

## Gender Representation in the Division of Domestic and Public Roles in Modern Families in Surabaya

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### Abstract

Gender inequality in domestic and emotional responsibilities remained strongly embedded in modern families. This study aimed to examine how domestic and emotional roles were represented and negotiated in dual-income families in Surabaya. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving five urban families selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected over three months through semi-structured interviews and participatory observation. The results indicated that domestic and emotional work was still dominated by women, with primary responsibilities largely assigned to them, while men's involvement tended to be occasional and was socially perceived as voluntary. Subtle resistance strategies adopted by women, such as delaying housework or involving their sons, rarely led to sustained changes in the division of labor. The study concluded that efforts toward gender equality in the domestic sphere required gender-responsive policies, expanded paternity leave, and early gender equality education. These measures were essential to encourage men's active participation in household labor and to foster more egalitarian family relationships.

Keywords: domestic labor, dual income families, emotional labor, gender inequality

### Abstrak

Ketimpangan gender dalam tanggung jawab domestik dan emosional masih kuat melekat dalam keluarga modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana peran domestik dan emosional direpresentasikan serta dinegosiasikan dalam keluarga dengan dua pencari nafkah di Kota Surabaya. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dengan melibatkan lima keluarga perkotaan yang dipilih melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan selama tiga bulan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi partisipatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pekerjaan domestik dan emosional masih didominasi oleh perempuan, dengan tanggung jawab utama berada pada mereka, sedangkan keterlibatan laki-laki bersifat sesekali dan dianggap sukarela. Strategi perlawanan halus yang dilakukan perempuan, seperti menunda pekerjaan rumah atau melibatkan anak laki-laki, jarang menghasilkan perubahan yang bertahan lama. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa upaya menuju kesetaraan gender dalam ranah domestik membutuhkan kebijakan yang responsif gender, perluasan cuti ayah, serta pendidikan kesetaraan gender sejak dulu. Langkah tersebut penting untuk mendorong partisipasi aktif laki-laki dalam pekerjaan rumah tangga dan menciptakan hubungan keluarga yang lebih setara.

. Kata kunci: keluarga dua pencari nafkah, kesetaraan gender, kerja dosmetik, kerja emosional

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## Introduction

Gender representation in the family is a reflection of how societies construct and institutionalize the roles of men and women across generations. These roles are not biologically determined but are socially shaped through cultural practices, traditions, and socialization processes that continuously reinforce patriarchal values. In most societies, including Indonesia, women are still predominantly positioned as caretakers and domestic managers, while men are seen as the primary breadwinners. Despite the significant social changes brought about by modernization, these gendered divisions remain deeply embedded within the family structure. In urban centers such as Surabaya, where modernization and globalization are rapidly progressing, gender role expectations persist and continue to disadvantage women (Ilham & Velianto, 2022).

The phenomenon of women actively participating in the workforce alongside men has not sufficiently challenged the conventional division of labor within the family. According to data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2023), 52.53% of women of productive age in Surabaya are engaged in professional employment. However, this increase in women's public participation does not necessarily lead to a redistribution of domestic responsibilities. Women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of household labor and emotional management, creating a double burden that threatens their psychological well-being and long-term quality of life. This situation also contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequalities across generations, as children internalize these unequal role models within their own families. If left unresolved, this issue will continue to hinder the achievement of gender equality targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 which emphasizes the need to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Musembi, 2021).

The urgency of this research is very high given the rapid social and economic changes in urban areas such as Surabaya, which have a direct impact on family dynamics and gender role division. In today's modern and digital era, women not only play the role of caregivers and household managers, but are also increasingly active in the workforce and family decision-making (Amin et al., 2024). However, despite the increasing opportunities available to women, gender inequality in domestic roles and the double burden remain significant issues that threaten women's psychological well-being and quality of life (Collins et al., 2021). Furthermore, gender equality within the family is a crucial foundation for sustainable human development that is adaptive to changing times, especially amid the ongoing trends of digitalization and globalization (Puspitawati et al., 2023). Persistent gender inequality within families can reinforce structural and cultural discrimination patterns, leading to various social issues, such as low male involvement in childcare and domestic work, as well as insufficient public policy support (Collins et al., 2021).

