ABSTRACT

Purpose — This research is aimed to identify and understand professional challenges attached to Women in Real Estate (WIRE) sector specifically in Malaysia. As we can see today, Malaysian women are highly important in contributing to the country’s economic and social development. Despite the increasing number of WIRE today, women still are facing a lot of challenges that hinder them to excel to a higher level in their profession successfully. Undoubtedly, in Malaysia the contribution of WIRE cannot be denied either by other key players or many other stakeholders within the sector. Challenges such as gender equality, risks, discrimination, cultural, risks of sexual harassment and etc have hampered their potentiality and capability to contribute to the national profession and WIRE development at large. Therefore, this paper will discuss on WIRE participation and involvement in Malaysia’s Real Estate Sector (MRES). Over the years women participation in Malaysia’s labour force has gradually increased. Equal access to the educational opportunities could be a significant driver for the growing contribution of WIRE in MRES. Despite the immense challenges being faced by the WIRE, many great opportunities could also been seen to potentially excel their professionalism. This questionnaire study is conducted by disseminating questionnaire to 100 professional WIRE registered under The Board of Valuers, Appraisers and Estate Agents Malaysia (BOVEA). The significance of the study is to help the WIRE to appreciate the value of their practice, prepare for challenges, and seek for equal opportunities in MRES professionally. Generalisations and findings from this research can be used as best practice guidance for WIRE by BOVEA in order to support WIRE’s career advancement and in the meantime it will inspire many women in Malaysia to join this sector as registered WIRE.

Keywords — WIRE, MRES, challenges, opportunities, professionalism, women’s participation.
INTRODUCTION

"Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female – whenever she behaves as a human being, she is said to imitate the male"

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

In Malaysia, women make up almost half of the total population and their ever increasing roles become more prominent nationally. Women have been mainstreamed into development process and by carrying variety of roles in the family, community and society levels, amazingly still they have been able to contribute to the national development and prosperity (Mhd Khalili, Esa, & Miskiman, 2012).

In an article published by The Star Online (2013) it was mentioned that women are generally better learners and can be better approached in order to stimulate and expand our minds. The research also found that women tend to be more attentive, flexible, and organised. With those statements, women are seen having the upper hand as these skills are transferable to the workplace and tasks.

Interestingly, in Malaysia in terms of women achievements and contributions, they are highly recognised nationally. For instance, a prominent website known as Top10Malaysia.com has announced the Top 10 Most Inspiring Women of Malaysia in 2012 as shown in Table 1 below (Top10malaysia.com, 2013). The recognition of their achievements and contributions was awarded based on their tenacity, competence and professionalism towards Malaysian society and development at large.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>The Most Inspiring Women in Malaysia</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zeti Akhtar Aziz (Tan Sri Dr)</td>
<td>Governor of Malaysian Central Bank (BNM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nicol Ann David (Datuk)</td>
<td>World number one by Women's International Squash Players Association (WISPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Siti Nurhaliza binti Tarudin (Dato’)</td>
<td>Malaysian singer, songwriter, record producer, television presenter and businesswoman who has made significant contributions to the society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zainah Anwar</td>
<td>Prominent Malaysian non-governmental organization leader, activist and Muslim feminist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Michelle Yeoh Choo-Kheng (Dato’)</td>
<td>Well known artiste who has made numerous international appearances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marina Mahathir (Datin Paduka)</td>
<td>Headed the Malaysian AIDS Council for twelve years and was the Vice-President of AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continue…
Table 1: The Most Inspiring Women in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>The Most Inspiring Women in Malaysia</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teresa Kok Suh Sim</td>
<td>Member of Parliament for Seputeh, Secretary of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), DAP National Organizing Secretary, the National Secretary of DAP Wanita, and a member of the DAP Disciplinary Committee and member of the Select Committee on Review of Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mazlan Othman (Datuk Dr)</td>
<td>First astrophysicist and the first woman to be awarded a PhD in physics from New Zealand’s University of Otago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jamelah Jamaluddin</td>
<td>CEO of the Kuwait Finance House (Malaysia) Berhad, the largest Islamic bank in Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mother Mangalam Iyasmawy Iyer (Datin Paduka)</td>
<td>Co-founder and president of Pure Life Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On top of that announcement, the recent Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR) revealed that Malaysia has the highest number of women in the workforce with 40 per cent compared with other Asian countries (The Star Online, 2013). In general, the participation and contribution of women also have shown a significant growth in Malaysia Real Estate Sector (MRES). Though their significance is not as advanced as Women in Real Estate (WIRE) in the West, which they can be listed based on their RE’s influentially and wealthy but many Malaysian WIRE are seen actively engaged in all RE duties consisting of thought leaders, power brokers and deal makers, property managers, estate agents, valuers and in general they are entrepreneurs from inside the MRES industry whose ideas are influencing the way properties are bought, managed and sold.

