

CHAPTER - 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women's contribution in the work place is being more recognized today. Many women are now working outside home along with men in the working force. Women used to be working only in places and jobs that were considered feminine such as in schools and doing clerical jobs but due to the change of men's and women's roles today, coupled with the increasing opportunities for education and the rapid growth of economy, women are now entering workplaces that were traditionally dominated by men, and many men now are considering shifting into jobs that were traditionally linked to women. These changes in roles, economy and education have brought along the changes in the way people view jobs as no longer belonging to only men or women. Therefore, it is believed that gender stratification in workplace is becoming less alarming now.

However, it is arguable since there are still cases of occupational gender-based segregation and although there are more men and women are now working in non-traditional gender-related jobs, still the public consider men and women to be more suitable working in different fields and areas. For example, women are always expected and associated with more feminine, less time consuming and less physically demanding works such as administration, education and care. In contrast, men are associated with more masculine and physically demanding works like construction and engineering. Clerical jobs and nursing were examples of the type of jobs that men generally refuse to take because these jobs usually offer lower payment; provide little opportunity for progression and development.

Connor (2010) in his article appeared in *Business Ethics*, an online quarterly magazine, discusses a finding of a survey done by Catalyst (a non-profit organization focusing on research on men and women working in the business industry). In that survey, it was found that in 2008 and 2009, less than 20 percent of companies in the Fortune 500 had three or more women occupying top positions. This lack of interest to let women move upward and occupy top positions is part of inequality since it is only in 2009 that the U.S Securities and Exchange Commission announced a new rule for companies to reveal information on the way nominees for top positions are selected. Thus, before 2009, the criteria and reasons for selection of candidates for top positions were not disclosed. Therefore, it is not known whether women were less preferred to be picked up as leaders to occupy important positions in companies because they cannot meet the standard and criteria of selection or because they were being stopped from progressing because they do not have masculine qualities.

In situations where women were less preferred, as it usually happens due to the “glass ceiling” phenomenon- as mentioned by Lips (1993) who states that usually it is difficult for women to move upward in their career as most of the top positions are mostly reserved for men and due to the “glass ceiling” phenomenon that serves as a barrier in the progress of women’s career where skilled and qualified women were subtly forbidden to move upward in their career and overpower men stopping them from moving to top rank positions. Apart from using female’s physical weaknesses and stressing on their feminine qualities as excuses to prefer men, women have always been considered second as opposed to men, making them the second choice for such employment.

Gender stratification starts during the childhood days itself and people grew up believing that both genders have specific and different roles to play in the society. Eitzen and Baca-Zin (1994) said that women usually have lower position and lesser power of control in a family and this can also be observed in the workforce where men usually are the ones doing the job of controlling and managing, especially in top positions in organizations. The society started differentiating the types of jobs suitable for men and women based on the typical stereotyped qualities of men and women. This could be one of the many reasons for the issue of gender stratification in workplace that is passed down from generation to generation and strengthened by the constant public portrayal of gendered difference in media and society.

There are several beliefs when it comes to the roles played, expectations and status of men and women in the society. Traditionally, men are considered more powerful in the society and so they hold the responsibility to work and provide for the family. Women, on the other hand, are considered more suitable to stay at home and take care of the family. These kinds of perceptions are believed to be coming from different physical and emotional attributes that both genders possess, leading to inequality in job opportunities. Azizan Baharuddin (2003) says that the family, society and culture where one is brought up are powerful influences in stereotyping the interest of men and women in choosing the subjects of their study which later influence on the type of jobs after their graduation. Thus, growing up with the idea that men and women have different capabilities and expectations make it possible for them to choose different subjects to study and different working environment and areas to work after their graduation.

Gender stratification does not actually begin when a person starts working but it indeed starts and exists at the entry level, during the first process of employment itself. That is when employers limit the gender of their future employees through the requirement list presented in the advertisements given to fill up the existing vacancies. By listing gender in the job requirements, the issue of gender stratification in workplace assumes a new meaning with the trend of excluding a specific gender for a specific position in job advertisements. Muhammad Shahriar Haque (2005) states in his study that since there is no explanation for the requirements listed in the job advertisements, it is not known whether these requirements, especially in terms of gender (in the advertised positions), have any relevance in order for the worker to be able to perform job. Thus, there is no justification as to whether it is really important for one to belong to a particular gender in order to be able to get the position advertised and this is discriminating especially if someone is academically qualified and competent for a certain position but find it difficult to get employment opportunity on the basis of his or her gender.

