Women in Management: Breaking Barriers on Female Career Advancement in the Hospitality Industry

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Abstract: This study examines the perception of female undergraduates towards career advancement in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to female hospitality undergraduates in five private higher educational institutions with 278 questionnaires returned. Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis were used for data analysis. Pearson Correlation was conducted as part of inferential analysis. There were significant relationships between the six factors towards women's career advancement. Greater understandings on the factors affecting female career advancement from the undergraduate's perspective were obtained. This study is crucial for both hospitality education and organization to understand women better, appreciate them and shape them into future leaders in the hospitality industry. The significant findings from the study showed that female undergraduates equally holds the key to provide good learning experience in organizations that will continue to strive for effective and efficient managers in the field of hospitality management industries.

Introduction

As more women become involved in hospitality management, it becomes more critical to identify the key variables that affect their career progression and to intensify the types of initiatives that can be considered to facilitate woman's career progress (Brownell, 1994). The growing numbers of literature by researchers and practitioners have been concerned by the fact that, women have not made incremental career progress in the past several decades (Omair, 2008). In relation to women progression to senior position, a number of publications (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992) postulated that women in general do not received the right mentorship necessary to progress to senior level positions. Noe (1988) however believes that mentoring relationship provide cultural understanding with access to dominant coalitions, and that without the support of mentors, women may not gain the visibility that put them for the running in the promotion race for senior managerial positions. Factors related to family conflicts and work life balance also affect women's career development, especially in hospitality environments (Barrows & Bosselman, 1999). As Lobel (1991) posits, it is employers'

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prejudgement notions of the family obligations that creates the impact on woman's career and – this is the major problem.

The hospitality industry is generally a unique, largely fragmented industry with one of the world's largest employers. Today, hospitality organizations are moving towards a more balanced gender absorption in high responsibility positions. In Malaysia, women are becoming a central part of the labour market. In fact, talented women are coming into organizations on par with men (Brownell, 1993). Although women are becoming on par with men and represented almost half of today's global workforce, the number of women in middle management is merely gradually rising while the top management positions does not exceed 20% (Wirth, 2000). Studies showed that the perceptions of current female undergraduates do not inherently interfere with their hospitality career, and have postulated that they are committed to work any shifts and weekends. However, hospitality industry, human resources and senior managers still provide a barricade against them based on hypothetical assumptions (Brownell, 1994).

Literature Review

Issues on gender equality had been widely researched in the past and the findings showed that women in general have not made progression to more substantial career position (Brownell, 1994). It is true that equality between genders has simultaneously risen in the last decade. However, there is much to be done to correct the gender imbalance in higher management. The reason women are needed in top positions is for equality between men and women. Both sexes should have equal opportunities for career advancement including fair access to high ranking positions. Having women in top management position will be benefiting to the organization as women's thoughts and views could be different. This is beneficial for exploring alternatives and assists in the process of decision making (Tharenou, 2005). The following literature discusses the main factors that affect career advancement for woman.

Organizational Factors

Human resources are often seen as the backbone for hospitality and tourism organizations. In fact, it is one of the most important assets for an organization as human element in the hospitality industry is critical for service quality, competitive advantage and organizational performance. This belief is supported by most literatures that stress the critical role of human resources for an organization (Kusluvan, Il han & Buyruk, 2010). Human resource policies are the most common obstacle in women's career advancement (Azian, 2003). Selection and promotion policies are among the human resource policies that are constraining women's career advancement in the hospitality industry (Foster, 2000). Park (1992) and Jackson (2001) also identified five main barriers that affect women's career advancement, namely: (a) recruitment and selection policies; (b) lack of mentors and role models; (c) appraisal systems; (d) career development and promotion policies; as well as (e) the institutional male power and the roles of women. Study conducted by Lajara and Garcia (2013) showed that women are restricted to only floor maintenance and catering through selective human resource policies. The preconceived policy of recruiting women to certain department and position makes it even more difficult for career progression.

