

ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES  
(AIJBES)[www.aijbbs.com](http://www.aijbbs.com)**RESOLVING GENDER EQUALITY: HOW FAMILY  
BACKGROUND CAN HELP TO RESOLVE GENDER EQUALITY  
IN THE EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT**Sarah Artiqah Mohamad Saad<sup>1\*</sup>, Lily Suriana Hassan<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> Faculty of Business, Accountancy & Social Sciences, University of Poly-Tech Malaysia, Malaysia  
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**Article Info:****Article history:**

Received date: 02.10.2023

Revised date: 17.10.2023

Accepted date: 15.11.2023

Published date: 12.12.2023

**To cite this document:**

Saad, S. A. M., & Hassan, L. S. (2023). Resolving Gender Equality: How Family Background Can Help To Resolve Gender Equality In The Employment Context, *International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SMEs*, 5 (18), 81-90.

DOI: 10.35631/AIJBS.518009.

This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

Occupational segregation encompasses two distinct phases: initial labour market entry, characterised as horizontal gender segregation, and subsequent ascension to upper echelons within firms, known as vertical gender segregation. Existing scholarly work has illuminated how the labour market delineates occupations into men-dominated, women-dominated, and mixed-gender spheres (Beller, 1984; Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Rytina & Bianchi, 1984; Ruijter & Huffman, 2003; May & McGarvey, 2017; Lewandowski et al., 2020). Concurrently, vertical gender segregation, or the glass ceiling, propels men's expedited progression to upper management positions, contributing to male dominance in this realm. This gender disparity is underscored by global senior management statistics, revealing a mere 29% female representation (Catalyst, 2020). This research endeavours to dissect the familial impact on horizontal gender segregation, hypothesising its consequential role in driving vertical gender segregation. An online questionnaire was distributed to seven branches of the private college, and a total of 599 respondents were received. The descriptive statistical analysis was used to investigate which factor(s) of the family background influenced their education selection. The results found that parental role influenced the most decisions, followed by parents' education and family's economic condition. However, there were no significant differences between the three factors, probably due to the financial assistance they received during their studies.

**Keywords:**

Gender Equality, Family Background, Employment.

## Introduction

Gender equality has always been an unresolved issue in society. It perceives a feminist agenda, but the truth must be told that gender equality affects both genders, specifically in employment. As many women successfully enter the labor market, gender equality may become an issue for men eventually. For that reason, it is significantly vital to resolve gender equality in the employment context from the moment they enter the labor market.

In Malaysia, women graduates dominated all fields of studies: Education (81%), Health and Welfare (76%), Social Sciences, Business and Law (67%), Arts and humanities (60%), Services (58%), Agricultural and Veterinary (56%), Science, Mathematics, and Computing (55%), and General Programs (52%), except Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction (38%) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2021).

Consequently, the more women attaining tertiary education may only explain the movement of men- and women-dominated occupations into mixed-gendered occupations. It may seem to resolve gender equality in horizontal segregation, yet if men's participation in education is deteriorating, gender equality is unlikely to be achieved as men become the minority.

Previous studies found that the factors that contribute to these discriminations are levels of education, experience, skills (Fortin & Huberman, 2002; Rica et al., 2005; Kosyakova et al., 2015) and family (Evans, 2002; Lowen & Sicilian, 2009; Cortés & Pan, 2017). However, these studies do not explain the factors that may contribute to the occupation selection before entering the labor market that may cause occupational gender segregation.

As access to tertiary education has become inclusive, lower and middle-income families have the opportunity to send their children to attend and receive tertiary education (Yeung, 2018; Herbst & Rok, 2014; Dinkelman & Martínez A., 2014). Accordingly, receiving tertiary education may allow the children to explore their employment interests by enrolling in their preferred fields of study rather than inheriting their parents' jobs.

