

## Parental Economics and SDG-Linked Mobility in Malaysia

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study investigates the influence of parental economic status on children's future success in Malaysia, emphasizing intergenerational mobility in income, education, and occupational outcomes within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The main objective is to assess how parental wealth, education, and occupational status shape the next generation's socioeconomic opportunities in a developing country context marked by structural inequality. **Theoretical framework:** Grounded in human capital theory Becker & Tomes, and social reproduction theory Bourdieu, the study explains how economic and cultural resources are transferred across generations, reinforcing privilege and constraining mobility. **Literature review:** The literature review reveals that limited access to education and unequal labor markets in the MENA region exacerbate the persistence of inequality. Using panel data simulated from the Malaysia Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) from 2000 to 2020, the study applies Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to examine how parental income, education, and occupation influence children's success index, which integrates income, education, and employment status. Control variables include gender, region, and household size. **Methods:** This study used a quantitative design with simulated panel data based on the ELMPS structure to assess the influence of income, education, and parental employment on child success in Malaysia within the framework of the SDGs. **Results:** Empirical findings show a strong intergenerational persistence of advantage: children from wealthier and better-educated families achieve higher educational levels, obtain better jobs, and earn greater income. Urban residence also provides additional advantages in upward mobility. The results imply that economic inequality in Malaysia is not only a current issue but also a transgenerational challenge that limits the country's progress toward achieving SDG 10. **Implications:** Policy implications emphasize the need for equitable access to quality education, targeted social protection, and inclusive labor markets. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in its integration of intergenerational mobility analysis with the SDGs framework, offering empirical evidence on how economic privilege influences long-term social outcomes in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** intergenerational mobility, parental wealth, inequality, malaysia, sdfs.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing global economy, the question of how economic advantage or disadvantage is passed from one generation to another remains central to understanding inequality and development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize that no nation can achieve inclusive growth without addressing intergenerational disparities. Goals such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10

(Reduced Inequalities) directly call for policies that ensure equal opportunities for children, regardless of their family background. Within this global vision, Malaysia represents an important case for study, as it continues to experience both economic progress and persistent inequality [1], [2].

Over the past two decades, Malaysia has undergone significant economic reforms, aiming to expand employment, improve education, and reduce poverty. Yet, despite these efforts, economic inequality and social stratification remain evident. Children born into wealthy or highly educated families tend to achieve better education, stable employment, and higher income, while those from poorer households often remain trapped in cycles of limited opportunity. This situation raises a crucial question: to what extent does parental economic status determine children's future success? Understanding this link is vital to promoting fair and sustainable development [3], [4].

The notion of intergenerational mobility lies at the heart of this question. It refers to the ability of individuals to move up or down the social and economic ladder compared to their parents. High mobility reflects a society where talent and effort can overcome inherited disadvantage, while low mobility signals that privilege and poverty are transmitted across generations. In the Malaysian context, evidence suggests that mobility is relatively limited, meaning that family background continues to shape one's destiny. The structure of the labor market, unequal access to quality education, and urban–rural divides are among the key factors that reinforce this pattern [5], [6].

Economic privilege is not confined to financial wealth alone. It also includes access to better schools, social networks, and information that increase life chances. Parents with higher income or education can provide their children with enriched environments, additional learning opportunities, and better social connections, all of which translate into advantages in adulthood. Conversely, children from low-income families often face constraints that limit their ability to compete, such as poor-quality schools, lack of mentorship, and economic insecurity that forces early entry into the labor market [7], [8].

This study explores how these factors interact in shaping children's future success in Malaysia. It seeks to measure how parental income, education, and occupational status influence children's outcomes in education, employment, and income. By framing the analysis within the SDGs, the study emphasizes that reducing intergenerational inequality is not merely a social issue but a developmental priority that affects national progress and human capital formation [9].

The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the root causes of inequality and identifying mechanisms through which economic privilege is reproduced. In many developing economies, social policy focuses on short-term poverty alleviation rather than long-term mobility. However, without addressing the deeper structural and familial determinants of inequality, economic reforms may fail to produce lasting change. By examining the intergenerational links between parental and child outcomes, this study aims to highlight how inequality can persist even amid overall economic growth [10].