General barriers to women's progress have been identified empirically in countries like

Britain, Japan, Malaysia, United States, Finland and Germany (Adler, 1993). Numerous authors have postulated that 'male dominant' organizational cultures, which are reflected by hierarchical authority and top-down communication are barriers to women's progress (Marshall, 1993). This finding appeared to be globally shared by women in management (Hofstede, 1980). There is empirical evidence that organizational culture is a major impediment to women's progress into top management positions (Mann, 1995). This was also supported by Acker (2006) and Mooney (2008) that the general hospitality culture of long working hours made it even more difficult for women to balance family life and this has provided an advantage to male manager with no family responsibilities.

Bajdo and Dickson (2002) conducted a study on organizational culture and women's advancement in organization indicate that organizational culture is correlated to opportunities for women involvement in management. The study focused on cultural practices which reflected strong gender equity, strong humane orientation and lower power distance encourage women's advancement in organization. The study also concluded that strong cultural practices provide good foundation for women's progression to managerial position as compared to organizational cultural values.

The glass ceiling phenomenon leads to recent research concentrated on masculine organizational culture. The environment of an organization is often explored and the assumptions are that ambitious individuals would probably prefer a competitive environment while unmotivated individuals will favour a passive environment. Women in organization usually have to adapt to the dominant culture in organization, i.e. the masculine culture, as they are the minorities in organizations. In most organizations that are male-led, the old boy network still exists and is commonly practiced in these organizations (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Old boy network is generally an informal social network, establishing business relationships outside the organization (Mooney, 2008). The existence of old boy network in organizations has largely exclude women from these networks (Brownell, 1994). In fact, women need to create alternatives to substitute these traditional old boy networks with an informal network of their own (Klenke, 1996). This old boy network is believed to prevent success of women from engaging in business relationship. Therefore, hard work is essential for women to prove their credibility as managers (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). In view of the existing literature discussed above it is hypothesized that:

H1 There is a significant relationship between organizational factors and women's career advancement

Social Factors

Family and domestic responsibilities are seen as another important barrier faced by women for their career progression (Zhong, 2006). In general, women are perceived as the primary care-givers of the family. For this reason, many companies do not want to offer senior management positions to women especially in the hospitality industry. They perceive women as not fully committed to their work due to family responsibilities, for example, maternity, domestic tasks, child rearing and the primary care-giver of the family (Ghali & Olichon, 2008). In addition to that, irregular working hours in the hospitality industry is perceived as resulting in the poor commitment of women at workplace. For this reason, women are unable to move to the management positions due to the negative perceptions towards them. Even if women have spouses who share their domestic responsibilities, they are still penalized in terms of career

advancement. Organizations do not find it compatible to have a woman in top management positions with the combination of family obligations (Tharenou, 2005; Smith, 2002).

Zhong (2006) substantiated that family factors are not the reason of women moving less in management than men. However, family responsibilities may have reduced the opportunities of training and development as well as relocation of advancement compared to men (Tharenou, 2005). Men have participated more frequently in domestic responsibilities in years. The change in behaviour of men has helped relieve women on their family obligation. With that, they are able to manage their time efficiently and concentrate on their job responsibilities to increase opportunities for advancement in management (Mkona, 2012). Nevertheless, most evidence does not support the view that family factors will cause them to advance less in management than men. In fact, factors such as the human capital (for example education) are the one that affects the career advancement of women, as confirmed in most recent studies (Chenevert & Tremblay, 2002).

A number of literature revealed that the evidence hitherto may suggest that aspects of the broader culture in relation to women's roles and place in society disadvantage their advancement in management (Tharenou, 2005). While these may be valid, it is indeed a fact that the current trend in the hospitality industry does not paint a promising future for talented women working towards the top managerial positions. The issue on gender discrimination is still widely argued and many researches had been conducted on this topic. It is undeniable that most companies are still discriminating females and their proportion for top management positions to attain gender parity with men in organizations is still a question which is widely discussed (Adkins, 1995).

