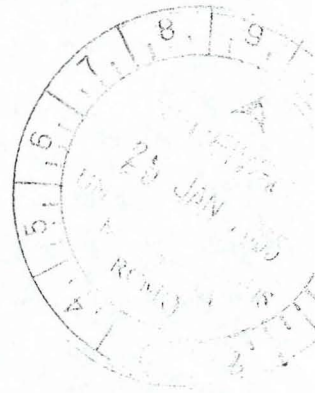


Bahagian Penyelidikan & Pembangunan  
Canselori  
Universiti Sains Malaysia



### Laporan Akhir Projek Penyelidikan Pendek

1) Nama Penyelidik: Profesor Madya Intan Osman (DBA)

Nama Penyelidik Lain:

Puan Adida Yang Amri (ketua penyelidik sebelum beliau mendapat cuti belajar); Profesor Mahfooz A Ansari; Profesor Madya Dr Zainal Ariffin Ahmad; Puan Ummu Kolsome; dan Dr Rehana Aafaqi.

2) Pusat Pengajian: Pengurusan

3) Tajuk Projek: Successful Women (No Akaun: 304/PMGT/633110) 27998

4) (a) Penemuan Projek/Abstrak

Kajian ini berfokus kepada pendapat wanita terhadap “kejayaan” berkaitan kerja dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi atau menghalang “kejayaan”. Kejayaan dalam kajian ini diukur secara objektif dan subjektif. Ia mendapati responden mempersepsi diri mereka sebagai mempunyai keperluan untuk berkuasa dan pencapaian dimana mereka mencari sesuatu yang mencabar secara mental dan penglibatan yang boleh didapati ditempat kerja. Sokongan daripada suami dianggap lebih penting daripada sokongan penyelia, suatu budaya yang cenderung mengdelegasi wanita kepada tugas rumahtangga. Peranan begini membolehkan wanita memegang kedudukan mereka dalam masyarakat dan menjalani tugas dalam profesion sendiri. Wanita ini dilihat mengguna taktik rasional dan pembaikan diri untuk mendapat persetujuan daripada ketua mereka bersetuju dengan permintaan mereka dengan bersikap terbuka, ikhlas dan berhadapan secara langsung. Kerja dipersepsikan sebagai bercampur lebih banyak dengan keluarga daripada keluarga bercampur dengan kerja mungkin disebabkan wanita terpaksa bergantung kepada keluarga sendiri atau orang gaji, keterangan yang menjelaskan mengapa wanita memilih berada dipengurusan pertengahan kerana memanjat keatas tangga pengurusan bermakna mereka harus mengorbankan masa keluarga.

Ianya dilihat effikasi diri mempunyai perhubungan yang signifikan dengan kejayaan yang dipersepsikan subjektif. Keinginan untuk berada disuatu tempat, melakukan sesuatu akan mendorong mereka dengan lebih bersemangat mencapai apa yang diharapkan. Responden mempersepsikan penglibatan keluarga sebagai penghalang utama terhadap kejayaan disebabkan wanita Malaysia selalunya diharap mengurus keluarga walaupun mereka bekerja. Tunduk, menerima apa sahaja yang diberi, tidak berasional dan kekurangan orientasi kerjaya dikatakan sebagai hasil daripada penglibatan keluarga yang keterlaluan. Wanita mungkin sampai di satu peringkat dimana mereka tidak boleh mencapai tahap paling tinggi dalam pengurusan dan melibatkan diri dalam hal keluarga buat masa yang sama. Oleh yang demikian, mereka memilih jalan yang membolehkan mereka mencapai apa yang dipersepsikan sebagai imbalan.

### Abstract

The study focused on how women define “success” with regards to work and what factors influence or inhibit “success”. Success in this study is measured objectively and subjectively. It showed that respondents perceive themselves as having a need for power an achievement where they seek for something mentally challenging and engaging that can be obtained at the workplace. Support from spouse is perceived as having an edge over support from supervisors a culture that tends to relegate women to the house, enabling women to hold their own in society and at the same time be able to execute the job undertaken. They seemed to likely use rational and self-enhancement tactics to get the boss to agree to their request, preferring to being forthright, open and honest. Work was perceived to interfere more with family rather than family interfering with work perhaps owing to the women having to rely on the extended family or upon good house help in the form of maids explaining why women choose to linger at middle level management as moving further up would be at the expense of spending time with family.

