The Influence of Workplace Culture on Women Discrimination at the Workplace

H. Siti Aishah, A. M. Mahazan

Abstract— Women discrimination at workplace refers to the behavioral component or differential (usually negative) actions taken towards women. On the positive side of the gender stereotype, women are viewed as being kind, nurturing and considerate. Meanwhile, on the negative side, women are seen as being dependent, weak and overly emotional. The traits they supposedly possess tend to be regarded as less appropriate for the high-status position. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship of women discrimination at workplace and workplace culture. A sample of this study was 215 respondents from Malaysia Government-Linked Companies. The data was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The findings reveal that workplace culture has a significance impact on women discrimination at the workplace. Therefore, the implication of this study shows that workplace culture is essential and has a direct influence on preventing workplace discrimination against women.

Keywords—Women Discrimination, Workplace Culture, Gender Discrimination, Workplace Discrimination.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's career progress are still slower and underrepresented in the certain organization [1]-[3]. The females have not always matched those employment conditions of males even though the size of the female labor force has rapidly grown in most developed countries during the last century. From the statistic provided by the Malaysia Ministry of Human Resource and The Global Gender Gap Report in 2015, the power structure remains heavily male-dominated. The men own and control most of the wealth and hold the political power although women are more than half the population in Malaysia, Female workers have difficulties in accessing higher level employment positions, and it is harder for them to get promoted [4]-[5].

Workplace culture easily can be recognized as "the way things are done around here." This term refers to the independent system of beliefs, values, and ways of behaving that are common to a workplace. On whether the company offers equal employment opportunities to such "different" workers, employers are not at all homogenous. Some firms are noticeably better places to work than others for women, minorities, or similar groups as widely-circulated reputations suggested [6].

According to Bendick and Egan (2000), discrimination is more likely happen in the workplace where human resource management decisions are made informally, subjectively and without documentation, explicit and validated criteria, open advertising of opportunities or training for supervisor and other personnel decision-makers [6].

This research examines the extent that workplace culture has an impact on women discrimination at the workplace.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Women are scarce in corporate board even though professional women are entering the workforce at the same rate as men. In Fortune's 2011 list of the largest U.S companies, women hold only 12 of the 500 CEO positions, down from a peak of 20 in 2006 [7]. Meanwhile, around the world, a study conducted in nearly 4,000 companies found that only 10 percent of the directors were women. There is also some argument that saying the lack of diversity on the board of directors in the most companies has contributed to the financial crisis that began in 2008. The research done by Catalyst found that companies with three or more female directors have more significant returns on equity in comparison to the companies with no women director [8].

One of the explanation women are being discriminate at the workplace is that because women are relative newcomers to their chosen fields. Adequate time may not have elapsed to allow more of the women to have worked their way into the top echelons of organizations [9]. As reasonable at this maybe, however, women are not being promoted as quickly as men, and as a result, there is little reason to expect to see much more at the tops of the organization in the near future [9]. There are conservative beliefs about qualities of women and men and the kind of tasks for which each is most appropriately suited [9].

In regards to the workplace culture, there has been limited effort to integrate the study conducted in Malaysia since the 1980's. There also some areas that have been explored. In the end, this leaves scholars with a series of snapshots, but no integrated knowledge of the cross-cultural management and workplace culture in Malaysian [10]. Specifically, most of the research has focused on human resource management and leadership [10]. Surprisingly, for a country where cultural differences between ethnic groups are necessary, it should encourage more research that can be done.

A. The female labor in Malaysia – an overview

In Malaysia, women make up a majority of the local workforce. The Malaysian Labor Force Report (Department of Statistics, 2015, p. 5) reported that out of the total working

female population in 2015 of 5.2 million, 73.1% were paid employees, 15.6% were own-account workers, and 8.1% were unpaid family workers. Only 1.7% were categorized as employers [4].

In the case of Malaysia, the female labor participation rate increased from 44.7 percent (1995) to 45.7 percent (2008). This percentage further improved to 46.4 percent in 2009 (Tenth Malaysia Plan). In 2010, also according to the Tenth Malaysia Plan, the national policy on women had improved the representation of women in decision-making positions from 18.8 percent in 2004 to 30.5 percent in 2010 for the public sector. Meanwhile, the national policy has increased participation of women from 13.5 percent in 2004 to 26.2 percent in 2010 for the private sector. In April 2011, Bank Negara Malaysia reported that only 6 percent or 45 women were appointed as board members of the financial institution [11]-[12]. Tan Sri Zarinah Anwar, Chairman of the Malaysian Securities Commission, has reportedly said, women are under-represented on the board of directors of Malaysian public listed companies. From the listed companies, women represent only 7.5 percent of the total number of directors although, women consist almost 50 percent of the workforce [11], [13].