Being a part of the social process, advertisements in media compose and encourage explicit implication of meaning as agreed and shared by the dominant group using language that is inculcated with specific meanings. Language used in advertisements and other printed media is a powerful influence in shaping men and women's idea with reference to the suitable jobs. According to Ashby and Wittmaier (1978), women who are exposed to career information containing non-traditional role models are less stereotyping in terms of choosing and rating the traditional gender-type jobs. Since these job advertisements with gender exclusionary expressions appear in public newspapers that are accessible for everyone, the society is always exposed to the idea that a particular job is better suited for a specific gender group. Therefore, job seekers always have to succumb to these exclusions

when looking for jobs and this can be a frustrating situation when they realize that they are not eligible to apply for certain jobs that have listed gender as part of the requirement. As these discriminatory advertisements appear in public, it reflects the acceptance of the society towards the inequality that exists in the employment process. In addition, it also reflects the administrative control concerning the equal representation and opportunity for both genders in the job market.

Advertisements that appear in media have become a part of our life. They influence us a lot in our day-to-day life style, especially when it comes to choosing things for ourselves. Our exposure to many advertisements does affect our behavior and the way we interact with each other in our social set up. Bar-Tal (1997) states that information received from the media are viewed as valid and informative making it as one of the most influential means of forming stereotypes in the society. Men are often portrayed as having higher status in employments on television as compared to women and such a distribution of occupational roles reinforce gender stereotypes. Thus, people are often bombarded with the idea that men and women belong to different occupational roles. Being one of the most viewed types of advertisements, job advertisements do have their own power to influence and affect the society's beliefs and perceptions towards gender segregation in workplace. As concluded by Ashby and Wittmaier (1978), the images and language used in the media affect the perception towards gendered-job suitability among teenagers and adults. This, coupled with many educational materials used in the educational institutions that portray gender-specific occupations for men and women, shape the mindset of the young generation to think that men and women should work in different areas. In Malaysia itself, many of the textbooks used in schools continuously portray men and women in pictures and texts as playing traditional, gendered roles as reported by Saedah Siraj (1990) and Bahiyah Dato' Hj.

Abdul Hamid, Mohd Subakir Mohd Yasin, Kesumawati Abu Bakar, Yuen Chee Keong & Azhar Jalaludin (2008).

Advertisers (who are the employers) whenever they advertise for vacancies in their organizations, often indirectly manipulate job seekers by limiting the gender of hopeful applicants who wish to apply for the job and this is done by listing out the gender requirement for the positions advertised. This is a real concern for the society because job seekers will be forced to believe that in order to be able to secure a position in a particular profession, they have to come under a specific gender group. Muhammad Shahriar Haque (2005) says that since employers (advertisers) make it a point to list gender as part of the requirement in job advertisements, it discouraged potential applicants if they do not fulfill the gender requirement required for the positions advertised. So, gender stratification will continue to be an issue as men and women will continue to work in places that are traditionally related to them.

This exclusionary practice in job advertisements should be addressed as it can deprive potential applicants (despite their gender) from applying, which later on will become an obstacle to the progression and development of the society. Other than reflecting the social and cultural beliefs in the society, these advertisements are also influential in shaping the mindset and behavior of the potential job seekers who are the future assets of the society. Thus, the hope and expectation to achieve gender equality in society seems to be difficult to achieve inequality and segregation still exists in the society, in the form of gendered exclusions, at the entry level of job market.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Reskin (1993) states that the level of gender segregation in most jobs and organizations remain large despite significant changes in the composition of the labour force and the legal environment. Since listing gender in job advertisements can discourage potential applicants to apply for jobs on the basis of gender specification, advertisements containing gender exclusionary expressions is one of the causes of the issue of gender segregation in most jobs and organisations. In Malaysia itself, job advertisements with gender exclusionary expressions are published in printed newspapers. Therefore, job advertisements that appear in local newspapers actually reveal that this kind of exclusionary practice is going on continuously. This can sometimes stop job seekers from applying because they start feeling that they are not suitable and qualified for the position because their gender is not preferred for the position advertised.