It appears that self-efficacy has a significant relationship with perceived subjective success. The push wanting to be somewhere, wanting to do something will drive some of them very hard to achieve what they wanted to do. Respondents perceive family involvement as the main hindrance toward success because Malaysian women are generally expected to manage the family even if they are working. Submissiveness, complacency, non-rational and lack of career orientation were argued to be an outcome of being too involved in family affairs. Women may have come to a point that they are not able to reach the highest echelons of management and be involved in



family affairs as well. Thus they have decided to choose a path that allows them to achieve what they perceive as a balance.

Output Penyelidikan

(b) Katakunci yang digunakan

Bahasa Malaysia	Bahasa Inggeris
Kejayaan	Success
Kejayaan Objektif	Objective Success
Kejayaan Subjektif	Subjective Success
Keperluan untuk berkuasa	Power for Power
Efikasi Diri	Self Efficacy
Taktik bukan Rasional	Non Rational Tactic
Pembaikan Diri	Self Enhancement
Siling Kaca	Glass Ceiling
Halangan-Halangan	Barriers
Halangan Kerja	Work Barriers
Halangan Keluarga	Family barriers

5 Output dan Faedah Projek: Gender in Management. The Case of Malaysian Women.

Kertas kerja dibentangkan di Persidangan Antarabangsa Sains Sosial, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan Dis 10-12 2004. Akan diterbitkan sebagai prosiding/penerbitan persidangan Sains Sosial, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, 2005. Faedah projek termasuklah perkongsian penemuan dan methodology dengan beberapa penyelidik dalam bidang ini dari beberapa buah universiti dari Pakistan, USA, Scotland, S. Africa, dan England.

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## **\*Gender in Management. The case of Malaysian Women**

Ummu Kolsome Farouk & Intan Osman,

ains Malaysia

This paper is about successful women at the workplace in Malaysia. It reports on the findings and conclusion of an empirical research project carried out via questionnaires on a sample of successful women at work in Malaysia. The study found that self-efficacy has a significant relationship with perceived subjective success.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The demographic of the Malaysian workforce is changing. Women are entering the labor market in droves. Statistics show that since Malaysia's independence in 1957, the number of women in the labor market has increased from 30.8% in 1957 to 47.1% in 1995 (Seventh Malaysian Plan, 1996-2000 cited in Noraini, 1999). However, it must be noted that the women who have entered the local job market are concentrated in the unskilled and low income earning groups. For instance, in 2001 only 5.5% of the women in the workforce were in the professional category; and 4.5% were employed in the legislative, senior office and management positions (The Edge Malaysia, 10 February 2003). The women holding the aforesaid positions would be perceived by the public as successful. In view of the current position of women in the Malaysian workforce, the purpose of this paper is to discover the factors that contribute towards women being successful at the workplace.

Note: The paper was presented at the International Social Science Conference, "Endangered and Engendered." Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 10-12 Dec 2004 based on the findings of research, Women at Work sponsored by Universiti Sains Malaysia via the Intensified Research Project Areas (IRPA) bearing grant number 304/PMGT/633110 USM. It will be included in the conference publication, 2005. Other researchers contributing to the design, measures, data collection and analyses are Adida Yang Amri, Associate Professor Dr. Zainal Ariffin bin Ahmad, Professor Mahfooz Ansari and Dr. Rehana Aafaqi.



Statistics show that women are in the workforce but vertical and horizontal segregation exists (Azura, 2001). Vertical segregation means that women are concentrated at the lower level of the organization or the lower level of a particular job category (e.g production operator rather than production supervisor). Horizontal segregation means that women are found to occupy a particular department of the organization compared to others (e.g Human Resource Department).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute toward women being successful at the workplace. In other words, how did some of these women succeed in holding middle to senior management level positions in an organization? The following research questions were formulated for the purpose of this research; (I) What are the factors that influenced women's perception of success at the workplace? (ii) What are the factors perceived by women as inhibiting them from being successful at the workplace? (iii) What is the profile of a perceived successful woman at the Malaysian workplace.

Following upon the heels of the abovesaid research questions, the objectives of this research are as follows; (I) To identify the factors that determine women's perception of success at the workplace; (ii) To identify the factors that women perceive as hindering them from being successful at the workplace; (iii) To obtain a profile of a woman perceived as successful at the Malaysian workplace.

