

# Household chores, family responsibilities main reasons for unemployment among women

By [S. Birruntha](#) - September 10, 2024 @ 2:49pm



About 62.1 per cent of women outside Malaysia's labour force cite household chores and family responsibilities as the main reasons for their unemployment, according to Khazanah Research Institute (KRI). Freepic

KUALA LUMPUR: About 62.1 per cent of women outside Malaysia's labour force cite household chores and family responsibilities as the main reasons for their unemployment, according to Khazanah Research Institute (KRI).

Its research associate Puteri Marjan Megat Muzafar said social norms play a significant role in shaping gender outcomes, particularly in economic participation.

"Traditional gender roles persist where men are seen as the primary breadwinners and women are expected to be the caregivers which leads to gender inequality.

"These long-standing norms can limit women's career aspirations and opportunities," she said in a panel session titled "Women's Role in Society: Addressing Gender

Bias, Double Burden & Mental Wellbeing in Malaysia" organised by self-serviced laundrette, dobiQueen here today.

According to a recent study by KRI, women's educational attainment has improved and is on par with men, comprising 52 per cent of those with tertiary education, yet they represent only 37.7 per cent of the labour force.

In terms of skilled jobs, women represent half of professionals (50.1 per cent), but remain underrepresented in key leadership positions as managers (25.4 per cent), technicians and associate professionals (29 per cent).

In addressing gender roles and bias, women are performing five times more unpaid household care work than men.

From cleaning and caregiving to meal preparation and more, these "unseen" tasks are crucial to daily lives but remain excluded from traditional economic measures.

Meanwhile, Mental Illness Awareness and Support Association (MIASA) founder and president Anita Abu Bakar cited a Rakuten Insight survey showing that in May 2022, 54 per cent of female respondents reported higher stress or anxiety in the past year.

She noted that women often bear significant caregiving responsibilities, which can result in caregiver fatigue and burnout, leaving little time for self-care.

"Persistent gender inequality in the workplace, marked by pay disparities, limited opportunities for advancement, and inadequate recognition, intensifies frustration and diminishes self-worth.

"In addition, societal expectations impose unrealistic standards on women regarding success, appearance, and behaviour can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression," she said during the panel session.

Adding further, Anita said MIASA continues to advocate for flexible work arrangements to empower women to take necessary time off without fear of job loss and reinforce a supportive and high-trust workplace culture.

This may include part-time positions, job sharing arrangements, compressed workweeks, on-site childcare and robust family leave policies.

She said these measures are also evidence-based, as numerous studies from around the world have highlighted associations between the imposition of firm family leave policies and increased wellbeing as well as job satisfaction among working women.

dobiQueen co-founder and executive director of Nini Tan said when it comes to alleviating actual household burdens, dobiQueen advocates sharing household responsibilities more equitably.

She noted that this redistribution of chores not only eases stress and prevents burnout but also fosters a more balanced lifestyle.

"We salute the majority of women who keep the household going.

"Our goal is to reduce household chores for working adults and give them back precious time for them to spend with family and friends," she added.

Malaysia aims to become a high-income nation with resilient, self-determined families, aligning with the SDG 2030 goals of inclusiveness and gender equality.

To achieve this, KRI said supporting women's physical and mental well-being is crucial, as nation-building starts at home.

KRI also cited the importance of a support system in caring for children and empowering women.

The firm said while the three-generation or extended family arrangement has been in decline these four decades, more alternative care arrangements can be made to support working mothers.