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Masculine in Feminine World: The Story of Male Nurses and Bridal Make-up Artist (Mak Andam)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative studies were intended to explore the involvement of men in the two careers dominated by women which are nurses and bridal make-artists (mak andam). There were two studies involved in this research. The first study was among male nurses who currently working at governments' hospital and clinic in Terengganu. In study one, 14 male nurses were interviewed to understand their involvement in nursing. Meanwhile, in the second study five bridal make-artists were interviewed to obtain more understanding on their involvement in their non-traditional career. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations and written documents. The data were analyzed using Nvivo software. All the participants in this research were Malay Muslims and aged between 25 and 33 for nurses and 26 to 54 years for bridal make-artists. The findings of this study indicated that the involvement of male nurses was caused by external factors which were family, economic, fate and self-interest. For family factor, three issues involved which were experience having family members who are poorly, family influences and role model. The second theme was participant self-interest to choose a career as male nurses. The third theme was due to economic pressure and the last theme identified was their belief in fate. These factors were slightly different for the bridal make-artist as the main factor of their involvement as mak andam were due to their personal interest. The second theme identified in study two was support from friends. Other themes were family work experiences and family support. This paper will further discuss the participants' involvement in their non-traditional careers in the context out Malaysian culture.

Keywords: male nurses, bridal make-artists, mak andam, nontraditional career

Introduction

The socialization process between genders occurs in the community or family. Previous studies indicated that this gender socialization process will shape and influence the career choices of children when they grow up (Holmes, 2006). According to Kelan (2010), any expectations on how a person will behave and act is due to their own biological sex as it creates stereotypes on how men and women should behave in society. This cultural constructs often determine what roles and careers are appropriate for men and women. As a result, society often categorized a career that suit to certain gender (Holmes, 2006). For instance, women are associated with professions such as public administration, education, arts and human services while men's career are synonyms with transportation, agriculture, construction, architecture, manufacturing and engineering (Nontraditional Careers for Men and Women, 2016). Due to some situation, the dominated career by certain gender has shifted. Currently, there are women who are employed as scientists, engineer, architect and

men involved as social worker, nurse, secretary and bridal make-artists. The non-traditional career phenomenon offers another dimension in the work culture. Factors that encourage men to choose a profession dominated by women are because of difficulties to get a job, less stress, the desire to spend more time at home and the issue of gender equality (American Sociological Association, 2012). In addition, social background and educational level of parents also plays a role in the selection of an individual's career (Warming, 2005). Support from parents who encourage their children to make their own choices without barriers is one of the causes of change in gender roles in choosing this career. In terms of culture, changing attitudes about gender roles are also important factors in the development of this phenomenon. Despite new exposure experienced, those who work in their non-traditional career, especially men were reported having challenges. This is because, through the socialization process has highlighted the role of men to choose a career symbolize power, prestige, challenging, higher paid (Lupton, 2000; William, 1995) as compared to feminine career which are considered to be low status and pay.

Chusmir (1990) proposed a framework of factors contributing to adoption of non-traditional career by men. In that framework, Chusmir described that personal influences blended with external influences (family and societal) will contribute to job decision among men (and likely for women). The outcome of involving in non-traditional career would be positive and negative. For men, the outcome would be mostly negative (Kadushin, 1976, Kanter, 1977, Segal, 1962, Spangler et al., 1978 in Chusmir (1990).

Therefore, the research question of these studies was why do men in Malaysia make a decision to get involved in a career dominated by women? The main objective of this study is to explore the external and internal factors that influence their decision making to engage in the feminine career.

Literature Review

Socialization process give a big impact in gender role attitude. As a result of industrialization and modernization in society that socialization process has gradually change from traditional to the modern approach. Gender role attitudes refer to the internalization of social norms based on gender role stereotypes (Sobiraj, S., Korek, S., Weseler, D. and Mohr, G., 2011). It is consist of a socially belief about the different of characteristic and roles between gender. Traditional ideologies emphasize men with greater social status and power compare to women. Men are generally raised to be masculine, independent and doing the tough job. On the other hand, women are thought to be nurturing, responsible, soft and obedient.

In spite of that, there is still a notion that women and men should behave according to what is socially appropriate for their gender. Those who are willingly to withdraw from the gender stereotyped will be seen as deviant and separate from mainstream. This is the issue that have been faced by man who willingly choose non-traditional career. Men traditionally portray to be working with machine, using power, control and to show their pride. However all this picture will be gone if they choose to involved in non-traditional men careers that include nurturing, teaching and to be soft. Men who cross the gender boundary initiate a challenge to fight with traditional ideas of gender behaviour (Cross, S., Bagilhole, B., 2002). Masculinity is an important gender identity for a men. It is not fixed and born with but can be gained through the socialization process and traditional belief in the society (Lupton, B., 2000) When men involve in career that traditionally belong to women, they can be seen as different from real man and possibly change to be a feminist rather than masculine. However, according to Dodson, T. A. and Borders, L.D. (2006) men who are not really concern about

their gender-related characteristic of non-traditional occupation would be more willingly to pursue a career in non-traditional job.