The findings from this study would explain the drivers and barriers for women to be successful at the work place. The study would enable management specialists to formulate better plans and strategies to attract and retain women at the skilled and higher income earning groups of an organization. Organizations here refer to public and private sector organizations that range from manufacturing to service industry. Female talent needs to be tapped. In the early decades of the new millennium, female talent will become an increasingly important issue for the organizations (Nelson & Burke, 2000).

By knowing what are the ingredients that are needed to nurture a woman with potential, organizations will be able to provide the support required to ensuring that this potential is fully utilized for the benefit of the society. The nurturing of this talent should at the same time nourish and strengthen the family structure. It would also help such women and their families enhance their quality of life. Having a workforce that has both the quality of work life and family life will in turn create a highly motivated, dynamic, energized, and loyal workforce.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature suggests that there is no single criterion of success that satisfies all researchers. In fact, different researchers have adopted different criteria of success. These criteria can be grouped into two categories: objective and subjective. Most researchers (e.g., Ansari, 1984; Ansari et al., 1982) have used the objective criteria of success. The numerator in the index of success has been salary or standardized salary score, number of promotions secured (Lee, 1999), or the hierarchical echelons attained. The denominator of the index in most cases has been the length of service or age. These indexes of success have been called the rate of advancement, career progress or success, salary progress, or simply the index of success. The other group of researchers (e.g., Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley (1990) has recommended the use of subjective criteria as well such as perceived career success, quality of life outside of work, satisfaction with self and life in general, quality of family life, and level of health..

### *Factors that Contribute Towards Success at the Workplace*

Women who represent a distinct trend have penetrated the 'glass ceiling' (invisible artificial barriers created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices that bar women from top executive jobs) probably owing to individual motivation, ability and lucky circumstances (Wirth, 1998). Sometimes women have to work harder and perform better than their male counterparts to move ahead (Wirth. 1998). To be successful in a career, a woman would have to negotiate her way around the dominant social expectation that accompany the female sex--principally that motherhood and its associated responsibilities should be paramount and other considerations subordinate (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). In other words, intelligent juggling of work and family demands is vital (Olarie, 2000). However, some women have also sacrificed family in favor of career by consciously deciding not to have children (Davies-Netzley, 1998). . Women to be successful also had to invest in cultural capital to overcome the barriers of male network and peer similarities (Davies-Netzley, 1998). This entailed improving educational level and modification to speech and behavior. The latter part required them to dress up in ways that did not reflect their femininity (power suits, combed back hairstyle). In terms of speech, the women talked about what was of interest to men (politics, sports etc). Nevertheless, for some executives, being promoted to a department head could be by coincidence (e.g., male colleague resigned) and they might not get accepted and consulted on important organizational issues by higher management or CEO until after several months (Mansor, 1994).



### *Factors that are Barriers Towards Success at the Workplace*

Barriers towards success can be internal or external. The internal barrier is a psychological phenomenon caused by cultural beliefs and societal attitudes of how women should behave and what role they should play. These causal factors make women internalize characteristics expected by society out of them (submissive, shy, non aggressive, give primary importance to man's career, responsible for children etc.) and affect attitudes of others towards them (Hernandez, 1999; Korabik, 1994; Noraini, 1999; Reciniello, 1999). Women's own attitude shaped because of culture or upbringing can become a stumbling block. For instance, McLoughlin (1992) quotes from a female businesswoman-cum-employer who says that Asian women see their own ambition as unwomanly: "They think it is unfeminine to push themselves forward because in their culture women are subservient. In some of the offices Asian women do not want to be promoted to positions where they would be supervising man. The Asian man did not want it either" (McLoughlin, 1992). The restrictive affect of cultural beliefs and societal attitudes pulls the noose around women's neck tighter when women adopt a compromising attitude. Gottfredson (1981) cited in Henderson (1999) states that individuals may adjust their career decisions due to restrictive environmental factors such as social gender role expectation. Women's internalization of characteristics shaped by culture and society has left them inept at utilizing certain career development strategies that serves as a setback: lack of self advertising of accomplishments (Reciniello, 1999), lack of career planning, inability to leverage on potential of networking and influence of mentor (Travers et al., 1997).

