

MEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE: A STUDY OF MALAY MUSLIM MEN IN DUAL-CAREER FAMILIES IN KUALA LUMPUR AND SELANGOR

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Abstract: A number of changes to the structure of the family unit have been identified as the number of women participating in full-time paid employment has increased. Dual-career families, for example, are becoming more common in today's society. The aim of this study is to investigate the involvement of Malay Muslim men in dual-career families in the domestic sphere in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. Ten married Malay Muslim men in dual-career families were recruited. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to gather the data. This study shows that men have positive views of doing the household chores. Several factors supported their positive views and attitudes, such as paternity leave provided by their employers, as well as support given by their spouses, extended family and other people. In terms of these factors, men do not face any barriers in helping their wives with household chores. In practice, however, they stated that their wives still undertook a greater share of the housework than they did. Not surprisingly, it could be said that there is continuing gender segregation in relation to household duties, but this is set against perceived successful negotiation of these duties between the respondents and their wives. The traditional perspective and understanding of Malay Muslim men in dual-career families in terms of the domestic sphere continue to exist and are well sustained. However, at the same time, this study also reveals the acceptance of changes to the traditional gender role ideology.

Key words: Malay Muslim Men, Dual-Career Families, Domestic Sphere, Gender Role, Household Chore.

INTRODUCTION

When the word 'gender' was added to the constitution, it demonstrated an acknowledgement by the government of Malaysia of the equal role of women and men in the economy, politics, society, culture and other fields. Malaysian women have benefited from increased access to education and training. This scenario has indicated by the improvement in their literacy rates, enrolment and achievements at all levels of education. Subsequently, it has led to the involvement in all sectors of employment, not only of single women, but also of married women with young children (Treas and Widmer, 2000; Abdullah, 2000; Zaini and Rahman, 2006; Ahmad, 2011; Marican et al., 2011). According to Labour Force Statistics, Malaysia (2010), women accounted for 4,017.3 million of the total employed population, and about 61% of them are married, thereby leading to the emergence of many dual-career couples. In today's world, men are now no longer seen as the main breadwinners and women are no longer confined to the role of homemaker, as understood in the traditional gender ideology. This changing situation has also led to the rise of many dual-career families. As a result, working women are required to adopt a range of efficient strategies for managing their dual responsibilities in the workplace and home.

Many previous studies, conducted in both the West and in Asian countries, including Malaysia, have found that more women are juggling roles as employees in the workplace and members of the family at home. However, it is less common for men to be active participants in the management of domestic chores (e.g. Hochschild and Manchung, 1989; Treas and Widmer, 2000; Abdullah, 2000; Ochiai, 2008; Ahmad, 2011; Marican et al., 2011). In Malay patriarchal society, domestic chores and child-rearing duties continue to be viewed primarily as a woman's responsibility, although there is a growing perception in society that men's attitudes to household duties have begun to change slightly (Zaini and Rahman, 2006; Noor, 2006). It also appears that men are unable to emancipate themselves from the Islamic religion and Malay *adat* when discussing these matters. In addition, there is also a lack of awareness among men of the importance of their involvement in helping working women with domestic chores, in addition to the fact that most state policies and programmes continue to be very focused on maintaining the traditional positions of women.

Although several studies by anthropologists and historians have pointed to the development of bilateralism in Malay society, emphasising the idea that social relations between men and women are based on values of complementarity and equality in regard to managing the family (Karim, 1992; Rudie, 1995; Ghazali, 2002: 2), women are still frequently seen to do more than men (Osman, 1989; Omar and Hamzah, 2003; Shah, 2010). Consequently, the division of labour at home continues to be conducted along gender lines. Many Malay working women are not only become active members of the paid labour force, but they also have been with domestic chores (e.g. Abdullah, 1994; Kling, 2000; Noor, 1999; Omar and Hamzah, 2003; Hosain et al., 2005; Noor and Mahudin, 2005; Sultana and Noor, 2011; Bakar, 2012).

