

Research Proposal Outline

This submission outlines the proposed approach for the Research Proposal Presentation (Assignment 2). The proposed study builds directly on the literature review completed in Assignment 1, which critically examined the gender pay gap in Singapore's IT sector using both quantitative labour market data and qualitative organisational explanations (Ministry of Manpower, 2023; OECD, 2024; Ridgeway, 2011). The research proposal aims to extend this work by developing a structured research design capable of empirically investigating why gender-based wage disparities persist within Singapore's technology sector.

Proposed Project Title

Explaining the Persistent Gender Pay Gap in Singapore's IT Sector: A Mixed-Methods Research Proposal

Research Problem and Significance

Despite Singapore's strong performance on gender equality indicators and high female educational attainment, wage disparities remain evident, particularly in high-skilled technology roles (Ministry of Manpower, 2023). Quantitative evidence indicates that while the adjusted gender pay gap has narrowed, a substantial unexplained component persists (MOM, 2024; OECD, 2024).

The significance of this study lies in addressing key gaps identified in the literature:

- National datasets lack granularity by job role, seniority, and organisational context (Lin et al., 2020; OECD, 2024)
- Existing explanations are often based on Western contexts, limiting their applicability to Singapore (Ridgeway, 2011; Kuteesa et al., 2024)
- Policy initiatives primarily focus on skills development rather than organisational power structures (MOM, 2023; WEF, 2024)

Given the IT sector's importance to Singapore's Smart Nation strategy (IMDA, 2023), understanding these mechanisms is both academically and practically relevant.

Research Question

To what extent can the gender pay gap in Singapore's IT sector be explained by human capital factors compared with organisational and structural inequalities?

Supporting sub-questions include:

- How does occupational segregation influence wage outcomes in IT roles?
- What organisational practices affect promotion and pay progression for women in the sector?

Aim and Objectives

Aim:

To critically evaluate competing explanations for the gender pay gap in Singapore's IT sector through a mixed-methods research design.

Objectives:

- To analyse secondary quantitative data on wages and employment patterns (MOM, 2023; OECD, 2024)
- To explore organisational and cultural factors shaping pay and progression (Heilman, 2012; Ibarra et al., 2010)
- To assess the explanatory power of Human Capital Theory and Gender Inequality Theory (Becker, 1993; Ridgeway, 2011)
- To identify implications for policy and organisational practice (PwC, 2022; WEF, 2024)

Key Literature and Theoretical Framework

- Human Capital Theory (HCT), which attributes wage differences to education, skills, and experience (Becker, 1993)
- Gender Inequality Theory (GIT), which emphasises structural, cultural, and institutional barriers within organisations (Ridgeway, 2011)

Prior research suggests that while HCT explains part of Singapore's adjusted pay gap, it fails to account for persistent disparities in senior and specialist IT roles (Lin et al., 2020; Kuteesa et al., 2024).

Methodology and Research Design

A mixed-methods approach is proposed to address limitations in existing research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018):

Quantitative component:

- Secondary analysis of publicly available wage and employment datasets (MOM, OECD)
- Descriptive and comparative analysis by occupation and gender

Qualitative component:

- Thematic analysis of organisational and policy documents (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Triangulation will enhance validity and allow for a more nuanced understanding of pay inequality mechanisms.

Ethical Considerations and Risk Assessment

This study will rely exclusively on secondary data analysis and document-based qualitative analysis, and will not involve primary data collection through interviews or surveys. This methodological choice is justified by the limited project timeframe and the practical constraints associated with gaining access to industry professionals in Singapore's IT sector.

From an ethical perspective, the exclusive use of publicly available and anonymised datasets (e.g. Ministry of Manpower and OECD statistics) and published organisational and policy reports significantly reduces ethical risk. No personal, sensitive, or identifiable data will be collected, stored, or processed as part of the research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

Wordcount: 619

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