Studies on gender roles within families have been extensively carried out, but the majority of studies concentrate on rural communities or school contexts that do not simulate urban complexities in families. Results indicate that household roles are still unequal even where both spouses work, and the COVID-19 pandemic has consolidated traditional women roles. However, empirical research on the negotiation of roles among urban families, specifically in Surabaya, and emotional load among women in household

conflict is limited (Angraini et al., 2024; Karimah & Puspitawati, 2020; Maulidina et al., 2022).

Liberal feminist theory is relevant to explain these issues. Aisyah (2013) stressed that inequality arises from social constructs, not biology, and can be changed through policy, law, and education. Nu'man (2023) emphasized that patriarchy places men as breadwinners and women as caretakers. Therefore, liberal feminism calls for equal household division, fair paternity leave, and gender-sensitive curricula. Yet, this framework is still underrepresented in studies of urban nuclear families, which face globalization and digitalization that reshape gender roles (Karimah & Puspitawati, 2020).

Within this framework, understanding how gender roles operate in different socio-economic settings becomes essential. In determining the purposive informants, this study specifically focuses on middle-class families in Surabaya, representing a socio-economic group characterized by diverse domestic practices. Although these families have sufficient financial resources to hire domestic help, most of them prefer to perform household tasks independently without external assistance, often involving their children in supporting daily domestic routines. This distinction is crucial for understanding how economic capacity, cultural expectations, and modernization interact to shape the division of domestic and emotional labor. By situating the study within this context, it becomes possible to explore how household responsibilities are shared and negotiated within the husband–wife relationship, with children's involvement reflecting intergenerational socialization of gender roles. This socio-economic context offers an essential foundation for understanding how gendered domestic practices and emotional labor are constructed and negotiated within middle-class Surabaya households.

The novelty of this study lies in examining not only structural inequality but also women's emotional burdens and role negotiations in modern urban households. This research integrates public policy and gender socialization analysis, offering a multilevel perspective from structural to individual experiences. Thus, it expands literature that has often overlooked Indonesian urban families. Collins et al. (2021) noted that women's entry into the public sphere does not automatically redistribute domestic roles. Puspitawati et al. (2023) highlighted that this imbalance causes stress and a double burden. Maulidina et al. (2022) explained that family socialization reproduces unequal gender values. These findings reinforce the need to view household inequality as both micro and structural. This study contributes theoretically by enriching feminist discussions on urban families and practically by offering recommendations for education, workplace policy, and community programs that promote gender equality. Such measures are essential to challenge patriarchal norms and encourage men's participation in domestic life.

This study focuses on how gender roles are represented, constructed, and practiced in the daily lives of modern families in Surabaya. It aims to reveal the underlying dynamics that cause unequal division of labor in the modern era and offer practical solutions that help build a fair family system in which men and women share domestic and emotional responsibilities equally.

## Methods

### Participants

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological orientation, as the research focused on exploring and understanding the lived experiences and subjective meanings constructed by dual-earner couples regarding the division of domestic and emotional responsibilities. Considering the research objectives, scope, and stages of data collection, the study demonstrated a strong phenomenological tendency, particularly in emphasizing participants' perspectives, interpretations, and meaning-making processes.

The participants consisted of five married couples who had been married for between four and twenty-three years, with husbands and wives aged between 30 and 45 years. Each family had one or two children. One of the families included a 20-year-old only son who actively participated in household chores such as cleaning, doing laundry, and assisting his mother in daily domestic activities. His involvement illustrates a process of gender equality socialization within the family, in which domestic responsibilities were not exclusively assigned to the mother but were shared among family members.

All participating families resided in the eastern, southern, northern, and central parts of Surabaya, representing middle-class urban environments with relatively similar socio-economic characteristics. The use of lowercase letters for directional terms follows standard academic English conventions, as these terms do not refer to specific administrative regions. Most families lived in densely populated residential areas with access to educational and employment facilities in the city center. Several informants were neighbors or acquaintances of the researcher, which facilitated more open and natural interactions during interviews and observations. This familiarity helped reduce social distance and enabled the collection of more authentic data regarding household dynamics.

