



Gender Inequality In Malaysia Labour Force: Data Evidence

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 26 March 2023 Revised: 12 July 2023 Accepted: 29 July 2023	Women have overcome many challenges within the labour market, but gender inequality still exists in the form of total employment by categories and states. The higher gender disparity was found in Selangor with the ratio of the men and women employed at 599,200 and this is concentrated in the 30-34 years old. The past findings on the gender discrimination practice in the Malaysian labour market motivated this study to fill the literature gap by providing an up-close analysis on the differences observed within the different states in Malaysia, the difference that can be observed by age group, by the status of employment, by the different sectors of employment and the gender difference as observed in mean and median wages. As context for the finding, an overview of the government policy initiatives to close the gender gap is also provided. One of the proposed recommendations was the balanced responsibility between both genders in household care.
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Keywords: Gender Inequality, Gender Discrimination, Labour Market, Malaysia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women have overwhelmed many obstacles within the workplace, but gender disparity persists where women's earnings and economic participation is considerably less compared to male. Unfortunately, this trend doesn't seem to be ending any time soon. The Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum estimated that the amount of time it takes to end gender inequality would take nearly 100 years and gender-based disparities in pay and employment opportunities will take almost 200 years to achieve [23, 31, 40]. There has been a significant increase in men's contribution to household responsibility including childcare and it is likely to continue growing with greater women participation in the labor force, however even with this progress women's contributions still far outshines their male counterpart [45, 54].

According to World Economic Forum's, Malaysia placed ninth in the region and is recorded as one of the countries with the largest gender inequalities in South-east Asia in four indicators which are economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment [22]. According to the report released by the Department of Statistics, the female (55.2%) labour force participation rate is lower than men's (80.4%). In recent years, it was also found that women in Malaysia face a slightly

enhanced score of 72.7% in economic participation and opportunity, with the proportion of women as legislators, senior officials and managers had also risen to 24.7% in 2018 from 22% in 2017.

Women enrolments rates in every level of education in Malaysia were greater as vis-a-vis their male counterparts when it comes to educational attainment [41]. However, women continue to be overrepresented in lower growth industries and lower paying jobs, according to McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). Women's access to talent likewise narrows, with a representation decline of more than 50% from entry-level to senior management. The proportion of women holding senior roles in the labor force is recorded at 20.4% [22]. Surprisingly, there are exceptions in certain instances such as approximately 23 percent of women board members and senior managers were recorded at energy companies in Malaysia, outstripping the average in the Asia-Pacific region [7].

Women in Malaysia workforce still earn below their male counterparts [37, 44]. For every salary and wages of men with RM100, women workers attained only RM93.2 in 2018 [44]. Social and cultural gender norms undermine women's place of work contributions and it is also one of the major obstacles that result in the underrepresentation of women in senior executive and management roles [8]. The shortage of opportunities for women or the glass ceiling to move into senior executives and management roles could also contribute to the decrease in the participation rates [8, 16, 50]. The gender wage disparity increases as one moves towards the lowest salary distribution, a result that is consistent with Malaysia's sticky floor effect [33].

Women also shoulder the responsibility of having and raising children in addition to other family commitments and this shift their focus away from work [8, 51]. Children out of school need to be attended, meals to prepare at home, the intensified care and needs for older persons and ill family members was all the responsibility to be shouldered by women and this is categorized as unpaid care work. Further the demands for unpaid care work obligations during the movement control period or Covid-19 pandemic is greater than before [13, 47, 52]. In some instances, women are found to drop out of the workforce to these family needs [47]. Women in these conditions find themselves bearing a herculean effort in shouldering the responsibility and are often stressed to find a balance, with the general outcome being that their own physical and mental wellbeing needs are mistreated [13].

The theme for the 2017 celebration is 'Be Bold for Change'. It is called such to inspire all people, irrespective of gender and background, to take ground-breaking action that really drives the utmost alteration for women. As Malaysians rejoice the International Women's Day 2017, we have to admit that we still have a long way to go in attaining equality between men and women [49]. According to the 2016 ILO-Gallup survey, a significant number of people still think it is inappropriate for women to work outside the home for pay. Many women had expressed disapproval from their immediate relatives for choosing to work outside the home [14]. The strong social norms on gender stereotype created a pressing need to look into the gender disparities in Malaysian labour market in the subsequent year of 2017. In view of the critical gender discrimination and wage differentials faced by women, this paper seeks to provide a closer inspection on the measurements of these disparities within the context of the situations in different states in Malaysia, the difference observed by age group, by status of employment and based on the various sectors of employment. This paper is organized into six sections. The next section presented on the literature review, while subsequent section discussed on the data analysis with the results illustrated next. Discussion on the government policy will be provided in section 5. The last section will conclude the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past, extensive researches have been performed on the gender inequality issues in Malaysia with the focus on the gender wage differentials, gender imbalance in education and discrimination faced by women in work place. All of which these studies provided a consensus that the gender inequality issues have existed as early as in the 70's [38] observed a major shift in the structure of the labour force that started since in the 1970s and attributed this change to the dramatic improvements in education opportunities. They further stressed that women have been a major beneficiary to such changes. However, these changes failed to improve the opportunities for women in the labour market. As [34] pointed out labour force participation rate for females is very much lower than that of their male counterparts in Malaysia, despite that they are equally educated.

