

The hong kong women managers

[Countries](#), [China](#)



The Hong Kong women managers face great obstacles at their workplace. The biggest among all is the attitude of male co-workers towards female manager. A little less than this, the attitude of female sub-ordinates towards female managers also come in the way of career development of Hong Kong women managers. Schein (1976) had claimed that the word 'manager' comes with the thought of a man not a woman. This means that masculine traits are the best considered traits for the role of manager.

A large number of studies have shown that a perception of women as managers is less favorable in the eyes of the residents of Hong Kong as compared to men (Chow, 1995; Ng, 1993, 1995a; Ng & Chiu, 2001; Ng & Fosh, 2004; Ng & Pine, 2003; Ng et al. , 1998). Researches have also shown that attitudes towards women as managers in Hong Kong include the need of more women as managers in Hong Kong workplace, perceptions of the qualities of women as managers are also considered whether women have the capability, commitment and temperament to be successful as a manager.

Negative attitudes of people towards women in the role of managers insist on limiting the career progress of women managers (Collinson et al. , 1990; Snizek & Neil, 1992). Women managers face great pressure at their workplace because they are in the minority (Kanter 1977). Being a manager is not an easy task for women because the post of manager and higher severs as a double-edged sword for them. Their colleagues and sub-ordinates keep keen interest and notice their good and poor performances.

Ng's (2001) study confirmed that token effect is really present in the Hong Kong workplace but the intensity of that token effect had been moderated due to realistic culture of Hong Kong and the city is not concerned with giving equal opportunities to women at their workplace. In other words, organizations in Hong Kong believe in receiving high results and therefore, the token effect does not seem very prominent. They do not consider women as a token whose success or failure should seem significant to them.

If a women manager gets success in her projects then it is the responsibility of a good human resource management practice to award that woman manager with more advanced and challenging responsibilities. There are chances of both success and failure at higher positions. A woman manager should not be blamed because of being a female for the failure of the project. The old-boy network is another factor that comes in the way of success of Hong Kong women managers. The old-boy network is also known as the men's club.

Women managers are not allowed to socialize in the old-boys clubs in Hong Kong (Westwood & Leung 1999). Ng et al. (2002) reported that many employed women in Hong Kong do not wish to be promoted to higher positions because they believe that higher positions are reserved for men and even if they get a chance to be at a higher position then they would be alone as men would not let them join their men's club. Hong Kong women managers have also reported, though seldom, that they are being sexually harassed at their workplace (Ng 1995b).

Employed women in Hong Kong have to face a glass ceiling (Morrison et al. 1987) or a 'bamboo ceiling' (Westwood & Leung 1999) if they hope that they will become manager someday. Jankowicz (2005, p. 224) mentions that methodology is the process or approach to undertake a research or study. Prior to follow a methodology, it is essential to understand the research philosophy, which according to Grinnell (1993 cited Kumar, 1999, p. 6) "research is a structured inquiry that emphasize acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and creates new knowledge that is generally applicable".

When researching it could be apply to any situation, either for professional or personal purpose. In this case, the main purpose of doing research is to develop an investigation about real situations that may increase or change the knowledge of a particular management problem (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). Therefore, the diverse research methods will be discussed in this chapter, which among other strategies it involves collection and analysis of the research data (Blaxter et al, 2001; Collis and Hussey, 2003).

The understanding of philosophical positioning of research is useful in the way that helps researchers to clarify alternative designs and methods for a particular investigation and identify which are more likely to work in practice (Ghauri et al, 1995). In this case, research philosophy is about the way the researcher perceives the development of the knowledge and the way the information can be acquire through different processes, besides it provides an ideology to carry out the research (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders et al, 2003; Bryman, 2004).

