



## A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE, MENTORING SUPPORT, AND NETWORKING TOWARDS WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN MALAYSIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - There was a slight increase of women in Malaysia's labor force in 2016. However, there are still some deep-rooted mind-sets that women are not proficient to be at the top of the corporate ladder. Women in many countries including Malaysia consistently face barriers in their career advancement as most of the top management are dominated by males. Therefore, this exploratory study examines the relationship between work-life balance, mentoring support and networking towards women's career advancement in Malaysia.

**Methodology** - This survey uses convenient sampling methodology to conduct the survey of 110 female employees in Malaysia. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Test were used to analyze the correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

**Findings** - The finding of the results shows that all three independent variables, work-life balance, mentoring support, and networking are positively correlated with the dependent variable, women career advancement.

**Conclusion**- Work-life balance, mentoring support, and networking is a crucial factor that affects the advancement of female in the workforce in Malaysia. Therefore, future surveys and organizations should focus on women career advancement as the Malaysia government has strived to increase the participation of female in the workforce.

**Keywords:** Women career advancement, work-life balance, mentoring support, networking, Malaysia

**JEL Codes:** M00, M10, M12

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the noteworthy social changes of the last century is the involvement of women in the paid workforce. Although the numbers of women's involvement in the workforce are increasing, however evidence shows that women are not progressing to senior management positions at equivalent rates to men (Abidin et al., 2009). Female employees are often trapped in the tactical and operational management positions, and this occurrence is noted worldwide. Despite there is effort have been contributed to overcoming the attitudinal and institutional discriminations that hold back women's career development, nevertheless, many of the results fall short of expectations. According to Wood and Lindorff (2001), women are now graduating in higher numbers than men from educational institutions, and more women are entering the paid workforce and taking up managerial roles, but the poor representation of women are senior management level continues. According to the Labour Force Survey Report 2016 from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) stated that the number of female employees in Malaysia in 2016 is 7,982,100. Meanwhile, the approximation of the population of the female employees is 2,174,550 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). Hence, it is important to understand the barriers that hinder the career advancement of female employees in Selangor.

Research into work-life balance has shown that work-life balance benefits are commonly viewed as a solution to help female employees balance their work and non-work commitments (Yet-Mee et al., 2013). Understanding the factors affecting the support from the organizations to help female employees carry out their responsibilities in work and life to avoid conflict of both roles (Kargwell, 2008). Mentoring support is one of the factors that affect women's career advancement. Mentoring is a relationship between a mentee and a mentor (Donaldson et al., 2000). Mentoring programs can enhance female mentees' career development by contributing to improving gender balance at the management level (Maxwell, 2009). Further, networking is also a factor affects women's career advancement. Networking is a process of contacting and being contacted by people in a social network to maintain the relationship (Burke, 2007). Networking is important for advancement because they provide increased access to career-related information (Morrison, 2002). Career development is a lifelong process that involves attitudes or behavior that takes place in an individual's work life to achieve career goals (Adekola, 2011).

Therefore, the purpose of this study aims to explore the correlation between work-life balance, mentoring support, and networking towards career advancement among female employees in Malaysia.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Women's Career Advancement**

The idea of career advancement is usually conceived as in relation to objective measures such as salary and promotion (Allen et al., 2004). Career advancement is defined as an influence and behavioral process that affects an individual on the choice of profession, education literacy, work values, role integration, career identity and pattern, and decision-making method (Anderson, 2007). A study by Wentling (2003) found that women's career advancement is much more complicated than men as women had to forgo their education and career progression as to incorporate family and work life. This situation causes a dilemma for women in between fulfilling job commitment and responsibilities towards family.

As more women enter the workforce, women often faced barriers to career advancement in an organization. In a study among executive-level female employees who are working in Sri Lanka's private sector, results showed that women's career often been conceded due to the glass ceiling effect and there is a correlation between women's career advancement and family barriers (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013). According to Mordi et al. (2011), the glass ceiling is defined as an obstacle that impeded women in gaining access into the workforce and the barrier that hindered women to rise the upper rungs of the corporate ladder. A study conducted in Hispanic women in the US workforce by Armijio (2009) finds that the group of women remains at the bottom pit of the organization hierarchy along with wages, labor participation, management positions and educational level in the US. Though there was a number of studies showed that number of women at entry and middle-level management positions has increased (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013), many women still face glass ceiling in other countries. A research by Saadin et al. (2016) identified that women often face career obstacles in comparison to men, as women move up to the corporate ladder, they constantly encounter the glass ceiling effect.

