



## EARLY VIEW

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# AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MALAYSIAN MEN BECOMING INVOLVED IN A FEMININE CAREER: A CASE STUDY OF MALE NURSE AND PAK ANDAM

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## ABSTRACT

*The gender socialization process will form and affect the career choices of children when they grow up. As a result, certain careers are considered appropriate only for a certain gender. However, this scenario of gender dominated career is now loosened. Currently, there are men who work as nurses, secretaries, and bridal beauticians. This study examines the factors that influence Malay, Muslim Malaysian men to work in two careers generally dominated by women, which are nurse and 'pak andam' (Malay bridal beautician and consultant). Using a case study qualitative approach, the author investigated the factors that influence male nurses (N = 14) and 'pak andam' (N = 5) to work in occupations generally considered to be the main domain of women in Malaysia's culture. Data from semi-structured interviews revealed that the reason why men become male nurses is mainly caused by external factors, which are family obedience, financial disadvantage, and religious obligation. However, during their journey in becoming nurses, they developed their passion for nursing. In contrast, the males who become 'pak andam' do so mainly because of personal factors, which is their interest in beauty and fashion. This paper will further discuss the participants' experiences from the context of Malay Muslim culture.*

**Keywords:** non-traditional career, male nurses, *pak andam*, economics of gender, multicultural

## INTRODUCTION

Men are starting to concentrate on certain careers dominated by females. There has been a significant increase in demand for traditional female jobs and these trends are expected to continue in the future (Autor & Dorn, 2013; Dwyer, 2013). The phenomenon is now changing culture and creating a new culture in the work environment, albeit the process is not occurring rapidly. Previous literature reveals the significant influence of gender stereotypes in the career choice decisions of men and women. Even in early adolescence, high school students already have a gender stereotyped perception about educational choices, with boys tending to choose mathematics and science classes, and girls choosing non-science classes (Pinxten et al., 2012). This is consistent with the evidence of Serra, Soler, Camacho-Miñano, Rey-Cao and Vilanova (2019), Ramaci et al. (2017), and Nicolao (2014) who found that men are more interested in more realistic careers, while women are interested in social and artistic expression. Realistic careers are often associated with masculine traits, and, therefore, are seen as more suitable for men, such as science, business, electricians, and engineer, whereas social and artistic tracks are

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associated with feminine traits, and seen as suitable for women, for example, teaching, nursing, and clerical jobs (Ramachi et al., 2017; Nicolao, 2014). As mentioned earlier, certain career are dominated by one gender. Gendered careers or traditional careers are formed by the skills and features that both men and women are supposed to encompass due to their gender (McDowell, 2015). These beliefs were passed traditionally down from one generation to another generation and directly affected the career roles, which are seen to be suitable for one gender or another. Thus, they tend to behave or act the way they think others want them to behave. Once they cross those boundaries, they are no longer in the 'correct system'. Those who did not follow of this gender stereotype will be 'marked', seen as deviant and detached from the mainstream (Ku, 2011). Therefore, a non-traditional career is often challenging and worrying for some as it is not normally done in the social group or the system. Some people embark on non-traditional careers. The issue is how they decided to go into careers dominated by other genders. Do they plan ahead or accidentally choose to take part? Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing the decision to enter a non-traditional career for Malaysian men. This article presents the results of a case study based on the career of Malaysian men as nurses and *pak andam* (male bridal make-up artist). These two groups of career were chosen because they are often associated with female workers. Nursing, for instance, has social recognition as a female profession (Mao et al., 2021; Kim and Soon, 2021). In Malaysia, statistics have shown that female dominate nursing workforce as opposed to male (Sowtali, 2019). As for *pak andam*, they are also minorities, as most research on Malay's bridal make up industry focuses on *mak andam* (female bridal make-up artist) (Bohari & Magiman, 2020; Salleh, 2018; Salleh & Kim, 2016). Therefore, it is pertinent to explore the factors that motivate Malaysian men to embark on a career dominated by women.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Different theories have been posed to explain career choices based on psychological, social and cultural factors. Psychological theories such as Holland (1997), Ginzberg (1972) and Super (1972) focus on personality types as an influence to work environment and describe career choice as lifelong process for individual. Other than psychological theories, the Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981, 1996, and 2005) offer wider perspectives through a sociological perspective on career development which includes gender, race and social class. Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise emphasizes the development of a person's interpretation of career choices. The components of the Gottfredson's theory include the process of circumscription and compromise (Cassie & Chen, 2012). In the Circumscription process, people limit their range of career opportunities in order to take full advantage of available career options that meet their needs. Factors that are involved during the process of narrowing-down occupation selections include power, gender roles, social valuation and characteristics of one's unique self (Cassie & Chen, 2012). At the end of the circumscription process, the individual successfully manages to narrow his or her career options significantly (Gottfredson, 2005). In other words, the circumscription stage allows the person to exclude unnecessary career choices. In doing so, the person rules out options outside of a perceived social and personal space. As not all appropriate career choices are available, individuals often have to compromise. In the compromise stage, individuals may be persuaded to sacrifice roles that they deem more compatible with their own concept to those that are perceived to be more readily available. The theory predicts that people will choose to work in a different field within their social space rather than jeopardize the prestige or type of work according to gender. If no work is available, they will opt for lower-level work before looking for jobs that conflict with their gender self-concept, because gender is more central to

