

CHILDREN AND WOMEN'S DECISION NOT TO WORK – A STUDY IN KLANG VALLEY

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Abstract

The widespread increase of women working in paid labour has a social and economic impact on the family and the household. Since the 1970s, export-oriented industrialisation policies and an increase in the educational attainment of women have seen an emerging pattern of dual career families in Malaysia. However, female labour force participation rates have been at a constant rate of 46 - 47 % in the last three decades. It emerges that a significant increase in the number of women leaving the labour market is due to the presence of their young children. Many international studies have tried to analyse the effect of child birth on working mothers but these studies are concentrated in countries with high female labour force participation rates. This study conducted in the Klang Valley, Malaysia is based on a self-administered questionnaire survey of working women who left the labour market. The purpose of this study is to examine whether the presence of their young children has an effect on women's decision not to work in paid labour. In this preliminary study of 80 respondents, it was observed that women quit their jobs mainly because of their young children. The study further analyses other socio-economic

characteristics like household income which influenced women's exit from the labour market. Finally, the paper concludes with discussions on whether child care facilities and other family friendly policies might have an effect on women's decision to go back to work.

Keywords: Women's exit from labour market, female labour force participation, family friendly policies.

Introduction

Trying to understand why employees leave a company has been one of the most studied topics in organisational research. Surprisingly, in spite of the importance of being a major issue, studying why female employees exit the labour force due to children and childbirth has been very scarce (Lee & Mowday, 1987). Current changes in the female composition of the labour force and also the workplace provide an incentive for understanding why women decide to leave the labour force following childbirth.

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