GENDER IMBALANCE IN DECISION MAKING IN HIRING EMPLOYEES IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explained gender imbalance in decision making in hiring employees in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between gender and the decision making in hiring employees. The paper was conducted based on two developed hypotheses which were (1) there is a positive and significant relationship between male and decision making in hiring employees; and (2) there is a positive and significant relationship between female and decision making in hiring employees. From the study, it was found that gender stereotypes are likely to distort decision makers’ perceptions of job candidates. This can affect the chances of being hired for both genders. Other issues of gender imbalance that can be found in this paper are wage and position differential between both genders, masculinity and femininity characteristics and some more. Therefore, the findings of this paper will help the private sectors to address the issues of gender imbalance among their HR officers as most of them are still not aware about this matter.

Field of Research: Gender segregation, gender stereotypicality, HR officers, discrimination, gender imbalance

1. Introduction

The labor market today consists of people differing in age, gender, race, nationality, religion, work experience and other personal characteristics. This aim of this paper is to investigate how gender may influence the hiring decision in the public sectors. Many researchers have found that gender segregation and gender-based hiring discrimination still exist in today’s society. Women’s advancement into the labor force has been a rapid process and statistics show that women make up more than half of the American work force (Frederick, 2003).

Some prior researches stated that decision making in hiring selection were made based on the applicant’s gender (Burke, 2003; Miller, 2007; Young & Hurlic, 2007). This shows that there is gender imbalance in those organizations studied and this might also happen in other organization too. Gender imbalance plays an important role in making decision in hiring the job candidates. There are several characteristics that relate to gender differences such as leadership styles, activities and skills that are listed in the job descriptions (Frederick, 2003). The role of gender among candidates is crucial because employers may use candidate’s gender in making hiring decision. To investigate the roles of gender in influencing the hiring decision in the public sectors, this paper focuses on a set of Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) in Klang Valley, Malaysia.
2. Masculinity and Femininity

Gender stereotypes are cultural constructs, shared at the societal level, that describe what men and women are “known” to be like (Gorman, 2003). The researcher explains that it is established that stereotypes of all kinds influence people’s perceptions and memories of others. Therefore, most of the time, the organizational decision makers are likely to form the impression that male candidates possess stereotypically masculine characteristics, such as decisiveness and assertiveness. In contrast, the author claims that the decision makers are likely to see female candidates as possessing stereotypically feminine characteristics such as friendliness and willingness to cooperate. Interestingly, masculinity and femininity characteristics have a relation in determining the candidate’s position. For example, a woman’s apparent lack of decisiveness might disqualify her for a higher level position. On the other hand, a man’s perceived weaker social skills might make him seem less appropriate for a public relations position.

Collins, Reitenga, Collins and Lane (2000) also supports other authors’ views by explaining that candidate’s gender stereotypes may influence the employers’ decision in deciding which gender to hire. They claim that female candidates may be perceived as less motivated, less able to perform independent task, more focus to their family and female’s qualifications are nominally the same. This suggests that the male candidate would be more likely than the female candidate to receive an employment offer. The individuals who are gender biased individuals are often use stereotypes believe characteristics of a particular gender that women have possess characteristics such as empathy, passivity, lack of dominance, and dependence (Hardin, Reding & Stocks, 2002; Stewart & Perlow, 2001). In relations to this, the authors argue that male candidates are more preferable by the people who are responsible to make hiring selections.

3. Position

Young and Hurlic (2007) claimed that women found to be less desirable candidates for management positions. It is because characteristics of successful managers are typically not used to describe women. This characteristic of successful managers refers mainly for male managers which includes intelligent, aggressive and other positive attributes. In addition, among male and female managers, women score lower than men on attributes of success.

Even though the number of representation of women at senior leadership and managerial levels would be higher, there is approximately a 30 to 40 percent gender gap in leadership and managerial positions (Miller, 2007). Even more concerning is recent evidence to suggest that the presentation of women at senior levels in public sector is declining (Tung-Chun Hung, 1999). Whether an agency is male dominated or female dominated, males still end up with greater access to management positions (Brown & Ridge, 2002). Burke (2003) claim that management that is perceived as significantly male domain becomes a barrier for women moving into management positions. The authors explained several problems that are associated with gender domination by male which include women workers are more into a narrow range of jobs, lack of opportunities for promotion and development and insufficient opportunity to develop a broad range of skills.

