

JAMIYAT VA HUQUQ



SPONSORSHIP EFFECT FOR WOMEN LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS' ADVANCEMENT

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KALIT SO'ZLAR

Homiylik, ayol rahbar, homiylik ta'siri, gender tengligi, tashkiliy yordam, yetakchilik to'siqlari, mentorlik, muvaffaqiyat yo'li, ayollar muhofazasi.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Спонсорство, женщина-лидер, эффект спонсорства, гендерное равенство, организационная поддержка, препятствия для лидерства, менторство, карьерный рост, защита интересов женщин.

KEY WORDS

Sponsorship, women leader, sponsorship effect, gender equity, organizational support, leadership barriers, mentorship, career trajectory, female advocacy.

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu tadqiqotda muallif homiylik ayol rahbarlarga qanday foyda keltirishi haqida mulohaza yuritadi. Tadqiqot Malayziyaning xususiy, davlat va hukumat bilan bog'liq sektorlaridagi ayol rahbarlar va tadbirkorlarning hayotiy tajribasini o'rganuvchi kengroq tadqiqotning bir qismidir. Xulosalar asosida ayol ishtirokchilarning martabasi o'sishiga yordam beradigan homiylik ta'sirining to'rtta toifasini aniqladi, ya'ni: (I) nomzodni ko'rsatish orqali homiylik; (II) taqdimot va tavsiyalar berish orqali homiylik; (III) tan olish orqali homiylik; va (IV) g'amxo'rlik orqali homiylik. Shuningdek, yuqori salohiyatga ega ayollar haqiqatan ham kuchli qo'llab-quvvatlanishi kerakligi tasdiqlandi; ayollarni ilhomlantirish, ularni targ'ib qilish va yetakchi bosqichlarga chiqazish uchun ularni kuchli himoyalash zarurligi ko'rsatildi.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данном исследовании автор показывает, каким образом спонсорство может принести пользу женщинам-лидерам. Исследование является частью более масштабного исследования, посвященного жизненному опыту женщин-лидеров и предпринимателей в частном, государственном и связанном с правительством секторах Малайзии. Основные выводы выявили четыре категории эффектов спонсорства, которые помогли участницам-женщинам-лидерам в их карьерном росте, а именно: (I) спонсорство через выдвижение кандидатур; (II) спонсорство через представление и вводный инструктаж; (III) спонсорство через признание; и (IV) спонсорство через заботу. Полученные результаты также подтверждают, что женщины с высоким потенциалом действительно нуждаются в сильной поддержке, а защита женщин необходима для их вдохновения, продвижения и защиты при восхождении на руководящую ступень.

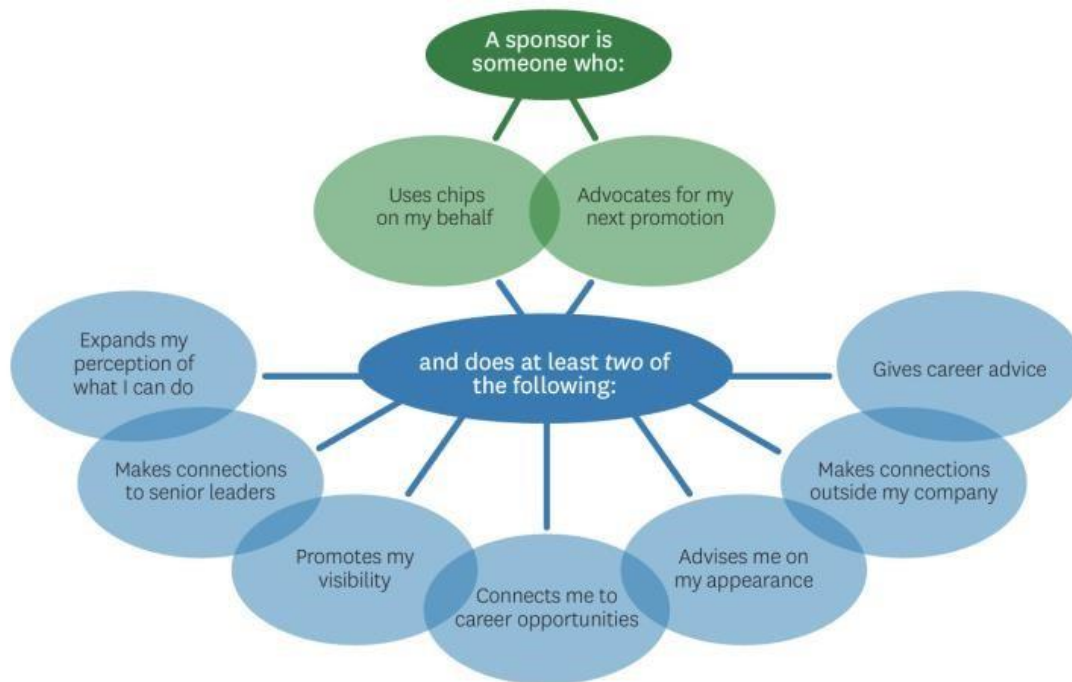
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine how sponsorship effect may benefit women leaders. The study is part of a larger inquiry which delves into the lived experiences of women leaders and entrepreneurs in Malaysia's private, public and government-linked sectors. The key findings revealed four categories of sponsorship effects which have helped the women-leader participants in their career advancement, namely: (I) sponsorship via nomination; (II) sponsorship via introduction and induction; (III) sponsorship via recognition; and (IV) sponsorship via nurturing. The findings also affirm that high-potential women really need the powerful backing and female advocacy necessary to inspire, propel, and protect them through when ascending the management rung.

