

# An Explanatory Study on Job Motivation, Socioeconomic Status and Networking towards Women Career Advancement in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of conducting this research is to study women's career advancement in Malaysia, which predominantly is focusing on job motivation, socioeconomic status and networking. Subsequently, the data of this study were collected through self-deployed questionnaires and were spread among women working by using Quota Sampling methodology that were controlled by marital status and working experience as well as, applying quantitative survey using statistical methods to test the hypothesis. There were a total of eighty questionnaires collected from working women starting from the age of twenty and above. The hypotheses were tested in order to understand the different variables on women's career advancement and their correlations. Later, in the findings, it is found that only one variable which is socioeconomic status that had a stronger negative significant relationship with women's career advancement while compared to the rest of variables. This explains that women's career advancement in Malaysia is influenced by their socioeconomic status. Besides, the findings of this research are limited by the amount of respondents, the coverage area and location, and language interpretation. Finally, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge by continuing to shed lights on the barrier women face in their work place that hinders their career advancement.*

**Keywords:** *women career advancement, career development, job motivation, socioeconomic status, and networking*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Following the increasing participation of women in the workforce and in entrepreneurial activities, attitudes are changing all over the world. Women are becoming more confident of themselves and they are aware of the opportunities of being their own bosses. There is an acknowledgement that women entrepreneurs are a stimulus towards job creation and help spurring economic growth (Yu and Yan, 2015). However, it is also understood that women face numerous problems in their career advancement. Along with, the famous general perception that men perform better than women (Grant, 2013), there are umpteen problems faced by women at various stages beginning from their initial commencement of enterprise, in running their enterprise. Problems usually arise when women find themselves in a complicated situation when they have to make a choice between their family responsibilities and career development (Valentova, 2005). In a research done in Malaysia, it confirmed that the women's participation in the workforce has increased from 44.7 percent to 47.3 percent in 2004 (Unicef.org, 2005).

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Women have been actively engaged in employment sector especially when the manufacturing expanded in the 1980's. While in 2014, the female labour force's participation has steadily increased from 53.6 percent, which is a rise of 6.8 percent since 2010 (Talentcorp.com.my, 2014). The global trend shows that while looking at the managerial position, men tend to be more successful than women. In consequence, there is still some deep-rooted mindset that women do not have the ability and are not competent enough to be placed on the corporate ladder. Women all over the world continue to face problems in the progression of their career because males dominate most of the top management positions. Based on a research by McKinsey, 53% of women are hired every year. Sadly the percentage will drop to 37% during their first career advancement (Chu and Ramstad, 2012).

Career aspirations are influenced by factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, occupation, education level and parental expectations (Domenico and Jones, 2006). Gaining insight into career aspirations and career interests may be useful in expanding career options available to young women. Mordi et al, (2011) argued that women with relatively lower career aspirations might not be unrelated to career advancement. Besides that Mordi et al, (2011) added that based on a study among Nigerian women with regards to career advancement, result showed that there was a significant relationship between gender stereotype of woman manager and career aspiration.

Thus, the aim of this study is to uncover the barriers of women's career advancement among female employees in Malaysia. Added to it, the study intends to discover the relationship between job motivation, socioeconomic reasons and networking and how these factors can affect women's career advancement in Malaysia.

## Problem identification

With career advancement as an important aspect, this study seeks to accomplish the main objective, which is to determine the aspects in stopping the women in Malaysia from achieving a bright career. Firstly, respondents' characteristics are considered as prime domain of the research within women's career advancement. Profiling their age, educational background, working sector, level of management, income status and marital status will highly help to identify and elaborate on the women's career advancement.



The age of the respondents is very important in order to understand their views on a problem. Older respondents will have a higher level of maturity. Educational background can have a great impact on the respondents' attitudes and therein have a different way and perspective of understanding social phenomena. In a sense, the level of education will determine the response. The private working sector is divided into 4 parts, which are sole proprietorship, partnership, private limited company and public listed company. Based from those different working sector, it will influence the learning of the respondents and the level of management will help to determine the possible growth of the respondent in the company. While for income status, it plays a prime role in shaping the economic conditions. Therefore, in this study, income will be investigated as a variable and the data related to income of the respondents. Added to this, Wentling (2003) suggest that women's top managerial position depends on their education, which also might break glass ceiling through education (Subramaniam et al., 2014). Finally, marital status is also very important since it might make a lot of changes in decisions. For example, these respondents can influence decisions such as making someone more responsible and matured in understanding and responding. Therefore, will the respondents' characteristics among the women influence career advancement in Malaysia?