Gender role stereotypes give rise to the perception that women generally possess less leadership ability than men. There is a perception that women are less qualified for leadership positions because they are unable to perform well in a male dominant organization (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). In general, women are perceived to have less favourable attitudes compared to male leaders. Thus, there is a lesser possibility for women in attaining leadership roles and being recognized as equally effective in these roles compared to men (Mann, 1995). The prejudice against women is one of the reasons of under representation of women in companies worldwide. Prejudice is especially worse when (a) the leadership role is seen as masculine; (b) men are evaluators; (c) when the female gender role was obvious, physically; (d) when agentic behaviour were used, especially if the observers are male (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Tharenou (2005) noted that a good manager is still perceived as predominantly masculine. This is still seen as one of the main obstacle faced by women worldwide to reach to top management positions. In short, women are underrepresented in management worldwide in all fields despite cross cultural factors. It is certainly an intriguing fact (Mkona, 2012).

Gender discrimination between men and women has always existed from a work distribution point of view. Women are seen to hold feminine jobs such as secretary or the assistant behind men who is seen more as a leader (Smith, 2002). Although the perception of male or female in organizations has changed over time, gender discrimination is still an existing barrier for women advancement in the organization. A total of more than 80% of men and women perceive gender discrimination as an ongoing problem at workplace. Survey was conducted on 1550 hospitality managers with master's degree in hospitality management. A total of 58% of the respondent were women. It was concluded from the study that gender discrimination was shown to be the reason most women graduates left the hospitality industry (Woods & Kavanaugh, 1994)

While glass ceiling is highlighted as a common barrier for woman as they move up the organization ladder, coping with gender stereotyping, prejudice and indirect discrimination in a hostile organizational climate made up the other barriers women face in today's hospitality industry (Zhong, 2006). There is a significant resonant which indicates that there is a locus of control for successful women in hierarchical position, which supports the belief of success that comes with one's own efforts and abilities rather than down to luck or fate. Also, the study revealed that hard work with the right attitude is one of the major factors for women career advancement (Zhong, 2006).

The term glass ceiling could also be seen through the comparatively smaller numbers of women holding top managerial positions. In Malaysia, women in top management positions in public sectors increased from 6.9% in 1995 to 30.5% in 2010. Women holding positions of general manager, president or CEO in companies in the private sector increased from 13% in 2004 to 26% in 2008. In addition, the percentage of female board representation from 2005 to 2009 has maintained between 11 to 14% (Ng, 2010).

Women have been experiencing tremendous growth not only in the managerial and technical sector, but they also have almost proliferated in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. They have come a long way in working towards the aspiration of achieving equality in the work place compared to years ago. Former Women, Family and Community Development Minister, Datuk Seri Sharizat Abdul Jalil, considers that women has been in a quantum leap, whereby there is no discrimination against them at the workplace and they share equal chances of earning the same pay, perks and promotion opportunities as men today. She further shared that it is other restraining factors and perceptions that are depriving women of such things. She added firmly that it is indeed women that have been powering the economy of the nation and that investing in women is a smart choice for economic growth (Wong, 2009). In view of the existing literature on social factors which includes family and gender issues, it is hypothesized that:

H2 There is a significant relationship between social factors and women's career advancement.

Individual Factors

Ng and Pine (2003) postulate that personality traits related to advancement in management of men and women is generally similar. The personality of male leaders who are seen as task and achievement oriented is positively linked to women in management (Aurich & Rosen, 2010). Moreover, women with masculine characteristics such as aggressiveness, domineering and independence, prefer to seek managerial roles to fit their personality. Personality traits such as being ambitious, self-confident and hardworking are consistently related to women's career advancement (Zhong, 2006). The concept of self-confidence leads to higher career aspiration and self-development. However, recent study points out that women lack self-confidence and self-esteem in comparison to men (Ghali & Olichon, 2008). The low self confidence in women might be a reason for less women graduates applying for high responsibility position despite being well qualified. They tend to feel under qualified for the position and this impedes the development of their careers (Chow, 1995).

