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Research Article

Gender Discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services

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Abstract

Gender discrimination is widespread and can be easily missed as common practice or perceived as a social norm. Numerous studies have presented that woman play an integral part in an organisation and a country's growth, yet the number of women participating in the workforce is lacking and even more at leadership levels. Therefore, this research will discuss factors such as performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism that gives rise to both explicit and implicit forms of gender discrimination in the workplace experienced by women. This is quantitative research where a questionnaire is designed and distributed to an estimation of 400 women working in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services using the nonprobability convenience sampling method. The data collected will then be analysed using different measurement models and tools followed by an analysis of the data that will proof or disproof three different hypotheses, if these factors performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism influence gender discrimination.

Keywords

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Background of Study

Although this topic is much debated and researched, there is continued gender discrimination in workplace. Notwithstanding that, countries and organisations have developed gender equality programmes and policies, they achieved very limited results, leading one to question the effectiveness of such initiatives (Engeli & Mazur, 2018). The discussions surrounding human resource (HR) practices requires HR professionals to venture beyond the elements of HR policies and practices to include organisation culture and environment as well as organisational policies (Simões, Duarte, Neves, & Silva, 2019). The global gender gap between women and men participating in the workforce in 2020 stands at 58 percent and it is estimated to take another 257.3 years to close this gap with the expanding gender gap in India and China (Sander & Keller, 2021; Schwab, Crotti, Geiger, & Ratcheva, 2020). A study conducted by (Cuberes & Teignier, 2016) calculated a reduction of 47 percent of GDP if all women were excluded from participating in the workforce (Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar, Newiak, & Zeinullayev, 2015). Although 143 out of 195 countries have pledged to uphold equality between men and women, this is still a far fetch vision and gender discrimination is still widespread (Mingst & Karns, 2019). However, these laws have yet addressed gender discrimination holistically (Goldin, 2006). Despite the Global Gap Report in 2019 indicated that many countries have closed the gender gap in the last two decades, it has not translated to the narrowing of gender pay gap where in many countries, and women still receive lower pay for similar works performed by men (Gonzales et al., 2015; Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2019). Conversely, men are presupposed to take up the roles of senior leaders in organisations and hence dictating the amount of pay such roles is awarded (Lindqvist et al., 2020). Organisations are central to the country's economy. There is urgency to take proactive measures in addressing gender inequality (Tolbert & Castilla, 2017). An ethical and socially responsible framework is essential for the existence of an unbiased work environment (Duarte et al., 2019). For this reason, this study reviews performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism that influence gender discrimination and the extent to which this is evident in in Malaysia SME: Contact Centre Services sector.

Problem Statement

Women's contribution to economic growth is widely recognised. Organisations that have a well-represented women ratio in senior positions are more likely to outperform others by as much as 50 percent (Sneader & Yee, 2020). It was asserted that if these issues are addressed and gender equality achieved, it could boost the Malaysia's GDP between 7 to 12 percent (Harymawan, Nasih, Salsabilla, & Putra, 2020; Kang & Kaplan, 2019).The Malaysia's Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) recommended various policies to increase the number of women in the workforce. This includes the introduction of parental leave, tax reforms, flexible working arrangements, part-time work regulations and childcare provisions (Zhang et al., 2019). Despite these policies, the percentage of Malaysian women in the workforce still hovers at 54.6 percent and ranks lower compared to peers in the ASEAN region. Retention of women in the workforce is still a challenge underpinned by persistent issues relating to family care such as pregnancies, childcare, and other familial duties (Mohammed, Jaafar, & Wagiran, 2017). This is further affirmed where Malaysia's position dropped from 84 in 2018 to 97 in 2020 in the Global Gender Gap for the Economic Participation and Opportunity sub index (Biggioggero, Crotti, Becciolini, & Favalli, 2019; Gap, 2017). There are approximately 907,000 SME corporations in Malaysia, however only women, and majority of own 20.6 percent of SMEs and these women own less than 52 percent of the company's equity. This perhaps presents the stereotypes that influence the ventures women undertake in social enterprises perceived to be more suited to women (Cuadros Rubio, 2016). While women that are already in those position, the level of authority that is assigned to them may be lower or dissimilar to that of her male counterpart, thereby contributing to the gender gap that this paper presents in later sections of this study (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017; Mondal, Rana, & Malik, 2017). The study of gender discrimination in Malaysian SME sub-sector contact centre services in this aspect may increase the managers' understanding on the extent these stereotypical conceptions in business firms.