Behavioural psychologists define motivation as the psychological process that influences behaviour purposes and directions (Kreitner, 1995). According to a study, Gupta and Tayal (2013), used 12 instruments to measure job motivation among the engineers in North India and they found that the motivation will influence satisfaction. Another research was conducted by Frank and Lewis, in United States twelve years ago, but these researchers used different instruments, which was applied in the government sector (Frank and Lewis, 2004). Furthermore, another researcher in South Africa used these instruments and investigated the understanding of the conceptions of job motivation among women of all races in South Africa (Wells, 2011). However, none of them applied these instruments to a homogenous women group in developing countries such as Malaysia. Therefore, to which extent job motivation contributes to the career advancement of women in Malaysia?

Much has been written considering the impact of family considerations on women's career development. For example, Betz (1994) emphasised that women apparently "downscale" their aspirations to accommodate the realities of combining motherhood with a career. Russel (1994) noted that work-family conflict which was found to be particularly among women with demanding careers involved a variety of problems including not only the basic issue of limited time but also the socialised primacy of husband's career (Lopate, 1971; Bernard, 1975; Foster, Wallston and Berger, 1980), limited support from significant others (Borman and Guido-DiBrito, 1986), and issues of childcare (Ross and Mirowsky, 1988). Few decades ago, a study was conducted in Virginia to conclude a positive relationship between socioeconomic status, educational and occupational aspirations among

undergraduates (McLaughlin, Hunt and Montgomery, 1976). Furthermore, based on a research among developing countries, it was concluded that external financing heavily impacts the social and economic environment in developed economies (Ascher, 2012). However, none of them applied to a homogenous group like women and women entrepreneurs in a developing country like Malaysia. Hence, do socioeconomic reasons affect women's career advancement in Malaysia?

Women have broken through the glass ceiling and now comprise almost one- half of the current US labour force (US Department of Labour, 2011), and are gaining entry into once male- dominated professions as well as into the ranks of middle- level management (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005). Despite these important gains, however, few women hold senior level and executive management positions in major corporations (Sheridan, 2002). For example, men still hold 82 percent of the board seats in Fortune 100 firms and 85 percent of the board seats in Fortune 500 firms (Catalyst, 2011). In 2006, Yukl confirmed that nowadays networking is an issue that most CEO's cannot disregard (Yukl, 2006). After conducting their interviewees, Helmer, Hjälmner and Stener (2008), came up with theories that a forced networking cannot be efficient as a natural networking. The research carried out in Mauritius, revealed that women considered that men were much more related to professional networking when compared to women (Gungaphul and Kassean, 2012). As a consequence, will networking influence the career advancement of women in Malaysia?

Within this ambit, the researcher would like to investigate how each variable in the research affect the Malaysian women's career progression. The overall objective of the research study is to identify relationship between the independent variables and the barriers that hinder the career advancement of the women in Malaysia. In this context, the following sub-objectives are drawn:

- To profile the respondents' characteristics among the women in Malaysia.
- To examine the level of motivation in affecting women's career advancement in Malaysia.
- To explore the level of socioeconomic status in affecting women's career advancement in Malaysia.
- To identify the level of networking in affecting women's career advancement in Malaysia.
- To determine the degree of career advancement among the women in Malaysia.

## II. METHOD & MATERIAL

### A. Research Design and Sampling Population

This is a quantitative study. In terms of objectives, it is an explanatory study. Looking at the sampling methodology, the population in this study is in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The sample of this study refers to the working female adults in Malaysia. The sample of this study refers on how job motivation,



socioeconomic reasons and networking affect the women's career advancement in Malaysia. In terms of sampling methodology, this study had used Quota sampling methodology. Meanwhile, according to the statistic, in 2015 the total population of female in Malaysia was 14, 817, 941 whereby this number was considered as a very large number of the sample group (Indexmundi.com, 2015). As checked and calculated by Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, the minimum number of the sample size for this survey of private sector working women is 80 where the confidence level is 90% and the margin of error is 10%. A quota sampling was selected as the sampling method. This survey was conducted among 80 women in Malaysia, whereby the sample size specifically focused on working female adults in the private sector namely sole business owners, partnership, private limited and public limited companies. The survey will concentrate on two different age groups, which is age 20-44 and 45-59.