The research was conducted over a period of three months, from February to April 2025. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-intrusive participatory observations. Observations were conducted through periodic visits at mutually agreed times rather than prolonged residence in participants' homes. During these visits, the researcher documented everyday family interactions, patterns of domestic task distribution, and emotional communication during routine activities such as meal preparation, house cleaning, and childcare.

Although this study did not require formal ethical clearance due to its non-invasive nature, ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. They were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The researcher ensured participants' privacy and confidentiality by anonymizing all personal information and using pseudonyms in transcripts and reports. Data were used solely for academic purposes, and participants' comfort and well-being were prioritized during interviews and observations.

## Measurement

Two primary instruments were used for data collection: semi-structured interviews and participatory observation guidelines. The interview protocol was developed based on the conceptual framework of liberal feminism and adapted from qualitative research methods as suggested by Creswell et al., (2018). Semi-structured interviews employed open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their lived experiences related to the division of household and emotional responsibilities, perceptions of gender roles, and daily negotiation of domestic and public duties.

Key topics discussed during interviews included perceptions of fair role distribution, actual household practices, emotional responsibilities, and family decision-making dynamics. The flexible interview format allowed participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and interpretations freely.

Participatory observations were conducted to gain insight into participants' daily interactions and the practical division of household tasks. Observations took place in natural settings to capture authentic moments of cooperation, task performance, and emotional management. Field notes from observations provided contextual depth and enabled comparison between reported experiences and observed practices.

In phenomenological qualitative research, emphasis is placed on collecting rich, detailed, and nuanced data related to participants' lived experiences. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and participatory observations served as the primary data sources to understand how dual-earner couples constructed and interpreted domestic and emotional responsibilities in everyday life. The richness of the data strengthened the credibility of the findings and supported thematic analysis and data triangulation.

## Analysis

The unit of analysis focused on the lived experiences of husbands and wives in negotiating and constructing meanings related to domestic and emotional responsibilities within the family. The analysis aimed to understand how participants interpreted their involvement in household tasks, childcare, and emotional management.

In line with the phenomenological approach, the analytical process involved repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes to achieve a holistic understanding of participants' narratives. Significant statements were identified, interpreted, and developed into thematic expressions to reveal recurring patterns of experience.

After data reduction, the findings were organized into thematic matrices to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and unique cases across families. This thematic organization enabled the researcher to interpret how gender roles were practiced and negotiated in urban family life. Particular attention was given to identifying similarities and differences between husbands' and wives' experiences within each household.

To enhance reliability and trustworthiness, methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with observational findings. Data source triangulation was also applied by cross-checking information provided by husbands and wives. Member checking was performed by presenting preliminary findings to

participants to ensure that interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives.

NVivo software was used to assist data organization, coding, theme identification, and visualization. The use of qualitative analysis software supported systematic analysis and improved analytical clarity. Through this analytical process, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender roles were constructed and negotiated in the division of domestic and emotional labor within modern families in Surabaya, while highlighting the social, cultural, and structural factors influencing these patterns.

### Findings

In general, the findings of this study describe participants' lived experiences of negotiating domestic and emotional roles within dual-earner families. The findings focus on how household responsibilities, emotional labor, and role negotiations are experienced, interpreted, and managed in everyday family life. The analysis is organized into five main themes (1) women's dominance in domestic work, (2) emotional labor as a hidden burden, (3) role negotiation and silent compromise, (4) subtle resistance strategies in responding to inequality, and (5) the influence of gender socialization and family culture. These themes represent recurring patterns across participants' narratives and are summarized in Table 1, serving as the central structure for the presentation of the findings.

This section presents the research findings based on participants' lived experiences, consistent with a phenomenological qualitative approach. The presentation of results is not intended to generate generalizations, but rather to illuminate the meanings, experiential patterns, and social dynamics as perceived and articulated by the participants. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, provided voluntary informed consent prior to data collection, and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Although this study did not require formal ethical clearance, ethical principles of qualitative research were strictly observed throughout the research process. Pseudonyms or participant codes are used throughout this section, and all interview excerpts are presented in a manner that protects participants' identities and personal information. This table provides an overview of the thematic structure of the findings, while in-depth meanings are elaborated through participants' narratives and interview excerpts in the sections that follow.

