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WOMEN'S RIGHTS: ISSUES, RATIONALES AND
CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN FACING SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY**Irma Wani Othman¹, Suwaibah Zakaria^{2*}, Mohd Sohaimi Esa^{3*}

¹ Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
Email: irma@ums.edu.my

² Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
Email: suwaibah@ums.edu.my

³ Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
Email: msohaimi@ums.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The discussion in this paper focuses on issues that increase the awareness and understanding of society on the importance of achieving common equality in a fair way to optimize women's ability to provide a sustainable future for the country. Among issues discussed (i) Career issues halt for highly educated women with families, (ii) The issue of women as victims of domestic violence, (iii) Elimination of gender discrimination in an effort to dignify women, (iv) Confusion over the issue of women's human rights labelled as a family, community and welfare, and (v) Denial of women's entrepreneurial potential and leadership credibility in the national political arena. This paper uses secondary sources, such as research results published in journals, scholarly writing, online news sources, and public forums, to employ a qualitative methodology. The results of the study present information regarding (a) Gender discrimination, cultural clashes and community perceptions, (b) Implementation & enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act 1994, (c) Viability of the National Women's Policy 2009, (d) Strengthening the functions and jurisdictions of the Affairs Unit Woman (EVE). The rationale for preserving women's rights is for the society to be aware of the importance of women in mobilizing the economy, social, and culture. In addition, the recognition and appreciation of women's contributions must continue to ensure a more prosperous, peaceful and prosperous future for the country. The direction for the future undertaking should focus on the significance of women's empowerment in guaranteeing the development of the country which no longer refers solely to economic development but covers development in terms of social, personality and community unity.

Keywords:

Women, Gender Injustice, Domestic Violence, Social Responsibility

Introduction

On 19 February 2022, Malaysia has celebrated Women's Day in Malaysia to give appreciation and recognition to the contribution and services of women who are tremendously significant in the development of the country. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development has announced that '*Saksama Bersama*' will be the theme of Women's Day 2022 which will be celebrated on 8 March 2022 (Berita Harian, 2022a). This theme was chosen to increase the awareness and understanding of all levels of society on the importance of achieving common equality fairly in order to optimize women's capabilities in order to provide a sustainable future for the country (Berita Harian, 2022a). According to Mat Saad (2020) human capital is the main asset in the development of human civilization. Dependence on knowledgeable human capital can only be achieved if the human mind is freed from conforming to the norms and ethics that surround a society (Ayob, Daud & Ismail, 2016; Abang Muis, Hajimin, Marinsah & Othman, 2021a). Women in the past were seen to carry out important responsibilities in a basic household, but nowadays women's ability in education and economy is growing in line with the development and needs of human resources or the use of skilled labour in the country (Topimin, Othman, Hassan & Ahmad, 2021).

Gender inequality has been faced by women for a long time, especially in the past where women's involvement in any administrative or work matters was minimal (Yusoff, Ahmad, Ali, Ismail & Asri, 2021). The stigma of the difference between men and women as two different sexes and considered women to be much weaker than men put a glass ceiling to various opportunities that are potential for women (Yusoff, Ahmad, Ali, Ismail & Asri, 2021). In the past, women were a group that was not given or had power and were considered as subordinates. This situation is known as the concept of patriarchy. The concept of patriarchy is a concept that places men as the main pillar of social organization (Israpil, 2017). This concept also places men higher than women in all aspects of social, cultural and economic life (Israpil, 2017). If you recall the situation of women when this concept was used, society placed women in a position where they did not have the right to work and own a property, and even not having the opportunity to get a job.

Apart from that, women were also not given the opportunity to receive enough education like today because at that time women were considered more responsible for the tasks at home and were about to get married. This concept of patriarchy not only causes the standard of living of women to be extremely low, but the saddest thing is that women are treated as tools to manage the household and there is always room for their contribution to be belittled. Since these women are considered inferior, men often take the opportunity to unequal treatment to women at will (Israpil, 2017). This gender injustice can be seen in several situations, especially family institutions where a wife is not encouraged to work because they should focus on carrying out the duties of a wife at home (Esa, Othman, Ationg & Mokhtar, 2021a).

At the same time domestic violence often occurs every year, making it one of the top crimes in the country. Domestic violence occurs when one of the partners, whether husband or wife, commits physical injury or emotional abuse on their respective partners. Reporting the matter

to the authorities such as the police is rare for fear of the abuse getting worse or for fear of threats and the safety of themselves and children. In the end, the victims had to remain silent even though they were with their extended family members and did not give a real picture of the turmoil in their household. During the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, the incidence of abuse and domestic violence skyrocketed. Even during Movement Control Order (MCO) period from January to April 2020, a total of 902 cases of serious domestic violence involving women were reported across the nation (Berita Harian, 2021). Therefore, women's empowerment is essential for women to have the opportunity to make decisions in order to reach their full potential, to participate in decision-making and to be able to make rational choices.

According to Alavi and Mat Basakerus (2022), women have emotional and affective maturity and possess feminine characteristics. Women are important pillars of national development, which crucial not only for social, political, and economic aspects, but for all aspects of national development as well. As wives, mothers, and paid workers, women contribute to the development of the nation. Therefore, the community must respect women in order for them to achieve equality. The role of women should not be taken lightly, as a small change can lead to a larger one, thereby elevating their economic and social contributions to the same level as men. The result of the annual celebration of International Women's Day was a day filled with optimism for the dignity of women at this time. This celebration was held to recognise the accomplishments of women, the obstacles they face, and the struggle for gender equality. It should be able to convince the community to accept these women as vital players in the administration and employment sectors.

