

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains the summary of the study, discussions, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 The Interviewing Results

The interviewing results with 4 representatives in two local petrochemical companies and two foreign transportation companies indicate that half of the interviewees who are married weigh 50% on domestic responsibility as a barrier for their career advancement and 25% on both social influence and personal aspiration. However, the interviewees who are unmarried viewed the obstacles for their career advancement differently. They weigh social influence at 40%, domestic responsibility and personal aspiration at 30% each. Therefore, the phenomenon of the glass ceiling is quite different in single and married women's opinions. Domestic responsibility appears to be the main obstacle for married women in climbing the corporate ladder whereas social influence is the most important factor that unmarried women are more concerned about.

5.2.2 Survey Results

The demographic information of the respondents shows that the majority of the female white-collar workers (71 per cent) were between 25-39 years old. More than half of them are single (65 per cent). Most of them (74 per cent) have bachelor's degree education and more than half assume a position at staff level (58 per cent), and almost one-third are at supervisory level. Very few are at manager level (4 per cent) and the rest (17 per cent) did not identify their position.

The overall results from 100 respondents from two local petrochemical companies and two foreign transportation companies indicated that a majority of the respondents are uncertain if these factors are barriers towards their career progression.

However, among the three, *personal aspiration* comes first on the list, followed by *domestic responsibility* and *social influence*

When we only look at the results of the local petrochemical companies, one-third of the respondents agree that domestic responsibility is a barrier for women's career advancement. On the contrary, when we look at social influence, they strongly disagree that it is a barrier for women's career advancement. Again, when we look at personal aspiration, they disagree as well as being uncertain that it is a barrier for women's career advancement.

The results in foreign transportation companies are pretty much the same. Only two per cent agree that domestic responsibility is a barrier. Overall, it is not obvious how female white-collars workers perceive any of these factors as a barrier towards their career progression.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section will focus on how the three factors; social influence, domestic responsibility and personal aspiration, contributed to the barrier for women's career advancement.

5.3.1 Social Influence as a Barrier for Women's Career Advancement

The survey results indicate that a majority of the respondents do not feel that social influence is a barrier. However, one of the most notable statements is that most people feel that female managers have a tendency to express their emotion more than male manager which supports the statement of Davidson and Cooper (1992) that women are labeled particular behaviour such as emotional expressiveness. On the other hand, these people least believe that men are more devoted to their work than women which is opposite to research by Corus and Cassar (2004) that suggested women are perceived as lacking job involvement.

Based on the results from the interviewing, female white-collar workers who are single believe that social influence is the main barrier towards their career advancement. The differences of the survey and interviewing results can be assumed that in fact women agree that this factor is a barrier, however, they may have this

hidden feeling without realizing it until they are asked to explain and explore in an in-depth interviewing process.

5.3.2 Domestic Responsibility as a Barrier for Women's Career Advancement

The survey and interview present a corresponding result that women believe domestic responsibility is a barrier for their career advancement, especially those who are married with children. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, she will not consider new opportunities that offer attractive compensation if they require that she works much harder and stays longer hours as it will affect her domestic schedules. Therefore, it supports the study of Guillaume and Pochic (2004) that women become handicapped by their social representation attached to sexual roles and household division of labour. Overall, women admit that they sometimes are less committed to their work due to this reason. It further supports a belief that commitment is represented by working full time including being in early and staying on late (Palmer, 1996). While White (1994) suggests that for organizations who want to assign more women in managerial positions, they should put more effort to focus on balancing work and family life because women are not attracted by high salaries.

5.3.3 Personal Aspiration as a Barrier for Women's Career Advancement

The survey results in local petrochemical companies indicate that more than half of the respondents are uncertain if this factor could be a problem, whereas a majority of the respondents in foreign transportation companies disagree that it is a problem. However, when we focus on each statement in this section, it can be observed that most women do not measure career achievement as life achievement and that they also believe that happiness is more important than career achievement. Therefore, this may be one of the answers to why women are so scarce at top levels. Many women appear to re-evaluate their lives and values and attempts to make changes in the middle of their career growth. It can be understood that the failure for women to achieve the highest levels represents choice rather than regression.

The interview results also suggest that only 25-30 per cent of this factor contributed to the barrier for women's career advancement.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 Social Influence does not appear to be a barrier for women's career advancement as suggested by the survey result. However, an in-depth interview reveals that unmarried women believe that social influence is the most critical issue that delays their career progression. An interview has helped explore the deeper meaning and understanding of the respondents.

5.4.2 *Domestic responsibility* is the most outstanding factor recognized by married women as a barrier towards their career advancement.

5.4.3 It is not obvious from the survey results that any of the three factors is the most influential towards women's career advancement. However, if the mean is taken into consideration, personal aspiration receives the highest score, followed by domestic responsibility and social influence.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

1. The sample size of the population of the study should be increased in order to get more reliable results.
2. More stratum of the population may be included to cover the companies from other industries and other locations.
3. The factors contributing to women's career advancement can be explored to other aspects such as organizational structure, education, etc.