External barriers appear in many forms. Occupational segregation, gender role stereotyping or allocation of work based on gender are varied terms that bear the same meaning. These terms reflect a current situation brought about owing to cultural beliefs and societal attitudes regarding women. In other words, a particular type of work is not given to a woman because of her gender. "A career for a man is like motherhood for a woman. Anyone who admits not being completely enamored with the role appropriate for his sex is committing blasphemy" (Prather, 1971). Nevertheless, there are some women managers who insist that their career success is independent of gender and that their colleagues see them as a person rather than a woman (Marshall, 1984). Women are placed in jobs which are perceived as suitable to the expected female qualities (nursing, teaching etc) or jobs in which women serve a maintenance or administrative role (Guy, 1994; Henderson 1999; Korabik, 1994; Prather, 1971,). This can be a hurdle toward success when work is gendered. The reason being that when women are placed in jobs that are merely



supportive they will inevitably be excluded from policy making or functional aspects of the business organization, skills needed for penetration into top positions of an organization (Guy, 1994).

Occupational segregation is further exacerbated if educational opportunities are based on gender which is also engendered by cultural beliefs and societal attitudes about what type of education is suitable for women. For example, in China it is difficult for women to obtain education in the technical fields such as accounting, science, politics and engineering. As a result, Chinese women find difficulty getting managerial roles and advancing as managers to top positions, as knowledge in the aforesaid areas are needed (Korabik, 1994). Ethnicity is also a factor that can pose a barrier toward women's climb up the corporate ladder. Societal values may shape what jobs are suitable for a person on the basis of ethnicity. It serves a double blow to women as they are already discriminated on the basis of gender (Henderson, 1999).

As stated earlier, cultural beliefs and societal attitudes regarding women, affect the attitude of others dealing with women especially men themselves. Men's prejudice toward women or male stereotyping of women is the main deterrent of women's advancement (Townsend 1996 cited in Davies-Netzeley 1998). In a study by Deloitte and Touche, 1995 (cited in Reciniello, 1999) men perceived that women lacked technical competence; lacked ability to compete and were not willing to spend long hours at work. Male stereotyping, is all the more pervasive when an organization is dominated by men (Guy, 1994). Nevertheless, male stereotyping still occurs in organizations dominated by women if men still hold court at the higher echelons of the organization (Guy, 1994; Travers, 1997). In organizations such as these the male company culture prevails. To put it simply, promotional procedures, personnel procedures and work styles reward or value male characteristics such as ambitiousness, competitiveness, aggressiveness and willingness to put long hours at work (Travers, 1997). A predominant work style or company culture that is traditionally masculine, aggressive, competitive and demanding long hours at work could pose a developmental and promotional barrier for women; and on a lesser plane cause women to shy away from the workforce (Reciniello, 1999), because it causes a tension between women's need for achievement and connection with family. An extension of male prejudice is the act of sexual harassment at the workplace. Sexual harassment may occur at the workplace. Women are more often the victims, and this can prevent women from moving up to the top position of the organization, as the top brass is more often than not predominantly male (Wirth, 1998)



A study by Davies-Netzley (1998) revealed that women in elite positions viewed two external factors as barriers towards success: male networks (Korabik, 1994) and peer similarities. The male network that exists in a male dominated environment or an organization top heavy with men can hamper women's climb up the corporate ladder. To put it simply hard work alone was not enough to break through the glass ceiling. Women had to find ways to be integrated in the male network and share similar interest with a superior (golf, running partner) who is more often male to unblock the pathway to progress. To overcome these barriers women interviewed in the study by Davies-Netzley (1998) had to invest in cultural capital. This entailed improving educational level and modification to speech and behavior. The latter part required them to dress up in ways that did not reflect their femininity (power suits, combed back hairstyle). In terms of speech the women talked about what was of interest to men (politics, sports etc). Organizations can play a part in reducing the impact of the aforesaid barriers by adopting the following suggestions: (1) introduction of programs and policies to eradicate sexual harassment at the workplace; (2) imposition of an equal opportunity policy; and (3) institutionalization of career building strategies for women, such as including women in the informal network, career tracking ( identifying talented women and giving them visibility and challenging job tasks) and mentoring (Wirth, 1998).