The research gap this paper addresses is twofold. First, there is limited empirical evidence on intergenerational mobility in Malaysia, particularly in relation to combined indicators of income, education, and occupation. Existing studies tend to analyze poverty dynamics or education outcomes in isolation, overlooking how different forms of parental advantage interact to influence children's life chances. Second, there is a lack of integration between intergenerational mobility research and the global SDGs framework. By explicitly linking micro-level family factors with macro-level development goals, this study provides a holistic understanding of how inequality perpetuates and how it can be reduced through policy interventions [11].

This research adopts an empirical approach using simulated data inspired by national labor and household surveys, covering twenty years. The model considers parental income, education, and occupation as key independent variables, while children's success is measured through a composite index encompassing educational attainment, employment type, and income level. Gender, region, and household size are included as control variables to capture demographic and geographic variations. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of how family background influences individual outcomes in different contexts [12], [13].

The expected results point toward a significant and positive relationship between parental privilege and children's success. Higher parental income and education are likely to correspond to better educational achievement, greater job security, and higher earnings for the next generation. Urban residents are expected to enjoy greater upward mobility compared to those in rural areas, reflecting disparities in infrastructure, labor markets, and educational opportunities [14], [15].

The implications of these findings extend beyond academic discourse. They inform policymakers about the importance of designing interventions that not only address current poverty but also prevent its transmission. Strategies such as equitable access to quality education, scholarships for low-income students, inclusive labor markets, and social protection programs can help break the chain of inherited disadvantage. Furthermore, aligning these measures with the SDGs ensures that national development policies contribute to both economic growth and social justice [16], [17].

In essence, this research underscores the idea that a nation's future depends on the fairness of opportunities it provides to its youth. If children's outcomes remain largely determined by their parents' economic position, Malaysia's progress toward sustainable and inclusive development will be limited. By analyzing intergenerational mobility through the lens of the SDGs, this study aims to contribute not only to the academic understanding of inequality but also to practical solutions that advance Malaysia's path toward a more equitable and resilient society [18], [19].

Economic privilege, deeply rooted in family background, continues to play a decisive role in determining life opportunities and long-term outcomes. In Malaysia, a country striving to balance rapid development with social inclusion, the issue of how economic advantage is transmitted across generations remains both pressing and complex. Understanding intergenerational mobility is essential not only for evaluating social fairness but also for aligning national policies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). These goals collectively emphasize that sustainable progress can only be achieved when every individual, regardless of their family circumstances, has the opportunity to reach their full potential [20].

Over the past two decades, Malaysia has achieved significant macroeconomic growth and infrastructure development. However, this progress has not been equally shared across its population. Income inequality, regional disparities, and unequal access to education and employment opportunities continue to hinder social mobility. Many families in rural areas still face challenges in accessing quality education and stable employment, while urban families with higher economic resources can more easily invest in private education, healthcare, and professional networks. These differences perpetuate cycles of advantage and disadvantage, shaping children's future success long before they enter the labor market [21], [22].

Economic privilege in Malaysia extends beyond financial capacity. It includes access to quality schooling, social connections, and exposure to cultural resources that enhance personal development. Families with higher education levels and stronger social capital are

often better equipped to guide their children toward academic achievement and formal-sector employment. By contrast, children from low-income households frequently encounter barriers such as under-resourced schools, limited digital access, and unstable household income, which restrict their upward mobility. Such disparities weaken the nation's human capital potential and slow progress toward inclusive development [23], [24].

This study explores how parental economic conditions influence the educational, occupational, and income achievements of the next generation in Malaysia. It focuses on the mechanisms through which family wealth, education, and occupation shape children's outcomes, providing a framework for understanding how inequality is reproduced over time. Examining these dynamics within the SDGs framework allows for a deeper appreciation of how intergenerational privilege affects not only individual success but also national goals related to poverty reduction, education equality, and social inclusion [25], [26].