4. Wage among both genders

Wage inequality between men and women is one of the important concerns of researchers. Many past studies attempt to redress the imbalance in wage-level determinants for both genders. According to gender discrimination theory, we may assume that gender is an important predictor of wage levels even when differences in human capital are involved (Tung-Chun Huang, 1999).

This research has been supported with other research which state that women workers are not only has a narrow range of employment choices and opportunities, but they also have a lower pay
compared to men workers (Brown & Ridge, 2002). According to Miller (2005), gender segregation into different areas of work remains a key factor contributing to the gender gap in earnings. The researcher claims that the service sector including care, health, social work and education remains largely the province of women. Whereas, sectors including sciences, engineering, and technology remain dominated by men. This explanation by Miller shows why there is gender gap in earnings. Most researches claim that women get a lower pay compared to men (Brown & Ridge, 2002; Tung-Chun Huang, 1999 & Miller, 2005).

5. Hiring decision

In addition, according to Malos (2007), employers should stop this practice by not conforming to gender stereotype as a condition of employment. This is supported with other research which according to Stewart and Perlow (2001), employers must ensure that selection procedures are free from unfair bias that may negatively affect the increasing number of minorities and women. Therefore, it is important for all of us to develop an understanding of the factors contributing to unfair employment decisions.

In addition, employers, human resource managers or executives who are responsible to make hiring selection, have their own preferences in deciding which gender to be hired. According to (Amat Taap Manshor, Mazuki Jusoh & Maimun Simun, 2002), they found that there are a higher proportion of male respondents that have preferences on gender. Throughout their findings, out of 21 respondents who prefer to select male candidates, 18 are males. It means male employers would likely to hire male rather than female for the job.

When it comes to candidates are of equal qualification, both male and female respondents have strong preferences to select candidates of the same gender (Amat et al., 2002). However, this preference will be decreased when the candidates are less qualified and they might select the candidate with opposite gender.

6. Conceptual framework

- The existence of gender-based discrimination
- Gender imbalance in job descriptions
- HR Officers’ perceptions

**Decision making in hiring employees**

*Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study*

This conceptual framework described and explained in detail all the variables which were related to this study. The variables included were the dependent, and the independent variable. The dependent variable was used to examine the outcome of an experiment, or research project. In this study the dependent variable that has been identified was gender imbalance and the value was the decision making in hiring employees. The independent variables were manipulated or changed to examine its effect upon the dependent variables. It is also known as the factor variable. For this variable, the researcher has identified the values of this variable were the existence of gender-based discrimination, gender imbalance in job descriptions, and the HR officers’ perceptions. These three values of the independent variable, affect in the decision making in hiring employees which leads to gender imbalance.
7. Methodology

7.1. Sample and data collection method

The population of this study consisted of 229 HR officers from thirty-two Government-Linked Companies. The researcher chose HR officer ranging from Junior Executive to Human Resource Manager in these GLCs in the Klang Valley, since the study was to identify the existence of gender imbalance in the decision making of hiring employees in the organization. Therefore, the obtained number of HR officers referred to the entire group of people that the researcher wished to investigate. These 32 companies have a total of 229 HR officers who ranged from HR Junior Executive, HR Executive, HR Senior Executive, and HR Manager. From this the researcher decided to take 70% or 160 of the population as the sample size for this study. Therefore, the total number of sample size for 32 companies was 160. The sample size which was larger than 30 and less than 500 were appropriate for most research (Salkind, 2006).

7.2. Instrumentation

The following Table 1 indicates the measures of the study variables used in the study. The instrument items were adopted from previous studies by Amat Taap Manshor, Mazuki Jusoh & Maimun Simun (2002), Payne (2005), Wicher (2008), Bauer (2004) and Tung-Chun Huang (1999).

Table 1: Instrumentation of the study variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study variables</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Source of scale</th>
<th>Type of scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existence of gender-based discrimination in the organization</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Amat Taap Manshor, Mazuki Jusoh &amp; Maimun Simun (2002); and Payne (2005)</td>
<td>7-points Likert scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender imbalance in job descriptions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wicher (2008)</td>
<td>7-points Likert scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions towards the gender-based hiring discrimination</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Amat Taap Manshor, Mazuki Jusoh &amp; Maimun Simun (2002); Bauer (2004); and Tung-Chun Huang (1999)</td>
<td>7-points Likert scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Finding & Discussion

The findings showed that most of the respondents, 55.1% were male and 44.9% were female. The finding showed that 40.2% of the respondents fall in the age group of 41 and above, and 35.5% of the respondents are age of 31-40 years old. 19.6% of the respondents fall in the age group of 25-30 years old and followed by 4.7% in the age group of 18-24 years old. It also showed that 68.2% of the respondents have Bachelor Degree followed by 17.8% of the respondents hold a master and 14% of them have a diploma. Later, the researchers found that 73.8% of the respondents have more than five years of working experience, followed by 16.8% of the respondents who have four to five years of working experience and 9.4% of the rest have one to three years of working experience.