Evidently, in Malaysia, according to the Department of Statistics (DOS), as at 2009, the percentage of WIRE/female involve in MRES, renting and business activity is 5.9 per cent which are slightly higher than percentage of male as revealed at 5.3 per cent. Interestingly, according to Mahpul and Abdullah (2011), the increase in women labour force participant rate was largely resulted from the educational improvement, as better educated women are more likely than the lesser educated to be in the MRES labour force.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Samariang Sharifah Hasidah Sayeed Aman Ghazali as a member of a Legislative Assembly in Malaysia, she was reported said that the role of women is seen more and more important to ensure that people are not on the edge in managing and developing countries. This claim mirrors the reason of why the government of Malaysia formed the National Women’s Policy by setting a target that 30 per cent of the decision-makers in Malaysia has to be the women (Borneo Post Online, 2013). She further mentioned her concern though there are more than 60 per cent of women are placed in Higher Education Institutions (HEI), sadly after graduation there are many men
successfully hold top positions in many organisations compared to women graduates. Dainty et al. (2000) claimed that a woman’s career strategy is influenced by external factors and internal factors. External factors include nature of the industry and working conditions, meanwhile the internal factors relate to personal attributes, circumstances, characteristic and abilities.

In the context of WIRE, according to National Association of Realtors (NAR), in the US, although women have been involved in real estate almost since its inception in 1794 and its establishment as a legitimate business in the 1840s; unfortunately, there are few industries remaining today that have not seen a drastic change in the role that women play, and real estate and relocation are certainly not immune to these changes (National Association of Realtors, 2013). Furthermore, a research by Winn (2004) revealed that women entrepreneurs, doing her duties might cause them to leave their work due to the nature of their work. This research also revealed that there many other reasons of leaving profession by women personnel such as family pressure which was found as the highest ranking per cent as well as gender-role expectations, followed by the issues of isolation, partner conflicts, long hours working time and childcare (Winn, 2004). In fact, many claim that no matter how hard is women to play their role in order to contribute in their career development, women are confronted by structural and cultural barriers, which often exclude them professional careers ladder including within the Real Estate Sector (RES) (Valerie, 2006).

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The contribution of WIRE has been acknowledged by many players within the RES nowadays. Unfortunately, there are also barriers influencing WIRE’s career development and growth in this sector. Therefore, lines of inquiries for this research are established as below:

1. What are the possible challenges facing by Women in Real Estate (WIRE) in Malaysia?
2. What are the enablers in helping the professionalism advancement for Women in Real Estate (WIRE) in Malaysia?

**RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this study is to determine the professional challenges as well enablers to WIRE practice in Malaysia. It also aimed to identify opportunities that are possible for the development and growth of WIRE in the MRES.
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

(1) What are the possible challenges facing by Women in Real Estate (WIRE) in Malaysia?

(2) What are the enablers in helping the professionalism advancement for Women in Real Estate (WIRE) in Malaysia?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a feminism research by philosophy. In this philosophical stance, the role of social and political values in science, with particular focus on feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory will be employed by the researcher. In specific it aims to understand the nature of gender inequality for WIRE in MRES. It is also trying to examine WIRE’s social roles, challenges, experience, interests, enablers, opportunities and feminist politics in the field of surveying exclusively towards registered Malaysian WIRE that are actively engaged in all RE duties such as valuers, estate agents and property managers in MRES industry whose ideas are influencing the way properties are bought, managed and sold. This quantitative study will be conducted based on statistical sampling by disseminating questionnaires to professional WIRE registered under Board of Valuers Appraisers and Estate Agents Malaysia (BOVAEA). The sampling would be 119 or 50 per cent out of 238 professional WIRE registered under BOVAEA. See Figure 1. At the same time, 3 expert interviews qualitatively will be conducted with strategists from the Valuation and Property Services Department (VPSD), BOVAEA and Women Development Department (WDD), Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCO) in order to understand the national scenario and perception towards challenges and enablers facing by WIREs in Malaysia. This research will be concluded with knowledge constitution and suggestions for future research in the area of WIRE practices in MRES based on feminist epistemology and philosophy of science.

