

# Women in the Teaching Profession: Impacts and Challenges

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**Abstract**—Recently in Malaysia, women's participation in teaching profession has increased. The increasing trend of women's participation in the teaching profession poses challenges in families, especially in the developing countries like Malaysia. One of these challenges, concerns in balancing their role between family and job responsibility that faced by many women teachers. The purpose of this study is to discover how women teachers' impact on family happiness and the challenges faced by them in balancing their role between family and job responsibility. The findings presented in this study are based on survey research in a secondary school Dato' Bijaya Setia in the district of Gugusan Manjoi which is located in Kedah, Malaysia. The study found that employment of women in economic activity has several beneficial impacts of improving the economic condition of the family. The results also revealed that in low income earning families, both husbands and wives' employment contribute to the family income that less likely to experience of family poverty. The study also showed despite women's teachers' significant role towards the overall development of the family, the majority of women teachers encountered a number of difficulties in balancing their role between family and job responsibility especially when they need to work more than the normal working time. Therefore, it is common for the majority of women suffering from psychological stress when they are unable to complete the task at a fixed time. The present study also suggests implication of family friendly policy and its appropriate practice to support the women teachers who are significantly contributing to family, community and the country.

**Keywords**—Emotional exhaustion, Family friendly policy, Work family conflict, Women Teacher.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE article focuses on women's involvement in the teaching profession from the Malaysian perspective. In Malaysia, the participation of women in the labor force has been increased since its independence in 1957. The trend has continued to increase in the late 1980s. Women's labor force participation is considered as economic indicators since it helps to reduce the unemployment rate, poverty and increases the overall standard of living. Similarly, as part of women's labour force participation, women's involvement in the teaching profession is beneficial to the country as both male and female teachers have the positive impact of diversity of the nation.

However, teachers are the important resources that contribute to developing the educational quality and the human capital of the nation. Moreover, Malaysia has a vision

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to achieve the status fully developed country by the year 2020. To achieve vision 2020, access to quality education, human quality development and teacher development among its most important challenges [1]. Therefore, the government of Malaysia has made efforts to establish training centers in order to provide training for the primary and secondary school teachers. Malaysia has made significant achievements in meeting local and international standards in terms of education [2].

Like many other developing countries, in Malaysia, the recruitment of women teachers is an issue that has become increasingly important. In Malaysia, therefore, a large number of educated women are working as teachers in both primary and secondary education sectors. The current statistics for Malaysia in 2010 showed that the number of women in the teaching profession imbalance the number of males. These statistics showed that there was a total of 229,921 primary teachers in the country out of 159,276 are females. It presents only 30.7% of primary teachers are males, which are low compared to females [3]. Indeed to say that a huge number of women teachers are playing an important role in the educational development of the country that need to be studied deeply. Moreover, some of the positive qualities such as honesty, creative thinking, problem solving and patient are appearing in women that are appropriate for the highest achievement in the teaching profession. However, although women's participation in the teaching profession is contributing to economic and social development of the country, they are facing numbers of difficulties in managing family as well as their profession. There are a number of factors that influence women's teachers' challenges such as increased duties and demands on time, working more than normal working hours and gender norms. In accordance with this background, the study attempts to examine women's involvement in the teaching profession and the challenges faced by the women teachers in managing their work and family from the Malaysian perspective.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching is not only a noble profession, but also a demanding occupation where teachers need to maintain a high level of professional performance. They must accept personal responsibility for their own performance, growth and development [4]. Therefore, in Malaysia; teaching is considered one of the highest stress occupations, especially for the women who need to deal with both work and family. Although there are a number of factors contributing to women's teachers challenges, Literature focuses on domestic

gender ideology. Women are more naturally disposed towards nurture than men, based on the traditional gender roles found in many societies that place women within the domestic domain as caregivers [5]. From this belief, women teachers like to give priority family over career would interpret as a lack of commitment that will hinder their personal career goals [6]. Instead, when women teachers are unable to minimize the balance of the commitment between work and family, it may contribute to stress. Women increased participation in the teaching profession influence them to play multiple roles in balancing work, housework, and childcare responsibilities. On the other hand, the impact of multiple roles at work and in family life may contribute to stress.

A growing literature further indicated that teaching is a challenging profession and hence, teachers need to know the technique how to distress to maintain good health and high spirits [7]. A study conducted by Mukundan, & Khandehroo among 120 English language teachers in Malaysia which revealed that emotional exhaustion of the female teachers was significantly high [8]. The study also revealed that English teachers with less than 26 years of teaching experience, having a significantly higher level of emotional exhaustion. A similar study was conducted by Sultana [9] among working women from three different educational institutions of Malaysia which found that most of working women are stressful due to lack of socialization and inability to fulfill personal affairs. They have limited social contact as they are mostly busy with their heavy work schedule. The study also showed that most of working women were facing the most challenges when their children fall in sick [10]. In another study, Sultana [11] women in the teaching profession are having stress related to heavy workload and time constraints that lead to work family conflict. The author further indicated that most of women have expressed always quarrel with their husband due to have work schedule and unfinished work. These come from stresses, which turn, in work, family conflict between them [11].