**B. Data Analysis**

The total number of 80 respondents' details was keyed in into SPSS one by one, and then the individual data was analysed on a group basis. Added to it, graphical representations such as histogram, bar charts and pie charts were used to make the interpretation work easier. By analysing the frequency of these variables, it helped to better construe the relevancy and validity of the sample group within this research. This research paper includes both of the descriptive and inferential statistics. This study employed the Pearson Moment Correlation test to examine the relationship between the variables.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**A. Reliability Analysis**

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test and measure the internal consistency of how interrelated are the set of the items or questionnaires are as a group. Additionally, it tested the reliability of the questionnaires for this research. According to the rule of thumb of Cronbach's Alpha, specifies that the accepted alpha value should be more than (>) 0.7 (Christmann and Van Aelst, 2006). The first variable, which is motivation, produces a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.765 with the measurement of six items. The second variable, which is socioeconomic status, produces the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.773 with the measurement of six items. The third variable, networking produces the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.811 with the measurement of six items. Finally, the last variable is women's career advancement, which produces the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.911 with the measurement of six items. In conclusion, all the variables demonstrates significance and reliability since all the variables showed values more than 0.7 which justifies the requirements of Cronbach's Alpha.

**B. Pearson Correlation analysis**

The analysis on the Pearson's correlation was done at a 5% confidence level and at 95% confidence interval 2-tailed. In the table, a correlation matrix between the factors (motivation, networking and socioeconomic status) and women's career advancement is illustrated.

**Table 1: Pearson correlation analysis**

	WCA	MOT	NET	SOCIO
Pearson Correlation	1	-.258*	-.396**	-.488**
WCA Sig. (2-tailed)		.021	.000	.000
N	80	80	80	80

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Source: Research Data (SPSS)

**C. Correlation between Motivation and Women's Career Advancement**

Motivation was found to have a significant negative correlation to women's career advancement because it has a p value of 0.021 in which  $p < 0.05$  and Pearson r value of -0.258. Therefore, as the p value is less than 0.05, there is enough evidence to say that the test is significant and there is a correlation between motivation and women's career advancement. The negative value of -0.258 indicates that there is a negative and a weak relationship between motivation and women's career advancement. Therefore, that rejects the null hypothesis, which was constructed in chapter one.

**D. Correlation between Networking and Women's Career Advancement**

Networking was found to have a negative correlation to Women's Career Advancement as it has a p value of 0.000 in which  $p < 0.01$  and Pearson r value of -0.396. Therefore, as the p value is less than 0.01, there is enough evidence to suggest that the test is significant and there is a correlation between networking and women's career advancement. The negative value of -0.396 indicates that there is a negative and a weak relationship between networking and women's career advancement. Therefore, that rejects the null hypothesis, which was constructed in chapter one.

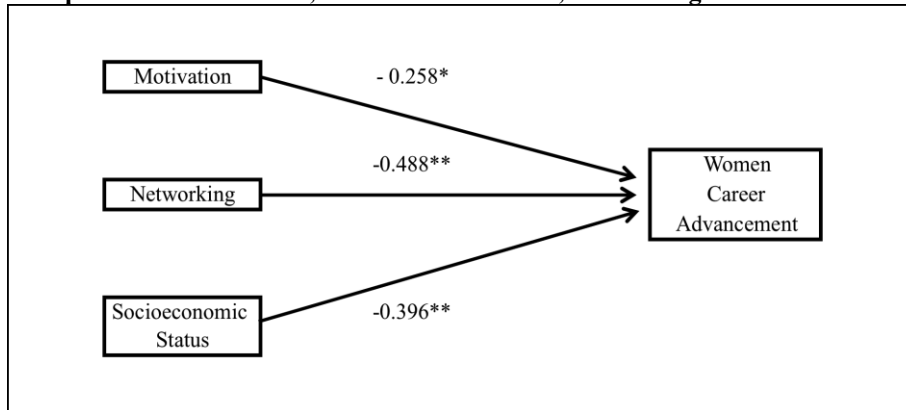


**E. Correlation between Socioeconomic Status and Women’s Career Advancement**

Socioeconomic status was found to have a negative correlation to Women’s Career Advancement as it has a p value of 0.000 in which  $p < 0.01$  and Pearson r value of  $-0.488$ . Therefore, as the p value is greater than 0.001, there is enough evidence to suggest that the test is significant

**Final predictor of the research**

**Figure 1.1: Relationship between motivation, socioeconomic status, networking and women’s career advancement.**



All of the variables tested showed negative correlation. Variable that has least to the strongest relationship with women’s career advancement is arranged in the following sequence: Motivation, Networking and Socioeconomic status. Figure 1.1 shows the illustration of the relationship between the variables.