Figure 1: Mix Methodology using Survey and Expert Interview
Source: The Researcher (2014)
LITERATURE REVIEW

Women in General

The economic growth in Malaysia has influenced workers (especially women workers) to become economically active. The favourable economic conditions can be attributed to three main factors; namely, gross domestic product (GDP), structural change and government policy.

Women’s participation in the labour force has risen over the past two decades in most developed countries. This is also true in many of the Asian countries. What is also true is that women find numerous barriers to their advancement, both from inside the company and also from family and the society (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006). Higher educational level and falling fertility rates have contributed to women’s increased participation rates (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006).

According to the perspective of Feather (1984); Putnam & Heinen (1976); Schein (1973); Spence & Helmreich (1978), women have been socialized to possess ‘feminine traits’ such as warmth, kindness, selflessness, while the profile of a promotable manager is that of an individual who is aggressive, forceful, rational, competitive, decisive, strong, self-confident and independent (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006).

Factors such as cultural values, societal and institutional practices, expectations and stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in society can affect the structures and organizational processes. These factors can also affect and be affected by women’s attitudes and behaviour at work (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006).

According to the gender-organization-system perspective, women are underrepresented and under-utilized in organizations for several reasons: women have been placed in disadvantaged position in organizations; women are socialized to display traits, behaviour, attitudes are argued to be incompatible with top management position; and women have different expectations placed on them by society. These factors cannot be considered in isolation as they, in turn, affect one another (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006).

In Malaysia, the empowerment of women will be a key agenda of its Tenth Plan Period (2011-2015), where the Government will increase its efforts towards addressing issues confronting women to enable them to realise their full potential and participate more effectively in the economic and social development of the country. In addition, the Government’s goal is not only to encourage more women to participate in the labour force, but also to enhance the quality of their participation by increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. Therefore, it is essential that women are given the right opportunities, environment and mind set so that they can participate and contribute in the various fields of national development (The Economic Planning Unit Prime Minister’s Department, 2010). In order to achieve this, key programmes in this plan are focusing on:

(1) Increasing women’s participation in the labour force;
(2) Increasing the number of women in key decision making positions;
(3) Improving provision of support for women in challenging circumstances such as widows, single mothers and those with lower incomes; and
Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

In order to support women role nationally, improvement in work-life balance provisions to encourage greater women participation in the workforce, particularly from the low income households, will be made by increasing the number of Community-based Nurseries and Day Care Centres (DCC) under Department of Social Welfare (DSW). There are currently 2,077 DCCs that are not registered with DSW. To this end, the Government will increase its efforts to ensure registration of the day care centres. In addition, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes to sponsor the establishment of licensed DCCs in partnership with NGOs will be actively promoted. Flexible working hours and work from home policies in the public and private sectors will continue to be promoted to encourage a more family-friendly workplace (The Economic Planning Unit Prime Minister’s Department, 2010).

Women in the Workforce

It can be observed from the numerous studies on women in Malaysia that they have enjoyed empowering in their socio-economic status with economic progress. In the last three decades, the population of Malaysia has grown steadily. It grew more than twice its size of 13.8 million in 1980 to 26.7 million in 2005. Furthermore, the working age group to population ration also rose from 7.8 million in 1980 to 16.88 million in 2005. The average growth of total population and total working age group were 2.6 per cent and 3.2 per cent respectively. These circumstances eased the burden of taking care of younger and older people circuitously implied that more potential labour will be available to enter the workforce. It seems that high working age population and a favourable dependency implied that more potential labour will be available favourable dependency ration will still persist (The Economic Planning Unit Prime Minister’s Department, 2009).

The female labour force participation rate had increased from 44.5 per cent in 1982 to 47.9 per cent in 2011 (Department of Statistics, 2013). In this study it shows that it is largely as a result of the educational improvement, as better educated women are more likely than the lesser educated women to be in the labour force. The female labour force participation rate show an increase from 84.5 per cent in 2008 to 86.3 per cent in 2011 by obtained the degree level of education.