The previous studies above provide an overview on how working women, especially those who are involved in the profession. However, despite working women are facing challenges in managing household as well as their profession, women's employment has significant impacts on children's and family well-being. Various studies show that women's employment has both positive and negative influences on the well-being of the family [12]. Some studies show that there are negative impacts on children if the mother does not work as working mothers are able to contribute to family income. [13]. As an example, it can be said that without the income of the mother, the family may find themselves living at poverty level. With a dual income household, many women find themselves more able to make more choices for their families when it comes to child nutrition and education [14].

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this article is to examine women's involvement in the teaching profession and its impact on the family. The specific objectives of this article are (1) to examine how women teachers would contribute towards their

families' development (2) to analyze the constraints faced by women teachers in managing their work and family responsibility (3) to suggest necessary efforts should be taken for improving the performance of women teachers towards their profession.

### IV. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was a quantitative study in nature; therefore, the survey technique was largely used in this study. The findings presented in this study are based on survey research in a secondary school Dato' Bijaya Setia in the district of Gugusan Manjoi which is located in Kedah, Malaysia. There was only one technique such as questionnaire was used for data collection. A total of 40 women teachers were considered as the respondents in this study. Semi-structured questionnaires were prepared in obtaining data. Questionnaires were handed to each respondent and the information was collected directly by the researcher. The variables related to the challenges and impacts of women teachers were measured using 5 statements using Anchored scale ranging from 1=Strongly Agree (SA), 2=Agree (A), 3=Not Sure (NS), 4=Disagree (D) 5=Strongly Disagree (SD). For measuring women's teachers' challenges and impact towards family matters frequency, percentages and mean were largely used in this study.

### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Impact of Women Teachers towards Family's Development

This section examines the impact of women teachers towards their children and family happiness. Extensive literatures found positive impact of women's employment on children as well as overall well-being of the family, especially for children educational development. The access of mothers to income-generating opportunities, impacts positively on the well-being of children. Generally, when both husband and wife are working they are able to contribute to child nutrition and education. Hence, it is appropriate to examine the impact of women teachers towards their family happiness from the Malaysian perspective. In order to examine the impact of women teachers in building family happiness, there are six statements were formulated and the results are presented in Table I.

In the first two statements, it is noted that all respondents agreed on their contribution towards improving their family economic condition as well as reduce husband's burden. These findings clearly indicate that the income of the women teachers has an impact on the socioeconomic improvement of their families. The results revealed that a significant number of respondents (47.5 percent) agreed with the statement "I help my husband to fulfill all the needs of the family" (Mean=4.52). The results also indicate that in low income earning families in cooperation between husband and wife, especially, on financial matters is very important in maintaining family happiness.

These results are supported by a previous study conducted by Booth [12] showed that women's income may reduce

poverty as well as to contribute to quality of life. Therefore, employment has several positive impacts on their families as it is associated with increase access to and control over mother's income [10]. All women teachers agreed that they are able to fulfill all the needs of the family (Mean = 4.40). Similarly, the majority of the women teachers agreed that they contribute to their children's educational development (Mean=4.15). These findings are supported by the previous study conducted by Sultana [10] on the mothers' perception of the impact of employment on their children among working and non-working mothers in six educational institutions in Malaysia and the results showed that working mothers were able to contribute to child development compared to non-working mothers. The study also found that mothers' intellectual and economic resources contribute to children academic and cognitive development [10]. Moreover, in the last statement "I contribute to increase my family financial savings for the future" showed that a total of 22 women teachers (55.0 percent) agreed that a career woman have an impact on the increasing of family savings for the future (Mean = 4.38).

TABLE I  
IMPACTS OF WOMEN TEACHERS IN BUILDING THEIR FAMILY HAPPINESS  
THROUGH LIKERT SCALE

Statement		SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total	Mean
I contribute to improve the economic status of the family	F	0	0	0	17	23	40	4.58
	%	0	0	0	42.50	57.50	100	
I contribute to reduce the burden of the husband towards the family	F	0	0	0	19	21	40	4.52
	%	0	0	0	47.50	52.50	100	
I help my husband to fulfill all the needs of the family	F	0	0	0	24	16	40	4.40
	%	0	0	0	60.00	40.00	100	
I contribute to children's educational development	F	0	2	2	24	12	40	4.15
	%	0	5.00	5.00	60.00	30.00	100	
I contribute to foster the moral values among the members in my family	F	0	0	2	23	15	40	4.33
	%	0	0	5.0	57.5	37.50	100	
I contribute to increase my family financial savings for the future	F	0	1	0	22	17	40	4.38
	%	0	2.5	0	55.00	42.50	100	

### *B. Challenges Faced by Women Teachers in Maintaining Happiness of their Family*

Although women teachers play a significant role towards the overall development of the family, they face challenges in managing family as well as their job responsibility. Generally, working women perform dual roles as an income generator

and primary caregivers to their children in the family. Due to performing dual roles, it might be hard for working women to fulfill the commitment towards the family as well as professionally. In line with this background, this section examines the challenges faced by women teachers in balancing work and the family responsibility. In order to analyze constraints faced by women teachers, there are eight variables were formulated and analyzed separately.

