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Factors Associated to The Gender Roles Socialization of Working Women: A Case of Major City, Thailand*

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Abstract

This research aims to examine factors associated to the gender roles socialization of working women. Quantitative methodology was employed with individual level as a unit of analysis. The sample consisted of 398 women who are working in government agencies and private enterprise. The samples were randomly selected by multi-stage sampling technique in 9 municipals of major city. The data were collected using the interview schedule from May to June 2018 and analyzed by descriptive statistics and Chi-square. The results revealed that most of women samples (55.6 %) were in the Generation Y (19-38 years old). 51.3 percentages of the women samples were married, and 43.7 percentages got bachelor degree or higher. Most women, samples (54.3 %) have gender roles socialization in traditional style by the principle, Women should be a housewife. When analyzing factors associated to the gender roles socialization of working women with Chi-square, it was found that the characteristics of women (education level) and work condition factors (organization size and the understanding of women's labor rights) are the factors that associated to the gender roles socialization of working women at statistically significant 0.01 level.

Keywords: Gender Roles Socialization, Working Women, Human Rights

Introduction

The gender roles socialization is one part of socialization and a process whereby social members perceive the values related to differences in their gender roles. The principles of practices for men and women have been formed so that each gender performs the roles appropriately according to social expectations Butler (1988) such as attires, expression, or activities. The socialization that leads to the acquisition of feminine and masculine roles influences gender-based behaviors, thinking, beliefs, and social conducts (Nicolson, 2015). The gender roles socialization also influences the working progress of women. In the present capitalist society, employment outside the household of women is necessary. However, in the Middle East and Asian countries, including Thailand, the traditional social value of female gender roles still exist. In traditional beliefs, there is an expectation for married

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women to emphasize the roles of a wife or a mother than the roles of occupation and occupational progress (Omar and Davidson, 2001).

Bias and belief related to the roles of female's employment outside the household are key obstacles preventing women to step towards becoming an administrator or a senior officer (Johns, 2013). In the modern society, women's gender roles socialization should be in an egalitarian style, i.e., the society should instill the concept of equal working roles and household duties between men and women since women's working capacity is equal to men's. Family care should not be established as women's duty only. Thus, when more women in the rural society work outside their home, the gender roles socialization of the women must have changed from the former roles of household chores or looking after children to external employment. It is thus interesting to study the gender roles socialization of women in the economic system and the factors that are associated with the gender roles socialization. This body of knowledge would result in recommendations for life development of working women in the future.

Research Objectives

To examine the gender roles socialization of working women and the factors associated with the gender roles socialization of working women.

Literature Reviews

The major topic reviewed was the gender roles socialization as discussed in details below: The gender roles socialization is a process whereby gender roles are instilled. Thai society clearly divides feminism and masculinity and believes in the differences between the two genders. Women are taught to take responsibilities over housework, children raising and family member tending whereas men are taught to be a leader and to earn a living for the family, and hence are more respected (Lindsey, 2015). The gender roles socialization related to working women is done through the following 3 social institutions:

1. The gender roles socialization by the family – Family is the most influential institution on an individual since it is the first institution to do this. The family lays the thinking foundation, beliefs, and personality according to the socially expected gender roles. A person learns the gender differences and how women and men function or take responsibilities in the household. The father, mother, or relatives act as the role model for the children. If the father and mother do not teach their children to have fixed gender roles and instead encourage both the son and the daughter to take responsibilities and share in decision making or enable the children to have flexible gender roles; then the children will have gender equality (Chantavanich, 2004).

2. The gender roles socialization by the workplace – When a woman works outside her home, she will face a changing surrounding. Her workplace may classify the roles of male and female workers and enable more opportunities for progress among men than women towards becoming an administrator or a manager Itzin and Newman (1995) due to men's leadership and decisiveness capability. Women are still seen to be attached to the household, taking the role of housewife, and taking care of children. Thus, women do not need to be in a position that requires high skill and competence. In this regard, a workplace has an important say in the enhancement of working women's norm. Meanwhile, more women are entering the economic system even though the acceptance of their competency is limited (Cross, 2017).