their view of the self. However, limited information, limited understanding of the procedure and right method as well as a lack of positive social support often hinders individuals from compromising.

According to Hansen (2016), non-traditional careers are defined as those in which an individual finds that less than 25% of the workforce is of his or her own gender. However, as a new phenomenon in work culture, non-traditional careers are still debated as they involve a new way of thinking for the community, religion, and the values of society and individuals. Scholars generally agree that the duties of men are at the centre of their masculine identities and the social status bestowed upon them by others (Shagufta, 2018; Friedman 2015; Ridgeway 2011). In fact, men can be socially penalized by entering employment that defies the ideals of men (Henson & Rogers 2001; Pullen & Simpson 2009).

Men's participation in non-traditional occupations is influenced by a number of factors. Previous literature on this topic suggests several factors underlying men's decision to enter non-traditional careers. According to Williams and Villemez (1993), these are three categories of men who enter female-dominated careers: seekers, finders, and leavers. Seekers are those who are actively fighting for careers dominated by women, while finders are those who were looking for another kind of career but ended up in a non-traditional career. The last group, the leavers are those who had a 'female' career and left them. Williams and Villemez (1993) suggest that the majority of men are in the finders category as they entered careers dominated by women almost unintentionally, which means that they did not actively seek such entry, but simply ended up in it, either out of availability or out of convenience. Ann and Dienemann (2014) suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic factors should be taken into account in understanding male motivation in women-dominated career. On one hand, working in underrepresented career offers men endless opportunities to gain intrinsic rewards of benefiting others and providing care services. On the other hand, working in female-dominated careers offers men tremendous extrinsic rewards such as bright career prospects, employment stability and satisfactory earnings. Furthermore, Warming (2006) identified two other factors; the social background and educational level of the parents that support the higher statistics of men involved in non-traditional careers. This research suggests that there are clearly different options for men entering women-dominated work, taking into account the circumscription and compromise process proposed by Gottfredson (2005).

Several benefits exist for men in female-dominated professions. First, the minority status held by men in non-traditional careers benefits them. They are more likely to be promoted than the women in their jobs (Zhang & Tu, 2020; Gutek, 2001). The second benefit received by men working in non-traditional careers is the positive status effects (Lupton, 2006), such as superior recognition, hiring benefits and promotions opportunities (Zhang & Tu, 2020). These effects later provide a sense of belonging to these men, in that they feel welcome in the profession even if it is not a profession favored by many men. Lastly, men in female-dominated work such as male nurses (Zhang & Tu, 2020; Zysberg & Berry, 2005) tend to receive higher salaries compared to women who are already in the industry. Nevertheless, their remuneration is less than men who work in male-dominated jobs. Based on past literature, it can be summarized that all the factors discussed above would therefore affect men's openness to choose non-traditional or female-dominated careers.