Study by [34] has shown that women are always less preferable by employers due to the negative perceptions that they are less skilled and immobile compared to their male counterparts. Besides that, they tend to receive lower wages due to the discriminatory practices. Their findings have been consistent with many past literatures such as [9, 39, 48] that has observed the discriminatory practice that cost the women lower pay. Meanwhile, [36] shed light on the occupation segregation in the Malaysian labour market is mainly explained by gender. The results from the study supported the past findings [1,19] that shed light on the occupation segregation by gender with females continue to be employed disproportionately in certain low-paid occupations. It is, therefore, substantially evident as illustrated by these findings of the discrimination practice that exist in the labour market. [35] suggested that differences within occupations account for the major portion of the gender wage inequality. The outcomes also show that wage discrimination within occupations theatres a significant role in the wage differential between men and women, whereas sample selection bias plays a vital character in the investigation of wage differential between men and women.

Besides, women have been generally perceived as having a weaker attachment to the labour market compared to their men counterparts [10]. It is hardly shocking that this led to the development of statistical discrimination, where women are less likely to be offered primary occupations with higher salaries, better working conditions, stable employment, and more prospects for professional growth. On the other hand, study by [34] indicated In the Malaysian labor market, gender wage disparities are commonplace, with men typically earning far more than women. On a similar note, a much recent study was conducted by [26] to empirically analyse the gender income gap in Malaysia. The finding from the Blinder-Oaxaca income decomposition model indicated that the income of female workers in Malaysia has been found, on average, is lower than that of the male workers. In addition to that, the results from their study implied that there is salary discrimination against women in the Malaysian workforce.

According to [32], majority of women are involved in secondary labour market with low earning levels because of the perception that female workers possess less skill. [15] similarly concluded that female workers are rewarded less compared to male workers in a study conducted in Ireland. A study by [11] in Australia, Austria and Scandinavia demonstrated the wage differentials with females receiving significantly less than their male counterparts. In the attempt to explain the underlying reasons for the gender discrimination and wage-differentials faced by women, [28] further explored the significant obstacles and difficulties faced by women seeking employment in Malaysia. Women persist in challenging some of the barriers preventing women from pursuing secure professional positions. The male-breadwinner paradigm's hegemony still affects employers' and husbands' perspectives. Childcare has been long considered as a female task, leaving many women to juggle in between career pursue and care duties.

Although past findings have shed light on the gender imbalance in Malaysian labour market and the discrimination practice that prevent women from enjoying the same pay as their male counterparts, however, there has been up-close analysis on the measurements of these disparities. This study will contribute by filling the literature gap to provide an up-close quantitative analysis on the gender disparities within the different states in Malaysia, the difference by age group, status of employment and various sector of employment. In addition to that, the analysis from this study will provide policy implications and recommendations based on the initiatives implemented by the government in advocating gender equality in the Malaysian labour market.

3. DATA SOURCE

For the purpose of this paper, data was drawn from the annual Labour Force Survey Report, published by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. The data collected was for the year of 2017. The data enabled analysis of gender disparity by state, by status of employment, age group, mean and medium salaries, type and sector of employment including employer and employee, own account workers, unpaid family workers managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, service and sales workers, and skilled agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishery workers.

4. FINDINGS

According to the [43], the percentage of unemployment rate in Malaysia had reduced to 3.5 percent for women, while the percentage of the unemployed persons for men increased from 3.1 to 3.3 percent in 2017. Furthermore, the labour force participation rate for women has climbed from 46.8 percent (2010) to 54.7

percent (2017), contributed mainly by additional employment in the manufacturing and plantations sectors. The growth of these labor-intensive sectors has led to the creation of new employment opportunities. This is also expounded by the fact that labour shortage in Malaysia could derail the growth in these sectors [53].