**Further analysis on the correlation between Socioeconomic Status and Women’s Career Advancement**

Further analysis on the socioeconomic status was done to figure out which factor plays the most significant contribution to women’s career advancement. As both Question 5 and Question 6 are related to family, Question 6 was not counted in test. The results were not significant except for Question 4 and Question 5 were the most significant with the value of  $-0.513$  and  $-0.497$  respectively. Therefore, it can be explained that marriage as a constraint and family issues are important factors influencing women’s career advancement.

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis is a method that is used to

and there is a correlation between SES and women’s career advancement. The negative value of  $-0.488$  indicates that there is a negative and a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and women’s career advancement. Therefore, that rejects the null hypothesis, which was constructed in chapter one.

forecast or predict the value of the variable, which in this case is the women’s career advancement against the value of two or more variables, which in this case are motivation, networking and socioeconomic status.

**Model Summary**

The first measure in this model is the multiple regression coefficient (R), which measures on how well it predicts the outcome of women’s career advancement. The R value in the first measurement shows 0.521, which indicates that there is an average level of prediction towards the outcome of women’s career advancement. However, by using the second measurement, which is the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), a more accurate measure can be undertaken. The  $R^2$  in this case is 0.272, which indicates 27.2% of the variability of women’s career advancement is accounted or contributed by motivation, socioeconomic status and networking variables. In other words, the  $R^2$  of 27.2% shows the measure of the overall strength of association between women’s career advancement and its predictors.

**Table 2: Anova**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	704.650	3	234.883	9.459	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1887.150	76	24.831		
	Total	2591.800	79			

- a. Dependent Variable: WCA
- b. Predictors: (Constant), MOT, NET, SOCIO

Source: Research Data (SPSS)

The above table explains the Anova analysis of the research. The F-ratio or test shown in the table above tests whether the whole regression model is a good fit for the data. For this research, the independent variables that are motivation, networking and socioeconomic factors statistically significantly predict women’s career

advancement variable by having a p value of 0.000 in which the p value is than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and value of F (0.243) = 9.459. Overall, the regression model fits properly with data.



**Table 3: Summary of Multiple regression analysis for women's career advancement**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	34.672	2.976		11.650	.000
MOT	-.190	.128	-.149	-1.483	.142
NET	-.142	.141	-.129	-1.012	.315
SOCIO	-.426	.145	-.374	-2.933	.004

a. Dependent Variable: WCA  
Source: Research Data (SPSS)

By looking at Table 3, it is found that motivation has a negative influence on women’s career advancement as t-statistics value at – 1.483 with p=0.142 which is greater than alpha of 0.05. As the beta under the understanderised coefficients shows -0.190, this demonstrate a unit increase in motivation, the model predicts that women’s career advancement will decrease by 0.190 units. For networking, it is found that it has a negative influence on women’s career advancement as t-statistics value at -1.012, with p=0.315 which is greater than alpha of 0.05. As the beta under the understanderised coefficients shows -0.142, this demonstrate a unit increase in networking, the model predicts that women’s career advancement will decrease by

0.142 units. As the beta under the understanderised coefficients shows -0.426, this demonstrates a unit increase in socioeconomic status. The model predicts that women’s career advancement will decrease by 0.426 units. Besides there is no sufficient evidence to support as the p=0.04 which is lesser than alpha of 0.05. Thus, compared to the other variables in the study, socioeconomic status is the only variable that significantly affects women’s career advancement. The following Table 4 contains the formula that has been used to classify the beta value of standardised coefficients.