It is interesting to note that even if a woman has no family the very fact of her being seen as a potential mother can create a barrier toward her being successful at the workplace (Wirth, 1998). This reflects the phenomenon of women being seen as a homogeneous group with similar interests, ambitions and constraints (Wirth, 1998). The balance between work and family is a barrier toward women being successful at work because cultural beliefs and societal values have placed the responsibility for child care on the woman, a rather universal phenomenon. Perhaps that is the reason for women being overrepresented in homemaking and part-time work as found in the findings by Ross (1998). Winsor (2000) in his study had interviewed two women in high flying careers who had to change or partially sacrifice their career aspirations because of difficulty in balancing work and family. One of the women chose job sharing in the position akin to a judge which allows her to work three times a week. In his paper he alluded to the fact of demystifying the superwoman myth and the fact that many women are leaving their high flying jobs because of inability to balance work and family. The women interviewed had a choice in changing their careers. Thus Winsor (2000) concedes that women who are forced to work or forced to give up work might react differently. Women forced to work and having to balance



family might be working at sub optimal levels which can make the climb up the corporate ladder arduous. However, for those women forced to leave, the organization would be at a loss because female talent slipped through the organization net. Winsor (2000) has stressed that the work-family nexus is a vital organizational issue that has to be dealt with what with the need to harness female talent and the growing number of single parents (be they male or female).

The conflict between work and family is a reality. Marchese (2002) in his paper reviewed several articles that highlighted the negative consequences ensuing from the conflict between work and family: poor physical health, depression, hypertension, alcohol abuse, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, anxiety, burnout, low organizational commitment, work stress, low work productivity, dissatisfaction with life, psychological stress and marital strain. If the organization does not acknowledge its role in the work-family balance it will have to deal with issues pertaining to job satisfaction, absenteeism, tardiness, performance and turnover (Chapman et al. 1994; Dalton et al. 1990; Guy 1993, Rodgers et al. 1989 cited in Winsor 2000).

#### *Profile of a Successful Woman*

White, Cox, & Cooper (1992) found that successful women were predominantly first-born or only children. Relative to less successful women, these women were found to have supportive parents, good schooling, high internal locus of control, a high need for achievement and autonomy, a high degree of self-efficacy, and are more innovative (White et al., 1992). Other qualities prevalent were that of being single minded, striving to meet their ambitions, persistent, professional, honest and, above all, to be themselves (White et al., 1992). Some of these findings of White et al. are very much in line with the dynamics of success discovered for men executives (Ansari, 1984; Ansari, Baumgartel, & Sullivan, 1982).

#### **METHODOLOGY-SURVEY**

Based on the literature review a theoretical framework was developed to discover the relationships between two independent variables and the dependent variable of perceived career success. The two independent variables were self-efficacy and self-monitoring.

Multiple items were used to measure the two independent variables (self-monitoring and self-efficacy), and they were adapted from the works of Greenberg & Baron (2000); and that of



Sherer, Maddox, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, (1982) respectively. The dependant variable was measured using the subjective criteria of success. In addition, multiple items were also used to measure the dependent variable of perceived career success (items measuring perception of career success form personal perspective and from the perspective of others).

Other variables were also measured via multiple items in this study: personal orientations, locus of control, support, work-family nexus and attribution of glass ceiling. Items measuring the first three variables were adapted from Steer & Braunstein (1976); Levenson & Miller (1976); and Corcoran & Fischer (1987).

All the items were measured on a seven point Likert scale. Questionnaires were sent to respondents via mail, e-mail and personal contact. Responses from the valid questionnaires returned were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software package. Several types of analysis were executed: descriptive analysis, factor analysis and inferential analysis.

## **METHODOLOGY-INTERVIEW**

Qualitative data was also obtained via four interviews with four women perceived as successful. The interviews were semi-structured and recordings were made. Subsequently transcripts of the interviews were made and analyzed. The results of the analysis will be used to when formulating profile of successful woman in Malaysia and when discussion is made upon the results of the study. It is important to note that the interviews are ongoing as forty respondents have been targeted for the whole interview phase.

## **RESULTS**

### *Sample Profile*

A total of 377 respondents responded from a total target of 500. This represents a return rate of 75.4%. 52.6% of the respondents are below the ages of 35, and 47.5% are between ages of 35 and 55. A majority of the respondents, 51.7% are of Chinese origin, 34.5% are of Malay origin and the others are of Indian or other ethnic origins. With respect to marital status, 64.5% are married, 29.4% are single and the others are divorced, separated or widowed. In terms of tertiary education, 40.6% hold a Bachelor's degree, 13.7% hold a postgraduate degree (Masters and Phd)



and 30.2% hold a diploma level qualification. In terms of monthly income, 11.2% earn more than RM6,000; 57.9% earn between RM2,001 and RM6,000; whereas 25.7% earn less than RM2,000.