3. The gender roles socialization by the media – The mass media generally present women's image in a negative direction. For instance, women are presented as a kind of goods, sexual item, sexually-oriented product presenter, or an image of the ideal female. The society is thus familiar with the women's image as a wife, a mother who is protected and supported by men rather than a strong and steadfast individual (Jones and Pringle, 2015). It can be said that mass media greatly influences the value creation and regeneration towards women.

Patterns of the gender roles socialization: The transfer of thought, beliefs, and understanding of female gender roles are classified into two patterns (Thudam and Trichandhara, 2013):

1. Traditional socialization of gender roles – Women are believed to have the duty of family and household care while men work outside. Women are expected to take the roles of a good wife and mother rather than a competent worker in an employment system.
2. Egalitarian socialization of gender roles - Men and women are believed to have equal roles and duties in employment and taking care of the family. Women should be equally and impartially entitled to various rights and opportunities.

This research defines the gender roles socialization as the fact that women working in a private or public organization are instilled and taught about gender roles from 3 social institutions, namely, the family, workplace, and mass media. What they have been instilled led them to 2 kinds of thoughts, beliefs and understanding of gender roles in the workplace, i.e., traditional (a belief that women are only suitable for housework) and egalitarian (a belief that men and women are equal in terms of roles and duties in the household and outside).

A number of research studies were conducted related to the gender roles socialization: 1) The study by Lewis (2018) on the correlation between the gender roles socialization by the family and the attitudes towards gender roles in Sweden shows that age and gender are associated with the attitudes towards gender roles. The elderly (aged 70-94 years) were found to hold greater sexism attitudes towards gender roles than the youths (aged 19-30 years), and men were found to have greater sexism attitudes towards gender roles than women. In addition, educational levels, job positions, and parental housework share were found to correlate with the gender roles socialization and sexism. 2) The study by Ogletree, (2015) on the perspectives of Texas University students towards marriage, men's and women's roles in children raising and method of raising children in the USA shows that 51% of the students thought that married couples should work full time and equally share responsibilities in children raising. However, more female students were found to believe in raising children in a conventional style than male students. 3) The study by Kollmayer, Schober & Spiel (2016) shows that even though Austrian education attempts to enhance gender equality, gender-related double standards still exist and are found in instruction that emphasizes gender differences. 4) The study by Clark et al. (2015), which was conducted on married officers who are supported by their organization shows that the majority of women workers have higher experiences than their husbands. The interesting recommendation is that employment raises family conflicts (men and women have different problems). The relevant organizations, government, and the public sector should support and set a policy that brings benefits to their officers regarding family life, such as children rearing.

The related research shows that the gender roles socialization is related to ages, marital status, education levels, the size of the workplace, and working experiences. In addition, the researcher believes that knowledge of labor rights should be associated with the gender roles socialization.

Research Methodology

The cross-sectional design quantitative research methodology was applied in this study with the analytical unit being at an individual level. The research population comprised 95,317 women aged 18-59 years old who were working in a governmental or private sector and officially resided in 9 municipalities of Muang Khon Kaen District which is the major city, (Department of Provincial Administration, 2017), which are close to the city and convenient for the women to work in the urban area. The calculated sample size was 398 cases based on Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973). The multi-stage sampling method was used, and the research instrument was a questionnaire developed from the related concepts, theories, and research. The questionnaire is composed of 4 parts: personal baseline data of the women, working conditions, social and gender status, and the gender roles socialization.

The 15 questions related to the gender roles socialization were derived from the thoughts, beliefs, and understanding of gender roles in the work of women who have been socialized by 3 social institutions, namely, the family, workplace, and mass media. The answers are based on the rating scales of 4 (completely agree), 3 (mostly agree), 2 (somewhat agree), and 1 (mostly disagree). The gender roles socialization is the variable measured in levels and divided into 2 groups from the total score of the whole range of questions, which are from 19 to 60. The criteria for interpretation of the scores are classified into the norm-referenced socialization of gender roles: (1) traditional (19-39 points) and (2) egalitarian (40-60 points). The questionnaire underwent content validity investigation from experts before trial with a group of women who did not belong to the sample group. The reliability score was 0.914, confirming the questionnaire's quality and appropriateness as a research instrument.

