

Factors Affecting Career Advancement of Female Chefs

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Siti Ida Isnainie Md Mubin*

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia
idaIsnainie@uitm.edu.my

Mohamad Abdullah Hemdi

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kedah Branch, Malaysia
moham984@uitm.edu.my

Srinita Isjkarim

Universiti Syiah Kuala Darussalam Banda Aceh, Indonesia
srinita@unsyiah.ac.id

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Abstract

Female chefs experience many challenges in the male-dominated chef profession. Research shows that female chefs face challenges of promotion, low pay, work-life balance, burnout and sexual harassment. The current study intends to unveil factors affecting career advancement of female chefs. Specifically, whether factors such as equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination, and career commitment have significant influence on career advancement of female chefs. Survey data were gathered from female chefs at the level of non-supervisory and operational employees attached to 4 and 5-star rated hotels located in the state of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. 248 usable questionnaires were returned and analyzed. The results showed that equality of opportunities and work-family conflict significantly influenced career commitment and career advancement. While, career commitment partially mediated the relationship between equality of opportunities and career advancement. Identification of factors affecting career advancement of female chefs help hotel managers to effectively develop initiatives to attract and retain female chefs in the profession and enabling their opportunities and career prospects in the hospitality industry.

Keywords:

Career Advancement, Career Commitment, Female Chef

1 Introduction

The hospitality industry plays a major role in the economy of a country. The hotel industry offers large employment opportunities for male and female. However, hospitality workers, especially female chefs seem to face challenges that affect their careers. One of the main challenges for females' career advancement is the glass ceiling syndrome, a barrier which hindered the opportunity for female in climbing the career ladder (Meharroof, 2009). Previous authors have claimed that promotion criteria are gender sensitive due to the unequal gender distribution of jobs in certain occupations and decision-making positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Eagly and Carli (2007) further argued that women have problems of leadership style, have more difficulties managing work-life balance, and under-invest in social capital. Within the hotel industry, Zopiatis (2010) confirmed that males are the majority who sits at the top positions in the culinary industry and not females. In the article written by Durai, (2016) executive chef at mandrin Oreintal, chef Ottlik stated that due to the perception that the industry is to be dominantly monopolized by males. Conrad and Von Scheve (2017) agreed that gender role is still a common obstacle to career advancement for females in many contexts. Work and family balance are the most challenging duty for people, especially couples. Women need to concentrate on their families because these are their roles besides being great employees to their employers. Thus, it is interesting to examine the role of equal rights for job opportunities in the hotel industry particularly effecting females' workforce in the culinary trade. Previous studies have investigated factors of career advancement in hotel industry which include opportunities equality (Ahmad, Latif, Bilal & Hai, 2019), work-family conflicts (Mallon & Cassell, 1999), gender discrimination (Sparrowe & Iverson, 1999) and career commitment (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2001). Hence, the current study intends to unveil factors affecting career advancement of female chefs. Specifically, whether factors such as equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination, and career commitment have significant influence on career advancement of female chefs.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Career advancement of female chefs

The position of "Chef" has its origin in the Chef de Cuisine or Chief of the Kitchen. It is a title attributed to the highest-ranking worker within the kitchen hierarchy (Ferguson & Zakin, 1998; Trubek, 2003). Various authors in the field of hospitality have pointed the different paths and competencies required to attain a chef's status. A chef must be both a culinary craftsman and an active business manager. Technical culinary-specific competency are considered critical, followed by team leadership and management skills (Pratten, 2003).

The chefs' profession has a strong professional identity and culture (Cooper, Giousmpasoglou, & Marinakou, 2017). Becoming a renowned chef is a long and painful process (Cooper et al., 2017). Although men and women have the same views on a

chef's career, gender constitutes a "glass ceiling" for women's progress in the hospitality industry (Boone, Veller, Nikolaeva, Keith, Kefgen & Houran, 2013). Women face barriers hampering their advancement in chef career (Woods & Viehland, 2000). According to Lindstrom, Doren, and Miesch (2011) career advancement is a constant progression of improving and refining career goals. A career also refers to an individual's future advancement and employability (Nadarajah, Kadiresan, Kumar, Nissa, Ahmad Kamil & Mod Yusofi, 2012) and is reflected when individuals gain pays, benefits, responsibilities, status, and build a reputation (Gupta, 2013). From an organizational perspective, career advancement is seen as the effectiveness of an organization's structure to assist their employees in their overall career advancement (Sharma, Sigh & Sigh, 2012). Good career advancement in the organization may eventually assist the employee in using their skills, abilities, and knowledge to the nature of their work as well as increase their productivity and quality of work (Weng & McElroy, 2012). Shamsuzzoha and Shumon (2007) agreed that a lack of career advancement opportunities provides by organizations can lead to less career commitment and high turnover rates.

