substantial gender differences in work values. The results of several others, however (Bartol and Manhardt, 1979; Siegfried et al., 1981) indicate substantial gender differences. Men tended to be more concerned about money, independence, security and long term career goals, whereas, women tended to be more people oriented, environment oriented and preoccupied with short term career goals (Pryor, 1983).

The social scientists provide different explanations behind the substantial gender differences in work values. Mainstream economic theory assumes that labor markets operate in a non-discriminating fashion, rewarding workers for their productivity. Thus if women are worse off than men, it is because they are less productive workers. Characteristics that they assume increase productivity: the skills, experience

and commitment that workers bring to their jobs. Human-capital theorists assume that women's orientation to their families inhibits their investment in education, training and experience and thus makes women less productive than men (Becker, 1964).

The gender-role socialization theory addressed the assumption that women are oriented primarily to their families rather than their careers. Gender-role socialization is the process by which families, peers, schools and the media teach a society's expectations of "appropriate" dress, speech, personality, leisure activities and aspiration for each sex (Weitzman, 1979). The different socialization of females and males may incline them to seek jobs that society deemed acceptable for their sex. Socialization may also contribute to a tendency for men and women to have different values that affect their work lives such as, how important it is to have authority on the job or make lots of money. Besides that, a variety of explanations has been offered to explain the contradictory results, including the influence of assessment tools, research techniques, study samples and changing feminine views of work and family.

In addition, a considerable portion of business ethics literature has emphasized how individuals establish criteria for an ethical/moral decision and how this influences decision-making behavior. Much research in the West focused on the Protestant Work Ethics (PWE) and, to a lesser extent, other so-called 'ethics'. Weber (1958) proposed that the Protestant work ethic provided the moral justification for the accumulation of wealth. According to Weber's view of Protestant theology, work is a

divine calling and must therefore be done to the glory of God; worldly success is a sign of grace. Characteristics of individuals subscribing to the PWE include industriousness and self-discipline (Feather, 1984).

Differ from the West, work carried out in accordance with the *shari'ah* is a form of jihad and is inseparable from the religious and spiritual significance associated with it. The basis of all work ethics in Islam is to be found in the inescapable moral character of all human action and the responsibility which a human being bears of his or her actions, not only before the employer or employee, but also in relation to the work itself, which must be executed with the utmost perfection of which the actor or worker is capable. For instance, Islamic work ethics is very much reflected by the intertwining of work, prayer and leisure. The hours of work is regularly punctuated by prayer (Syed Othman al-Habshi, 1993).

The last element discussed was job satisfaction. Early literature focused on the two-factor theory originated from a study by Herzberg, Mausner and Synderman (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to the theory, the primary determinants are the intrinsic aspects of the job called motivators, whereas, the primary determinants of job dissatisfaction are extrinsic factors (Nathan, 1970).

One view of job satisfaction holds that women are satisfied with jobs in which they can interact with others in a supportive and cooperative way, even though the jobs may be only minimally demanding and challenging (Mason, 1995).

The most crucial criticism in the dimension of job satisfaction is the notion that any observed differences in job satisfaction are not due to the influence of sex per se, but rather to the effects of several variables which co-vary with sex. As Saucer and York (1978) demonstrated, significant, observed sex differences in job satisfaction 'washed out' when the effects of age, education, tenure in the organization and present position were held constant through analysis of co-variance. Another criticism in this area concerns the fact that these studies have been done at different times over a 50 year period in which they have been enormous social and occupational changes, especially in sex-role stereotyping. Not only more women work than ever before, but also more have assumed higher managerial jobs.

Due to various claims, the present study should be seen important because the socio-cultural context of Malaysia is sharply different from that of Western countries and therefore furnishes a crucial test for gender differences in dimensions of work values and job satisfaction particularly to the majority population of Malaysia, the Malay Muslims.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There are two types of objectives in this study, namely, general objective and specific objectives. These objectives are stated as follows: -

General Objective

The present study tries to examine the demographic characteristics, work values and job satisfaction between gender of Malay employees.

Specific Objectives

The present study tries to have a comparative analysis on Malay work culture by:

- i) Identifying respondents' personal background (age, marital status, number of children, area zone, place of stay, highest education level), employment background (job sector, job rank, job tenure, part time job) and financial background (income, savings, land, shares).
- ii) Identifying respondents' level of Islamic education and understanding between male and female Malay employees.
- iii) Identifying the work culture of male and female Malay employees, which covers aspects on work values and job satisfaction.
- iv) Determining whether Islamic education and understanding have a significant impact on the work culture of male and female Malay employees.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

- i) This study contributes literature to the theory of gender differences in work values and job satisfaction, particularly considering religious education and understanding as one of the dependent variables.
- ii) Discussions on work values, defined as ethical work behavior, are crucial to the current situation in Malaysia. Concern has been expressed in recent years over certain acts and behaviors, which are repugnant to good work values. The study provides thorough information on the relationship between religious background and work values.
- iii) Clear understanding on the gender differences in work values, defined as importance of preferences at work, will support the organizations' leaders. Government agencies and employees can organize various programs to motivate employees for higher productivity and efficiency at work.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Main elements in work culture are operationally defined and given as follows:-

Gender

The terms sex and gender have been used synonyms but these terms have different meaning. Sex is used for a classification based on human biology. Gender, in

contrast, refers to a classification that societies construct to exaggerate the differences between males and females and to maintain sex inequality (Reskin and Padaric, 1994).

Gender differentiation

Social processes that exaggerate the differences between males and females and create new ones where no natural differences exist (Reskin, 1988)

Gender Socialization Process

The process by which families, peers, schools and the media teach a society's expectations of 'appropriate' dress, speech, personality, leisure activities and aspiration for each sex (Weitzman, 1979).

Values

It is defined as the constellation of likes, dislikes, viewpoints, should, inner inclinations, rational and irrational judgments, prejudices and association patterns that determine a person's view of the world. It is the guidelines and beliefs that a person uses when confronted with a situation in which a choice must be made (Luthans, 1995).

Work values

Work related values, or simply described as work values, refer to the evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of preferences (Dose, 1997).

Intrinsic Work Values

Preference to accomplish work for own sake and incline towards social aspects rather than acquiring any material or social rewards.

Extrinsic Work Values

Preference to accomplish work for acquiring pay, promotions or security.

Job Satisfaction

A pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job extensions (Locke, 1976).

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH

This small study is organized in five chapters. Chapter I, the first chapter is an 'introduction', which includes an overview on work culture, significance, objectives of the research, operational definition and organization of research. Chapter II is on literature review, theoretical framework, problem statement and hypotheses. It covers literature on elements in work culture, previous studies on gender analysis in work culture and Islamic values in work culture. Chapter III concentrates on research design and methodology. Topics on data collection, subjects, measures and procedures will be discussed here. Chapter IV presents the findings, analysis and interpretation of data. Statistical analysis will be done to show significant variables found in the study. Finally, Chapter V is a 'conclusion', which comprises limitations,

suggestions and recommendations from the study.