Table II summarized the results of the challenges faced by women teachers in maintaining professional and family. The results show that the majority of women teachers are facing challenges for working more than the normal working time (Mean=4.08). Hence, the majority of women teachers need to deal with emotional and psychological stress when they are unable to complete the task in a fixed time period (Mean=4.33). However, many women teachers need to involve themselves in clerical work in the school that one of the challenges faced by them to manage their family as well as their profession (Mean=4.48). The majority of women teachers (60.0 percent) strongly agree with the statement that they are facing challenges in managing career responsibilities as they are frequently required to engage in clerical work at school. Moreover, a large number of women teachers agreed that they are facing challenges in managing their family and profession when they are frequently asked to attend meetings after duty and it continued for a long time (Mean=4.30).

These findings are similar to the previous study about stress, work and family conflict among married women in their families [9]. The study found that due to imbalance of work, family and social life, working women are stressful. Stress and anxiety may cause them to be tired and lack energy. The present study also demonstrated that it is common for the majority of the women teachers dealing with psychological stress due to heavy work (Mean=3.97). On the other hand, many women teachers are stressed because of their inability of spending quality time with their family (Mean=3.87). This situation may lead work, family conflict that noted in the last statement (Mean=3.53). However, the impact of multiple roles at work and in family life contributes to work family conflict [10]. Due to imbalance of work, family and social life, working mothers are stressful. Similarly, stress and anxiety may cause them to be tired and lack of energy. Therefore, it is common for the majority of the women teachers dealing with emotional stress due to heavy work (Mean= 3.97). This situation may lead work, family conflict that noted in the last statement (Mean=3.53). From the above discussions, it can be summarized that most of women teachers are facing challenges related to inability of spending quality time with their family due to heavy workload that lead stress and work family conflict. Due to imbalance of work, family and social life, many women teachers are suffering from psychological stress. However, it has been also noted that Malaysian women sometimes face the issue of balancing work and life becoming a major concern among most dual career families. Previous studies showed working women experience more role stress as compared to non-working women.

TABLE II  
CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN TEACHERS IN MAINTAINING HAPPINESS OF THEIR FAMILY

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total	Mean
I need to work more than the normal working time	F 0	6	1	17	16	40	4.08
	% 0	15.0	2.5	42.5	40.0	100	
I need to deal with pressure to complete a task in a fixed time period	F 0	2	3	15	20	40	4.33
	% 0	5.0	7.5	37.5	50.0	100	
I need to be involved in clerical work in school	F 0	2	1	13	24	40	4.48
	% 0	5.0	2.5	32.5	60.00	100	
I need to be involved in extracurricular or co-curricular activities	F 0	3	0	18	19	40	4.33
	% 0	7.5	0	45.0	47.5	100	
I always need to attend meetings out of school time and lasted over a long time	F 0	4	1	14	21	40	4.30
	% 0	10.0	2.5	35.0	52.5	100	
I am coping with emotional stress after a heavy work	F 0	4	4	21	11	40	3.97
	% 0	10.0	10.0	52.5	27.5	100	
I do not get quality time for family	F 0	7	1	22	10	40	3.87
	% 0	17.5	2.5	55.0	25.0	100	
I often tempted to exist a small conflict in the family	F 0	11	4	18	7	40	3.53
	% 0	27.5	10.0	45.0	17.5	100	

## VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to discover how women teachers impact on family happiness and the challenges faced by them in balancing their role between family and job responsibility. The study found that employment of women in economic activity has several beneficial impacts of improving the economic condition of the family. The results also indicated that in low income earning families in cooperation between husband and wife, especially, on financial matters is very important in maintaining the overall development of the family. Despite women's teachers' significant role towards the overall development of the family, the majority of women teachers encountered a number of difficulties in balancing their role between family and job responsibility especially when they need to work more than the normal working time. Therefore, it is common for the majority of women teachers suffering from psychological stress when they are unable to complete the task at a fixed time. While they spend the amounts of time away from their young children and family can be considered as one factor that influence family conflict. Given the importance and demands of women's participation in the teaching profession, the study suggests the implication of family friendly policy and its practice that supports the involvement of the teaching profession as well as the overall development of the community. In Malaysia, it has been

argued that many workplaces have implemented various Family Friendly Policies, but there still exists a gap between the employee's practical needs and the availability of family friendly policies [15]. The present study also suggests implication of family friendly policy and its appropriate practice to support the women teachers who are significantly contributing to family, community and the country. Furthermore, the study was limited to women's teachers' participation in only a secondary school in Kedah state of Malaysia; therefore, the results of this study could not be generalized to a broader scope. Similar study can be conducted in several schools throughout Malaysia.

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