Developing Scale of Maid for Assessing Malaysian Employers Perception towards Quality of Maid

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Abstract: Country's dependence on foreign maids are not only experienced by Malaysia but also experienced by other countries in the world such as Hong Kong, Singapore Australia, Jordan, Kuwait and UAE. The growing demand for maid in the above mentioned countries reflects that maid has become a necessity for most people in some parts of the world. Most of previous studies focused on describing the attributes of maid using qualitative approaches. The instruments that commonly used are focus group discussion, ethnographic observation and in-depth interview. Based on review of previous research, this paper discusses the shortcomings of measuring the quality of maids using qualitative approaches. This paper highlights the lack of studies that provide specific instrument to measure quality of maid. Hence, this study seeks to develop new quality maid scale which could be used for future research in this area using quantitative approach. The Personal Construct Theory is used as an underpinning theory for this study. The development of a quality maid scale is according to the following six major steps: (1) generate an item pool, (2) scale development, (3) panel of experts review, (4) scale purification on pre-test sample, (5) scale verification on survey sample, and (6) identification of the new quality maid scale. The major theoretical, empirical and practical contributions of this study will also be discussed.

Keywords: conceptual paper, quality maid, developing scale, Malaysian employers' perception

1. Introduction

In recent years, many countries in the world such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Jordan, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates are facing a growing reliance on foreign maids (Frantz, 2008; Groves & Lui, 2012; Huang & Yeoh, 1996). In Hong Kong, there was about 292,000 foreign maids in 2011; with almost one in every three households with young children hires a full-time maid (Groves & Lui, 2012). Singapore recorded almost 80,000 foreign maids in year 2009 (Yeoh & Huang, 2000), whereas Jordan has about 70,000 foreign maids; with at least one in every eleven households employs a foreign maid(Frantz, 2008).

In Malaysia, there were about 142,745 maids until December 2012 (Immigration Department of Malaysia, 2012). The growing demand for maid in the above mentioned countries reflects that maid has become a necessity for most people in some parts of the world. A continued demand for maids also implies the presence of maids are needed by people because maids may facilitate them in managing the household chores (Colombo, 2007), taking care of children (Chan, 2005; Ip & Cheung, 2008; Roumani, 2005)and taking care of elderly people(Colombo, 2007; Shah, Badr, & Shah, 2011).

Although many researchers have reported that the presence of maids may release the burden of women and may facilitate life of the host families(Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2009; Cheung & Mok, 1998; Colombo, 2007; de Regt, 2008; de Ruijter & van der Lippe, 2008; Frantz, 2008; Fu & Shaffer, 2001; Greenfield, Flores, Davis, & Salimkhan, 2008; Groves & Lui, 2012; Huang & Yeoh, 1996; Ip & Cheung, 2008; Lo, Stone, & Ng, 2003; Roumani, 2005; Shah et al., 2011), there are also some researchers who found that the presence of maids may increase the burden on employers because the quality of work done by maids is at "less-than-optimal" level(Groves & Lui, 2012).

Some researchers also found that the presence of maids may lead to employer's anxiety and insecurity because they believe that maids may cause other problems such as sexual attractions towards employer's husband, petty theft of household items (Frantz, 2008), baby abduction,physical abuse of children and elders (de Ruijter & van der Lippe, 2008), and reveals unflattering details about the host family to the outsiders(Frantz, 2008). These conflicting findings are arising because the conceptual definition of quality maid is not clearly defined yet, due to the lack of a specific instrument in measuring the quality of maids. This warrants an empirical investigation to define and measure quality of maids.

The aim of this study is to develop scale of maid in measuring the characteristics of quality maid from Malaysian employers' perspective. This scale will provide a new conceptualization related to the characteristics of quality maid that may allow for more empirical research to be conducted in the future studying the consequences of having a maid. With the specific instrument, our country may be able to reduce cases related to employers' child abuse by maids and many other cases related to the poor quality maids.

2.   Literature Review

A review of research found that most of previous researchers used a qualitative approach in the study of maids. The instruments that they have used include focus group discussion (Roumani, 2005), ethnographic observation (Frantz, 2008; Greenfield et al., 2008; Lo et al., 2003) and in-depth interview (Colombo, 2007; Frantz, 2008; Groves & Lui, 2012; Lo et al., 2003). However, there are concerns among scholars to adopt a subjective assessment from qualitative studies. That is, respondents have made their own assessment on the characteristics of their maids. The subjective assessment may vary according to the different groups of people, at different times because of the respondents' mood (Colombo, 2007; Frantz, 2008) or may be due to the cultural differences (Ip et al., 2008: Greenfield et al., 2008). Accordingly, this explains the existence of research gaps in order to have an objective assessment in determining the characteristics of quality maid to assess the perception of employers on their maid, specifically in Malaysia.

