Promoting Gender Equality In Workplace: A Conceptual View

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Abstract

This study proposes to investigate the relationship between women's right and gender equality in a Malaysian workplace. There is lack of evidence on gender equality specifically in promoting women in a workplace. Nowadays, the women's roles are questionable and have been denied. Despite the efforts in implementing policies on gender equality, there is lack of law and enforcement pertaining to this matter. Indeed, in Malaysia, Federal Constitution Article 8(2) prohibits gender discrimination in the workplace but merely focuses on gender equality. Thus, this study suggests implementing the policy on women's rights namely sexual harassment, gender balance in management, family-friendly working practices and job security in encouraging gender equality. Women employed at managerial position has been selected as target respondents for this study and six states have been chosen as sample location. It is expected that this study has vital implications on various workplaces. This study also contributes to women equality literatures in performance, leadership and decision-making. Thus, the proposed study will create awareness on the implementation of the gender equality policy.

Keywords*: Women's Right, Gender Equality, Sexual Harassment Policy, Gender Balance in Management, Family-friendly Working Practices, Job Security, Workplace*

1. Introduction

Background of the study

Traditionally women are synonym with housework and childcare. As time change, women's role also change. They are no longer sitting at home, struggling with housework. Nowadays, they work together with men and produce income. Statistics by International Labour Organization (2018) reported that the global women's labor force participation rate was 48.5% in 2018. However, in certain circumstances women's role has been denied. Women do not receive equal accessibility, position and opportunities as far as men receive due to gender discrimination that become human norms for centuries. Women's right on freedom, dignity, equity and security has been restricted and unable them to achieve gender equality. Gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunity and treatment by male and female in all aspects. A radical approach focusing women's right and gender equality between male and female has been developed through women's empowerment paradigm. Surprisingly, statistic shows that the Malaysia Gender Gap Index (MGGI) is 0.692 in 2016. This indicated that the equality gap between men and women is 69.2% and indicates that gender inequality problems remain unsolved.

The problem of gender inequality derived when culture disguises that men are stronger and perform better job than women. It seems that men are fit to carry all responsibilities in their lives and women may not be able to compete with men in some aspects. Gender inequality can produce serious public crisis and may give impact to the human development (Li, 2011). Due to that fact, there is an increasing attention given to women's right and gender equality in literatures focusing various sectors such as manufacturing (Wu & Cheng, 2016), agriculture (Meemken & Qaim, 2018) and global supply chain (George, Gibson, Sewall, & Wofford, 2017). In spite of variety researches on women's right and gender equality, limited research has been conducted on the implementation of gender equality policy in workplace. The complexity of equality policy problem in workplace is better elucidated

through a longitudinal case study. In managerial level, women have dealt with many problems such as lack of involvement in decision-making, barriers in professional advancement and the opportunities given to them. Women have not been allowed to exercise their full potential as decision makers (Tovar, 2006) due to cultural and social prejudices (Eagly & Carly, 2007).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of women's rights on gender equality in workplace. The women's rights in this study represented by sexual harassment, gender balance in management, family-friendly working practices, and job security. This study serves as an additional reference and literature review for researchers in conducting similar research area. Besides, academicians or researchers can apply this research framework for their research on gender equality in other area of industries. This study also create awareness in Ministry of Human Resources for improving and modifying the standards to better suit with the current issues of women's right. In fact, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge and help policy makers to regulate policy on gender equality. This study will be beneficial to Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) by facilitating the gender mainstreaming into policy and practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

From theoretical perspective, this study foresee that the application of Social Role Theory will strengthen the previous literature argument on the relationship between women's right and gender equality. Eagly and Wood (2012) mentioned that Social Role Theory would help to understand about both stability and change in gender roles and relationship with behavioral sex differences. Both said that the roles of women was changed as they encouraged towards employment environment. They believed to discover convergence in those male and female attributes that reproduce this masculinizing of women's experiences. This theory aligned with meaning of gender equality where men and women sharing the resources, fair in participation and chances to talk in community. Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb and Corrigall (2000) reported that women becoming more similar to men for importance of job aspects likes freedom, challenge, leadership, prestige, and power. In turn, a more way for more women to accomplish power places greater equality with men in skill growth and normal of living (Alexander & Welzel, 2007). Even though indicator showed that the changes on gender equality has slowed on the root of sex, other aspects and behavior attributes (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999;

Blau, Brinton & Grusky, 2006b), women's movements, outlooks and ideas are more advanced than men's and its rapidly change (Dodson, 2006; Seguino, 2007; Eagly, Diekman, Schneider, & Kulesa (2003a).

