

# The Relationship between Job Flexibility, Family Culture, Network Support, Mentoring and Career Success among Women Managers in Private Sector Organizations

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**Abstract:** The entrance of women in the workforce has change the outlook of modern family and yet the proposition of women in top managerial position remains relatively low. Thus to offer another approach, this paper aims to investigate the factors influencing career success among women managers in private sector organization. The sample of this study consists of women managers whereby a total of 144 employees were selected from private sector organizations. Data were gathered using self-administered questionnaires. The drop and the collect method was used to collect data from the sample, with the help of the human resource department of the organizations. This study used random sampling procedure to select the respondents. This study used correlation research design to investigate the direction and strength of the relationship among variables. There are four independent variables (job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring), and one dependent variable (career success). This study indicated that there is relationship between all four variables with the dependent variable. That is, the relationship between job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring with career success. This study will contribute empirical data to the existing career success literature, and hope to give additional insight to career success study in Malaysia.

**Key Word:** Career success, Job flexibility, Family culture, Network support, Mentoring.

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## I. Introduction

The increasing number of women entering into the professional occupations which traditionally dominated by men have triggered the growing interest in the study of women's career success. According to Omar and Davidson (2001), women employment was mainly in Malaysian public sector which mostly concentrated in the health, education and personnel service sector which were considered as traditionally women's job. Hence due to the better academic qualifications, more and more women had joined professional careers and management position in both the public and private sector organizations. However, researcher have found that there is still existing gap between men and women's career success that cause many women managers were unable to reach at higher management position (Omar & Davidson, 2001; Lemons, 2003; Hoobler, Lemmon & Wayne, 2014) due to the perception that only men are capable to be in the decision making position.

In addition, many private sector organizations in non-western countries have begun to institute practices such as introducing job flexibility which may help women managers to success (Rath et al., 2015) in the senior and top levels. (Doloitte& Touches, 1996; Baldiga&Douchet, 2001; Cohen & Single, 2001) states that, job flexibility has been an essential factor for women to success in their career and has been proactively implemented in the private sector organizations. Job flexibility is seen as a solution for many women managers to success in their career. Moreover, drawing from the evidence that job flexibility has facilitate career success (Baltes et al., 1999; Gajendran& Harrison, 2007), some academician has speculated and found that women managers who obtain job flexibility have achieved career success, in which they obtain higher income than those who do not obtain job flexibility (Gariety&Shaffar, 2001; Weeden, 2005). However, in a direct opposite statement, other academician has speculated that worker who uses job flexibility are understand to have lack of commitment in their career (eg, McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003). In a study conducted by Glass (2004) have shown that working mothers who used job flexibility has seen to have disadvantage in their career success which result in negative effect on wages growth. Besides that, a study conducted by (Almer&Kalpan, 2000) also have found that job flexibility tends to change the nature of work employee do, the amount of their workload or both and employees career success is likely to be affected because of the lack of commitment shown by women towards the organization. Therefore, due to the in consistency findings and limited understanding from the previous

study, this study tends to investigate the relationship between job flexibility and career success among women managers.

Malaysian society is still religious and traditional. This is because in Malaysian context where the majority of population are Muslim, culture and religious perspective of working women have some impact on women's involvement in working environment especially in organization. According to Stivens (2007), some religious quarters have gone far by calling for families to advocate and nurture the family institution and values so that they can act as protector against the various social affliction threatening the society. Culturally, women are expected to uphold their primary responsibility towards family and children. Islam emphasized on women's right to practice their religion as well as their rights towards employment, social and political activities as long as they preserve their dignity. However, as economic responsibility towards family is not assigned to women, it affected women career success. High number of female student enrolment in higher education institutions but low number of women involvement in decision making rise the concern on what are the factors facilitate women involvement in decision making position which lead to this study.