## Men as Nurses and *Pak andam* in Malaysia

Within the context of Malaysian culture, it can be observed that the trend of male nursing and *pak andam* careers are still in a slow growth. For example, Sowtali (2019) stated that within Ministry of Health Malaysia, there is a big gap between the number of female nurses and male nurses with ratio of 36:1. In 2011, the Ministry of Health reported the total of 461 male nurses were working in Malaysia, and the number had increased into 1826 in 2015 (Mustapa & Abdullah, 2019). In 2018, there were only 2366 male nurses reported working with the Ministry of Health, compared to 85,512 female nurses (Sowtali, 2019). Traditionally, the roles of *mak andam* are performed by women, who constitute the person that exercises traditional customs with the bride (Salleh & Rou Kim, 2020). In contrast, men who carry out these functions are referred to as *pak andam* (PRPM, 2021). In Malaysia, *mak andam* is a less controversial choice compared to *pak andam* as they are in the same gender with the bride, therefore any cultural conflicts arise from other-sex interaction can be avoided (Salleh & Roun Kim, 2020; Darussamin, Rahman & Ghazali, 2020). Nevertheless, both *pak andam* and *mak andam* play their unique role particularly during and after the wedding. They establish their own businesses and earn an income through services to brides and bridegrooms preparing for weddings. Like their female counterparts, *pak andam* also offer services such as creating wedding gifts, preparing wedding dresses, and applying make-up (Mohd Afandi, 2018).

Research specific to the determinants of male choosing careers in nursing suggests that the encouragement and support of significant others (Bujang et al., 2020; Juliff et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2016; O'Connor 2015; Zamanzadeh et al., 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2010) and family pressure (Beggs et al., 2008; Romen & Anson, 2005; Law & Arthus, 2003) has affected on men's involvement in the nursing profession. Meanwhile, in the context of *pak andam*, previous research has focused solely on *mak andam* in Malay weddings (Darussamin, Rahman & Ghazali, 2020; Salleh & Rou Kim, 2020; Salleh, 2014). The precise number of Malaysian *pak andam* is not currently known. Although local newspapers (Baharom, 2018; Mohd Afandi, 2018) discuss the existence and services by Malaysian *pak andam*, the empirical study rarely sheds light on this topic.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Malaysia is a commission which recruits nurses for the Ministry of Health. All Malaysian citizens between the ages of 17 and 25 are qualified to apply for these positions if they fulfill the following criteria. Candidates who pass the Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) or Malaysian Vocational Certificate are eligible to apply with at least a C grade in the Malay Language or the equivalent. Candidates with credits in Malay, English, Science, and Mathematics are preferred. It is mandatory for the candidate to be in good health physically and mentally in order to serve patients. Successful candidates undergo three years of training at nursing colleges across Malaysia with allowances of RM835.57 per month (Nursing Training, 2019). Although there are specific academic requirements for entry into nursing practice, this situation is different for entry into *pak andam* in Malaysia. *Pak andam* career is not classified under the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Malaysia (JPA, 2022). Therefore, this document is intended to explore the participation of Malaysian men in both female works.

## METHODS

A qualitative approach using case study design was used to gain a deeper understanding of the male nurse and *pak andam* experiences. The qualitative approach enables the researcher to acquire a complex and detailed understanding of a study question by exploring the experiences of the individuals concerned across the contexts themselves (Creswell, 2007; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Meanwhile, the case studies are the most appropriate since the research seeks to answer the "what" question which requires a justifiable justification and further inquiry (Yin, 2003). In line with the objectives of the study, which are to explore and to understand in details the factors contributing to Malaysian men opt to a feminine career choice through their experience, this method could lead to a more accurate and enriching data collection. Data were obtained through in-depth interview among 14 male nurses and 5 *pak andam*. As a result of the saturation process, interviews were held only among 19 participants, 14 nurses and 5 *pak andam*. The face-to-face interview was carried out using semi-structured, open-ended questions that allowed them to share their experiences. The interview started with the question: Can you tell me, what makes you choose this career? Follow up questions were asked about how they have experienced the profession and what the perceived challenges or support received in being male nurses/*pak andam*? Based on the interview, other follow-up questions were used to obtain clarification if necessary, such as "How do you feel about your career choice?" and "Can you elaborate on that?" A rehearsal of the interview was carried out before the data was collected. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed with permission. The data collection took a period of six months and was implemented in a natural setting at the participants' place of work. In addition, the credibility of the data was also established through a peer review of two qualitative research experts. To improve the dependability of the study, the researcher used an audit trail where all the results obtained and the activities performed have been clearly documented. Thematic analysis was used to extract prominent themes from participants' understanding of their realities (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In terms of transferability, the researcher asked respondents to review interview transcripts and observation reports and to validate on the accuracy of the resulting themes. This process was continually conducted throughout the study. Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all attained (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