Table 1. Summary of emergent themes and participants' lived meanings

Main Theme	Focus of Participants' Experiences	Phenomenological Meaning
Women's dominance in domestic work	Women's dominance in domestic work	Women's dominance in domestic work
Emotional labor as a hidden burden	Wives manage children's emotions and family harmony	Emotional regulation is perceived as women's moral obligation
Role negotiation and silent compromise	Requests for help are temporary and non-sustaining	Family harmony is prioritized over role equality

Table 1. Summary of emergent themes and participants' lived meanings (Continue)

Main Theme	Focus of Participants' Experiences	Phenomenological Meaning
Subtle resistance strategies	Delaying chores and involving sons in domestic work	Resistance is enacted through everyday symbolic practices
Gender socialization and family culture	Childhood role models shape current practices	Gender roles are learned and reproduced intergenerationally

### Women's Dominance in Domestic Work

The findings indicate that female participants consistently assume primary responsibility for domestic work, despite their active participation in paid employment. Household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and managing children's daily needs are largely perceived as the wife's responsibility and are integrated into women's daily routines without explicit negotiation. Domestic work is not viewed as a shared obligation, but rather as a natural extension of women's roles within the family.

Participants described how domestic responsibilities persist regardless of their workload outside the home. After completing paid work, women continue to engage in unpaid domestic labor, often without a clear division of tasks or prior discussion with their spouses. Husbands' involvement, when present, is generally framed as situational assistance rather than routine responsibility. One participant described how domestic duties remain her obligation after returning from work:

*"Even though I also work from morning until evening, when I get home I still take care of everything cooking, cleaning, and the children. My husband usually helps only when I ask."* (T)

Another participant emphasized that requesting assistance from her husband often involves emotional hesitation, as domestic work is implicitly defined as her domain:

*"Sometimes my husband says he is tired from work, so I feel uncomfortable asking for help. In the end, I just do everything myself."* (IC)

These narratives suggest that women actively manage not only the tasks themselves but also the emotional considerations surrounding whether and how to request assistance. As a result, domestic labor becomes individualized and internalized as women's personal responsibility rather than negotiated as a shared family obligation.

Researcher observations further reinforce these accounts, showing wives performing multiple domestic tasks simultaneously—such as preparing meals while supervising children while husbands were more likely to disengage from household activities after returning home.

The perception of domestic work as women's duty is also shaped by intergenerational learning. Several participants linked their current practices to family patterns observed during childhood, where mothers were primarily responsible for

household labor. This continuity normalizes unequal domestic arrangements and reduces the likelihood of questioning existing divisions of labor.

*"It has always been like this. My mother did the same things, so I thought that this is simply a wife's duty."* (ES)

### **Emotional Labor as a Hidden Burden**

In addition to physical domestic work, female participants described carrying a substantial burden of emotional labor within the family. Emotional labor refers to ongoing efforts to manage children's emotions, maintain household harmony, and regulate interpersonal tensions between family members. This form of labor is largely invisible, yet it is experienced as a continuous and demanding responsibility embedded in women's everyday lives.

Participants explained that emotional labor requires constant attentiveness and self-regulation, particularly in responding to children's emotional needs and preventing conflict within the household. Women often described feeling obligated to remain calm and patient, even when experiencing fatigue or psychological stress.

One participant explained:

*"When the children are upset or there is a problem, they always come to me. I have to stay calm, even though I am actually tired and stressed."* (S)

Another participant highlighted the expectation that she should suppress her own emotions to preserve family stability:

*"If I show my emotions, the atmosphere at home becomes chaotic. So I am the one who has to give in."* (SA)

These narratives illustrate that emotional labor is not only about managing others' emotions, but also about regulating one's own emotional expressions. Participants reported that displaying frustration or distress was often perceived as potentially disruptive, reinforcing the expectation that women should absorb emotional strain for the sake of family harmony.

Several participants described emotional labor as an ongoing process rather than a discrete task. Unlike physical chores that have visible completion, emotional labor was experienced as continuous and without clear boundaries, contributing to feelings of exhaustion and emotional depletion.