Prior studies using quantitative approaches (Fu & Shaffer, 2000; Lu et al, 2009) have shown that there are conflicting findings related to the consequences of having a maid if subjective assessment used in describing the features of maids. In these studies (e.g., Fu & Shaffer, 2000; Lu et al, 2009) the respondents were asked only to report whether they had employed a maid. The 'yes' or 'no' answers given by respondents did not correspond with their actual opinion to describe how the characteristics of their maids

have facilitated or troubled their life(Spector, 1992). The absence of the specific instrument cause the detection of moderating effects vary and this has led to conflicting findings in explaining the consequences of having a maid using quantitative approaches.

In general, the concept of maid employment is almost similar to the concept of housekeeper jobs in the hospitality industry. It is also almost match to the concept of caregiver jobs in the field of early childhood development. This is consistent with an empirical research conducted by Colombo (2007) who suggests that the duties of maids involve helping out with cleaning house, washing dishes, making beds, ironing, cooking, gardening and yard caring, caring for children, taking children to school, the playground and park, caring for elderly or the disabled and providing company for the elderly people.

In the field of early childhood development, there are extensive studies that measure the characteristic of caregiver. For instance, the Caregiver Competence Evaluations (Normington, 2006) instrument was developed specifically to identify the psychological characteristics of parents who neglect their children. Furthermore, many other existing instruments such as Child-Caregiver Observation Scale (C-COS; Boller, Sprachman & the Early Head Start Research Consortium, 1998) and Child Caregiver Interaction Scale (CCIS; Carl, 2007) were formed specifically to measure the quality of interaction between caregivers and children. However, the care giving duty undertaken by maid is general in nature. In other words, maids should have the care giving skills that range from caring for young children to the elderly people (e.g., Ariffin, 2001). Sometimes, maid was assigned also to take care of children or adults with disabilities (e.g., Colombo, 2007). Hence, the existing instruments in the field of early childhood development are not suitable to be adapted in measuring the quality of maid as a caregiver. In conjunction with that, it implies that there is a need to have a specific instrument to measure the quality of maids as caregivers that should take into consideration the duties of childcare, elder care and disable care.

Since the maid duties include the tasks of taking care of children and managing the household chores, the current study has to refer to the instruments that are commonly used to measure quality of housekeepers in the marketing literature. The probable reason is the existing instruments in the field of early childhood development cannot simultaneously measure the function of maid as a housekeeper. The examples of instruments developed by the marketing scholars to measure quality of housekeeper are HOLSERV (Mei, Dean, & White, 1999), LODGSERV (Knutson et al., 1990) and lodging quality index (LQI; Getty & Getty, 2003).

These instruments were adapted and expanded from the SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman, Zelthami, & Berry, 1985), in which these instruments were purposely formed to measure the quality of service in hotel and lodging industries. Among the aspects measured by the aforementioned instruments are the quality of personnel, quality of interaction between employees and customers, and quality of service delivery. These instruments (i.e., SERVQUAL, HOLSERV, LODGSERV, LQI), however, were only tested in the field of marketing and the reliability of these instruments have never been tested on maid setting from the perspective of human resource management (HRM).

Therefore, there is a need to have a specific instrument to measure the quality of maid from the HRM perspective that might be applied in HRM practices such as

recruitment and selection of maids, training, performance appraisal and human resource development of maids. Since none of previous researchers in the field of HRM has systematically provided a specific measurement to measure the quality of maid, there is a need to have a reliable and valid instrument for assessing the quality of maid, specifically from the perspective of Malaysian employers. Because employer has to pay thousands of dollars to maid agency to get a maid, it is worthwhile to have employers' point of views on characteristics that a quality maid should have to facilitate life of the host families. Therefore, this study tries to fulfil this research gap by developing scale of maid to assess the quality of maid as perceived by Malaysian employers.

