



**RATIONALIZATION OF DIVISION OF DOMESTIC WORK
AMONG YOUNG MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES**

***RASIONALISASI PEMBAGIAN KERJA DOMESTIK
PADA KELUARGA MUDA KELAS MENENGAH***

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ABSTRACT

The discourse on gender equality in society is growing. Although the participation of women working in the public sector is increasing, the roles of husband and wife are still divided sexually. Domestic work and child care are still the primary responsibilities of women. This study examines gender inequality and the rationalization of the work division in young couples' households in urban communities. This study uses a qualitative method. This study uses the theory of doing gender and symbolic interactionism. This study found that families with an unequal division of domestic work made rationalization of gender inequality within the family. Various excuses were given to disguise the unequal division of domestic work between husband and wife. This happens because of the patriarchal ideology in Javanese society. The wife was given more responsibility for domestic work and child care than the husband. In traditional families, inequality in the division of domestic work is rationalized for the following reasons, namely gender, standards, and time. In transitional families, inequality in domestic work is rationalized through gender, standards, skills, time, religion, and avoiding conflict. In an egalitarian family, family members do domestic work based on their responsibilities and initiatives. The actors who perpetuate gender inequality in young families are husbands, husbands and wives, and extended family members. This study concludes that gender roles in young couples' households are still traditional and perpetuated through rationalizing gender inequality in domestic work and childcare allocation.

Keywords : Domestic Works, Family, Gender Equality, Gender Injustice, Women

ABSTRAK

Wacana kesetaraan gender di masyarakat semakin berkembang. Meskipun partisipasi perempuan yang bekerja di sektor publik meningkat, peran suami dan istri masih terbagi secara seksual. Pekerjaan rumah tangga dan pengasuhan anak masih menjadi tanggung jawab utama perempuan. Penelitian ini mengkaji ketidaksetaraan gender dan rasionalisasi pembagian kerja pada rumah tangga pasangan muda di masyarakat perkotaan, terkait dengan pemetaan dan justifikasi pembagian pekerjaan rumah tangga. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Studi ini menemukan bahwa keluarga dengan pembagian pekerjaan rumah tangga yang tidak setara merasionalisasikan ketidaksetaraan gender dalam keluarga. Berbagai alasan diberikan untuk menyamakan pembagian pekerjaan rumah tangga yang tidak seimbang antara suami dan istri. Istri diberi tanggung jawab lebih untuk pekerjaan rumah tangga dan perawatan anak daripada suami. Dalam keluarga tradisional, ketidaksetaraan dalam pembagian pekerjaan rumah tangga dirasionalkan karena alasan berikut, yaitu gender, standar, dan waktu. Dalam keluarga transisi, ketidaksetaraan dalam pekerjaan rumah tangga dirasionalisasikan melalui gender, standar, keterampilan, waktu, agama, dan menghindari konflik. Dalam keluarga egaliter, anggota keluarga melakukan pekerjaan rumah tangga berdasarkan tanggung jawab dan inisiatif mereka. Aktor-aktor yang melanggengkan ketidaksetaraan gender dalam keluarga muda adalah suami, istri, dan anggota keluarga besar. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa peran gender dalam rumah tangga pasangan muda masih tradisional dan dilanggengkan melalui rasionalisasi ketidaksetaraan gender dalam pekerjaan rumah tangga dan alokasi pengasuhan anak.

Kata Kunci : *Keluarga; Kesetaraan Gender; Ketidakadilan Gender; Pekerjaan Rumah Tangga; Perempuan*

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is undergoing slow changes in the family structure is also evidenced by scientific explorations of how family members understand the justice of the domestic work division. Apart from disproportionate involvement in family domestic work, women see this situation as fair (Baxter, 2000). Slightly different from Western society, the findings of a study conducted by Midgette (2020) on Chinese and Korean communities show the development of a gender-biased discourse in some families.