The percentage of economically active women is still considered insufficient by planners and employers. Table 1a & Table 1b showed the employment of both genders by state and age group, a glance across the boards shows that the employment of men is more than women in all states and in all age group categories and this is considering that Malaysia have a balanced gender population between male and female. According to TalentCorp report, women in their 20s and 30s who drop out of the workforce do not return because as they need to focus on household chores and this is termed as “single peak pattern” [24]. Most alarming is that women quit the labor force before having children or as this is unsustainable for them as they would need to tamper with a career and their children [8]. Women fork out more than one to three hours extra time on family obligations than men [6]. This disproportionate care obligations shouldered by women in the family is one of the reasons women’s participation rates in the workforce was relatively low [6, 21].

By states, employed women are mostly concentrated in Selangor (1,217,200), Sabah (615,100) and Johor (554,900) and the least employed women area are W.P Labuan (14,400), W.P. Putrajaya (22,300) and Perlis (34,400). By age group, the most active age range women are found to be participating are 25-29 years old (987,000) followed by 30-34 years old (855,800) and 20-24 years old (725,400) while the least active age range women are found to be participating are 60-64 years old (117,700), 15-19 years old (177,600) and 55-59 years old (240,800). Selangor is a center of economic development in addition to being part of the single largest urban concentration in the country thus the findings are understandable.

By comparing these statistics with men, simple but interesting gender inequality can be seen by states and age groups as well. By states the greatest gender inequality are found in Selangor with 599,200 in differences, followed by Sabah (510,800) and Johor (469,900) which is also the 3 most employed states as well, while the least gender inequality are or states are W.P Putrajaya (4,100), W.P Labuan (12,000) and Perlis (26,300). In term of age range, the highest gender inequality is found among 25-29 years old (523,900) and these are concentrated in the states of Sabah (104,200), Selangor (86,100) and Johor (68,200); followed by 30-34 years old (475,800) and these are concentrated in the states of Selangor (92,800), Sabah (77,600) and Johor (70,300); and the third is 20-24 years old (409,000) and these are concentrated in Sabah (83,100), Johor (56,100) and Sarawak (49,700). The least gender inequality age range are 60-64 years old (143,300), 15-19 years old (143,500) and 55-59 (252,200) (Table 1a & 1b).

Table 1a. Employed persons by state, gender and age group, Malaysia, 2017 ('000)

Negeri/state	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
Wanita/ Women	177.7	725.7	987.1	855.9	666.2
Johor	16.9	80.1	103.5	89.2	68.3
Kedah	10.7	40.4	53.4	45	41.4
Kelantan	7.7	28.6	34.6	29.8	29.8
Melaka	5.7	23.7	28.3	24.8	18.7
Negeri Sembilan	4	26.2	30.4	25.2	20.4
Pahang	6.8	33.7	37.9	38.5	26.3
Perak	13	61.5	58.2	41.7	41.8
Perlis	0.8	5.8	5.6	5	3.9
Pulau Pinang	8.3	49.6	66.9	59.5	46.8
Sabah	52.5	100	115	99.2	74.5
Sarawak	18.5	64.3	74.9	60.6	51.1
Selangor	22.4	147.7	271.4	237.4	168.6
Terengganu	4.7	21.9	24	21.2	17
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	5	37.7	75.7	67.6	53
W.P. Labuan	0.5	2.9	2.6	3	1.4
W. P. Putrajaya	0.1	1.3	4.6	8.1	3.2
Lelaki/Men	320.9	1,134.30	1,510.90	1,331.60	1,058.90
Johor	32	136.2	171.7	159.5	130.4

Negeri/state	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
Kedah	23.3	72.7	83.2	69.7	61.2
Kelantan	15.4	55.4	56.9	50.2	40.3
Melaka	9.5	34.2	39.6	32.9	25.7
Negeri Sembilan	14	43.7	48	40.9	34.7
Pahang	15.9	63.5	78.9	73.1	52
Perak	20.7	84.1	99.7	77	69.3
Perlis	2	10.2	10.2	7.8	5.9
Pulau Pinang	12.1	57.8	80.8	74.5	61.3
Sabah	83.6	183.1	219.2	176.8	130
Sarawak	36.5	114	123.7	103.6	87.4
Selangor	36.9	192.2	357.5	330.2	252.3
Terengganu	10.9	38.3	45.6	35.7	29.2
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	7.3	44.9	87.6	88.9	73.8
W.P. Labuan	0.8	3.2	4.7	5.5	3.1
W. P. Putrajaya	0.2	0.9	3.6	5.3	2.6

Table 1b. Employed persons by state, gender and age group, Malaysia, 2017 ('000)