3.   **Theoretical Foundation**

In this study, the respondents will be asked to interpret how they perceive a quality maid. According to Nelson (n.d.), the measurement of perception is a subjective identification process to obtain, interpret and organize sensory information, in which it is contrary to the measurement of factual knowledge. On the basis of Social Perception Theory, social perception is referred to as social cognition, at an early stage that uses the brain's ability to process and keep the information based on observation to determine the thoughts and intentions of other individuals (Smith & Mackie, 2000; Allison, Puce & McCarthy, 2000). Several social factors that have been observed and interpreted include verbal message, voice tone and nonverbal behaviour such as facial expressions and bodily reactions (Ajzen, 1988; McDonald, Bornhofen, Shum, Long, Saunders & Neulinger, 2006)

Social perception allows people to understand, to make judgments, impression and predictions on the behaviour of others in their social world. For the current study, social perception to be represented by Malaysian employers will be used by the society as a tool to predict how the presence of a maid may have an impact on their personal lives. On the basis of social perception theory, the society will be able to know the characteristics that should be possessed by a quality maid to facilitate life of the host family. Instruments that will be constructed from this study may serve as a benchmark for society who plans to hire a maid and in the meantime, will reside with them.

Hence, the required maid should be someone that can be trusted so that all family members will feel safe to live with a stranger. The expected dimensions of quality maids that may be emphasized by Malaysian employers are attitude, behaviour, skills, religious practices and personal attributes (Paitoonpong et al., 2002; De Regt, 2008; Frantz, 2008). The ways employers construct the dimensions of a quality maid may be underpinned by the Personal Constructs Theory. Kelly (1955) stated that the basic argumentation for this theory is a person's processes are psychologically channelled by the ways in which he / she expect an event. Kelly then explains the eleven corollaries that normally used by a person to construct dimensions.

Referring to the eleven corollaries as proposed by Kelly (1955), a key factor in constructing dimensions is the past experience. Thus, for the purpose of the current study, the method that is appropriated to construct quality maid dimensions is to use focus groups that will involve Malaysian employers who have experience in hiring full-time maids. Discussions in the focus groups may allow participants (i.e., Malaysian employers) to share their experiences about their maids. This in turn will highlight the characteristics that should be possessed by a quality maid that is required by Malaysian employers. On the basis of the individuality corollary and the commonality corollary, the experience of each employer may be similar, and some experience may be different,

which will create various dimensions. Thus, through focus group discussions, this study may be able to construct dimensions that can be shared by all Malaysian employers.

4. Research Design

Since the purpose of this study is to develop scale for measuring the characteristics of quality maids, quantitative study seems to be an appropriate approach in achieving this objective. However, in order to generate an item pool, the focus group will be conducted to gain an overview of the characteristics of quality maids from Malaysian employers' perspective. This study will not use dyads as the unit of analysis because it attempts to measure the characteristics of quality maid from employers' perspective only. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, data will be collected from each individual employer and the unit analysis is the individual.

This study is a cross-sectional design which is the data will be obtained once in order to answer the research questions. According to Sekaran (2003), the data collected at one point in time is sufficient for the scale development study. The scale purification on pre-test sample and the scale verification on survey sample will be conducted on actual work setting. It means that this study will be done in a non-contrived setting without disruption on respondents' normal life routine.

5. Sampling Design

The respondents for this study will be male and female employers who have experience in hiring full-time maids. The employers are chosen because they have to pay thousands of dollars to maid agency to get a maid. Therefore, it is desirable to obtain the employer's point of views on how the characteristics of maid that is worth with their expenses. The respondents should also meet all the criteria outlined by Immigration Department of Malaysia.

The respondents also should be working employers in which this study does not specify the types of occupation. The reason to involve male and female employers with as many different types of employment as possible is to encompass a wide range of perspectives that might be critical to this study. Considering that it might be easier for employers to assess the quality of their maids, this study will be limited to employers who have full-time maids only because they live within the same household.

Most of previous researchers only use female employers as the respondents for their study (Frantz, 2008; de Regt, 2008). The current study, however, intends to involve male and female employers as the respondents for the current study. The justification of this is some of previous researchers found that there are significant differences between male and female in their perception of maids (Chan, 2005). The different perception between genders exists because female employers often play an additional role in supervising and scheduling daily work for their maids (Chan, 2005).

This study intends to use purposive sampling technique, which involve Malaysian employers who have experience in hiring full-time maid. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) stated that the probabilistic sample method is almost impossible to be used particularly for the hard-to-reach, stigmatized, or hidden population. Although the Immigration Department of Malaysia has provided the number of employers who have maids in Malaysia, this group of people, however, is a hidden population. It is not easy

to access them because of the difficulty in obtaining the personal information of employers because all employers' information is kept confidential by maid agencies and not to be disclosed to the public. This is in line with Tan (2011) who mentions that it is almost impossible to obtain a sampling frame from the Immigration Department of Malaysia because all the employers' information is classified as highly confidential.