According to the former Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, in The Women Summit 2009, it is a national advantage that women excel in various fields and continue to play an important role in socio-economic development in Malaysia. However, he reminded that

Table 1. Different attributors of males and females

Male	Female
Business oriented	People oriented
Autocratic	Participative
Instruction giving	Socio-expressive
Transactional	Transformational
Structure	Consideration

Source: Appelbaum et al. (2002)

the positions women hold should be based on merit and not merely because of their gender. He added that women must strive to earn these positions and continue to advance to higher positions based on merit, capabilities and experience. Therefore, women's success is not only based on their competency but also their knowledge, skills and abilities in moving forward to hold higher responsibility positions. In fact, they can turn adversity into opportunity (Dylyani, 2009).

New values such as feminism have been practiced in business organizations over the last decade (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2002). These values challenge authoritative approach which is usually associated with traditional masculine management. The values inspire a different management approach in organizations which increase effectiveness in communications, leadership, control and negotiations. Furthermore, these values are seen as contributing to success in business organizations. Past literature indicated differences in male and female approach to leadership (Eagly, Schmidt & Engen, 2003). Eagly *et al.* (2003) conducted a meta-analysis comparing findings from 45 research studies. It was found that female leaders exceeded males in rewarding subordinates for their good job performance, which inclined more to transformational leadership approach. From this research, it is revealed that females have a higher responsiveness to followers.

The different characteristics of men and women allow feminine styles to be singularly different from its male counterpart. In fact, theory suggested that certain feminine characteristics in women are advantages that enable them to lead and hold top management positions in an organization. The characteristics described as essentially feminine are communication skills especially the ability to be a good listener, advanced intermediary skills for conflict and negotiation resolution as well as competent interpersonal skills to handle people (Standford *et al.*, 1995). Appelbaum *et al.* (2002) describe the different attributors to males and females as follow:

From the characteristics above, it is obvious that the feminine characteristics are appropriate for transformational leadership while masculine characteristics are appropriate for transactional leadership. Furthermore, many researchers have been following this direction of male and female leadership approach in their studies (Hare *et al.*, 1997; Eagly *et al.*, 2003). Females have the tendency of being empathetic and have clear communication whereby they state clear expectations, express their thoughts clearly and maintain the flow of communication. Females are also people oriented where they treat peers and co-workers well, which is essential to maintain effective relationships in organization. Despite being people oriented, females are seen to be less outgoing. According to Appelbaum *et al.* (2002), women have higher score

in orientation towards production and achievements while men score higher in orientation towards strategic planning and organizational vision. In short, both women and men are seen as equally effective in top management positions. Therefore, based on the empirical findings, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H3 There is a significant relationship between individual factors and Women's career advancement

Theoretical Framework

Studies in the past investigated women in higher ranking positions, their career advancement and how it relates to leadership (Aurich & Rosén, 2010; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). There are still cultural beliefs that men are the dominant force. Issues related to gender equality and leadership were ignored until the 1970s (Chemers, 1997). The arguments in various studies conducted led to personal belief that there is a need for an in depth understanding of the apparent factors affecting the career advancement of women in the hospitality industry (Schrieber, 1998).