The connection between education and labour force participation as a means to women’s socio-economic standing has been repeatedly emphasized by state policies. For instance, increased access to education has been shown to offer women a wider range of occupational opportunities, as well as to increase their life-chances in pursuit of a more rewarding career path in Malaysia (Yahaya, 2009). The labour force participation rate of a country refers to the percentage of the total working age population in the labour force.
Within Asian countries, a research conducted by Budhwar (2005) highlighted that there are some of the key strengths of women in Asia as managers as below:

(1) Greater sensitivity in relationships (more understanding, compassionate, sympathetic and empathetic);
(2) Ability to ‘network’ better amongst their colleagues;
(3) Ability to better understand and perceive situations;
(4) Stronger sense of dedication, commitment and loyalty to their organizations (women managers are perceived to be less likely to ‘job-hop’ than men);
(5) Ability to perform multiple tasks;
(6) Better management of crisis situations;
(7) Greater readiness to share information and power (which highlights their interactive leadership style);
(8) Ability to behave in a more gender-neutral manner; and
(9) Ability to solicit input from others which leads to an atmosphere of greater degree of trust, self-worth and respect for ideas.

Women in Real Estate Industry

Globally, with respect to real estate sector practitioners, in the US, Commercial Real Estate Women Houston, known as CREW, unveiled the 15 honourees of its Top Women in Commercial Real Estate Awards at a reception April 25, 2012 which had around 200 attendees. CREW created the award in celebration of its 15th anniversary. The top 15 women — and the 35 finalists — represent disciplines across the commercial real estate industry and work at a variety of companies. Many of their accomplishments include decades in the real estate sector, overseeing projects and portfolios totalling billions of dollars and starting their own companies (Pulsinelli, 2012).

To determine the impact, the judges looked at a variety of factors, including current job responsibilities and accomplishments, professional affiliations and leadership roles, civic roles and contributions and awards and recognitions. Interestingly, it can be seen that real estate practitioners in the West already opened the doors of these traditionally male-dominated companies to WIRE and continued to mentor the WIRE who followed in their footsteps. WIRE have been given the reward to acknowledgement their contribution and commitment in real estate sector. Please refer Table 2 below.

Table 2: Top 15 Women in Commercial Real Estate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Top 15 Women In Commercial Real Estate</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Laurie Baker</td>
<td>Senior vice president of fund and asset management, Camden Property Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jeri Ballard</td>
<td>Vice president, Strategy &amp; Portfolio, Shell Oil Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lynn Davis</td>
<td>Principal and CMO, Fidelis Realty Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Melanie Edmundson</td>
<td>Owner, Phase Engineering Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tammy Hendrix</td>
<td>Vice president, operations, Houston region, Brookfield Office Properties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continue…
Table 2: Top 15 Women in Commercial Real Estate  
Source: Pulsinelli, (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Top 15 Women In Commercial Real Estate</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Susan Hill</td>
<td>Senior managing director, HFF LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brandi McDonald</td>
<td>Managing principal, Newmark Knight Frank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Edna Meyer-Nelson</td>
<td>President, Richland Investment Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lynny Osenbaugh</td>
<td>President, Osenbaugh and Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jennifer Raymond</td>
<td>President, JPR Commercial Real Estate Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rhonda Sand</td>
<td>Senior vice president, Western Gulf Territory manager, Regions Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cassie Stinson</td>
<td>Attorney at law, Law Office of Cassie B. Stinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chrissy Wilson</td>
<td>Vice president, leasing, Hines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Debra Wilson</td>
<td>Senior vice president, CBRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Michelle Wogan</td>
<td>Senior vice president, Transwestern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, from the above Table 2, it can be seen that WIREs in Malaysia are not being acknowledged as much as WIREs in the West as MRES is traditionally male-dominated and WIREs participation and contribution are not seen very significant to the national community at large.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN REAL ESTATE (WIRE)

Women are facing different of challenges and barriers but the main argument is that a "glass ceiling" exists in the workplace. The term was coined more than twenty years ago by The Wall Street Journal to describe the barriers that women face in the workplace. The word "ceiling" suggests that women are blocked from advancing in their careers, and the term "glass" is used because the ceiling is not always discernible (Strauss, 2007).