As disclosed in the Global Gender Gap Report 2015, Malaysia is placed at the 95 in the economic participation and opportunity and 134 in the political empowerment from the total 145 countries. Malaysia also ranked at the 95 placed in legislators, senior officials and managers with a score of female to male ratio 0.28 (0.00 = inequality, 1.00 = equality). Malaysia is placed at the 122 for the women in parliament and 132 for the women in ministerial positions, both with the ratio 0.12 and 0.06. The Global Gender Gap Report is a report that measures gender gap in the economic participation and employment, educational attainment, political empowerment, outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio [5].

III. WOMEN DISCRIMINATION AT THE WORKPLACE

According to Robbins & Coulter (2012), discrimination occurs when someone commits their prejudicial and stereotyping attitudes in treating others who are members of a particular group unequally [14].

Women discrimination in the workplace is real, and it could happen throughout the course of women career. First, during the hiring process, employers might be asking certainty about several things to women including their likelihood of getting pregnant, the mother's ability to get to work on time, take care of their children and satisfactorily complete their job tasks [15]-[17]. Regarding on-the-job experiences, the employer may discriminate against pregnant women and mothers during their daily on-the-job routine for example by questioning their need to take time off to care for their children. Third, the employer may speculate about women's true job commitment during the time for evaluation and promotion [15], [18]-[20].

Women are expected to remain in the home in their roles as wives and mothers in countries such as India and Saudi Arabia where women have the most negative self-concepts. In contrast, in countries such as Finland and Denmark, the status difference between women and men is less because women are more active

in the labor force and members of each gender tend to perceive themselves equally favorably [21].

A. Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

According to Baron, Branscombe, and Byrne, stereotypes is a belief about social groups regarding the traits or characteristics that they are believed to share. Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that influence the processing of social information [21]. Stereotypes are generally inaccurate, whether it is positive or negative. [9].

Stereotypes threat effects are relatively difficult to control. For example, simply telling women before they take a math test that men do better on math than women do is sufficient to evoke stereotype threat and hurt their performance [21]-[22]. Because women are negatively stereotyped as being worse at math than men, women tend to perform more poorly when they simply take a difficult math test in the presence of men, whereas they tend to perform better when the same test is taken in the presence of only other women [21], [23].

B. Prejudice

Prejudice reflects the negative response to another person based solely on that person's membership in a particular group. Prejudice is not personal because it is an affective reaction towards the category as a whole [21]. In results from a prejudice behavior, individuals who score higher on measures of prejudice towards a particular group do tend to process information about that group differently than individuals who score lower on measures of prejudice [21], [24]. Women, for example, are victims of prejudice when they are believed to be weak, emotional, or inferior in one way or another.

C. Discrimination

Greenberg defined discrimination as the behavior consistent with a prejudicial attitude; the act of treating someone negatively because of his or her membership in a particular group. In another word, prejudice is an attitude, whereas discrimination is a form of behavior following from that attitude [9]. According to Baron, Branscombe, and Byrne (2009), discrimination is defined as less favorable treatment or negative actions directed toward members of disliked groups. The stereotype about women have certainly changed over time, and this reflects the real changes that have occurred in women's role [21], [25]-[26]. However, it will be incorrect to conclude that women no longer experience discrimination. In fact, merely considering the possibility that sexism might play a role in the outcomes women receive that can affect their self-esteem, work performance and subsequent academic performance [21], [27].

IV. WORKPLACE CULTURE

According to Greenberg (2011), workplace culture is a cognitive framework consisting of attitudes, values, behavioral norms, and expectations shared by organization members; a set of basic assumptions shared by members of an organization [9].

The problem with work culture from antidiscrimination perspective is that the process of social interaction is likely to be infected with discriminatory bias, leading to work cultures that are defined and imposed along racial and gender lines [28].

Judith S. McIlwee and J. Gregg Robinson identified work culture as a central component of women's disadvantage in the traditionally male-dominated field [28]-[29].