According to Mooney and Ryan (2009) women's major stumbling block to higher management positions are due to long hour working culture, hiring practices, common attitude of male managers (he old boy network) and geographical mobility. This had an adverse effect for progression and significantly influenced women's work life balance. The result of poor work life balance has affected their career paths and are said to be non-linear in all industry (Bierema & Opengart, 2002). The reason behind this is because of the multiple roles they need to play. Not only have they needed to deal with stress and anxiety in workplace, but also in the role of family responsibilities. Due to this social role that is seen to be their responsibility, they often refrain from accepting higher responsibilities at work (Zhong, 2006; Carmona & Olias, 2007)). Women opt for flexible working hours instead of irregular working hours, which is a norm in the hospitality sector. With that, they are able to carry their responsibilities equally. However, some women leaders do not agree that they are not able to deal with positions of
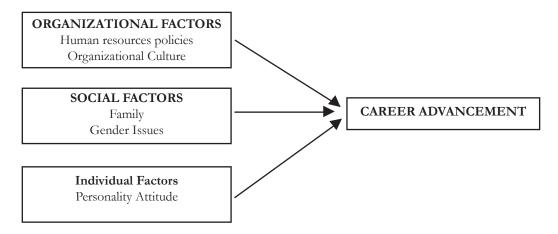

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

higher responsibility and handle family life at the same time. To them, family is the pillar of strength that enable them to work harder in achieving their ambitions. The woman who is eager to be home with her child definitely has a powerful incentive of time management at workplace due to intrinsic motivation (Schwartz, 1989).

There are several theories related to the factors affecting women's career advancement, mainly on barriers to women's advancement in management careers (Burke, 2009). It is obvious that these theories have devalued women in both theory and social context (Bierema & Opengart, 2002). However, these theories are used in this research to examine if female students share similar perceptions concerning barriers to female career advancement in the hospitality industry. General perceptions of fairness among female workers are best demonstrated through equity theory. Equity theory of motivation by Adam (1962) is crucial for many organizations that practices principles of balance. Equity theory of motivation best describes individual's motivation level and it's correlation to one's perception of fairness and justice in the management practices. Equity theory posits that an individual will venture into a job when he is motivated and has positive perception of fairness in the organization. Each individual's outlook can be different as the theory is a form of relativistic approach. Comparisons between individuals or with groups in terms of expectations or results are common and unavoidable. This theory is often associated with rewards and payment (Jones & George, 2008). From the literature and theories discussed above the conceptual framework can be drawn as follows:

Methodology

Unit of Analysis and Sampling

This study focused only on female hospitality undergraduates as respondents. Organizational, social and individual factors served as the independent variables while women's career advancement served as the dependent variable for this research. The sample frame for this research is the female undergraduate students who have attended internship training with the respective university, university colleges and colleges within the Klang Valley region, Malaysia. There is an interest to study the view of female hospitality students on their perception towards women's career advancement in Malaysia. Therefore, purposive sampling is used, as only specific types of people who can provide the desired information that fulfills the criteria set for this research (Sekaran, 2000).

Research Instruments

The questionnaire for this research was based on the instrument used from previous existing research relevant to the factors affecting women's career advancement (Brownell, 1994; Weber, 1998; Ng & Pine, 2002; Zhong, 2006). Azian (2003) has conducted a quite similar study in Malaysia on women's view on career advancement. The questionnaire for this research was adapted from research done by Foster (2000) and Azian (2003). The measurement related to organizational factors (Human Resources Policies and Organizational Cultures) and individual factors (Personality and Attitude) was adapted from Azian (2003). This was deemed a good reference point because Azian (2003) dealt specifically with issues related to human resource management and culture that deprive women's career path in organizations. Measurement

Table 2. Age, level of education and nationality of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age of Respondents			
18 years and below	5	1.8	1.8
18-20 years	95	34.2	36.0
21-23 years	160	57.6	93.5
24-26 years	15	5.4	98.9
26 years & above	3	1.1	100
Total	278	100.0	
Level of Education			
Diploma	62	22.3	22.3
Degree	216	77.7	100.0
Total	278	100.0	
Nationality			
Malaysian	197	70.9	70.9
Others	81	29.1	100.0
Total	278	100.0	