In contrast, most male participants acknowledged their limited involvement in emotional caregiving within the family. Some attributed this to a lack of habit, while others indicated discomfort or uncertainty in responding to emotional situations. As a result, emotional responsibilities were implicitly delegated to wives, further reinforcing gendered divisions of care work within the household.

### Role Negotiation and Silent Compromise

This section captures how participants experience and manage negotiations regarding the division of domestic roles within everyday family life. The findings indicate that discussions about household responsibilities are infrequent, situational, and rarely sustained over time. Rather than being established through explicit and continuous negotiation, role arrangements tend to evolve implicitly through daily practices and unspoken expectations.

Female participants described that attempts to communicate fatigue or request assistance were often met with short-term responses, such as temporary help, without leading to long-term changes in domestic arrangements. As a result, negotiations were perceived as emotionally costly and unlikely to produce lasting outcomes.

One participant explained:

*"If it is discussed too often, it might lead to conflict. So I just do it myself rather than making the atmosphere at home uncomfortable." (F)*

This account illustrates how the anticipation of conflict shapes women's decisions to limit open negotiation. Maintaining household harmony was frequently prioritized over asserting claims for a more equitable division of labor.

Other participants described accepting unequal arrangements as a practical strategy to ensure that domestic tasks were completed. Silence and self-adjustment emerged as common responses when expectations of shared responsibility were unmet.

*"I am actually tired, but if I leave it undone, no one else will do it." (RS)*

These narratives suggest that role negotiation often takes the form of a silent compromise, where imbalance is recognized but managed through personal endurance rather than explicit confrontation. Over time, this pattern contributes to the stabilization of existing role divisions, making them appear routine and difficult to renegotiate.

### Strategi Resistensi Halus

This section illustrates how women respond to unequal role arrangements through subtle and non-confrontational forms of resistance in everyday family life. Rather than openly challenging existing divisions of labor, participants described engaging in small, intentional actions that allowed them to negotiate boundaries without provoking direct conflict. These strategies emerge as a logical response to the limited effectiveness and emotional costs of overt role negotiation described.

Female participants explained that subtle resistance enabled them to express dissatisfaction while maintaining household harmony. Such actions included delaying domestic tasks, selectively prioritizing responsibilities, or redistributing chores in ways that were not explicitly framed as demands toward their spouses.

One participant described involving her children as part of this strategy:

*"I make my son wash dishes and help clean the house, so he does not grow up thinking that these are women's jobs." (I)*

This practice reflects an effort to reshape everyday norms within the household by challenging gendered expectations indirectly. Rather than confronting husbands, participants often redirected their resistance toward long-term change through children's socialization.

Other participants described resistance as a means of reclaiming personal space and energy. Delaying household chores or temporarily disengaging from domestic responsibilities functioned as quiet signals of fatigue and boundary-setting, even when these actions were not explicitly communicated.

*"I do not want my children to see their father just sitting while I do everything, so I involve them." (I)*

These narratives indicate that resistance is embedded in routine practices and is shaped by participants' awareness of relational dynamics within the family. Subtle resistance allows women to navigate unequal arrangements pragmatically, preserving relational stability while asserting limited agency within existing constraints.

### **Gender Socialization and Family Culture**

This section highlights how participants' current domestic practices are shaped by early socialization and intergenerational family norms. Participants frequently referred to their childhood experiences as an important reference point for understanding and legitimizing present-day role divisions within their own households.

Many male participants described growing up in families where domestic work was primarily performed by mothers, while fathers were minimally involved in household tasks. These early observations were internalized as normal and appropriate gender arrangements, later informing how domestic responsibilities were enacted in their own marriages.

Female participants similarly drew on family histories to explain their acceptance of unequal role distributions. Observing mothers who managed household and emotional responsibilities without complaint contributed to the perception that such arrangements were customary and expected.

These shared familial patterns suggest that gendered divisions of domestic labor are not solely negotiated within the marital relationship, but are embedded within broader cultural and intergenerational processes. As a result, unequal domestic arrangements are reproduced through everyday practices that feel familiar and taken for granted.

By situating current experiences within past family models, participants framed domestic role divisions as inherited rather than actively chosen. This framing reduces the likelihood of questioning or renegotiating established practices and reinforces the continuity of traditional gender roles within contemporary dual-earner families.