Gender stereotypes of workplace are showed in the belief that women belong in certain occupations and men belong in others, or, in other words, that certain profession (for example teacher, secretary, nurse, etc.) are "female" occupations and others (for example automotive mechanic, engineer, pilot, etc.) are consider as "male" occupations. That is, a traditionally held stereotypes is that nurse is a woman, or that nursing is a "female" occupation. Another traditionally held stereotype is that a pilot is a man or that engineer is a "male" occupation [41].

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

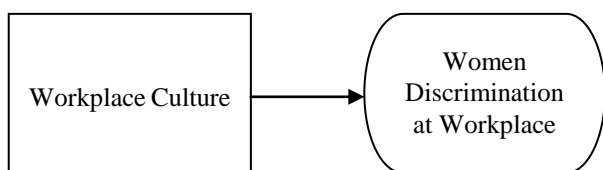The primary research model in this study is exhibited in Figure 1.

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework presented above, the hypotheses is constructed as follows to meet the research objectives:

H1: Workplace Culture is significantly related to Women Discrimination at the Workplace.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was quantitative in nature. The respondents of this study were 215 women employees in Malaysia Government-Linked Companies. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and contained three section (1, 2 and 3). Section 1 collected the demographic data of the respondents covering age, race, educational level, position level, and length of service in the present department. Section 2 probed the respondents' on workplace discrimination on three categories namely (1) on the moment of hiring, (2) on-the-job, and (3) during promotion & evaluation. Lastly, Section 3 focused on workplace culture which included four categories; (1) supervisor support, (2) co-worker support, (3) employer work-family support, and (4) advancement opportunities. Items in questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neither agree or disagree, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. The Likert scale is most widely used because it is easy for the respondent to use, understand and response from such a scale are likely to be reliable and acceptable [30]-[32].

A. Measures
Workplace Culture
In the previous study such as Stainback, Ratliff, Roscigno, and Tech (2011), workplace culture was measured using five dimensions. The four dimensions are supervisor support, co-worker support, employer work-family support, and advancement opportunities [33].

The Cronbach's Alpha of the resulting scale from the sample is ($\alpha = 0.897$), indicating a high degree of internal consistency of this measure.

Women Discrimination at the Workplace
In previous research, such as Crowley (2013), women discrimination at the workplace was assessed using three variables: (1) at the moment of hiring, (2) on-the-job, (3) during evaluation/promotion [15]. The questionnaires were adopted from Nor Hanim (2012) [34]. Cronbach's Alpha of the resulting scale in our sample is ($\alpha = 0.854$) as reported in Table 1.

Table 2 illustrates the reliability of this measure.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

A: Demographic Background and Respondents
The sample comprised 215 women employees. 85.6 percent (N = 184) of the employees were Malays, 8.4 per cent were Indian (N = 18), and 5.6 percent (N = 12) were Chinese. In terms of age, 39.1 percent (N = 84) were between 30 to 31 years old, 38.1 percent (N = 82) were between 20 and 29, 15.3 percent (N = 33) were between 40 to 49 and 7.4 percent (N = 16) of respondents were above 50 years old. For the academic qualifications of those surveyed, 46.0 percent (N = 99) holds a bachelor's degree, 22.8 percent respondents (N = 49) holds high school level education, 21.4 per cent respondents (N = 46) holds a diploma, 8.8 percent respondents (N = 19) holds a master's degree, and 0.9 percent respondents (N = 2) holds a Ph.D.'s degree. Regarding job position of the respondents, about seventy-one of the respondents (33.0%) in the survey held key decision-making positions either as senior executive, manager and senior manager. Also, a significant number of junior executive consists of sixty-one respondents (28.4%) who are playing a key role within the companies also participated in this study. Meanwhile, Sixty-six respondents (30.7%) are holding non- executive position, and seventeen respondents (7.9%) are holding other positions. Regarding the length of service in the present department of the respondents, more than half of the respondents which consists of one hundred and fifteen respondents (53.5%) has been with their present department for less than five years. On the other hand, one hundred respondents (46.4%) has been with their current department for more than five years.

B. The reliability and validity analyses
Table 2 shows the goodness of data for this study. The Exploratory Factor Analysis using the extraction method of Principal Component with Varimax (Variation Maximization) Rotation was performed on the 15 items measuring workplace culture and 20 items measuring women discrimination at the workplace. The results in Table 2 indicate that the Bartletts' Test of Sphericity is significant (P-Value < 0.05). Furthermore, the measure of sampling adequacy by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is excellent since the value was 0.897 (workplace culture) and 0.854 (women discrimination at the workplace) exceeded the required value of 0.6. Based on the computed

Eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The eigenvalues are 2.506 (workplace culture) and 2.809 (women discrimination at the workplace). Finally, the study needs to calculate the value of Cronbach's Alpha for every dimension or component to assess the Internal Reliability of the particular dimension or component in measuring the latent construct. The internal reliability or sometimes called internal consistency indicates how strong the respective items are holding to each other in measuring the same construct. The value of Cronbach's Alpha should be greater than 0.7 for the items to achieve the Internal Reliability.