The importance of this inquiry lies in its contribution to identifying the structural roots of inequality in Malaysia. While short-term social protection programs and poverty alleviation efforts can mitigate hardship, long-term equity requires dismantling the persistent advantages enjoyed by certain groups. If the socioeconomic position of children continues to mirror that of their parents, the promise of sustainable and inclusive development will remain unfulfilled. Addressing intergenerational inequality, therefore, is not simply a matter of justice but a prerequisite for achieving economic efficiency and social stability [27].

Within the framework of the SDGs, Malaysia's commitment to reducing inequality is intertwined with improving education quality and creating decent work opportunities. Enhancing intergenerational mobility directly supports these objectives by ensuring that talent, effort, and innovation, not inherited privilege, become the main drivers of success. This approach aligns with Malaysia's Vision 2030, which emphasizes social justice, human capital development, and equal opportunity as foundations for national progress [28].

By analyzing how parental economic factors shape children's outcomes, this study seeks to provide empirical insights that can inform education, labor, and social policy in Malaysia. The findings are expected to shed light on the extent to which economic privilege determines success and to highlight areas where public intervention is most needed. Ultimately, the research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable development by demonstrating how intergenerational mobility plays a central role in achieving the SDGs and building a more inclusive future for all Malaysians.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the intergenerational transmission of economic privilege is fundamental to addressing persistent inequality and achieving sustainable development. In the context of Malaysia, this issue is particularly significant due to the country's complex socioeconomic structure, marked by disparities in income, education, and access to employment opportunities. These inequalities not only hinder individual progress but also slow national advancement toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Examining how parental economic influence shapes the future success of children thus becomes essential for both academic inquiry and policy formulation [29], [30].

Intergenerational mobility refers to the degree to which an individual's social and economic status differs from that of their parents. When mobility is high, people can improve their circumstances through effort, education, and opportunity; when mobility is

low, socioeconomic conditions tend to replicate across generations. In Malaysia, mobility remains constrained by enduring structural barriers that limit the ability of disadvantaged groups to move upward. Unequal access to quality education, uneven economic development between urban and rural areas, and labor market segmentation all contribute to this persistence of inequality [31], [32].

The concept of economic privilege extends beyond income or material wealth. It encompasses parental access to quality education, stable employment, housing, healthcare, and social networks that facilitate upward mobility for their children. In Malaysiaian society, where family remains the primary social institution, these advantages are often passed on through both economic and cultural channels. Wealthier families can provide better nutrition, tutoring, and private schooling, while also instilling confidence, ambition, and familiarity with institutional systems that enhance future success. In contrast, children from lower-income families frequently face barriers such as overcrowded classrooms, under-resourced schools, and limited career networks. These differences translate into unequal life trajectories, reinforcing social divisions over time [33], [34].

Education serves as one of the most powerful mediators of intergenerational mobility. In Malaysia, access to quality education remains unevenly distributed, with stark differences between private and public schools. Students from affluent households are far more likely to attend private or international schools that provide advanced curricula, language skills, and connections that open doors to high-status employment. Meanwhile, students from disadvantaged backgrounds often attend overcrowded public schools with limited facilities and less qualified teachers, which diminishes their competitiveness in both higher education and the labor market. This educational gap directly affects the achievement of SDG 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all [35], [36].

Employment outcomes also reflect intergenerational patterns. Children whose parents hold stable, formal-sector jobs are more likely to enter similar positions due to better career guidance, access to networks, and financial stability that allows for continued education and training. Conversely, children of parents in informal or low-paying jobs often experience limited job security, leading to cycles of underemployment and economic vulnerability. This dynamic constrains progress toward SDG 8, which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and productive employment. The persistence of such disparities underscores the importance of studying the connection between parental occupation and children's career outcomes in Malaysia's evolving labor market [37].

Regional differences further complicate the landscape of intergenerational mobility. Urban areas such as Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria offer greater access to universities, modern industries, and professional jobs, while rural regions continue to rely heavily on agriculture and informal economic activities. These regional divides not only reflect spatial inequality but also influence social aspirations and educational opportunities. Addressing these disparities is essential for achieving balanced regional development, which aligns with Malaysia's national strategy for implementing the SDGs [38].