Hence, the family background influences their children to explore their employment interests before enrolling in their preferred fields of study (Zuazu Bermejo, 2018; Hällsten & Thaning, 2018; Hägglund, 2021). Therefore, to this extent, it is fundamental to synthesize how a family affects the children's enrolment decision according to the parental role, parents' educational background, and family economic status.

## Research Questions And Objectives

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
RQ1: To what extent does the family background (parents' roles, parents' education background, economic status) influence education and occupation selection?	RO1: To examine the relationship between the family background, education selection, and career selection.

## Literature Review

### Parental Roles

Technological advancement eases many job executions, from durations to muscles, allowing men and women to participate in any labor. As a result, any man or woman can be the

breadwinner, domestic carer, or both in the family. This may change parental roles in a nuclear family, in which a mother can be the breadwinner and the father is the domestic carer. Subsequently, it may affect the upbringing of the children.

According to Wejnert & Djumabaeva (2012), there is a movement of changes in the parental roles between the parents. For instance, the family is becoming more egalitarian rather than patriarchal when it comes to family patterns, socialization practices, and children's education.

Trifan, Stattin, & Tilton-Weaver (2014) also found that directive control in gender-stereotyped parental roles has lessened, which lifting many restrictions on behavior and feelings. Hence, the children foresee their parents as more flexible and democratic, especially when the parents share the authority together.

Despite parental roles indicating a positive direction to address gender equality, it is still inadequate to resolve the gender equality issues in the labor market.

### ***Parental Education***

Parents are the children's aspiration for their future. It explains how the occupation passes through generations (Busch-Heizmann, 2015). It is highly likely that the children will value the parent's occupation who is more dominant in the family. A mother can inspire a son to pursue a career just like his mother, and so does the daughter to follow her father.

Kainuwa and Mohammad Yusuf (2013), as well as Jung and Zhang (2016), concurred that children view their parents' educational history as a significant factor in shaping their own educational aspirations. A stronger educational foundation in the family tends to motivate children to pursue higher education, drawing inspiration from their parents.

Nevertheless, in the absence of active parental involvement in their education, children may become disengaged. While a parent's academic background can serve as a catalyst for their children's educational pursuits, it is crucial for parents to actively support and nurture their children's interests for them to realize their envisioned educational goals.

Likewise, Hosseinpour, Yazdani, and Yarahmadi (2015) discovered a correlation between parental educational background and children's academic performance. It was observed that a higher level of parental education positively correlates with enhanced academic achievement in their children. Moreover, economic prosperity within a family context was also found to be associated with improved academic outcomes, particularly among urban-dwelling children (Li & Qiu, 2018).

However, these studies focused on education attainment and achievement but not the fields of study they may choose to pursue their studies.

### ***Family Economic Status***

In her research, Aina (2013) emphasized that aside from parental academic background, family economic status plays a crucial role in determining children's enrollment in tertiary education. Her findings revealed that children from more affluent families with better-educated parents are more likely to pursue tertiary education than those from lower-income households.

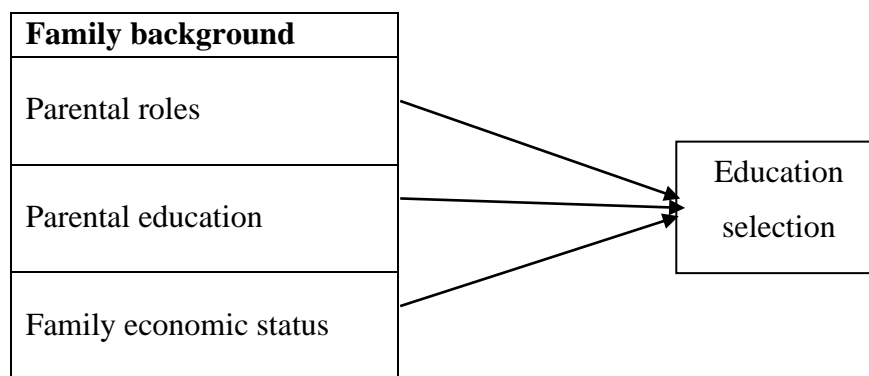
While there has been a positive trend in enrollment rates among lower-income families, they face a heightened risk of discontinuing their tertiary education due to financial constraints compared to their more financially stable counterparts.