Research Objectives

In ensuring that this research study delivers a directed outcome, a set of research objective is established (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, & Bristow, 2015). The research objectives are important to enable the research to be conducted in a systematic manner that provides answers to a problem or to contribute to a body of knowledge (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Therefore, this research aims to investigate and identify the level of correlation between the independent variables (performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism) and the dependent variable, which is gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. There are three (3) main objective that this study is attempting to achieve where relevant research questions will be addressed in the next section.

RO 1: To determine if performance management influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.
RO 2: To determine if unequal pay influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.
RO 3: To determine if stigmatism influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.

Research Questions

A set of research questions is develop aimed to find data to fulfil the three (3) research objectives as stated in the previous section.
RQ 1: Does performance management influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services?
RQ 2: Does unequal pay influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services?
RQ 3: Does stigmatism influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services?

Scope of Study

The scope of this study is to determine the impact of performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism have on gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. With reference to (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) the recommended sample size for this research is 384. Quantitative data will be collected from female employees working in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services irrespective of their level and or nature of their employment.

Literature Review

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination are any actions whether intentional or otherwise aimed at excluding women from any activity based on their gender, race, religion and others is against the fundamental human rights and freedom of women and that women should have equal stand and access to participate in political, economic, social and any other sectors (Cedaw, 1979; Heilman, 1983; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Pantazica, Drumea, & Marghescu, 2019).

Global Perspective on Gender Discrimination

Prevention of gender discrimination is both a moral and economic concern that may lead to financial losses and innovation decline, reduces an organisation's competitiveness and limiting its sustainability (Delgado, Guerra, Padrón-Hernández, & Peña-Garcia, 2018). However, many of these policies were ineffective and serves as a smoke screen to protect the organisations interest and reputation rather than the actual practice of diversity inclusion (Scarborough, Lambouths Iii, & Holbrook, 2019). In (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, & Dolan, 2020), an additional GDP of USD$12tn can be earned if the gender gap is narrowed by 2025 through activities that encourages diversity and

inclusivity such as organisations working toward increasing the number of women in key positions. Women still encounter unequal treatment in school and work, especially so for those identified by colour, race or disability (Kim et al., 2019). For example, in India, women only account for 17 percent of India's GDP and continue to face formal barrier such as access to education and access to finance for aspiring women entrepreneurs and informal barriers from family and society stereotypes where women's only responsibility is to care for her home (World, 2018; World Economic, 2020). The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 reported that China dropped from 63rd to 106th and continue to face major hurdles or barriers and only 9.7 percent of women in China compared to the global rate average rate of 36 percent of women are leading companies in China (Kang & Kaplan, 2019; World Economic, 2020).

Malaysia Perspective on Gender Discrimination

In Malaysia, due to numerous government efforts the number of female graduates has increased to 50.4 percent from 2017 to 2018 with an estimated 80.5 percent of graduates employed (Dato'Onn). The government of Malaysia has committed to reducing the barriers to Malaysian women and placing women in the centre of social and economic activities as outlined in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). However, women remain underrepresented especially in senior positions and the political scene and barriers prevent women to climb higher towards leadership positions (Masud, Othman, Akhtar, & Rana, 2021; Senthanar, MacEachen, Premji, & Bigelow, 2020). Despite Malaysia's efforts to providing free education and a wide range of public to private higher learning institutions, there is still a mismatch between the output of a country's education system leading to inefficient distribution of human capital resource and gender imbalance in the workforce (Amran et al., 2014; Goh et al., 2017). A study conducted by the Grant Thornton International Business Report (Wierda et al., 2020) reported that there is a meagre 10 percent increase of women participation in senior positions since 2007 where only 33 percent women held senior positions in Malaysia currently (World Economic, 2020).