Previous research indicates that the relationship of glass ceiling effect poses as an obstacle on women's career advancement from the aspects of organizational practices, and the effect on family and social commitments. At the interpersonal level, mentoring and networking is crucial to career advancement as it aids in career and personal development (Yet-Mee et al., 2013). This is because mentors act as an advisor to provide psychosocial support to assist women at the early stage of career advancement. Tharenou (2005) highlighted that mentoring is essential for women than it is for men as women encounter more barrier in their career advancement. The scholar further suggests that women need to be supported by female mentors in order to progress in their career advancement.

Singh et al. (2006) highlighted that networking is one of the critical elements as it impacts female manager's career advancement in networking and interpersonal relationship in an organization. Appropriate networks will enable women to be successful and boost their self-confidence. To note, networking is an essential criterion for women's career advancement (Coleman, 2010). Women can utilize networking to affiliate with colleagues and clients to achieve career success (Suseno et al., 2007). Thus, networking allows individuals to tap into resources that surrounded in such connection as an advantage (Lin, 2001). Nonetheless, several studies emphasized the negative issues due to the lack of networks on women's career advancement for managerial positions (Tlais & Kauser, 2010). A research by McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) finds that women still tackling the lack of access to the organizational network. According to Jamali et al. (2005), numerous women manager found that they have problems with interpersonal relationships with their colleagues. In addition, women manager has been prohibited from informal networks (Kattara, 2005).

### **2.2. Work-life Balance**

Work-life balance can be defined as an individual's focus on different life roles, and inter-role phenomenon (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Saadin et al. (2016) stated that work-life balance incorporates tasks between taking care of kids and family. The researcher also mentioned that women should be concentrated to become a good mother and wife before developing into

a successful manager. According to Yet-Mee et al. (2013), the practices and policies of work-life balance should concentrate on eliminating gender-based structural barrier towards women's advancement. Thus, the design of work-life balance practices and policies can be presumed as to recognize and assist the different demands of family meanwhile encourage women's career advancement in the workplace.

As there is a significant involvement of women in the workforce, therefore more scholars are focusing on the issue of work-life balance towards women's career advancement (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). A recent study conducted by Shapiro et al. (2007) proves that women are taking the advantage of flexible work arrangements in contemplation to achieve their career goals and manage other responsibilities. Despite numerous organizations have implemented various programs to support the employees in order to reduce work-life conflicts such as flexible working hours, kindergarten within the company and others, this does not tackle the main cause of the issue. A research conducted by Bilmoria et al. (2007) showed that employees still face career development issue even they utilized the benefits provided by the company.

Various studies showed that female employees receive less support from the organization to distinguish the work and non-work obligations to avoid conflict of both roles. In a study among senior and middle management levels employees from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in Sudan, results showed that women received insignificant support from their organization to assist them on carrying out their responsibilities (Kargwell, 2008). A respondent in Kargwell study mentioned that Ministry of Health did not offer any support to help her carry out the burden of her twin roles but provide her with transportation facilities only. Another study conducted by Broadbridge (2008) also shows that a clear majority of the organizations are not willing to provide any support to assist women to carry out their responsibilities on taking care of children and work. The study also mentioned that two out of three female senior executives have to give up her career as the organization did not provide any support to reduce work-life conflict.

Studies also found that women employees often face a conflict between inflexible working hours and household responsibilities. Thus, women always exposed role stress due to the multiple role demands in running a career while also running a home and family. A research by Miller (2004) among the woman engineers found that women unable to advance to management positions due to the long working hours. Women engineers need to sacrifice her personal due to the long working hours and insufficient break in the oil industry. According to Twomey et al. (2002), the conflict between work and family can be overcome where women do not marry and remain childless. The researcher also found that it was uncommon for women with children to be in senior positions. A study conducted by Subramaniam and Arumuqam (2013) discovered that extra working hours and additional job responsibilities will prompt to negative impact towards family life. The researcher also mentioned that people perceived women can carry out family duties better than men because of women able to perform better child care than men.

However, Murphy and Doherty (2011) mentioned that it is hard to evaluate work-life balance due to personal circumstances where it impacts the perception of creating a harmony that reflects a person's needs. Therefore, it is important for employees to be able to distinguish their home and work life.