on personality and attitude was chosen due to comprehensive study conducted by Azian (2003) that refers to the individual behaviours that contribute towards staff mobility in the organization. Social factors which include family and gender issues were adapted from Foster (2000). The measurement was adapted as it referred to family and gender issues that deprived women's progression towards managerial positions. The findings from the study indicated that family and gender were significant in deterring women's progression in organization. The measurement for career advancement was adapted from Zhong (2006). The measurement refers to female undergraduate's career advancement in hospitality industry, which is relevant to this study as part of the independent variable.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic profile of respondents such as the age, current level of education and length of service in the hospitality industry. It was also used to measure the differences in perception of respondents towards women's career advancement. The data was analyzed through frequency distribution to further divide the data through percentage as it was easier to interpret in general. Inferential analyses were used. Bivariate Correlation determined the relation of variables in this research paper. Bivariate Correlation was used to examine the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Descriptive Analysis

The age of respondents is represented in Table 2. It is divided into five (5) categories. The

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Table 3. Interpretation based on R-Correlation

R-correlation	Interpretation
.90 – 1.00	Very high correlation
.70 - .90	High correlation
.50 - .70	Moderate correlation
.30 - .50	Low correlation
.10 - .30	Very low correlation
.00	No correlation

Table 4. Correlations of organizational factors and career advancement

		Organizational	Career Advancement
Organizational	Pearson Correlation	1	.736**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	278	278
Career Advancement	Pearson Correlation	.736**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	278	278

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

majority of the respondents are from the age of 21 – 23 years old which comprises of 160 people, representing more than half of the respondents for this research. Next, respondents who fall under the age of 18 – 20 years old represented 34.2% of the sample. Respondents at the age of 24 – 26 years, 18 years and below and 26 years and above made up 5.4%, 1.8% and 1.1% respectively. As mentioned earlier, the respondents are students, therefore, most of the respondents fall within the age range of 20s. Table 2 also represents the current level of respondent's education in the universities concerned. The majority of the respondents were enrolled in degree programmes (77.7%), most of them female students from the hospitality bachelors' programme. Diploma students only comprised of 22.3% of the respondents in this survey.

As shown on Table 2 most of the respondents are Malaysian. They represented 70.9% compared to only 29.1% of respondents of other nationalities. Table 2 also shows the breakdown of the respondents of other nationalities who took this survey. The majority were Indonesian representing 18%, followed by Chinese with 6.5%, Vietnamese with 1.8%, Japanese and Sri Lankan with 0.7% respectively. Korean and Maldivian represented 0.4% respectively.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between organizational factors and women's career advancement.

In order to test the relationship of two continuous variables, Pearson Correlation test was used

Table 5. Correlations of social factors and career advancement

		Social	Career Advancement
Social	Pearson Correlation	1	.591**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	278	278
Career Advancement	Pearson Correlation	.591**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	278	278

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 6. Correlations of individual factors and career advancement

		Individual	Career Advancement
Individual	Pearson Correlation	1	.302**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	278	278
Career Advancement	Pearson Correlation	.302**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	278	278

** Correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

to measure the relationship of organizational factors and women's career advancement. From Table 4, the results indicated that the correlation between organizational factors and career advancement obtained r-coefficient = .736 at the p value = .000 which is less than 0.01. This shows that there is a positive relationship between organizational factors and career advancement. Table 3 according to Azian (2003) is the interpretation of pf r-correlation that measures the strength and direction of linear relationship between two variables.

The r-coefficient at .736 signifies that there is a high correlation between organizational factors and career advancement. With p value = .000 which is less than 0.01, represents a significant relationship between organizational factors and career advancement. Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted. The test have proved that the organizational factors such as recruitment policy, pay policy, promotion policy, appraisal system, training opportunities, old boy network and establishing creditability had a positive relationship and is highly correlated with women's career advancement.

H2: There is a significant relationship between social factors and women's career advancement.