The data was collected from May to June 2018 and analyzed by means of descriptive statistics into percentages, means, standard deviations, lowest, and highest scores. The analysis of factors associated with the gender roles socialization of working women was based on Chi-square, where Contingency Coefficient (CC.) was applied to indicate the correlation level between variables. The correlations were divided into 3 levels: low correlation (CC. = 0.001-0.500), medium correlation (CC. = 0.501-0.700), and high correlation (CC. higher than 0.700) (Field, 2002).

Research Results

The research results presented below cover 3 issues: 1) individual characteristics and working conditions, 2) gender roles socialization of working women, and 3) factors associated with the gender roles socialization of working women as follows:

Individual Characteristics and Working Conditions

The findings show that most of the women in the sample group (55.6%) were in Generation Y (19-38 years old), and the means age was 37.6 years (S.D. = 10.3). This finding is consistent with the present world situation and anticipation that in 2020, women in the Generation Y will account for 25% of the whole world labor and will be an influential group on the future labor market (World Bank, 2015). About 51.3 percent were married, while 43.7 percent completed a bachelor degree or higher. It can be seen that the access of women to high education is still low since the percentage of those holding a bachelor degree is not high. The survey on Thai women's employment also shows that only 24.8 percent of working women completed higher education (National Statistical Office, 2017).

As far as working is concerned, most of the women (39.9%) worked in a large organization, and nearly half had over 10 years of working experience (40.7%). 45.5 percent have positive attitudes toward the work. As high as 69.3 percent had a high level of knowledge and understanding of female labor rights. However, there are some issues of which the women did not have accurate understanding especially those related to the type of jobs restricting females to do (transportation of dangerous chemicals and heavy item lifting) and the fact that employers are not able to cease hiring pregnant women.

Gender Roles Socialization of Working Women

Most women (54.3%) received traditional gender roles socialization with the belief that they should take responsibilities over the household and family while men work outside. It should be noted that this study collected information from working women who live in urban areas. However, the women were socialized in gender roles by means of traditional beliefs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the socialization was from the family influence in the community where men dominate (Rodsap, 2012). Meanwhile, 45.7 of females received egalitarian gender roles socialization with a belief of equal responsibilities over the family and income-earning (Table 1)

Table 1 Percentage of Women. Classified by the Socialization of Gender Roles

The socialization of gender roles	Percentage
Received traditional gender roles socialization (19-39points)	54.3
Received egalitarian gender roles socialization (40-60points)	45.7
Total	100.0 (398)

\bar{x} =39.0 points S.D. = 7.6 Min = 19.0 points Max = 60.0 points

Additionally, it was found that the family has traditionally socialized women to think, believe, and understand at the high and the highest degree that women should be gentle, meticulous, and circumspect. Therefore, the suitable and main duties of women are taking care of the husband and children, doing housework and preparing meals at 68.4, 65.1, and 56.3 percent, respectively. The gender roles socialization of the workplace where women are affiliated to emphasize those men should make a decision on major work-related matters at 57.3 percent. The mass media influences women to acquire thoughts, beliefs, and understanding that marriage is their life, and their suitable duty is being a wife and a mother. Women think, believe, and understand that employment is not the most important thing in life and it is difficult for them to become successful in their job at 51.5, 51.0, and 50.8 percent, respectively.

Analysis of the egalitarian gender roles socialization reveals that the family's socialization in terms of thoughts, beliefs, and understanding was at the high and highest degree that women are able to work well both in the household and outside (99.0%). The workplace has socialized women to progress equally as men, remunerate women more than men if the women's capacity is higher, at 68.9 and 60.6 percent, respectively (Table 2). The mass media has socialized women to think of, believe in, and understand their own potential and competency at 86.9 percent (Table 2).

