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ROLES PERFORMED BY BANK BRANCH MANAGERS IN MALAYSIA

Summary. This paper discusses managerial roles performed by bank branch managers in Malaysia basing on Mintzberg's model. In-depth understanding of managerial roles performed is significant to organization in at least two ways: improve managerial recruitment effectiveness and identify suitable training programs for existing managers. Data was collected from 143 bank branch managers across Peninsular Malaysia via interview survey. There were at least four implications worth noting here. First, Mintzberg's (1971) framework was indeed applicable in Malaysia although it has been developed more than 38 years ago. Second, there were indeed changes in role rankings, suggesting role emphasis changes over time. Third, roles more emphasized by today's managers were interpersonal and informational roles while role less emphasized was decisional role. Fourth, male and female managers were found to perform all 10 roles in the same extent. Practical implications were then discussed.

Keywords: Managerial roles, role emphasis, bank branch managers

ROLE MENADŻERÓW ODDZIAŁÓW BANKOWYCH W MALEZJI

Streszczenie. W niniejszym artykule, bazując na modelu Mintzberga, przedyskutowano role pełnione przez menedżerów oddziałów banków w Malezji. Pogłębione rozumienie pełnionych ról menedżerskich jest istotne dla organizacji, co najmniej z dwóch powodów: dla celów poprawienia skuteczności rekrutacji na stanowiska menedżerskie oraz określenia odpowiednich programów szkoleniowych dla menedżerów. Dane pozyskano w badaniach przeprowadzonych metodą wywiadu od 143 menedżerów oddziałów banków zlokalizowanych na obszarze Półwyspu Malajskiego. Zauważono co najmniej cztery implikacje warte odnotowania. Po pierwsze, model struktury organizacyjnej zaproponowany przez Mintzberga (1971)

jest rzeczywiście stosowany w Malezji, chociaż opracowany został ponad 38 lat temu. Po drugie, istotnie zaszły zmiany w ocenach poszczególnych ról, co wskazuje na ciągłą ich zmianę. Po trzecie, role częściej wskazywane przez współczesnych menedżerów kładą nacisk na funkcje interpersonalne i informacyjne bardziej niż na role decyzyjne. Po czwarte, zarówno mężczyźni jak i kobiety pełnią wszystkie 10 ról menedżerskich w tym samym stopniu. W niniejszym artykule dyskusji poddano praktyczne implikacje powyższych wyników badań.

Słowa kluczowe: role menadżerskie, podkreślanie ról, menedżerowie oddziałów bankowych

1. Introduction

Managerial roles framework proposed by Mintzberg (1971) has attracted a considerable extent of debates among management scholars in terms of its validity to explain what managers do. Some authors expressed concerns on the generalizability of the framework due to its inductive approach drawing on limited observational data of only five top executives (e.g. Lamond, 2003). However, there is a majority of others who continued to provide empirical support to the framework and use it to explain role differences played by managers across different industries (Anderson, Murray, & Olivarez, 2002; Brubakk & Wilkinson, 1996; Chareanpunsirikul & Wood, 2002; Muma, Smith, & Somers, 2003), different managerial levels (Kraut, Pedigo, McKenna, & Dunnette, 1989), different situational factors (Anderson, et al., 2002) and different countries (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2003).

Due to its popularity in managerial research, almost all management text book authors included the framework in their books to explain what managers do (e.g. Daft, 2008; Williams, 2009). Thus its applicability in all countries has substantial impact in view of its wide use in both research world and management education. Since there were only two known studies using the framework in Malaysia (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2003; Zabid, 1987), its applicability in Malaysia is not sufficiently tested. Therefore, this paper intends to provide further validation of the framework in Malaysia.

First, the paper investigates the applicability of the framework by running one sample t-test analysis on scores of each individual role to assess if the roles are rated significantly required to perform by branch managers in Malaysia. Second, it compares role ranking reported by Zabid (1987) and role ranking generated by this survey (collected in year 2007/08) to understand if the role emphasized changed over 30-year period. Third, this paper performs an independent t-test on three pairs of roles (interpersonal, informational and decisional) to identify roles most emphasized by bank managers now so that training needs analysis could be done accordingly. Finally, independent t-test is again conducted to assess if there are role emphasis differences by male and female managers which is useful for

recruitment manager to justify if male or female candidates are more suitable for branch manager position.