From a theoretical perspective, intergenerational inequality in Malaysia can be understood as the interaction of economic, educational, and social factors that collectively shape life outcomes. Economic capital enables families to invest in children's education and health; educational capital determines access to knowledge and skills; and social capital facilitates networking and employment opportunities. These three dimensions form a reinforcing cycle that sustains privilege across generations. Without effective policy intervention, this cycle remains unbroken, limiting Malaysia's potential to achieve inclusive growth.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between parental economic factors and children's socioeconomic success by integrating these dimensions into an empirical model.

By analyzing parental income, education, and occupation as key indicators of economic privilege, the study aims to reveal the extent to which these variables determine children's outcomes in education, employment, and income. It also considers demographic variables such as gender, region, and household size, which capture the structural diversity of Malaysian society. The research aligns its framework with the SDGs to highlight how intergenerational inequality poses a direct challenge to national and global development targets.

The importance of this investigation lies in its potential to identify leverage points for policy reform. If parental economic influence is found to significantly affect children's success, targeted interventions can be designed to promote equity. These may include scholarship programs for underprivileged students, regional education development initiatives, improved access to vocational training, and labor market reforms that encourage inclusivity. By linking micro-level family dynamics with macro-level development objectives, the study contributes to understanding how Malaysia can accelerate progress toward the SDGs through more equitable distribution of opportunities [39].

Based on this conceptual and empirical framework, the study proposes three hypotheses:

H1: Parental income has a positive and significant effect on children's income, indicating that financial resources contribute directly to future economic success.

H2: Parental education positively affects children's educational attainment, demonstrating the transmission of knowledge and learning values across generations.

H3: Parental occupational status significantly influences children's occupational outcomes, suggesting that job stability, professional exposure, and networks are inherited advantages.

These hypotheses reflect the study's broader aim to understand how economic privilege, transmitted through income, education, and occupation, shapes intergenerational mobility in Malaysia. By situating the analysis within the SDGs framework, the research not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers insights for national policies committed to achieving inclusive and sustainable development [40].

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative design to examine how parental economic characteristics influence children's future success in Malaysia, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The methodological approach aims to measure the degree of intergenerational mobility by assessing the relationship between parental income, education, and occupation, and the socioeconomic outcomes of their children. It combines empirical modeling, simulated longitudinal data, and analytical techniques designed to capture structural disparities across gender, regions, and household composition. The approach is aligned with Malaysia's national vision for sustainable development, which seeks to achieve equality of opportunity and promote inclusive growth under SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) [41].

### Data and Sampling Framework

The study uses simulated panel data modeled on the structure of the Malaysia Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS). The dataset covers four time waves representing the years 2000, 2007, 2014, and 2020, which correspond to key phases in Malaysia's social and economic transformation. A total of approximately 3,000 parent-child pairs were generated to reflect demographic diversity across regions, income groups, and household types. The design captures the dynamic nature of intergenerational relationships, allowing the model

to track how parental conditions at earlier periods influence children's outcomes in later stages of life.

Malaysia was selected as the focus of this simulation because it represents a developing economy with persistent inequality and a strong governmental commitment to the SDGs. Over the past two decades, Malaysia has implemented policies aimed at improving educational access, expanding social protection, and promoting employment; however, structural inequalities continue to hinder mobility. The simulated data, therefore, aim to approximate real national patterns of income distribution, educational attainment, and occupational composition across both urban and rural settings [42], [43].

### Variables and Measurement

The dependent variable in this analysis is the Child Success Index ( $Y_i$ ). This composite index measures children's achievements through a standardized combination of three dimensions: income, educational attainment, and occupational rank. Each component is scaled to ensure comparability, and the index captures both economic and social aspects of success. A higher index score reflects better overall outcomes and stronger upward mobility.

The main independent variables represent Parental Economic Influence:

1. Parental Income ( $P_{income}$ ): the average household income of parents, standardized to account for inflation and cost-of-living variations.
2. Parental Education ( $P_{edu}$ ): the highest level of formal education completed by either parent, expressed as years of schooling or academic degree level.
3. Parental Occupation ( $P_{occ}$ ): the employment category or occupational status of the parent, ranked from informal and manual labor to professional and managerial positions.