### **2.3. Mentoring Support**

Mentoring is a relationship between an experienced individual as a mentor while a less experienced individual as a mentee or known as protégé (Donaldson et al., 2000). Numerous studies discovered that mentoring is important towards women career advancement. A study by Wanberg et al. (2003) discovered that there is a significant correlation between mentoring and career outcomes such as better career advancement and development opportunities. McCauley (2005) supported the statement by further elaborate the opportunities such as access to organizational resources and rewards, personal development and job satisfaction.

Several studies found that mentors can obtain career benefits thru mentoring relationship. A study by Fletcher and Ragins (2007) mentioned that mentor can improve their career advancement and satisfaction by utilizing relational skills and competencies. Ramaswami and Dreher (2007) noted that mentoring may enrich the mentor's performance because the mentee may offer assistance to their mentor by providing feedback and providing important information, indicating a social exchange relationship between the mentor and mentee. Furthermore, a research by Maxwell (2009) proved that mentoring programs can improve female mentees' career advancement meanwhile contribute to enhancing the gender balance in the organization. The researcher also notes that mentoring can enhance women's opportunities for career advancement to managerial level. Tharenou (2005) conducted a research among the lower middle levels within the public sector and finance and business service in Australia discovered that the support from a mentor can increase the female mentee's career advancement than their male counterparts. The researcher also found that mentor career support is one of the crucial development activities that should be implemented by the organization in order to aid women to advance in their careers.

A study by Nies and Wolverton (2000) found out that the scarcity of mentoring is an obstacle to women's career advancement. Besides, studies also found that women often face difficulties in getting a mentor (Burke & Karambayya,

2004). This is due to women may feel discomfort with cross-gender mentors and token status. A study by McDowall-Long (2004) found that women are socially and professionally comfortable when they engage with other women as mentors. Moreover, a study by Yet-Mee et al. (2013) found that mentoring support does not assist women's career advancement due to the lack of women mentor and the female senior manager refuse to provide mentoring support to the female executives. Therefore, the scarcity of mentor impacted women's career advancement and success negatively due to the lack of women mentor.

## **2.4 Networking**

Networking was described by Burke (2007) as the process of contacting and being contacted by individuals in a social network and preserving these linkages or relationship. Networking can happen through multiple activities such as building connections with others, joining professional affiliations, joining social activities, and look for high-visibility assignments (Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

Networks can help women to adjust themselves to a male-dominated working culture while giving them collective power and confidence to support and react to organization change. Numerous studies investigated the correlation between networking ties and promotion. In general, these studies recommend that the connections with the higher levels management in the organization is crucial for both men and women to fully influence their social networks, however, women confront greater difficulties than men in developing these connections.

Scholars note that women's networks can be a source of support and information, and it able to assist women's to be efficient in management. Singh et al. (2006) conducted a research of women's corporate networking in United Kingdom companies using interviews and email survey. The research concluded that women able to work across the limitations by establishing a strong network and gaining information from multiple sponsors. The finding of the research shows that women's network able to improve their human capital by offering more career development opportunities, female role models, mentoring support, and talent identification. In contrast, Perriton (2006) recommends that it is important for women to empower in traditional networks as it is more beneficial than women's networks. Several studies show that women will benefit from having access to networks as sources of information and support regardless of the type of networks. Meanwhile, Cross and Linehan (2006) conducted a study to identify the factors affecting the lack of senior female managers in Ireland's high-tech sector. The respondents in the study believed that organizational decisions were made depending on the information that is obtained in the organization via formal and informal networks. Besides, the respondents also believed that decisions were made and promotion is promised via informal networks. Shen and Kram (2011) discovered the similar findings with the previous study and argue that social capital plays an important part in women's career advancement to senior management level. Social capital helps women to gain advantages in an organization such as increased visibility, support and upward mobility, increased career and job satisfaction, and respect and recognition.

Nevertheless, Bagilhole and White (2011) note that women may think that it is challenging to become a member of men's informal networks, where it is important to acquire adequate social capital to access top managerial positions. Studies investigate the gender and women's efforts to increase visibility recommend that women may not be remunerated equivalently as men because of the types of opportunities available to them. A study conducted by Forret and Dougherty (2004) among 418 male and female business school alumni showed that the efforts to increase visibility were notably associated with the number of advancements and total of reimbursement for men, but not for women. The research concluded that the types of assignments men and women have access to may restrain the benefits they receive from their social networks.