Negeri/state	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64
Wanita/ Women	587.7	511.1	395.4	240.9	117.6
Johor	62.6	51.1	44.8	25.5	12.9
Kedah	41.5	36.5	30.3	21	11.3
Kelantan	31.9	33.4	28	18.6	9.1
Melaka	16.4	17.3	14.7	8.3	3.6
Negeri Sembilan	18.6	18.2	15.1	8.9	4.9
Pahang	26.1	23.3	21.3	13.9	6.6
Perak	36.5	35.8	30.6	15.8	6.5
Perlis	3.9	3.8	2.9	1.8	0.9
Pulau Pinang	40.2	35.5	26	17.4	9.6
Sabah	60	47.2	35.4	22.4	8.9
Sarawak	52.5	45.8	38.7	29.4	16.8
Selangor	134.7	107.7	70.9	38.7	17.7
Terengganu	18.1	16.4	14.3	7.9	3.5
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	41.6	36.6	20.5	9.8	5.2
W.P. Labuan	1.5	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.2
W. P. Putrajaya	1.6	1.4	1.1	0.9	-
Lelaki/Men	921.1	826.4	729.2	493.2	260.9
Johor	111.8	100.2	88	61.7	33.3
Kedah	57.5	56.1	51.2	34.7	18.6
Kelantan	38	39.2	37	26.6	14.8
Melaka	22.8	22.9	22.1	15.4	8.3
Negeri Sembilan	29.2	26.9	27.5	19	10.8
Pahang	43.4	40.1	36.4	27.8	17.8
Perak	64.9	65.8	62.2	43.7	25.4
Perlis	5.2	6.3	6	4.5	2.6
Pulau Pinang	56.7	49.5	41.6	30.5	14.6
Sabah	106.2	88.2	71.6	45.5	21.7
Sarawak	85	78.7	69	51.3	30.4
Selangor	212	171.4	138.8	84.7	40.4
Terengganu	26.9	27	24.9	17.8	9.5
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	57.2	50.4	49.5	27.5	12.2
W.P. Labuan	2.7	2.4	2.1	1.4	0.5
W. P. Putrajaya	1.7	1.4	1.5	0.9	0.1

Table 2 showed the comparison of gender disparity of employers category by state. In 2017, the total number of Malaysian women entrepreneurs numbered a total of 95,000 and they are concentrated in the state of Selangor (37,300), Sabah (9,500) and Johor (6,600) and the least concentrated states or area are W.P. Putrajaya (less than a thousand), W.P. Labuan (200) and Perlis (800). In a comparison of these statistics with men shows a significant gender inequality gap in that the ratio of women to men employer stand at 1 to 4.81 which means for every 5 men employers there is only 1 woman that is involved in entrepreneurship.

The highest gender disparity of this category by the state is Johor (8.35), Kedah (8.15) and Pulau Pinang (7.38) and the least gender disparity of this Perlis (3.125), Selangor (3.32) and Terengganu (4.15). The gender disparity in this category are staggering in that some states record almost double the ratio of the national average and in the state with the least disparity, the differences are almost 1 to 3 which leaves much to be desired especially in the position of entrepreneurship which could be the biggest potential in uplifting women social mobility in the society. Women typically leave their occupations due to negative experiences in the labor force, particularly in male-dominated fields [46]. According to Women in Tech Report, women are emotionally affected at work when they know they are rewarded with lower earnings than their peer (or even fewer experiences) compare to male colleagues or because of the overall office culture that favor men. She is the one who knows what harrying or discrimination in the place of work faces and feels like, due to she is the one goes through it [4].

Table 2. Employed Persons As Employer By State And Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	95.0	457.7
Johor	6.6	55.1
Kedah	3.3	26.9
Kelantan	2.7	14.7
Melaka	2.4	10.7
Negeri Sembilan	2.6	15.1
Pahang	4.9	24.8
Perak	6.5	36.3
Perlis	0.8	2.5
Pulau Pinang	3.4	25.1
Sabah	9.5	39.9
Sarawak	5.3	26.9
Selangor	37.3	124.0
Terengganu	3.3	13.7
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	6.2	40.4
W.P. Labuan	0.2	1.1
W.P. Putrajaya	-	0.5

Table 3 shows the comparison of gender disparity of employee category by state. In 2017, the total number of women employees in Malaysia numbered 4,083,500 and they are concentrated in Selangor with 1,072,100 followed by Johor (448,000) and Sabah (445,600) and the least are found in W.P. Labuan (11,300), W.P. Putrajaya (19,500) and Perlis (24,700). These concentrations of employees by states are the same with Malaysian men indicating that both genders are subjected to the same influential factor but differing in impact. In a comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men employees stands at 1.62. The state or area with the highest gender disparity in this category are Sarawak (2.02), Pahang (1.94) and W.P. Labuan (1.89) and the least or reverse gender parity are found in W.P. Putrajaya (0.79), W.P. Kuala Lumpur (1.37) and Pulau Pinang (1.39). Although gender disparity is also found in the employee category the severity was not as severe compare to the employer category. In fact, the capital area of Malaysia recorded a reverse gender disparity whereby more women are employed compared to men. However, much remain to be desired as some states especially Sarawak, Pahang and Johor recorded disparity that are higher than national averages.

