

## **Factors Leading Highly Educated Women to Become Housewives: An Islamic Perspective**

Ila Nursalida Ali Amran<sup>a\*</sup>, Nurul Atika Mohd Rosli <sup>a</sup>, Zilal Saari <sup>a,b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Akademi Tamadun Islam, Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 54100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

<sup>b</sup>*Pusat Penyelidikan Fiqh Sains Teknologi (CFIRST), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 54100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

<sup>c</sup>*Bahagian Perancangan Strategik, Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara (LPPKN), 50350 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

*\*Corresponding author: ilanorsalida@graduate.utm.my*

---

### **Article history**

Received: 2024-07-17    Received in revised form: 2024-10-13    Accepted: 2024-10-14    Published online: 2024-10-31

### **Abstract**

Historically, women were primarily associated with domestic roles, while men pursued careers outside the home. With the rapid development of technologies and industries, alongside increasing female enrolment in education, women's participation in the labour force has grown significantly. However, this shift has had profound impacts on women, both socially and personally. Despite governmental efforts to boost women's workforce participation, employment rates remain below optimal levels. This research aims to identify the reasons why highly educated women choose not to join the workforce and instead become full-time housewives, regardless of their educational attainment. A quantitative online survey was conducted among women with Master's and PhD degrees (n=253) to explore their motivations for this choice. The findings revealed that many educated women opt to become housewives primarily to care for their children and effectively manage their families, viewing these roles as crucial in fulfilling their Islamic responsibilities and ensuring the well-being of their households. Additional factors influencing this decision are also discussed. The implications of this study offer significant opportunities and strategies for authorities to holistically empower housewives, considering both their educational backgrounds and the Islamic values that guide their choices.

*Keywords:* educated women, housewife, career, empowerment.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globalization, industrialization, and technological development have changed the working landscape for women. They have more opportunities to enrol in the education system and make lifestyle changes. With the advent of Malaysia's new economic policy around 1970, the government emphasized women's issues and development as an important economic resource (Nor Diana & Noraini, 2016). Thus, the true women hood concept (Welter, 1966) where women primary role at home is no longer applied.

Educated women are particularly involved in the workforce because they have a high level of education, as suggested by the Investment of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1962). However, educated women career path is not easy as compared to men (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). They were confined with unexpected abandonment and unpredictable breaks. They continue to take care of the home and raise her children even if she pursues a career (Zhou, 2015). Salleh & Mansor, (2022) refer this situation as double burden syndrome for women. Consequently, balancing family and career reflect the employment rate of women (Mohsin & Syed, 2020; Nor Diana & Noraini, 2016; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012; Suhaida et al., 2019). In addition, strict work schedules in Malaysian workplace culture requires employees to be in the office thus make it challenging for women to work and care for their children (Haryana, 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2020; Suhaida & Mohd Faizal, 2017). Furthermore, lack of assistance from spouse adds the burden of working women (Haryana, 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2020).

Another reason educated women struggle to cope with work and family issues is due to gender role expectations (Haryana, 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2020). The role expectation for women is generally focused on family and child rearing matters. According to Suhaida et al., (2016) women with children under the age of 6 and over the age of 2 were found to be less likely to participate in the labour market, even if their mothers were educated. The more young people in a household, the greater the burden on female members as they are involved in household chores such as house cleaning, washing clothes, preparing meals and caring for family members (Hamplová, 2019; Sharifah Nabilah & Norma Mansor, 2022).

Data from Department of Statistics Malaysia, (2022) showed that more women than men have completed tertiary education, yet women drop out of the workforce after giving birth. Throughout history, the employment ratio for women has remained low when compared to men. Among the unemployed graduate, proportion of female unemployed graduates was 55.7 per cent compared to the men (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). This showed lower rate of women labour force participation among graduates. The low labour force population ratio (LFPR) of women, combined with their high rate of enrolment in tertiary education, raises concerns because the valuable investment in education to raise qualification standards and skills for women is not yielding the expected rate of return (Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA), 2024). It contradicts Becker's (1962) Theory of Human Capital Investment. This theory holds that as one's educational attainment increases, so does the rate of labour force participation. Thus, the government has taken several steps to boost the participation of women in the workforce, including flexible work schedules, community day care and nursery centres, child subsidies, paternity leave, and tax exemptions for businesses who open childcare facilities (Suhaida et al., 2017). However, employment rate of women has not been particularly encouraging, though.