Similarly, as both social factors and women's career advancement are continuous variables, Pearson Correlation is used to test the hypothesis. Table 5 shows correlation between social factors and career advancement. The results showed that the r-coefficient at .591 at p-value = .000 which is <0.01 significant level. This means that there is a positive relationship between

social factors and women's career advancement. As the r-coefficient is at .591, it is concluded that there is a moderate correlation between both variables. In addition, the p-value is <0.01, therefore, there is a significant relationship between social factors and women's career advancement. Thus, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

The test proved that gender and family issues (and related factors) have a positive relationship with women's career advancement. Family issues which include being married, being a single parent, conflict with family responsibilities and childcare responsibilities are also positively correlated with women's career advancement in the hospitality industry. The results indicate that gender issues are moderately correlated with career advancement, indicating that the treatments females receive from managers still differ from their male counterparts. Thus, gender inequality is perceived by respondents to be continuously practiced in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, family issues are perceived to be moderately affecting women's career advancement, indicating that the social responsibilities female carries is still affecting their movement to managerial levels in hospitality organizations.

H3: There is a significant relationship between individual factors and women's career advancement

Table 6 shows the correlation between individual factors and women's career advancement using Pearson Correlation test. The correlation between both variables obtained r-coefficient at .302 with the p-value at .000, which are less than .01 significant levels. This clearly shows positive correlation between individual factors and career advancement. However, with r-coefficient at .302 (slightly above .300), there is a low correlation between both variables. Despite low correlation between both individual and career advancement, the p-value at .000 which is less than .01 indicate that correlation is significant. Thus, concluding that there is a significant relationship between individual factors and career advancement, therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

The test has proved that respondent perceived that individual's attitude and personality is pivotal for career advancement in the hospitality industry. Hard work, positive attitude, communication skills, problem solving skills, high educational qualification, family support, competent personality and having adequate job knowledge are perceived to be an important criterion to hold high positions in hospitality industry. While luck and personal sacrifices are seen as part of the criteria, it is seen unlikely to be agreed as a component for women's career advancement. Although the majority agrees on the importance of the above individual factors in gaining accessibility to top management positions, there is still a low correlation between both individual factors and career advancement.

Discussion

The number of women in the top managerial positions has vastly reduced over the years. The findings from this study suggest more opportunities must be created for women to manage higher positions in the hospitality environment, the impact on the career focus from this study illustrate that the personal lives and organizational factors such as human resource policies, organizational culture, family issues, gender issues, personality and attitude should be minimized to make way for women's progression towards top management positions in the hospitality industry. With the current trend in hospitality education, there are more women entering hospitality management programmes that are on par with men (Fernsten, 2013),

a significant contribution to both educators and practitioners is to establish a new strategy to retain these women and find methods to assist them to rise to senior positions in the hospitality industry.

Results suggest that human resources policies were seen to be moderately correlated with women's career advancement as suggested by similar findings from Azian (2003). Zhong's (2006) review matches the current research that the majority of the respondents had similar opinions on family issues. Respondents ranked 'conflicts with family responsibilities' as the most important constraint followed by 'being a single parent' and 'childcare responsibilities'. The most significant visible findings from this study reflect on long working culture. There were also discussion on long working hours not connected to productivity. A contribution from this study is in highlighting the need for more flexible working systems or friendly working hours so that women managers can take care of their family matters as well as contribute to the operational management activities at workplace.

Hypotheses tested based on Pearson Correlation showed significant correlation between organizational, social and individual factors with women's career advancement. The respondents' view from this paper is similar to the research done by Azian (2003) and Zhong (2006). Research work by Zhong (2006) however reviewed that 'conflict with family responsibilities', 'being a single parent' and 'childcare responsibilities' affect women's desire for career advancement. The findings were consistent with previous research by Brownell (1994), Ng and Pine (2003) and Zhong (2006). This research paper identified the most significant barrier to women as the 'old boys network', which is a manifestation of the masculine culture. The findings indicate of possible bias in selecting women who could not portray the image of manager who emphasises the need for operational activities in the organization before her family. This is consistent with findings by Acker (2006). The result from this research also indicated that the possibility of bias on hiring women with family is strong. Hotels may deliberately chose male over female in order not to lose employee later due to family concerns. Significant theoretical contribution from this finding indicates that equity theory of motivation is a crucial factor for hospitality organizations. This goes back to the notions of equity, fairness and justice in management practices. This further explains that women's motivation in the hotel industry will be greater when their perception of fairness is higher. Literally, women will venture into management positions with ease in the hotel industry when they are motivated and have positive perception of fairness.