Literature Review

In orthodox era, women's roles are limited to household work such as serving the husband, managing household chores, and educating children. When women prioritise their careers, they assume a dual responsibility (Lailiyah & Ridhwan, 2020). By virtue of their gender, women shoulder greater responsibilities than men due to the demands of fulfilling domestic and occupational obligations. In addition, middle-aged married women experience physical, cognitive, and emotional changes that result in a decline in function and efficiency. After undergoing a variety of experiences, middle age is also a time when the meaning of life frequently shifts (Zakaria, Ab. Kadir & Subhi, 2017). From an Islamic standpoint, it has also regulated the rights of men and women, as both men and women are not exempt from the rights and obligations for which they are responsible (Hajimin, Abang Muis, Mokhtar, Othman, Esa, Ationg & Hamid, 2021).

A person has a choice of "rights", thus demand with all his might that his rights be fulfilled, or he cannot demand his rights at all. However, in the case of "obligations," a person has no choice but to fulfil or carry out what is required of him (Lailiyah & Ridhwan, 2020). Nevertheless, proponents of da'wah assert that good Muslim women should teach others about Islam, participate in childrearing, and cultivate positive social consciousness (Awang, Yusoff, Mat Isa, Mohd Yusof, Yusof & Nordin, 2019). According to Alamgir (2014), women as bearers of values and cultural traditions are a significant symbol in Islamic revival politics and the foundation of an Islamic state. Al-Imam Al-Nawawi (1234-1277 a.d.) believed that women possess unique characteristics that are not found in men, particularly the positive characteristics of women who are nurturing, loving, and good educators to their children, as well as patient and tenacious Alamgir (2014). Therefore, it is highly inappropriate when women are physically or psychologically harmed.

Da'wah ideology asserts that women are a source of support for men, do not have the same political rights as men, and can only lead organisations (Awang, Yusoff, Mat Isa, Mohd Yusof, Yusof & Nordin, 2019; Mokhtar, Mohd Shah, Ramlie, Othman, Ationg, Esa, Marinsah, 2021). Their career opportunities are limited to clerks, teachers, nurses, and doctors. The emphasis is on educating the next generation of Muslims that they must cover their hair, wear long, loose clothing, and refrain from using so-called "Western" products like cosmetics. For working women, the hijab issue is a significant symbol of the Malay women's community's efforts to create an Islamic identity and a declaration of their commitment to Islam (Abdul Rahim, 2015). Concurrently, after the era of globalisation, women advance to the forefront and should be prepared to plan their careers.

According to Abdul Aziz (2020), individuals must practise effective career management to avoid stress during this COVID-19 outbreak, which will result in physical, mental, and emotional disorders. For those who have quit their jobs or been laid off, early preparations must be made to cover the challenging financial and subsistence aspects, which have worsened since the outbreak. Additionally, initial preparation includes the ability to train oneself to always be patient and content with the tests encountered (Abang Muis, Marinsah, Ramlie, Othman, Ationg, Mohd Shah, Yusoff, 2021b). In the majority of past studies, the issue of women's role in the workplace and domestic responsibilities has been emphasised (Abu Bakar, 2012). To the extent women decide to stop working, relatively little attention is paid to questions pertaining to problems at home and at work in greater detail, as well as to the challenges women face in this era of globalisation and their impartial rights in decision-making.

According to Abang Muis, Esa, Ibrahim, Othman, Mokhtar, Ationg & Mohd Shah, 2021c), the common elements of leadership and disciplines in Islamic-based human development that focus on the development of the potential of the Muslim individual in all aspects. Hence, we are able to comprehend the evolution of women's leadership. Through the research of Hasan and Hamid (2017), who attempted to decipher the development of women's leadership in building the local knowledge for women's leadership through the life of Tun Fatimah Hashim, who served as a leader in UMNO's group for mothers for 16 years. Through the leadership of Tun Fatimah Hashim, the societal stigma that women should not be leaders can be refuted, given that she established a household and was able to participate in political activities with her husband while also being a leader (Hasan & Hamid, (2017). In addition, the findings of Syed Ismail Al-Qudsy (2021) study, demonstrated that the issue of women's leadership is frequently raised when the majority of the highest administrative positions are held by men. Female leadership has been evident in Islamic history for a very long time, as exemplified by Saidatina Khadijah bin Khuwailid, despite the fact that the topic of female leadership is still contested today (Al-Qudsy, 2021).

With this development, it is certain that numerous studies pertaining to women, including women's issues combined with family, community, and social welfare issues, will be conducted. Abu Bakar's (2012) study on working women and family management examined the dilemma faced by working women in balancing their office and home responsibilities. This is due to the fact that, from an economic standpoint, women must work to supplement their husband's income when family obligations increase, resulting in higher expenses. It has been discovered that working women have difficulty juggling their household responsibilities along with their professional obligations. Having to carry a heavy workload at home and not having

enough time to do all of the work at once, including caring for the children, is a challenge and a sacrifice that the family and society should recognise.

Aside from that, the study of Sharil, Fathilah, Niteh, Ahmad & Basir (2018), discussed the knowledge of female workers about violence against women in public places, especially violence that resulted in physical, sexual or psychological injury. Therefore, violence against women needs to be taken into account for every society because emotional and spiritual suffering can leave a worse impact on women. Ismail (2018) also discussed the social problem of women involved in immoral activities that are the cause of social problems and also highlights the method of building a guide for a prosperous woman's life. A case study regarding the involvement of a few women in immoral activities such as beggars, homeless people, drug addicts, sex workers, pregnant women out of wedlock in the city of Kuala Lumpur was said to affect the image of the country in the eyes of tourists, highlighting the issues of urban cleanliness and the public being exposed to infectious diseases.

Increasing crime, peace issues, urban cleanliness and social health are increasing due to various factors. Therefore, the Government through KPWM always strives to preserve the rights of the interests of women, families and society fairly and equitably without the elements of discrimination. The results of this study found that the method of building a life guide for women is to approach the group with wisdom, provide temporary accommodation and help them according to their ability. Efforts to deal with the activities of immoral women have been done by many government agencies through various methods (Othman, Mokhtar, Ationg & Abang Muis, 2021a). As for men, they need to be aware that they need to give opportunities to women to do something that can develop the modernization of the country. In a study that analysed the issue of women's empowerment, Mulia and Narwan (2020), discussed the diverse roles of women who are actively involved in developing the country's economy, social, politics, and psychology. A study by Talib, Ahmad, Mat Saad, Mohd Shafie, Fatira, Seri and Mariahati (2020), discussed about the role of women in empowering economic sustainability where their writing brings attention to the needs of women in efforts to develop the economy of the country and prepare themselves mentally, physically, emotionally and financially. The results of the study found that the role of working women is more focused on helping the family's economy compared to men who work to support the family who are responsible as the head of the family.