The use of different types of expressions concerning preference for men and women in job advertisements can show how men and women are represented in the media and the way they are perceived and treated for in the society. In addition, as Dijk (1997) points out that study of any written text and oral communication can show how those with power can use language to manipulate and influence the mind and actions of the people for their own interest. Thus, analysing the effect of these gender exclusionary expressions in printed job advertisements can show how employers and companies have the power to control and influence the public (specifically job seekers) in terms of gendered-job suitability by using gender exclusionary expressions in their advertisements.

Early in 2010, the issue of increasing number of female employment in the civil service was brought up by Ahmad Shah Mohd Zin, the Secretary-General of the Congress of Unions of Employees of Public and Civil Service (Cuepacs). He also expressed his concern of the influence of the trend to the nation's growth in the long run. He further commented saying that the gender equality policy should be carefully implemented so that the balanced number of men and women in the civil service will not be affected because more women are now seen to be climbing to higher positions in the civil service.

It is mentioned in the Malaysian Federal Constitution that everyone has equal rights as a Malaysian. Article 8 (1) and (2) and Article 136 in the Federal Constitution states that:

(1) All persons are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law.

(2) Except as expressly authorised by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment.

(136) All persons of whatever race in the same grade in the service of the Federation shall, subject to the terms and conditions of their employment, be treated impartially.

In Article 8 (1), protection against gender discrimination is guaranteed but in Article 8 (2), the protection against gender discrimination is not mentioned as only discrimination based on religion, race and place of birth are mentioned. Furthermore, Article 8(2) and 136 state that protection against gender discrimination is guaranteed for those in the public sectors but not for those working in the private sectors. Although labour laws do not reveal any inequalities at the surface level, there are still gender concerns that apply exclusively for either gender. For instance, there is no regulation in terms of difference in pay structure between men and women. The prohibition that excludes women to work at night in the agricultural and industrial sector is seen as no longer practical these days as reported by

Aminah Ahmad (1998). In addition, although women can be assessed for their income tax separately, they are however, not entitled to apply for relief for the maintenance of children.

As exposed recently by the Secretary-General of Ceupacs only 30% of the decision-making posts in the Malaysian civil service for women and the remaining 70% is reserved for men. Malaysia is a country where different religions and cultures play an important role in the society. While it is not doubted that these religions and cultures bring positive aspects in the life of men and women, there are also other things that can lead to discrimination and bias to both men and women. Furthermore, these religious and cultural values possessed by the society, which are sometimes being misused, are responsible for the existing stereotyped perceptions on gender roles and expectations in the society. For instance, a male is considered as the head of the family (in Malay, Chinese and Indian families, the three major races in Malaysia) and this patriarchal practice is also extended to the working environment. In her article, Tan (1991) states that the Malaysian society is accustomed to the idea of women to take a 'back seat' in the working environment and this has in turn, steered women to be in and remain in certain positions in any organization.

In order to address the issue of gender stereotype and segregation, it is important to look at all aspects involved in the process of employment. There are not many studies or researches carried out to look at the first step of employment process via the employers' selection of possible candidates for the jobs. This can be seen through the language pattern used in every job advertisement available everywhere in which one can find some criteria listed by the employers to filter or shortlist the applicants

These criteria sometimes might be biased as they are inclined towards a specific gender according to the types of job advertised, making job seekers from the opposite gender to lose interest. Advertisers even sometimes include exclusionary expressions like “only”, “preferably” or “must be” to explicitly denote the gender preference in the list of requirements for the position advertised to limit and exclude a specific gender of job seekers from applying. Consequently, this can influence job seekers to believe that men and women should choose different type of jobs and they will continue to work in different job areas, having different job scope considered by the society as suitable according to their gender.