Overall, the thematic presentation of the findings illustrates recurring patterns in how domestic and emotional roles are experienced, negotiated, and interpreted by participants in dual-earner families in Surabaya. The findings provide an empirical foundation for further theoretical interpretation in the discussion section.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that families in Surabaya, although increasingly exposed to discourses of gender equality, continue to reproduce traditional gender dichotomies in household and affective roles. The entry of women into the labor market and the effects of modernization have not led to a fundamental shift in the distribution of domestic and childcare responsibilities. Rather, such responsibilities remain strongly associated with femininity, while masculinity continues to be linked with economic provision. This indicates that urbanization and women's economic participation do not automatically translate into cultural transformation, since deeply rooted social norms preserve unequal structures within the household (Aisyah, 2013; Alie et al., 2023; Nur et al., 2024; Hotman & Damanik, 2025).

From the standpoint of liberal feminism, these inequalities are not rooted in biological differences but are embedded in institutional and cultural systems that assign rigid gendered roles. Women are socially constructed as primary caregivers, while men are positioned as breadwinners. This cultural construction creates the illusion that female subordination in domestic life is natural, and this perception is recycled across generations through socialization processes in family, religion, and education (Purwanto, 2021; Afifah et al., 2025; Kune et al., 2023). Earlier studies also stress that men's participation in domestic life is symbolically constructed as help or support, rather than as an integral duty. Such framing ensures that women remain primarily responsible for household management, while men retain discretionary power over whether to participate (Bianchi et al., 2012; Craig & Churchill, 2021).

One of the central contributions of this study is the identification of emotional labor as a structural component of gender inequality in the household. Women in Surabaya not only undertake routine domestic duties but also assume responsibility for managing family emotions, ensuring harmony, and negotiating conflicts. These findings highlight that emotional labor is often invisible but essential for family stability. It is not merely an individual coping strategy, but part of a gendered system in which women are expected to absorb stress and maintain equilibrium for the benefit of the family (Setiyawan et al., 2022; Samidah et al., 2022). International studies confirm that when traditional gender role ideologies are internalized, the result is greater conflict between work and family roles and heightened psychological strain among women (Townsend et al., 2024).

The feminization of emotional labor deepens women's psychological burdens, particularly in times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the merging of domestic and professional responsibilities significantly increased exhaustion and emotional fatigue, especially among working mothers (Musyafa'ah et al., 2022; Imelda, 2023; Maulidina & Puspitawati, 2022). The present findings echo these trends by showing that unpaid emotional responsibilities contribute to depression, fatigue, and marital dissatisfaction. Furthermore, unequal divisions of domestic labor negatively affect family well-being, reinforcing cycles of stress that undermine both women's personal health and household stability (Karimah & Puspitawati, 2020; Sibarani et al., 2024).

This research also documents the subtle strategies of resistance employed by women. Delaying chores, refusing to perform certain tasks, or involving sons in household work illustrate micro-level forms of agency. Such strategies demonstrate that women are not passive recipients of inequality but actively negotiate and resist in everyday ways, even under restrictive conditions (Bianchi et al., 2012; Pratama et al., 2025; Faatihah et al., 2023). However, these micro-level efforts are often symbolic rather than transformative, since cultural norms and patriarchal structures limit the potential for sustained change. Without broader institutional and cultural reform, such resistance remains fragile and temporary.

The Indonesian context adds further complexity. Intergenerational socialization plays a significant role in reproducing inequality. Boys who grow up in households where their mothers are solely responsible for domestic work often carry the same practices into their own marriages. This reproduction of inequality is reinforced by cultural and religious values that discourage men from performing household chores, labeling such activities as inappropriate for males. Consequently, gendered divisions of labor persist, even among urban and educated families (Pratama et al., 2025). Such intergenerational transmission illustrates the difficulty of transforming gender roles without deliberate cultural and educational interventions.

