

## Challenges in Creating Social Capital: A Perspective of Muslim Female Managers in Malaysia

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**Abstract :** In view of cross cultural career experiences, to the author's best knowledge, the crucial role of culture and religious traditions in Asia remains understudied. Drawing on the notion of social capital as an invaluable resource needed for manager's to progress, the purpose of this study is to probe the contextual experiences of Muslim women to elucidate unique challenges associated with social capital and career progress. Twenty-three in-depth interviews with top level Malay managers were conducted to probe experiences of upward career mobility and inequities in the workplace. Interpretive phenomenology was used to surface unique challenges and processes of creating and leveraging social capital. The study uncovers the unique challenges of Muslim women in Malaysia. Narratives of participants highlight not only generic forms of gender discrimination, but also culturally specific stereotypes and social expectations limiting their advancement. Interestingly, the findings identify a gender-religion handicap in the form of perceived inequality and restrictions rooted from the women manager's gender and religion. The analysis also reveals how these Muslim women managers' negotiate their challenges, especially how they access social capital and progress their careers. The research offers a unique perspective on the career experiences of Malay women managers' in top management. The research provides insight into the unique processes of developing social capital utilized by this group of women for career success.

**Keywords :** career success, gender discrimination, malaysia, Muslim women, social capital

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