The discourse on gender equality in society is growing. However, the findings of previous studies show that gender bias practices in society are still common, especially in the context of domestic family work (Baxter, 2000; Midgette, 2020). The traditional gender roles of men and women in the family setting are still undergoing a prolonged shift to achieve a more egalitarian ideal (Coltrane: 2000).

In the context of Indonesian society, a study on gender inequality and the Division of domestic work conducted by Simulja (2014) shows gender inequality in the

contribution of domestic work caused by gender-biased societal ideology. The findings of Simulja's study also found that the traditional gender allocation of domestic work can be confronted through a more egalitarian gender ideology.

Sociological studies of the family, especially in domestic work, analyze the community's social life through activities that seem mundane and are often taken for granted. Academic studies on domestic work have begun to develop since the 1960s (Davis, 2013), beginning with a study by Blood and Wolfe in 1960 about married couples and how they lived their domestic lives.

The concept of domestic work or domestic work has received the attention of sociologists in the study of gender inequality in the family structure. Ann Oakley (1974) argues that domestic work is a form of 'work.' According to Oakley, this idea is often missed in sociological studies because most of the existing studies reduce the value of domestic work itself. According to Sigiro (2018), care work in Indonesia itself has not yet been recognized as a job classified as productive work. Sigiro argues that the state's negligence in placing nursing work as productive work causes the public to have a low impression of the value of nursing work itself.

This study explores gender inequality in the family setting by analyzing domestic or household work in urban communities, especially in married couples part of the young cohort. Specifically, this study examines the rationalization of the division of domestic work between husband and wife and how they justify the division of domestic work. The study of domestic work or household work is essential because, in negotiating and renegotiating the division of domestic work in the family, there is a broader relationship dynamic about power, both visible and hidden (Davis, 2013). Although often underestimated, without realizing it, aspects of domestic life that seem "ordinary" and "boring" are integral in the organization of "public" life (DeVault, 1991).

The study of domestic work has grown to become more extensive and complex over time, especially in gender and family studies. Family practices often overlap with gender practices, and this can happen because gender roles are often socialized and strengthened through the 'doing family' itself, as stated by Morgan (2011), *"For both mothers and fathers family practices were merged with gendered practices and it could be argued that this merging contributed to the sense of inevitability and necessity associated with these practices."*

To get a holistic analysis in sociological studies, researchers must analyze gender and family simultaneously and not separately. A process and roles are allocated based on the individual's gender identity in the family's daily life. This idea is reflected in a study conducted by DeVault (1991). DeVault argues that 'domestic' activities such as feeding practices, which are synonymous with women's roles and are often seen as innate expressions of gender, are an ongoing interactional achievement rooted in individual experience and learning.

Following DeVault, the study conducted by West and Zimmerman (1987) on gender put forward a view that gender is an incarnation of routine that is embedded in everyday interactions. West and Zimmerman believe that gender itself is institutionalized, shaped through a continuous process of interaction, one of which is through the Division of domestic work in the family. West and Zimmerman think that the gender division of domestic work is 'doing gender,' which is related to how to solve problems related to the allocation of domestic work, to 'who,' to do 'what,' based on the categories of 'women' and 'men,' showing demonstrations and celebrations of what is considered 'innate traits' of men and women. Therefore, it can be said that domesticity is a central element in 'doing gender.'

There is a refusal to apply the concept of "fair" to the family process; in this context, the division of domestic work because it is considered that "fairness" is unnecessary to create a "balanced" and "mutual understanding" relationship between family members. This knowledge indirectly legitimizes gender inequality in the domestic division of work in the family.

In general, rationalization is defined as giving a set of artificial reasons to others and oneself to justify the actions taken to make them appear better than they are (Bruce, 2006). In this study, rationalization refers to giving a set of reasons by women, both to themselves and to others, to explain the unequal distribution of domestic work and child care in their families. Studies on the rationalization and justification of domestic work have been conducted previously to explore the existing division of domestic work deeply. Exploration on rationalization aims to understand the gender ideology internalized in the division of domestic work. An investigation into providing a rational basis for the work division is needed to understand the barriers to shifting gender roles towards a more egalitarian order. Previous studies on this subject were primarily conducted in Western

societies in the context of ethnicity, rural communities, and dual-career couples (Beagan, 2008; Lupton, 2000; Vanhooff, 2012).