Factors Influence Gender Discrimination

Performance Management

Performance management is a series of activities implemented in a systematic process aimed at developing and improving individual performance and driving organisation performance at the same time. However, the exact nature of the activities varies in context depending on the organisation sector, size, structure, culture, leadership and strategy (Ashdown, 2018; Delabrouille et al., 2018). A properly defined and structured performance management system provides support for employees to understand what is expected of them and addresses the demands of their jobs and meeting the expectations commonly arrived through agreed goals between the line managers and the employees (Van Thielen, Bauwens, Audenaert, Van Waeyenberg, & Decramer, 2018). The various activities in the performance management system may add additional workload and stress to both managers and employees that may suggest unintended behaviours and biases surfacing during the process and may hinder performance improvement of individuals (Bauwens, Audenaert, & Decramer; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Mondal et al., 2017). Activities that may be included and carried out during the performance management process such as training, feedback and coaching may not have taken into account the existence of unconscious gender bias towards women rendering such activities ineffective and hindering women's progression in organisations, leaving women negatively impacted (Madsen & Andrade, 2018). A holistic view of performance management that covers a broad range of HR activities such as appraisals, feedback, incentives and strategic alignment with organisation objectives is key to performance improvement of individuals (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Malaysia still trails behind peers in the ASEAN region in terms of women participation in the workforce (Sirrs, 2019) suggesting that gender discrimination needs to be further reviewed to narrow the gender gap (Heng et al., 2020). A recent research conducted by (Momsen, 2019) titled 'Voices of Malaysian Women On Discrimination & Harassment in the Workplace' survey, noted that 56 percent of Malaysian women indicated that they experienced some form of gender discrimination at workplace from comments regarding their marital status or being passed on for promotion or training opportunities for similar reasons (Duarte et al., 2019).

Unequal Pay

Unequal pay is the pay gap between women and men for the same amount and similar nature of work (Azcona et al., 2020). However, women in the EU continue to receive lower pay compared to men (Sivaprasad et al., 2017). (Keeter, Hatley, Kennedy, & Lau, 2017) presented data that women are earning only 82 percent of what men earn on average both part-time and full-time jobs (Graf et al., 2019). In the U.S. alone, gender wage gap is the biggest issue where in 2018 a full-time working woman earns 81.6 cents for every dollar that a man earns on average (P. Anderson et al., 2019) and that the wage gap increase as the age of working women and men increases (Blau & Kahn, 2017). While in the UK, other than education, work experience, industry and range of job characteristics, the number of years of work and hours also contributed to the gender pay gap experienced by women especially those that take work breaks for childbearing or family duties (Costa Dias, Joyce, & Parodi, 2018). Women in China account for the highest female population globally. However, 49 percent of women in China experienced job insecurity, while another 53 percent worry about salary deduction after their maternity break (Mojsoska-Blazevski & Petreski, 2015; Sorells, 2018) The (Dato'Onn, 2019) reported that the average monthly salary have increased for both gender from 2018 to 2019. However, there is still a disparity of 0.9 percent and that the annual increments for women continue to be lower than that for men (Abdou, Nasser, Nasr, & Shalaby, 2019). Women are usually placed in lower paying jobs hence the reason for the gender pay gap (Chin & Goh, 2017).

Stigmatism

Stigmatism or stigma for short is an unfair negative belief on a particular society or group of people (Merriam-Webster). In workplace, this refers to the nature or characteristics of a job that is perceived to be gender specific for example work related to education is primarily seen as suitable for women, while jobs in the defence sector that is more militarised is for men (Drumea, 2018). Goffman (1963) explained the existence of a virtual social identity versus the actual social identity wherein an attribute that makes an individual different from another leads to reclassifying the image of that person in the society and because it is seen as being different it becomes the object of stigma or a having a negative connotation. Workplace inclusion is desired and understanding the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination is essential to comprehend the nature of stigmatisation (Jacobs, Meeussen and Sterk et. al., 2019). An example in the scientific field where men are generally perceived as highly agentic while women are highly communal (Alawa et al., 2016; Clark, Hoover and Habashi et. al., 2016). Gender stereotyping is a common global obstacle for women's access and career development. It retards recruitment, training to promotion opportunities and employee retention (Eagly and Koening, 2014). These stereotypes put women in predefined roles leading women to opt for jobs deemed 'suitable' for them (Batra and Reio, 2016; Caleo and Heilman, 2018). There are more elusive and indirect gender biasness that does or does not intentionally exclude or directly bring harm but causing women failing to reach their fullest potential such as taking on less important responsibilities or reduced hours of work to achieve work-family-life balance (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb, 2018; McKinsey Global Institute, 2018). There is also the social perception that women have to trade-off their careers for marriage or family leading to women viewing leadership positions or additional job or task as less favourable simply because men prefer their female partners to be less ambitious (Bursztyn, Fujiwara and Pallais, 2017; McKinsey Global Institute, 2018 see also McKinsey 2015). Malaysia embarked its strategy to include more women in the workforce since 1991 but continued to face challenges such as the competing responsibilities of family and career that restricts their mobility and participation in workforce (Baqutayan, Mohsin, Mahdzir, & Ariffin, 2018). Women's Aid Organisation (2020) reported that 47 percent of women who stated their plans to start a family were excluded from promotions (Kang and Kaplan, 2019).