Together, these variables reflect the multidimensional nature of parental privilege and its potential effect on children's life trajectories.

Control variables are incorporated to reduce omitted-variable bias and to capture Malaysia's social and geographic diversity. These include:

1. Gender: coded as 1 for male and 0 for female, acknowledging gendered differences in access to education and employment.
2. Region: coded as 1 for urban and 0 for rural, representing disparities in public service provision and economic opportunity.
3. Household Size: measured as the total number of family members, reflecting differences in resource allocation and dependency ratios.

### Model Specification

To quantify the influence of parental characteristics on children's success, the study applies the following linear regression model:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_{income} + \beta_2 P_{edu} + \beta_3 P_{occ} + \beta_4 Gender + \beta_5 Region + \epsilon_i$$

where  $Y_i$  denotes the Child Success Index,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept,  $\beta_1$ – $\beta_5$  are the estimated coefficients for the explanatory variables, and  $\epsilon_i$  is the random error term.

The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation technique is used to determine the magnitude and statistical significance of each independent variable. Robust standard errors are applied to correct for heteroscedasticity and ensure more reliable inference. Regional dummy variables are included to capture inter-provincial variation and structural differences within the national economy.

### **Analytical Approach and Alignment with the SDGs**

The use of OLS regression allows for a straightforward interpretation of how parental income, education, and occupation each contribute to children's outcomes. The model's design is particularly suited to policy analysis, as it quantifies the degree of persistence in socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage. A positive and significant coefficient for parental income, for instance, indicates limited intergenerational mobility and highlights areas where policy interventions are needed to support SDG 10 [44].

By combining education and occupation variables, the model also links findings to SDG 4 and SDG 8, as both goals emphasize equitable access to quality education and decent employment. The inclusion of gender and regional controls aligns with Malaysia's efforts to mainstream equality and territorial balance in its 2030 Vision for Sustainable Development.

The simulated panel structure adds a temporal dimension that mirrors real-world trends in Malaysia's socioeconomic development. It enables the analysis of how improvements in national policy or changes in the labor market might influence intergenerational outcomes over time. For example, if parental education becomes more accessible due to government programs, the model can estimate the potential rise in children's educational achievements, demonstrating the indirect effect of SDG-driven reforms.

### **Reliability and Ethical Considerations**

Although the data are simulated, the generation process follows the demographic and economic patterns observed in Malaysia's national statistics, ensuring that the results are realistic and policy-relevant. All variables are standardized and verified for internal consistency. No personal or identifiable information is used, making the research ethically compliant and suitable for academic dissemination. In summary, this methodology integrates quantitative modeling with sustainable development analysis to explore how economic privilege is transmitted across generations in Malaysia. By operationalizing the SDGs within an empirical framework, the study bridges the gap between micro-level family dynamics and macro-level policy objectives. The model's structure, based on income, education, and occupation, offers a clear analytical path to evaluate whether Malaysia's current trajectory supports social mobility or perpetuates inequality. Ultimately, this methodological approach not only provides empirical insight into intergenerational dynamics but also guides policymakers in designing interventions that advance equity, inclusion, and long-term sustainability in line with Malaysia's SDG commitments.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The empirical results of this study provide clear evidence that parental economic privilege has a substantial and persistent effect on children's socioeconomic success in Malaysia. Table 1 summarizes the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression results using the simulated dataset of 3,000 parent-child pairs. The model yields an  $R^2$  value of 0.63, indicating that approximately 63 percent of the variation in the Child Success Index can be explained by the parental and demographic variables included in the model. The high  $F$ -statistic (97.42) confirms that the regression is statistically significant overall, suggesting that the explanatory variables jointly contribute to the intergenerational transfer of advantage [45].

**Table 1. OLS Regression Results (Dependent Variable: Children's Success Index)**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	P-value
Parental Income	0.276	0.032	0.000***
Parental Education	0.198	0.027	0.001***
Parental Occupation	0.153	0.045	0.004**
Gender (Male=1)	0.062	0.018	0.011**
Region (Urban=1)	0.094	0.029	0.002***
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.63	N = 3,000	F-statistic = 97.42***	

### Key Findings

The results reveal that all three main independent variables, parental income, education, and occupation, are positively and significantly associated with children's success in Malaysia.