2. Theoretical Review and Hypothesis Development

In 1916, Henri Fayol proposed planning, organizing, leading, coordinating and controlling as answers to what managers do. It was commented that the proposal was imprecise to capture various activities performed by managers, in which inspired Mintzberg (1971) to study managerial activities based on structured observation study designed for a more refined answer. Out of his study on five chief executive of medium to large organizations (a consulting firm, a school system, a technology firm, a consumer goods manufacturer and a hospital), Mintzberg (1971) concluded 10 managerial roles claimed to represent all activities performed by managers based on a week's observation period. Roles were defined as "organized sets of behaviors belonging to identifiable offices or positions" (Mintzberg, 1971 p.103). They were summarized in table 1.

Table 1

Mintzberg's Ten Managerial Roles

INTERPERSONAL ROLES – relate to behavior that focuses on interpersonal contact, these roles derived directly from the authority and status associated with holding managerial office		
Role	Description	Example of Activities
1. Figurehead	Performs a number of routine duties of legal and social nature.	Representing company in ceremonies, status requests and solicitations
2. Leader	Responsible in the motivation and activation of subordinates; responsible for staffing and training.	Performing all managerial activities involving subordinate
3. Liaison	Maintains self-developed network of outside contacts and informers who provide information and favors.	Acknowledging of mail, external board work and other activities involving outsiders
INFORMATION ROLES – relate to the processing of information, manager as a focal point for a certain kind of information and manager a transmitter of information.		
Role	Description	Example of Activities
4. Monitor	Seeks and receives a variety of special information developed through understanding of organization and environment.	Handling all mails and contacts categorized and concerned primarily with receiving information (e.g. Periodical news, observational tours)

con. tab. 1

5. Disseminator	Transmits information received from outsiders and subordinates to members of the organization.	Forwarding mails to organization for informational purposes, verbal contacts involving information flow to subordinates
6. Spokesperson	Transmits information to outsiders on organization's plans, policies, actions, results; serves as expert on organization's industry.	Revealing information or speaking to people outside the organization

DECISIONAL ROLES – relate to the making and interrelating of all significant decisions in the organization as only the manager fully understand complex decisions, particularly those involving difficult value tradeoffs.		
Role	Description	Example of Activities
7. Entrepreneur	Searches organization and its environment for opportunities to bring about change.	Heading strategy and review sessions involving initiation or design of improvement projects
8. Disturbance handler	Responsible for corrective action when organization faces important, unexpected disturbances.	Heading strategy and review sessions involving disturbances and crises
9. Resource Allocator	Responsible for the allocation of organizational resources of all kinds	Scheduling and authorizing any activity involving budgeting and the programming of subordinates' work
10. Negotiator	Responsible for representing the organization at major negotiations	Negotiating with the company's stakeholders on decisions that might affect the company's performance such as negotiating with Bank Union on staff's compensation packages

2.1. The applicability of the framework

Majority of the researchers who found support for the applicability of Mintzberg's framework (1971) used data collected from developed countries (Howcroft & Beckett, 1993; Konrad, Waryszak, & Hartmann, 1997; Portela & Thanassoulis, 2007), thus it is interesting to test if the framework is applicable in the Malaysian context and whether the framework stands the test of time. Since managerial roles were measured using 7 point Likert scale where 1 indicates "not at all required to perform" and 7 indicates "very much required to perform", the framework is considered applicable if all the roles produced score significantly greater than 4 (Likert scale's middle point). That is, respondents indicate those roles as reasonably required to perform and thus the framework is considered applicable. Therefore, hypotheses 1 (H1) is proposed as follow:

H1: Each of the 10 role scores is significantly greater than four

2.2. Role ranking comparison

Literature suggests a significant role change in today's bank branches. Branches are shifting their focus from providing transactional services to mainly concentrating on marketing-related services (Brubakk & Wilkinson, 1996, Cook & Hababou, 2001, Howcroft & Beckett, 1993, Portela & Thanassoulis, 2007). Transactional or operational tasks are now largely centralized and taken care by alternative banking channels like phone banking, internet banking and automatic banking, allowing branches to focus on more value-added sales activities (Portela & Thanassoulis, 2007). Centralization approach adopted in the banking industry today is strategically used to reap advantages such as better control of cash positions and operational risk, better supervision on information and transactions, and more effective overall cost by eliminating redundant operations and minimizing the number of information systems in use (Kroll, 2007). For example, the cost of finance operations was 0.67 percent of revenue at leading companies who effectively centralized some of their operational activities, compared to 1.22 percent at average companies (Kroll, 2007).