There has been little research undertaken on the subject of Malay Muslim men's participation in helping women with domestic chores and how this impact on the division of labour at home. Thus, it is important to carry out research on the domestic sphere by focusing on the involvement of Malay Muslim men in dual-career families as an individual's family/work experiences can be influenced by differences in religious and cultural values and in economic and political factors across different multi-ethnic groups (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Cha and Thebaud, 2009; Bianchie and Milkie, 2010). The conducting of this study may lead to a better understanding of the similarities and differences of experiences among career Malay Muslim men in terms of their degree of participation in the management of the household. This research is therefore needed in order to determine men's involvement in domestic chores because their participation has the potential to reduce the burden on their wives. Based on the discussion above, this research has the following objectives.

Objectives of the study:

This study attempts to explore to investigate the involvement of Malay Muslim men in dual-career families within the domestic sphere. More specifically, the objectives of this study are (1) to examine factors influencing Malay Muslim men's views on the idea of helping their wives with domestic chores (2) to explore the types of domestic chores undertaken by Malay Muslim men.

METHODOLOGY

In the context of this study, which was an exploratory study, I used a qualitative semi-structured interview as a tool to collect the primary data. According to Oakley (1981) and Hesse-Biber (2007), a researcher can obtain more personal information from the study respondents, particularly pertinent to their private lives, as well as can understand in-depth about the respondents' experiences by using this method.

Respondents for the study were recruited through friendship networks and the snowballing technique using purposive sampling (Bryman, 2004). The following specific

criteria were used for the recruitment of respondents: (a) married Malay Muslim men, (b) both husband and wife had obtained at least a diploma degree and possibly a master's or doctoral degree, (c) aged between 24 and 40 years old, (d) both husband and wife work in professional occupations and (e) both husband and wife work in either the Kuala Lumpur or Selangor areas. We selected only married couples, both of whom held at least a diploma, to meet the definition of dual-career families established by Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) and Hertz (1986). Based on these criteria, ten men were recruited as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents and Their Wives by Age, Level of Education and Types of Occupation

No	(Respondents) Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupation	Wife's Occupation	Wife's Age	Wife's Level of Education	Length of Marriage
1	Ehsan	32	Degree	Engineer	Lecturer	31	PhD	7 years
2	Basri	32	Degree	Teacher	Government Officer	32	Degree	4 years
3	Rohaizat	37	Degree	Engineer	Bank Officer	37	Degree	12 years
4	Hamid	38	Master	Lecturer	Lecturer	35	Master	13 years
5	Ahmad	35	Degree	Government Officer	Government Officer	35	Degree	10 years
6	Musyrid	37	Degree	Businessman	Teacher	37	Degree	7 years
7	Yusry	35	Master	Government Officer	Lecturer	37	Master	10 years
8	Ubaidillah	30	Degree	Site supervisor	Teacher	31	Degree	7 years
9	Junaidi	31	Degree	Businessman	Teacher	27	Degree	6 months
10	Syed	40	Degree	Engineer	Engineer	40	Degree	15 years

In addition, these two urban areas have been chosen because they do not only representing the most modern and metropolitan cities, but also providing many higher educational institutions, job and education opportunities, differences in social stratification, as well as they have Malays as the biggest ethnic group. Respondents in this study are listed according to their location (see Table 2).

Table 2: Name of Respondents According to Location

Name of Location	Name of Respondent
Kuala Lumpur	Ehsan
	Basri
	Rohaizat
	Hamid
	Ahmad
	Musyrid
	Yusry

Selangor	Ubaidillah
	Junaidi
	Syed

With the explanation above, the results of this study cannot represent all married Malay men in Malaysia because the findings are based on only a small sample of married Malay men in dual-career families. In addition, this research was about Malay Muslims and is therefore not representative of all men in the multiracial population, who have different cultures and religions. The rationale for limiting our study was so that we could obtain a clear understanding of our respondents' stories relating to men's involvement in domestic chores. In fact, small samples are the norm in qualitative research and are necessary in order to achieve an in-depth understanding, as pointed out by Hesse-Biber (2007):