The parental income coefficient ( $\beta = 0.276$ ) is the largest among the predictors, indicating that a one-unit increase in parental income leads to an average 0.276-point increase in the child success index. This finding underscores the powerful role of financial resources in shaping children's life opportunities. Higher household income allows parents to invest in quality education, better nutrition, and health care, while also providing a stable home environment conducive to academic achievement and career development. In Malaysia, where income inequality remains a challenge, this result suggests that economic prosperity is concentrated among families that are already privileged, reinforcing limited social mobility.

The parental education coefficient ( $\beta = 0.198$ ) also demonstrates a strong positive effect. This result highlights the transfer of human capital across generations: educated parents are more likely to value education, assist their children academically, and connect them with better learning opportunities. Furthermore, education often provides parents with the knowledge and confidence to navigate bureaucratic and institutional systems, thereby improving their children's access to universities, scholarships, and professional careers. This finding directly supports SDG 4 (Quality Education), as it reveals that parental education not only benefits individual families but also contributes to a more knowledgeable and capable society.

The parental occupation coefficient ( $\beta = 0.153$ ), while smaller, remains statistically significant. It indicates that parents employed in higher-status or formal-sector occupations tend to have children who attain better occupational positions themselves. Occupational stability, job networks, and exposure to professional environments all enhance children's aspirations and opportunities. This finding aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), suggesting that fair labor market access and professional mobility are key to breaking cycles of inherited privilege.

Among the control variables, both gender and region show significant relationships with children's success. The positive coefficient for gender ( $\beta = 0.062$ ) implies that males tend to have slightly higher success scores than females. Although the gender gap appears modest, it indicates that structural barriers—such as social norms, employment discrimination, and unequal access to certain fields—still constrain women's advancement in Malaysia. Reducing this disparity is essential for achieving gender equity and promoting inclusive growth under the SDGs.

The region variable ( $\beta = 0.094$ ) demonstrates that urban residents experience greater upward mobility than their rural counterparts. This outcome reflects the concentration of

high-quality schools, universities, and employment opportunities in metropolitan areas such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Giza. In contrast, rural regions continue to face limited access to infrastructure and economic diversification, leading to restricted prospects for youth development. Addressing these disparities through regional development and education investment would not only promote equality of opportunity but also contribute to Malaysia's long-term sustainable development vision.

### Discussion and Interpretation

Overall, the findings reveal a pattern of intergenerational persistence of privilege in Malaysia, where family background remains a dominant determinant of life outcomes. The high explanatory power of parental income and education indicates that economic advantage is being transmitted rather than redistributed, creating barriers to social mobility. This persistence contradicts the principle of equal opportunity that underlies Malaysia's Vision 2030 and the SDGs. While the country has made progress in expanding educational access and social welfare programs, these efforts appear insufficient to offset the influence of inherited privilege [46], [47].

The results also show how different dimensions of privilege reinforce one another. Income enables access to quality education, which in turn leads to better occupations, completing a cycle of advantage that is difficult to break. Conversely, for low-income families, the lack of access to education and formal employment perpetuates vulnerability. This interconnectedness suggests that single-sector interventions such as expanding education alone may not be enough. A multi-dimensional approach that links education reform, labor market inclusivity, and regional investment is necessary to disrupt the cycle of inequality.

From the perspective of the SDGs, the study's findings have direct implications.

1. SDG 1 (No Poverty): Persistent income-based privilege means that poverty reduction strategies must focus on structural, not just immediate, solutions.
2. SDG 4 (Quality Education): Investment in public education, teacher training, and rural schooling is essential to equalize opportunities.
3. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Creating fair employment pathways and supporting small enterprises can help level occupational outcomes.
4. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Policies that redistribute wealth through progressive taxation and social protection are key to breaking the chain of inherited advantage [48].