The women's right factors under discussion in this study are sexual harassment, gender balance in management, family-friendly working practices, and job security. From the perspective of sexual harassment and gender equality, this theory refers role by presuming the persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviour and those of other persons. The underlying concept in this theory is based on the irrelevant of gender based role expectation on domination of workplace. In men dominated workplace, men will likely to sexualize their experience in guiding their interaction with women (Kapila, 2017). It was suggested that the role of manager is to maximise profit and a deterrent to sexual harassment in the form of a punishment while the role of supervisor is to oversee workers and the amount of sexual harassment. Despite the role to protect the workers, supervisor may seek sexual favours in return for a positive performance review or production linked bonus (Lin, 2016). Preventing gender dominance will lead to preventing sexual harassment in workplace, which in turn will promote gender equality.

Whereas in gender balance in management level, Social Role Theory focuses on the explanation of social relations, whereby behaviour is associated with specific social positions (Biddle, 1979). Social Role theory occurs between two people in substituting their principles which determined by them (Goffman, 1959). It is most often used to differentiate between men and women (Trauth, 2013). With respect to gender equality associated with gender balance in management level, the past study document only minor percentage of women in top management positions (Malach-Pines& Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). It assumes that the organization tends to appoint men than women and believes the men are fit enough to carry the position compared to women. Additionally, the Social Role Theory explains the continuous process in order to fulfil the outcomes such as performance (Broderick, 1998). It also offers an opportunity to examine how the behaviours and choices plays the important determinants.

Based on the Social Role Theory from the perspective of family-friendly working practices, the segregation of men and women roles influence them in the activities that they participate, providing different training and expertise at different tasks and leading to various beliefs and social behaviours (Clow, 2011). The gender stereotyping which

believed that in natural, women is a better caregiver and men are the better leaders indicates that a person is less qualified, unnatural and lack of natural gift if she involves in other gender dominated roles. This may due to the reason that the women not only have responsibilities in their house (such as wife, mother, and daughter), they are also need to be fully committed in the job. Supposedly, every parties should reward the work provided by women whether they have children or not as they have extra burden (in the household labour, duties and chores). Employers should highly considered adopting the development of family-friendly working practices as to promote the development of human resource agendas and companies' competitiveness (Aminah, 2007). Consequently, women's psychological well-being can be increased and in overall, this can promote better gender equality. Additionally, in the perspective of job security, Social Role Theory clearly shown a relationship between genders in social surrounding such as job opportunity, social function (perception) and others. This theory argued that individuals especially employer might be querying about the women's ability in certain position, as women are often experience conflicts between their work and their family life. As a result, women are being prejudice in promotion and job employment.

3. Literature Review

This study conceptualizes four women's right agendas, which are sexual harassment, gender balance in management, family-friendly working practices, and job security. Those women's right were subsequently relates to gender equality.

3.1 Sexual harassment

The phenomenon of sexual harassment exists across the globe and it has been happening in early civilisation. During slavery era, women slaves were at the mercy of predatory masters who often subjected to sexual harassment. Today, although we are no longer in slavery era, the sexual harassment continues. Women at workplace, school or even in the street are exposed to sexual harassment. Based on United Nations[1] and European Union[2] definitions,

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[1] United Nations defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexually determined behaviour as physical contact and advances, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography and sexual demands, whether by words or actions.