To sum up, the traditional society has practiced values that indoctrinate girls to be capable good housewives and able to give their full commitment to household affairs (Kumari, 2012). This situation has caused women to not have an elite status in society (Kumari, 2012). However, this value is not very suitable to be practiced in this era because most women have their own privileges. Therefore, the role of women should be appreciated and supported by various parties so that women can perform well in their careers. There are many support systems in Malaysia that help women in careers such as the National Women's Policy (NWP) 1989, which is an equitable partnership in having resources and information is guaranteed for them. It clearly shows that the issue of women's empowerment is very important in the economic aspect to develop the country and the involvement of women in various aspects can help the modernization of the country towards the status of a developed country.

Methodology

The research methodology in this writing uses a qualitative approach based on social science disciplines that require careful observation of aspects that focus more on processes and events.

Information from various sources such as primary and secondary sources by using secondary data content analysis methods related to history, law, historiography, sociology and ethnography and partnered with descriptive analytical discussion (Creswell, 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). This paper applies secondary sources, such as research results published in journals, scholarly writing, online news sources, and public forums, to employ a qualitative methodology. The findings of the results increase the awareness and understanding of a multilevel society on the importance of achieving common equality in a fair way to optimize women's capabilities. The data include (a) Gender discrimination, cultural clashes and community perceptions, (b) Implementation & enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act 1994, (c) Viability of the National Women's Policy 2009, (d) Strengthening the functions and jurisdictions of the Affairs Unit Woman (EVE). This discussion examines the results of secondary research by researching issues that increase the awareness and understanding of a multilevel society on the importance of achieving common equality in a fair way to optimize women's capabilities.

Discussion

Women not only play a major role in the formation of the next generation, but their contribution is an important economic asset for the country. Since the country achieved independence, the government has opened educational opportunities to all levels of the society (Esa, Ationg, Othman, Mohd Shah, Yusoff, Ramlie & Abang Muis, 2021b). Women have been given the same opportunities as men to enter schools and institutions of higher learning. Armed with the education and knowledge gained, women are now said to be more confident and have self-potential in many fields, whether it is economic, political or social. Women have also started to show their abilities by taking on various responsibilities. However, in our efforts to recognize and protect women's rights, the concerned group has to face various women's issues and challenges as well as face social responsibilities. Among those discussed are as follows:

The Problem of Career Stagnation Among Highly Educated Women with Families

It is assumed that the issue of career stagnation among highly educated women with families is due to personal issues related to family responsibilities or the influence of an individual's environment. It cannot be denied that a person's behaviour or actions are affected by the surrounding society when discussing the decision to quit a job due to environmental influences. For example, a person's job-related negative comments can cause stress. This is exacerbated by an employment sector that is less sensitive to the needs of female employees who, due to pressing family obligations, require greater flexibility in performing their duties (Zakaria, 2020). When society disregards the significance of women's contributions in various fields, such as education, business, etc., the dilemma becomes more persistent. Society's way of thinking will have an effect on the motivation of women who are frequently restrained from advancing in the workplace (Zakaria, 2020).

At the same time, it is correct that the country's proactive actions recognise the role of women as a significant contributor to the country's development in various sectors. Women are the backbone of the family, which is the foundation for the next generation of national leaders. Women are involved in the management and administration of ecotourism projects, climbing and forest adventure operators, homestay managers, food and handicraft merchants, registration counter guards at campsites, cooks at campsites, and cleaning workers at campsites and homestays. This does not account for the demand for female workers in occupations such as equestrian operators, carpentry, landscaping, and operators of activities such as rafting,

fishing, and camping. Women predominate in cleaning jobs, front-desk positions, and homestay management. The occupations with the highest percentage of women, 42.2 percent, or 19 women, are cleaning positions (Mulia & Narwan, 2020).

The Issue of Women as Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can be defined as an individual who tries to commit violence or tries to injure other or it can also be said that a person tries to dominate his own partner, especially for those who are married. This issue of domestic violence often happens to those who are married regardless of whether the couple has children or not. Most of these domestic violence issues occur as a result of the emotions of each couple who are unable to control or can be said to be unprofessional. The issue of domestic violence has also been included in Section 2 of the Domestic Violence Act 1994 where the issue of domestic violence is a crime included in the court act because things like domestic violence are one of the factors in the occurrence of depression not only directed at married couples, but also affected to the children's mental state when they see and hear the chaotic situation in the family (Sharil *et al.*, 2018).

According to the World Health Organization (1998) also stated that one of the factors in the occurrence of domestic violence is the influence of alcohol, gender differences, social structure between men and women from the point of view of differences in strength and body size (Sharil *et al.*, 2018). This is said to be so because, most cases or crimes regarding domestic violence are more women as victims. This is due to the fact that women's body size is normally smaller than that of men, making it difficult for women to react in self-defence. The lack puts the strength of the female group much weaker than the strength of the male group. The majority of these reported cases stem from stress at work or experiencing financial problems. Not only that, violence will also happen if the group of men is bottle feet or defined as drinkers. If the family has children who are still in school, their mental health is also affected when they are and experience domestic violence, thus resulting in trauma until adulthood later (Sharil *et al.*, 2018).

Abuse such as psychological and emotional involves a woman's feelings and her ability to control her own life. For example, psychological and emotional abuse is threatening, insulting or humiliating women so that it leaves a bad impact just like physical injury because it harms the woman's self-esteem and feelings. According to a statement issued by Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar described violence against women as a health issue, a violation of women's human rights, bodily integrity and sexual and reproductive rights (Sinar Harian, 2021). This is because abused women are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as smoking and the use of illicit substances compared to women who are not abused. It clearly shows that the government should try to stop violence against women because women need to be protected and not to be hurt.