Given the circumstances, it was discovered that educated women prefer to be housewives rather than pursue a career path, despite holding a higher education degree. In order to identify

the reason highly educated women opt to become full-time housewives, despite their educational attainment, the goal of this research is to investigate the factors that led highly educated women choose to become full-time housewives.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Education from Islamic perspective

Islam places a profound emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge as a means of fulfilling one's spiritual and worldly responsibilities. According to Islamic perspective, education is essential for more than just a country's growth and prosperity. Education is essential for the individual before it can benefit the country. Education can fosters individual growth and development (Sim, 2020). Additionally, Allah mentions in surah Az- Zumar verse number 9,

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*Meaning: Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (Az-Zumar,9]*

This verse highlights the significance of knowledge and its impact on an individual's status and capabilities. The rhetorical question posed by Allah emphasizes that those who possess knowledge are not equal to those who do not, suggesting that knowledge elevates a person, both spiritually and intellectually. It is further explain in Surah Al-Mujadilah verse 11 affirms that Allah SWT increased the degree and value of educated people. Allah SWT will raise the knowledgeable people to various degrees based on His words,

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

*Meaning: "So that Allah SWT raises the ranks of those who believe among you, and those who are given religious knowledge (from among you) by several ranks". [Al-Mujadalah: 11].*

Based on this verse, Al-Qurthubi as cited in Umar Mukhtar, (2016) explained that there will be glory in this world as well as reward in the hereafter. Thus, a pious person is raised from a non-pious person and a believer is raised from a non-believer. Ibn Mas'ud RA has stated that in this verse, Allah SWT has praised the scholars (Umar Mukhtar, 2016). He elevates the believers who receive knowledge above the believers who do not receive knowledge by a several degrees. According to Hamka, (2019), an individual's elevation by Allah is attributed to two factors, firstly, their faith, and secondly, their knowledge. The believers and the knowledgeable both have lights in their faces and eyes.

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad SAW further emphasized,

*"Whoever takes a path to seek knowledge, then Allah SWT will make it easy for him the path to Heaven" (At-Tarmidzi [no. 2646] & Muslim [no.2699a]).*

More importantly, knowledge is a criterion for determining whether a situation is good or not (Al-Jauziyah, 2004). Hamka, (2015) added that education generates the intellectual capacity necessary to achieve well-being and happiness in life.

### 2.2 Educated Women in Malaysia

Individuals who have completed their tertiary education are considered educated (Suhaida et al., 2016). This includes women. They are graduates of various classified fields from higher

education institutions. Graduates are defined by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, (2022) as those who have completed at least two years of study at a university, college, polytechnic and recognized body, or equivalent. In 2022, there were over 405,000 female students and about 282,000 male students enrolled in public higher education institutions in Malaysia (Statista, 2024). There were still significantly more female students enrolled than male students over the years. In fact, the number of male students had been declining since 2019 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). This was in line with the global trend that shows more women than men are pursuing higher education.

According to Department of Statistics Malaysia, (2022) education is an essential factor to develop country economy. A nation lays the groundwork for growth and prosperity by prioritising education and providing its citizens with the necessary training and information. As a result, a country's prosperity is inextricably linked to its people's skills and knowledge, as they contribute to the labour force, foster innovation, and increase productivity (Gillies, 2015). Malaysia is investing significantly in its educational system to lay the groundwork for a prosperous future because it recognizes the importance of education. Thus, lies the Theory of Human Investment Capital (Becker, 1962) that suggests the higher an individual's level of education, the greater their participation in the labour market.