Thus, bank's centralization drive has shifted bank branch managers' roles where branch managers were reported given lesser decision power (Brubakk & Wilkinson, 1996) and were expected to concentrate more on sales and customer base (Portela & Thanassoulis, 2007) since operational tasks are increasingly centralized via technology like phone banking, internet banking, and automatic banking. Therefore, it is proposed that hypotheses 2 (H2) is as below:

H2: There is significant difference in role importance ranking

2.3. Roles most performed by bank managers now

As a consequence of changing roles explained in earlier section, Portela and Thanassoulis (2007 p. 1276) identified corresponding changes in bank branch managers' responsibilities. They are summarized in the following:

- to foster an effective use of new distribution channels so that branch personnel can use their time in value-added activities;
- to increase sales and the customer base of the branch, while serving the clients that visit the branch with high service quality levels;
- to manage the product mix in a way that generates high profitability, without reducing service quality associated with any product.

The above statements suggest that customers are the main concern of a branch manager and customer service is the only dimension that bank branches compete on, consistent with the notion put forward by Pineda and Whitehead (1997). Thus, it is predicted that branch

managers now spend more time in improving service quality by training staff to achieve better service level (Interpersonal) and personally involved in serving key customers to maintain relationship (Interpersonal) while updating latest company promotion information to both staff and customers (Informational). Thus, it is expected that bank managers performed interpersonal and informational roles at similar extent since both roles are performed simultaneously most of the time. However, it is expected that time taken by branch managers to make strategic decision (decisional role) is relatively lesser now since they are given lesser decision power. Thus, three hypotheses were developed as follow:

H3a: Interpersonal role is more frequently performed than decisional role

H3b: Informational role is more frequently performed than decisional role

H3c: No significant difference between interpersonal and informational roles performed

2.4. Gender and role performed

Past researches suggested significant differences in roles performed (Anderson, et al., 2002, Konrad, et al., 1997) between male and female managers although they both held same positions. Anderson, et al. (2002) reported three significant differences in managerial roles performed between genders which are leader, liaison, and disseminator. Female managers were found to perform greater roles in those three roles than male managers. Thus, it is expected the same applies in Malaysia where male and female managers placed different importance on roles and performed the roles at different extent. Therefore, H4 is proposed below:

H4: There are significant differences in roles performed by male and female bank managers

3. Measures

Main variables used in the study were managerial roles performed, gender and earlier role ranking. Data for managerial roles performed and demographic information like gender, age and educational level were gathered via interview survey while earlier role ranking data were taken from secondary source. A 30-item scale adapted from Anderson, et al. (2002) was used to measure roles performed by bank managers. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each function was required to perform throughout the year in their position as branch manager. Three items each were used to measure each role basing on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all required) to 7 (very much required).

Role ranking reported by Zabid (1987) was the closest data available for ranking comparison, thus it was used as proxy for earlier ranking. He collected data from 367 managers of 167 Malaysia Public Enterprises or Government Link Corporations (GLC). About 30 percent of the managers were reported employed in the service sector such as banking, insurance, airline, shipping, travel agency and rail transport. Since bank managers were included as part of his respondents in service sector, Zabid's service sector (1987) ranking was used as proxy for earlier role ranking. The role ranking reported by Zabid (1987) was duplicated in table 2 below:

Table 2

Role ranking of service sector extracted from Zabid (1987, p. 24, table 5)

Managerial role	Service Sector
Entrepreneur	1
Liaison	2
Resource Allocator	3
Leader	4
Disseminator	5
Monitor	6
Negotiator	7
Figurehead	8
Disturbance Handler	9
Spokesperson	10

4. Data Collection

Data were collected from 143 bank branch managers across Peninsular Malaysia via interview survey between July 2007 and May 2008. It was collected by students of MGM2111 (Organization and Business Management) as part of their course assignment to understand what managers do. Branch managers from eight local banks were approached and 143 agreed to participate in the survey, manager distribution was summarized in table 3. Majority of the manager respondents (33) came from CIMB while the least (8) came from Public Bank. However, representations from six other banks were quite equal ranging from 15 to 19. Branch managers' name cards or the branch's official stamp was used as verification of interviews performed.

Table 3

Bank distribution

		Frequency	Percentage
1	Ambank	16	11
2	Hong Leong	15	10
3	Maybank	18	13
4	RHB	19	13
5	Bank Rakyat	17	12
6	BSN	17	12
7	Public Bank	8	6
8	CIMB	33	23
	Total	143	100

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis section first discusses the profile of respondents, followed by analyses used to test each hypothesis. Respondents' demographic information was shown in table 4.

