

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The data for this research were obtained through both primary and secondary data. The primary data involved the collection of qualitative data through one-to-one interviews on women's career advancement working in the government sectors. This research to gather insight into the factors influence women's career advancement and improvements that needed to be made to achieve this, as well as their personal motivations to pursue career advancement and also the barriers faced on women career advancement.

3.2 Research Design

This study is a qualitative research. Merriam (2009:14) describe qualitative research as “a process of scientific inquiry that seeks to comprehend the meaning of a specific phenomenon from the viewpoints of the respondents”. Normally, qualitative researchers collect data directly from the respondent through interviews or focus groups. Other methods utilized by researchers include observations, photography, video recording, and document reviewing. Merriam (2009) categorized qualitative methodologies into six: descriptive/basic/generic, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, case study and narrative analysis. Creswell (2008) suggested similar approaches to conducting qualitative research. Among these methodologies, the most utilized qualitative methodology in the field of management is the case study methodology.

Yin (1994:130) defined case study methodology as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon and a context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and when the context is pertinent to understanding the phenomenon”. Yin (1994) further specifies that case study methodology design involves the identification of conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the study and the gaps to be addressed, as well as the development of conceptual framework to be utilized in explaining the data and the methodological design (how data are collected and analyzed, how validity and reliability are achieved, and how findings are concluded). As such, case study is a full- fledged methodology in support of empirical inquiries. Eisenhardt’s (1989) view seems to be in line with Yin’s (1994), as the former treated case study as a research strategy by proposing a comprehensive eight-step procedure for conducting a case study research. The use of a qualitative research method to collect primary data through interviews and open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding by taking into account the different voices and perspectives of the study target. Moreover, as this study requires rich and deep data, the qualitative approach was selected to explore the experience of women in this study and to accomplish the study’s purpose. Case study selection and data gathering technique are discussed further below.

3.3 Sample of Study

The target groups of this study were women working in various Malaysia government sectors to avoid being bias to favoring one government sectors. The sample criteria for respondent were women, married women with various number of children, working in different sectors in government and also have work experience for 5 years and above. The aim of this was to study women’s career advancement in term of their factors influencing their career advancement that could help them to improve their productivity and development at work as well as balance their dual roles and the barriers that they are facing in pursuing their career advancement path.

The author chose to focus only on Malaysia government sectors rather than to incorporate private sectors because as the economy and tertiary sectors in Malaysia grew, the government sectors absorbed more female labor force than the private sector. According to the statistics, the number of female participation in the workforce increased from 43.03 per cent in the year 2008 to 52.74 per cent in 2022 (The World Bank, 2022). The reason for the increase in the formal sectors was that women gain benefits from working with the government in terms of welfare.

The respondent were from various level of educations and within age range of 35 to 58 years old and above. The purpose of this was to analyze these group experiences on how they negotiate and balance their roles in order to progress in their career by exploring of working women in different government sectors and conditions to progress further in their career differ from one another.

3.4 Profile of Respondents

Through purposive sampling, the author interviewed a total of five respondents. These respondents came from various government sectors which consists of the background of a teacher, nurse, lecturer, and human resource management position. A brief background profile for each case is provided below, followed by a summary of their demographic data. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the participants are presented as Respondent 1,2,3,4 and 5.

3.4.1 Respondent 1

Being a wife and a mother of two children. Respondent 1 age 56, was a Headmaster. She has worked in the government sector for 33 years. She began her career at the age of 23. And now she has been working as a teacher for almost 33 years. According to Respondent 1, her career life journey started as a regular teacher then she continued her studies with a degree in the hope that she would be able to achieve more. After that, she was promoted to go upper of her level which is hold a title from ordinary

teacher to Senior Assistant Teacher then after a few years she tried to climb again the career ladder into the high level through persistence, patience, facing challenges to realize her ambition to hold a position as a head teacher. Her desire become true and now she currently holding that title as a Headmaster.