Linkage between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Global contribution from women and men in transforming the economy and society is more critical than ever. While developing nations have to some extent closed the gender gap, female labour force participation as reported by World Bank (2020) only stands at 46.91 percent that means that more than half of the global female population is unemployed. This is where it is

important to change the behaviours of societies in breaking the mind-sets of social categorisation (Ozturk and Tatli, 2016; Castilla and Tolbert, 2016; Kang and Kaplan, 2019). Many researchers both global and local have discussed gender discrimination in the areas of recruitment, unequal pay and stigmatism. However, literatures on gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services is scarce and few. There is also insufficient data or a gap in data that is centred on gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services considering that in the last few years, it has been highlighted that there are too few Malaysian women in leadership positions (Maaroff et al., 2019). This is unfavourable when women are segmented into predefined professions and positions (Caleo and Heilman, 2018). Social and cultural barriers hinder women from participating in the workforce that is vital for the progress and development of a nation (Batra & Reio Jr, 2016). Through the literatures have been reviewed, there is a lack of literature that focuses on gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. Current literatures are broad and general in nature covering issues such as recruitment or career progression hence, this research focuses on performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.

Fundamental Theory

Social Role Theory

The stereotype on gender roles is historical and archaic (Martinez-Levy et al., 2017). The social role theory perceives that men are more dominant and powerful (Bosak, Eagly and Steinmetz el. al., 2014; Eagly and Koening, 2014; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2019). This explains the characterisation of men and women grounded upon gender beliefs and social expectations (Jacobs et.al, 2019; Bosak et.al., 2014) transcribed into organisational job functions limiting the roles that women can undertake in an organisation.

Conceptual Framework

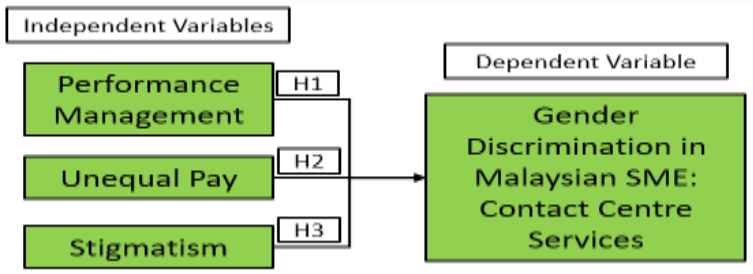

Figure 1: Conceptual theory for Gender Discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services

The Hypotheses are:

H1. Performance management influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.
H2. Unequal pay influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.
H3. Stigmatism influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A research design is the blueprint that outlines the collection methods, measurements and analysis of data to answer research questions. This is a descriptive to examine the correlation between variables and its significance towards each other (Bougie and Sekaran, 2016).

Sampling Design

To determine the sample size, it starts with the target population defined in terms of elements, geographical boundaries and time, followed by drawing a sampling frame where members of the general population will fall into the circle that meets the criteria of the target population (Bougie and Sekaran, 2016; Anderson et al., 2014; Lohr, 2019).

Sampling Plan

As defined by Babin et. al (2019) sampling can be categorised as the probability and non-probability sampling (Lewis et al., 2019; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020), female labour force participate rate stood at 55.2 percent or about 6.18 million females at the end of the third quarter of 2020. Malaysia's labour force participation employed full or part-time and has seen an increase in female participation since 1982, however the growth has been stagnant since 2015 (World Bank, 2016).