... the logic of qualitative research is concerned with in-depth understanding and usually involves working with small samples. The goal is to look at a 'process' or the 'meaning' individuals attribute to their given social situation, not necessarily to make generalizations. (Hesse-Biber, 2007: 119)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Factors That Influence Dual-career Family Malay Muslim Men's Views on the Idea of Helping Their Wives with Household Chores

This section focuses on factors that influence the views of Malay Muslim men in dual-career families on the idea of helping their wives with household chores. As the title suggests, the goal of this section is to fulfil the first research objective: *To examine factors influencing Malay Muslim men's views on the idea of helping their wives with domestic chores.* We explore how respondents draw upon what influences them to help their wives with domestic chores and their feelings when helping their wives. This chapter begins with a discussion of themes of factors that have an influence on them in helping their wives with the household chores. Several factors have influenced respondents in helping their wives with the household chores as discussed below:

The awareness of having a working wife for economic need

In Malaysia, efforts undertaken in the Malaysian Plan have led to women having many opportunities to participate in national development, particularly through their careers and the expertise they possess (Noor, 1999, 2006). All respondents accepted the changes of role between husband and wife through which women are no longer seen as individuals associated only with domestic chores because their existence in the public sphere has been accepted. As all my respondents work and live in the Selangor and Kuala Lumpur areas, two highly populated and urbanised areas in Peninsular Malaysia, they realised that their wives needed to work in order to meet the financial needs of their families. All of them agreed that living in these areas was very costly. The increases in life demands and the high cost of living, including daily expenses such as renting or buying a house, paying tolls, children's educational fees and bills, are hard to meet with only the husband as a breadwinner to support the family. Thus, wives with good careers and earning good incomes are able to assist their husbands in meeting

the needs of their families. The respondents recognised that if only one person in the family worked as a breadwinner, their income would not be sufficient to support the family once they were married. Their statements were related to respondents' and their wives' approximate basic monthly incomes, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Approximate basic monthly income (RM) for respondents and their wives

Respondent	Respondent's Basic Monthly Income	Respondent's Wife's Basic Monthly Income
Ehsan	RM8,000	RM4,000
Basri	RM3,400	RM4,300
Rohaizat	RM8,000	RM6,000
Hamid	RM4,000	RM4,500
Ahmad	RM5,900	RM4,500
Musyrid	RM3,000	RM2,800
Yusry	RM6,500	RM4,000
Ubaidillah	RM2,500	RM3,000
Junaidi	RM5,000	RM2,900
Syed	RM6,000	RM3,500

In this study, respondents talked about their wives also playing a role as a second contributor to the family finances, thus they should assist their wives in doing the household chores in order to ease their burden. For example, three respondents clearly expressed their views on this matter:

I help my wife because I know she also works. She helps me to pay some bills for our family. Living in Selangor and working in Kuala Lumpur means both of us need to work because the cost of living is very high and everything is expensive in both areas. So she helps me and I help her so that I can ease her burden at home when doing some of the housework. (Ahmad, age 35)

One of the reasons why I do the housework at home is because I wanted to ease my wife's burden. My wife is a working woman so I think I should help her as she also helps me to support the family finances. We need to work because living in Kuala Lumpur is very costly. (Hamid, age 38)

My wife also has her own career. She helps me to support our family. So I need to help her with the housework too. We need to help each other because both of us are working so that we can support our family in Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur is a big city and everything is expensive. (Basri, age 32)

The respondents' statements above are in accordance with Lewis (1996), who stated that the traditional family formation, with a husband as a breadwinner and his wife as a full-time housewife, no longer represents the dominant cultural norm in today's Western societies. Thus, dual-earner families in Western societies, including those with young children, have emerged due to 'economic need, women's desire for independence, contemporary job uncertainties and the demise of the job for life' (Lewis, 1996: 2). In Malaysia, more than 44% of households were considered dual-income families by the late 1980s (Tey, 1994). According to Othman (1998), the incomes of married working women, whether they were from working-class or urban middle-class households, were needed to meet basic expenditure, as their husbands' incomes were insufficient. The traditional breadwinning trends of Malay families have also changed as women have begun to participate in the paid labour force and it is common today to see both husbands and wives working and sharing the same roles as breadwinners (Noor, 1999; Mashral and Ahmad, 2010).

