Diversification of roles for career sustainability in industry

Haniza Haron
Level 15, Menara Binjai, Jalan Binjai, Kuala Lumpur
haniza_haron@petronas.com

Abstract. Oil and Gas industry downturn in year 2015 posed impacts not only to the economy, but also to the career sustainability of women workforce, especially in Oil and Gas. Most of the organizations started to downsize, and some of the departments are restructured. Thus, workers have no options except to sustain in the organization. The question is, how? This paper discusses the problem statement; the career sustainability of women employees in Oil and Gas industry in Malaysia, gives the overview of the current scenario of women employees in Malaysia in general, and brought up the topic of diversification of roles in career, which is defined as performing job not related to the qualification, or skills. It shares the methodology to assess the diversification of roles scenario via women employee survey experiment, covering the sampling of 100 women employees from various Engineering backgrounds and departments in Oil and Gas companies in Malaysia, with working experience between 5 to slightly more than 10 years. The scope of the survey is the assessment of current job roles of women employees, and diversification of roles scenarios. Overall, it summarizes the major findings from the survey, which showed 78% of 100 women employees who took part in the survey are currently having, or have had diversification of roles in their career. Then, through good platform available in Malaysia, the study recommends the ways to apply and adapt the roles diversification, in order to sustain in the career, for women employees in Oil and Gas industry, which may also be applied by other women workforce.

1. Introduction
Women workforce in Malaysia, traditionally has been deliberated in terms of low empowerment, high gap in gender equality, and low labour participation rate as compared to the men workforce. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, in Press Release Labour Force Survey Report Malaysia 2016 [1], female labour participation rate in 2016 is only 54.3%. This means, the percentage of women who are eligible to participate in the workforce is 54.3%, with the remaining of 45.7% of women are outside of the workforce, due to reasons such as studies, housework, retirement, disabilities, or not interested to work. Although the percentage has increased about 0.2% for women compared to year 2015 which has been stated at 54.1%, the women workforce in Malaysia is still way behind. On top of this, Khazanah Research Institute (KRI)'s research last year [2], has ranked Malaysia at the 106th place out of 144 countries in terms of having the lowest number of women in the workforce (see Figure 1). Despite having low numbers of women workforce in Malaysia, the perspective shall be shifted from quantity to quality; what happens to the women who are currently inside the workforce? Can they sustain?

From the perspective of the Oil and Gas industries, the gender gap percentage between women and men is really significant, based on the statistics provided by the Department of Statistics Malaysia [3]. Female employees are only 25.9% (4,486 persons) and outnumbered by the male employees, in which,
also recorded the largest employment in the oil and gas industries with a share of 74.1% (12,864 persons) as depicted in the Figure 2.

Regardless of the numbers, the competition of the women workforce in the Oil and Gas industries with others remains high as illustrated in Figure 3. There have been times of economic slump, and it was the Oil and Gas recession turn in year 2015, when the oil price had dropped from an over USD100 per barrel to an average USD35-45 per barrel. The impact of this to the organization, is, worldwide, whereby most of the Oil and Gas companies started to adapt the change of organization structures and doing manpower optimization, on top of operating expenditure cutting, employees layoff, and change of business strategies. Indirectly, this situation also impacts the existing job scope of women employees. In fact, it is a game changer. To remain within the competition of this game changer, women employees need to adapt the change, and sustain. The question is, how?

![Figure 1. Country rankings and global gender gap index [1].](image1)

![Figure 2. Number of employees by gender and academic qualification in 2014 [3].](image2)
The study exposed the current career situation of the women employees in Oil and Gas, in Malaysia, after the Oil and Gas downturn. It brought up the idea to sustain, by introducing diversification and defines it as ‘an employee performing a job not related to her qualification and skills’. The example is, if she is a Mechanical Engineering graduate, she can be attached to Mechanical Engineering job skill related, such as performing engineering design for mechanical equipment, or performing maintenance of mechanical equipment. Instead, she is assigned to perform different job skill, such as performing cost control monitoring for projects. It also gives sustainable approach through recommendations of role diversification in career, and the key factors to support career sustainability, focusing on the women workforce in Oil and Gas, which may also be applied by other women workforce in other industries.