Besides that, network support is also seen as a challenges faced by women managers. Women usually struggle in approaching these 'old boy' networks. According to Cross and Armstrong (2008), women are usually excluded from being a part of these almost men clubs because of their gender even though it is expected that women's involvement in men's network can be very important for women to success in their career. Therefore, women feel isolated when the working environment is not what they expected. During the past years, researchers in the western context has established that mentoring and network support are the two important aspects of social capital (Seibert et al., 2001; Bozionelos, 2006). The mentoring and network support have been linked with a diversity of positive result, including group effectiveness (Oh et al., 2004), innovation (Zheng, 2010), knowledge sharing (Chiu et al., 2006), employee performance (Ben Hador, 2016) and career success (Seibert et al., 2001). Although the positive impact of mentoring and network support on career success is mostly affirmed in the literature (Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Bozionelos, 2003; Allen et al., 2004; Bozionelos & Wang 2006; Turban et al., 2017), insufficient knowledge about the mechanism in which these two social capital component benefited women managers career success. Furthermore, although the approach of network support was established in the western context, there is still expanding proof that plays a significant role in other cultures (Bozionelos & Wang, 2006; Ben Hador, 2016; Hassan et al., 2017). However, according to Ngo and Li (2015) career literature have fail to notice the significance of cross-cultural differences in understanding the career phenomena. Therefore, more studies are needed to investigate the relationship between mentoring and network support with women managers career success in non-western context.

Moreover, mentoring is more critical for the success of women managers even though it may be important for men and women managers. Many researchers have agreed that women are not well coordinated into the mentoring systems (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). According to Nieva and Gutek (1981), men mentor usually finds it inconvenient to collaborate with women mentees because the men mentors thinks that women is lack of dedication and drive necessary for a continuing professional career. Besides that, Copper and Hingley (1983) proposed that women can miss the chance for career advancement because there are insufficient women role models. The insufficient women role models will likely to aspire to responses which reflect the attitude of men manager's success and may further disengage women as their style of living does not readily accommodate to the men managerial model (Cooper & Hingley, 1983). Besides that, there is still insufficient amount of mentors accessible to women than men, and women can be less probably than men to established these connection (Brown, 1985; Burke & McKeen, 1994; McDowall-Long, 2004).

By reviewing the previous literature, the factors of career success were divided into three aspects namely, the individual factors, human capital factors and social support factors. Rowley, Kang and Lim (2016) have determine the organizational factors (male-dominated organization culture, mentoring, work experience, training and development) and individual factors (masculinity, work family conflict) influences career success among women managers. Moreover, Datta and Agarwal (2017) have conducted a study on the intrapersonal factors, interpersonal factors and organizational factors on career success among women managers. Doubell and Struwig (2014) have explore the factors of demographics, career barriers, personality traits, cultural factors, external support and internal support with career success among women managers. However, not many studies focusing on the influence of job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring on career success among women managers in a single study. Therefore, more studies are needed to confirm the influence of relationship between job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring with career success among women managers. Adding on, there are limited studies conducted among women managers in Malaysian private sector organization setting. Thus, this study shed the gap from the previous literature.

Previous study on career success among women managers have been conducted in international settings. For example, Tlais and Kauser (2011) in Arab have studied on the career success of Arab women managers, Peus and Traut-Mattausch (2008) in US have investigated the factors influences women managers' success, in Turkey, Aycan (2004) have studied the key success factors for women in management, Simpson and

Altman (2000) in UK have studied on the time bounded glass ceiling and young women managers: career progress and career success, also Fernando, Amaratunga and Haigh (2014) in UK have investigated the career advancement of the executive women in the UK construction industry. However, to date most study in Malaysia setting focuses mainly on career advancement among women managers and very little study have conducted on career success among women managers. Thus, this study intended to shed the gap by providing empirical findings to the current literature on career success among women managers.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994, 2002) developed social cognitive career theory (SCCT) using Bandura's (1986, 2001) social cognitive theory as a foundation. Social cognitive career theory is an important role in which a person's interpretation about his or her own potential to accomplish task effectively. This theory is composed by many elements that include interest, abilities, values, environmental factor which had present in the prior theories and had influence career development. The fundamental cognitive construct for example self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goals have impact a person in making decision regarding their career. SCCT posit that certain features of the opportunity structure influence people's ability to translate their interest into career goals and goals into action. In an organization, the strategic position of top management, in terms of its relationship to segment of executive, will affect the organizational environment, which in turn affect human behavior. Women managers believe that the organization provide job flexibility values their contribution and care about their well-being in the organization.

Moreover, SCCT was developed based on how people, their action and surrounding that correlatively effect each other. Self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals which influence on a person's career decision are highlighted in the theory. Social cognitive career theory mentioned that "certain conditions may directly affect people's choice of implementation possibilities", (Lent, 2005, p.110). Example by Lent states that "in certain cultures, individuals may differ their career decisions to others in the family, even when others' preferred career path is not all that interesting to the individual" (p.110). SCCT basically proposed that sometimes a person's career option is connected to their interest due to the situation that may need a settlement in own interest. This concept can be use in the career development of women managers as their success in career are mostly associated to family factors and cultures with less on their personal interest.