A total of 19 participants were involved in this study. As it turned out, all the participants recruited were Malay Muslims. For nurses, the list of male nurses was obtained as a result of ethical approval received from the National Register of Medical Research (NMIC), Ministry of Health. As for the *pak andam*, they were identified from the wedding services advertising. The prospective *pak andam* was then approached for an interview session. From this number, the participants comprised the following groups: 30-34 years old (42%), 25-29 years old (32%), 35-39 years old (16%) and 5% for both age groups of 40-44 years old and 51-54 years old. Prior to working as nurses, eight of the men had studied in different fields, such as engineering, accounting, and agriculture, but never completed their studies as they chose to pursue a diploma in nursing instead. Others were jobless or worked as waiters and laborers prior to their involvement as nurses. Of the 14 nurses, the duration of work experience ranged between 3 and 10 years. The five *pak andam*, on the other hand, had between five and 34 years of work experience, with three of them having worked for more than 10 years. Neither *pak andam* had any family members who participated as *pak andam* or *mak andam*. Meanwhile, five male nurses have family members (mother and sister) who also work as nurses. All *pak andam* remained unmarried, while the marital status of male nurses varied.

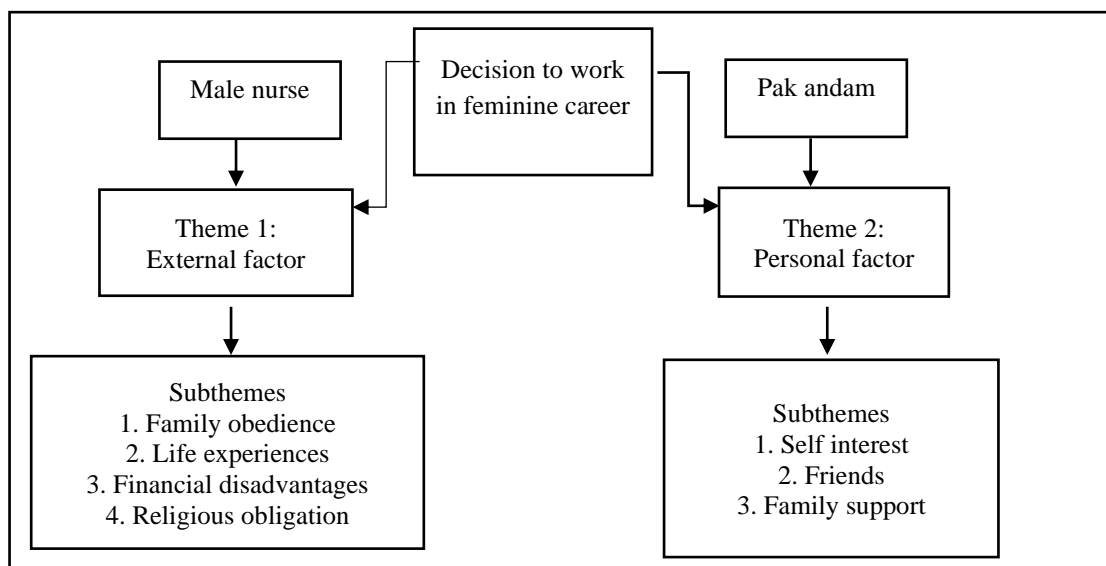
Table 1

*Demographic information of male nurses and pak andam*

Participants		Age	Marital Status	Experience in NTC (years)	Family members worked as nurses or <i>pak andam</i>
Male Nurses (MN)	MN 1	31	Married	4.5	None
	MN 2	26	Single	3	None
	MN 3	27	Single	3	None
	MN 4	33	Married	7	None
	MN 5	33	Married	7	Mother & sister
	MN 6	25	Single	3	None
	MN 7	31	Married	4.5	None
	MN 8	30	Single	10	Sister & sister in law
	MN 9	26	Married	7	None
	MN 10	36	Single	10	Sister
	MN 11	30	Married	8	Sister
	MN 12	30	Married	5	Sister
	MN 13	26	Single	3	None
	MN 14	31	Single	9	None
Pak Andam (PA)	PA 1	54	Single	34	None
	PA 2	44	Single	20	None
	PA 3	26	Single	5	Mother - tailor
	PA 4	36	Single	7	None
	PA 5	38	Single	10	Grandparent- tailor

**FINDINGS**

The first identified theme for choosing nursing career choice is the external factors that is derived from four sub-themes: family obedience, life experience, financial disadvantage and religious obligation. Meanwhile, in *pak andam* career choice, personal factors appear as the main theme. Self-interest, friends and family support seemed to be the subthemes of *pak andam* involvement in non-traditional careers (Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Decision to work in feminine career*

## **Theme 1: External Factors**

There were four subthemes relating to the first theme including; family obedience, life experiences, financial disadvantage and religious obligation.