Although there is an argument that inequality in the allocation of a family's domestic work is caused by the availability of time and reasons for work and income, the results of studies based on this argument appear inconsistent. The study conducted by Bergen (1991) showed a relationship between domestic work and income. However, in contrast to this, the study conducted by Carrier dan Davis (1999) showed no relationship between income and contributions in housework. The inconsistency, in this case, indicates that there is a need for a deeper study of the reasons behind the division of domestic work in the family. The study's findings by Simulja (2014) further reflect the assumption that the division of domestic work in the family is more related to gender ideology than the income level of married couples.

Studies on the gender division of work in the family in Java, Indonesia have been conducted, especially in farming and rural communities (Andriani & Euis, 2008; Kusujiarti, 2000; Sosan, 2010). Contrary to previous studies, this study presents a novelty in the study of the gender division of work in the family by considering the contextualization of the social setting of the study and the age cohort of the informants. Researchers specialize studies in urban communities, and young age cohorts with the argument that married couples with young age cohorts who live in urban areas get more egalitarian transmission of gender values and norms.

This study is fascinating because it aims to reveal gender inequality and the rationalization of the division of domestic work and the reasons behind it. This study is critical because domestic work is not just a series of meaningless activities. On the other hand, researchers believe that housework can represent gender values, norms, and ideologies in a household. This study specifically seeks to explore the reasons behind the slow shift in traditional gender roles and expectations in the family by investigating the rationale given by family members to the division of household work.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method. Qualitative methods seek to reveal social reality holistically and comprehensively. The researcher argues that domestic work as the focus of the study is an appropriate effort to investigate gender inequality in family settings more deeply. This research was conducted in Surabaya, the capital city of East

Java Province and the second-largest city in Indonesia. Surabaya is a metropolitan city where values and norms in urban society are loose. Contrary to rural communities, urban communities develop more diverse values and norms.

This study uses the theory of doing gender and symbolic interactionism. Data collection used in-depth interviews. The informants in this study were ten married couples. The research subjects were young husbands and wives aged 22-31 years in Surabaya and were part of the middle-class society. Researchers limited research to young families in urban communities based on the assumption that the young cohort is influenced by ideas related to gender equality and a more egalitarian society.

The collected data was transcribed and categorized based on the research topic. Data were analyzed, dialogued, and discussed relevant theories and previous studies. In the end, the novelty of this study is stated in the conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Domestic Work Division among Young Middle-Class Families

This study examined the work division in domestic works using a gender approach. The findings of the data in this study indicated that the division of domestic work in married couples is colored by gender values embedded in individuals. These gender values are based on gender ideology which is then manifested in the existing division of domestic work. In this study, the prominent people responsible for domestic work are (1) wife, (2) wife and husband, and (3) wife, husband, and household assistant. Meanwhile, the prominent people responsible for child care activities are (1) the wife and (2) the wife and household assistant.

This study used the perspective of symbolic interactionism to understand the context of attitudes, values, beliefs, and expectations in the implementation of housework. The symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on gender-biased domestic relations as a critical explanation of the implementation of domestic work (Davis dan Greenstein, 2013). In this study, the division of domestic work and childcare activities in dual-earner families is centered on women, both for young women with home-based and office-based jobs. This study did not compare couples' quantity of time doing domestic work and daily child care. However, the analysis in this study will focus more on how young couples map out the primary responsibilities in domestic work and childcare

activities. The main responsibility here can be interpreted as who is understood by the young couple as the party responsible for domestic work and child care activities in daily household life.