It is also interesting to note that two respondents shared concerns about the lives of their wives and children if they were to die as one reason for why their wives needed to work. Rohaizat and Basri mentioned that their wives needed to continue working because they believed that their wives' earning capacity would provide a guarantee of a comfortable life should any misfortune befall them in the future. Their wives' careers are important in supporting the well-being of their family if something were to happen to them as the husbands. Thus, if their wives work and earn their own incomes, they can continue their life with their children independently. Thus, they need to help their wives at home in order to support their wives to work. Elaborating on this matter, Rohaizat and Basri pointed out the following:

My wife and I agreed that both of us need to work after we get married because I am afraid something bad will happen to me. If my wife works, it's a guarantee in the future, especially if anything bad happened to me. It's like a preparation for my wife so that she can survive with the children. (Rohaizat, age 37).

I help my wife doing the housework because she is also a working woman. I want her to work not only to help me to support our family finances but also so she can continue to support our family if anything happens to me. (Basri, age 32)

Religious influences

Furthermore, two respondents responded positively to the notion of helping their wives with the household chores in terms of religious guidelines:

I help my wife because I know my religion encourages the husband to help his wife in doing the household chores. As I know that the Islamic religion encourages women to participate in activities that bring benefits to the country, society and religion the same as men do, Islam also encourages a man to help a woman with household chores when they build their families. (Hamid, age 38)

My wife has a good full-time job now and I want her to continue being a career woman even after we get married. I believe that what she does now is encouraged by the religion and Malay culture. So helping her with housework is also encouraged by my religion. (Ubaidillah, aged 30)

Their answers are related to many verses in the *Quran*, which discuss Muslim women, and their roles in the public sphere. One of these verses, *Surah al-Ahzab* (Chapter The Confederates: 35), explains that Islam states that men and women are not different in carrying out duties and responsibilities as this is considered to be part of religious practice in their daily lives. Both men and women are encouraged to perform their roles as individuals, as members of the family in addition to as members of society by participating in each activity, insofar that it does not go against Islamic teachings (Salleh, 1985). Based on these verses, my respondents believe that Islam has a strong influence on their lives in many aspects such as economics, politics and social and cultural values. In particular, the respondents have also taken into account the religious factor that steered them to become involved in the household chores.

Types of Domestic Chores Carried out by Malay Muslim Men in Dual-Career Families

This section focuses on the types of domestic chores undertaken by Malay Muslim men in dual-career families in order to help their wives at home. As the title suggests, the aim of this section is to meet the third research objective: *To explore the types of domestic chores undertaken by Malay Muslim men*. As the respondents are heterosexual men whose partners also have their own careers, we discuss their participation in sharing the household workload. We also look at whether the traditional pattern of division of labour at home is gradually giving way to a new family arrangement of managing the role of husband and wife when both of them work. We identify what types of domestic chores men do and how they feel about doing them. In general, they have positive attitudes towards domestic tasks and are not reluctant to get involved in doing the household chores and helping their wives, as discussed below:

Helping their wives with household chores

An earlier study conducted by Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) explained that the idea of the subdivision of labour at home or of sharing the domestic chores with other people had provided both husbands and wives with the opportunity to become involved in the paid labour force. They added that the tasks often shared by working spouses or other people were childcare, laundry and cleaning. Hochschild's study (1997) found that many working spouses tried to plan better for 'the second shift' in order to more effectively spend time either with their children or in doing the household chores at home. These couples set aside quality time in order to manage all of their home activities and domestic chores. They divided the chores into categories so that they could complete them according to daily, weekly or monthly schedules. The strategies used in the earlier studies of dual-career families by Rapoport and Rapoport (1976), Hochschild (1997) and Abdullah (1985, 1987) still seemed relevant and were also seen as important and the best choice for respondents and their wives. They strongly believed that housework duties should be a shared responsibility between husband and wife. One aspect of housework that almost all respondents mentioned doing was cooking, yet, despite this, it was not something they did often. Basri and Junaidi explained this in more detail:

