Women's Networking and Career Development: A Systematic Analysis of the Literature

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Abstract

Women behave differently from men in the development of their career. Additionally, women use networking relationships for advancement of their careers. Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to analyze the different empirical views on barriers in women's networking and its impact on their career development. The literature review comprises journal articles, conference proceedings and institutional reports by multidimensional organizations on the topic of women's networking and their career development. This review article identifies five critical aspects in the literature as old boy's networks, gender stereotype for networks, women network structure, network preference and attitude on women's networking. Finally, this paper presents the deficiencies of existing literature and directions to future research.

Keywords: women, barriers of networking, top management, career development

1. Introduction

In today's business world, many women works for the top level positions. Women have further accessed similar level of education and employment opportunities as men. (ILO, 2005). Although, middle managerial level working women have different issues to climb the career ladder to the top (Elmuti, Jia, & Henry, 2009). In line with this regard, empirical research evidences have criticized the topic, why lack of women managers have not achieved the top level career positions in their career ladder. As revealed by some researchers, there are different factors are affecting to women to reach the ranks of top levels in management (Burke & Nelson, 2002; Burke & Mattis, 2005). Among those factors, networking is one of the significant factors to discuss since networking is important to improve managerial career development and affect to success of an individual (Singh et al., 2006) in the work place. As defined by some researchers (Fisher & Vilas, 1991; Roane, 1993; Kramer, 1998; Barton, 2001; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001) networking includes joining to professional associations, participating in social functions and engage in social activities. Therefore networking can be supported to generate information, resources and opportunities within and outside of the organization to female or male counterparts. Accordingly, networking improve managerial career success. (Singh et al., 2006) of the work place. As said by Lathi (2003) proper networks make women to be successful on their own and this increases their determinations. Moreover, as suggested in some research studies, networking is an important consideration for women's career growth and success (Coleman, 2008). Women leaders can make networking to associate with organizational clients as well as with other collages in their own profession or organization (Suseno et al., 2007) since networking brings range of benefits to enhance the career success. These, networking relationships provide value to performers (e.g., individuals) by letting them to top into the resources embedded in such relationships for their benefit (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001). However, it is important to investigate women's networking barriers to earn benefits from the networks in the same way as men (Perriton, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2007; Tonge, 2008) to the development of their careers.

Therefore, this study has collected and criticized the literature from year 1995 to 2015 as "A literature review for barriers in women's networking and its impact on their career development".

2. Methodological Approach of This Study

The methodological approach of this study is inspired by systematic analysis. Basically, a systematic analysis is carrying together a number of differently conducted studies, sometimes with contradictory findings, and finally

producing their results (Akobeng, 2005). As mentioned by Akobeng, a systematic reviews let researchers to take justification of the whole range of relevant conclusions from research on a specific topic, and not just the results of one or two studies (Akobeng, 2005). Also, systematic reviews improve the reliability and accuracy of conclusions. Considering above mentioned benefits, the researcher has used the systematic analysis for this paper.

In contrast, researcher considered networking, formal and informal network, network structures, gender and networking, stereotyping and career development as key words to search the literature researching on women network and career development. The literature review encompasses journal articles, conference proceedings, books and institutional reports by multidimensional organizations. Researcher examined approximately 15 journals (as mentioned below) with other sources. (*Journal of Career Development International, Journal of Economics, Business and Management, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Journal of Industrial and Commercial Training, ,Research in Organizational Behavior, International Journal of Manpower, Journal of Equal Opportunities International, Journal of Applied Psychology, Career Development International, Journal of Educational Administration, Women in Management Review, Journal of Educational Administration, The Academy of Management Review, Economics World)* from 1995 to 2015. All the journals are highly recognized journals of gender studies and management. Similarly, researcher selected the research articles based on relevancy. The purpose of this study was to compare the empirical views about barriers on women's networking and its impact on career development.

3. Result

3.1 Old boys' Networks

The old boys' network can be referred as a mindset of a shared background and history with different informal networks that were not easily associated by women (Mooney & Ryan, 2008). Moreover, networks at work are often identified with "old boys" networks' which can be formal, informal or personal, but always linked with male privilege (Coleman, 2010). Theses male dominated networks are essential to career success. Further these male dominated networks are more powerful and women naturally have difficulties in gain access to these male-dominated networks. (Pini et al., n.d). Therefore, managerial women have limited or lack of access to male dominated organizational networks with numerous disadvantages for career advancements as well as expressive benefits such as friendship and social support (Ibid, n.d).