Elimination of Gender Discrimination in An Effort to Dignify Women

Discrimination is unfair and biased treatment of certain individuals compared to those of equal status. While gender discrimination is understood as an unfair treatment of two different sexes, namely men and women (Yusoff *et al.*, 2021). In the past, forms of discrimination that always received attention such as prohibiting women from obtaining equal rights in education and engaging in the employment and administration sectors (Mulia & Narwan, 2020). Among them are the sceptical views of older people who have conventional thinking, including a few parties in the employment sector who often criticize women who are married but still want to have a

career. They think that married women should work at home and take care of the children (Hasan & Hamid, 2017). However, as women gained a foothold in the industry, the nature of discrimination began to shift.

Wage or salary discrimination, job type division, and sexual harassment are all forms of discrimination against women in this industry (Zainol Abidin, Ismail & Sulaiman, 2016). This wage or salary discrimination frequently occurs against women when the amount of compensation provided is insufficient or lower than that provided to men (Zainol Abidin, Ismail & Sulaiman, 2016). These disparities in pay are common even when men and women work in the same industry and have the same level of education. Furthermore, job types are classified according to gender. Engineers are considered unsuitable for women because women are perceived to be weak in the face of difficult situations in some jobs. Then there's workplace sexual harassment.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the United States Government defined sexual harassment as a form of discrimination in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Zainol Abidin, Ismail & Sulaiman, 2016). Verbal harassment, such as teasing and sexual words, gestural or nonverbal harassment, such as looks with negative connotations, visual harassment, such as showing pornographic material, and psychological harassment, such as repeating inappropriate invitations, are examples of sexual harassment experienced by women. Physical disturbances such as unwanted touch is accepted (Zainol Abidin, Ismail & Sulaiman, 2016). After years of unfair treatment, women are now able to work in administration and the labour sector with nearly equal treatment as men.

Confusion Over the Issue of Women's Human Rights which is Labelled as a Family, Community and Social Welfare Issue

The issue of discrimination related to women should be emphasized in a more personal context, which is to focus on women's human rights as human beings. Confusion occurs when the issue of women's rights is understood as a general issue related to family, community and social welfare issues. It is said that women are victims of discrimination in various aspects of life. For example, women are not exempted from discrimination from a career perspective (Zainuddin & Aboo Thalib, 2018). This is because women are said to be better suited to stay at home and carry out their responsibilities as wives and mothers by fully managing the household. As a result of various factors, women face the issue of divorce, disputes, and matrimonial property problems (Abdul Rahim, 2015). As a consequence, this is a fundamental issue that affects the majority of Malaysian women and will continue indefinitely.

This issue also contributes to other issues such as mental health issues, identity crises, and identity confusion. According to Othman, Mohd Shah, Yusoff, Abu Bakar, Zulhaimi, Abang Muis & Muda (2021b) the denial of the LGBT clearly shows that the issues faced by women such as self-conflict, sexual orientation and family support system disadvantages are problems that should be taken seriously as community. Human rights are a critical issue for every country in the world, including human rights (Hanafi, Abdul Rahman, Mohd Noor & Mohd Nor, 2016). In a nutshell, acts of violence against women, such as physical, psychological, emotional, and sexual abuse, should be taken into account with a more personal solution approach that considers women's welfare as a human being, rather than simply repairing the defects of society in general. The main topic of discussion is the role of women in society, which eventually leads to a focus on women's welfare in the context of human rights. In addition to the issue of

women's fundamental rights, the struggle in legal, political, and social aspects to be equal to men is a contentious issue that women continue to demand today (Hanafi *et al.*, 2016).

Denial of Women's Entrepreneurship Potential and Leadership Credibility in the National Political Arena

Women are not stereotyped as weak individuals; rather, they are capable of increasing sources of income to benefit families and the country. Women play an important role in the strengthening of human capital, so their presence is critical to the country's development. As a result, women achieve many successes and recognitions at the local and international levels while maintaining their high-performance status. To maintain women's performance and success in this country, we must work to empower them by improving their access to information and support (Hamzah, Mustari & Basiron, 2014). The effectiveness of assisting in the empowerment of this group of women faces numerous obstacles or challenges due to a variety of factors. In terms of economic success, most women are successful in the field of entrepreneurship (Othman, Mokhtar, Maidin & Moharam, 2021c; Talib *et al.*, 2020). Their participation is critical to the success or failure of a planned programme or activity. Women play an active role in determining the direction of the programme by participating in every activity or programme organised by the organisers. Women entrepreneurs are women who work in the field of entrepreneurship and start, own, manage, and dare to take risks in their business. Women can earn money by selling local products to customers, such as local cosmetics. As a result, women can make consistent economic contributions to the country's growth.

Similarly, women's empowerment is demonstrated by the credibility of leadership, particularly in the country's political aspects (Othman, Yusoff, Mohd Shah, Esa, Ationg, Ibrahim & Raymond Majumah, 2021d). The proof, as shared by the founding President of the Council of Malaysian Women Political Leaders (COMWEL), Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin in the Daily News on 7 March 2022, stated that Malaysia is still far from meeting the universal standard of 30% female representation in government (Berita Harian, 2022b). This is demonstrated by the fact that only 15% of the 222 seats in the Dewan Rakyat are held by women. Similarly, 15.6 percent of Ministers in the Cabinet are women, while only 10.5 percent of Deputy Ministers are women (Berita Harian, 2022b). The lack of women in positions of decision-making or leadership creates the impression that there is gender inequality in Malaysian politics (Saidon, Daud & Samsudin, 2017). Overall, formal political representation of women is low and falls short of the 30% quota agreed upon by various actors, particularly governments of UN member countries (Saidon, Daud & Samsudin, 2017). Women's positions around the world have generally remained marginalised and have become a global minority despite having the same population as men (Saidon, Daud & Samsudin, 2017).