Table 3. Employed Persons as An Employee by State and Gender, Malaysia, 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	4,083.5	6,606.7
Johor	448.0	840.2
Kedah	232.6	340.0
Kelantan	142.8	245.7
Melaka	131.8	188.4
Negeri Sembilan	134.7	226.0
Pahang	154.0	299.5
Perak	283.0	443.2
Perlis	24.7	39.5
Pulau Pinang	284.9	396.6
Sabah	445.6	838.0
Sarawak	296.6	599.8
Selangor	1,072.1	1,520.3
Terengganu	109.9	193.6
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	291.7	399.3
W.P. Labuan	11.3	21.4
W.P. Putrajaya	19.5	15.4

Table 4 showed the comparison of gender disparity of own account workers category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as own account worker in Malaysia numbered 978,400 with the highest concentration in the state of Selangor (287,700), Sabah (109,000) and Johor (81,700) and the least concentration are found in W.P. Labuan (600), W.P. Putrajaya (700), and Perlis (7,500). In comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men own account workers stands at 1.66. The state or area with the highest gender disparity is W.P. Labuan (4.67), Pahang (2.42) and Perlis (2.39) and the least gender disparity are found in Selangor (0.91), W.P. Putrajaya (1.43), and Kelantan (1.60). Own account worker are also known as contracted employee where they face greater exposure to risk of employment and uncertain rewards. Although the national average of gender disparity in this category are similar to employee category, the differences in some states or area are confounding with almost 3 times disparity reported. However, it is worth nothing that there is a reverse of gender disparity in Selangor but caution need to be noted that there is gender disparity reported in the employee category for Selangor and these women whom are employed as own account worker are not original employees whom are subjected to harsher employment condition as own account worker due to circumstances.

Table 4. Employed Persons as Own Account Workers by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	978.4	1623.6
Johor	81.7	146.2
Kedah	81.0	165.9
Kelantan	76.1	122.1
Melaka	21.3	39.1
Negeri Sembilan	27.6	51.5
Pahang	47.7	115.6
Perak	64.9	137.7
Perlis	7.5	17.9
Pulau Pinang	35.4	58.8
Sabah	109.0	241.5
Sarawak	74.2	137.0
Selangor	287.7	262.3
Terengganu	31.0	61.7
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	31.9	62.5

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
W.P. Labuan	0.6	2.8
W.P. Putrajaya	0.7	1.0

Table 5 showed the comparison of gender disparity in unpaid family worker category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as unpaid family worker in Malaysia numbered 397,000 and are concentrated in Sarawak (75,700), Sabah (53,600) and Selangor (47,600) with the least concentration reported in W.P. Labuan (600), Perlis (3,300) and W.P. Kuala Lumpur (7,700). In comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in unpaid family worker category stands at 0.52 with almost all states and areas reported women being over-represented with the exception of Sabah reported an almost balanced ratio of 1.1. The highest reverse gender disparity by states and area in this category are reported in W.P. Kuala Lumpur (0.17), Selangor (0.17) and Perak (0.35); and the least reverse gender disparity are reported in Terengganu (0.68), Negeri Sembilan (0.64) and Kelantan (0.59). Unpaid care work is not exclusive to low-earnings households rather it is across salary and education levels in every community [13]. Women who are not working cited housework, comprising child and elderly care, as the main reason for not looking for work [24].

Unpaid care work also cause gender disparities in the labour market as it has a role in women's decision to leave of the labor force [17, 18]. Khazanah Research Institute concluded that women disbursed almost 64% in excess of men on unpaid care work, even though working nearly the equal number of the hour as men in a paid job [13]. [8] stated that having personal or family commitments impact the women's career and promotion opportunities negatively. The decrease in promotion opportunities due to the ability of women to works the hours and entertains clients of work hours expected by employers in the place of work. [24], have a similar opinion stated that Housekeeping, which comprises family household tasks, is also a mutual difficulty increased by women in the current labor force that avoids them from taking heavier tasks or leadership roles in the place of work.

