



International Journal of Engineering, Business and Enterprise Applications (IJEBA)

(Open Access, Double Blind Peer-reviewed, Refereed and Indexed Journal)

www.iasir.net

Women Career Opportunity in Retail Industry: A Study of Local Retail Firms in Indonesia

Yuyun Listiyawaty

Department of Human Resource Development, Post Graduate Program,
Airlangga University, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia.

Abstract: *This study examines the problems faced by female employees in a national retail company in Indonesia. Customers will easily find sales promotion girl that offers a variety of products in shopping center, but unfortunately they are not part of the company's employees. In fact retail companies recruit more male employees. The results of Interviews of employees and company management indicate that the prevailing stereotype in public custom that women are physically weaker than men is true and is acknowledged even by the female employees themselves. In addition, the conflicting role of women as workers and as housewives raises a mindset of female employees that career is not a priority and something that must be pursued. The task of taking care of the family restricts the movement of female employees in making decisions related to their career path in the future.*

Keywords: *Women, equal, opportunities, career, retail.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are still considered as secondary in the society which is often referred to "second class citizen" whom existence is not so accounted. The implications of the concept and common sense of unbalanced positioning have become a force in the segregation of the living sector into the "domestic" and "public" sectors, in which women are perceived as active in the domestic sector while men are placed in the public sector. This kind of ideology has been endorsed by social and various institutions which later became a social fact about the status and role played by women (Abdullah, 1997).

Saptari & Holzner (2016) stated that the system of values, norms, and stereotypes about women has long been seen as one of the main factors affecting women's position or relationship with men or with their environment within existing social structures. Common people and scientists believe there is a very strong view that the values or norms of women in society grew out of consensus in their own community that was brought down from generation to generation and modeled every system of ideas or values underlying the division of sexual labor has a form that is often different: in different levels of interaction (between general and individual levels), in different social arenas (at home, workplace, or at social meetings) and between one society and another.

This study focuses on the retail sector in Indonesia. The rationale for selecting this sector is its gender composition and work structure. Industrial retailers have traditionally been associated with a large number of women, employed in non-managerial hierarchies with types of jobs that do not require special skill or unskilled, low-paid, and sex-disaggregated (Broadbridge, 1997). Furthermore, women have not been well received for entry into managerial ranks in the retail industry. Therefore, the retail sector is considered to provide examples of cases concerning the problems faced by female employees in career path for further study.

II. BACKGROUND: GENDER & CAREER STEREOTYPE

Gender stereotype is one of the consequences of injustice in understanding the gender perspective itself, so that what we call the female nature is almost entirely social construction, even considered a destiny that women must accept (Tilaar 1997).

Handayani and Sugiarti (2001) provide stereotype images of men and women: social formations of women are known as gentle, beautiful, emotional, maternal beings, while men are considered strong, rational, virile and powerful. Stereotypes are a form of injustice that generally has a negative impact on women, as a result women are synonymous with work at home, opportunities for women to work outside the house are very limited. There are even women who are highly educated but do not apply their education to actualize themselves.

Saptari and Holzner (2016: 457) argue there is a segregation of labor on the basis of a very strict sex. Men generally occupy more stable types of jobs, higher wages, increased likelihood, and are categorized as skilled jobs. Women, on the other hand, generally occupy less stable types of jobs, lower wages, without the possibility of upgrading, and are categorized as unskilled. It has been commonly seen that women's wages are low because

their skills are considered low. These skills are associated with education, training, and technical skills in handling machinery and production tools.

Phillips and Taylor (1980), provide an important critique of the view that women are suitable for unskilled jobs. According to them, it has often been pointed out that with the change of work organization within the factory, often the same work can be done by workers of different types. A job gets a skilled or unskilled classification not dependent on the type of work but because of the person who filled the job and the stereotype associated with that person.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method. In this approach, the researcher makes a complex picture, examines the words, detailed reports from the respondent's point of view, and studies the natural situation. The type of qualitative research used in this study is case study. To get in-depth data, the researcher employs interview technique, observation, and documentary study which will then be analyzed into a theory. The case study will understand, examine, and then interpret the meaning derived from the phenomena studied.

The research was conducted at Happy Mart supermarket outlet (name disguised) which is a national private owned retail company in Indonesia. The selected supermarkets are located in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. Reasons the researcher did the research here is because the number of its employees is 80% male and there are no female employees who occupy managerial positions.

Interviews were conducted on 8 female employees whose working period is more than 5 years with an age range between 26-35 years old. Of these eight people, 6 of them are married and have children while the other 2 are still single. In addition, interviews were also conducted on HRD manager and Store Manager as representative of the company. Interview results obtained from employees and managers will be tested by means of triangulation to ensure validity.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview with female employees, HRD manager and Store Manager at Happy Mart Surabaya, showed that the company does not apply policies and regulations that differentiate treatment of male and female employees in regards to the promotion process in the company's career path. This is evidenced by the statement of the employees that the majority of female employees have been following the promotion process. Of the eight people interviewed, five stated that they had followed the promotion process. In addition, each employee is given equal rights to participate in the training program according to the needs of each department regardless of gender differences.

After digging deeper, the researcher found some problems faced by female employees in their career path. The first is during the recruitment period, the company prefers to recruit male employees because it is judged in terms of physical appearance: Male is physically stronger than women. The consideration in retail companies is that lower level work requires more physical strength. This causes the presence of female labor force is less than men. The view that women are incapable of doing heavy work and high risk is a common stereotype in society for a long time so that women themselves also accept that view as true.