The Rationale for the Issue of Recognizing and Preserving Women's Rights

Women comprise about half of Malaysia's population, where the role and contribution of women, whether as wives, mothers, or salaried workers, in the development of the nation and the country is considered vital for economic, political and social sustainability (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). Women not only play a major role in the formation of the next generation, but their contribution is an important economic asset for the country. Since the country achieved independence, the government has opened educational opportunities to all levels of society. Women have been given the same opportunities as men to enter schools and institutions of higher learning. Armed with the education and knowledge gained, women are now said to be

more confident and have self-potential in many fields, whether economic, political or social. Women have also started to show their abilities by taking on various responsibilities. Therefore, the rationale for the issue of recognizing and preserving women's rights, the group concerned has to face various women's issues and challenges as well as facing social responsibilities is detailed as below:

Gender Discrimination, Clash of Culture and Societal Perception

Women should defend their right to make life choices even after having a family. Women's awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the family and career is important so that they are not oppressed by any party or unfair system. In addition, women's understanding of their rights and responsibilities is also important for balance and happiness in life (Awang *et al.*, 2019). In addition, unstable and unequal marital relationships are also contributing factors to women deciding to stop working. This is due to the position of the husband as the main decision maker in the family, but the wife bears the responsibilities of workers and house managers, coupled with the commitment to the children, which adds to the pressure.

The issue of gender discrimination, cultural clashes and society's perception of women's abilities that must be proven compared to men is an unhealthy way of life. For example, society places women as not suitable to be in a decision-making position because of their nature which is said to be more emotional than rational men. Cultural pressure has implications for women to stay at home and manage household affairs. While the man or husband is the main breadwinner or "breadwinner" to support the family's life (Abdul Rahim, 2015). It is clear that the issue of career stagnant among highly educated women with family needs to be scrutinise to identify the challenges that women actually experience in this era.

Implementation and enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act 1994

As discussed above, this domestic violence is rarely reported and treated as a personal problem. The notion that domestic institutional crises need to be resolved by the married couple themselves makes the issue of domestic violence a social problem at all societal levels regardless of race, class and economic status. Therefore, the government took proactive steps in enacting the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (Sharil *et al.*, 2018). It aims to convey to the people that abuse or violence against one's own partner, especially women, will be dealt with harshly if the matter is found to be true and real. Then the perpetrator will receive a commensurate punishment for the act that has been done to the victim. Incidence similar to this need to be taken into account and cared about by the whole community as domestic violence have serious implications.

As a result of prolonged depression caused by domestic violence, there are some women who feel too depressed that their mental state is also unsafe, so the victim is willing to take action to end her history by taking steps to commit suicide. Therefore, it is important for all groups regardless of race, gender, age and religion, to be sensitive to the surrounding situation and have literacy regarding the problem of domestic violence by fulfilling the responsibility of reporting to the authorities. Not only that, things like taking care of the people around us, directly trying to help those who experience domestic violence. Even when the community is sensitive to what happens, the harmony of the residential area reduces cases of domestic crime. The community should not adopt an attitude such as being nosy because not everything needs to be done by oneself, and there are situations and circumstances that we need to be concerned

about before something undesirable occurs, such as suicide or a case of murder as a result of domestic violence.

Viability of the National Women's Policy 2009

This is one of the important issues to improve the standard of living of women and reduce the stigma of society's mind towards women today. These issues of discrimination against women need to be overcome because we have lived in an age where the quality of society's life is increasing and our country needs more workforce. In overcoming this issue there are several steps that can be taken. Among them is through the implementation of the National Women's Policy. The National Women's Policy is a policy formed to coordinate programs and activities related to the efforts to integrate women in national development (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). There are two specific policies introduced to coordinate women's programs and activities, namely the National Women's Policy 1989 and the National Women's Policy 2009 (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). These two policies have different goals over time.

The National Women's Policy 1989 is a policy introduced to encourage women's involvement in various sectors such as the economic, political, and social sectors. The existence of this policy occurred after the awareness that this group of women needed a certain plan and mechanism to involve themselves in the current of development because of the high competition with the group of men (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). The implementation of the 1989 National Women's Policy has several goals. The first goal is to guarantee an equitable sharing between men and women in the ownership of resources and information in addition to obtaining opportunities and benefits from development. The second goal is to integrate women into all sectors of development in accordance with their abilities and needs for the purpose of improving the quality of life, eradicating poverty, eliminating ignorance and illiteracy and ensuring that the country is in a state of peace and prosperity (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). Women have many opportunities to involve themselves in the development of the country through the implementation of the National Women's Policy 1989. This policy allows women to get involved in the national development process. In addition, the standard of living of women can be improved through the opportunities provided through this policy. Looking back, in the past, women's living standards were very low because they were not given the opportunity to be involved in any sector.

The second policy is the National Women's Policy 2009. This policy is actually the same policy as the policy introduced in 1989. However, this policy has been changed according to the flow of time. The National Women's Policy 2009 is a policy that focuses on gender equality, poverty eradication, and integrating women in all aspects of national development (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). The National Women's Policy 2009 has three goals in an effort to empower women and develop human capital. The first goal is to develop the potential and empower women from various walks of life and in all sectors as agents of change for society and as contributors to the economic and social development of the country. The second goal is to achieve equitable sharing between women and men in acquiring and controlling resources, participation opportunities, and enjoying the benefits of development. The third goal is to increase and strengthen a fair and equitable partnership between women and men in aspects of life to strengthen family institutions and develop communities and society (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016).

The implementation of this policy can help in overcoming this issue. This happens because every goal in this policy is aimed at helping women rise up. This policy also helps in the issue

of discrimination against women, especially in the employment sector. This can be seen when the government has made efforts to form an administrative machinery to coordinate women's activities in national development. The establishment of the administrative machinery that has already been formed is the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. Therefore, the existence of this policy is one of the ways to solve problems that arise in the hope of celebrating Women's Day to dignify women.