### **2.3 Educated Women and Workforce Participation**

Reality of gender inequality in the workforce quickly became apparent after graduation. According to The World Bank, (2024) from the gender data portal, men made up 78% of the labour force, compared to women's 51.6%. Given that male graduates showed a noticeably higher rate of workforce participation than female graduates, this indicate that in 2023, women's participation in the workforce remained disproportionately low. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022), graduates who are unemployed are classified as outside labour force for a variety of reasons including training, continuing education, housework, disability, retirement, or not being interested in finding job.

Report from Department of Statistics Malaysia, (2022) showed many female graduates are outside labour force still unemployed due to family responsibilities and housework. However, according to the Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA) (2024), despite their unemployment, women in general are employed. Yet, because of gender bias, work done by women is frequently not considered employment. Women are frequently the primary caregivers for children and oversee a wide range of important household tasks.

Suhaida et al., (2017) explored into the employment choices of educated married women within Malaysia's labor market. Their study shed light factors influencing these women's decisions regarding workforce participation. Elements such as ethnicity, educational background, age, residential locality, financial resources, paternal education, spouse's earnings, and childcare responsibilities significantly impact their engagement in the labor force. Notably, findings indicated that educated married women are less inclined to work if they reside farther from urban hubs, are aged over 34, have spouses with monthly incomes surpassing RM6,000, and are responsible for children rearing.

A study conducted by Haryana, (2015) revealed the factors prompting educated women to withdraw from the workforce in Malaysia. Interviews with 18 participants showed a multitude reasons behind their decisions to transition into full-time housewives. The primary driver for this shift was identified as the absence of adequate social support. Respondents highlighted the crucial reliance on support from spouses, government, and society to sustain

their engagement in the workforce. However, the lack of assistance from husbands, inadequate childcare provisions, societal perceptions of gender roles, and cultural pressures emerged as significant barriers hindering women's participation in the workforce.

The huge disparity between the number of female medical students and female doctors in the medical workforce in Pakistan prompted a study to investigate why female medical students in Pakistan, despite pursuing professional degrees, often choose not to enter the medical workforce (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). Using qualitative methods, data from 31 female doctors were gathered, revealing three main factors which are individual, organizational, and sociocultural. Personal choice was a significant influencer, alongside organizational challenges like heavy workloads and gender bias. Sociocultural norms, including gendered caregiving expectations and spousal resistance, further hindered women's career retention. The findings highlight systemic barriers that contribute to the underrepresentation of female doctors in Pakistan's medical workforce.

Prevalance from the previous studies rooted in promoting gender equality, economic independence, and the utilization of women's skills and talents in professional spheres. Researchers advocates for policies and initiatives aimed at facilitating women's access to employment opportunities, promoting work-life balance, and combating gender discrimination in the workplace (Mohsin & Syed, 2020; Suhaida et al., 2019). Conversely, considering the current situation, encouraging women to become housewives as their chosen career requires a different perspective. This approach advocates prioritizing and valuing women's roles in the home as caregivers, homemakers, and nurturers. As a result, it recognizes the importance of domestic labor and the significant contributions made by women to the well-being and cohesion of families. Rather than focusing solely on women's formal labor market participation, this approach advocates for policies and social norms that recognize and support women's choices who opt for full-time domestic roles.

Educated women who undertake domestic roles as housewives often yield benefits for their children and families. Research examining educated women opting for housewifery reveals that they experience higher levels of mental, physical, social, and psychological well-being, alongside a higher quality of life compared to less educated counterparts (Javed et al., 2016). Moreover, Devi & Fourianalistyawati, (2018) emphasize that educated housewives demonstrate greater self-esteem and adeptness in adapting to their domestic roles. These findings suggest that educated women who elect to pursue housewifery can undergo substantial personal growth regardless of their professional career. Sim, (2020) conducted a study indicating that, for Emirati women, education and career endeavours were not merely stepping stones toward a specific goal but were valued as ends in themselves, closely tied to personal fulfilment rather than external objectives.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research design**

The study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive research design. This design was used to explore the factors that led educated women opt to become housewives, focusing directly on the aspects influencing their decision. The descriptive research design involved collecting quantitative data to describe patterns and frequencies related to these factors.