Sample Size

To determine the appropriate sample size, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table is used as reference and hence the minimum sample size for this study would be 384 samples. Therefore, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed through various communication mediums reaching to a large group of respondents so to increase the chances of collecting sufficient data for analysis. Questionnaires were distributed using nonprobability convenience sampling method after considering the limitations of this research, which is time and money (Krosnick, 2017).

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is used to understand the underlying structures and factors for those research questions that a research addresses (Anderson et al., 2014). Factor analysis offers a technique to identify if the selected variables included in the questionnaire of this study does not meet the criteria, it must be removed and replaced with another item before a full data collection can be conducted (Cooper and Schindler, 2018). The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartletts') is a factor analysis tool used for this study. This is available in the IBM SPSS Factor application to test the sensitivity level of factors in the hypothesis and reliability of the factor to be included in the study (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The Bartlett's test specifies the analysis must achieve a value of more than 0.6, if not more data needs to be collected or the sample size is inadequate for factor analysis. However, a value range of between 0.5 and 0.6 is acceptable during the pilot test because a small data set of 10% is only used for the pilot test that is small compared to the actual sample size (Cooper and Schindler, 2018). However, the factor loading value should be more than 0.6 in the full data collection.

Reliability Test

The reliability test measures the internal consistency, stability of measurement and potential measurement error of the variables presented. Tests such as the Cronbach's alpha model assesses the consistency of the scale where the higher the value the higher the reliability of the items (Babin et al., 2014). This measure states an acceptable upper limit of 0.7; however, a range of between 0.6 and 0.7 is acceptable for the pilot test.

Preliminary Analysis

In the preliminary analysis, the Bartlett's test is interpreted based on those 'measures of sample adequacy' (MSA) that identify the degree to which variables are related. A rule of thumb is that the value must be 0.6 for the study to proceed. However, acceptable value is different during the pilot test that is a value of between 0.5 and 0.6 (Babin et.al, 2016). Additionally, the Eigenvalue (EV) is used to indicate the total variance of variables covered by the factors where the score should be more than 1 but not more than the value of the number of independent variables.

Hypotheses Testing

This study utilises multiple regression analysis, regression ANOVA and beta coefficient to determine the correlation between the dependent variable and independent variable.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The calculation of multiple regression analysis is conducted in the IBM SPSS and is represented as the square of multiple r, R-square or R^2 as 0-100% that determines the strength of the relationship between your model and dependent variable. The coefficient of determination of the R^2 values where if the R^2 is closer to 1.0 then there is statistical significance between the variables presented in this research. However, if the value is more than 0.5 the conceptual framework does not fit the model, which is not a major issue as it only means that the independent variables does not fit as the construct or influence the dependent variable. It may also mean that there could be other independent variables that may have a stronger influencing power on the dependent variable, which has not been considered in this study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Anderson et. al, 2018).

One-way ANOVA

This test also identifies if there is an existence of a statistically significant relationship represented by the p-value where if the p-value is less than 0.05 than the researcher is 95% confident that the analysis of variance between independent variables and independent variables to dependent variable is able to provide a statistically significant relationship(P. Anderson et al., 2019).

Beta Coefficient

Beta coefficient or standardised regression coefficients is the result of the estimates from multiple regression analysis that has been performed on variables to allow the researcher to easily make comparisons of all measurements that was conducted and present in different units of measurements (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The beta coefficient is represented as a t-value where if the beta coefficient value is nearer to 1 the higher the influence of the independent variables towards the phenomenon understudy or the dependent variable.

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity test examines the level of skewness in the data. The lower the value of data the lower the chance of skewness and is detected by the tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). If the tolerance value is less than 0.2 and the VIF value is more than 10 then the data is said to have a severe multicollinearity issue and a very high inter-construct correlation that can lead to a very skewed error and a Type 1 error. Type 1 error means that the alternative hypotheses is accepted and not the null hypotheses but because of the multicollinearity you should have accepted the null hypotheses. However, if the data is less than 10 but more than 5 then according to Babin et all (2018) even though the skewness is not extensive it is already happening so the potentiality of inter-construct and Type 1 error may happen.