About 51.4% of the respondents have been in their organizations for more than 6 years, 17.3% had been in organization between 4-5 years; 17.8% between 2-3 years and only 12.8% had been in organization for less than 2 years. 33.7% of the respondents are from the sales/marketing/accounting section of the organization; 8.8% from production/operations; 4.8% from Information services, 8.5% from HR/Personnel and 13.8% from General Management whilst a mere 3.2% are from R&D. This corroborates the findings that a significant majority of the respondents are based in the service sector of the industry about 61.8% and 28.6% are from the manufacturing sector of the industry. A majority of the respondents are centered in middle level management 52.5%, with 15.4% being at senior management level leaving 20.7% of respondents at lower level management. 58.4% of the respondents have no businesses of their own. For those who do, 15.6% bought shares to become business partner, 13.8% started from scratch and 9.5% inherited from family/spouse. In terms of networking, 76.1% of the respondents have no affiliation to any professional organization; as only 22% do have membership in professional organizations. With regards to those respondents having memberships in professional organizations, a majority seems to limit their involvement to not more than 2 organizations.

Demographic Variables	Categories	Group Sample %
Age	< 25	14.1
	26 - 35	38.5
	36 – 45	32.4
	46 -55	14.6
	> 55	0.5
Tenure	< 2	12.7
	2 – 3	17.8
	4 – 5	17.2
	6 -7	12.7
	> 7	39.3
Years of Experience	< 3	17.2



	4 - 5	10.1
	6 - 7	7.4
	8 - 9	7.4
	> 9	57.8
Salary	< 2001	25.7
	2001-4000	37.7
	4001-6000	20.2
	6001-8000	6.1
	8001-10000	1.9
	> 10000	3.2
Race	Malay	34.5
	Chinese	51.7
	Indian	6.4
	Others	5.3
Marital Status	Single	29.4
	Married	64.5
	Divorced/Separated	3.2
	Widow	0.5
Education Level	Diploma	30.2
	Bachelor's	40.6
	Master's	9.5
	PhD	4.2
	Others	11.7
Job Function	Sales/Marketing	16.7
	finance/accounting	17.0
	Production/Operation	8.8
	Information Services	4.8
	HR/Personnel	8.5
	General Management	13.8
	R&D	3.2
	Others	18.8
Management Level	Lower	20.7
	Middle	52.5



	Senior	15.4
	Missing	11.4
Industry Type	Manufacturing	28.6
	Service	61.8
	Missing	9.5
Method of Ownership	No Ownership	59.4
	Inherit from family/spouse	9.5
	Started from scratch	13.8
	Bought shares to become business partner	15.6
Member of Professional Organization	No	76.1
	Yes	22.0
Number of Professional Organizations Involved In	0	76.4
	1	9.0
	2	7.2
	3	2.9
	4	1.3
	5	1.1
	6	.3

**Table 1: The Sample Profile**

*Regrouping of Variables Based on Factor Analysis*

Factor Analysis based on Principle Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation was executed on all items within the variables of the study. The variables were then clustered into the following factors or variables: (i) family interfere with work (ii) work interfere with family (iii) using of connections (showed outside connections can help, showed connection inside can help, knowing of influential others, can support through contacts, can get support of higher authority to back request, connection with top people in company can help) (iv) instrumental dependency (pretended only boss can support me, pretended only boss can solve problem, pretended only boss



can decide for me) (v) self-enhancement (made him believe I was trustworthy, made him believe I was responsible, offered to work harder, highlighted achievement) (vi) using charm (used feminine demeanor when making request, accentuated femininity in dealing with supervisors, used sex appeal in making request) (vii) rational persuasion (explained reasons for request, convinced boss by explaining importance of issue, told boss reasons why my plan was the best) (viii) upward appeal (appeal to higher levels to back my request, refer to higher authority if situation so demanded) (ix) need for achievement (try hard to improve, do best work with difficult assignment, try to perform better than coworkers, take moderate risk) (x) need for power (strive to gain more control, strive to be in command, find oneself organizing and directing) (xi) task related efficacy (keep trying until I can, when decision made go right to work, failure makes me try harder, certain that I can make plans work) (xii) lack of task related efficacy (rarely achieve set important goals, soon give up if not successful, cannot get down to work when I should) (xiii) lack of self monitoring (behavior reflects true feelings, difficult to argue ideas I don't believe in, make a poor actor, don't change attitudes or actions to please others) (xiv) self monitoring (try to impress people, often act in different ways, not always the person I seem).