### 3.2 Participant

A total of 253 participants took part in this study. Previously, Suhaida et al. (2017) noted the lack of statistical data on educated women who are unemployed, and they focused on married educated women deciding whether to work or not. In contrast, this study responded to the Department of Statistics Malaysia's (2022) report that most female graduates remain unemployed due to family responsibilities and housework. The researcher selected educated housewives using random sampling, specifically targeting those with master's and doctoral degrees, as they have invested significant time and effort in their education. This study aims to explore the unique case of educated housewives, limiting the participants to those with higher tertiary education.

Participant in this study mostly were at the age range of 31-35 years old (47.4%). Most respondents (78.2%) have a master's degree, with a significant number (21.7%) pursuing a PhD. Table 1 provide personal sociodemographic characteristic of the 253 participants who participated in this study.

**Table 1:** Sociodemographic characteristic

Characteristic	n (%)
<b>Age</b>	
25-30	18 (7.1)
31-35	120 (47.4)
36-40	70 (27.6)
41-45	34 (13.4)
46-50	8 (3.1)
51-55.	3 (1.1)
<b>Education Level</b>	
Master	198 (78.2)
PhD.	55 (21.7)

### 3.3 Procedures

The researcher recruited participants by distributing posters on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Participants clicked provided link in the poster to take part in the survey. Data was collected through an online survey using Google Forms, which was available from September 28, 2022, until October 5, 2022. Figure 1 illustrate the poster distributed for this study to call for participants. The poster invites participants for a study on the wellbeing of highly educated housewives, specifically those with a Master's or PhD. However, the survey linked in the poster begins by asking about the initial factors that led these educated women to choose the role of a housewife.



Figure 1 : Poster called for participant

### 3.4 Tools and instrument

A self-structured instrument was designed to achieve the objectives of this study. The researcher developed a questionnaire to identify the factors leading educated women to become housewives, with possible factors listed based on a literature review. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: one for demographic background and the other for the primary reasons for becoming a housewife. The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms application. Descriptive analysis was conducted on the survey data.

## 4.0 RESULT

The data provided focuses on the perspectives of educated women and their reasons for choosing housewife as a career. There is no one-size-fits-all explanation for why someone chooses to be a housewife. To further explain on the educated women preferences to opt for housewife, family background of the participant including duration of being housewife and the number of children have recorded. According to the findings, half of the respondents (56%) spent at least 4 to 9 years as a housewife. Findings also revealed that educated women who decide to be a housewife tend to have fewer children, with 69.1% of them having one to three youngsters.

Table 2 : Family background

Family background	n (%)
<b>Duration of being housewife (years)</b>	
1-3	74 (29.2)
4-6	76 (30.0)
7-9	66 (26.1)
10-15	32 (12.6)
>16	3 (1.2)
>20	2 (0.8)

Number of children	
0	11(4.3)
1-3	175 (69.1)
4-6	65 (25.5)
7-8	2 (0.8)

To determine the objective of this study, there is no ultimate justification for becoming a housewife because the reasons given are numerous and diverse. Table 3 indicated factors led educated women choose to become housewife.

**Table 3:** Factor led of being housewife

Factors	n (%)
<b>Reasons for choosing housewife</b>	
1. <i>Prioritizing family needs</i>	116 (45.8)
2. <i>Personal will</i>	38 (15.0)
3. <i>Inabilities to secure job</i>	29 (11.4)
4. <i>Juggling roles between work and families</i>	26 (10.4)
5. <i>Caring for sick family members</i>	11 (4.3)
6. <i>Husband preferences</i>	12 (4.7)
7. <i>Lack qualities of childcare</i>	4 (1.5)
8. <i>Others</i>	17 (6.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>253 (100%)</b>