2. Current Working Situations of Women Employees in Oil and Gas Industry of Malaysia

Through an initiative survey entitled Diversification of Roles in Career among Employees, the collection of data is done through probability sampling, encompassing women employees from various Oil and Gas companies, in Malaysia, consisted of personnel with various Engineering background and departments as shown in Figures 4(a) and 4(b), respectively. The survey recorded respondents’ feedback whether the diversification of roles is happening on real, and what impact does it gives. The selected women employees with participation of age below 40, are those who are in 5 years and slightly more than 10 years of working experience since they are the category who are facing the career sustainability issues and perhaps, the diversification of roles. Besides, the assumption for this survey is, this is the target employees to be laid-off due to less numbers of experience compared to those with 15 years and more of working experience, and this group is also considered as the highest population in the Oil and Gas industry.

Based on the survey, the results shown in Figure 5(a) indicate that 78% respondents have been assigned to work not related to their qualifications and skills, whether it was in the past, or at present, 17% respondents are not, and 5% respondents are unsure. As can be seen in Figure 5(b), when being asked the reason of performing work not related to qualification and skills; 78% answered as business requirements, 17% answered assigned by superior, and 5% answered as she/he wants to challenge himself/herself. On the other hand, the willingness to perform work not related to qualification and skills as shown in Figure 5(c); 27% respondents answered yes, 5% respondents answered no, and 68% answered that they will depend on the situations. When asked whether the respondents are currently
performing work not related to the original background as indicated in Figure 5(d), 68% answered yes and 32% answered no.

However, when asked whether different job roles add value to the career, 100% respondents as shown in Figure 6(a) agree with the scenario. From Figure 6(b), most of the respondents are ready to be assigned to any works which are difficult or unfamiliar when 89% answered yes and 11% answered no. Besides, 95% of the respondents are ready to jump into other industries when they could not sustain in Oil and Gas industry; and 5% answered no as depicted in Figure 6(c). In the end, as shown in Figure 6(d), 95% preferences agree on employees perform multitasking jobs and only 5% goes to an employee to stick on specific skills.

The results clearly show that the diversification of roles in career is happening for women employees in Oil and Gas industry, together with the reasons behind it, and how the respondents adapt to the situation. For respondents who agree on applying the diversification of roles in their career, the reasons include; various job exposures will widen their networking and develop the understanding not only limited within their boundaries. Besides, it is assumed good for creating a well-rounded employee and help in enhancing multiskills’ which allows them to see the process and problems in a bigger picture. This situation also helps adjusting oneself to face the current challenges. Although the career ladder might be slower pertaining to covering many areas with different skills, that does not mean the employee will not get anything good in return. Sometimes there is a need to have observations with different perspectives before concluding into a decision, or resolving a problem. In contrast, respondents who agree on addressing specific skills in career instead of applying the diversification of roles, those specific skills are assumed can bring a better development and structured career progress. In fact, this situation is true because skilled employees with many traits and experience, can yield to a better job satisfaction and productivity, believing to be expert in one area is better, rather than being average in several areas. The specific skills in that particular field may require one self’s expertise in resolving a very specific technical issue, whereby not all employees are able to do that.

In summary, the major finding of the experiment is, it strengthens the diversification of roles is good towards career sustainability, as the employees are able to adapt and change based on business requirements and the surrounding environments. This is based on 100% of respondents agreed that different job roles do add value to their career, regardless of their situations.

3. The Sustainable Approach

Based on the sampling experiment, the diversification of roles might also have been happening in other industries. The feedback on this may varies upon whether the respondents agree, or not. In Malaysia, there are initiatives to ensure that the women are able to enter the workforce, protected after entering or re-entering, promoted and sustained. In favour of validating this situation, the relationship between the initiatives towards women sustainability in the workforce has to be clearly conveyed while the key factors of supporting the sustainability has to be compiled to see the connection and how do they linked to each other.