Strengthening the Functions and Jurisdiction of the Women's Affairs Unit (HAWA)

The issue of women's empowerment networks has become one of the important issues to improve the livelihood of women and provide awareness to the community that women are also able to involve themselves in improving the development of the country. As previously discussed, various obstacles are encountered in continuing the struggle of women in various aspects of the country's development. Women, in various aspects, have the potential to develop their identity and leadership in transforming and strengthening the administrative system and the national economy (Mokhtar, Othman, Ibrahim, Esa, Raymond Majumah, Yusoff, & Ationg, 2021b). Thus, women can shape themselves with existing skills. For example, women who are skilled in making handicrafts. The results obtained can help women to generate income while increasing their skills. These products can be sold in the market and can be welcomed by customers because the products made are unique and attract people's attention according to the creativity of their production. This can result in women having high performance up to the international level.

As stated in the goals for the country's women's policy, it is evident that this policy aims to develop the potential and empower women from various walks of life and in all sectors as agents of change to society as well as contributors to the country's economic and social development. In the rural and agricultural sectors, women continue to be an important factor (Musa, Ationg, Esa, Ibrahim, Othman, Hajimin & Sharif Adam, 2021a; Husin & Amin, 2018). Women's employment in the manufacturing sector has also increased significantly, particularly in the textile and electronics industries (Selvaratnam & Kaw, 2011). Women's participation in service sectors such as community, social, private and public sector services is also increasing. Recognizing the various roles or functions of women in the family, society, economy, social and national politics, the government recognises that specific strategies must be developed to effectively involve women in the development process in order to maximise women's potential.

Acknowledging this, the government passed the National Women's Policy (DWN) in 1989 (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). The formulation of this policy demonstrates the government's commitment to assisting women in participating in a more meaningful stream of national development. DWN provides guidelines for incorporating women's contributions to national development. The effort to empower these women, according to the National Women's Policy, is to strengthen the Women's Affairs Unit (HAWA) as a National Development Machinery. HAWA is the national machinery for women's advancement, and it is now under the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). This is something that is appropriate because HAWA can increase its power and status by establishing relationships with each Ministry, as well as appointing coordinators in each state so that it can act more effectively on women's affairs. With that, women's well-being can be taken into account if there are many problems they face at that time.

Challenges of Women Facing Social Responsibility

The Pressure Between the Demands of Family Responsibilities and Career Obligations

Among the challenges faced to overcome this issue is the pressure between the demands of family responsibilities and career obligations. Uncommon for societies to perceive women do not need to be highly educated to get a job because they will be supported by their husbands or family members. This thinking not only affects women but will also have an impact on the family, society and country. The complete dependence on men to provide for the family obviously has a long-term impact on a family. Women need to be prepared mentally, physically, emotionally and financially because of the increased needs and responsibilities that must be done for economic development. According to Zakaria (2020) the average working woman spends a lot of her time with a dense daily routine. They have to get up early in the morning to take care of their children and family, go out to work for an average of eight to ten hours a day, return home late in the afternoon or early at night and continue their duties as a wife and mother. This scenario has caused the body to become exhausted, tired, and emotionally tense. Not only that, but some women neglect their husbands and children.

According from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in Malaysia showed that approximately one-third of workers experience work-related stress (Ganing, Hassan & Wan Hamzah, 2020). Work pressure is typically caused by responsibilities or workloads that do not correspond to the individual's knowledge, skills, or expectations, making it difficult for them to cope (Makhbul, Abdullah & Hashim, 2013). This stress will be exacerbated if they lack support from peers or leaders and have no control over the source of stress. It is obvious that the problem of career stagnation among highly educated women after having a family is caused by the challenges that women face, which is the pressure between the demands of family responsibilities and career duties (Ganing, Hassan & Wan Hamzah, 2020). In addition, the lack of support from those closest to women also causes women to leave their careers for the benefit of the family.

The intended assistance includes moral support, physical assistance, retaliation, and so on. Women's challenges in dealing with various emotional problems at work and at home are insurmountable, demonstrating that other parties, such as husbands, employers, children, and colleagues, must provide support for working and married women. According to Ismail and Hamjah (2012), the social support system consists of husbands, parents, relatives, employers, neighbours, and housekeepers who can assist married women in forming a quality family according to Islam. This clearly demonstrates the husband's loss of support for his wife. This will have an impact on a wife's emotions at work, causing her to lose confidence in socialising. Women who are under pressure will lose their ability to think rationally. For example, the wife may decide to stop working without considering the long-term consequences of her decision.

According to a study conducted by the Tun Fatimah Hashim Women's Leadership Centre at UKM, one of the challenges faced by women in this country is balancing career and family commitments (Abu Bakar, 2012). The challenge for women is that they require the assistance and support of their husbands and families in order to contribute more effectively and productively at work. According to Malaysian Department of Statistics data, the total labour force consists of 6.06 million women and 9.47 million men (Mulia & Narwan, 2020). 15.53 million in total. In fact, the Labour Force Participation Rate increased by 68.7% (2019) compared to 68.6% (2018) in the first quarter of 2019 (Mulia & Narwan, 2020). Through this

rate, women's labour-force participation increased from 55.6% in 2018 to 55.7% in 2019. (Mulia & Narwan, 2020).

Furthermore, the second challenge is support for childcare, particularly for babies. The existing Childcare Centre's fees are still high. In fact, there are still insufficient childcare centres near workplaces to assist mothers in continuing to breastfeed (Zakaria, 2020). However, the Child Care Centre itself also has challenges which is the lack of adequately trained and certified staff to care for babies. This is important so that mothers are calmer and more confident to leave their babies. The number of TASKA registered with the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) until February 2019 is a total of 4,497. The third challenge is public stereotyping that is still sceptical when women become leaders. There are still many who do not believe in the ability of women to be leaders at work or in an organization and in politics. The percentage of women is still far behind.