## **3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

As a research question, the researcher seeks to answer what factors that hinders women from career advancement. The main objective of the research is to study on work-life balance, mentoring support, and networking towards women's career advancement in Malaysia. To specify, women work force in Klang valley area will be chosen as the subjective of the research. Therefore, the specific objective of this research work are: (1) identify the relationship between work-life balance, mentoring support, and networking towards women's career advancement in Malaysia, (2) investigate the relationship between work-life balance and women's career advancement in Malaysia, (3) identify the relationship between mentoring support and women's career advancement in Malaysia and (4) study the relationship between networking and women's career advancement in Malaysia.

This is a quantitative study. In terms of Objectives, this is an exploratory study. Looking into the sampling methodology, the population in this study is 2,174,550 (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2016). The sample in this study refers to women in the workforce in Malaysia. In terms of sampling methodology, this study has used convenient sampling methodology. Since the total female employees in Malaysia in the year 2016 was approximately 7.9 million (Malaysia Department of Statistics,

2016), which considered as a large sample group. The result from Raosoft Sample Size Calculator suggested that 120 is the minimum sample size of the survey. (Margin of error = 8%, confidence level = 92%)

Based on the literature, the following hypotheses have been developed to be tested in the study:

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant correlation between work-life balance and women career advancement.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant correlation between work-life balance and women career advancement.

H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant correlation between mentoring support and women career advancement.

H0<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant correlation between mentoring support and women career advancement.

H0<sub>5</sub>: There is no significant correlation between networking and women career advancement.

H0<sub>6</sub>: There is a significant correlation between networking and women career advancement.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the primary data collection, a total of 150 questionnaires have been distributed to the respondents through online and physical distribution. Eventually, 110 questionnaires have been successfully collected from the respondents, which accounted 73% of the entire questionnaire process.

##### **4.1 Profile of Respondents**

From a total of 110 respondents, the marital status of respondents consists of single at 61.8%, married at 35.5%, while divorced at 1.8% and widowed at 0.9%. Majority of respondents (56.4%) were below 30 years old, 33.6% were aged 31-40 years old, and 6.5% were aged 41-50 years old. The smallest category was 51 years old and above (3.6%). Half of the respondents have a working experience that varies 1-5 years (51.8%), while 10% have working experience for 6-10 years, 16.4% have working experience of 11-15 years and 21.8% have working experience of more than 15 years. As for the educational background to the respondents, about 59.1% of the respondents completed bachelor degree, 20.9% completed master degree, 10.9% completed diploma or certificate holders, 4.5% were doctorate, and 3.6% of the respondents only completed SPM. There are one respondent that completed the professional course (0.9%).

##### **4.2 Reliability Test**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), reliability is a measurement that established to test the both consistency and stability. In general, the value of Cronbach's Alpha ranged at 0.06 considered poor result, ranged at 0.07 considered as an acceptable result and ranged at 0.08 considered as good. The closer to the value of Cronbach's Alpha of one, this indicates the higher internal consistency reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Table 1 above illustrates the reliability of the study

**Table 1: Correlating Reliability of Women's Career Advancement in Malaysia with Selected Dependent and Independent Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (r)</b>
Women's career advancement	0.557
Work-life balance	0.865
Mentoring support	0.849
Networking	0.797

P=0.01

##### **4.3 Normality Test**

Based on the results shown in Table 2, the mean for women career advancement is smaller than the median (14.78 < 15.0). This indicates that the distribution of women career advancement is negatively skewed. As for the mean for work-life balance is smaller than the median (12.73 < 13.00). This indicates that the distribution of women career advancement is negatively skewed. Meanwhile, the mean for mentoring support is smaller than the median (14.58 < 15.00). This indicates that the distribution of women career advancement is negatively skewed. Besides, the mean for mentoring support is smaller than the median (14.06 < 15.00). This indicates that the distribution of women career advancement is negatively skewed.

**Table 2: Mean, Median, and Mode of Dependent Variable and Independent Variables**

	Women Career Advancement	Work-life Balance	Mentoring Support	Networking
Mean	14.78	12.73	14.58	14.06
Median	15.00	13.00	15.00	15.00
Mode	14.00	12.00	16.00	16.00
Standard Deviation	2.428	3.642	3.158	3.169

N=110

### 4.3 Multiple Regression Test

To further measure the effect of work-life balance, mentoring support and networking towards women’s career advancement in Malaysia, linear regression was done to forecast value of dependent and independent variables.