### **Family obedience**

For nurses, family obedience was the main driver of a career in nursing, although it was not their first career choice. Parents, siblings and other family members used their influence to encourage participants to apply for nursing education. Participants felt that they must obey the decisions of their parents. The participants in this study shared:

Long time ago, my sister applied for the nursing course but she failed to register. After MCE, I studied at polytechnic but then I was asked by my parents to apply for the nursing course. I just followed their demand (Male nurse 13, 26 years).

My dad told me about the advertisement for nursing and asked me to fill up the PSC online. I just followed what he said (Male nurse 12, 30 years).

### **Life experiences**

Subsequently, having previously cared for family members in a hospital also encouraged participants to choose nursing careers. Through these experiences, they became aware of the importance of male nurses in relieving patient pain. This is revealed in a participant's commentary:

I fell in love with nursing when I took care of my father when he entered the ICU after a car accident. I noticed the boundaries between female nurses and male patient. From that moment, I decided that I wanted to be a nurse (Male nurse 10, 36 years).

### **Financial disadvantage**

Another factor that led to the participants' enrolment in nursing is financial disadvantage. Because hiring is rather difficult these days, it leaves the unemployed with limited choices in obtaining the job they want. In the midst of desperately looking for work, getting hired as a nurse by the government offers job stability and benefits available to a government servant, such as allowances and a pension. Here, three participants think about the importance of finding employment:

I really wanted a job. Based on my background, not exactly successful. I could not depend upon my parents' fortune. They haven't got one. So, I definitely needed a job, get my own money (Male nurse 4, 33 years).

I got no choice. That's why I'm taking the offer. I noticed that even my seniors were having trouble getting a job. Even when they are in graduate school, it is still difficult to get a job (Male nurse 6, 25 years).

When I was at the nursing interview, most of the women were candidates. But I was left with no choice as I aimed to get a job (Male nurse 13, 26 years).



## Religious obligation

The fourth subtheme that came up in the study of male nurses was a religious obligation. As a Muslim believer, the obligation to believe that which is determined by God later developed their interest in a nursing career. As one interviewee put it:

In fact, this work didn't really interest me. When I filled out the PSC online application, I chose the radiographer and medical assistant as my options. Then, during the interview, the panel asked whether I would agree to become a nurse if given a chance; then I said, if it is my fate then I will accept it (Male nurse 6, 25 years).

When I'm in that position, I think that's fine with my desire and my personality. I am not someone who enjoys sitting down and writing. I'm trying to help people (Male nurse 6, 25 years).

I am now interested in nursing because it is a noble job that helps the community. People are admitted and we treat them. I feel proud when they manage to get back on track (well). After that, I began to love my job as a nurse (Male nurse 12, 30 years).

## Theme 2: Personal Factors

Despite external factors identified by male nurses, as major influences in their vocational choice, *pak andam* highlighted more personal factors in their career decision. There are three subthemes associated with the second theme; self-interest, friends and family support.

### Self-interest

Although some nurses only became interested in nursing later, the scenario was very different for the *pak andam* participants in this study. Their passion and love for beauty, fashion, makeup and creativity in wedding gifts influenced their decision to be *pak andam*. As shared by three *pak andam*:

I developed my interest since I was at secondary school. I did make-up for my niece and aunties when they wanted to attend a ceremony. My passion started when I was a kid, I did face painting for my sister (*Pak andam* 2, 44 years).

I started the interest since I was at school... when I was a kid. I adore fashion long time before. Even during my studies, I began to create wedding gifts... but, in those days, the basic wedding gifts (*Pak andam* 3, 26 years).