Gender equality between men and women in Malaysia is still a long way off, and more efforts are needed to bring it closer. Women held 1,010 board member seats in all publicly traded companies in 2018, accounting for 15.7 percent of the total 6,245 (Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development) (Zakaria, 2020). In fact, the proportion of women on boards of directors in the top 100 publicly traded companies increased to 24.4 percent in 2018 (Zakaria, 2020). It is clear that women face challenges such as balancing career commitments and support for child care, particularly for babies, as well as public stereotyping that remains sceptical when women become leaders.

Inadequate NGO Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence

The country's challenge in dealing with the issue of domestic violence is the response and insufficient NGO shelters (Ationg, Othman, Esa, Mohd Tamring, Hajimin & Hamid, 2021b). This is because, as a result of this issue or case of domestic violence occurring on a regular basis, NGOs are forced to provide limited services, particularly shelters. Although the Department of Social Welfare operates sheltered areas, there are only a few areas and places throughout the country where these facilities are provided specifically for female survivors of domestic violence, and these services are frequently oversubscribed. Things like this are a challenge for the country in helping victims who have experienced domestic violence because this shelter is a place that can protect them from any unwanted things happening and can also help victims to calm themselves from the traumatic events they have experienced.

Furthermore, one of the difficulties is a lack of awareness about these welfare services. Due to this most women are unaware of this welfare service and continue to contact the police. This point pertains to women who have experienced problems such as domestic violence; the majority of them do not seek assistance from the Social Welfare Department before being referred to the Welfare Officer by the WAO (Sinar Harian, 2021). Among other things, the main barrier that causes things like this is that most women are unaware of the Social Welfare Department's important role in providing them with protection services to prevent the violence they are experiencing from continuing. Every group of women, regardless of age, should be aware of every role played by the Social Welfare Department to ensure their safety. There are women who do not dare to report or call the police about abuse because they believe that their safety is not guaranteed even if they have reported the violence they have experienced, because once the offender has been punished, the offender is likely to seek revenge on the victim, that is the woman, because she had made a report and caused herself to be punished.

One of the steps that can help in uplifting women is through the implementation of the National Women's Policy (Ahmad & Ghani, 2016). The policy is a policy that can help change the standard of living and provide opportunities for women to be involved in the main sectors of the country. However, there are some challenges that interfere with the main goal of this policy being implemented. This will affect the number of women involved in this process. The first challenge is that some women do not receive complete education. It is well known that some job opportunities require the individual to have an education level of at least *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM). This problem arises when the individual does not receive the education that their parents should have provided in the past. As a result, this issue has an impact on the policy's main goal of assisting in the advancement of women.

The second challenge is the scarcity of skilled women. Skills are one of the most important aspects of any job sector and administration at this time (Hasan & Hamid, 2017). Communication skills are very important for women to learn today because every major sector in our country requires these skills to deal with various types of society (Mokhtar, Hajimin, Abang Muis, Othman, Esa, Ationg & Lukin, 2021c). The third challenge is the prejudice against women, which results in gender stereotypes, evaluations, and biased perceptions of women's leadership (Yusoff *et al.*, 2021). Women are frequently viewed as weak and unfit to lead. As a result of men's thinking at the time, women were frequently oppressed and subordinated in the past. Even with this policy, this challenge creates fewer and fewer opportunities for women.

Gender Discrimination and Oppression of Women

The challenge facing women today is discrimination and oppression. The issue of discrimination is becoming more and more common and among the discrimination issues that are the main attraction in Malaysia is the issue of gender discrimination that leads to discrimination of women. In the meantime, the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment has become a global topic and attracts the interest of the whole world and a number of countries in the world facing this problem, especially in terms of women's involvement in the development of the economic sector (Yusoff *et al.*, 2021). This issue has become so serious that the courts and regulatory agencies have had to deal with various cases of discrimination against women involving promotions, hiring and conditions in the workplace. Women's awareness of this issue has led to the emergence of feminists who fight for women's rights and equality in the world of work. Among the forms of discrimination against women in the employment sector is the discrimination of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Sexual harassment is a negative phenomenon that occurs in the workplace that can have a negative impact on women (Abdul Aziz, Ab Razak, Mohd Nasir, Amat & Zakaria, 2021). Sexual harassment in the workplace has existed since women first entered the labour force. As a result, issues of workplace discrimination against women must be taken seriously. Meanwhile, women in politics face more challenges than men. This is because female leaders are perceived to be more multitasking because they must manage family, household, community, and country (Abdul Rahim, 2015). Despite the fact that women have transitioned from their primary roles as wives and mothers, their roles cannot be abandoned because society will judge the extent to which women leaders are capable of handling tasks in both public and private spaces.

Unlike male leaders who are burdened by their roles in the public sphere and duties in the private sphere, men will be assisted by women who act as women, wives, and mothers. Therefore, women who are involved in politics should be supported by various parties so that women can create a balanced situation between the genders and build a more equitable and fair society. According to Zainol Abidin, Ismail and Sulaiman (2016), discrimination in the promotion of female employees is still serious. This is because the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has claimed that the gender discrimination of female workers in the promotion issue is still serious despite having the same work performance score as men (Zainol Abidin, Ismail & Sulaiman, 2016). Complaints received by the party involved gender discrimination against female employees in hiring, salary increases, and promotions. Employers' perceptions of women's ability and competence must change because women are given unique advantages such as having a strong spirit to work while giving birth and managing a family (Mohd Shah, Othman, Yusoff, Ationg, Abu Bakar, Esa & Abang Muis, 2021a). As a result, discrimination against women requires more attention because women can contribute to the improvement of the country's economy.

Doubt on Women's leadership

Every person who wishes to implement something in their life faces a challenge. Women have reservations about female leadership in politics. This is because women are given less attention and encouragement to enter the field of leadership because their leadership style and ability to lead people are questioned. As a result, women find it difficult and lacking in confidence to handle all of the responsibilities that will befall them one day. According to Alavi and Mat Basakerus (2022), the role of women in community life in development is viewed not only as a development process but also as a structured foundation in social development (Lukin, Esa, Abang Muis, Ationg, Mohd Tamring, Othman & Mokhtar, 2021). As a result, the emergence of female youth in the leadership structure began to be recognised and equated with the liberation and gender equality movement, which essentially fights for women's rights in various aspects of life (Hanafi *et al.*, 2016).