From the result, it shows that the most common reason, cited by 45.8% of respondents, is prioritizing family needs. The second most frequent reason, at 15.0%, is personal will that indicated a voluntary choice. Inabilities to secure a job is mentioned by 11.4% respondents, while juggling roles between work and families accounts for 10.4%. Other factors that led educated women opt to be housewife include caring for sick family members, (4.3%), husband preference (4.7%) and lack qualities of childcare (1.5%). 6.7% reasons mentioned as others cited by a small number of respondents include the end of a job contract, having a special needs child, wages being perceived as not worth it, time freedom, and language barriers. In total, 253 respondents contributed to this data, with each percentage reflecting the proportion of the total responses.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The fact that educated people with advanced degrees, such as Master's and PhDs, choose to be housewives calls into question stereotypes about the traditional division of labour in households. Even the Theory of Human Investment Capital (Becker, 1962), stated that the higher an individual's level of education, the greater their participation in the labour market, this study highlighted that education does not necessarily preclude individuals from pursuing domestic roles; rather, it emphasizes the various paths individuals can take based on their personal preferences and circumstances. This demonstrates that education is linked not only to a career, but also to personal satisfaction and well-being (Diener, 1984; Ilies et al., 2019; Sim, 2020).

As stated earlier in the literature review section, education is important not only for obtaining a good career and obtain good financial (Huppert, 2009), but also for personal growth and development (Sim, 2020). A study of educated women who choose to become



housewives found that educated housewives have higher levels of mental, physical, social, and psychological well-being and quality of life than less educated women (Javed et al., 2016). Devi and Fourianalistyawati (2018) added that educated housewives have higher self-esteem and are more capable to adjust to their roles as housewives. This indicated that educated women who choose to be housewives can grow significantly regardless of their career.

To understand why educated women choose to be housewives, the researcher investigated participant experiences with becoming housewives. This study sheds light on the significant portion of respondents who identified as housewives, with 56% having dedicated a substantial portion of their lives, ranging from four to nine years to this role. This implies a deliberate decision rather than a default situation, emphasizing the respondents' agency and willingness to fulfil these roles. Previously study suggested that mothers will be happier working with their own preferences (Hamplová, 2019). Mohsin & Syed, (2020) added that being a housewife is a personal choice based on one's preferences and situation Thus, the findings revealed that respondents are satisfied with their decision to be housewives for an extended period, implying that these individuals did not simply passively occupy the role but actively chose to do so.

Furthermore, finding from this study which showed in Table 2, revealed that the respondents tend to have few number of children which is only 1-3 kids .This challenges the commonly held opinion that women who choose to stay at home because they have larger families (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development 2014). However, this study is consistent with a study conducted by Sato, (2022) which found that housewives without children are happier than housewives with children. Thus, having fewer children brings more happiness to respondents in this study, allowing them to focus on childrearing and other activities while being a housewife. Having more children can increase a parent's economic burden (Ugur, 2019) and require more housework from mothers (Sato, 2022). However, Allah mentions in Surah Al-Isra' verse 31, He promised that having children won't make parent live in poverty and hardship based on his words,

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْئًا كَبِيرًا

*Meaning: “And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin” [ Al-Isra',31]*

In this study, among the numerous and diverse reasons educated women choose to be housewives, is the desire to prioritize family was identified as the most common justification. This was also consistent with many previous studies in which educated women opt to become housewives to focus more on childrearing and family responsibilities (Haryana, 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2020; Nurdinova, S., Adaçay, 2022; Suhaida et al., 2017). Having children brings emotional pleasure and satisfaction to parents (Sato, 2022). Therefore, educated women place a high value on prioritizing their family's needs and devoting time and energy to building stronger relationships. From this study, prioritizing family's needs and dedicating their time and energy to nurturing their relationships is of paramount importance.