### **Social Capital Theory**

Some researchers apply Social Capital Theory as primary theory for career success (Seibert, Crant&Kraimer, 2001; Nikitkov&Sainty, 2014; &Mohd, Thomas & Ismail,2013). Social capital theory according to Lin (2001) is defined as contibution of assets such as trust, norms, and network inherent in collective relationship with expected returned. Social capital is the resources that result from relationships (Payne, Moore, Griffis& Autry,2011). It is not physically tangible, but present in the existence of interpersonal relationship (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001b). Lin and Erickson (2008) defined social capital as "resources embedded in social relations and social network". Resources needed for career are information, trust, status, sponsorship, opportunity for development and visibility. Individual or group exchange social to gain access to needed resources from others in the social system. In an organization, a greater number of promotion and salary increase are example of benefit for women managers with social capital. Besides that, social capital theory can also contribute to our understanding on mentoring association. For example, if the relationship is with people who has more power and authority, the social capital is seen to be more valuable. In addition to that, in a mentoring relationship it is important to communicate professional norms such as personal development, sponsorship for advancement opportunities and moral support in times of difficulties. Association with mentor can lead to higher status in an organization.

## **III. Methodology**

Correlation research design was used in this study to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010).The population of this study was women managers from private sector organizations. The private sector organizations were selected through simple random sampling using Microsoft excel whereby 30 organizations was selected and the women managers was selected randomly. The sample size of the women managers was based on G-power analysis. The total number of respondents include in this study was 144 women managers. Therefore, 150 number of questionnaire given to the women managers. However, 146 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, and two was not valid with representing a response rate of 97.3%. the research instrument used was developed by the previous researcher and has used in several studies, thus having a good validity result. Questions on job flexibility were taken from Journal Workplace Flexibilities, Job Satisfaction and Union Membership in the US Workforce developed by Cotti, Haley & Miller (2014). Besides that, questions for family culture were taken from Journal Development

and validation of the family influence scale (FIS) developed by Fouad, Cotter, Fitzpatrick, Kantamneni, Carter & Bernfeld (2010). Questions on network support were taken from Journal intra-organizational network resources: relation to career success and personality developed by Bozionelos (2003a). Questions on mentoring were taken from the Journal Mentor Role Instrument developed by Ragins & McFarlin (1990). Lastly, questions on career success was taken from Journal Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley (1990). The correlation between job flexibility, family culture, network support, mentoring and career success among women managers was measured using inferential analysis using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. To determine the influence of job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring on career success among women managers measured analyses using Multiple Linear regression to report the strength and direction.

#### IV. Result

In this study, the correlation between job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring as independent variables and career success as dependent variable were tested. Thus, it was used to determine the strength of relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

**Table no 1:** Correlation between Job Flexibility and Career Success

		Job Flexibility	Career Success
Job Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	144	144
Career Success	Pearson Correlation	.548**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	144	144

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The association coefficient for the job flexibility and career success among women managers is moderate correlation that the r value is 0.548 at a significant level 0.01. The result explains that when job flexibility is high, therefore the career success among women managers is also high. On the other hand, when the job flexibility is low, the career success among women managers also will be low. The result is persistent with the previous research findings by Mcnall et al. (2010) on flexible work arrangement who found that flexitime and compressed work week help employees to experience higher job satisfaction and career success.

**Table no 2:** Correlation between Family Culture and Career Success

		Family Culture	Career Success
Family Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.726**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	144	144
Career Success	Pearson Correlation	.726**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	144	144

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The association coefficient for the family culture and career success among women managers is high correlation that the r value is 0.726 at a significant level 0.01. The result explains that when family culture is high, therefore the career success among women managers is also high. On the other hand, when the family culture is low, the career success among women managers also will be low. This result is supported by Mayrhofer et al. (2008) and Tharenou (2005) affirmed that family obligations affects women career success. Besides that, Ahmad (2008) postulate that family culture have positively influence career success of women managers. This result is supported by Ezzedeenand and Ritchey (2008) and Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) that there is a positive association between family culture and career success of women managers.