According to the report by Malaysia Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review 2017 by Economic Planning Unit of Prime Minister’s Department, one of the goal of 8 Sustainable Development Goals’ is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Notably, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development with its agencies and partners such as the TalentCorp, have also focus on strengthening the family institution by creating a more conducive working environment and increasing the number of women to return to the workforce, including promoting the career comeback program, releasing grant for establishing child care centres at the workplace, increasing maternity leaves, and making flexible work arrangements. One of the Key Success Factors under this is creating opportunities for women to work, re-enter the labor force, and secure top positions. Referring to this initiative, the platform for women in Malaysia can be considered as good enough, to ensure women to be in the workforce.
Figure 4. The collected data from a survey on Diversification of Roles in Career among Employees that encompassing women employees in Oil and Gas companies of Malaysia with (a) various Engineering background and (b) departments.

Figure 5. The results of (a) responses on work not related to qualifications and skills, (b) reasons of performing work not related to qualification and skills, (c) willingness to perform work not related to qualification and skills, and (d) responses on performing work not related to the original background.
Figure 6. The results of (a) responses on different job roles add value to the career, (b) responses on ready to be assigned to any works which are difficult or unfamiliar, (c) responses on ready to jump into other industries when they could not sustain in Oil and Gas industry, and (d) preferences agree on employees perform multitasking jobs or to stick on specific skills.

Based on the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by the Prime Minister’s Department, Malaysia [4], initiatives and the relationship to support the sustainability and empowerment are summarized in Figure 7. From these initiatives, which constitute a good platform, there is no reason for women to be outside of the workforce, except for the reasons highlighted in the earlier paragraph. Through promotion, protection and supports, women are secured and encouraged to be in the workforce, as well as elevated to a higher status in the society. Besides having a longer life expectancy, women in Malaysia are also likely to possess good education. This is supported by the fact of, in 2015, female student enrolment in public higher education has reached 62 percent and it eventually has been exceeding 60 percent since 2003. Thus, women shall participate effectively and be in the workforce, ultimately creating a more equitable and inclusive economy in Malaysia. Once women are inside the workforce, applying the diversification of roles will help them to sustain in the career.

Consequently, here are several recommendations for women employees in Oil and Gas industry to apply and adapt the diversification of roles, starting from the beginning of the career, such as:

- Readiness to receive any assigned works including non-core works; such as preparing budget, planning, management of resources, managing an event, and supported with the right mindset.
• To deliver more than the expectation for every single task assigned, whether it is core jobs, or non-core jobs.
• To build a good rapport and learn from others from various background, even if it is not in own interest, and to avoid working in silo.
• To challenge self to do works differently, to achieve different results.
• To get out from the comfort zone.

Although most of the recommendations above are already well said and practiced, not many women employees are aware that those efforts are actually necessary starting from the beginning of the career. This is due to the fact that the ability of performing multiskills job are achieved through years of practice. However, it is significantly necessary for women to ensure that she is ready to adapt by accepting the diversification of roles through many situations in order to sustain when the time to change the business requirements or any economic downturn may suddenly come crashing by.

Figure 7. Relationship between Malaysia government initiatives towards women workforce sustainability as a platform.

4. Conclusion
In a nutshell, sustainability of women employees in the workforce, especially the women on Oil and Gas industry, the key factors are readiness to accept the diversification of roles, good communication skills, established networking, knowledgeable, having good attitudes and right mindset. Here, the
readiness to accept the diversification of roles is included to increase the level of awareness of women employees in their career sustainability.

As a conclusion, it is highly recommended that women employees in the workforce, especially in Oil and gas industry, to apply the diversification of roles starting from the beginning of the career, to help them to sustain in the industries. In other perspectives, the readiness to accept the diversification of roles in career proves that the women employees are putting the effort to sustain and adapt the changes. Hopefully this will also help the women employees to remain in the competition, through a good platform of combined initiatives in Malaysia, and key factors to sustain.

References
[1] Labour Force Survey Report, Malaysia 2016, 28 April 2017, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Page 2 of 4, Malaysia
[2] Tan Theng Theng, Jarud Romadan, Allen Ng, 6 March 2017, Khazanah Research Institute, Page 3 of 6, Malaysia
[3] The Office of Statistician Malaysia, 22 January 2016, Department of Statistics Malaysia, Petroleum and Natural Gas Statistics 2015, Page 3 of 3, Malaysia
[4] Malaysia Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review 2017, June 2017, Page 23 of 82, Economic Planning Unit of Prime Minister’s Department, Malaysia