Previous study showed numerous reasons why educated women choose to prioritize their families and children. Some of the reasons cited including gender traditional roles and sociocultural reasons (Haryana, 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2020; Nurdinova, S., Adaçay, 2022; Sahin & Aytac, 2021; Zhou, 2015). Traditional roles and sociocultural emphasize on women role in childrearing process and family responsibilities. It is interesting to note that respondents not only chose to become

housewives to care for the child, but also includes care for the sick family members. This is similar to Nurdinova, S., Adaçay, (2022) which reported that caring for family members become one of the reasons for becoming housewife. Women traditional roles that responsible for home, families and children has narrated in Sahih Bukhari number 7138,

وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ نَيْبِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ

*Meaning: "The woman is a guardian who is responsible for her husband's home and children".*

The challenge of balancing work, household duties, and childrearing often prevents educated women from fully focusing on their children and family needs (Kamarul Azmi Jasmi & Siti Fauziyani Md Salleh, 2005; Norehan Abdullah et al., 2012; Telaumbanua & Nugraheni, 2018). In our study, many respondents cited juggling these responsibilities as a key reason for becoming housewives. Sharifah Nabilah and Norma Mansor (2022) describe this phenomenon as work-family conflict. A respondent in Zhou's (2015) study echoed this sentiment, stating that managing both work and childcare is not only difficult but also feels impossible. In countries like Japan, women often choose to interrupt their careers during the childrearing phase (Zhou, 2015). This career interruption affects not only less-educated women but also those who are highly educated. These women temporarily leave the workforce with the intention of returning in the future (Zhou, 2015).

To address the family-work conflict, the government has introduced initiatives such as flexible working hours for female employees (Sharifah Nabilah & Norma Mansor, 2022) and improved childcare centers (Zakirah et al., 2020). However, this study found that issues with childcare are a rare reason (1.5%) for educated women to become housewives. This suggests that many educated women choose to stay home not due to childcare challenges but to dedicate their full attention to their children and families. The unique care and nurturing provided by mothers have a significant impact on their children's growth and development (Nasih Ulwan, 1988).

Some other reason cited by respondents opt for housewife is inability to secure a job. This suggests that despite their educational qualifications, these women faced challenges in finding suitable employment opportunities, leading them to opt for a role within their own homes. Despite on personal or individual preferences, decisions to choose housewife as career were influenced by preferences of others such as husband (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). In line with this finding, respondents mentioned their husbands as a reason for becoming housewives. Thus, it is indicated that they may have prioritized their husband's career or lifestyle preferences over their own professional ambitions.

The prevalence of previous studies emphasizes the importance of gender equality, economic independence, and the use of women's skills and talents in professional fields. Scholars advocate for policies and initiatives that help women get jobs, promote work-life balance, and address gender discrimination in the workplace. However, in the current context, there is a call for a different perspective, a viewpoint that encourages women to choose housewifery as their career. This approach prioritizes and values women's roles as caregivers, homemakers, and nurturers in the home. It recognizes the value of domestic work and the significant contributions that women make to family well-being and cohesion. Instead of focusing solely on women's formal participation in the labour market, this position advocates for policies and societal norms that respect and uphold women's choices to engage in full-time domestic roles. It is important to recognize and respect the choices made by these

individuals, as their decisions are shaped by a range of personal, cultural, and socio-economic factors.

This study has limitations because it focuses on descriptive statistics rather than deeper analysis. Future research should explore the relationships between variables like child age, mother age, and family income. Additionally, future studies should examine the preferences and challenges faced by educated women who choose to become housewives, which could help in creating policies to empower housewives.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the decision of highly educated women to become housewives reflects a complex interplay between modernity, tradition, and Islamic values. While some women prioritize family needs or face challenges in balancing professional and domestic responsibilities, others consciously choose this path, guided by their Islamic beliefs that emphasize the importance of family, child-rearing, and managing the household as a means of fulfilling their religious duties. This diversity of motivations highlights the need to understand and respect individual choices within the framework of Islamic teachings. Authorities can use these insights to develop policies that holistically empower housewives, ensuring they are supported, valued, and recognized in both modern and traditional contexts in Malaysia, in alignment with Islamic principles.

## Acknowledgment

This work was funded by Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (Vote No: R.J130000.7853.5F224) and UTM Research University Grant (Vote No: Q.J130000.3553.05G11). We would also like to thank all respondents, academicians and researchers who have helped us in this study.