Research Question 1: Does gender-based discrimination exist in the Government-Linked Companies or GLCs in the Klang Valley?

Descriptive Statistics of the Existence of Gender-Based in the Organization
Table 2 showed the overall summary of the descriptive statistical analysis for all levels. Measures of shape (kurtosis and skewness) were obtained for the interval-scale independent and dependent variables. Cronbach Alphas to verify internal consistency were carried out. The findings in Table 2 indicated that the mean ratings for each level of the variables in descending order from high to low were easy to understand both genders’ characteristics in Malaysia ($M = 5.36, SD = .692$), hire same gender for any jobs when candidates are less qualified ($M = 5.24, SD = .750$), prefer to work with someone who is same gender ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.035$), the government and news media have shown more respect to female workers as a minority group ($M = 4.81, SD = .661$), and discrimination against female candidates is no longer a problem in Malaysia ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.555$). For overall sample, the variable for existence of gender-based discrimination in the organization ranged between ($M=4.56$) to ($M=5.36$). Overall, mean score for this variable was 5.0 which indicate Slightly Agree that gender-based discrimination exists in the organization. The overall Skewness for this variable was 0.896 while Kurtosis value was 1.304.

Based on the 7 point used, overall minimum rating was 4 and the maximum was 7 and the range was 3.00. Median rating value was 4.80 and the score for its Skewness and Kurtosis were 0.896 and 1.304 respectively. The 25th percentiles value was 4.40, while the 50th percentiles value was 4.80. For both the 75th and 90th percentiles’ values were 5.60 and 6.20 respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existence of Gender-Based Discrimination in the Organization</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand both genders’ characteristics in Malaysia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire same gender for any jobs when candidates are less qualified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to work with someone who is same gender</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to female workers as a minority group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination against female candidates is no longer a problem in Malaysia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1.555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Existence of Gender-Based Discrimination in the Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median</th>
<th>4.80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>1.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50th</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90th</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 107

**Research Question 2: Is there gender imbalance in job descriptions?**

**Descriptive Statistics of Gender Imbalance in Job Descriptions**

Table 3 showed the overall summary of the descriptive statistical analysis for all levels. Based on the seven-point scale used, the minimum value was 1 which indicated strongly disagree, and the highest value was 7 which indicated strongly agree. The statistics in Table 3 indicated that the mean ratings for each level of the variables in descending order from high to low were in job appointments and promotions, female candidates should be given at least as much preference as male candidates.
(M=6.21, SD=.630), in my organization it is acceptable for female candidates to have a career in higher level positions (M=5.57, SD=.631), male are suitable to work in engineering area (M=5.50, SD=.782), lower level management positions usually are filled by female which lead to a lower wage pay (M=5.47, SD=.769), male and female candidates are equally capable of making managerial decisions (M=5.44, SD=.703), it is desirable for female candidates to have a job that requires a large amount of responsibility (M=5.35, SD=.616), female and male workers will get same wage rate for a similar job positions (M=5.26, SD=.718), male candidates are most preferred to be hired for middle managerial positions (M=4.90, SD=.411), clerical or secretarial positions are meant for male candidates only (M=3.62, SD=1.006), and female are suitable to work in engineering area (M=3.39, SD=.833).

Based on the 7 point used, overall min rating was 4 and the max was 7. The range value was 3.00 and the median rating was 4.82. The 25th percentiles value was 4.72, while the 50th percentiles value was 4.81. For both 75th and 90th percentiles’ values were 5.45 and 6.00 respectively. For the overall gender imbalance in job descriptions, the median value was 4.82, while the range value was 3. The Skewness’s and Kurtosis’s values were .847 and 1.267 respectively.

Table 3: Gender Imbalance in Job Descriptions (n=107)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Imbalance in Job Descriptions</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In job appointments and promotions, female candidates should be given at least as much preference as male candidates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my organization, it is acceptable for female candidates to have a career in higher level positions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male are suitable to work in engineering area</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level management positions usually are filled by female which lead to a lower wage pay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male and female candidates are equally capable of making managerial decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is desirable for female candidates to have a job that requires a large amount of responsibility</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female and male workers will get same wage rate for a similar job positions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male candidates are most preferred to be hired for middle managerial positions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical or secretarial positions are meant for male candidates only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female are suitable to work in engineering area</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Gender Imbalance in Job Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25th</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>1.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50th</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90th</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n=107
Research Question 3: Is there any relationship between gender and the decision making in hiring employees?