The phrase "glass ceiling" refers to an invisible barrier that prevents someone from achieving further success. It is most often heard in the context of women who cannot advance to the highest levels of power in the workplace. The glass ceiling is a way of describing whatever keeps women from achieving power and success equal to that of men (Napikoski, 2013). The term “glass ceiling” was coined in a 1986 Wall Street Journal report on corporate women by the two reporters, Hymowitz and Schellhardt. The glass ceiling is a concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, or aspire, to attain senior positions (as well as higher salary levels) in corporations, government, education and non-profit organizations. It can also refer to racial and ethnic minorities and men when they experience barriers to advancement (Lockwood, 2004). In order to support this claim, there is a study about the challenges exclusively faced by the WIREs as listed by Ishaya (2011). Ishaya (2011) concluded the challenges as below:

1. Being seeing as not capable of practicing the profession;
2. Correcting the general impression that female surveyors are lazy, incompetent and having to attend meeting late in the day;
3. Family problem taking care of the home front, combining it with work;
4. Family problem;
(5) Having to strike balance between challenges at work and the home front;
(6) Having to wake up in the morning and take care of the home front and then come to the office early;
(7) Looking at a woman as not able to practice the profession;
(8) Quantum of quackery in the profession;
(9) Some men don’t see why a female should be practicing estate management in the north;
(10) Limited hours to work, because of household chaos; and
(11) Reluctant to travel

On top of the above mentioned challenges, Mattis (2004) documented there are also barriers to women’s advancement at their workplace as the following:

(1) Stereotyping and misperceptions about women’s abilities;
(2) Long term commitment to business carriers;
(3) Exclusion from informal networks and channels of communications;
(4) Lack of access to mentors;
(5) Managers’ lack of willingness to “risk” putting women in key development assignments;
(6) Salary inequities; and
(7) Sexual harassment

It appears that both of the studies have shown similarities in terms of the challenges facing by for WIREs in RES. Among the top reasons for poor women participation are inflexible working arrangements and the lack of appropriate infrastructure to allow women to return to the workforce after they have left, usually to tend to family commitments (TalentCorp, 2010).

Resentment against women was manifested in overt and covert discriminatory behaviour towards them (Dainty et al, 2000). These actions ranged from overt gender harassment and bullying where women workers face the problem of not reporting verbal jargons and attitude for fear of being rejected by their male colleagues (Söderberg, 2009). In a study performed by Novus Opinion in Sweden, it is not only the jargon that is making the situation difficult but also distrust towards female leaders (Axelsson, 2010). 49 per cent of the female leaders feel an attitude obstruction against them by the male workers and colleagues are making their job difficult which eventually leads them to leaving the industry (Axelsson, 2010). Alarmingly, in the informal sector, women in construction are some of the worst victims of discrimination (Chrisna du Plessis, 1998; Aulin & Jingmond, 2011).

The lack of advancement by women is often blamed on their choosing families over careers or not having the skills necessary to demand higher salaries. However, new research from Catalyst has challenged these assumptions when they identified nine strategies that individuals use to further their careers: getting training through experience, gaining access to power, making achievements visible, blurring work-life boundaries, getting formal training, planning their careers, seeking advice when needed, scanning opportunities outside the company, and scanning opportunities inside the company. These personal strategies were then clustered into four types of employees. The results: regardless of which cluster of strategies women used,
men consistently advanced faster and further when they “did all the right things”. This report sought to dispel the myths surrounding advancement among women such as women are seeking slower tracks or women “don’t ask” (OWL National, 2012).

The type of covert discrimination women workers face are in the form of maintenance of a cultural long working hours and enforced geographical instability. This contributes to the issue of balancing between having a successful career and family-oriented lifestyle (Dainty et al, 2000; Aulin & Jingmond, 2011).

In a study performed by Hossain and Kusakabe (2005), the major barrier identified by women engineers in Thailand and Bangladesh is the recruitment process which favours the male workers. Employers prefer to keep the organization male-dominated even for tasks such as cost estimation, mapping and documentation. Women were excluded while hiring. Employers’ prejudice that construction is unsuitable for women is manifest in the recruitment process where employment are often informal and through personal contacts (Dainty et al, 2000).

The type of covert discrimination women workers face are in the form of maintenance of a cultural long working hours and enforced geographical instability. This contributes to the issue of balancing between having a successful career and family-oriented lifestyle (Dainty et al, 2000).

Restricted promotional opportunities within the organizations showed that promotions ‘within companies’ had tended to occur within divisions preventing lateral staff mobility between operating divisions in order to maintain sub-cultural environment, to restrict opportunities for women and maintain existing hierarchy and work practices (Dainty et al, 2000). Women were seen as threats to the limited promotional opportunities available within the organizations.