Career commitment is conceptualized as a continuous process which include an individual participation in the career path, studying relevant knowledge and skill, and consequently an attempt to stay in the one's career path (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2001). Koslowsky, Weisberg, Yaniv and Zaitman-Speiser (2012) defined career commitments as one's behavior towards one's job and involvement in one's career. An individual who is committed to a career will work hard to retain the position, try to maintain the job as a long-term career choice, develop professional development by engaging in positive work behaviors and enjoy taking on various roles and responsibilities in that particular job (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Coyle-Shapiro, Morrow and Kessler (2006) construed that career advancement as fulfillment of promises on the part of the employer implied by the psychological contract, which in turn has been found to be positively related to employees' career and organizational commitment. It would seem that fostering employee assessments of career growth by assisting employees in meeting career goals, acquiring new skills and then reinforcing these activities by promotions and salary increases would achieve higher levels of career and organizational commitment.

Equality of opportunity at the workplace demands that vacancies be assigned based on a 'fair contest' in which only those attributes applicable to one's future performance in the position to which one applies should be judged (Fishkin, 2014). However, within the hotel industry, Durai, (2016) have found that male and female chefs face similar limitations and restrictions for career advancement but, females' conditions are more serious. Occupational segregation worsens gender inequality, which discourages women from entering male-dominated jobs, such as chef because such jobs are believed to need either body strength to perform the job with uninterrupted working hours (Lindsay and Maher, 2014). Previous studies have found that the existence of fair and equal employment opportunities would lead to higher organizational trust (Brown, Gray, McHardy, & Taylor, 2015) and career growth (Anastasiou & Siassiakos, 2014).

Gender discrimination in job equality has been noted in general, and in the hospitality industry. Various studies have also reported wage differences in tourism and hospitality were based on gender (Casado-Díaz & Simon, 2016; Ferreira, Guimaraes & Silva, 2016). Harris and Giuffre (2015) have noted that in haute cuisine, as in any male-dominated field, women face the challenge of being an outsider who have to adapt to the traditional work environment. Female chefs have to “lean in and fit” according to current occupational arrangements which requires physical and mental strength by adhering to work rules and culture, such as long working hours, not asking for help, avoiding emotions or feminine traits, and not challenging the masculine culture (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Even after being hired, female workers report experiencing discrimination, exclusion and tokenism as minorities in the industry (Cheung, King, Lindsey, Membere, Markell, & Kilcullen, (2016). Semykina and Linz (2013) study on employees from manufacturing, construction, finance, and education have concluded that perceived gender inequality significantly and negatively influenced advanced promotion opportunities.

Work–family conflict can act as an important, and gendered, mechanism underlying women’s under-representation in male-dominated occupations such as in chef profession. Work-family conflict occurs when an unhealthy balance exists which forces a person to place work demands above and beyond the demands and needs of family, or alternatively place family demands above those of work. Conflict between work and family responsibilities often stemmed from the long work hours expected of chefs and played a role in their decisions to leave kitchen work (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Bakker and Geurts (2004) postulated that the female chefs will face challenges when combining work and family obligations, especially if they have young children. Similarly, Gerson (2004) agreed that greater job pressures, long working hours or having many children may increase the severity of work-family conflict of female employees. However, good work and family supports in the form of flexible work time, schedule control, supportive spouse or having paid domestic help may help to decrease the level of conflict and increase job satisfaction (Voydanoff, 2008).

Based on the discussions of literature pertaining to the study variables of career advancement of female chefs, the following are the research frame work and hypotheses.