In several ways, these male dominated networks act as constrains for women to climb the top. As revealed by Sadl (n.d.) in his study, men members of male network groups, particularly senior male counterparts, act as gatekeepers, obstructing women's career progression. Further, Gransmark (2010) revealed that these leading group are over-represented among the recruiters for top level jobs and favor to hire employees with a similar background as themselves and act as doorkeepers, reducing the possibilities for others to obtain the high-status jobs.

There are several reasons have combined with this male dominated behavior towards women's career development to the top level. Firstly, according to Ghazali et al. (2010) male managers are having their own ways in making decision where sometimes the decisions were made in the informal setting such as washroom breaks or in lifts as well. Similarly, Simmons (2011) long-established that the old boy's network establishes business relationships on golf courses, at exclusive country clubs, in the executive sky-boxes at sporting events, and in other facilities. Therefore, women find it tougher to network in male-dominated settings and, therefore, women may miss out on creating different networks that would empower them to raise their high profile (Mascia, 2015). Though, women have the capability to be great leaders, but that they are still being held back (Mascia, 2015). Finally, as suggested in, Green and Cassell (1996) in their study, women are seen as lack of leadership qualities and considered as comparatively submissive, nurturing, warm, kind and selfness. Thus, they tend to be clustered with the entry level positions (Jamali, Safieddine, & Daouk, 2007). With all these reasons, the "Old Boy's Network" can avoid women and other minority groups from being truly successful in the business world (Goodman, 2003). Recruiters for high-status jobs and prefer to hire employees with a similar background as themselves as well as act as gatekeepers, reducing the possibilities for others to obtain the high-status jobs.

3.2 Gender Stereotype

Gender stereotype leads to hinder the women's career success through networking and such perceptions on stereotypes are based on gender or sex-role stereotypes of what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior for men and women leaders (Mavin, 2009). Further, these stereotypes are associated with the social predictions and conceptual beliefs about the traits that are characteristic of and fitting for, women and men (Mavin, 2009). Therefore, societal expectations of gender suitability may highlight that women are expected to display

communal (nurturing, interpersonally sensitive) and that men are expected to show argentic (independent, assertive and ambitious) abilities and behaviors (Wood & Lindorff, 2001).

As suggested by Simmon (2011) in his study, women have had minimal legal rights and career opportunities than men over the past years and a woman's main role has always been to be a house-wife, and then to be a mother. Hence, women have been stereotyped for years as being the less knowledgeable and weaker sex (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). This gender stereotypes explicit a 'message' that the leader positions as a non-position for woman whether women's have appropriateness for a leader positions or not (Eagly & Carli's, 2007; 2008). As suggested by Mavin in his study, leadership qualities and traits are mostly associated with men, thus leaving women perceived as less adequate for leader roles (Mavin, 2009). Therefore, Chemers and Murphy (1995) have mentioned that women leaders face greater obstacles on gender stereotype.

Overall, women remain significantly lower represented in positions of power (Dee, 2013). These women carry such restrictions as stereotyping and isolation (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009)

3.3 Women's Network Structure

Network structure includes network size, composition and/or density (Moser & Wolf, 2009). With regard to network structure, some research provides evidence that men and women differ in the structure of personal networks, as well as in the rewards attained from personal networks (Stallings, 2008). In one side, in male dominating business structures, women have to make themselves known in men's networks as well to get opportunities. On the other hand, men get more possibilities to rise to leadership positions with this network ties than women. Further, if men have their own, broader networks than women, and if those men don't aware about any capable women to recommend, the opportunities will visibly go to men (Lathi, 2013). Research suggests that if women takes opportunities through networks, women may gain less network rewards, such as beneficial information or endorsement from top level managers, than men (Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; Belliveau, 2005).

Moreover, network structure is a static and comprehensive view of an individual's total network encompassing the entire population of an individual's ties (Stalling, 2008). Further, women formed their networks in the same structural context (Ibarra, 1997; Cited as Stallings, 2008). On the other wards, women expect to make relationships with other women and with other minorities exists, a phenomenon called homophily (Rogers and Kincaid, n.d). Therefore, this organizational structure influence for women's career development over the networking (Ibarra, 1997; Cited as Stallings, 2008). Therefore, as suggested by Ibarra in her study, women are often less likely than men to hold top level positions in organizations since women's ability to generate influential societal networks. Conversely, men does not face these same constraints.