According to Cross, S., Bagilhole, B. (2002), men take their gender privilege and sexual power as an advantage to be in women’s world. There is a challenge when a men have to compete with a women in in the women’s career worlds. They have to be identify as better workers than women. Men gender privilege can be use as the advantage to differentiate them from the women. Being in a women’s world is not an indication that they have a feminine traits.

Finding from Dodson, T. A. and Borders, L.D. (2006) depict that career choice decision is the major factor why men tend to be in non-traditional career. They have their own ambition and want to have satisfaction in life. Their finding also shows that men who works as school counsellor, consider as non-traditional career have a better job satisfaction rather than men who work as mechanical engineer. Even though there is a wide discrepancy in salaries, school counsellors reported that they have much more job satisfaction rather than engineers. Assumption here maybe because of less gender role conflict regarding the role work and power in school counsellor compared to engineers (Dodson, T. A. and Borders, L.D., 2006).

Support from family also the contributing factor that leads men to involve in non-traditional career. As a socialization process occurred in the family, how the gender role attitudes has been emphasize give a big impact to the children career decision. Support or may be a role model in the family will be the biggest strength they bring which kept them stick to their career path. (Meadus, R. J. and Twomey, J.C.,2011).

Therefore, man who involved in this non-traditional career really know what they are looking for, not afraid of losing the masculine identity, have a support from family (Meadus, R. J., and Twomey, J.C., 2011) and having satisfaction doing what they want to do (Cross, S., Bagilhole, B., 2002).

Methodology

This research consisted of two studies. Study I was conducted of male nurses whereas Study II involved participants who work as Mak Andam. All participants in this research are Malay and Muslim. Table I and II below are details of demographic information about the participants.

Study I

There were 14 participants (age 25 to 36 years old) participated in Study I. About half participants in Study I are married. In terms of work experiences, they were in the field around three to ten years. Before engaged in nursing, they worked in private sectors, and studied in multiple areas of studies. Among 14 participants, five participants indicated having family members who involve in nursing. Permission from the Ministry of Health was granted upon proceeding this study.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of Participants in Study I

| Participant | Age | Marital Status | Experience in nursing (years) | Career before involves in nursing | Family member involves in nursing |
|-------------|-----|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr MK | 31 | Married | 4.5 | Student | None |
| Mr MR | 26 | Single | 3 | Student | None |

| Participant | Age | Marital Status | Experience in nursing (years) | Career before involves in nursing | Family member involves in nursing |
|-------------|-----|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr MI | 27 | Single | 3 | Waiter | None |
| Mr EH | 33 | Married | 7 | Waiter | None |
| Mr HA | 33 | Married | 7 | Student | Mum & Sister |
| Mr WM | 25 | Single | 3 | Jobless | None |
| Mr MS | 31 | Married | 4.5 | Private sector | None |
| Mr CK | 30 | Single | 10 | Student | Sister & Sister in law |
| Mr MA | 26 | Married | 7 | Student | None |
| Mr AR | 36 | Single | 10 | Private sector | Younger Sister |
| Mr SA | 30 | Married | 8 | Student | Elder Sister |
| Mr MZ | 30 | Married | 5 | Student | Elder Sister |
| Mr MSH | 26 | Single | 3 | Student | None |
| Mr HA | 31 | Single | 9 | Student | None |

Study II

In Study II, five participants were interviewed to gather information about their experience as mak andam. All participants were single and involve as mak andam for 5 to 34 years. Slightly different with Study I, one participant in Study I have an education background in fashion and design which suit with the career as mak andam. Furthermore, none of the participants’ family member involves in this career.

Table 2
Demographic characteristics of Participants in Study II

| Participants | Age | Marital Status | Work Experience as Mak Andam | Education background | Family member involves as Mak Andam |
|--------------|-----|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mr Ha | 54 | Single | 34 | Malaysian Examination Certificate | None |
| Mr Su | 44 | Single | 20 | Diploma - Polytechnic | None |
| Mr Dan | 26 | Single | 5 | Certificate -Fashion & Design | None |
| Mr Az | 36 | Single | 7 | Diploma -Accountancy | None |
| Mr Ka | 38 | Single | 10 | Malaysian Examination Certificate | None |

Semi structured interviews were conducted in these studies to understand the involvement of the participant in their non-traditional careers. The interviews were carried out twice by the researcher. Each interview takes approximately 45 to 60 minutes for each interview. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed manually into text. After reading each interview, a qualitative analysis using Nvivo software was conducted to code and interpret the data in terms of commonalities and differences, searching for emerging themes and patterns.