3.4.2 Respondent 2

Respondent 2 also as a teacher and mother of three children. Aged, 45 and has served in the government sector for sixteen years. She was graduated with a Degree in Education. Respondent 2 started her career at a young age where she started her career journey as an ordinary teacher. Then, she was promoted to climb her way to the top. She stated that in order to hold a position as a committee leader in her school, she had to willingly take more challenging roles task, she also had to constantly work on improving herself in terms of skills and knowledge on the job in order to specialize in her tasks and role as a leader. Respondent 2 also expressed her ambition and aspiration through her contribution in her career life as well as she wants to produce students who are successful in addition to religious literacy.

3.4.3 Respondent 3

Respondent 3, 44 years old, was a mother of three children. Master Degree holder. She was a Chief Administrative Officer and had been working in the government sectors for fourteen years. She was mainly responsible in the smooth running operation in her department under Performance and Career Section. Respondent 3 stated that she had been in the same position since 2017 until now. Her goal to work is mainly to be financially independent and at the same time to being able to help her husband financially, and to provide a better life for her children.

3.4.4 Respondent 4

Respondent 4 had been working under Ministry of Health for nearly 20 years as a Dimension Nursing Officer. When the author interviewed her, Respondent 4 was in her late 30s and married. She was blessed with a husband and three children. . Through her story, she has gone through various challenges in continuing her career as a nurse. She stated that her greatest challenge to career advancement was the need to divide her time between work and her family. Respondent 4 mentioned that the possibility of advancing in her career is possible but most probably she would still be in her current position. Although she shared household responsibilities with her husband, she indicated that her husband's primary role at home was to supply needs for their family, while she was in charge of the children. She had to take emergency leave while her children were smaller to care for them. This made it difficult for her to concentrate at work.

3.4.5 Respondent 5

Respondent 5 a Doctor of Philosophy holder. Age, 35 and was a mother of two children. She had been working in the government sectors for ten years and now currently work as a University Senior Lecturer. Respondent 5 is really a passionate and well planning in build her career path.

She was a highly motivated and determined individual. During her academic years, she had always been a high achiever. She attributed her academic success to yeas of practice in self-discipline, hard work and efficient time management, habits she brought into her career life. Respondent 5 perceived her career life as equally important as her role as a mother because she believed that when she continuously progress and perform well in her job, she could help in motivating others as well as set a good example for her children. In addition to that, Respondent 5 also had a supportive husband behind it who had always been encouraging and supportive of her career decisions.

3.5 Data Collection

To obtain in-depth and rich data from each respondent for this research, the author used qualitative method by conducting interviews on women working in Malaysia government sectors. Interview is the best method for this research for its strength to capture women's voices firsthand. The research's in-depth interview was formed through a semi-structured way. Semi-structured interviews, the most common method of data collecting in qualitative research (Willig, 2013), was carried out in this study so that the study is able to explore respondents' expressions regarding their factors in pursuing the career progression and also the barriers they faced in their career path. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to freely express themselves on developed themes, increasing the complexity and diversity of responses (Creswell, 2017).

The procedure in making interview process started with the author get to fill out the permission form from the faculty to get approval to do the interview. After receiving approval, this letter is sent via email and WhatsApp to the selected respondents for this study, with a draft of the questions to be asked later. Then, the author discussed the date they were free to be interviewed.

The author divide into two question; firstly ask them indicate to the factors influencing women career advancement and second part knowing the barriers that they are facing in pursuing their career advancement path. The interview was conducted using both Malay and English as medium for communication which was later, translated to English language during the process of transcribing. The author constructed a few questions as a guideline and the remaining questions were constructed based on the answer of each respondent. The main research interview questions that used for this research include:

3.5.1 Sample of Interview Questions

- **Demographic background**

- Age, working experience and educational background and these are just a few questions

- **Factors influencing women career advancement**

- **Spouse Factors**

- Does your partner provide support, and if so, what form does the support shown by the spouse in family management?

- **Employer Factors**

- Can explain the personality of your current employer and can explain what it looks like welfare facilities and support given to you in doing task

- **Peer Factors**

- Is your colleague, someone who is willing to share various knowledge and the skills you have to help facilitate your work affairs?
- What form of physical and mental support is given by your colleague at work?

- **Children Factors**

- Do you believe that children become a strength in doing activities work whole day?
- How is the availability of children in doing homework independently seen as a strength for mothers to succeed in doing tasks in the office, to what extent have you worked towards forming independence in your children?

