

Abstract

The study of “Opportunities to achieve a woman executive under the individual, interpersonal, and organizational contexts” is a qualitative research with the life story method. The lives of twelve women executives are considered in this study to identify conditions which contribute to the success in the workplace. The women were selected among the Thai Government Level 9 Civil Executive and officers of the rank of general within the Thai Ministry of Defense. Using qualitative research method, the women in this life story are analyzed at 3 levels: personal, interpersonal, and organizational.

The results of this study can help steer new policies to remove discriminatory practices and provide advancement for the next generation of women executives. Key findings are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Personal factors before entering workforce.

Most women analyzed in this study grew up in strong, traditional Thai families. The women were taught traditional skills such as housework and care-giving. At the same time, they were taught to be ready for work outside the home. These women were encouraged to develop themselves and pursue higher education to levels of at least an undergraduate degree. The success of role models, especially, parents and older siblings, were found to be an important factor. Peers and other individuals outside the home also influenced the women in academic direction. They practiced positive attitude toward challenges, but maintained traditional religious beliefs.

Personal factors after entering workforce.

All women in this study demonstrated continuous improvement in their skills and abilities through engagement in the workforce. Their participation in post-graduate education and other training opportunities served to enhance their skills and make them more human capital. In addition, healthy lifestyle and physical wellness played a major role in their success.

Personal motivation was demonstrated to be important factor in success; important motivations were typified by peer acceptance and open expression of creativeness. Motivation and determination enable women to excel. In addition, the women in this case study demonstrated self-awareness and correction through self-control and advance preparation. Their successes are tangible. The qualities noted herein were noticed by superiors. Their execution of promotion opportunities was influenced by demonstrated leadership and a willingness to transfer into positions without prior experience. These women were also able to find balance between work and family. Hence, having a spouse who shares house duties will be an important factor.

Interpersonal factors.

Women who find success in working executive positions learn through established mentoring systems and networking relationships which provide help, consultation, suggestions, information, connections, and directions in decision making. Fair treatment without discrimination in assignment, pay, promotion potential, and career development forms a significant factor that enables advancement without obstacle, even continuous development. Successful women are not abused by their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates, and their ambition is not be inhibited by blatant sex discrimination. While there may be words of hostile humor and a rejection of women who are perceived as invading the work environment as equals, successful women react appropriately to work their way through such environment, emphasizing their work, and not showing a direct response to hostility in any manner.

Organizational factors.

The women in this study work under organizational structures that have chosen not to practice discrimination. Procedures and methods for establishing pay, in-grade step increases, promotion potential, and career development are well established. Even now, policy to encourage gender equality in civilian government personnel practices is being written by the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC); the initiative is considered a vital tool in establishing equal access to

opportunity. Uninterrupted expansion in organizational size and command structure can provide opportunity for advancement. Conflicting demands on time allocated to home and work may be unavoidable, but the successful woman tries hard to adapt to these environments. Apparent opposition to the traditional feminine role can be stressful, especially in an organizational culture that is political. These women can be exposed to hostility, ridicule and sexual innuendo. However, the women in this study demonstrate that they can manage their lives and empower themselves through stoic ambivalence, adaptation and professional discipline.

The results of this study can lead to specific recommendations to women at the personal and inter-personal level that will enhance opportunity for advancement. The study can also provide policy guidance to social and family institutions, educational institutions, work organizations and government in order to make changes in these structures which result in equality in the workplace.