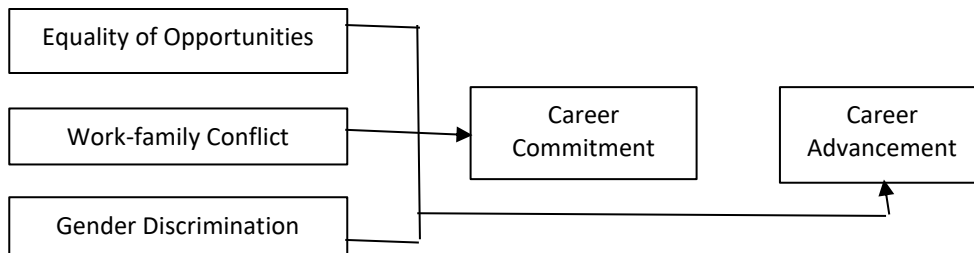


Figure 1: Research framework

Research Hypotheses:

- 6 H1: Equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, and gender discrimination significantly influence career advancement.
- 7 H2: Equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination significant influence career commitment.
- 8 H3: Career commitment significantly influence career advancement
- 9 H4: Career commitment mediate the relationship between equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination and career advancement.

3 Methodology

This study makes use of convenience sampling in the form of quantitative approach by using google form survey. Participants in this study consisted of female chefs at the level of non-supervisory and operational employees attached to 4 and 5-star rated hotels located in the state of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. 480 questionnaires were distributed and 248 usable questionnaires were returned and analyzed, representing a response rate of 51.6 %. Measurements were adopted and adapted from previous scholars indicating respondents’ level of agreement on a six-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Descriptive statistics were performed and multiple regression analyses were employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Baron and Kenny’s (1986) mediation rules were followed for testing mediation effects of career commitment.

4 Findings

4.1 Mean, Standard Deviations, Reliability and Correlations of the Study Variables

Table 1 indicates the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and intercorrelations of the study variables.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Coefficients, and Intercorrelations of the Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.Equality of Opportunities	4.78	0.82	(0.81)				
2.Work-Family Conflict	4.69	0.77	.19**	(0.86)			
3. Gender Discrimination	3.64	1.00	-.35**	.03	(0.80)		
4. Career Commitment	4.93	0.66	.21**	.19*	.04	(0.68)	

5. Career Advancement	4.79	0.73	.32**	.07	-.05	.27*	(0.63 *)
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Note: N = 248; *p<.05, **p<.01; Cronbach's alpha for each measure is in parentheses

A means scores of 2.59 or less were considered as 'low', means scores between 2.60 and 3.59 were categorized as 'moderate' while means a score of 3.60 or higher was labelled as 'high'. As shown in Table 1, career commitment (M = 4.93, SD = .66) and Career advancement (M = 4.79, SD = .73) were highly perceived by the respondents in this study. This indicates that the female chef had a high expectation in career commitment and career advancement. Similarly, the score for equality of opportunities (M = 4.78, SD = .82) and work-family conflict (M = 4.69, SD = .77) were perceived highly by respondents. While, respondents in this study have lower perception on gender discrimination (M = 3.64, SD = 1.000).

The inter-correlation amongst equality of opportunities, work-family conflict and gender discrimination were significant ranging from $r = .19$ ($p < .01$) to $r = -.35$ ($p < .01$). Similarly, the correlation between equality of opportunities and work-family conflict were significant toward career commitment. However, the intercorrelation between gender discrimination and career commitment was insignificant ($r = .04$, $p > .05$). Only correlation between equality of opportunities ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) and career commitment ($r = .27$, $p < .01$) towards career advancement were found to be significant. From the correlation result, it can be said that no serious multicollinearity exists among the study variable as the strength of the correlation was all below .90 (Hair et al., 2006).

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

To test hypotheses 1 and 2 in this study, all the independent variables were regressed on career advancement (H1 – Model 1) and career commitment (H2 – Model 2) respectively. Table 2 presents the regression results of this analysis.

Table 2: Regression Results on the Influence of Independent Variables on Career Advancement and Career Commitment

Predictors	Career Advancement (Model 1)	Career Commitment (Model 2)
10 Independent Variables		
Equality of Opportunities	.344**	.223**
Work-Family Conflict	.004	.140*
Gender Discrimination	.067	.117
R^2	.107	.077
Adj. R^2	.097	.066

F -Change 9.996* 6.949**

Note: N = 248; *p<.05, **p<.01

As can see from Table 2, the three independent variables were able to explain 10.7% ($R^2 = .107$, F-change = 9.996, $p < .05$) of the observed variation on career advancement (Model 1). Only equality of opportunities was significantly influenced career advancement ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$), while work-family conflict and gender discrimination were insignificant. Hence, hypothesis 1 was partially supported in the sense that only equality of opportunities was found to significantly influenced career advancement. When the independent variables were regressed on career commitment (Model 2), three variables were able to explain 7.7% ($R^2 = .077$, F-change = 6.949, $p < .01$) of the observe variation on Career Commitment. Of the three independent variables, equality of opportunities ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$) and work-family conflict ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) were significantly influence Career Commitment. Hence, hypothesis 2 was partially supported in the sense that only equality of opportunities and work-family conflict were found to significantly influenced career commitment.