Table 5. Employed Persons as Unpaid Family Worker by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	397.0	208.2
Johor	25.7	11.0
Kedah	39.9	14.7
Kelantan	41.6	24.4
Melaka	7.9	3.7
Negeri Sembilan	11.8	7.6
Pahang	27.9	15.5
Perak	27.9	9.8
Perlis	3.3	1.6
Pulau Pinang	12.2	5.9
Sabah	53.6	58.7
Sarawak	75.7	36.2
Selangor	47.6	8.3
Terengganu	13.6	9.2
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	7.7	1.3
W.P. Labuan	0.6	0.3
W.P. Putrajaya	-	-

Table 6 showed the comparison of gender disparity in the manager category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as manager in Malaysia numbered 152,500 and they are concentrated in Selangor (73,300), W.P. Kuala Lumpur (12,100) and Sabah (11,400); and they are least concentrated in W.P. Putrajaya (100), W.P. Labuan (200) and Perlis (600). In a comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in manager category stands at 3.52 with the highest gender disparity reported in W.P. Putrajaya (10.0), Pahang (7.73) and W.P. Labuan (7.50); and the least gender

disparity was reported in Melaka (3.10), Perlis (3.00), and Selangor (2.58). Gender disparity in this category is happening across all states and at staggering severity with some states reported double or triple of the national average. The shortage of chances (real) for women to move into senior executives and management roles that could have contributed to the decrease in the participation rates [8]. Men are still overrepresented as senior-level positions, including nearly 82 percent of chief executives, senior officials and legislators, along with 80.5 percent of hospitals, retail and other services managers [37].

Table 6. Employed Persons as Managers by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	152.5	537.0
Johor	9.6	25.5
Kedah	5.9	7.4
Kelantan	1.3	11.5
Melaka	3.7	19.3
Negeri Sembilan	4.2	14.7
Pahang	1.9	35.4
Perak	9.6	1.8
Perlis	0.6	36.1
Pulau Pinang	10.5	44.1
Sabah	11.4	25.9
Sarawak	5.6	188.9
Selangor	73.3	10.4
Terengganu	2.4	59.6
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	12.1	1.5
W.P. Labuan	0.2	1.0
W.P. Putrajaya	0.1	53.9

Table 7 showed the comparison of gender disparity in a professional category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as professionals in Malaysia numbered 978,600 and they are concentrated in Selangor (331,500), Johor (84,300) and W.P. Kuala Lumpur (81,400) with the least concentration in W.P. Labuan (2,200), Perlis (6,800) and W.P. Putrajaya (8,100). In a comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity (or reverse gender disparity) is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in professional category stands at 0.81. It is interesting to note that women professionals are more than men across all states with an almost balance ratio attained in the states of W.P. Kuala Lumpur (1.01), Pulau Pinang (0.96) and Perlis (0.88); and states or area with the most gender disparity are reported in Kedah (0.52), Melaka (0.58) and Terengganu (0.70). [16] showed that an extra positive sign of women's growth is the greater magnitude of women's overrepresentation in professional and technical occupations. Working women may now get higher education than in the past (than their mothers and grandmothers) [4,5,12]; however, they still earn less than their male colleagues. Women have shown that they have the capability and skill to perform in the same area of work and this is growing [5]. However, this over-representation of women could also be attributed to the high attentiveness of women in the teaching and nursing professions.

Table 7. Employed Persons as Professionals by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	978.6	790.4
Johor	84.3	66.1
Kedah	51.6	27.0
Kelantan	34.9	26.2
Melaka	34.1	19.8
Negeri Sembilan	33.1	28.4
Pahang	38.6	27.4
Perak	59.0	41.4
Perlis	6.8	6.0

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Pulau Pinang	56.3	54.0
Sabah	66.4	54.2
Sarawak	61.6	52.4
Selangor	331.5	277.6
Terengganu	28.7	20.0
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	81.4	82.3
W.P. Labuan	2.2	1.8
W.P. Putrajaya	8.1	5.8

Table 8 showed the comparison of gender disparity in the technicians and associate professionals category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as technicians and associate professionals in Malaysia numbered 491,600 and they are concentrated in Selangor (157,100), Johor (52,200) and W.P. Kuala Lumpur (38,500); and the least concentration are reported in W.P. Labuan (1,500), W.P. Putrajaya (1,900) and Perlis (3,000). In comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in technicians and associate professionals category stands at 2.09 with the highest reported in W.P. Labuan (2.87), Negeri Sembilan (2.83) and Johor (2.71); the lowest gender disparity was reported in W.P. Putrajaya (1.32), Kelantan (1.42) and Sabah (1.79). The numbers of men as technicians and associate professionals are still predominant in all states is due to there are insufficient female's initiatives to promote and absence of women would to a large degree.