Findings and Analysis

Pilot Test

The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp messaging application to females that do not need to be statistically selected, that is female employees in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Service to collect a sample of 40 responses, which is 10% of the total sample size that is to be collected during the preliminary test (Dalati, 2018; Malmqvist, Hellberg, Möllås, Rose, & Shevlin, 2019).

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a technique used to determine the suitability of the items in the questionnaire and if they should be removed or replaced with another item before conducting a full data collection (Dalati, 2018). This test conducted in IBM SPSS is commonly known as the principal component analysis includes the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett's), Factor loading and Eigenvalue.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

According to (Medders, Babin, & Paesani, 2014), the rule of thumb of the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is that the significant value should be less than 0.05 to indicate that there are sufficient correlations among the variables to proceed. The results of the pilot test for the dependent variable gender discrimination where the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) is above the rule of thumb of more than 0.05 at 0.607; and the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant level is well below the rule of thumb at 0.001 indicating that a high level of significance among the items in the questionnaire. The results of the pilot test for the independent variables in this research that is performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism where the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) is above the rule of thumb at 0.774; and the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant level is well below the rule of thumb at 0.001 indicating that a high level of significance among the items in the questionnaire.

Factor Loading

Factor loading is represented as communalities in the IBM SPSS principal component analysis report where the rule of thumb should be greater than 0.6 (Anderson et. al., 2014). **Table 3** shows the factor loading values for all items in the questionnaire where all items have met the rule of thumb of greater than 0.6. **Table 1**: Factor loading for all items in this research

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Have experienced gender discrimination	1.000	0.778
Jobs assigned irrespective of gender	1.000	0.616
Treated with respect	1.000	0.816
My gender influences my profession.	1.000	0.941
Performance management is a continuous exercise	1.000	0.763
Feedback is thoroughlydiscussed.	1.000	0.827
Supervisor displays consistent PM practices	1.000	0.879
Measured equally	1.000	0.849
There are salary gaps among the same level	1.000	0.825
I have been denied a salary increase	1.000	0.614
I am paid less for doing thesame job as men.	1.000	0.771
I am satisfied with my current salary.	1.000	0.815
Jobs and tasks assigned based on gender.	1.000	0.870
I was not assigned an important task	1.000	0.762
I was passed on for a promotion	1.000	0.776
Men have better managerial knowledge and skills	1.000	0.757

Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha test is used to measure the internal consistency, stability of measurement and potential measurements errors that the variables may present with a rule of thumb of between 0.6 and 0.7 for the pilot test (Medders et al., 2014). The results of the Cronbach's alpha based on standardised Items for Gender Discrimination (DV), Performance Management (IV), Unequal Pay (IV) and Stigmatism (IV) where values are between 0.6 and 0.7 or above. However, the Cronbach's Alpha in granular acceptable range levels where is the value is above 0.7 is considered to be in the ranges of acceptable, satisfactory, sufficient, fairly high, high or strong indicating a high reliability of the factors for the research (Taber, 2018). Based on the results of the pilot test using Factor Analysis and Reliability test, the questionnaire is reliable, and those results obtained is consistent and therefore, the full data collected, or the preliminary test may

commence.

Profile of Respondents

A total of 400 responses was collected where all 400 are females which follows the segment design, that is to collect data from females working in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. More than 50% of respondents fall below the age of 40 years with the age group of 21 to 30 years being the largest respondents at 41%. Majority of the respondents at 54% are single, followed by 43% that are married.

Preliminary Test

In this section Factor Analysis and Reliability test is conducted after the completion of the full data collection from 400 respondents to provide indication if the samples are enough and that it is viable to proceed with the research (Blischke, Karim, & Murthy, 2011).

Factor Analysis: Gender Discrimination

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test results with a KMO value of 0.618 and a significant value of < 0.001 indicating that the sample is adequate and that there is significant level of relationship between the items. The factor loading rule of thumb prescribed by (J. A. Anderson, 2014) is a value of greater than 0.6. However, as factor loading represents the significance of relationship of factors, the value is indicative of how significant or insignificant a factor is to the variable that may not affect the results of the hypotheses testing and the researcher may decide on the minimum acceptable factor loading which is commonly 0.3 or greater (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Factor loading values in **Table 2** indicate the level of association of items with the dependent variable gender discrimination where the highest correlations is that jobs are assigned irrespective of gender in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Service at 0.881 and the lowest is where women are treated with respect at 0.591.