Another key implication relates to the absence of institutional support. Policies that could encourage more egalitarian family practices, such as flexible working arrangements, family leave, and accessible counseling, remain limited in Indonesia. As a result, participation in domestic life often remains at the level of discourse, while entrenched inequality continues to be institutionalized (Jokubauskaitė et al., 2022; Hotman & Damanik, 2025). To deconstruct these entrenched patterns, policy interventions and education systems must explicitly incorporate gender equality into their frameworks, ensuring that caregiving and domestic responsibilities are recognized as shared duties rather than gendered obligations (Jahan, 2021; Islam et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian setting, therefore, household negotiations in Surabaya represent more than personal struggles; they reflect systemic cultural conditions that privilege male authority and normalize female subordination. The endurance of these gender roles suggests that modernization and economic participation alone are insufficient for dismantling inequality. Liberal feminist analysis emphasizes that genuine equality requires structural reform to guarantee equal rights and opportunities in both public and private spheres. Indonesian research reinforces this by showing that women often compromise in order to maintain family harmony, even when such compromises deepen structural inequality (Purwanto, 2021; Afifah et al., 2025; Alie et al., 2023).

Ultimately, these findings indicate that achieving gender equity in Indonesian households requires more than individual negotiations. Broader cultural transformation is necessary to redefine caregiving, domestic work, and emotional responsibilities as collective obligations. Such transformation will require institutional support, public policies, and socialization processes that challenge patriarchal norms across generations. Without these changes, the burden of unpaid labor and emotional work will continue to fall disproportionately on women, limiting their autonomy and undermining the realization of egalitarian family relations (Nur Laili, Listyani, & Agzumi, 2024).

The findings of this study reveal a persistent tension between modern family structures and traditional gender norms in dual-income households in Surabaya. Although both partners participate in paid employment, domestic responsibilities remain strongly gendered, with wives consistently managing household and emotional labor. The instances of negotiation and resistance found in the data indicate that change is emerging, but it is gradual and often constrained by long-standing cultural beliefs about gendered duties. Men's participation tends to be framed as optional or supportive rather than a shared obligation, reflecting how deeply rooted socialization continues to shape daily practices. These results highlight that transformations in gender roles do not automatically follow shifts in economic and professional status instead, they are renegotiated slowly within everyday interactions and family dynamics. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in showing how gender equality in Indonesian families is evolving not as a sudden transformation, but through subtle and ongoing contestations within the domestic sphere.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

#### Conclusion

This study provides new insights into how gender roles are lived and negotiated within modern dual-income families in Surabaya. Although husbands and wives share financial responsibilities, the findings reveal that domestic and emotional labor continue to be considered the natural domain of women. These patterns are strongly influenced by cultural expectations and gender socialization passed down across generations, showing how traditional norms remain embedded even in households that appear modern in structure and lifestyle.

The study also highlights women's agency through subtle resistance strategies aimed at renegotiating domestic responsibilities, although such efforts are often constrained by the desire to preserve family harmony. By foregrounding the lived experiences and meaning-making of husbands and wives, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how gender equality is contested, rather than automatically achieved, within contemporary Indonesian families.

Therefore, advancing gender equality in the household requires not only structural change through equal access to education and employment but also cultural transformation that redefines domestic and emotional labor as shared responsibilities between men and women both in principle and in everyday practice.

#### Recommendation

The results show that policymakers must create inclusive policies that support the fair division of domestic responsibilities. Although Indonesia has not yet fully adopted a comprehensive paternity leave policy, the recommendation to extend paternity leave refers to a direction for policy reform rather than an existing practice. This reform can be realized through revising the current Manpower Law No. 13 of 2003, which currently grants only two days of paternity leave under Article 93(4), by extending it to at least one or two weeks to align with neighboring ASEAN countries and encourage fathers' involvement in caregiving. In addition, company-based parental leave initiatives and flexible working arrangements should be promoted to enable men to share caregiving

responsibilities without compromising their professional obligations. Public advocacy through non-governmental organizations, media, and community-based programs is also essential to increase awareness of the importance of men's participation in domestic and emotional labor. These reforms would move Indonesia closer to international labor standards (ILO) and help structurally reduce gender inequality in household and emotional responsibilities. Furthermore, workplace flexibility, early gender equality education, and community programs play a crucial role in challenging rigid gender norms. Future research should also include children's perspectives and explore how institutional environments such as workplaces, schools, and religious communities shape domestic gender dynamics across different family types, including single-parent and non-traditional families.

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