I got involved when I was at the polytechnic. I've watched other people make up. After graduation, I started to do make up for others. Back then, there was no charge. So, I was asked by friends and parents to do makeup for them. After a while, I started charging them (*Pak andam* 4, 36 years).

### Friends

In contrast to the participating nurses, the *pak andam* reported receiving support from friends, prompting them to get serious about this venture.

My friends said I do makeup very well. They said I should sell it. So, I started to save for the future. I've been to all the weddings, artist meetings ... things like that. When I was

there, friends would always introduce me to their other friends for make-up. At the time, I charged less, just for pleasure. But many of them suggested that I should take make-up seriously (*Pak andam* 5, 38 years).

I think, I feel grateful. It's also a blessing because when I meet friends, everyone reminds me how interested I am in doing this thing at school. I remember that I truly enjoyed attending events during school (*Pak andam* 3, 26 years).

I was encouraged by friends from my hometown to open a bridal shop. It's the start of my passion and my career (*Pak andam* 1, 54 years).

## Family support

In addition to friends, family members supported the *pak andam* as well:

My mom lent me money to get the business going. At first, I didn't get to pay it back. Then mom gave me more money to run the business. Then I started repayment of my loan. So far, there are no loans (*Pak andam* 3, 26 years).

I had a younger sister who wanted to get married. And then my mom called me for help. I helped by preparing the wedding dress, make up... things like that. Then my mother asked me to be serious about it. I told mom I had no money to start a business. My father handed me the money (*Pak andam* 5, 38 years old).

## DISCUSSION

### Male Nurses

Male nurses in Malaysia are still a minority in the workforce. However, due to the circumscription and compromise process proposed by Gottfredson (2005), men choose to be in this profession. In this study, family obedience has influenced Malaysian men to apply or gain entry in nursing. This finding is congruent with the study by Bujang et al., (2020); Juliff et al., (2017); Stanley et al., (2016); O'Connor (2015); Zamanzadeh et al., (2013); and McLaughlin et al., (2010) who found that the approval and support of family has a positive contribution on men's involvement in the nursing profession. Family pressure is another reason for men involvements in nursing (Marañón, Rodriguez-Martín & Galbany-Estragués, 2019; Beggs et al., 2008; Romen & Anson, 2005; and Law & Arthus, 2003). Meanwhile, Meadus & Twomey (2011) stressed that the influence of the family is indeed a factor in the pursuit of non-traditional male careers. Traditional Asian values require children to show unduly respect and obedience to their parents. Even as adults, they must remain committed to their family belief system, including in selecting spouse as well as career (Kim, Park, Ho, & Wu, 2017). In Malay cultures, parents have a very strong influence in directing the right behavior and attitude as well as play a role in disseminating cultural and religious teachings to their children. They are recognized as a highly authoritarian figure and need to be respected without question (Keshavarz & Baharuddin, 2009). In the Malaysian context, Muslim men are obliged to provide family income to support a wife and children at home which is called "nafqah" as stated in Quran (2:233): "The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis."

As Abdullah (1996) stated, respect for the elderly is extremely important in Malaysia's Muslim culture. Islam commands to all Muslims to honour, obey, respect, and be kind to parents, as stated in the noble Quran (4:36): "Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents." As such, participants choose nursing career because they simply follow the parent's decision to show their respect towards their parents. This coincides with circumscription process in Gottfredson Theory (1981) which highlighted the importance of social environment (family) in viewing a particular job as acceptable and within tolerable level boundary. The familial message that they receive assure their willingness to consider a non-traditional career, even they face stereotypical influences by a larger society.

Life experiences also play a role in men's participation in nursing (Appiah, Appiah & Lamptey, 2021). As O'Connor (2015) and McLaughlin et al. (2010) mentioned, the experience of caring for parents or family members who are ill encouraged men to apply for a career in nursing. The desire to care for others was closely linked to altruistic traits or the desire to help or care for others (Zulkarnain et al., (2021); Juliff et al., (2017); Stanley et al., (2016). In line with Boughn (2001), Whittock & Leonard (2003), and Zamanzadeh et al. (2013), these findings support the notion that an altruistic trait or the desire to help others was the major contributing factor for men entering into a nursing career. Male nurses in this study overwhelmingly reported entering nursing because they want to help others. According to Zamanzadeh et al. (2013) the desire to help others was a result of their cultural background and beliefs. In the culture of the Malay Muslim community, the attitude of helping is fundamental to their lives. Based on the history of social relations, the attitude and value of helping is more prominent in the Malay community than in other communities (Abdul Razak & Wan Hussin, 2011). These findings may also be relevant to the notion of that there is a link between orientation to internal/unique self and field of work as proposed by Gottfredson (1981), in which career choice as nurse is an outcome of prosocial orientation behavioral congruence.