Therefore, there are two main views related to research philosophies: positivism and phenomenological, which is also known as interpretivism approach (Creswell, 1994; Denscombe, 2002; Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders et al, 2003; Jankowicz, 2005). Saunders et al. (2003) point out that the phenomenological approach proposes the discovery of subjective meanings in for example humans' behavior in order to understand and give interpretations to their actions and reactions to particular situations (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders et al. , 2003).

Nevertheless, it is important to have in mind that one is not a better philosophy than the other. The philosophy “ depends on the research question that the researcher is seeking to answer” (Saunders et al, 2003, p. 85). From the above mentioned, the research philosophy of this study is based on the development of skills and knowledge without aiming to emphasizes and seeking for the truth, but to focus on understanding of human behavior based on the descriptions and experiences of people in specific situations (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders et al. , 2003; Jankowicz, 2005).

Hence, this research will take an interpretivism philosophy, because the study is related with career barriers to Hong Kong women managers in terms of sexual harassment, work and family stress, stereotyping of genders and negative attitudes of employees towards female managers and which is based on different meanings and interpretations that individuals could have on their own experiences. In addition, Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 67) said “

it is an approach which assumes that the social world is constantly changing, and the researcher and the research itself are part of this change”.

Not only the social world is changing, but also the global business environment is and using an interpretivism approach provides flexibility to confront those changes. Whereas the positivistic approach is emphasized by seeking law-like results that can be emphasized and there is an objective truth that exist in the world and can be revealed through the scientific method, where the focus is on measuring relationships, systematically and statistically, between variables (Yin, 1994).

In order to answer the research questions, the investigation's aim is to explore how women managers in Hong Kong face the challenge of career barriers in the business environment and whether there is a bamboo ceiling these women managers face in Hong Kong hence it would lead to employ a qualitative approach to deal with the data collected. In this case, the development of this research suggests collecting valuable data from interviews of women managers in Hong Kong to be analyzed and interpreted to reach the objectives of this investigation.

According to Saunders et al (2003), a research is conducted to analyze existing theories, or to establish new theories as a result of recent findings. This will depend on whether the approach is deductive or inductive. A deductive approach is where the researcher develops a theory which will be tested, whereas an inductive approach is where the theory will be developed from the analysis of the data that is going to be collected.

The nature of this research is not to find a specific theory but an explanation of an existing situation, for example, in today's global business environment. Therefore, this research will place the inductive approach which is closely related with the interpretivism philosophy due to its characteristic of not assuming results that are inferred from general conjectures, but developing an explanation from the data collected where general conjectures are induced from specific cases (Creswell, 1994; Jankowicz, 2000; Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders et al., 2003).

The obtained data can be either quantitative or qualitative. Whereas a quantitative research is a logical and critical approach that relies on the use of statistics and numbers, a qualitative research emphasizes on understanding by exploring and giving interpretation to specific situations (Blaxter et al., 2001; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002; Berg, 2004). Dabbs (1982 cited Berg, 2004) point out that the concept of quality is essential to the nature of things and quantity is basically an amount of something.

These two approaches are mutually inclusive (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002), that is, " qualitative data may be quantified, and quantitative data qualified" (Blaxter et al., 2001, p. 199) According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002) qualitative methods are more useful and appropriate when the research is inductive, which is the case, since it can lead to explanations by going in-depth into a phenomenon.

Therefore, this investigation will undertake a qualitative data approach due to the importance of comparing and contrasting individual's opinions and experiences, in order to identify what women managers in Hong Kong think

about whether a bamboo ceiling affects their career development. As the data will be collected by the use of interviews, the findings are going to be based on meanings and interpretations of experiences given by participants (Saunders et al. , 2000).

Although qualitative data is known as time consuming and sometimes can be expensive, for businesses purpose give more realistic results at the moment of the analysis and interpretations of the data (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Owing to what have been said, the qualitative approach is the best to fit to the aim and objectives of this research, not only to investigate careers barriers for women managers in Hong Kong, but also it will help to provide information about how these women managers confront such career barriers form the obtained findings.