Findings and Discussion

Despite the variability within individual experiences of involvement in their non-traditional career, similarities existed across participants. Based on the participants’ perspectives, four main themes emerged in Study I while three themes in Study II.

Table 3
Themes emerged in Study I and II

| Study | Themes |
|-------------------|---|
| I (Nurse) | Family Economic Self interest Fate |
| II (Mak Andam) | Self interest Friends Family |

There were four themes emerged in Study I which are family, economic, self-interest and fate. Family appears to be the significant factors that influenced participants to involve in their non-traditional career. Issues derives from family theme are family power, experience having family members who are poor and role model.

In Study II, the participants’ passion in beauty inspires them to be a mak andam. Another findings are support from friends and family motivates the participants to be in the fashion and beauty business.

Discussisons

All participants in these studies (Study I and II) are willing to take a risk by involving in their non-traditional career particularly nurse and mak andam. As general assumption about men is they need to perform tough job, career as a nurse and mak andam allowing the participants to be nurturing, responsible, soft and obedient. Therefore, these studies intend to explore why the participants involve in a career that would possibly change their ‘normal’ roles.

Findings in these studies indicated that both careers (nurse and mak andam) were influenced by both internal and external factor in their career decision making. In Study I, most participants indicated that their involvement as nurse was influenced by external factors which are family and economic pressure. These findings support previous research which indicates that family does contribute to the involvement of men in non-traditional career (Meadus, R.J and Twomey, J.C. 2011). In the Malay context, respect to the elders is highly valued. It also shows loyalty to the elders as knowledgeable people who can lead, monitor and show them exemplar (Abdullah, 1996). Therefore, even though career as nurse is quite rare among males in Malaysia, the participants follow the advices, suggestions and ideas from the elderly in the family such as parent, sister and other family members due to the respect to them.

The second factor identified in Study I that influenced participants to choose a nurse as their career was economic pressure experienced by the participants. According to website of Public Service Commissions of Malaysia (2015), nursing candidate, have to undergo three years training to be appointed as a nurse with grade U29. During the training, they will receive a living allowance for RM835.57 per month. Once appointed they will receive a

minimum of RM1312 per month with increment of RM145 per year. With such amount, a career in nursing in Malaysia is considered a secured job as compared to participants in Study II where their income is totally based on their make-up services to the bride and the bridegroom. Again, career in nursing for the Study I participants' was influenced by an external factor.

Muslim, participants in Study I believe that it was their fate that they work as male nurses. Therefore, as a Muslim believer, they accept their job that with the concept of redho (acceptance). Surprisingly, by accepting what is determined for them by God, they started to develop their interest in nursing and love their job.

Contrary to findings in Study I, Study II participants mentioned that their involvement in the career was mostly due to an internal factor which is their self-interest in beauty and fashion. The findings support previous research that desires to pursue their ambition and to have satisfaction in life lead men to get involve in non-traditional career (Dodson, T. A. and Borders, L.D., 2006). Therefore, it is not surprised when most of the participants in Study II indicated that they already develop this interest since they were in their study in school and college. For Study II participants', their self-interest in the career as mak andam allow them to be creative, patient, soft and artistic in transforming the bride on their wedding day. In addition, they expand their interest by performing free make up to friends and relatives. As a result, they transform their interest into business where they open their own bridal shop and services. None of the mak andam mentioned that they were 'forced' to be in the field by their family members. In fact they do enjoy their job.

For Study II participants', support from friends and family were the external factors that supporting their decision to stay as mak andam. As stated by Meadus, R.J and Twomey, J.C. (2011) family does play significant roles in facilitating male to be in non-traditional career. Furthermore, friends appear to be another factor that assists participants in Study II to be in this profession. At the beginning of their careers, participants in Study II indicated that most of their friends shares the same interest with them. Therefore they received full support from friends when they shared their interest to do business in bridal make-up. Participants also mentioned that they receive financial support from family. Furthermore, the experience of family members in sewing added another value to them to expand their creativity as mak andam. Therefore, support from friends and family blended with participants' interest, skills and creativity becomes the biggest element that pulls them to stay with the career as mak andam.

Limitations

This paper only intends to explore the factors contributes to the involvement of men in their non-traditional career. However, this paper does not discuss the participants' experience while performing their duty as nurse and mak andam.

Conclusion

These studies indicated that the involvement of the male in their non traditional career is consistent with the framework proposed by Chusmir (1990) which is the involvement of men in their non-traditional career is due to internal and external factors. However, which dominant factors (either external or internal) are depending on which career that were chosen by them. In these studies, male nurses were more influenced by an external factor whereas for mak andam their involvement was due to an internal factor. By involving in career that is not socially appropriate for gender and cultural norms, the participants are risking their masculinity as well as their identity. However, by doing so they actually creating a new

working atmosphere to the society. Perhaps in the future, their involvement in the working climate will be socially accepted.

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