The variable of support was clustered into: (i) support from spouse and (ii) support from supervisor. The variable pertaining to attribution of glass ceiling/barriers towards success was clustered into (i) lack of self worth (ii) lack of ambition (iii) same sex jealousy (iv) lack of career orientation (v) non-rational (vi) complacent (vii) submissiveness (viii) family orientation/involvement. The dependant variable of subjective success was clustered into two subsets: (i) subjective satisfaction with career (people feel my career is successful, career progress has been comparatively good, career on schedule); (ii) subjective satisfaction with progress (satisfied with progress for goals, satisfied with progress for advancement, satisfied with my success, satisfied with progress for income, satisfied with progress for new skills).

#### *Factors Perceived by Respondents as Barriers Towards Success?*

Descriptive statistical analysis of the variable pertaining to attribution of glass ceiling shows that based on the mean scores, the respondents of the study perceived the main hindrance towards success to be caused

by family orientation/involvement. In terms of personality traits, the main sources of hindrance in a descending order are being submissive, being non-rational, same sex jealousy, complacency and lack of career orientation. The means scores for lack of self worth and lack of ambition were the lowest.



### *Respondents' Perception of Variables Used in Study*

The descriptive statistics (based on the mean scores) seem to indicate that the respondents perceive a high degree of support from spouses compared to supervisors. In terms of influence tactics, these respondents perceived themselves as using tactics of self-enhancement and rational persuasion in getting the superior to agree with them. With respect to personality traits, the respondents perceived themselves as having a high need for achievement or power. In addition, they are not comfortable with self-monitoring behavior. They also seem to perceive themselves as exhibiting more task related efficacy compares to lack of task related efficacy. With regards to perception of success, their perception of their own progress and perception of how others view their progress is very much the same. Their perception of subjective success seems to waver between undecided to slightly agree. The respondents also appear to perceive that work tends to interfere with family (4.2 mean score) rather than family interfering with work (3.2 mean score).

### *Self Efficacy's Influence on Perception of Success*

The p value of 0.005 and 0.000 from the execution of hierarchical regression analysis indicates that self-efficacy had a significant relationship with perception of subjective career satisfaction and subjective career progress respectively (at significant level  $p < 0.05$ ). However, self-monitoring did not have a significant influence on perceived subjective success.

### *Profile of a Successful Woman*

An assimilation of the excerpts from the four interviewees indicate the following: a strong father figure, existence of mentors, networking, supportive spouse, a career plan, leadership qualities, assertiveness, being honest and upfront in their dealings with others, high level of self efficacy, responsible for executing task, creative and innovative, ability to convert hurdle into opportunity and good relationship with boss and peers.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Factors Perceived by Respondents as Barriers Toward Success?*

Respondents perceive family involvement as the main hindrance toward success because Malaysian women are generally expected to manage the family even if they are working. This is consistent with findings from literature review that claim that the Asian woman despite working



outside the home is still expected to carry on the role of managing the household. One of the interviewees in her words said, “ Women have to work harder in the home because the traditional concept of family is that the man works outside the home and women work in the home. Even if women have good pay they still have to come back home and manage the home”.

The other personality traits that women perceived as barriers toward success are such as submissiveness, complacency, non-rational and lack of career orientation. These barriers can be argued to be an outcome of the dominant barrier of being too involved in family affairs. Women may have come to a point that they are not able to reach the highest echelons of management and be involved in family affairs as well. Thus they have decided to choose a path that allows them to achieve what they perceive as a balance. Moving up the corporate ladder would take them away from involvement in family affairs. The demographics of the respondents seem to allude to this with a great number of respondents resting at middle level management and below. Perhaps for them, success lies in being at the middle of the corporate ladder. The variables perceived by the respondents to have the lowest obstacle affect would be lack of self worth and lack of ambition. This corroborates with the findings whereby the respondents of this study perceive themselves to have a need for achievement and power.