Table 2:
Factor loading for items in Gender Discrimination

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Have experienced gender discrimination	1.000	0.687
Jobs assigned irrespective of gender	1.000	0.881
Treated with respect	1.000	0.591
My gender influences my profession.	1.000	0.651

The results of Eigenvalue for the dependent variable Gender Discrimination with a value of more than 1.0 indicating that the amount of variation of a variance is valid as it meets the rule of thumb of greater than 1.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Factor Analysis: Performance Management, Unequal Pay, Stigmatism

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test results with a KMO value of 0.763 for the independent variables of Performance Management, Unequal Pay and Stigmatism and a significant value of < 0.001 indicating that the sample is adequate and that there is significant level of relationship between the items. Described by (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2012) factor loading serves to present the significance of relationship of factors, the value is indicative of how significant or not a factor is to the variable, therefore **Table 3** shows the level of association of items with the independent variables. The items with the highest correlation in the independent variables is 'I was not assigned

an important task because of my gender' at 0.771, while the lowest is 'I am satisfied with my current salary' at 0.256.

Table 3:
Factor loading for items in Independent Variables

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Performance management is a continuous exercise	1.000	0.398
Feedback is thoroughlydiscussed.	1.000	0.602
Supervisor displays consistent PM practices	1.000	0.728
Measured equally	1.000	0.551
There are salary gaps among the same level	1.000	0.671
I have been denied a salary increase	1.000	0.663
I am paid less for doing thesame job as men.	1.000	0.612
I am satisfied with my current salary.	1.000	0.256
Jobs and tasks assigned based on gender.	1.000	0.619
I was not assigned an important task	1.000	0.771
I was passed on for a promotion	1.000	0.712
Men have better managerial knowledge and skills	1.000	0.513

Table 3 shows the results of Eigenvalue for the dependent variable Gender Discrimination with a value of more than 1.0 indicating that the amount of variation of a variance is valid as it meets the rule of thumb of greater than 1.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha test results based on standardised Items for Gender Discrimination (DV), Performance Management (IV), Unequal Pay (IV) and Stigmatism (IV) that includes all items shows that only the values for Performance Management (0.710) and Stigmatism. They (0.822) fall within the rule of thumb, where the value should be between 0.7 and 0.9 that may suggest that there are items that have a low correlation with the variables and proceeding to hypotheses testing may not answer the questions in this research (J. A. Anderson, 2014). Taber (2018) argues that relying on Cronbach's Alpha may not necessarily be appropriate as there is limited evidence to claim that a value within a range will provide valuable results in the hypotheses testing and have presented the range of Cronbach's Alpha values indicating their correlation levels.

Hypotheses Analysis

Table 4 list three hypotheses test that is identified to investigate the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables using Multiple Linear Regression analysis.

Table 4:
Hypotheses test for this research

Item	Hypotheses
H1	Performance management influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services
H2	Unequal pay influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services
H3	Stigmatism influence gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services

Multiple Regression

The coefficient of determination presented as R^2 measures the proportion of variance of the dependent variables that is explained by the independent variables, a value between 0 and 1, where the close the value to 1, the greater the independent variable influences the dependent variable and therefore a better predictor of the dependent variable (Anderson et al., 2014). **Table 5** shows the results of R^2 between the dependent variable gender discrimination and independent variables of performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism where R^2 = 0.012 which

denotes that only 1.2% of variance of gender discrimination is explained by the independent variables of performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism.

Table 5:
Multiple Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Aquare	Std. Error of the Estimate
.110[a]	0.012	0.005	0.77739

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV3: Stigmatism, IV1: Perfromance Management, IV2: Unequal Pay

ANOVA or the analysis of variance which is the F ratio compares the means of the different groups or variables where is there is a large than expected variance then the null hypotheses can be rejected (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In addition to the F ratio, the statistical significance, or p-value aids to determine the statistical significance of the model where the p-value should be less than 0.05 (Anderson et al., 2014). The p-value (Sig.) = 0.182 and F = 1.629 that indicates the test predicting variables in this research is statistically insignificant and that the researcher should accept the null hypotheses.