**Table no 3:** Correlation between Network Support and Career Success

		Network Support	Career Success
Network Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.489**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	144	144
Career Success	Pearson Correlation	.489**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	144	144

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The association coefficient for the network support and career success among women managers is moderate correlation that the r value is 0.489 at a significant level 0.01. The study explains that when network support is high, therefore the career success among women managers is also high. On the other hand, when the network support is low, the career success among women managers also will be low. This result is supported by Lathi (2003) where proper network can make women to be more successful on their own and this increase their determinations. This finding also corroborates the finding with past study by Singh et al. (2006) which states that women’s network support is essential as it enhance and effects the career success.

**Table no 4: Correlation between Mentoring and Career Success**

		Mentoring	Career Success
Mentoring	Pearson Correlation	1	.753**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	144	144
Career Success	Pearson Correlation	.753**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	144	144

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The association coefficient for the mentoring and career success among women managers is high correlation that the r value is 0.753 at a significant level 0.01. The study explains that when mentoring is high in the organization, therefore the career success among women managers is also high. On the other hand, when the mentoring is low, the career success among women managers also will be low. The result is supported by previous research findings by Azman et al. (2009) where he confirmed that proper mentoring programs can lead to increase the women advancement to higher level in the organization. Besides that, Bozionelos (2004) and Allen et al. (2006) have also confirmed that during an employees working period, mentoring plays a crucial role in the success of both the objective and subjective career success.

In this study, multiple linear regression was used to determine the influence of job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring on career success among women managers in private sector organizations.

**Table no 5: Multivariate analysis Result**

	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	T	Sig	Lower Boundary	Upper Boundary
(Constant)	15.380	2.090		-7.359	.000	11.248	19.512
Job Flexibility	-.085	.065	-.105	-1.306	.194	.215	.044
Family Culture	.231	.056	.397	4.132	.000	.121	.342
Network Support	.251	.093	.161	2.709	.008	.068	.434
Mentoring	.064	.015	.427	4.359	.000	.035	.092

Note. F=59.341; p=.000; R=.794; R<sup>2</sup>=.631; ΔR<sup>2</sup>=.620

The result of regression model in table 4.9, shows that the R square is 0.631, in which there are 63.1% of the variance in career success can be predicted from job flexibility, family culture, network support and mentoring. F-statistic equal to 59.341, p-value less than 0.05 shows that the overall regression model fitted well and significant at predicting career success among women managers. The strength of relationship between independent variables towards career success is a very strong relationship since R equal to 0.794. This indicates that the overall combination of the construct is significantly predicted of career success among women managers in private sector organizations.

From the table above, three independent variables are significantly and positively related to women managers career success, p<0.05, while one independent variable is not significantly and negatively related to women managers career success, p>0.05. This shows that job flexibility increased by 1unit value, career success decreased by -0.085unit value while other independent variables remains constant. This is due to unsuccessful implementation of job flexibility in the organization that causes the women managers to unable to use such benefit. In addition, women managers who uses job flexibility are perceived to be less committed to the organization that affects their career success. This has been supported by (Becker,1985; Goode, 1960; Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985) that women managers who utilize job flexibility for personal reason are seems to have lack of commitment to the organization than those who do not use job flexibility. This will eventually hinder women managers career success. Furthermore, 1unit value of family culture increased, career success

increased by 0.231unit value while other independent variables stay constant. Moreover, 1unit value of network support increased, career success increased by 0.251unit value while other independent variables remain constant. Besides that, 1unit value of mentoring increased, career success increased by 0.064unit value while other independent variables remain constant.

Based on the result in table above, mentoring with  $\beta=0.427$  is the highest standardized coefficient value, this is followed by family culture with  $\beta=0.397$ , network support with  $\beta=0.161$  and job flexibility with  $\beta=-0.105$ . This indicates that mentoring is the highest predictor that influences career success among women managers, followed by family culture, network support and job flexibility.

## V. Conclusion

More studies should be conducted to study women career success for the reason that differences of nature of men and women, physically, mentally, psychologically as well as different perception based on religious and cultural inclination. These factors must be revealed because this knowledge would be beneficial to the organization in helping their women managers such as provide benefits, training and motivations. In effort to deal with the limitation of the current study, it would be interesting to test whether the use of larger sample would yield similar result as using small sample in the current study one must be caution in making generalization on these findings. Even though quantitative study was used and believe to be suitable for this study, however qualitative study may bring further understanding on studying women manager career success. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodology could also help to understand the different views of career success among women managers. Data collection method, for example interviews and observations would help researcher obtained a better understanding of different views on individual women managers regarding their success in their career. Lastly, it is also suggested that sample from public sector organizations together with private sector organizations also should be included, as it add value to explore and compare the career success among women managers in both the organizations.

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