Introduction. In the corporate world, women's road to the top is different from the men's. Women face greater scrutiny compared men, must manage a minefield of unspoken judgments related to their professional and personal lives, scale higher bars and play different goal posts. In their adult life, women are also subjected to the myriad of paradoxes, for instance, married women with children would be seen as less available for challenging assignments, thus less flexible and potentially less dedicated to work; yet unmarried woman and/or without children is viewed as not conforming to the societal norm, and more likely to be considered as threatening, to be avoided, and seen as "not quite leadership material" [8]. These phenomena lead to the lack of the structural support and network required for women's career advancements. Often, high-potential women who stand out will experience serious setback in support, such as sponsorship shortfall among influential persons who could have offer professional and heavy lifting to women. Thus, making the proverbial glass-ceiling more entrenched than ever, and glass-cliffs more slippery than ever.

Literature Review. The Concept of a Sponsor.

What exactly is a sponsor and how do sponsors differ from mentors? While a leader can be both a mentor and a sponsor, the roles are distinct. According to Ibarra (2019), a classic mentoring



relationship, one in which the mentor provides personal advice and support privately to a mentee and, on the other hand, a classic sponsorship relationship is one in which the sponsor advocates for an individual risking own reputation. In contrast with mentors, sponsors stick their neck out by putting their name next to sponsee's performance, making their support highly visible to everyone. Hewlett et al. [8] noted that the driving force in a mentorship lies with the mentee, whereas in sponsorship, it is the sponsor who directs and fuels the relationship, refer **Figure 1**. They observed that a sponsor not only believe in the sponsee; a sponsor believes in the sponsee more than the sponsee believes herself, but also take calculated risks on the sponsee.

Figure 2.1: Sponsor (Source: Hewlett et al., 2010)

A Lack of Sponsorship Is Keeping Women from Advancing into Leadership

In discussing why men get more promotions than women, Ibarra, Carter and Silva [10] boldly explained that compared to men, they are over-mentored, under-sponsored, and that high-potential

females need more than just well-meaning mentors. Without proper sponsorship, women lack the important advocacy or the backing of superiors for promotion opportunities in the corporate world (Ibarra et al., 2010), in academic [11] and even in healthcare [2, 13]. Thus, not having a sponsor for a high-potential woman means that she lacks someone who could advocate for her, open doors and make a case for her advancement.

Women often do not advance past midlevel positions to executive positions as compared to men because sponsorship arrangement or relationships come more naturally to men [7]. Researchers highlight that women are known to abstain from asking for help [12, 14] and therefore miss out on having advocates that can do a lot especially in accessing higher-level audience. The helping hands of the powerful individuals can, over time, evolve to full sponsorship which Hewlett et al. [8] described to exist in ascending commitment such as: a Strategizer, in which an executive shares their 'insider knowledge' about how to advance in the organization; a Connector, in which an executive makes introductions to influential people in their network; and an Opportunity giver, in which an executive gives his or her protégé a high visibility project or promotion.

The Impact of Sponsorship. As discussed above, surprisingly research also show that both men and women tend to undervalue or fail to create a network of sponsors. However, compared to women, men at top position are 46% more likely to have a sponsor or sponsors. Ibarra et al. [10] found that men tend to have several sponsors throughout their careers. In addition, their focus group findings revealed that there is a profound difference in the way men and women perceive, cultivate, and capitalize on business relationships. Men pursue business relationships while women tend to not pursue them.

The profound impact of sponsorship lies in sponsors' power of advocacy in helping the sponsee stepping up the corporate ladder or looking out for potential disasters and helping the sponsee to sidestep potential disaster. Women who have sponsors claimed to have benefitted from the support extended by their sponsors [1]. In some studies, these phenomena are described as having "the voice in the room", "a powerful booster" and someone "to thank" for being there for those women when "the floor drops away." or when they are "blindsided" [8, 12].

In Canada, Woodwark, Wood and Schnarr [15] conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with women founders of technology firms and leaders of formal networks, and they found that the positive impact of women only networks (WON) for founders including increasing entrepreneurial diversity, access to financing, and founder credibility and sponsorship. The authors show how women founders use mixed gender and WON to build their businesses and conclude that membership in WON can be a vital step.

Capitalize on Seizing the Sponsorship. The impact of having sponsors in women's careers are clearly very beneficial and therefore it is crucial to foster sponsor-sponsee relationship for high-potential women. However, it takes two to tango. While it is good, sponsorship is voluntary and cannot be forced by either party. On this understanding, the relationship with potential sponsors must be established. Studies show that women acknowledge that they still must earn the respect and trust of potential sponsor (s).