Beta Coefficient

As the R, F ratio and p-value above seem to indicate that the researcher accepts the null hypotheses, the beta coefficient and their significance is reviewed to see if the researcher is to reject all null hypotheses in this research or there are some variables that have some statistical significance. The standardised coefficients beta shows that all independent variables have a negative beta that implies that the independent variables are in a good situation that does not significantly influence gender discrimination (SAGE Publications, 2017). However, the independent variable of stigmatism have a p-value = 0.045 which is lower than the rule of thumb of 0.05 that indicates that the researcher should accept H3 but reject H1 and H2 hypotheses test.

Based on the findings, following equation can be formulated, where
$y = 3.121 + -0.110 X3 + \varepsilon$
y = Gender Discrimination (Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services)
X1 = Performance Management
X2 = Unequal Pay
X3 = Stigmatism
ε = Error

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity is a problem that occurs when two or more of the variables are too highly correlated with each other (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Multicollinearity is represented as the tolerance value and variance inflation factor, where multicollinearity is a problem is the tolerance value is less than 0.2 and a variance inflation factor (VIF) more than 10 (J. A. Anderson, 2014). It shows the tolerance level of all independent variables to be more than 0.2 and the VIF values is less than 10, which means that variables not too highly correlated with each other.

Summary of Findings

The pilot test was conducted to examine the factor analysis and reliability test using responses from 40 sets of data where the results met the requirement or rule of thumb to proceed to the nest stage, which is the preliminary test. At the preliminary test stage, a total of 400 data set was collected and the profile of the respondents is analysed. Preliminary test, that is factor analysis and reliability test is conducted to determine if the data meets the requirements to proceed to hypotheses testing. In the hypotheses testing, one (1) hypotheses testing is accepted which is stigmatism indicated having a significant relationship to gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: contact centre services. This paper is based on data analysis and hypotheses testing conducted using IBM SPSS software version 22.0. The results indicated that among the independent variables of performance management, unequal pay and stigmatism; it is stigmatism that had the most

significant relationship with gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. On the other hand, performance management and unequal pay has a negative and no significant relationship with gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: Contact Centre Services. The following chapter will present the key findings, discussion, contributions and recommendations for this research.

Conclusion

Gender discrimination continues to be the topic of discussion at all levels of the organisation and country with drivers such as the United Nations to Women's not-for-profit organisations. However, mainstreaming or placing gender equality front, right and centre in every society, organisation and country have been an uphill battle with only a small percentage of improvement to the global gender gap. While the global gender gap has improved in areas such as secondary education, there is still a large human capital gap that needs to be filled at the higher learning institutions. Human resource professionals are an important 'actor' in an organisation playing the supporting role to shape the workplace environment that is conducive to bring about positive change towards an equitable gender representation in the workplace (Duarte et al., 2019). Supporting the efforts of HR professionals are the senior management, the main cast in the play as change leaders and drivers of organisation culture changes. Based on the findings of this research in the Malaysia SME: contact centre services, it is found that performance management have a negative relation towards gender discrimination and does not significantly influence gender discrimination indicating that a structured and organised performance management strategy, plan and management can eliminate the presence of gender discrimination where the performance of an employee is focused on the outcome and not on the individual (Dickens, 1998; Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Although this research has indicated that performance management does not have a significant influence towards gender discrimination in Malaysian SME: contact centre cervices, this research found that gender stigmatism continues to have an influence towards gender discrimination. A research conducted by (Ameen, Azizan, Yusup, Ramli, & Yasir, 2017) showed that women are persistent and deliver better results in male dominated subject areas such as technology and engineering in universities. This presents the complex nature of gender discrimination in the workplace where on the one hand performance management may be viewed as a factor to reducing or eliminating gender discrimination; however, on the other hand gender stigma continues to influence gender discrimination in the workplace. In summary, as stigmatism continues to influence gender discrimination in the workplace; performance management may have addressed gender discrimination. However, both influencing factors point to key actors in an organisation that is HR professionals and senior management that requires both to be highly involved in managing the organisation's culture and becoming models of a fair and equal gender representation.

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