Tabel 1. Employee Statistic in Happy Mart

	Men	Women
Staff	33	8
Team Leader	13	5
Departemen Manager	8	
Division Manager	2	
Store Manager	1	

Source : compiled by the researcher based on the company reports (2017)

The system of values, norms, and stereotypes about women has long been seen as one of the main factors affecting women's position or relationship with men or with their environment within the social structure. There is a limiting view of what women can do and what men can do. The value of this view ultimately underlies the division of sexual labor in society or in organizations (Saptari & Holzner, 2016).

According to Tilaar (1997), gender stereotypes are one of the consequences of injustice in understanding the gender perspective itself, so that what we call the female nature is almost entirely social construction, even considered a destiny to be accepted by women.

In Happy Mart female employees are recruited generally to occupy cashier positions, customer service, finance and personnel as they are judged to be more meticulous, painstaking, better in communication and customer-friendly. "Female employees are not placed in jobs that require more physical and high-risk work such as in the warehouse, technicians, sales areas and visual merchandise. The company considers that men are more suitable

and more able to occupy heavy and high-risk jobs because they are stronger than women. This company policy does not become an issue for female employees because of themselves also feel comfortable placed in the cashier, finance, and personnel. Seven female employees interviewed expressed no interest in moving to another section.

When male employees decided to resign because they find a better job offer, female employees are more loyal to the company. The second problem is faced by female employees who are married and have children. The female employees who resign is due to family reasons, namely getting married, not getting permission from the husband or because they want to focus on taking care of the child.

Sadli (2000) argues that the prevailing stereotype that women's primary duty is to educate and nurture children causes less experienced or less prepared women to compete in the public domain so that women are now more concentrated in informal sector work tailored to their limited skills.

Issues of role conflict are also found in the promotion process. The company provides equal opportunities to male and female employees to participate in the promotion process, but female employees expressed less interest in promotion. The main reason is away from the family if she passes the selection and is placed outside the city. Conflicts of role as housewives incriminate female employees to pursue careers despite the fact that in themselves there is a desire to rise to a higher career ladder.

Adiwijaya (1995) argues that role conflict affects the needs of a career, indicating that the inability to divide the time to make working women experience role conflict while the needs of a career that is marked with an adequate performance appraisal will also experience obstacles.

The same case is when companies offer female employees to attend training programs outside the city. Many female employees objected if they have to work outside the city for a long time, so the company is more likely to prioritize male employees to attend the training program. If it happens continuously, it will cause imbalance to quality, ability, and knowledge owned by male and female employees.

These issues are recognized by the company and it has been trying to find a way out. Among others, by approaching psychologically to provide motivation to female employees. In addition, the company also offers facilities for employees who are promoted out of town, among others, accommodation to visit family, rent a house if employees want to bring the family moved to a new task. Benefits in the form of compensation money for those placed outside the city are also given to employees to increase employee interest to participate in the promotion process. But the encouragement of the individual employee assisted by the support of the family felt more of a decisive success of female employees in the career path at the company.

V. CONCLUSION

The problem faced by female employees in the first retail company in Indonesia is the prevailing stereotypes in public that women are physically weaker than men. Women can not afford to do heavy work and are at high risk. In retail companies, women are mostly placed in parts that do not require much physical energy such as cashier, finance, customer service, or HRD. Due to fewer number of female workers than male, automatically the competition in pursuing a career between male and female is also unbalanced.

The second is the role as a housewife causing female workers not to put their career as top priority. Fear for promotion and having to leave the family to a new workplace causes them to choose not to take the promotion opportunities provided by the company.

Even if it is difficult, organizations that have real intentions to remedy an unequal situation for women should consider the following: First, they should adopt a better approach with employees to get feedback and input to be processed into consideration in determining policies that can improve the situation. Secondly, they must draw up a long-term agenda of a more substantial transformational change, in particular, changes in organizational culture, values and norms so as to overcome all forms of inequality. Third, they must recognize the complex, gender-strength underlying current organizational norms in the process of changing organizational culture or re-engineering of work processes.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdullah, Irawan. Sangkan Paran Gender, Pustaka pelajar, Yogyakarta. 1997.
- [2] Adiwijaya, Saputra. Pengaruh Stereotipe Gender dan Konflik Peran pada Perempuan Terhadap Kebutuhan Berkarir Karyawan Perempuan di Lingkungan Pemerintah Kabupaten Sidoarjo. Universitas Airlangga. 1995.
- [3] Broadbridge, A. The Relevance of Human Capital and Social Capital Theory in Explaining Ascension to Senior Management Roles, British Academy of Management Annual Conference, Warwick, September 13-15 2007.
- [3] SurabayaHandayani & Sugiarti. Konsep dan Teknik Penelitian Gender. Pusat Studi dan Kemasyarakatan Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang. 2001.
- [4] Tilaar, H.A.R. Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia dalam Era Globalisasi. Grasindo. Jakarta. 1997.
- [5] Sadli, Saparinah. Penghapusan Diskriminasi Terhadap Wanita, Alumnus, Bandung. 2000.
- [6] Saptari, Ratna, Holzner Brigitte. Perempuan Kerja Dan Perubahan Sosial : Sebuah Pengantar Studi Perempuan. Jakarta : Pustaka Utama Grafika. 2016.