While consider the network size on career development, Surngi (2014) has revealed that women have smaller network size compared to men with several reasons. For example, for women there is a decline in network size at reproduction age and with the problems of reproductive activities. (Moore, 1990). Moreover, women have obstacles for networking in the social context than men and unable to commit the extra time outside of work hours due to their parenthood commitments (Broughton & Miller, 2009). Therefore women have limited number of members to associate and have lack of opportunities to climb the top.

3.4 Network Preference

Men and women are usually, inherently distinct. Therefore, they associate with others (Stallings, 2008) in different ways. As revealed in number of former studies, women are more likely to make close ties with family members, who provide support and collaboration, as compared to men (Miller, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Surngi, 2014). Ibarra (1997, cited as Stallings, 2008) examined network preferences and found that high potential women had significantly more same-sex career and information ties than non-high potential women. Men, on the other hand, have a tendency to form more ties that provide instrumental resources than women (Ibarra, 1992; cited as Stallings, 2008). Moreover, it has been found that men expects friendships from those men who also provide access to organizational resources. Belliveau (2005) also demonstrates in his study that male instrumental ties may be more valuable than female instrumental ties because individuals receive more valuable instrumental rewards, such as access to important information (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998) in an organization.

3.5 Attitudes on Women's Networking

Gender differences in networking activities are stand up from gender-based socialization experiences. Further, theses socialization viewpoints departs from the hypothesis that men and women learn gendered attitudes and behaviors to be men and women (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Further some other studies have mentioned that if

women have been culturally socialized and adopted certain behaviors, their traits leads them to fulfill assumed roles such as dealing with domestic responsibilities, leaving the managerial positions to be occupied by men (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2000). An example, it is suggested that men are having more instrumental attitudes, whereas women hold more emotional responsive attitudes and like to release emotions more easily (Ogus et al., 1990; Bakker et al., 2002). Further, the uneven distribution of women and men in various work roles, as well as the power structure and different opportunities within an organization, shape their attitudes (Brandser, 1996).Accordingly, women are anticipated to be more sensitive to others than men , place more value on interpersonal relationships, and to seek societal support for a greater extent than does the male gender role prescribes for men (Greenglass et al., 1996).Therefore, with these attitude issues, women have less welcome from their work environments and somewhat threatened by what they perceived as self-serving dominant cultures (Oakley, 2000). Therefore, organizational structures serve to exploit and continue gender-stereotyped attitudes and uphold discrimination for women (Brandser, 1996).

4. Deficiencies of Existing Research

Through collecting and analyzing of research on women networking and career development in last 20 years, this paper consists of the following deficiencies. This findings make a platform to show the gap between networking and women's career development. Also, these finding will be guided as path to future research. Firstly, it was found, lack of fundamental theories on networking and women's career development. Secondly, most of the studies have generally identified the networking as a significant factor for women's individual development however researchers have not found the significant effect of networking on middle management women manager's career development. Further, the concept of "Old boys' Networks" is emerging concept and discuss women's networking barriers with old boys' networks but no one has recognized 'how women can deal with old boys' networks for their career success. Moreover, it is difficult to find out sufficient number of empirical evidences for cultural constraints on women's career success and current studies have not considered different cultural settings such as traditions, values, and beliefs on women's networking. Moreover, sufficient number of researchers have not identified the networking role and professional women's attitudes on career development. Finally, there is a gap between women's networking and career development to identify the precautions to empower women and strengthen the network relationships for women to reach the top management level positions.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the literature related to women's networking and their career development. It was found that there are lack of research on women's networking and career development. And few studies have acknowledged the impact of gender on networking experiences (Garcia & Carter, 2009). Also, qualitative research has dominated the in networking literature than quantitative research.

This paper mainly discussed the barriers of networking on women's career development   which are old boys' networks, size of the network, structure of the women networking, gender stereotype for women's networking, attitudes of women networking, network preferences and cultural constrains.

In conclusion, this study is an initial step to fill the research gap. Furthermore, it is vital to conduct more research on women networks and career development, to understand the women's network role in the workplace and the benefits to reach the top level.

6. Future Research

Future studies should attempt to find different cultural constrains on different cultures and contingent values of specific networking behaviors. Further, it is important to investigate the specific structures and preferences of women's networking for future contribution.

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