[2] The European Commission of the EU defines sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual

this study refers sexual harassment as undesired sexual nature either in form of word or action. A research conducted by The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) research in year 2014 found that 55% of 42,000 women in the European Nation have experienced sexual harassment incidents. The research further reported that women in Vietnam, India, Cambodia and Bangladesh there are 87%, 79%, 77% and 57% have experienced the sexual harassment respectively. Likewise other countries, Malaysia also facing the same issues. Specifically in Malaysia, there are 267 cases of sexual harassment reported in year 2017 (Women Aid Organisation, 2018). Based on the same study by FRA (2014) in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Korea, 30% to 40% of women being victims of sexual harassment at their workplace. The question is what actions have been taken to end it?

Combating the symptomatic of sexual harassment requires courage and support from related parties particularly on laws to prevent it. The launching of the Human Resource Ministry's Code of Practice for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment at Workplace on 1999 does not embrace the targeted achievement as there is no enforcement on it. The policy should be reviewed to ensure optimum coverage and systematic procedures are inclusive as preventive and redress mechanism. It should be able to be applied for the employer in various sectors including public, private, manufacturing, small, and medium enterprise. Admittedly, the sexual harassment problems also occurred at higher education institutional and it has caught many researchers' interest.

This study emphasises that sexual harassment policy is important to promote gender equality. Indeed, goal No 5 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aims to achieve gender equality by avoiding all types of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual. Therefore, preventive of sexual harassment able to fulfil the national agenda in gender equality. The first Malaysian court case that awards damages for sexual harassment in workplace is in the case of Mohd Ridzwan Abdul Razak V Asmah Hj Mohd Nor. Both of them were employees of Lembaga Tabung Haji. In this case, the sexual harassment incident refers to allegedly repeated vulgar remarks, dirty jokes of a sexual nature, use of rude and uncouth words in e-mails and repeated offers to make the defendant his second wife (Malaysian High Court, 2017). The victory in this case reflects the protection for sexual harassment victims and beginning journey to uphold justice on gender equality. The recent case that

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nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work.

caught the world attention was on film executive and producer, Harvey Weisntein who was alleged of sexual harassment on Rose McGowan, Ashley Judd and others. One of the possible factors that influence such scandal is the absent of gender equality whereby men dominated the power in workplace and have higher control over conditions of employment (Laxman, Hishamuddin, Maisarah, & Heng, 2014). International Labour Organization (ILO) in their report[1] pointed that sexual harassment negligates the gender equality and undermine the dignity between genders.

A research conducted by Heikkinen (2012), strengthen the argument that sexual harassment is associated with gender equality. By applying Acker's theory of gendered organization, the study comprehensively discusses and analyse the cases of sexual harassment and gender equality in workplace. Another study by Jin, Lin, and Strong, (2018) discussed on the impact of sexual harassment and how to promote gender equality in army, navy and air-force military in Taiwan.

3.2 Gender balance in management level

Aside from sexual harassment, this study proposed the rights on gender balance in management level to promote the gender equality. Gender balance in management level has important implications for both individual welfare and work related outcomes. There are number of limited studies investigate the gender differences in management level. In Malaysia, not many studies conducted on gender and level in management specifically women at all levels. This including the most senior in organizations as a subject of interest. For Malaysia situation, no extensive studies documented women's right in workplace. A study constructed by McTavish and Miller (2009), explained that the gender representation in higher education unequal in term on segregation of research activity. The result shows that women are more focusing on teaching and administration compared to men. Factually, the male is a domain gender in most of upper management so that gender issue has infrequently had been investigated (Fagenson, 1990). In work related outcomes, past studies documented that women mostly represented in lower-level management. This is due to their token status that makes them feel not comfortable in work (Kanter, 1977). Therefore, with the growing of the literatures, the women nowadays

play the vital roles in institutional performance, leadership and decision-making.

Other past studies also highlighted the issues on women position in management level. According to Simpson (2000), women are splits into three categories. First, where women were more numerous than at both the top and lower levels. Second, where women were more numerous than at the top, but represented at lower levels of management hierarchy. Third level were women incorporated at all management levels. The result of the study found that women experienced adequately within organization compared to the men in majority.