Assumptions of Correlation

Correlation analysis was used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Spearman rank order correlation was conducted under non-parametric techniques. In the following section, the researchers discussed testing the assumptions and corrective actions to take if violations occur.

Levels of Measurement

For this section, the scales of measurement for the variables were interval or ratio (continuous). Variables of gender, male, and the decision making in hiring employees were used in Likert scale from 1 to 7. Therefore, this assumption has been met.

Related Pair

To do correlation, each subject was provided with a score on both variable gender and decision making in hiring employees. The first one was female and decision making in hiring employees, and the second one was male and decision making in hiring employees.

Independence of Observations

The observations that make up the data were independent of one another which mean each observation or measurement was not influenced by any other observation or measurement.

Normality

The scores on one of the variables was not normally distributed which was the perception variable. The researchers have checked by inspecting the histogram of scores on each variable.

Linearity

Linearity is always related to the previous assumption which is the normality. As the variable was not normally distributed, therefore the relationship between the two variables was not linear.

Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity is also always related to the previous assumption which is the normality. As the variables were not normally distributed, therefore, homoscedasticity did not met the requirement.

Other Issues – Missing Values

The researchers have inspected the data file for missing data, and decided that there was no missing data in the data file. The researcher has run the Descriptive and found out no percentage of values was missing for each of the variables.

In conclusion, it was observed that these variables have violated the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Therefore, the researcher used Spearman’s rho to do the correlation analysis.

H1 There is a positive and significant relationship between female and the decision making in hiring employees

Table 4: Relationship between Female and the Decision Making in Hiring Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The relationship between female and the decision making in hiring employees was investigated using Spearman’s rho. There was a weak and negative correlation between the two variables ($r=-.25$, $n=107$, $p<.005$).

Table 4 indicates there is a significant negative association between female and the decision making in hiring employees at the 0.01 level. The correlation coefficient is negative ($r=-.25$), indicating a negative correlation between these two variables. There is also a weak correlation between these two variables, suggesting a weak relationship between female and the decision making in hiring employees. In explaining the variance, the coefficient of determination, ($r^2=.25$) indicates that the proportion variance in the decision making is explained by 25% of variance in female. The results indicating the hypothesis was rejected as there is a negative but significant relationship between female and the decision making in hiring employees.

**H2** There is a positive and significant relationship between male and the decision making in hiring employees

The relationship between male and the decision making in hiring employees was investigated using Spearman’s rho. There was a weak, and positive correlation between the two variables ($r=.20$, $n=107$, $p<.005$). Table 5 indicates there is significant positive association between male and the decision making in hiring employees at the 0.05 level. The correlation coefficient is positive ($r=.20$), indicating a positive and linear correlation between male and the decision making in hiring employees. There is also weak correlation between the two variables, suggesting a weak relationship between male and the decision making in hiring employees. In explaining the variance, the coefficient of determination, ($r^2=.20$) indicates that the proportion variance in the male is explained by 20% of variance in the decision making in hiring employees. Hence, it was fail to reject the hypothesis as there is a positive and significant relationship between male and the decision making in hiring employees.
9. Conclusion and Future Recommendation

It can be concluded that most of the respondents were slightly agree that gender-based discrimination exists in the organization. In addition, most of the respondents were to hire or work with those of the same gender as theirs when they making decision in hiring employees. This finding was supported by Stewart and Perlow (2001), which the researchers argued that male candidates are more preferable by the people who are responsible to make hiring selections. Through the understanding, all employers and organization can avoid the unfair employment decisions and all candidates will have an equal employment opportunity.

Based on the study and findings, it is highly recommended that, future researchers should use previous theories such as Gender Discrimination Theory and with the comparison of two models or theories. It is because the researchers could have more significant findings and more contribution to previous studies. Additionally, future research should examine moderating factors that may affect decision making in hiring employees. Lastly the researcher believes that the method of collecting data should not be confined to only questionnaire. It will be better if researchers strengthen the findings by conducting interviews and observations. By doing these types of collection data, the findings that gathered by researcher will be more precise as researcher can identify easily the HR officers’ perceptions towards gender-based discrimination in the organization.

References