As discussed earlier in McDowell (2015), many careers that were badly affected in the economy sector nowadays especially among men compared to women. Due to this challenging situation, they will grab any career opportunities especially that offer them better source of income. These findings are consistent with other studies who revealed that men's involvement in nursing career include monetary motives, such as higher salary as well as job security (Zhang & Tu, 2019; Stanley et al., 2016; Valizadeh et al., 2014; Zamanzadeh et al., 2013) having great career opportunities to be promoted and upward advancement (Zhang & Tu, 2019; Simpson, 2005) as well as positive status effects such as acknowledgement and recognition by themselves and others, respect, or prestige (Bujang et al., 2020; Lupton, 2006). Nursing career in Malaysia is classified one of the government sector under Ministry of Health. Indeed, for those offered as nurses will be guaranteed as government employees and indirectly will enjoy various benefits from the Malaysian government. *Pak andam* career in contrast, will not enjoy the same privilege as male nurses who work as a government staff. Likewise, Gottfredson (2005) highlights the compromise process occurs for job seekers to enable them to choose their career. As a result, some participants decided to grab any work offered, although they were not really enthusiastic about the job itself.

The Muslim faith of the participants also helped with their acceptance as nurses. They shared that their participation in nursing was determined by God, and, as Muslims, they merely accepted their fate with *reda* (acceptance or contentment with the will of Allah). Besides, working as a male nurse is considered *fardhu kifayah* (Fardhu Kifayah, 2018), fulfilling the obligation of Muslims as a community, such as the social responsibility to do good by easing the pain of patients. It is an invaluable role that male nurses can play, particularly for male

patients. An interesting finding from this study is that even though the early involvement of these Malay men in nursing was due to external factors (family and societal) as described by Chusmir (1990), they grew to become interested in nursing. As Lupton (2006) has pointed out, the recognition and respect men receive benefits their lives in their predominantly female careers. Their daily routines as nurses allowed interest to grow, and they began to see the career as noble and needed due to what is a high-demand job. As a result, they remain in that nursing profession. In contrast, Zhang and Tu (2020) reported that some male nurses plan to leave their jobs due to societal negative stereotypes and expectations.

### ***Pak Andam***

According to Holland (1997), career selection is based on the personality and characteristics of the work environment. If a person is working in a field that does not fit his/her personality and interest, it will affect his/her career and life satisfaction (Patola, 2018). This explains why men choose to be *pak andam* since the work allows them to apply their skills, abilities as well as fit their attitudes and value towards beauty. Since the *pak andam* had developed their interest since they were students, the findings are also in line with Ginzberg (1972) and Super (1972) that explained how career choice is a process that develops throughout life. The preference to *pak andam* job is also in light of orientation to internal unique self in circumscription concept of Gottfredson Theory (2005), in which the desire to a particular job is increased when it is associated with someone's interests, values and abilities. As Ku (2011) indicated, those who did not follow this gender stereotype will be 'marked', seen as deviant and detached from the mainstream. Interestingly, *pak andam* have always had the support of friends. Based on the subthemes identified, personal factors such as life experience and self-interest stimulate participants' motivation to enter this non-traditional male career. As Yusof (2013) and Hoff and colleagues (2020) mentioned, preferences or interests help a person make his or her own career decision and also contribute to work performance and motivation. As for *pak andam*, self-interest and passion led them to remain in the wedding business, although the income from this business is uncertain. Despite the career chosen being uncommon among men, the determination made clear earlier by these participants shaped their decision-making. Chusmir (1990) added that the combination of personal and external factors (familial and societal) helps an individual enter a non-traditional career. Consequently, in this study, it is determined that obedience to family, religious obligation, the support of friends and family also influenced the participants to get involved in non-traditional careers.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper was intended to explore and discuss the factors that contribute to men's work in a female-dominated career. In summary, this research demonstrates that personal and external factors contribute to Malaysian men's participation in their non-traditional careers. The personal factors primarily imply the self-interest of the participants, while the external ones are varied, including obedience to family, financial disadvantage, religious obligation, and support of friends and family. Although most of the factors leading to the choice of career between the two domains are identical, it cannot be over-simplified. These findings appear to lead to the evidence that among male nurses and *pak andam*, reasons that have led to career entry were identified on one hand, and how those relationships function to affect job orientation as well as later job success on the other.