- **Barriers faced by women career advancement**

➤ **Gender Discrimination**

- There is a culture that denigrates the strength of women and it is also very synonymous known as gender discrimination. What do you think of this sentiment? did it happen at your work?
- From your own experience, what are the obvious forms of gender discrimination that exposed in the context of your work environment?

➤ **Glass Ceiling**

- Are there promotion opportunities and opportunities to hold positions in performance of duties and responsibilities at work is it seen as equal for men and women?

➤ **Work Life Conflict**

- Can you explain the approach you use to balance implementation between your career and family life activities?

➤ **Child-care Support System**

- Do you see the role of childcare support center (definitely, kindergarten) as a platform that helps the smoothness of your work activities?

➤ **Family Consideration**

- If there is a claim to work outside working hours such as after 5 pm /on weekends / public holidays do you get consideration which appropriately from the family to take care of and manage the household affairs abandoned?
- To what extent can you get consideration from the children to understand your work who comes home late?

➤ **Excessive work and exhaustion**

- Do you often get excessive work that affects your mental health?
- Are you burdened with your work at the office?

➤ **Organizational Structure, Culture and Practice**

- Is the culture of replacing in others job often occurs in your work environment?
- Do you often face the scenario where must do a challenging work until it affect to your health?

➤ **Personal Factors**

- What are your strengths and weaknesses and how do you overcome them?
- What inspired you to continue your career to this point?

The interviews via semi-structured questions allowed the study to focus on capturing the narratives of the respondents while minimizing the voice of the researcher. This method was known as a 'story telling' in ethnographic research aimed to reduced researcher's bias in obtaining data. Hence, this method was efficient to obtain rich and unbiased data from the respondents. Moreover, the duration of the interviews was 35 to 45 minutes. Each and every interview was recorded through an audio recording device and the interviews were fully transcribed in the next step. Transcribing data is widely acknowledged as an important aspect of qualitative research since it yields substantial meaning and insights regarding the obtained data (Creswell, 2017). Afterwards, the data gathered from individual interviews were subjected to a thematic content analysis. The transcript was analyzed frequently for thematic analysis, and many patterns were discovered. These patterns were then organized into themes and sub-themes, providing for a more in-depth examination of the respondents' personal perspectives and representations.

Each of the every respondent was asked for their agreement at the start of the interview method, and they all participated voluntarily in this research activity. They were told that their identities would be kept private and that their comments would only be utilized for academic study. To protect the respondents' identities, each one was assigned a code number and was referred to as Respondent 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 throughout the study.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

To minimize any ethical issues, the author first asked the respondents for permission to conduct the interview and use a recording device to secure the data. It was also important for the author to make it clear to the respondents that if they felt uncomfortable performing the interview or being a part of this study, they had the option to withdraw from the study. The purpose of gaining permission and right to withdraw was to avoid the problem of consent and ethical issues when conducting a research. The interviews were highly confidential as no names shall be mentioned or revealed in this study. Instead, the author use a pseudonym to refer to the respondents and their workplaces in order to protect their identity. Before conduction the interview, the author provided the explanation on the purpose and objective to avoid the issue of deception.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Analyzing Qualitative Data

The data analysis for this study was analyzed using the data through interview. The author will collect the interview data and transcribe them for easy organization data. The author will then analyze the transcripts by grouping similar themes, interpret the key findings, developing a coding scheme and coding the data. It can be summarized that, the information for research had first been read and annotate by the researcher. All the information needed to be focus one by one so that no information will be overlooked at this preliminary step. Then, the information had been given identify by themes. At this step, the researcher had summarized all the information about the abstract meaning of it. The next step, is developing coding scheme. This is an essential step as to know that if the researcher had asked the right question to the right respondent. Lastly, coding the data is a step to make the researcher easier that reflect the true information from the respondent.

Next, the author will analyze the findings into two part. First part, the author will analyze the factors influence women career advancement in terms of spouse, peers, children and employer, Second part, the author will analyze how women in this research negotiate with the barriers and manage their roles either motherhood and as a career women as well as to allow them succeed in their career. Lastly, through the key findings, the author will be able to draw conclusion whether or not the findings will support or reject through the research that have been conducted.

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