However, lack of women representation on boards become an important issue recently and need to be addressed (Julizaerma & Sori, 2012). Adams and Funk (2012) indicate that women directors are more concerned and generous but less power than men are. The result of their research shows that there is positive relationship between gender diversity and organization performance. It is consistence with the most of the previous studies, which indicate positive relationship with organization performance. Srinidhi, Gul and Tsui (2011) found that the female directors are more independent and ethical than men. Women are always listen to other, willing to attend to other needs and offer some respect and consideration. This is based on few characteristics such as women is very helpful, well-mannered, understanding and empathetic qualities (Konrad, Kramer & Erkut, 2008).

For that reason, the workplace may has a positive impact when more women seat on the Boards of Directors. It is based on society perceptions indicate that the women is more ethical compared to male in delivering their responsibilities. The Malaysian government policy also highlight that there must be 30 percent women representation in decision-making levels of corporate sector. It is strengthened by MCCG 2017 that also inspires companies in general to include women's participation not only in board level but in senior management as well.

On the other hand, the institutional may has effective leadership when the women has their right in management level such as communication and decision-making ability. Thus, the women employees give emphasis to communication and support the leader in their work unit that could contribute to organizational leadership effectiveness (Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia, & Walumbwa, 2011). In addition, women also help on the employee development, provisional incentive, communication and vision, which becomes important factors on how companies develop their organizational leadership

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[1] Report of the Committee on Gender Equality 98th Session of the International Labour Conference Geneva, June 2009

that could contribute to the effectiveness of the works.

Furthermore, the key aspect of strategic decision-making is gaining co-operation with surround people within organization. Past studies noted that the women often omitted from the informal networks (Cooper & Davidson, 1982). As a result, women unable to fully involve in strategic decisions in organizations (Okanlawon, 1994). Undeniably, the women who are excluded from informal organization networks are less likely to be recognized as effective strategic decision maker. Consequently, the women might not have enough fact to make a good decision. Thus, the women must become visible in management level strategic decision making as well to ensure that everyone will recognize their position and responsibilities.

3.3 Family-friendly working practices

The traditional belief that the women is the homemaker or caregiver is somewhat questioning in this modern world as nowadays women are also the economic providers together with their spouses. This trend of dual-career couples increase the need for family-friendly workplace as to fulfil their responsibilities towards their organizations and family (Allen, 2001). It is important having work arrangements that can facilitate the family-friendly work practices as to reconcile the family and work. The examples of family-friendly working practices include the application of leave due to family reasons, work arrangements changes due to family reasons, childcare and elderly care facility, relevant trainings, implementation of standards relating to maternity and paternity leave, flexibility in working hours and others (Gray & Tudball, 2003; Guedes, 2012). United Nation Women (UN Women), an organization promoting gender equality and the women empowerment had launched the Global Virtual Knowledge Centre as an online platform to bring together the experts individuals and organizations, governments, relevant agencies and actors in promoting equality of women and girls. Based on the United Nation 'Men and Boys Knowledge Module', it is essential to change the practices of organizations and institutions as it can brings a significant impact on the community as a whole (Guedes, 2012). All parties among others including government agencies, organizations and employers should lead by example and implement certain standards to promote family-friendly working practices.

Gray and Tudball (2003) documented that in overall, the high-skills level employees and employees that received training from the company are the most likely group that will receive offer on the family-

friendly working practices. The reasons are that the employers want to retain the high-skills level employees in their companies and since they already invested in the employees' training. There is no access difference between the employees with high need of family-friendly working practices such as mothers, fathers and other carers compare to other employees. In contrast, Formankova and Křižkova (2015) in their study on part-time employees in Czech Republic, found that regardless of whether the employees are professional or in the managerial positions, there is no equal bargaining power intended for the women employees if they work with the flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, Clow (2011) verified none significant relationship between fatherhood with the employers' hiring, promotion and training decisions on men. Unfortunately, the women employee expecting a child receive less attention and attraction than women employee with no child in the hiring, promotion and training process. It shows that in general, people believed double-roles of women in workplace and their family are still questionable, but not for the men who can fulfil their roles as both father and employee (Clow, 2011).