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Test**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.039	1.072		7.498	0.000
Work-life balance	0.050	0.070	0.075	0.712	0.478
Mentoring Support	0.287	0.081	0.373	3.545	0.001
Networking	0.137	0.074	0.179	1.844	0.068

R square = 0.285, df = 3; F = 14.086, p = 0.01

The F statistic for overall goodness of fit of model is 14.086, which is significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . After excluding the non-significant variables, the final regression model produced by enter method is:

**Women career advancement = 8.039 + 0.287 mentoring support.**

This model explains 28.5% of the variance women’s career advancement. This indicates that 28.5% of the dependent variable was explained by the linear combination of the three predictor variables. Among the three predictor variables, the result clearly depicted that mentoring support was found to be strongly significantly towards women’s career advancement.

### 4.4 Pearson Moment Correlation Test

Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis describes the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables, as follow; 0.7 and above – very strong relationship, 0.50 to 0.69 – strong relationship, 0.30 to 0.49 – moderate positive relationship, 0.10 to 0.29 – low relationships, and 0.01 to 0.09 – very low relationship. The decision rule for accessing if a test is significant:

- If  $p \leq .05$ , the test is significant. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable.
- If  $p \geq .05$ , the test is not significant. Thus, there is no significant relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable.

**Table 4: Pearson Moment Correlation Test**

Variables			DV	IV1	IV2	IV3
Women Career Advancement (DV)	Pearson Correlation		1	.376**	.501**	.392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.000
	N		110	110	110	110
Work-life Balance (IV1)	Pearson Correlation		.379**	1	.581**	.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		.000	.000
	N		110	110	110	110
Mentoring Support (IV2)	Pearson Correlation		.501**	.581**	1	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000		.000
	N		110	110	110	110
Networking (IV3)	Pearson Correlation		.392**	.473**	.476**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	
	N		110	110	110	110

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)  
\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)  
Note: \*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$

All the independent variables tested showed a positive correlation. The strongest relationship of independent variable with dependent variable is mentoring support (0.501), followed by networking (0.392), and work-life balance (0.376).

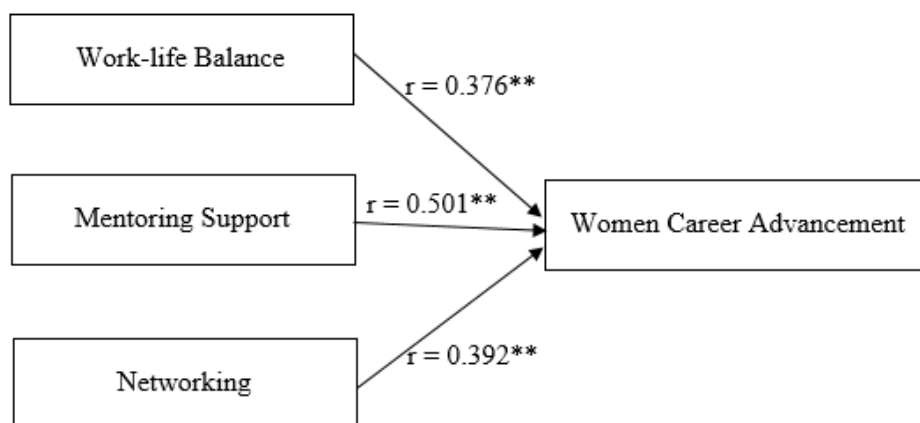
Overall, the significance of mentoring support was affirmed by the studies of Tharenou (2005) which showed mentoring support impact women's career advancement. The significant correlation of mentoring support with women career advancement ( $r = 0.501$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) may due to the mentoring able to provide better career advancement and development opportunities for female employees (Wanberg et al., 2003). Results revealed from the data affirmed that respondents agree that mentor would help to enhance their career advancement.

The significant correlation of networking with women's career advancement ( $r = 0.392$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) may due to women establish a network and utilize it as a source of information and support to enhance their career advancement in the organization.

The significant correlation of work-life balance with women's career advancement ( $r = 0.376$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) may due to the behavior of the higher management in the organization that affects their work-life balance. The significant of work-life balance to women's career advancement is reaffirmed with the study from Subramaniam et al. (2013).

#### 4.5 Discussion on Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that there are four accepted hypotheses;  $H_{02}$ ,  $H_{04}$ ,  $H_{06}$ . All three independent variable is significantly correlated with the dependent variable, women's career advancement.