Table 2 Percentage of Women Classified by the item of the Egalitarian Gender Roles Socialization

Egalitarian Gender Roles Socialization	Percentage of women				Total
	completely agree	mostly agree	somewhat agree	mostly disagree	
The family implanted you that ...					
1. Women are able to work well both in the household and outside.	42.0	48.0	7.2	2.8	100.0 (398)
Your organization/workplace has rules that ...					
2. Allowing men and women to progress in equal positions.	35.7	33.2	26.1	5.0	100.0 (398)
3. Remunerate women more than men if the women's capacity is higher.	25.9	34.7	30.7	8.7	100.0 (398)
4. Allowing women to be leaders in work or other activities.	13.8	34.2	42.7	9.3	100.0 (398)
5. Women are successful in their work that makes you believe in your potential and ability.	37.9	49.0	12.1	1.0	100.0 (398)

It can be seen that the research results reflect the modernity of the society, but not being consistent with the value instilling in females. Modern society should hold values towards equal gender roles between men and women. However, it was found that the family, the workplace and the mass media still instill the traditional gender roles in women, leading to their thoughts, beliefs, and understanding that they are suitable for housework, being a wife and a mother rather than becoming successful in their job. This makes women think, believe, and understand that they are able to do the household work only. Therefore, the duties of men and women are clearly distinguished,

thus leading to gender inequality Lorber (2001), enhancing bias towards women, and regenerating inequality between men and women in the society (Kimmel, 2000). This has an impact on women's self-esteem, work-related behaviors, and the working life, which are dominated by men.

Factors Associated with the Gender Roles Socialization of Working Women

The factors associated with the gender roles socialization of working women were found through the analytical correlation between personal characteristics and working conditions and the gender roles socialization. The findings are as follows:

1) Individual Characteristics – Age: Women in Generation X (39-53 years old) and the Baby Boomer Generation (aged 54 years and over) were socialized in a traditional pattern at 60.1 and 56.2 percent, respectively. Women in the Generation Y (19-38 years old), on the contrary, were socialized in an egalitarian pattern at 50.2 percent. The Chi-square test shows that women's age is not associated with the gender roles socialization at the significant level of 0.05.

Marital status: Over half of married women (58.8%) received traditional gender role socialization. However, the Chi-square statistics demonstrates that the women's marital status does not correlate with the socialization of their gender roles at the significant level of 0.05, probably owing to the fact that the women are in the socio-cultural conditions in which males dominate. The socialization still values male gender higher than female. Thus, age and marital status of women are not associated with the gender roles socialization.

Educational Level – It was found that 69.2 percent of the women holding educational level lower than a bachelor degree received socialization in a traditional style. The Chi-square test demonstrates that education level significantly correlates with the socialization of gender roles at the level of 0.01, with the Contingency Coefficient (CC) being relatively low, i.e., 0.322. This finding is consistent with the study by Lukanavanich, which shows that Thai universities offer programs in female studies and the governmental sector publicizes information that creates awareness and understanding among the citizens on gender equality. Thus, women who have a chance to study for a bachelor degree or higher are able to perceive the issue of gender equality more than the women whose education level is lower (Table 3).

Table 3 Percentage of Women Classified by Individual Characteristics and Gender Roles Socialization

Individual characteristics	Gender Roles Socialization		
	Traditional	Egalitarian	Total
1. Age			
Generation Z (Not over 18 years old)	100.0	0.0	100.0 (2)
Generation Y (19-38 years old)	49.8	50.2	100.0 (221)
Generation X (39-53 years old)	60.1	39.9	100.0 (143)
Baby boomer (54 years old and over)	56.2	43.8	100.0 (32)
	Pearson Chi-square = 5.521 df = 3 Significance = 0.137		
2. Marital status			
Have a spouse	58.8	41.2	100.0 (204)
No spouse	49.5	50.5	100.0 (194)
	Pearson Chi-square = 3.495 df = 1 Significance = 0.062		
3. Educational level			
Lower than a bachelor degree	69.2	30.8	100.0 (224)
Bachelor degree or higher	35.1	64.9	100.0 (174)
	Pearson Chi-square = 45.989 df = 1 Significance = 0.000 CC. = 0.322		