Table 8. Employed Persons as Technicians and Associate Professionals by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000	'000
	Women	Men
Malaysia	491.6	1029.3
Johor	52.2	141.6
Kedah	24.6	51.2
Kelantan	18.4	26.2
Melaka	20.3	42.4
Negeri Sembilan	16.1	45.5
Pahang	17.9	33.1
Perak	28.9	59.0
Perlis	3.0	5.5
Pulau Pinang	38.0	79.5
Sabah	30.6	54.9
Sarawak	30.9	63.9
Selangor	157.1	318.0
Terengganu	11.8	26.5
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	38.5	75.2
W.P. Labuan	1.5	4.3
W.P. Putrajaya	1.9	2.5

Table 9 showed the comparison of gender disparity in the service and sales workers category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working as service and sales workers in Malaysia numbered 1,611,100 and they are concentrated in Selangor (341,200), Sabah (191,400) and Johor (167,400); and the least concentration are reported in W.P. Putrajaya (1.5), W.P. Labuan (3.8) and Perlis (14.8). The same pattern of concentration also applied to men which indicates that both genders are subjected to the same influential factor but differing impact. In comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in service and sales category stands at 0.99 with the highest reported in W.P. Putrajaya (1.73), W.P. Kuala Lumpur (1.26) and Melaka (1.22); the lowest gender disparity are reported in Kelantan (0.91), Perlis (0.91) and Selangor (0.82).

In this category the gender disparity is the most minimal compared to other categories with the highest being 1.73 reported in W.P. Putrajaya. However, the majority of women are occupying only supplementary positions

as compared to men in this category. This is certainly an appearance of gender discrimination against female labor. Similarly, the fact that there is an overrepresentation of women in the clerical and related occupation categories reaffirms the dispute that women are usually occupied in supportive and manual types of occupation [20]. The skill and knowledge that individuals provide to the provision of services is oftentimes more important than the building of infrastructure or capital. Thus, a thriving services industry can continually accelerate a great number of opportunities for professionals and highly qualified workers to provide their services [42]. Women's lack of highly skilled is one of the reasons women are underweight in all states.

Table 9. Employed Persons as Service and Sales Workers by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000 Women	'000 Men
Malaysia	1611.1	1595.1
Johor	167.4	171.6
Kedah	123.6	117.8
Kelantan	111.3	101.4
Melaka	45.0	54.9
Negeri Sembilan	54.1	50.5
Pahang	80.3	78.7
Perak	131.5	141.1
Perlis	14.8	13.4
Pulau Pinang	76.9	87.5
Sabah	191.4	193.1
Sarawak	123.8	130.5
Selangor	341.2	280.6
Terengganu	57.4	57.1
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	87.0	110.0
W.P. Labuan	3.8	4.3
W.P. Putrajaya	1.5	2.6

Table 10 showed the comparison of gender disparity in the skilled agricultural category by state. In 2017, the total number of women working in the skilled agricultural category numbered 204,900 and they are concentrated in Sarawak (72,600), Sabah (53,600) and Kelantan (29,800) while the least concentration is reported in W.P. Labuan (less than 100), Pulau Pinang (200), and Melaka (700). In a comparison of women statistics with men of this category, the gender disparity is revealed and the national ratio of women to men in the skilled agricultural category stands at 3.38 with the highest reported in Pulau Pinang (42.5), Johor (13.4), and Perlis (10.8); the lowest are reported in Sarawak (1.54), Kelantan (2.22) and Sabah (3.04). Gender unfairness was noticed among market-oriented skilled agricultural workforces; agricultural, forestry and fishery laborers [37]. The prevalence of women in agriculture may be attributed to the effortlessness of entry in terms of educational desires and the flexible working hours which has empowered the women to combine the burden of housework and child care household tasks with salaries-earning events more simply. Women employees who work in plantation even bring along their children to work [20].

Table 10. Employed Persons as Skilled Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Fishery Workers by State and Gender, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	'000 Women	'000 Men
Malaysia	204.9	692.1
Johor	3.8	50.8
Kedah	13.3	71.1
Kelantan	29.8	66.1
Melaka	0.7	7.5
Negeri Sembilan	2.3	14.1
Pahang	10.3	66.7
Perak	7.5	59.7
Perlis	0.8	8.6

Pulau Pinang	0.2	8.5
Sabah	53.6	163.2
Sarawak	72.6	111.8
Selangor	3.1	29.9
Terengganu	6.7	32.8
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	-	0.5
W.P. Labuan	0.0	0.8
W.P. Putrajaya	-	0.1