**$H_{02}$ :** There is a significant correlation between work-life balance and women career advancement.

The findings of this hypothesis testing indicated that work-life balance is significantly correlated with the women's career advancement ( $r = 0.376$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). This finding corroborates the findings of the recent study conducted by Worrall et al. (2010) where work-life balance is the main barrier to women's career advancement. Besides, Subramaniam et al. (2013) also concur with the findings that work-life balance significantly affects the career advancement of female employees.

**$H_{04}$ :** There is a significant correlation between mentoring support and women career advancement.

The findings of this hypothesis testing indicated that mentoring support is significantly correlated with women career advancement ( $r = 0.501$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). This finding matches the findings of the previous study by Wanberg et al. (2003) where mentoring support significantly affect the career advancement of female employees. In addition, a study by Maxwell (2009) also agrees that mentoring support can enhance women's opportunities in career advancement to managerial level.

**$H_{06}$ :** There is a significant correlation between networking and women career advancement.

The findings of this hypothesis testing showed that networking is significantly correlated with women career advancement ( $r = 0.392$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). This finding corroborates the findings of the previous study by Singh et al. (2006) where networking significantly affects career advancement as it improves and affects the success of a female employee in the organization.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence about the significance of barriers to women's career advancement in Malaysia. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Test results have revealed that all three independent variables are significantly correlated towards women's career advancement among the female employees in Malaysia.

*Research objectives 1: To identify the correlation between work-life balance, mentoring support and networking towards women's career advancement in Malaysia.*

The findings of the study found that all three independent variables are significantly correlated with dependent variable, where mentoring support shows the strongest correlation among the three variables ( $r = 0.501$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), followed by networking ( $r = 0.392$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), and work-life balance ( $r = 0.376$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Thus, the findings of the study conclude that all three independent variables are a crucial factor that affects the advancement of female in the workforce in Malaysia. Besides, the findings also supported that the research framework of this study is valid.

*Research objectives 2: To investigate the relationship between work-life balance and women career advancement in Malaysia.*

Based on the findings, it was revealed that the work-life balance is significantly correlated towards women career advancement. This finding points out that the higher management in the respondents' respective organization is sympathetic towards their family responsibilities. However, the findings revealed that the organization was not really supportive when employees want to switch to less demanding jobs for family reasons and the organization does not provide sufficient facility to support the work-life balance of employees. This aligned with the study of Kargwell (2008) where women receive little support from their organization to distinguish the work and non-work obligations. Therefore, the relationship of work-life balance towards women career advancement is significantly correlated but there is a weak relationship as there are benefits provided by the organization to manage the work-life balance, however, the benefits are insufficient. This corroborates with the study of Bilmoria et al. (2007) where employees still face career development issue even they utilized the benefits provided by the organization.

*Research objectives 3: To identify the relationship between mentoring support and women career advancement in Malaysia.*

Based on the findings, mentoring support is found with the strongest correlation among the three independent variables towards women career advancement. The results indicate that mentoring support has the most significant effect on women career advancement. This supports the study of Wanberg et al. (2003) where mentoring support will enable better career advancement and development opportunities. Besides, the findings revealed that the mentor provides psychosocial support to the respondents. Findings also show that mentor also prepares the respondents for career advancement. Maxwell (2009) reaffirmed that mentoring support can enhance women's opportunities in career advancement to managerial level. Hence, the relationship between mentoring support and women career advancement is strongly correlated as the results shows that there is sufficient career support received from the mentor.

*Research objective 4: To study the relationship between networking and women career advancement in Malaysia.*

Based on the findings, it was revealed that networking is significantly correlated towards women career advancement. The findings revealed that female employees have few individuals in the organization where they share emotional support, feedback and work confirmation. Findings also show that the female employees keep in touch with a number of people who are at higher level than them. This finding corroborates the study by Singh et al. (2006) where the networks able to enables the female employees to work by gaining information and support in the organization. Thus, this research shows that there is a significant correlation between networking and women career advancement.

Overall, this study was devoted to understanding the barriers that hinder the career advancement of female employees in Malaysia. The results of this study offer findings of the prior study, where it is not much covered in the literature in the Malaysia context. The findings enhance knowledge on the barriers that hinder career advancement of female employees. The study provided some useful insights for both academic researchers as well as the management.

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