The responses for individual factors were also similar to previous study by Ng and Pine (2003). The results indicated that the majority of respondents feel that 'attitude towards work', 'effective communication skills' and 'problem solving skills' as the main factors attributing to women's career advancement. Besides that, 'hard work', 'competent personality', 'adequate job knowledge' and 'high educational qualifications' are also perceive to be equally important for career advancement. Despite seeing the importance of these items, the low correlation of this factor with women's career advancement explains that it is not the main factor attributing to women's career advancement in the hospitality industry (Bajdo & Dickson, 2002)

Among the six variables tested, organizational factors (Human Resources Policies and Organizational Culture) have the strongest correlation towards women's career advancement. This finding is consistent with findings of some of the previous studies (Forster, 2000; Azian, 2003). The r-correlation is higher compared to the other variables. Human resource policies and organization culture is considered as organizational bias that an individual have no control over it (Azian, 2003). Recruitment policies, promotion policies, selection policies,

performance appraisal system, organization culture and gender issues involves attitudinal bias of the employer in the organization. On the other hand, an individual have control over familial issues, attitude and personality for career advancement in the organization. Foremost, it is clear that individuals have direct control over these components. This is supported from the results in that both social and individual variables obtained a lower correlation towards career advancement compared to organizational factors. Based on the current study, the career progression by the respondents is considered to be significant in women's career advancement in the hotel industry. Thus the industry should provide equal opportunity in training and development for women to achieve higher managerial positions. The major implication for the industry is that women could possibly contribute to a diverse style of management that could enhance the hotel industry as well boost the tourism economy by providing efficient and quality service that provide pleasant guestological experience. Besides the industrial implication, theoretically this study implies that perceived fairness in organizational policies provide women with better opportunities for career advancement that will change the future career decision in the hospitality industry. At the same time both educators and practitioners must prepare women to handle work place demands and ensure a supportive and healthy work culture where women can contribute to the hospitality management.

Conclusion and Limitations

This research sought to explore the perceived main barriers towards career advancement within the hotel management in Malaysia. In particular, the goal was to identify the perceptions of female hospitality undergraduates towards women career advancement in the hospitality industry. Although the formulation of this paper was based on existing empirical findings, it is strongly believed that there is a strong relevance for scholars who wish to investigate other industry-education-career advancement relationship in other industry sectors. In short, the triangular relationship between education, industry and students should be explored and analysed for better understanding of female career advancement in the hospitality industry. The solution for equality and better career advancement in the hospitality industry not only lies in preparing women to work hard, to foster their abilities, but also in the creation of a more equitable organizational culture in the industry. Since hospitality undergraduates are considered to be the future leaders of the industry, both the hospitality education and industry play a pivotal role in addressing the issue relates to career advancement.

Few limitations were identified and acknowledged while developing the results. Firstly, the study only focused on private higher educational institutions. Public institutions were not included in this study. In addition, the fact that the majority of the respondents were female undergraduates meant that the data was skewed to younger age group. At the same time, having male respondents would probably provide a balance view to the study. As for the nationality, the study emphasizes on Malaysians and did not specify the ethnicity ratio. However the findings for this study provided generalizability on career advancement for women. Finally the sample size collected may not provide the representation of the population. However a wider sample size on female and male would suffice to facilitate a more rigorous analysis. Apart from the limitations, it is recommended that other factors such as different level of female employees, ratio of race in Malaysia and hospitality culture be considered in exploring the best approaches to increase the number of women at the senior level of management in the hospitality industry.

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