Table 11 showed the median and mean wage of both gender in Malaysia and within each state in Malaysia. According to [2], median wage is a key metric that can be used to assess developments in the standard of living of the population. The median wage for men was found to be substantially higher than women in Malaysia. A comparison across the different states in Malaysia indicated that the median wage for men is higher than women for most of the states including Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Perlis, Sabah, W.P. Kuala Lumpur, W.P. Labuan and W.P. Putrajaya. It is evident, therefore, that the gender disparities exist in the Malaysian labour market which further created wage differential problems. The gender gap in median wages is greatest in Johor, with women earning only 75% of the male wage. This study similar to [3] will examine the gender gap in wages by comparing between women's average wage with that of men's [3]. Meanwhile, the gender differences in mean wages can be observed with the mean wage for male found to be substantially higher than the mean wage for women in Malaysia. The comparison across the states clearly demonstrated that the mean wage for men is significantly higher compared to the mean wage for women in the states of Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Perlis, Sabah, Selangor, W.P. Kuala Lumpur, W.P. Labuan and W.P. Putrajaya. The gap in the mean wages clearly indicated gender inequality in wages. The mean wages showed that the gender gap is the greatest with women earning an average wage of 81% of the male mean wage.

Table 11. Median And Mean Monthly Salaries & Wages of Employees by State and Sex, Malaysia. 2017

Negeri/ State	Median (RM)	Median (RM)	Mean (RM)	Mean (RM)
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Malaysia	2145	2170	2772	2954
Johor	1800	2400	2564	3158
Kedah	1550	1650	2254	2148
Kelantan	1800	1400	2598	2156
Melaka	2000	2170	2519	2599
Negeri Sembilan	2015	2250	2639	3031
Pahang	2000	1865	2456	2406
Perak	2160	2170	2512	2791
Perlis	1650	1760	2240	2310
Pulau Pinang	2145	1650	2589	2388
Sabah	2515	2745	3198	3651
Sarawak	2145	1680	2524	2521
Selangor	1800	1750	2503	2509
Terengganu	2145	1750	2529	2504
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	2500	2800	3774	4129
W.P. Labuan	1800	2250	2439	3054
W.P. Putrajaya	3500	3535	3971	4538

5. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Government has implemented initiatives to counter this disparity including providing childcare facilities such as creche, kindergartens, daycare center and etc. nationwide to enable women stay assured that their children are well taken care of while they are out at work. However public discussion should continue to be stimulated to bring a change in the social norms and tackle the widespread gender inequalities between men and women in the labor force. Malaysian culture needs to inspire a fairer relationship 50/50 partnership in a family.

Men need to engage more in care responsibility or obligations in the household to generate a more gender-balanced society. Women and men need to have an equal distribution of housekeeping and childcare, particularly when both are working full time. This in turn would enable female workers to invest more time in the office and perform better in their work. In addition, gender salary and employment disparity must be addressed; make certain minimum wage regulation along with social security procedures and generate effective enforcement machinery and successful certification process to mark the successful implementation of necessary regulation and measures in addition to empowering the Industrial Court to address any gender discrimination in the workplace or rewards. The other alternative to increase the participation rate of women is to reduce their family needs burden and this can be attained through flexible work arrangements or work from home.

Malaysian women's rights organizations played a serious role in increasing public awareness about gender disparity and social injustices against women. For further change to be made, the drive for the differential between men and women needs to begin at the uppermost levels of establishment and be embodied by all organizational culture in a faithful manner as one of the reasons for women occupied only in low level or feminine occupation is due to occupational segregation which persists because of the labor market preferences. Discrimination in hiring and promotion that reinforces segregation government can cause a glass ceiling that restricts the growth of women in senior positions. To encourage the growth of female managers into the organizational pipeline, which leads to leadership positions, concentration on sponsorship, mentorship programs, and networking groups in energy corporations can increase the pool of candidates for promotions.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis on the data within the aspect of differences observed across different states in Malaysia, the gender difference between different age group, between the status of employment, between the different sectors of employment and in mean and median wages observed clearly demonstrated the gender differences that exist in Malaysia. Women are likely to work fewer hours, engage in part-time or temporary employment due to their family commitments. A family commitment in the household between husbands and wives still desires much space for improvement. Such gender role amid traditional values was a result of a convergence of social, religious, and economic factors, the consideration of which is key in the country's attempt to enable women in the economic sphere.

According to the World Bank study in September 2019, if all obstacles to occupation for Malaysian women are removed and their involvement in our economy is raised, our incomes per capita can grow by 26.2% [25]. Malaysia stands to benefit in terms of greater prosperity and enjoy stronger economic growth when women are empowered to join and stay in the labor force [6]. This reinforces the statement that the strive for gender fairness in the labor market must go along with by equivalent highlighting on reconsidering the care model in the economy. Given the significance of reproductive work, the way in which principles and policymakers address the tension between care responsibilities—especially the unpaid ones—and women's economic participation is consequential for the sustainability of our economic development.

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