#### *Respondents' Perception of Variables Used in Study*

It is interesting to note that the respondents here perceive themselves as having a need for power and achievement. Women are perhaps at a point where they seek for something mentally challenging and engaging that can be obtained at the workplace. As one interviewee said, “ success to me means being able to pursue an interest that keeps you mentally charged and would have an implication on society”. Support from spouse is perceived as having an edge over support from supervisors. This perhaps relate to the fact that in a culture that tends to relegate women to the house, support from spouse is needed to enable women to hold their own in society and at the same time be able to execute the job undertaken. An interviewee said that her job sometimes required her to interview prospective job applicants at the oddest of hours and at non-conventional places. A supportive and understanding spouse is very much required at those times.

In terms of tactics employed when dealing with a superior, the women perceived that they would likely use rational tactics and self-enhancement tactics to get the boss to agree to their request. This corroborates the respondents' perception of themselves being disinclined from using self-



monitoring tactics. The reason for the aforesaid being that they prefer being forthright, open and honest. As one interviewee put it, 'I can talk to a group and get them to agree with me. Perhaps because I tell the truth and the audience can empathize with me. I talk from experience'. The respondents also appear to have a high level of task related self efficacy. One of the interviewees claimed that the reason she was entrusted with an assignment was because, "I would get the job done with no questions asked'. It is also interesting to note that the respondents perceive that their work interferes more with family rather than family interfering with work. This is perhaps owing to the women having to rely on the extended family or upon good house help in the form of maids. Thus the family is managed without it encroaching upon work; however work interferes with family. One of the interviewees said, "My work does not end at four in the evening. I would go home and clients would come to meet up with me at home". This could also be the reason why women rated their perception of success, on the average, between disagree to slightly agree. Perhaps success to them included the subtle elements of work-family balance and quality of work life. This could also explain why many women choose to linger at middle level management as moving further up would be at the expense of spending time with family.

#### *Self Efficacy's Influence on Perception of Success*

It appears that self-efficacy has a significant relationship with perceived subjective success. This is hardly surprising as excerpts with four interviewees go to show that this variable has a catapult effect. Excerpts from the interviews testify to this fact: "If you want to do anything worth doing, you must give it your best and do it well otherwise don't waste time!"; "What pushes me is wanting to be somewhere, wanting to do something and I will drive myself very hard to achieve what I wanted to do". Self-monitoring probably did not have a significant influence on perception of success, as it was more of a character trait that had little to do with completion of task assignment. One's behavior may not reflect one's actual feelings but if the job gets done well, the latter fact which has more to do with self-efficacy, would have a higher bearing on one's perception of success.

#### *Profile of a Successful Woman*

An analysis of the four interviewees must not be generalized, as the research is still ongoing. However, it does indicate the probable profile of a successful woman from a Malaysian perspective. The findings to a certain extent tally with the findings from the literature review that



states the profile of a non-Asian woman. Thus it remains to be seen whether there could possibly be a universal profile of a successful woman.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the research show that women who have joined the management level have a high need for achievement and power. In addition they have a laudable amount of self-efficacy to work with. However, the need to prevent further invasion of work into family has perhaps caused many to stop their climb up the corporate ladder. It could also be surmised in a subtle way that the women's definition of success would incorporate quality of work and family life at a balance manageable by them.

Thus, human resource professionals should not shut their eyes to the need to be involved in resolving the work-family nexus to enable women to continue their climb up the corporate ladder. In failure thereof, we might loose those women who have the need and self-efficacy to move further up the corporate ladder. If the move up the corporate ladder moves in tandem with women being able to engage in family matters, it is possible that women might not tarry at middle level management and move forth into the top echelons of management. The ways in resolving the work-family nexus are many and the organization would have to tailor appropriate alternatives that are suitable given the type of job and financial resources of organization to lure women to the top without sacrificing family at the altar of career success. Organizations can adopt several measures to help resolve the conflict between work and family: child-care assistance (setting up of day-care or financial assistance); compressed work-week; flexi-time; job-sharing; telecommuting; and a supportive organization culture (Marchese, 2002; Wirth, 1998). Nevertheless, some of these measures have their advantages and disadvantages and might not be suitable for all job types. The adoption of these measures is also subject to the financial health of the company (Marchese, 2002).

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