TABLE 2: GOODNESS OF DATA OF THE STUDY

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	KMO	Barlett Test of Sphericity	Eiganvalue	Cronbach Alpha
Workplace Culture	4	0.902 – 0.930	0.745	404.896 P = 0.000	2.506	0.897
Discrimination	3	0.760 – 0.912	0.773	425.615 P = 0.000	2.809	0.854

As in Table 3, the significant value is .000 (which is less than .05), showed that there was a strong correlation between the workplace culture and women discrimination at the workplace.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN WORKPLACE CULTURE AND WOMEN DISCRIMINATION AT WORKPLACE

Independent Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (p)
Workplace Culture	3.3491	0.870	0.000
Discrimination	3.5551	0.751	0.000

Workplace culture has given a significant impact on the employees to offering equal employment opportunities. When the women employees received strongest positive effects on workplace culture, the discrimination against women at workplace will reciprocate towards negative level.

Some workplaces have cultures in which discriminatory attitudes or behavior would be so harsh conflicting with the prevailing atmosphere that, when they are expressed, they are rapidly suppressed by negative social reactions or lack of ratification. Other workplaces have cultures in which discriminatory attitudes and behavior are not only tolerated but, implicitly or explicitly condoned. There, sexism or racism may be visible and virulent and even outrageous harassment may go unchecked [6].

C. Hypothesis Testing

Amos version 21 and SPSS version 20 was utilized to conduct the data analysis. A Two-stage approach was employed to minimize the changes to avoid any interaction between the structural and the measurement models [35]. First, the measurement model for each construct was independently tested for validity and reliability. Construct validity for this study was met with each indicator variables arrived at a minimum value of 0.5 for standardized regression weight [35]. For reliability testing, the Cronbach's alpha value was above 0.70, which indicated the existence of internal consistency [35] while composite reliability is a measure of the overall reliability of a collection of heterogeneous [36] also met the value of 0.70 [37]. The standardized loadings are larger than 0.5, all average variance extract (AVE) value exceed 0.5, Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha value exceeded 0.70. Thus, the scale has a good convergent validity [38], discriminant validity requirement been well fulfilled [39] and all Cronbach's [40].
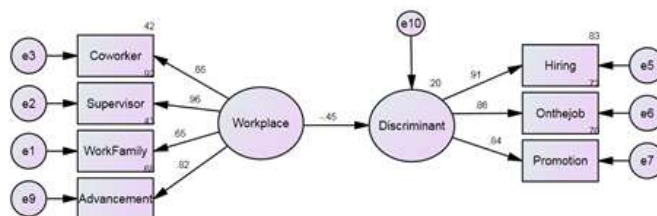

Fig 2: The relationship between workplace culture and women discrimination at the workplace.

The second stage of the two-stage approach involved examining the structural model to test the research hypotheses. The result of factor loading of workplace culture and women discrimination at the place of work were found to be a good fit. Table 4 summarized the goodness-of-fit index; it revealed that the models met the level of goodness-of-fit for this study.

TABLE 4: FITNESS INDEXES INDICATE THE FITNESS OF THE CONSTRUCT

Fitness Category	Benchmark	GDF	Model Index value	Comments
Absolute fit	> .9	GFI	0.951	The required level is required
Incremental fit	> .9	CFI	0.971	The required level is required
Parsimonious fit	< 3	Chisq/df	2.982	The required level is required

IX. CONCLUSION

From the findings, this study concluded that there is a statically significant negative relationship between workplace culture and women discrimination at the workplace. A negative correlation is a relationship between two variables such that as the value of one increases, the other decreases. In other words, the better practice in workplace culture will reduce the level of discrimination against women in the workplace.

It is imperative for everyone in the workplace to accept everybody else. Doing so helps avoid the costly problems of disharmony and communication failure just noted. Furthermore, by recognizing each other in the workplace, valuing them and embracing their differences will bring organizations stand to benefit greatly.

As a result of globalization and change in workforce demographics, it has become necessary to practice fair treatment and equal employment opportunity.

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