Furthermore, Abbiati and Barone (2017) have pointed out that some upper-secondary school students may lack sufficient information about the costs and benefits associated with tertiary education. As a result, children from lower-income backgrounds tend to perceive the costs as comparatively higher than those from more affluent families.

Additionally, they may feel a greater sense of regret in the event of dropping out, viewing the tuition fees paid as a significant loss. Moreover, they may have limited access to information about the potential earnings they could gain upon graduation. In contrast, children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have a clear understanding of potential post-graduation income, often due to their parents' knowledge and resources, which is not typically the case for those from lower-income families.

### Proposed Research Framework

Hence, this research analyses how family background may influence children's education selection.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	HYPOTHESIS
RQ1: To what extent does the family background (parents' roles, parents' educational background, economic status) influence the education and occupation selection?	RO2: To examine the relationship between family background and education selection.	H1: There is a positive relationship between family background and education selection.

### Methodology

An online survey was distributed to a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI), including its branches. A total of 599 respondents were received within a week of questionnaire distribution. An online survey was chosen as a convenience to access seven branches scattered in the Peninsular of Malaysia. The target population was selected as these students will embark on their employment after graduating with their diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and professional certificates, suitable to assess before entering the labor market, to tackle occupational gender segregation.

Parents' demographic profile was included in the questionnaire. It included employment status, age, highest academic qualification, and household income per month. This section is required to explain descriptive statistical analysis further.

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
parental_role	599	3.40	1.60	5.00	3.8337	.02723	.66644	.444
parents_education	599	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.7038	.03123	.76441	.584
economic_status	599	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4504	.02751	.67318	.453
Valid N (listwise)	599							

**Table 1**

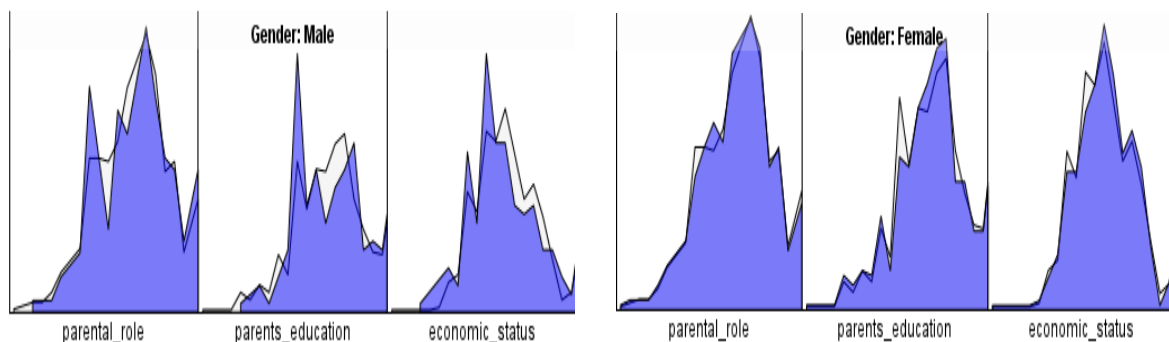
Statistically, there were insignificant differences between the parental role, parents' educational background and the family's economic status. However, further analysis of comparing subgroups depicted some variances.

**Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	169	28.2	28.2	28.2
	Female	430	71.8	71.8	100.0
	Total	599	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2**

A total of 71.8 per cent of respondents were female students. There was a difference in the dispersion of responses between the male and female students in perceiving their parents' background in influencing their educational selection when comparing the subgroups.

**Figure 1**

The majority of the respondent's parents were Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) holders. Further analysis of the subgroups showed that the dispersion of responses became concentrated in the middle as the parents held a doctoral degree compared to those with SPM and others. Furthermore, the result signified those fathers with doctoral degrees dispersed more than mothers with doctoral degrees. Erola & Leti (2016) explained that the reason was that educated fathers become more attached to their children as they enter adulthood rather than when they

were smaller, as, to them, their professional and economic resources become relatively insignificant to their education.