The need of the family-friendly workplace increase simultaneously with the employees' age as their responsibilities towards the families are also increase (Nelson, Brooks, Sahaym, & Cullen, 2017). The employees will have higher commitments not only to their children but also to the aging parents. Therefore, they will have higher appreciation for the practices on the family-friendly workplace especially for those involve in entrepreneurship compared to those work in the government, public or private corporations and non-profit organizations. The study of Allen (2001) found that employees perceived the arrangements of flexible working practices for instance flexible working hours and compressed work weeks as highly related to family-supportive organization compared to care supports for their dependent. Thus, he tentatively suggested that organization to offer flexible works options as an initiative to build an environment of family-friendly and supportive. In addition, Allen (2001) pointed out that there would be less work-family conflict, higher job satisfaction, higher commitment in the workplace with less intentions of leaving the organization, if there were family-supportive environments in the organization and vice-versa.

Guedes, (2012) stated that women could broaden their opportunities on the economic and employment if there is equal participation of fathers in the childcare including involvement in parent-teacher meetings, appointments with doctors and taking care of sick child. United Nations Expert Group Meeting recommended some men's involvement in parenting

and household labor comprising incentives in recruitment and promotion policies provided by the employers pertaining to the childcare contributions. They also suggested the designation of programmes and structure by the education and training institutions to facilitate care work by the fathers whose still continue their studies or on training. However, Gray and Tudball (2003) stressed that women are expected to need the family-friendly working practices more than men as women is naturally the caregivers.

In Malaysia, labor force participating rate shown that there are increments every year in women involvement for the last 10 years from 45.7% in 2008 to 54.7% in 2017. It showed an increment of 9% if compared to men involvement of only 1.1% (79.0% in 2008 to 80.1% in 2017) (Department of Statistics, 2018). The higher living cost especially for those in the big cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Selangor is one of the reasons why the women participating in the labor force increasing year by year. However, case study by Aminah (2007) on 2 local and 2 foreign private organizations in Malaysia found that there is still lack of family-friendly working practices including childcare centre, leave for family reasons and other benefits for family in this country. The results support the current situation where during the working hours; most of the parents will use the service provided by the childcare centre to transit their children thus deter their family-roles. The Section 2 of Act 308, Child Care Centre Act 1984, defined the childcare centre as premises that provide children care services ranging from half-day to full day for four children and above, below four years old based on fees agreed. Section 5 of similar act categorised the childcare centre in four different categories. These include Home based childcare centre[1], Institution based childcare centre[2], Work place based childcare centre[3] and Community based childcare centre[4] (Department of Social Welfare, 2018).

However, to date, there are numbers of cases involving the childcare centre including the death and injury to the child. It was reported in Malaysia that there are 581 cases of child abuse involving caregivers in various places including nurseries from 2015 to June 2017 (The sun daily, August 2017). Following the arising cases of death/injury of children in the childcare centres, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail who is the Minister of Women,

Family and Community Development with her ministry conducted necessary discussions to tighten the laws governing the childcare centres with the Attorney General's Chamber (The Star, July 2018). As the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, she also aims to set up a childcare centre in all government agencies from 1 January 2019. In addition, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development will plan collaborations with Ministry of Education to set up the childcare centres in schools. These plans will bring benefits to parents who works in shifts and to teachers but will only involve government agencies but none related to the private sector companies. However, in line with the circular of Inland Revenue Department's dated Feb 15, 1996, exemption incentives of 10% on tax will be given to private sector employers for 10 years for renovation and maintenance of building used for the child nursery (The Sun Daily, July 2018)

3.4 Job security

Another area of women's right in promoting gender equality is job security. Job security is the situation of employee's certainty that she will not been removed from the position she presently hold, being degraded, or being denied from any promotion by the employer. In promoting gender equality, job security relies on various factors such as safety, satisfaction, economic condition, organization performance, opportunity as well as qualification.

Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) stated that academic staff is not subject to high pressure when relate with job security because this profession quite secure, as the academician will be in a high demand when they become senior. Job security for academic staff is guaranteed once received the confirmation of appointment, which means that this academic staff permitted a tenure status where they cannot simply terminated form their current position (Akpan, 2013). However, in 2016, the appointment of approximately 6,000 of academician in public institution including professors were being terminated or not renew their contract due to budget constrain that have been terminated by the ministry (The Star, March 6). This causes panic to many of academic staff about their job security including in private sector's institution.

Job security encourages employees' commitment. However, once the employee rendered with tenure status, the commitment of the employees can be reduced. Based on Ichino and Riphahn (2005) from the observation of 545 males and 313 females as a professional in Italian bank, number of days of not present in the workplace per week rise dramatically especially for male staff when the employment security is granted. From this finding, it can be said

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[1] for less than ten children in the home of a person
[2] if the number of children increase to ten and above and is an initiative of private entities and non-government organisations - NGO
[3] initiative of employers and employees' welfare
[4] initiative of community to lower-level income families and receives aid from the Federal Government or a State Government

that female's staff show a high commitment in job even after the employment security is provided. Thus, this can give an advantage for more women staff to be hired in organization. On the other hand, factor like having a burden workloads also affect the academic staffs' commitment. According to Watts and Robertson (2011) due to high numbers of students, lecturer will need to interact frequently with the students, which can lead to tiredness to the lecturer. Female lecturers were more likely to face emotional exhaustion since they have to carry many roles at workplace as well as at home (Chen, Jamaiyah, Siau, Wymen, Loh, Mohd Hadzrul, Nadiah, & Nurakmal, 2014). Therefore, employer can give negative views on female lecturer that can make male employees tend to have high job security.

Job security also can be related to women characteristics. Pregnant is uniqueness for being women (Maizatul Azila, Hawa & Rohaidah, 2011). The authors added that pregnancy as a social function where pregnant mother carried a future asset for the country- if being raise in a good way. However, in organizational view, male worker will be more beneficial to be hired than women. This is because women will be in maternity leave for confinement for a period of at least 60 consecutive days (Employment Act) but not for male employee.

3.5 Gender equality

The term "gender" and "sex" are not synonyms. Rolleri (2013), stated that "sex" categorize whether female or male based on biology whereas "gender" describes people are naturally male or female or how to be "feminine" or "masculine" based on their feeling. By understanding the definition of "sex" and "gender", most of us would come to an agreement that the argument about gender and gender norms is motivating from evolutionary, sociological, psychological, and sexual points of view (Rollie, 2013). Gender equality broadly operationalized by men and women having 1) equitable access and use of resources, 2) equitable participation in relationships, the household, the community, and political arenas, and 3) safety or freedom from violence" (Rolleri, 2012a). A situation of gender inequality arises when women and "the feminine" are frequently degraded, and men and masculine personality are chosen, regrettably happened in many societies throughout the United States and in many

(if not most) communities throughout the world (Rolleri, 2013). Normally, men keep more authority to monopoly decision making in personal, society and political and women's needs and interests are under accepted or not sufficiently addressed (Rolleri, 2013).

Previous studies on gender equality have been conducted in several sectors such as education (Wilson, 2003; Subrahmaniam, 2005; Sahin, 2014; David, 2015), manufacturing industry (Wu & Cheng, 2016; Jaggi, Bahl, & Suri, May 2016), and financial (Bloomberg, 2016; Alliance for Financial Inclusion, 2017). In education sector, Dakar framework has been adopted by researchers in relation to gender equality (Wilson, 2003 & Subrahmaniam, 2005). Wilson (2003) emphasised on three rights in education, which are rights to education, rights within education and rights through education. On top of that, Subrahmaniam (2005) applied Dakar 'Education for All' and the "Millennium Development" in order to attain gender fairness in the educational range. Two goals that highlighted in Subrahmaniam (2005) are gender parity goals and gender equality goals. Gender parity goals measure in accomplishing equal contribution among boys and girls towards education while gender equality goals are endorsing educational equality of girls and boys. On other perspective, research performed by Wu and Cheng (2016) examined the impact of gender equality on productivity growth in manufacturing sector. They found that high female participation in small firm would increase productivity while for larger firms, low skill employees with better gender equality will improve productivity.