## List of Reference

- Al-Jauziyah, I. Q. (2004). *Kunci kebahagiaan*. (Abdul Hayyie, Terj.) Akbar Media.
- Becker, G. S. (1962). Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*, 70(5, Part 2), 9–49. <https://doi.org/10.1086/258724>
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2022). *Graduate Statistics 2022*. Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia
- Devi, Y. R., & Fourianalistyawati, E. (2018). Hubungan Antara Self Esteem Dengan Penyesuaian Diri Sebagai Peran Ibu Rumah Tangga Pada Ibu Berhenti Bekerja Di Jakarta. *Psibernetika*, 11(1), 9–20. <https://doi.org/10.30813/psibernetika.v11i1.1154>
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542–575. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542>
- Gillies, D. (2015). Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7>
- Hamka. (2015). *Tasawuf modern*. Gema Insani Press.
- Hamka. (2019). *Tafsir Al Azhar Juzuk 28*. PTS Publishing House Sdn Bhd.
- Hamplová, D. (2019). Does Work Make Mothers Happy? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 20(2), 471–497. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-9958-2>
- Haryana. (2015). Dilema wanita berpendidikan tinggi: Faktor-faktor wanita berhenti kerja. *Sarjana*, 30(1), 99–117.

- Huppert, F. A. (2009). Psychological Well-being: Evidence Regarding its Causes and Consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 1(2), 137–164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-0854.2009.01008.x>
- Ilies, R., Yao, J., Curseu, P. L., & Liang, A. X. (2019). Educated and happy: A four-year study explaining the links between education, job fit, and life satisfaction. *Applied Psychology*, 68(1), 150–176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12158>
- Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA). (2024). *Employment to Population Ratio*. <https://www.ilmia.gov.my/index.php/en/dashboard-datamart/kilm/indicators/item/employment-to-population-ratio>
- Javed, S., Javed, S., & Khan, A. (2016). Effect of education on quality of life and well being. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(3), 2349–3429.
- Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, & Siti Fauziyani Md Salleh. (2005). Kecemerlangan wanita profesional mengimbangi tugas rumahtangga dan kerjaya: Perspektif Islam. *Seminar Wanita Profesional*. [http://eprints.utm.my/41142/1/JasmiKA2005\\_KecemerlanganWanitaProfesionalMengimbangiTugas.pdf](http://eprints.utm.my/41142/1/JasmiKA2005_KecemerlanganWanitaProfesionalMengimbangiTugas.pdf)
- Ministry of Women Family and Community Development (2014). *Study to Support the Development of National Policies and Programmes to Increase and Retain the Participation of Women in the Malaysian Labour Force: Key Findings and Recommendations*. Publisher: Ministry of Women Family and Community Development
- Mohsin, M., & Syed, J. (2020). The missing doctors — An analysis of educated women and female domesticity in Pakistan. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 27(6), 1077–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12444>
- Nor Diana, & Noraini. (2016). Work, family and women’s well-being in Malaysia. In J. M. Connerley & Wu (Ed.), *Handbook on Well-Being of Working Women*. 717–734. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9897-6\\_40](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9897-6_40)
- Norehan Abdullah, Rahmah Ismail, Zuraidah Mohd Noor, & Fariza Ahmad. (2012). Kebarangkalian bekerja wanita berkahwin di Malaysia. *Jurnal Ekonomi Malaysia*, 46(1), 107–117.
- Nurdinova, S., Adaçay, F. R. (2022). Are Turkish Housewives Happy? A Qualitative Approach. In M. Cloutier, S., El-Sayed, S., Ross, A., Weaver (Ed.), *Linking Sustainability and Happiness. Community Quality-of-Life and Well-Being*. Springer, Cham.
- Sahin, A. K., & Aytac, D. S. (2021). International Migration of Highly Qualified Housewife Mothers and Their Career Concerns. *International Journal of Business and Management Research*, 9(1), 45–50. <https://doi.org/10.37391/ijbmr.090107>
- Sato, K. (2022). Who is Happier in Japan, a Housewife or Working Wife? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 23(2), 509–533. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-021-00411-3>
- Sharifah Nabilah, & Norma Mansor. (2022). Determinants of Labour Force Participation Among Married Women. *International Journal for Studies on Children, Women, Elderly and Disabled*, 15, 1–7.
- Sim, W. (2020). For Love, Money and Status, or Personal Growth? A Survey of Young Emirati Women’s Educational Aspirations. *Gulf Education and Social Policy Review*, 1(1), 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.18502/gespr.v1i1.7470>
- Statista. (2024). Number of students enrolled in public higher education institutions in Malaysia from 2013 to 2022, by gender. [statista.com/statistics/794845/students-in-public-higher-education-institutions-by-gender-malaysia/#:~:text=In 2022%2C around 282%2C000 male,of females than male students](https://www.statista.com/statistics/794845/students-in-public-higher-education-institutions-by-gender-malaysia/#:~:text=In%2022%2C%20around%20282%2C000%20male,of%20females%20than%20male%20students.&from_view=table). retrieve date 10 May 2024
- Suhaida, Halimahton, Abd Rahim, Rosfadimi, & Subramaniam, G. (2019). Child care matters: What educated mothers need before entering the labor market. *Advances in Business Research International Journal*, 5(3), 36. <https://doi.org/10.24191/abrij.v5i3.9985>
- Suhaida, & Mohd Faizal. (2017). The need to work by educated Muslim women in Malaysia. In Mohd Faizal P Rameli, Abdul Qayyum Abdul Razak, Muhammad Taufik Md Sharipp, Mohd Khairul Nizam Mohd Aziz, Rawi Nordin, S.Salahudin Suyurno, & Dziauddin Sharif (Eds.), *2nd*