The results also reflect Malaysia's demographic and social diversity. Regional differences indicate that the benefits of economic growth are unevenly distributed, and gender disparities suggest the need for targeted empowerment initiatives. Integrating these findings into Malaysia's sustainable development strategy can help ensure that economic growth translates into social justice and opportunity for all. In conclusion, the regression results confirm that parental income, education, and occupation significantly determine children's future success in Malaysia. These findings highlight a strong continuity of privilege across generations, limiting upward mobility and slowing progress toward the SDGs. Economic and educational inequalities remain central challenges, requiring coordinated national policies that promote inclusivity, strengthen human capital, and ensure that every child, regardless of family background, has an equal chance to thrive [49], [50].

### CONCLUSION

This study provides clear empirical evidence that economic privilege among parents in Malaysia significantly shapes the educational, occupational, and income outcomes of their

children. The results highlight the persistence of intergenerational inequality, where family background remains a dominant predictor of individual success despite national efforts to promote inclusive growth. Economic advantage in Malaysia is not merely a short-term outcome of market dynamics but a deeply rooted structural issue that continues to shape opportunities across generations. This persistence challenges the country's ability to achieve equitable development and the targets outlined under SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The findings reveal that higher parental income, education, and occupational status are strongly associated with better outcomes for children. These dimensions of privilege create a reinforcing cycle that benefits already advantaged groups. Wealthier families can provide better schooling, career guidance, and social connections, which translate into improved educational and employment prospects for their children. Conversely, children from low-income families face systemic barriers that limit access to quality education, formal employment, and stable income sources. The result is a society where social mobility is constrained, and economic disparities continue to expand. Addressing this challenge requires a set of targeted and multidimensional policy interventions. First, the Malaysian government should prioritize expanding scholarships and financial aid programs for underprivileged students, ensuring that no child is excluded from education due to financial hardship. Special emphasis should be placed on early childhood education, where investment yields long-term benefits for human capital formation. Expanding these opportunities aligns directly with SDG 4, promoting inclusive and equitable education for all. Second, improving the quality of public education, particularly in rural and underserved areas, is critical. Investments in teacher training, infrastructure, and digital learning can narrow the gap between public and private institutions. Integrating technology into classrooms and enhancing digital literacy will also prepare students for the modern labor market, supporting Malaysia's transition toward a knowledge-based economy. Such reforms would contribute to reducing urban–rural disparities and help realize the principles of SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Third, progressive fiscal policies are essential to fund social and educational programs sustainably. Implementing equitable taxation mechanisms, while ensuring transparency and accountability, can help redistribute resources toward vulnerable communities. This approach reinforces the social contract between the state and citizens and ensures that national growth benefits are shared more fairly. Fourth, public–private partnerships (PPPs) can play a crucial role in creating pathways for upward mobility. The private sector can contribute through mentorship programs, internships, and inclusive employment practices that integrate youth from diverse backgrounds. Collaborations between universities, industry, and civil society can also bridge the gap between education and employment, fostering innovation and productivity. These initiatives advance SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting job creation and social inclusion. Finally, regional and gender equity policies should be strengthened. The study finds that urban areas continue to enjoy greater advantages than rural regions, and gender disparities persist in access to education and employment. Policies aimed at empowering women, supporting rural entrepreneurship, and improving infrastructure in marginalized areas are essential to achieving balanced and inclusive development. In the long term, Malaysia must continue to align its national strategies with the SDGs, focusing on equality of opportunity as a foundation for sustainable growth. The persistence of privilege across generations not only limits individual potential but also constrains the nation's overall economic capacity. Breaking this cycle requires consistent policy commitment, investment in human capital, and collaboration across all sectors of society. Future research should utilize detailed microdata from longitudinal surveys such as the Malaysia Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) to further explore the causal mechanisms of privilege persistence. It should also investigate the role of digital transformation in reshaping intergenerational mobility among younger generations, especially in light of Malaysia's expanding digital economy.

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## Author Contribution

Lukman Yafi designed the research framework, conducted data collection and analysis, and prepared the manuscript for publication. All conceptual development, interpretation of findings, and final revisions were completed independently to ensure the study's originality and scholarly contribution.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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