HIGHEST_ACADEMIC_QUALIFICATION_Father						HIGHEST_ACADEMIC_QUALIFICATION_Mother					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Doctoral Degree	10	1.7	1.7	1.7	Valid	Doctoral Degree	6	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Master's Degree	29	4.8	4.8	6.5		Master's Degree	25	4.2	4.2	5.2
	Bachelor's Degree	83	13.9	13.9	20.4		Bachelor's Degree	88	14.7	14.7	19.9
	Diploma	90	15.0	15.0	35.4		Diploma	88	14.7	14.7	34.6
	STPM	39	6.5	6.5	41.9		STPM	42	7.0	7.0	41.6
	SPM	225	37.6	37.6	79.5		SPM	235	39.2	39.2	80.8
	OTHER	123	20.5	20.5	100.0		OTHER	115	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	599	100.0	100.0			Total	599	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

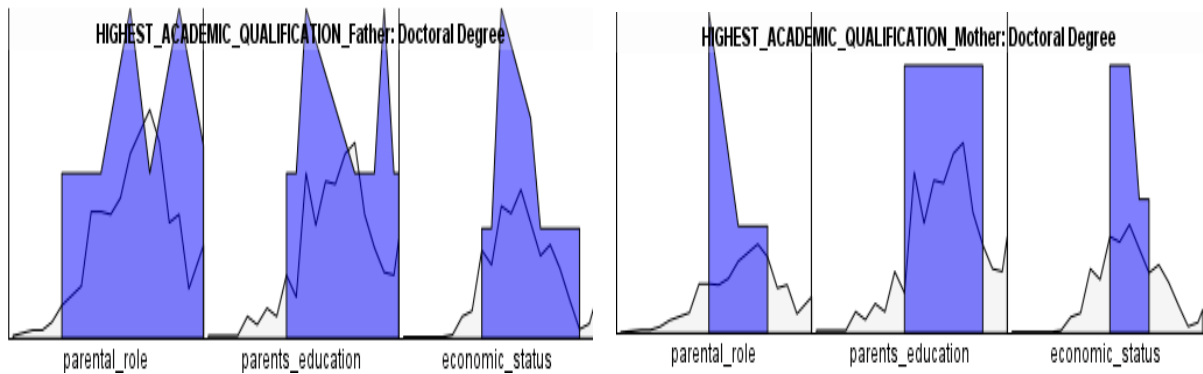


Figure 2

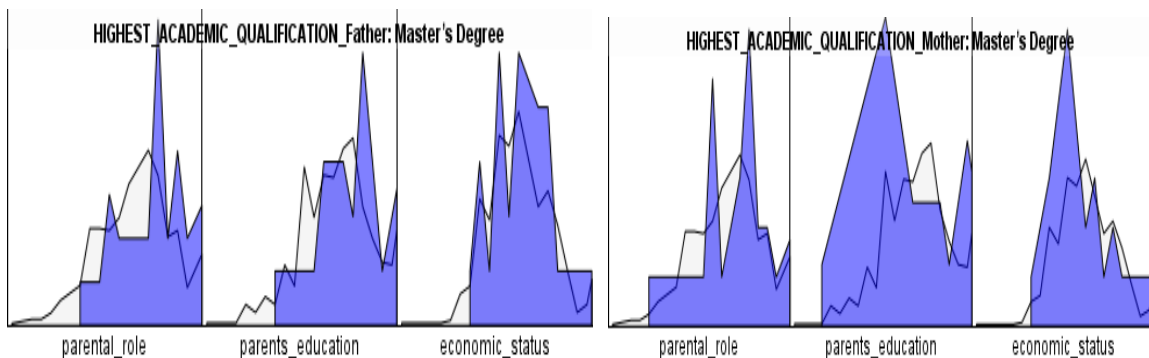


Figure 3



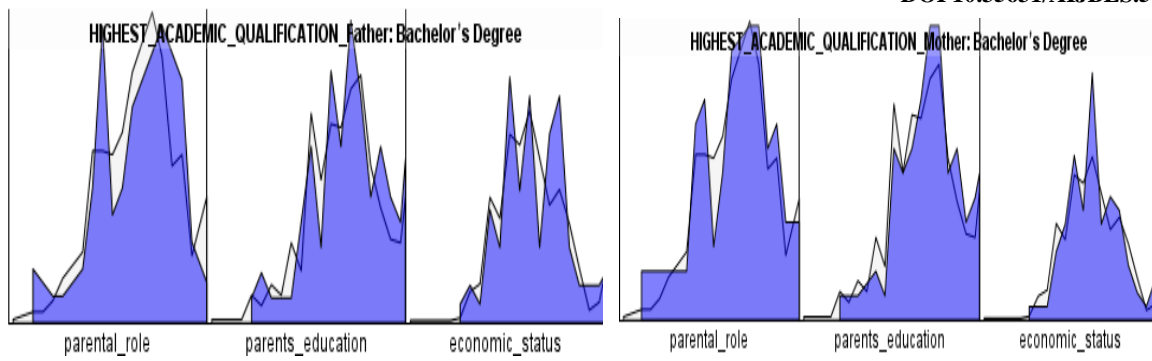


Figure 4

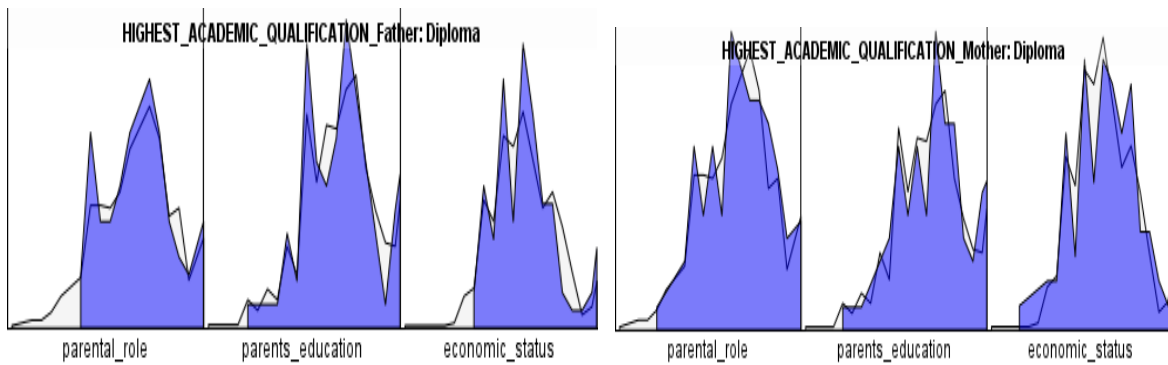


Figure 5

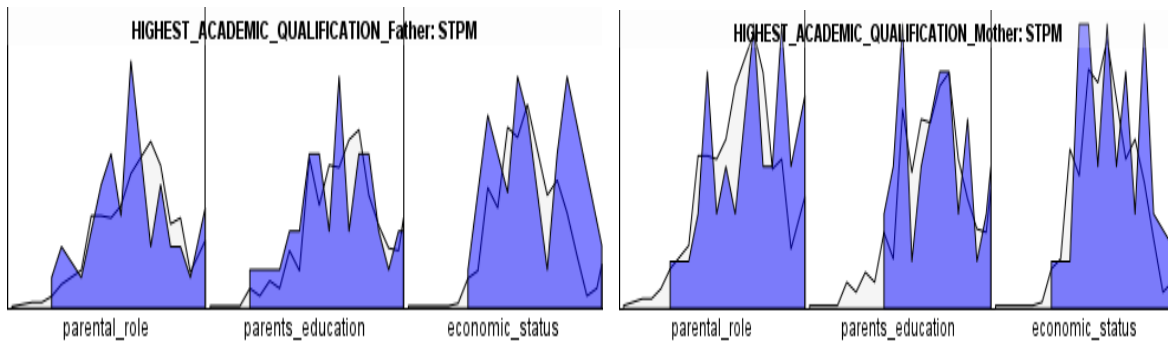


Figure 6

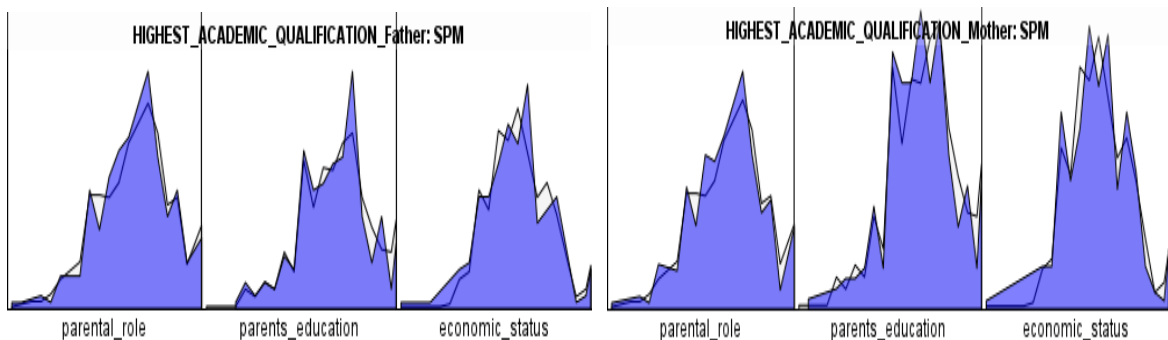
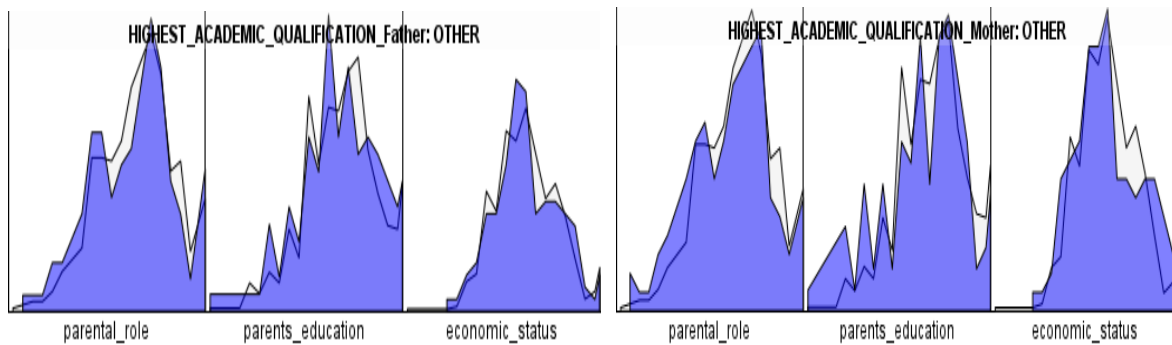