**Table 4: Beta value of standardised coefficients.**

<p><b>WCA= -0.149 MOT -0.129 NET -0.374 SOCIO</b></p> <p><b>WCA=</b> Women’s Career Advancement</p> <p><b>MOT=</b> Motivation</p> <p><b>NET=</b> Networking</p> <p><b>SOCIO=</b> Socioeconomic status</p>
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The above formula illustrates the influence of the independent variables (MOT, NET, SOCIO) towards the dependent variable (WCA). Based on the result in Table 1.6, the beta value of standardised coefficients shows that the motivation has a negative beta of -0.149, while the beta value of standardised coefficient for networking is -0.129 and socioeconomic status has a beta value of standardised coefficient of -0.374. Overall, based on the findings above, it can be concluded that the most significant factor that influences women’s career advancement is networking as it has the highest Beta value of standardised coefficient of -0.129. Nevertheless, it is also found that socioeconomic status has the lowest beta value of standardised coefficient of -0.379.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research output has been found to be totally reverse of the literature review. The researcher discovered that the traditional model might not fit for the women perspective, which means that there is room for a lot of further researches to be done in that field of study. The main possible reason for this cause might be because most of the studies that have been explained in the

literature review were undertaken in the United States, United Kingdom and African countries, which compared to Malaysia, are more open-minded and have more exposure to the world. Malaysia still practices a closed culture compared to the westernised countries. It is a developing country and many things are still new and conservative. Additionally, it is noticed that a lot of researches have been done on men but not on women. This eventually depicts that there is a lack of knowledge in this research area. Nowadays, there are an increasing number of women in the workforce, therefore it is important to understand them and awareness should be raised on what must be done to stand by them. It may be that women are facing tough challenges and different problem compared to men at the workplace. This might be so because in most cases, men’s career come first and then come their family while for women it is the contrary. Another aspect might be that patriarchy is still prevalent as the wives still had to be consulted by their husbands on employment matters.



May be this is a very important aspect in the study of women's career advancement in Malaysia, and therefore it might be one of possible reason for a low R2. Eventually, the research objective of this study has been achieved. Based on the data analysis, there are relationships for the hypothesis but they were actually reverse from the literature review. They are in a completely different direction of result. This is a research area that should be focused on because the R2 is low. It therefore means that factors the researcher thought to be important in the beginning of this study finally did not need so much of importance. After noticing that the R2 was low, to make the result favourable, the researcher thought of increasing the samples. Definitely, by doing so, it will increase the accuracy but due to time limitation this was not feasible.

Based on Pearson Moment Correlation Test, it was found that networking has a negative significant relationship to women's career advancement. Interestingly, this study found out that majority of the respondents has difficulty in building work relationships (also known as networking) especially with other female co-workers. The study shows that most female workers experienced discrimination from other female employees and as such they do not prefer working with female colleagues and higher-ranked female employees. This study has also found that women tend to find it strenuous and challenging to deal with other female employees however they feel more comfortable while working and interacting with male colleagues. Nevertheless, this preference might exist due to differences in gender. To drop a short note, previous studies found that networking is indeed crucial in career advancement especially in men but not for women in this study. This could be explained women's development is unique and the use of a male model that explains career success is not appropriate for women (Gallos, 1989).

Females in the Malaysian society are beginning to reach the pinnacles of their careers (Ilhaamie, 2014), despite that this very often leads to the detriment of their health and families. Based on the question number 4 under socioeconomic status which is "the women working with me always complain about possibilities to have marriage as a constraint reflects that a huge number of women have worries to juggle between roles as housewives, mothers, home-makers and managers at work. The results showed that family responsibilities and marital status had significant relationships with women's career advancement. This is consistent with the findings by Subramanian et al., (2014) who found that family responsibility related barriers hindered women's career development. This was because women had to continue with their family care responsibilities even if they took up more demanding jobs. Based on the researcher's observation, a sizeable number of respondents admitted that family responsibilities were a barrier and they were not willing to leave their babies and children under the care of domestic workers for a long time because they could not trust them.

Thus the challenge of coping with work and life balance has affected them in meeting their various commitments. For example, studies have shown that one of the main reasons of glass ceiling for women is conflict between work and family. It has also been suggested that profound challenge is the effort to balance family and work

(Knotson and Schmidgall, 1999). At a certain point of their career, a huge amount of women do not wish to progress further within the industry. Such a decision arises because these women perceive that there is no other way for them to reconcile the dual realities of the family and a career. Sadly, for some women who have family responsibilities often have to face obstructions in their upward movement as they juggle their time between both their families and their career.

From the findings and conclusion, this study recommends that women employees should take advantage of the changing social view and accommodation to advance their careers to managerial positions. The findings also have several implications for policy makers and employers. There is need to provide a flexible work environment to women employees to enable them to manage family responsibility roles and career roles. Career advancement opportunities should be provided to all irrespective of their socioeconomic status.

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