6.   Sample Size

According to the Immigration Department of Malaysia (2013), there were about 142,745employerswho legally employed full-time maids in year 2012. Out of this number, 90 percent of them were female employers and only 10 percent were male employers. To allow the researcher to generalize findings from a sample to a population, a reliable and valid sample is required for the current study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), a total of 384 respondents are required to represent the population size of more than 75,000 people. Thus, for the purpose of verifying scale on survey sample, this study attempts to get a minimum of 384 Malaysian employers who have experience in hiring a full-time maid to be the respondents for this study.

7.   Research Procedure

The procedure used to develop quality maid scale largely follows the guidelines recommended by previous researchers (Wotruba & Wright, 1975; Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 1991). Referring to these researchers, the current study concludes that there are six major steps in developing a quality maid scale which are; (1) generation an item pool; (2) scale development; (3) panel of experts review; (4) scale purification on pre-test sample; (5) scale verification on survey sample; and (6) identification of the new quality maid scale.

7.1   Generate an Item Pool

There are two basic methods to generate an item pool namely deductive and inductive. Deductive scale development method requires a comprehensive review of literature to understand the constructs, whereas an inductive scale development method is needed when there is insufficient theory to underpin the identification of the construct. Thus, for the purpose of item generation, this study will use (1) review of relevant literature related to existing theoretical and empirical research of maid; and (2) exploratory method which is conducting focus group with Malaysian employers.

The selection of these methods is in line with Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (1976), who suggest that the item generation can be done through exploratory research (e.g., focus group or open-ended interviews) and literature searches. This method has been used extensively by many previous researchers in order to generate an item pool (DeVellis, 1991).

7.1.1   Literature Search

The current study has refer to the ten qualitative studies (Paitoonpong et al., 2002; Colombo, 2007; De Regt, 2008; Frantz, 2008) that discuss the characteristics of maids which are considered important by their respondents. The purpose of referring to

these qualitative studies is to gain an initial overview of the characteristics of maids which are listed in Figure 7.1. These studies have attempted to highlight the characteristics of maids gathered through interviews and focus group discussions.

Figure 7.1: Characteristics of Maid as Highlighted in Ten Qualitative Studies

Characteristics of maids that mentioned by respondents in ten Studies	Frequency of being mentioned
Trustworthy, reliable, honesty, frank, dependability	9
Hard-skill – ability to use modern appliances, technical capability	8
Obedient, loyal, faithful	6
Hardworking, diligent	6
Religious practice – Muslim, pray, fear of God	4
Quiet, not too friendly – not spreading gossip to outsiders	4
Personal attributes – prefer to have an ugly maid or not pretty maid	4
Independent in work	3
Doing the tasks in a timely manner	3
Soft-skill – have ability to communicate using local language	2
Hygiene	2
Responsible for the tasks assigned to	2
Not demanding about their working conditions, private room and holidays	2
Personal attributes – well educated	2
Personal attributes – dress modestly	2
Personal attributes - single or widowed	1
Personal attributes - middle aged maids	1
Put priority to employer's satisfaction rather than herself	1
Soft-skill – expressing emotion, interaction, emotional commitment	1
Respectful, courtesy, politeness	1
Work discipline	1
Efficiency	1
Thrifty	1

7.1.2   *Focus Group*

For exploratory methods, the researcher intends to have discussion with focus groups of male and female employers who have experience in hiring full-time maids. The purpose is to capture participants' experience, perception and attitude (Greene et al., 1998). The goal in conducting these groups is to enable participants to share their thought about the characteristics of their maid (e.g., Greene et al.,1998). The information gathered will be used to determine the characteristics of a quality maid from the employers' perspective.

Participants will be limited to describe the features of a quality maid based on their experience while employing maids. In order to ensure the validity of this research, a set of semi-structured questionnaire will be used in the discussion and the participants will be encouraged to express their views at length. The examples of open-ended questions that will be asked to the participants during the focus group discussion are: (1) "In your opinion, what is quality maid?", (2) "In 5 to 10 words, please state what first

comes to your mind when you think of the characteristics that quality maid should have, that is important to you".