Table 4

Respondents' demographic information

		Frequency	Percentage
Ethnic Group	Malay	95	66
	Chinese	37	26
	Indian	9	6
	Others	2	1
	Total	143	100
Gender	Female	38	27
	Male	105	73
	Total	143	100
Age Group	25-34	17	12
	35-44	65	45
	45-54	58	41
	55-64	2	1
	Missing value	1	1
	Total	143	100

The ethnic composition closely resembled the Malaysian multi-ethnic population where 66% were Malay, followed by 26% Chinese-Malaysian and 6% Indian-Malaysian. Majority of local bank branch managers interviewed were male (73% versus 27% female managers). About 90% of the managers fall into those aged from 35 to 54.

H1: Each of the 10 role score is significantly greater than four

Since reliability of all 10 roles were greater than 0.6 (see table 5, column 2), they were acceptable for further analysis (Nunnally, 1978). Mean scores of the 10 roles ranged from 4.54 (negotiator) to 6.63 (leader), indicating that some roles were less performed compared to others. One-sample T-test was used to test H1, whether the scores were significantly greater than 4. As can be seen from table 5, all 10 role scores were significantly greater than 4 at 5% significance level. Thus, H1 was supported. That is, Mintzberg's (1971) framework was indeed applicable in Malaysia *now* although it was introduced some 38 years ago. Thus, it was valid for academics and practitioners to continue using his framework.

Table 5

One-sample T-test for 10 Managerial roles

	Reliability	Mean	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Leader	0.78	6.63	2.63*	2.55	2.72
Monitor	0.77	6.38	2.38*	2.26	2.51
Disseminator	0.65	6.33	2.33*	2.22	2.44
Liaison	0.73	6.29	2.29*	2.16	2.43
Disturbance Handler	0.66	6.06	2.06*	1.89	2.23
Entrepreneur	0.64	5.89	1.89*	1.73	2.04
Resource Allocator	0.69	5.60	1.60*	1.40	1.79
Figurehead	0.77	5.18	1.18*	0.95	1.41
Spokesperson	0.69	5.14	1.14*	0.91	1.36
Negotiator	0.75	4.54	0.54*	0.30	0.78

* Significant at 0.05 level.

H2: There is significant difference in role ranking over 30 year period

Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was performed to compare if there is a significant difference between role ranking reported by Zabid (1987) and ranking generated by this study's data. A non-parametric Spearman rank correlation was used to assess relationship between the two rankings due to the small number of cases and the ordinal nature of ranking scale (Moan & Dereshiwsy, 2002). As can be seen from table 6, a sharp contrast exists between the two rankings where entrepreneur role was most emphasized 30 years ago while leader role was more emphasized now. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient was 0.39 ($P = 0.13$) between the two rankings, thus it was not significant at 0.05 level. Since they were not significantly related, they were different. Thus H1 was supported. There was indeed a significant difference in role rankings over 30 years period, suggesting role changes over time due to changing internal and external environmental factors.

Table 6

Role Rankings		
	The study's Ranking (2008)	Zabid's (1987) Ranking
Leader	1	4
Monitor	2	6
Disseminator	3	5
Liaison	4	2
Disturbance Handler	5	9
Entrepreneur	6	1
Resource Allocator	7	3
Figurehead	8	8
Spokesperson	9	10
Negotiator	10	7

H3a: Interpersonal role is more frequently performed than decisional role

H3b: Informational role is more frequently performed than decisional role

H3c: No significant difference between interpersonal and informational roles performed

Paired sample t test were performed for three pairs of means, as reported in table 7. Since pair 1 and pair 2 were significantly different, H3a and H3b were supported, suggesting that managers indeed performed greater interpersonal and informational roles than decisional roles, thus provide empirical support to theoretical claims made by recent researchers (e.g. Portela & Thanassoulis, 2007). Since pair 3 was not significant, H3c was supported, that was, there was no significant difference between interpersonal and informational roles performed by managers, suggesting those roles were performed at the same extent.

Table 7

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean difference
Pair 1	Interpersonal	6.03	0.68	0.51*
	Decisional	5.52	0.83	
Pair 2	Informational	5.95	0.70	0.43*
	Decisional	5.52	0.83	
Pair 3	Interpersonal	6.03	0.68	0.08
	Informational	5.95	0.70	

*Significant at 0.05 level

H4: There are significant differences in roles performed by male and female bank managers

Independent sample t-test was performed on each of the 10 roles based on male-female categories. Since none of the 10 roles were significant ($p > 0.05$) as shown in table 8, H3 was not supported, suggesting both male and female managers performed all the roles at the same frequency. That was, both male and female managers spent about the same amount of time performing each of the 10 roles.