Sometimes I do the cooking when my wife cannot do it. I don't mind doing it. Although I don't do it often, if I have time I can do the cooking for my small family. (Basri, age 32)

I will do the cooking when my wife can't do it but I cook only a simple meal or time permitted. (Junaidi, age 31)

Of the three men who had a maid, the maids did the cooking for their children but the wives cooked for their husbands. These respondents helped their wives with the cooking because they did not want the maids to cook for them. Yusry, Ahmad and Mursyid explained:

I don't like my maid cooks for me even though she cooks for my children. I want my wife do the cooking for me and I don't mind if I do the cooking too. (Yusry, age 35)

I cook when my wife cannot do it for my family, I don't want to eat the food cooked by my maid. My children will eat the food that my maid cooked. (Ahmad, age 35)

Although I have a maid who does the cooking for my children if my wife cannot the cooking, I don't eat the food that she cooked. I will cook by my myself or I will ask my wife to cook for me. (Mursyid, age 37)

In this study, all of the respondents made it clear that the responsibility for cooking, which they understood to be a traditional role, still fell with their wives. In accordance with their expectations, all the husbands in this study still assumed food preparation for the family to be a mother's responsibility. According to the statements above, these husbands only helped and shared the responsibility for cooking depending on the situation, although none of them felt reluctant about contributing to meal preparation. However, they made it clear that they limited their involvement to times when their wives were busy.

The other types of housework that most respondents mentioned as something that they needed to help with regularly were cleaning and laundry. Those who had rejected the idea of having a maid because they felt uncomfortable having strangers at home agreed that the ideas of the husband's participation in helping their wives do the housework and of sharing the domestic responsibility were vital in order to ease their wives' heavy burden. To manage these tasks, they created daily, weekly and monthly schedules for cleaning, laundry and other household chores, similar to those created for managing the cooking. In following these schedules, only simple cleaning jobs were carried out on working days, such as washing up the dishes and sweeping the floor. None of them did major laundry or cleaning tasks except at

weekends. They claimed that most of the tasks were shared with their wives. For instance, Basri and Hamid, who work as a teacher and lecturer, respectively, did the laundry and cleaning much more frequently than other respondents as they worked flexible hours, from around 7.30 am to 2.00 pm. Basri said:

I am the one who is in charge of laundry and outdoor house cleaning, especially on weekdays. I work flexible hours so I always help my wife to do these tasks. I think my assistance has reduced my wife's burden. (Hamid, age 38)

As a teacher, I will be at the school from morning until afternoon. So after I got back from school, usually I will do the laundry. I always do the laundry more than my wife as I always prefer to do it after I got back from school. My wife works in fix-time in one of the government sectors. (Basri, age 32)

In Syed's and Ehsan's cases, as their working hours were from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm, these men helped to clean up the house and do the laundry only when the situation permitted. They elaborated on this by stating:

I help my wife to do the laundry and cleaning when I have time. I don't do it regularly as I am also a busy person. (Syed, age 40)

I don't often help my wife doing the laundry or cleaning. I only do a little when I am free to do it. (Ehsan, age 32)

According to the discussion above, the respondents' willingness indicates men's capabilities in helping women with the household management. Here, it is generally accepted that these couples have at times shifted the household duties from one to the other, or to other people, for a variety of reasons. In addition, their decision to share the daily routine of household chores with their spouses in particular seemed the best way to manage responsibility for the housework. This is in accordance with several other studies conducted by researchers on career or earner couples. For example, some studies have shown that spouses in dual-career or dual-earner marriages share housework more equally than other couples (see Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, 1976; Hertz, 1986; Parasuraman et al., 1992; Becker and Moen, 1999; Da, 2004; Bartley et al., 2005; Ezzeden and Ritchey, 2008). Becker and Moen (1999), in their study, found that men who had jobs were also involved in looking after the children and helping their wives with household duties, although they required assistance from outsiders. Da's (2004) study showed that most of Shanghai's men participated in family work and they did more than their working wives as this was normal in Shanghai society. A study conducted by Ezzeden and Ritchey (2008) found that husbands' involvement in doing household chores was rated the second-most-cited category of spousal support by their respondents. All of the studies found that a husband's support reduced his wife's double burden whilst at the same time helping them to enhance their career development.