The results indicated that male nurses in Malaysia emphasize familial obedience as the main factor that contributed to the career choice, while passion and self-interest is the main reason for the career entry among *pak andam*. The results also showed that economic disadvantages, religious obligation and self-interest are another crucial aspect of continuing a career in nursing. Meanwhile, support received from friends and family members, especially mothers, could potentially influence entry decisions of *pak andam*. Although nurse and *pak andam* belong to non-traditional occupations for men, it is vital to bear in mind that both differ greatly in the nature of job, room for advancement, stereotyping and others.

Furthermore, our data also indicate that these two female-dominated careers, namely nurses and *pak andam*, have gradually begun to be popular among men in Malaysia. Due to the insecurity and fluctuations of the current economy, they do not have many options left to choose. This is why they need employment, regardless of the circumstances. Nevertheless, non-traditional careers culture in Malaysia that are changing in small but significant ways. The question is how prepared we are for the new work environment brought by men working in their non-traditional careers. Although communities may not be fully prepared for these changes, steps can be taken to address the gender employment gap, and this study is an example.

## Implications

As noted earlier in the literature review, non-traditional occupations have become widespread in the current global economy, and have become a new focus of research. As a result, this qualitative research was implemented because it is believed to be a valuable means of addressing these gaps. In particular, it does so by exploring and learning about the factors that influences male participation in predominantly female careers in the Malaysian context.

First, our research results provide empirical evidence that the involvement of these Malaysian Muslim men in non-traditional careers was due to personal and external factors. External factors include family obedience, financial disadvantage, religious obligation, and support from family and friends, while personal factors are mainly driven by value, attitude as well as their passion in beauty. For nurses, the career was an attractive combination of job security, stability through a fixed salary, allowances and respect as a public servant. As a result, the attractive nursing career package attracted participants as job seekers despite the fact that being a nurse may not have been their dream job in the beginning. As Ann and Dienemann (2014) stated, men entering nursing as their first professional career emphasize intrinsic factors such as the inherent desire to help and care for others, the greater sense of achievement, and the drawn to self validation. On the other hand, for the *pak andam* who are self-employed, the self-actualization provided by their career is highly valued. For them, working as a *pak andam* brings satisfaction, freedom and creativity. The findings are parallel to those of Holland (1971) which suggest that the greater the suitability between personalities and work environment, the greater the work satisfaction they receive.

Second, the findings of this research are also associated with the myth and misconception of this non-traditional culture within the local community. These cultures and norms barriers can act as obstacles for men to pursue these non-traditional careers. Given that there is evidence that men are part of their non-traditional careers, community education should be increased. This is because not all men involved in non-traditional careers are harmful to culture. For example, the availability of male nurses helps male patients specifically with their religious requirements. As for *pak andam*, there are increasing demands for *pak andam* among

bridegrooms. Therefore, *pak andams* are also capable of providing men with services that should be considered beneficial in the eyes of the Islamic religion.

Moreover, investigating these factors would provide implication and a fresh view for the government and policy makers to broaden policy solutions beyond the limited opportunities held in labor market currently. For example, the Malaysian Ministry of Health could increase the number of nurses in hospitals and implement a new policy in that sector. Consequently, these findings could bridge the gap in specific research on non-traditional careers for men specifically in the Malaysian context. Based on our study findings, we therefore suggest that Malaysian men enter into a female career plan in advance and are supported by job vacancies.

### Limitation and Recommendation

The limitation in the study include restricted demographic characteristics of the participants. In this qualitative research all participants involved are Malay and Muslims. Therefore, the results discussed are restricted to Muslim Malay cultural membership. Second, the inclusion of other professions would be required to properly interpret cultural factors in influencing career choice. Therefore, future research should seek to explore a broader spectrum of careers dominated by women such as secretary, model and fashion designer. Moreover, the other races and religion should be considered as Malaysia is a multicultural country.

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