2) Employment Conditions – The workplace size: More than half of the women (65.9%) working in a small organization (with 15-50 workers) received traditional socialization of gender roles. The result of the Chi-square shows that the organization size is not significantly associated with the gender roles socialization at the level of 0.01, with a rather low Contingency Coefficient (CC), i.e., 0.154. **Work Experience:** More than 50 percent of the

women with the working experience of 6-10 years and over 10 years were socialized in a traditional pattern at 57.0 and 56.2 percent, respectively. The Chi-square test shows no significant correlation between work experience and the gender roles socialization at the level of 0.05, probably because the organization women are affiliated to still values males more than females (Table 4).

Knowledge and understanding of female labor rights: Women who have been traditionally socialized in gender roles possess knowledge and understanding of female labor rights at a low and a medium level (93.3 and 64.5%, respectively). The Chi-square test shows that knowledge and understanding of working women's rights significantly correlate with the gender roles socialization at the level of 0.01, with rather low Contingency Coefficient (CC), at 0.207. This is due to the fact that traditional gender roles socialization believes that they are better at household work than working outside and thus not giving emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of female labor rights they are entitled to (Table 4).

Table 4 Percentage of Women Classified by working Conditions and Gender Roles Socialization.

Working conditions	Gender Roles Socialization		
	Traditional	Egalitarian	Total
1. The work place size			
Small (15-50 workers)	65.9	34.1	100.0 (123)
Medium (51-200 workers)	49.1	50.9	100.0 (116)
Large (more than 200 workers)	49.1	50.9	100.0 (159)
	Pearson Chi-square = 9.623 df = 2 Significance = 0.008 CC. = 0.154		
2. Work experience			
Less than 5 years	33.3	66.7	100.0 (143)
6-9 years	57.0	43.0	100.0 (64)
Over 10 years	56.2	44.8	100.0 (191)
	Pearson Chi-square = 2.213 df = 2 Significance = 0.331		
	Pearson Chi-square = 19.461 df = 3 Significance = 0.000 CC. = 0.216		
3. Knowledge and understanding of female labor rights			
Low level (0-5 points)	93.3	6.7	100.0 (15)
Medium level (6-10 points)	64.5	35.5	100.0 (107)
High level (11-16 points)	48.2	51.8	100.0 (276)
	Pearson Chi-square = 17.836 df = 2 Significance = 0.000 CC. = 0.207		

Conclusion of Research Results and Recommendations

Research Conclusion –Most of the women working in a governmental or a private organization in major city (54.3%) have undergone the gender roles socialization in a traditional pattern. They were instilled of thoughts, beliefs, and understanding of women's roles as a housewife being responsible for the household rather than seeking success in employment or being equal to men in the household and at the job. Thus, the family, the workplace the women are affiliated to and mass media should enhance the gender roles socialization in the egalitarian pattern for working women.

The factors found to be associated with the gender roles socialization include education level, size of the workplace, attitudes towards the work, and knowledge and understanding of female labor rights. Age, marital status, and working experience do not have any correlation with the gender roles socialization.

Recommendations – The analysis of the relevant factors with the gender roles socialization of working women demonstrates that the groups of women that should be enhanced in terms of egalitarian gender roles socialization include: women whose education level is lower than a bachelor degree, women working in a small organization, women with negative attitudes and women having low level of knowledge and understanding of female labor rights. Therefore, the family, the workplace, and mass media should socialize these groups of women in an egalitarian pattern since they are still under the influence of conventional norms and values. These obstruct their work and lead to inequality between the two genders. Working women themselves should alter their thoughts, beliefs, and understanding of their roles and duties. They should realize that they are capable to work well both in

the household and outside. In addition, the government and private sectors should promote the values that men should take responsibility in household chores and raising children so that the burden will not be placed on women who now earn the living outside the home and take responsibility in the household at the same time.

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