In Malaysia, Women's Aid Organization (WAO) and Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) have sit together with the government to draft the Gender Equality Act. The vice-president of WAO pointed out to incorporating this act in Malaysia law because women in the private sector will endure to suffer in silence due to the delay in enacting the law (The Sun Daily, March 2018).

4.0 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and the above discussion, the following conceptual framework has been developed:
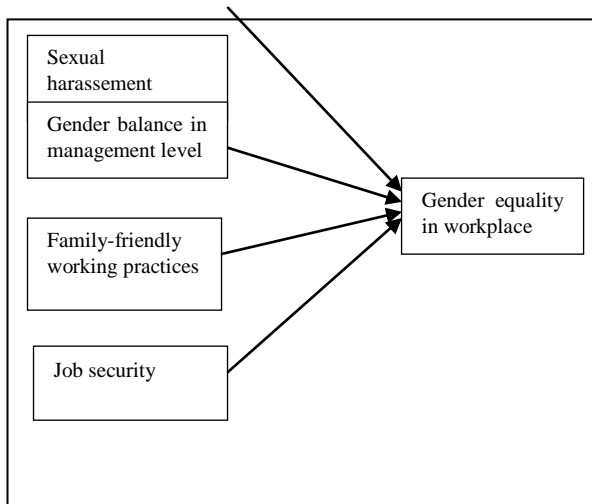
Figure 1: Conceptual model for the research

5.0 Methodology

In 2018, the statistics by International Labour Organization (2018) reported that the global participation rate for women was 48.5%. In Malaysia, the labour force participation rate was 80.1% for men while 54.7% for women. Based on the Employment Statistics Fourth Quarter 2018 released by the Department of Statistics, the services sector contributed the largest positions with 51.8% in Malaysia with filled positions of 2.5%, followed by the Manufacturing sector with 26.3%. Therefore, the target population for this study is the total number of employed women in Malaysia as to investigate the women's rights in promoting the gender equality.

According to the statistics on women empowerment in selected domains, Malaysia 2018, women participated 22.2% as legislators, senior officials and managers while men 77.8% in the same domain. For professional and technical workers, the numbers are almost equal where men participation rate was 55.3% and women participation rate was 44.7% (Department of Statistic, 2018). The occupation domain used by the Department of Statistics Malaysia is classified based on the Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) 2013. This standard categorised the occupation in 9 categories including (1) managers, (2) professionals, (3) technicians and associate professionals, (4) clerical support workers, (5) service and sales workers, (6) skilled agricultural, forestry, livestock and fishery workers, (7) craft and related trades workers, (8) plant and machine-operators and (9) assemblers and elementary occupations. Since there was a huge gap between men and women in the managers occupation domain, therefore this study intends to further investigate this category ("Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations 2013," n.d.).

The Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) 2013, classify the legislators, senior officials and managers under the major group 1 category that is, managers. The legislators are described to be involved in the government policy, laws, public rules and regulations including supporting the implementation of policies and government legislation. The examples of occupations under this sub-major include the prime minister and deputy prime minister. The senior officials on the other hand include the senior government officials, traditional chiefs and head of village and senior officials of special-interest organization. They normally involve with planning, organising, directing, controlling and evaluating the local, regional and national overall activities and give advice on the implementation of the planned activities. The occupations lie under this sub-major include among others the chief secretary of the government, attorney general, village head, president of trade union congress and president of political party. MASCO 2013 also divided the managers sub-major into different unit such as managing directors and chief executives, administrative and commercial managers, finance managers, policy and planning managers, business services managers, administrative managers, sales and marketing managers and others. Their roles are to plan, organize, direct, control and coordinate the activities in the organization.

The table 1 below shown the percentage of the employed persons based on the group 1, which is managers category in 2017 according to state.