At the end of each meeting, participants will be asked to put a scale on the characteristics they consider a quality maid should have. Participants may place any number from 1 = "very unimportant" to 7 = "very important" features to show their perception of how important each feature is which includes several aspects such as personal attributes, attitude, behaviour, skill, and religious practice. This preliminary qualitative approach will be used to determine the most important characteristics of quality maid. The responses will be analysed using a frequency count, and the most commonly found words will be grouped together to form dimensions for quality maid scale.

7.2   Scale Development

The first draft questionnaire will be designed for the purpose of assessing the content validity and clarity of the items. This study intends to use Likert scale format for the development of quality maid scale. Likert scale is the most common format used by many researchers in the field of scale development (e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1985; Shariff, 2002). Using a Likert scale format, the items will be presented in the form of verse statements, followed by response options that indicate various degrees of agreement or confirmation of the statement (DeVellis, 1991).

7.3   Panel of Experts Review

The next step in developing quality maid scale is by appointing a few panel experts from the academicians and a few representatives from Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, to validate the contents of the first draft questionnaire. Content validity of a measuring instrument is defined as the extent to which it provides adequate coverage of the topic (Shariff, 2002). With reference to the procedures of DeOnna (2006) and Petrova (2011), the panel experts will be asked to indicate the extent to which each item is appropriate to measure quality maid according to the scale ranging from (1) "need improvement" to (3) "exemplary". The panel experts also will be asked to indicate the extent to which the item describes the characteristics of quality maid according to the scale ranging from (1) "yes, definitely describes a characteristic of quality maid" to (3) "no, definitely does not describe a characteristic of quality maid".

7.4   Scale Purification on Pre-Test Sample

The process of developing the questionnaire will begin only after the instrument has been approved by panel expert. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire will be pre-tested in a pilot study involving employers who have experience in hiring maids. The aim is to get feedback from respondents regarding the content and format of the pilot study instruments. Once the completed instruments have been returned to the researcher, various tests of content validity will be conducted using quantitative approaches such as exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

7.5   Scale Verification on Survey Sample

After statistical analysis is conducted on the proposed instrument in the pilot study, modification and purification of the instruments will be carried out once again. Then the actual field work will be conducted in which the questionnaire will be distributed to the selected respondents. After the instrument is obtained from the participants, the following statistical procedures will be conducted; exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's coefficient alpha and criterion validity. The aim is to verify the reliability and validity of the proposed instrument.

7.6   Identification of New Quality Maid Scale

After all these steps are carried out, then the scale is ready to be used by future researchers as a valid instrument because this instrument has gone through the process of purification and verification. Some limitations of this instrument will be discussed at length in the last chapter.

8.   Theoretical Contribution

Since none has touched in the area of developing a quality maid scale (e.g., Fu & Shaffer, 2000; Lu et al, 2009), the findings of this study are expected to bridge the gap by providing specific scale in measuring employers' perception toward the characteristics of quality maid, specifically from Malaysian employers' perspective. The results of this study are also expected to provide a validated tool that may be used to assist in a human resource management functions associated with the recruitment and selection of maid, identification of training needs, implementation of mentoring and coaching of maid (DeOnna, 2006).

The originality of this study may contribute to a formation of a new body of knowledge and enrich the literature sources in the field of scale development that will benefit the academicians. This study also may serve as a starting point for further researchers in measuring the characteristics of quality maid, which in turn, may stimulate new research that will include modification and improvement of the scale through continued testing. A reliable and accurate measurement to be derived from the results of this study may be used by future researchers to conduct a series of examination using quantitative approaches, focusing on determining the consequences of having a quality maid.

9.   Practitioners Significance

The other contribution of this research is to provide information for the policy makers related to the characteristics of a quality maid needed by Malaysian employers. Nowadays, the Malaysian government is planning to take over the task of recruitment and selection of foreign maids through the collaboration with the government of Indonesia (government-to-government). Hence, there is a need to have a specific scale that can assist the policy makers in the selection process of maids. Since this study will highlight the characteristics of quality maid needed by people in Malaysia, this instrument may be used as a checklist for the governments of Malaysia in the screening stage and selection of maids brought in from foreign countries.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the central contribution of this paper is to propose a new instrument to measure quality of maids. Besides, this paper also discusses the six major steps in developing quality scale maid. The propositions steps are referred to previous studies which have been widely used by many researchers in developing a new instrument. The major theoretical, empirical and practical contributions of this study has also been highlighted and discussed.

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