There were differences in the ways in which those who had maids organised their household routines compared to the other respondents. As the routines of managing household chores were handled by maids, all of the housework duties were completed every day. These three men were less worried about domestic chores because the maids were responsible for them. In fact, they rarely did any domestic chores at home. However, they did mention that their non-involvement was not related to gender ideology concerning the division of labour at home, but rather was due to the presence of maids. They had been involved in helping their wives prior to employing maids. They explained this as follows:

I did help my wife doing the housework before we had a maid. But now, I rarely do it anymore because we already had a maid to do so. In fact, my wife also rarely does the housework unless our maid is on leave. (Yusry, age 35)

I don't do the housework because all of it is done by my maid. The maid tidies up our house every day, thus my wife and I won't have to think about doing it after we get back from our office. I remember I did help my wife doing the housework before we hired a maid. (Ahmad, age 35)

Because I have a maid, she does all the housework. I do not do it and same as my wife. We don't have to worry about doing the housework as both of us are working. I and my wife did the housework when we didn't have a maid in the last couple of years. (Musyrid, age 37)

Grocery shopping was another aspect of housework mentioned by the respondents. Interestingly, the main grocery shopping was often done at weekends, with most respondents doing it on either a fortnightly or a monthly basis. The respondents with their families always carried out this activity. Interestingly, as it was done with their families, they enjoyed the shopping trips because they considered them to be a kind of family outing. Normally, whilst out doing the grocery shopping, they also seized the opportunity to have a meal, such as lunch or dinner, outside the home with their families. Eating out with families was a popular trend among these men as it also ensured they spent quality time with their wives and children. Two respondents shared their stories about grocery shopping with their wives and children:

Every month we will go grocery shopping and I think this is also a time for my family outing. Doing this shopping is not as tough as to fulfil other household responsibilities. Yeah! I enjoy it because this is also a way we can spend time together as one family. (Ubaidillah, age 30)

Like Ubaidillah, another husband explained this by stating:

We [he and his wife] only do the shopping twice a month. We will bring our children as well. It's like 'two in one' you know, do the shopping and eat out once in a while with my wife and children. (Junaidi, age 31)

Responsibilities of Fathers towards Their Children

When the respondents explained about their involvement in childcare as fathers, they believed themselves to be the foundation of the family and that they should always be concerned about the betterment of the family and the upbringing of the children. They are also obligated to provide a warm, conducive and loving environment which acts as a concrete foundation for happy living. Although the respondents and their wives had several alternatives when it came to childcare, such as sending their children to day-care centres or babysitters, seeking assistance from their extended family or employing a live-in domestic helper when they were at their workplace, they never neglected their responsibility for the children's upbringing. Their degree of involvement in childcare was still dependent on their situations as most of them had children under the age of 12.

Because the father's involvement in the care of his newborn child is seen as important, many countries have recognised and introduced paternity leave. According to Adema and Whiteford, (2008), for example, fathers' levels of involvement in childcare have been successfully increased in many European countries, especially in Iceland, with the introduction of paternity leave. In Finland, 60% of fathers take a short period of paternity leave – between 6 and 18 working days – whilst only a few take long periods of parental leave in excess of 7 months for taking care of their wives and new children (Taskula, 2000). In addition, Shantti (1990, cited in Taskula, 2000: 5) noted that those fathers who do take paternity leave are 'often young and educated, and they work as white-collar employees in the public sector'. In this study, respondents agreed that paternity leave has enabled them to share some time off work during their wives' maternity leave in order to meet the needs of their newborn children. The respondents stated that paternity leave was among the most popular policies for managing issues pertaining to their children. This policy was beneficial not only for the female respondents as mothers but also for them as fathers. All respondents emphasised that the

availability of paternity leave helped them to spend time with their new child. During that time, they made it clear that their support was essential as it helped them to meet their wives' emotional needs. Attesting to the preceding claim, two respondents said:

I never missed helping my wife during the confinement period as I was on paternity leave.
(Hamid, age 38)

Spending time together with my wife for the first seven days is important because she needs me to be around at that tough time. (Rohaizat, age 37)

Another two respondents shared their thoughts about paternity leave. They mentioned that paternity leave was a medium through which they were able to support their wives after the exhausting process of labour and childbirth. Therefore, spending time together for a few days and taking care of their newborn, made possible by the leave entitlement seems to have enhanced the level of mutual support between husbands and wives:

I not only helped and supported her [my wife] during my paternity leave but I was involved in the whole process of bringing up our children. However, this policy was important for me because I could give her emotional support during her early days of confinement treatment as she has been through a hard time while delivering our baby. (Ehnsan, age 32)

I always support her in whatever she [his wife] does. Therefore, paternity leave is also one of the ways I support her as a husband and the support is not only emotional but also physical.
(Syed, age 40)

Embong's (2002) study revealed that one of the roles practised by Malay parents is that of an 'informal educator' for their children at home. Embong found that Malay parents living in urban areas were concerned not only about academic education for their children but also about religious education. The majority of these parents who lived in urban areas taught their children the basic tenets of Islam from a young age up to the point at which they reached puberty. It was stated in his study that Malay parents generally are very concerned about the importance of delivering Islamic teaching to their children in order to avoid moral crises, which are very prevalent in modern times. Abdullah (1998) found that fathers had much less frequent involvement in educating their children about the values of Islam and Malay culture than mothers.

In this study, they saw the home as the initial place where children's characters and behavioural patterns are shaped; therefore, both parents are highly responsible for being the first educators of their children. Without denying the importance of the father's responsibility in educating his children, all respondents stated that the majority of the responsibility for educating children at home still rested on the mother's shoulders. Some respondents were involved in teaching their young children at home. Two were involved in their children's education at home once they went to formal educational institutions. They helped their children with their schoolwork and revision, something that did not happen when their children were pre-school age. This finding is in accordance with Da's (2004) study of Shanghai men in Sydney, who found that fathers played a more important role in helping their children with schoolwork than mothers, and this was admitted by the Shanghai women. In my study, this responsibility had shifted to the husbands in only two cases as these respondents believed that they, as husbands, were more capable of teaching their children, especially in relation to their academic education. This finding is expressed by two respondents, who said:

I help my wife to look after my children's education when our eldest daughter started to go to formal school. I am the one who will sit down with my daughter while she is doing her schoolwork. I think I can teach my daughter due to my academic qualifications. My wife

focuses only on educating my daughter in terms of religious and cultural values. (Rohaizat, age 37)

When my children went to school, I became involved in helping our children with schoolwork. I did discuss this matter with my wife and we agreed about it. I should look after our children's schoolwork especially in their academic education and my wife focuses on other things. (Hamid, age 32)

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that the division of labour at home has undergone a change due to women's participation in the paid labour force. On the one hand, this change has certainly helped to ease the burden of family finances when women share the responsibility for being the breadwinner with their husbands. On the other hand, more men now participate in performing many of the household chores that have traditionally been perceived as women's tasks. A more egalitarian gender ideology has been accepted by both men and women due to the changing times. Most of the husbands' attitudes to domestic chores changed when they began sharing responsibility for them with their wives, and when they began taking care of their children, as they mentioned that these things were necessary to help their wives, especially when their wives were not able to fully manage them because of their own career commitments. This is evidence that, in this study, the gender ideology that applied to traditional domestic chores for women has also been accepted by men. However, it is also important to note that domestic chores still constitute one of the major areas that are considered women's responsibility, although the men claimed that it is shared equally with their wives.

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