To test hypothesis 3, career commitment was regressed on career advancement. Table 3 presents the regression results of this analysis.

Table 3: Regression Results on the Influence of on Career Commitment on Career Advancement.

Predictors	Career Advancement
11 Career Commitment	.266**
R^2	.071
Adj. R^2	.067
F -Change	19.014**

As can see from Table 3, the career commitment was able to explain 7.1% ($R^2 = .071$, F-Change = 19.014, $p < .05$) of the observed variation on career advancement. Career commitment ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$) was significantly influenced career advancement. Hence, hypothesis 3 was supported.

To test the mediation effects of career commitment on the relationship between equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination and career advancement (H4), the mediation conditions set by Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed. Results from Table 2 and Table 3 indicates that only equality of opportunities meet the conditions for mediation. Table 4 presents the mediation result.

Table 4: The Mediation Effect of Career Commitment on the Relationship Between Equality of Opportunities and Career Advancement

Predictors	Career Commitment	Career Advancement (without CC)	Career Advancement (with CC)
Equality of Opportunities	.223**	.344**	.278**
R ²			.145
Adj. R ²			.138
F-Change			21.184**

As shown from Table 4, the effect of equality opportunities on career advancement was significant ($\beta = .344$, $P < .01$), but the beta value had a decreasing effect in the presence of career commitment ($\beta = .278$, $p < .01$), thereby, implying partial mediation. In other words, equality of opportunities has only an indirect effect on career advancement via career commitment. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

5 Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to unveil factors affecting career advancement of female chefs. Specifically, whether factors such as equality of opportunities, work-family conflict, gender discrimination, and career commitment significantly influence on career advancement of female chefs. Findings from the current study indicated that equality of opportunities was found to have significant effect on career commitment and career advancement of female chefs. Further, work-family conflict and career commitment were also found to significantly influence career advancement.

Thus, within the context of Malaysian hotel industry, this study can specifically state that the existence of equal opportunities on promotion would significantly influence female chefs' career commitment and subsequently strengthen their belief in career advancement within the organization and profession. Female chefs in this study demands that promotion vacancies be assigned based on performance merit and not on gender. Results from this study are in line with previous findings (Anastasiou & Siassiakos, 2014; Brown et al., 2015) such that one's perceptions of the existence of fair and equal employment opportunities would lead to higher positive attitude such as career commitment and career growth. This finding will have important implications for hotel managers given that retaining experienced and competent employees has become a more critical concern in the people-oriented service organization such as hotel. Results from this study may suggest that hotel managers need to ensure that high levels of organizational justice in the form promotion processes and distribution of rewards are seen fair, just, and transparent. Specifically within the context of the current study, perceptions of fairness (equality) in personal outcomes and in procedures of decision making pertaining to rewards allocation (i.e., promotion or salary) positively

contributed to female chefs' feeling of commitment in career and career growth in the organization. This study has shown that female chefs' work-family conflict affect their career commitment. The workplace tasks as a chef keep female chef spending more time in the workplace, nonetheless, with good organizational and family supports in the form of flexible work time, schedule control, and supportive spouse help to increase the level of one's job satisfaction and consequently strengthen career commitment as supported by Voydanoff (2008).

Some limitations of this study should be addressed. First, the cross-sectional data of this study may preclude causal inferences. Thus, the result does not guarantee the causal directions of the observed relations in this study. Second, variables are measured by self-reported responses, which may raise the possibility of mono-source biases in some results. Finally, the potential effects of demographic or work characteristic variables should be controlled to obtain a more accurate pattern of the study's relationships.. Future research should employ a richer set of variables to obtain more accurate results on the effects of female chefs' career advancement, which will help hotel managers retain their valuable human resources.

12 About the author

Siti Ida Isnainie Md Mubin (MD) is a lecture in Faculty Hotel and Tourism Management, UITM.

Mohamad Abdullah Hemdi (PhD) is a Professor of Hospitality Human Resource Management at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UITM. Currently, he is the Rector of UITM, Kedah Branch.

Srnita Isjkarim (PhD) is a Professor at the Faculty of Economics at Universitas Syiah Kuala Darussalam Banda Aceh.

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