Table 8

Independent Samples T-Test on roles performed between gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Figurehead	Equal variances assumed	2.99	0.09	-1.33	141.00	0.19	-0.35	0.26
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.18	53.67	0.24	-0.35	0.30
Disturbance Handler	Equal variances assumed	4.21	0.04	-0.74	141.00	0.46	-0.15	0.20
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.59	46.95	0.56	-0.15	0.25
Resource Allocator	Equal variances assumed	0.24	0.62	-0.06	141.00	0.96	-0.01	0.22
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.06	66.37	0.96	-0.01	0.22
Negotiator	Equal variances assumed	0.15	0.70	0.95	141.00	0.34	0.26	0.27
	Equal variances not assumed			0.95	65.30	0.35	0.26	0.27
Entrepreneur	Equal variances assumed	0.71	0.40	0.69	141.00	0.49	0.12	0.17
	Equal variances not assumed			0.74	74.75	0.46	0.12	0.16
Spokesperson	Equal variances assumed	2.10	0.15	0.13	140.00	0.89	0.04	0.26
	Equal variances not assumed			0.13	55.87	0.90	0.04	0.28
Disseminator	Equal variances assumed	1.84	0.18	0.56	141.00	0.58	0.07	0.13
	Equal variances not assumed			0.52	57.38	0.61	0.07	0.14
Monitor	Equal variances assumed	0.18	0.67	0.37	141.00	0.71	0.05	0.14
	Equal variances not assumed			0.37	63.22	0.72	0.05	0.14
Liaison	Equal variances assumed	2.72	0.10	-1.14	141.00	0.26	-0.17	0.15
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.01	53.37	0.32	-0.17	0.17
Leader	Equal variances assumed	0.12	0.73	0.64	141.00	0.52	0.06	0.10
	Equal variances not assumed			0.60	58.37	0.55	0.06	0.10

6. Discussion and implications

There were at least four implications worth noting here. First, Mintzberg's (1971) framework was indeed applicable in Malaysia even now although it is more than 38 years old. Thus, Mintzberg's framework should continue to be remained as text book material to explain what managers do. Second, there were indeed changes in role rankings, suggesting role emphasis changed over time. Thus, it provides empirical support to the theoretical notion suggested by Portela and Thanassoulis (2007) and Brubakk and Wilkinson (1996) following a shift of focus on branches' responsibility.

And, it provides practical implication to HR managers to study managerial roles from time to time, so that changes are understood and taken into consideration in their recruitment process for branch manager position. Only then will job matching effectiveness be improved which will then lead to lower turnover rate and better job performance. Third, roles more emphasized by today's managers were interpersonal and informational roles which were related to dealings with subordinates and customers, thus people-skill trainings (e.g. leadership, marketing, networking skills, etc.) were most relevant to branch managers. On contrary, decision making, operational handlings, resource planning types of trainings which were related to decisional roles were less emphasized.

Fourth, Since male and female managers were found to perform all 10 roles in the same extent, it produced contradictory findings to those reported by earlier studies (Anderson, et al., 2002; Konrad, et al., 1997) probably due to the nature of banking industry where clear division of job and detailed description of responsibilities are practiced thus result in more uniformed roles performed across gender. Thus, the practical implication derived was gender should not be used as a criterion for branch manager selection as both male and female managers place equal emphasis on each of the 10 roles, thus not valid for HR managers to favor male for the position base on reason that female managers are less fit to perform certain roles required by management. Hence, promoting diversity.

7. Limitation and future directions

There were a few limitations in this research. First, Zabid (1987) measured perceived role importance while this research measured the extent in which roles were required to perform. Thus, Zabid's (1987) ranking was used with the assumption that managers usually spend more time performing roles they perceived as important. However, some may argue that this assumption may be hold true, thus further validation is needed in future.

Second, data in this research was collected by student interviewers. Although considerable amount of time was used to train the student interviewers and reasonable verification measure was taken (name card or bank's official stamp to attach in the questionnaire) to ensure interviews actually took place, some degree of skepticism may exist on data collected via student interviewers. Thus, future research is needed to verify current findings via different data collection methodology.

8. Conclusion

This paper discusses managerial roles performed by bank branch managers using Mintzberg's Model in the Malaysian context. From the 143 bank managers interviewed, this paper concludes that Mintzberg's 38 years old model is still applicable in Malaysia. Nevertheless, this paper found that the roles ranking differ from that of Mintzberg which indicates a change in roles emphasis over time where interpersonal and informational roles were emphasized over decisional roles. In addition, no gender differences exist to explain the extent of all the 10 roles performed. With the research findings presented, this paper hopes to promote understanding in improving managerial recruitment effectiveness and identifying suitable training programs for existing managers. Although 38 years since the inception of Mintzberg's framework, it is still a valid tool in identifying the roles managers perform in the 21st century.

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