To address this issue, women should not be discouraged, but rather strive to provide quality services. At the start of their involvement in leadership, every individual who leads in the country has a negative view and lack of confidence in the leadership style of female youth. Furthermore, if no promotion is given to women, they will face a significant challenge. If they have been with the organisation for a long time and hold the position, but there is no promotion for them and they are paid poorly, they will resign from their position. Gender-based employment becomes a problem as a result of jobs that favour men over women. As a result, women's employment opportunities will be extremely limited. This is due to the fact that the work can only be done by men due to a variety of factors, most notably ability. As a result, women are forced to rely on their own abilities to support their families. The difficulty in overcoming the problem is something that the community should consider.

Recommendations and Summary

The discussion about the challenges and the rationale of the issue of career stopping among highly educated women when they have a family needs to be continued in order to research more about it. Society should know about the importance of women in moving the economy, social, and culture in Malaysia. In addition, the recognition and appreciation of the contribution of women in the country needs to continue to ensure a more prosperous, peaceful and prosperous future for the country. A proposal to overcome the problem or issue of stalled career

among highly educated women when they have a family is that the government, especially the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, needs to play a role in training women to venture into the field of employment. Among the fields of work that women can engage in are such as ecotourism, industry, agriculture, and so on. This can provide opportunities for women to work together with men in these important sectors. Therefore, labour force resources will be sufficient and balance the current needs in various sectors. Family members such as husbands and children should also play an important role in supporting all the efforts made by their wives or mothers.

The issue of domestic violence has a very negative impact on the surrounding situation because mental health of the family members will be affected not only by the wife but also mental health of the children. Unstable mental health can cause them to have a desire to take their own life or vent their anger on family members. Proposed strategies that can reduce the problem or issue of domestic violence continue to occur, including holding regular discussions between government agencies and NGOs. Through the discussion, government agencies and NGOs need to be more sensitive and always provide one or more ways to overcome the problems of domestic violence, as prevention is better than cure. The authorities need to create a database and share information to enable information about safety for this group of women such as the role of the Social Welfare Department to be obtained more easily and quickly. This also helps victims of domestic violence to report without feeling doubtful, in terms of the safety of themselves and also their children.

The implementation of the National Women's Policy needs to be further strengthened so that the issue of discrimination and stigma against this group of women can be stopped. The goals of this policy need to be expanded for various aspects other than involving women in the most important sectors of the country. This situation can be seen through the Kelantan Women's Policy which has a clearer goal to strive and dignify women in the state. Kelantan Women's Policy is a policy that exists based on 'Ubudiyah (servitude to God), Masuliyah (responsibility) and Itqan (perseverance) which is taken from the policy of Building Together in Islam (Musa, Husin, & Amin, 2018). By declaring a serious commitment to meet women's needs by identifying and solving women's problems, issues and needs so that gender discrimination does not occur by taking into account the differences in nature, physiology and emotions between men and women that lead to differences in rights and responsibilities that form harmony gender (Musa, Husin, & Amin, 2018).

The second suggestion is to launch a campaign in conjunction with Women's Day, which is observed on March 8 each year. This campaign aims to change the minds of today's society so that gender discrimination against women is no longer tolerated. Female leaders such as Tun Fatimah Hashim must be featured in this campaign so that today's society understands that women can be leaders as well. The issue of violence and discrimination against women jeopardises the harmony of all parties, including the household, community, and country. With the emergence of issues of violence, women's rights have been exploited, complicating their role. Changes in values and norms among women with a good education and involvement in challenging employment sectors are challenging the role of women, who are seen as the main agents of socialisation in the family after the husband.

The rise in the number of women working in Malaysia, whether in urban or rural areas, has an impact on the stability of family institutions in producing quality human capital. Women are

viewed as the most important contributors to the country's economic growth. Recognizing this, the government has attempted to optimally involve women in the process of national development while also assisting in the improvement of women's status. Furthermore, the development of the National Women's Policy marks the beginning of the government's formal recognition of women as a source of national development. This policy aims to provide clearer guidance to development programme planning and implementation stages to ensure that women's participation is not overlooked. As a result, women's conditions and positions in Malaysia have improved over time. However, much work remains to be done to enable women to contribute more effectively to national development and improve the status of women's lives.

Overall, it can be seen that the network to empower women is a serious issue in various aspects such as economic, political and social aspects. The development of a country does not only refer to economic development but covers development in terms of social, personality and community unity (Othman, Esa, Abu Bakar & Mokhtar, 2021e). Development from social, economic, and political factors necessitates more courageous action and struggle on the part of women. Of course, women's physical differences will result in differences in duties and responsibilities in general, but women play an important role in working alongside men to help the country develop. Women do have the characteristics of a leader, which is to be a representative of women in politics who can determine the existence of equitable conditions, equal opportunities, and equitable treatment of the genders in order to live and develop as partners in the family and society (Mohd Shah, Mokhtar, Othman, Yusoff, Esa, Ationg & Ramlie, 2021b).

From an economic standpoint, various parties are beginning to recognise the economic importance of women's employment. Women's contributions began to be recognised, and women were given formal education and even the trust to hold higher positions in the workplace. Women are now advancing in their careers to the point where they can compete with male workers in a variety of fields. However, women's economic participation has resulted in strained family relationships and the existence of other problems in their lives. As a result, women's employment should be more intelligent in terms of arranging the steps in their career life in order to balance career and family. In terms of social aspects, women are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge of education and skills to assist women in their daily lives. As a result, in order to empower women's representation, women must face a variety of challenges, particularly the problem of societal perception and discrimination toward the abilities, abilities, and competence of women in leadership. All parties must also collaborate to help empower women in order to make the country a developed country that other countries can emulate.

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