Figure 7

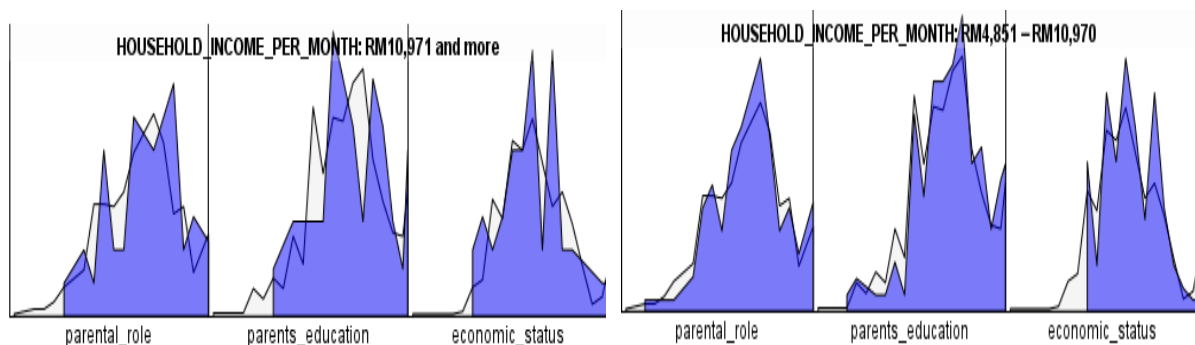
**Figure 8**

Half of the respondents (50.1 per cent) came from a household income ranging between RM1,000 to RM4,850 (B40). The financial assistance offered by the HEI to the Bumiputera attracts the B40 families to enter tertiary education as financial assistance has become a mechanism to improve education and nutrition in many countries (Sari, 2016), including Malaysia. It is expected that the B40 family can eventually improve their economic status once their children receive a better education attainment.

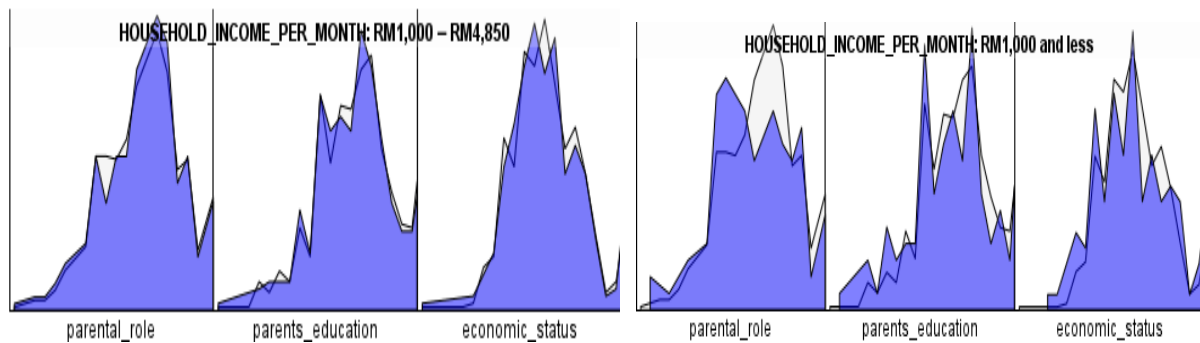
Subgroup analysis showed there was less variance between household income per month of RM4,851 – RM10,970 and RM1,000 – RM4,850. On the other hand, the dispersion of respondents quite fluctuates between the upper level of household income, RM10,971 and more, and the lowest level of household income, RM1,000 and less.

**HOUSEHOLD\_INCOME\_PER\_MONTH**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	RM10,971 and more	44	7.3	7.3	7.3
	RM4,851 – RM10,970	131	21.9	21.9	29.2
	RM1,000 – RM4,850	300	50.1	50.1	79.3
	RM1,000 and less	124	20.7	20.7	100.0
	Total	599	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4****Figure 9**





**Figure 10**

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the importance of family background in influencing their children's education selection. It is a preliminary study of understanding how the labor market is becoming gendered at horizontal (occupational gender segregation) and vertical (glass ceiling) levels.

The study provides valuable insights into the persistent inequalities that continue to affect both men and women. Although there was no significant difference in the parental roles, parents' educational background, and family economic status influencing the children's education selection, subgroup analysis indicated there was a dispersion in the respondents' responses.

The limitations of the study included the HEI selected under MARA, in which the objective is to help the Bumiputera become more competitive in economics through educational attainment. Hence, the study shall be conducted in a diverse environment to obtain better results.

## Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge Global Academic Excellence (M) Sdn Bhd, who granted the Publication Grant Scheme for this project.

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