The practice of including gender requirement in recruitment advertisements shows that the public are still not concerned about the fact that gender discrimination is still frequently practiced subtly in job advertisements. In addition, there are no specific and strict guidelines or laws to prohibit such practices of including gender requirement in job advertisements today. Thus, it is easy to find job advertisements containing discriminating requirements such as the gender requirement. Thus, job seekers are exposed to the discrimination even before they start getting the job. This kind of situation or practice concerning exclusionary and discriminatory requirements in job advertisements is not a healthy one as it makes people believe in gender stratification which in turn, will not help to solve the issue of gender discrimination and segregation at workplace.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

There are two objectives for this study. First, it is hoped to emphasize or highlight the practice of gender exclusion in Malaysian job advertisements (especially in printed media) which seems to marginalize a particular gender group. This type of discriminatory practice highlighted through the use of expressions denoting gender requirement or preference in job advertisements makes one to realize the need to have explicit guidelines and laws that protect the interest and service of the job seekers against discrimination in terms of job employment.

The second objective is to analyze the use of linguistic features (in the list of requirement of the job advertisement) and its impact on potential job seekers or applicants for jobs in different domains. This can further emphasise the power hold by employers (the advertisers) in using language to express the criteria of employees that they want which sometimes, include some gender biased expressions or descriptions. In addition, it can also show the influence of gender stereotypes and society's expectation of roles for both genders in job seekers' perception with reference to job-suitability based on gender for those vacancies advertised in newspapers.

In general, focusing on this practice of gender exclusion and the impact of gender exclusionary expressions in job advertisements, the study tries to explain one of the factors contributing to the occupational gender-based segregation, namely, discrimination at the entry level of the job in order to find ways to lessen and bring to an end the issue of gender segregation in job market.

1.4 Research Questions

The job advertisements collected from the printed newspapers and the questionnaire data are used for the analysis to answer research questions raised as follows:

1. How many job advertisements that appear in the newspapers include explicit expressions that are gender-exclusionary in nature?
2. What kind of impact such advertisements have on job seekers' perception in choosing jobs?

The number of job advertisements containing explicit gender exclusionary expressions is counted to understand and identify the ongoing trend in the practice of gender exclusion in job advertisements in the Malaysian context. Explicit gender exclusionary expressions refer to the gender requirement listed by employers in the advertisements. For example, "Female only", "Male preferred" or "Female educator". On the other hand, Implicit exclusionary expressions refer to those requirements listed that indirectly address gender preference for the position advertised. For instance, using expressions like "Able to work on weekends and travel outstation frequently" to address the male job seekers rather than female job seekers since the advertisers know that women will not be attracted to apply for such positions requiring them to travel a lot and work during weekends. The implicit expressions were taken into consideration based on the responds given in the questionnaire by the respondents themselves.

The use of such expressions are also analysed in terms of their influence and impact on job seekers' choice in choosing jobs based on the list of requirements produced by the advertisers for the vacancies advertised. Common stereotypes in gender difference are also noticed in discussing the trend of gender exclusion and job choices among job seekers.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 To the Researcher

This study can help the researcher to understand better the way the design of an advertisement can influence the way people think about certain things especially when an advertisement continuously appear in public newspapers (where it can be read and seen by the public almost every day). Besides, it also enables the researcher to think analytically in order to give input and recommendations at least to reduce the number of gender discriminating job advertisements in newspapers.

1.5.2 To Employers/Advertisers

This study is hoped to increase employers' concern with particular reference to the issue of gender segregation in workplace that seem to exist at the entry level especially when they advertise to fill up any vacancies available in their organisations.

1.5.3 To the University

The study conducted by the researcher may provide useful information to the university, faculty and departments of study especially in areas like sociolinguistics, language used in mass media, language and gender, language planning and other related areas of study. This kind of knowledge hopefully would be very useful as a source of information and guidance for future researches in the area of language use in mass media, language planning and development.

1.5.4 To Job Seekers and Society

The study conducted can also help to draw attention to the rights of job seekers and the society with reference to the process of applying for jobs. In addition, it will also create a kind of awareness and enlighten the society with regard to their rights which may indirectly reduce the gender gap as well as to reduce the typical stereotype perceptions on gender based job suitability that has restricted both male and female job seekers from entering into any field of job that they like.