- International Islamic Heritage Conference (ISHEC 2017)* 4(3), 57–71. Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari (ACIS), UITM Melaka. <http://marefateadyan.nashriyat.ir/node/150>
- Suhaida, Mohd Faizal, Azhana, Zunaidah, & Khalilah. (2017). Decision to work by educated married women. *Advanced Science Letters*, 23(8), 7702–7705. <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2017.9557>
- Suhaida, Mohd Faizal, Norafifah, Abdul Qayuum, & Nor Azlina. (2016). Labour supply among educated married women. *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship (GBSE)*, 2(4), 110–117.
- Telaumbanua, M., & Nugraheni, M. (2018). Peran ibu rumah tangga dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan Keluarga. *Sosio Informa*, 4(02), 418–436.
- The World Bank. (2024). *Labor force participation rate, by sex*. [https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economics/malaysia#:~:text=In Malaysia%2C the labor force,older that is economically active](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economics/malaysia#:~:text=In%20Malaysia%2C%20the%20labor%20force,older%20that%20is%20economically%20active). retrieve date 10 May 2024
- Ugur, Z. B. (2019). Does Having Children Bring Life Satisfaction in Europe? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 21(4), 1385–1406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00135-5>
- Umar Mukhtar. (2016). *Iryad Al-Hadist Series 109: The advantages of seeking knowledge*. Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan. [https://muftiwp.gov.my.translate.google.com/ms/artikel/irsyad-al-hadith/1122-irsyad-al-hadith-siri-ke-109-kelebihan-menuntutilmu?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=ms&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://muftiwp.gov.my.translate.google.com/ms/artikel/irsyad-al-hadith/1122-irsyad-al-hadith-siri-ke-109-kelebihan-menuntutilmu?_x_tr_sl=ms&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)
- Welter, B. (1966). The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860. *American Quarterly*, 18(2), 151. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2711179>
- Zakirah, Suhaida, & Abd Halim. (2020). Positioning childcare matters among working mothers. *Journal of Contemporary Social Science Research*, 4(1), 107–116.
- Zhou, Y. (2015). Career Interruption of Japanese Women: Why Is It So Hard to Balance Work and Childcare?. *Japan Labour Overview*, 12, 106–123. <http://www.project-syndicate.org>