On top of the findings, in specific it can be seen that other scholars also discussed the above matters as the following:

(1) Nature Characteristic

Women have unique sources of stress. First, even when employed, they are still responsible for the traditional roles of caring for the children and the home. Therefore, it is not surprising that when they are employed, they are still primarily responsible for the children and the home. As women are expected to take care of the home and the children, they are likely to feel guilty if these home-related responsibilities are not attended to properly. This sense of guilt is even stronger in Malaysia women where religious and cultural values both place extreme importance on the women’s homemaker role. Thus, for women, work stressors alone are not sufficient predictors of their well-being: work and family roles are both equally important (Noor, 2001).

(2) Family Responsibility

The most basic conflict occurs if the husband disapproves of the idea that his wife is working, whether or not it is an economic necessity. On the one hand, a woman has to abide to traditional cultural and religious values where the husband’s decision is final, while on the other hand, current situation
demands a woman to be assertive and independent and to have an equal say in the running of the household. This conflict between traditional values and current situation may yet contribute another source of stress for the women. Further, although many men are agreeable to the idea of having wives that are employed as this means greater family income, many do not share in the household tasks. This dual demand (from the work and the family roles) further exacerbates the women’s amount of stress (Noor, 2001).

(3) Safety and Sexual Harassment

Recent attention has been directed at sexual harassment, which can take extreme forms such as demands for sexual favours that are linked to keeping one’s job or gaining a promotion, through milder forms, such as posting offensive pinups or that of certain female anatomy (Noor, 2001). Sexual harassment at the workplace has been one of the main concerns of All Women's Action Society (AWAM) since the late 1990s (Karim & Tumin, 2009).

(4) Stress

A study by Budhwar, Saini & Bhatnagar (2006), shows that the biggest challenge faced by women managers today is managing their dual role of organizational managers and housewives. Women experience tremendous stress caused by either work overload or underload. Women’s overload comes from the pressure to work harder to prove their capabilities. For instance, in India, while Indian men do not mind having women as subordinates, they do not like them as bosses. Dissatisfaction from subordinates is a source of stress for women managers, which they see as a challenge to be confronted. One of the prominent obstacles that most women managers face is the differential treatment at work which upholds the centrality and superiority of men and treats women as inferior and less important. Due to this stereotype, women are offered less challenging jobs and are often not involved in tackling crucial organizational issues.

**Table 3: Challenges and Barriers in Women**

(The Researcher, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Challenges and barriers</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being seeing as not capable of practicing the profession</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Correcting the general impression that female surveyors are lazy, incompetent and having to attend meeting late in the day</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Family problem taking care of the home front, combining it with work</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011) ; Tonge (2008); Morris (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Family problem</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Having to strike balance between challenges at work and the home front</td>
<td>Chovwen (2007); Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Having to wake up in the morning and take care of the home front and then come to the office early</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Looking at a woman as not able to practice the profession</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Quantum of quackery in the profession</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Some men don’t see why a female should be practicing estate management in the north</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continue…
Table 3: Challenges and Barriers in Women
(Researcher, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Challenges and barriers</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Limited hours to work, because of household chaos</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Travelling</td>
<td>Ishaya (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Stereotyping and misperceptions about women’s abilities</td>
<td>Budhwar, Saini, &amp; Bhatnagar, (2006); Mattis (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Exclusion from informal networks and channels of communications</td>
<td>Mattis (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lack of access to mentors</td>
<td>Mattis (2004); Chovwen (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Managers’ lack of willingness to “risk” putting women in key development assignments</td>
<td>Mattis (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Salary inequities</td>
<td>Mattis (2004); OWL National (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>Karim &amp; Tumin (2009); Mattis (2004); Noor (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Gender Discrimination</td>
<td>OWL National (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Maternity Benefits</td>
<td>Tiffanie (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Workplace Violence</td>
<td>Tiffanie (2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

In the nutshell, it can be summarised that there are challenges that hinder WIREs to advance in their career or move forward in the industry. Despite just looking at the challenges, the significant of the study is to help the women to see the value, contribution and their profession in the real estate industry exclusively in MRES. Besides, government sector can provide necessarily support, protection, initiative as well as incentive to the women in Malaysia, as there are well aware of the challenges facing by Malaysian women. Creating awareness, shifting cultural attitudes, adaptation and adoption to new social norms would be a great help to bring WIREs in Malaysia to a new path of professional practice. At the workplaces, employers should support WIREs by igniting more women to enter paid labour market in MRES, equality of responsibilities in performing surveyors duties, dare to set bold goals for themselves, let them become important strategists to make decision making and try to break the perception of “glass ceiling” internally. Policies, procedure and best practice guidance can also be created in order to protect WIRE professional interests nationally.

REFERENCES