Table 1: Employed Persons by Occupations – Managers category 2017

State	Total Occupation ('000)	Managers ('000)	Total %
Malaysia	**14,450.00**	**689.50**	**4.77**
Johor	1614.70	63.50	3.93
Kedah	904.40	31.40	3.47
Kelantan	670.00	8.70	1.30
Melaka	405.40	15.20	3.75
N.Sembilan	476.80	23.60	4.95
Pahang	689.80	16.60	2.41
Penang	822.20	46.60	5.67
Perak	1,009.30	45.00	4.46
Perlis	97.90	2.40	2.45
Selangor	3,359.50	262.20	7.80
Terengganu	435.90	12.80	2.94
Sabah	1,795.90	55.50	3.09
Sarawak	1,251.80	31.50	2.52
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur	840.90	71.70	8.53
Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan	38.20	1.70	4.45
Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya	37.20	1.10	2.96

Source: Department of Statistics (2018)

Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Sabah, Penang and Perak are the 6 highest percentage of managers in the country which represent 79% of the total managers. Therefore, this study will select the sample from these states as they represent more than 50% of the total population. It is argued that the higher the sample size, the higher representative for the entire population. The sample size for this study will be 300 as it is sufficient according Sekaran and Bougie (2013).

Table 2: Labor Force by Sex – 2017

State	Labor Force Total	Employed		Unemployed	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
	('000)	100%	100%	100%	100%
Malaysia	**14,952.60**	**59.50**	**37.14**	**2.00**	**1.36**
Johor	1,671.70	62.97	33.62	2.15	1.26
Kedah	930.80	58.83	38.33	1.75	1.09
Kelantan	694.80	58.55	37.88	2.04	1.53
Melaka	409.40	59.11	39.91	0.51	0.46
N.Sembilan	490.70	61.16	36.01	1.75	1.06
Pahang	710.50	64.08	32.99	1.59	1.32
Penang	839.40	57.95	40.02	1.20	0.86
Perak	1,048.40	59.80	36.47	2.05	1.67
Perlis	101.40	60.65	35.90	1.68	1.78
Selangor	3,457.60	55.38	41.78	1.54	1.30
Terengganu	456.40	60.93	34.57	2.85	1.62
Sabah	1,903.30	61.90	32.46	3.68	1.97
Sarawak	1,290.70	61.97	35.01	1.84	1.18
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur	868.00	58.02	38.87	1.72	1.39
Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan	41.80	61.00	30.38	5.98	2.63
Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya	37.80	44.97	53.44	0.79	0.53

Source: Department of Statistics (2018)

A quantitative and cross-sectional research will be applied in this study. Quantitative research enable the researchers to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable within a population based on proposed framework. Quantitative research is relevant in this study as it supports larger target population which in this case refers to employed women in workplace. On the other hand, cross-sectional study offers a measurement for multiple variables' interest at a single point of time and easy to conduct (Sedgwick, 2014).

Judgemental sampling technique will be adopted as there is unavailable list of employed women in workplace in Malaysia. Consistent with low women participation as legislators, senior officials and manager, the current study will approach this group as target respondents. It is expected that the women at managerial position is knowledgeable and experienced in handling the issues related to gender equality.

Data will be collected through self-administration questionnaire. It will be distributed to the target respondents by hand and social media applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Researchers contact information will be provided to enable the target respondents to enquire any further clarification on the items in the questionnaires. The questionnaires will be divided into two sections which is questions on demographic and variables. All of the variables (IVs and DV) were measured using five point Likert scale (i.e. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree) through interval scale. Likert scale is more appropriate as the research was investigating correlations-based analysis such as regression and each of the variables are measured independently.

Data will be analysed using Partial Lease Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM is a user friendly statistical tools that easy to handle. The first step will be evaluation of measurement model. Generally, this step involves testing the indictor reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The next step will be evaluation of structural model. In structural model, it involves collinearity assessment, testing the significance and relevance of path coefficient, assessment of R square and assessment of predictive power.

6.0 Conclusion

This study attempted to highlight four women's right that should be emphasized in Malaysian workplace. Based on past studies it is suggested that all the women's right discussed in current study will influence gender equality. The application of role theory strengthen the argument that women's right have an impact on gender equality. It is proposed to distribute questionnaires for data collection in this study. The target respondents will be women employees in workplace as they knows their rights better than men. The results obtained will be published in the next article.

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