To capitalize on the positive effect of sponsorship on women, the fairer sex is recommended to avail themselves of every advantage and every option to get to the top of management hierarchy. While men still rely on the culturally entrenched old-boy networks, women need extra helping hand from the organization to harness the power of sponsorship so that they can leverage upon it to establish enduring bonds and negotiating positive results [8, 1]. Seizing it is, in part, a matter of high-potential women learning how to ask the organization for more dedicated support because with

that support, they will ask for more challenging assignments, greater recognition, higher compensation, and more leadership opportunities.

Research Method. This study is part of the larger inquiry into Malaysian women's strategic leadership and competence acquisition. Underpinning the process of inquiry is the interpretive paradigm which investigates the constituted meaning of the lived experience of the individuals involved. To complement the interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach and research design were used.

Data collection using semi structured interview.

Data was collected through semi structured in-depth interview with participants who are women occupying senior leadership position in Malaysia's private, public and government-linked sectors. The participants were interviewed during face-to-face sessions in mutually agreed locations, time and dates with durations varying between one to one and a half hours long. The interviews were recorded, and field notes were taken to capture the participants' verbal and non-verbal communication.

Data Analysis using GT Approach

Data analysis was conducted in two steps, firstly the within-case analysis and followed by cross-case analysis. In the first step, each women leader's narrative text was analyzed using grounded theory, GT approach on coding for the purpose of understanding each belief conveyed in every in-depth interview. In the second step, Yin's (2009) case-comparison approach was followed to perform conduct cross-case analysis. Based on GT approach, three levels of coding were performed during the data analysis process, namely the open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The development of a grounded theory based on comparative method is influenced by the Straussian school of thoughts and following Corbin and Strauss [6] and Corbin (2021), two complementary types of comparison making were used, namely constant comparisons of incidents and theoretical comparisons of properties and dimensions.

Results and Discussion. The qualitative inquiry into women leaders' strategic leadership and competence acquisition reveals the benefit as well as the importance of sponsorship effects for high-potential women's career advancement. The findings revealed that sponsorship happened via nomination, introduction and induction, recognition and nurture.

Table 4.1 Broad themes, key themes, theme frequency and keywords

Broad theme	Key themes
Sponsorship effects	Sponsorship via nomination
	Sponsorship via introduction and induction
	Sponsorship via recognition
	Sponsorship via nurturing

Source: Participants' Interview Transcript (Researcher's Data)

Sponsorship effect for high-potential women. Women leaders highlighted the critical source of support that had helped leveraging their careers, especially the support of influential individuals via sponsorship effects as follow: *Sponsorship via nomination*.

"I was nominated by my Deputy Director to attend the lab and subsequently nominated by the members to be the group leader for the social and the master plan."

(Participant C, Principal Assistant Director).

Sponsorship via introduction and induction.

"He introduces us [referring to herself and her senior director], introduces me and then seeks the Board approval to allow me to sit in".

(Participant A, General Manager).

"Datuk Amar WB said, "You must go there [referring to district J]. Do remember; don't let this district change you. You change the district." These are his words to me! [laugh] That is why when I come over to this district I start a proposal for a new township." She added: "So I try my best to see to this project. I hope to leave my legacy and will not opt for transfer in these three years. I always remember Datuk Amar WB, his words that remind me to come to this place to change it and not to let it changes me".

(Participant E, Senior District Officer)

Note: At this point Mrs. E took out a big scroll containing the plan for the proposed new township. Both of us were peering into the big drawing.

Sponsorship via recognition.

"I never dreamt that I shall become a CEO at the young age of 40 something; and that is not something that the government ministry under [Minister] Dato' R is used to. At that time that she thought that I was bit too young but later she took the risk and put me as the CEO." (Participant I, Chief Executive Officer).

"My boss, even though he was aware that I am a woman, yet he appointed me as the Chief Internal Auditor here [referring to her organization within the context of plantation industry]. So, it means he believes I can do it. It is not that easy to be a Chief Internal Auditor because my clients are mostly men who are so defensive about their areas [referring to the business matters that she has to audit]."

(Participant K, Senior Manager).

Similarly, Mrs. B recalled how she was invited by her superior to join the management team to fill the vacancy in another department. According to her:

"My present boss offered me this post because he knew that I had graduated with an MBA. So he said that if I wanted to learn, gained more experience by joining the management team he would welcome me to join this department." She further added: "He told me that I have a lot of information because I had been involved with that department from the beginning [of its inception]. He actually said that I knew almost everything about that department."

(Participant B, Deputy Head of Section)

Sponsorship via nurturing

"And there are people who took an [interest] and who saw my potential and decided okay, she needs a bit more help along the way to hone her skills. So, it didn't happen by design."

She emphasized: "I have people who are very helpful to me in my career. Again, it evolved.

It is through my own human relations with whoever I was working with."

(Participant F, Director General)

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