Contrary to Lyonette's data (2015) findings, where all research participants support the active contribution of men in domestic work, some of the informants in this study felt reluctant and resistant to their husbands' participation in domestic work. The researcher argues that this paradox is closely related to the meaning of housework itself:

"...So it's like, for example, yes, cooking... I cook for my husband and the children and prepare the food.... So, basically, what I can do, I put it first so I can do it, so my husband doesn't do it first." (KAK, single-earner family)

For KAK, domestic work had a close relationship with her identity as a housewife. In KAK's knowledge, the ideal housewife can complete all domestic work and care work activities independently without getting help. KAK's understanding of housewives created KAK's dilemmatic attitude towards other people's help, including her husband, to complete housework. Whenever KAK got help to finish housework, KAK felt that she was still not a perfect housewife. CIC, an informant, also had a similar attitude to KAK. When CIC felt lazy because she was tired and bored doing housework, CIC did not allow her partner to do housework, such as doing laundry because doing laundry was her responsibility. KAK (single earner) and CIC's attitude towards receiving help in domestic work is their attempt to express feminine traits, which are related to their identity as wives and housewives:

"...and I'm still very far from the word "cool" because I'm a lazy person and usually I'm still helped here and there, right, that's how it is.... doing my task is still being helped, that's why..." (KAK, single-earner family)

"That's how I said, "I'm lazy to do anything today," in the end, he accepted, "Yeah, if you are lazy, you do not have to, just do it tomorrow." I do laundry almost every day, but I don't do it by hands, right, it's still my responsibility, right, it's impossible for my husband to do the laundry," (CIC, dual-earner family)

From these statements above, It shows that in Javanese families both from single earner or dual-earner family, women attempt to do domestic roles and consider It as their duties. Apart from CIC and KAK, other informants supported the active participation of both partners in domestic work activities. Apart from the supportive attitude of young

women, the model of housework division still has the nuances of a traditional division pattern, where women are still the prominent people in charge of domestic work and childcare activities. Contrary to time availability arguments and an economic approach, in this study, young women working and those not working are still the main ones responsible for housework and child care. This kind of traditional division of work is rooted in individual gender ideologies imbued with traditional gender values (Zuo, 2001).

The data findings in this study follow the results of a study conducted by Midgette (2020). Young women in this study did not expect an equal share of domestic work between husband and wife. Wives expect more help from their husbands than doing the same housework with an equal portion. The word “help” is used more to explain the contribution of the spouse (husband) in housework activities.

“...When I’m really busy taking care of the children and have a lot of work to do, my husband sometimes helps. At a minimum, every time he eats, he surely does the dishes.” (RIE, dual-earner family)

“When it comes to housework...usually...well...knowing...knowing yourself, for example, if I haven’t cooked today, the house hasn’t been tidied up yet, so my husband will help.” (RATH, dual-earner family)

Moreover, to get “help” in housework, several “requirements” must be met first. Domestic work assistance by the husband is not given voluntarily, and the wife must first feel “tired,” “sick,” and “busy.” In other words, the husband only does the domestic work if the wife does not have time or cannot do it. This condition represents the knowledge of the informant couple that “housework is a woman’s job.” BG, an informant, stated that her partner only participated in housework when she was sick and was in a condition that did not allow her to do many activities.

“...it was really tragic at first (laughs) until he finally wanted to help, that’s because...I was sick, at that time, I had a high fever, I had a headache, I was really weak, my body couldn’t do as much activity as usual... In the end, from there, I was like, “Come on, here, we share the task, you mop, you sweep the floor, wash the dishes...” Basically all kinds of activities, activities that I can’t do, you know. Finally from there, hmmm, starting... getting used to it...” (BEG, dual-earner)

In the case of RIE’s family, the condition of being “tired of taking care of the housework and child care” was used as a justification for domesticating women. Because

RIE had to do housework, child care, and work simultaneously, RIE often felt stressed and tired. However, RIE's condition did not encourage RIE's partner to increase his contribution or initiate an equal division of housework and child care between himself and RIE. Instead, he used this condition to excuse RIE from stopping working.

“Well, from my husband's point of view, actually, he doesn't really have a problem with me working, only in the future he has a plan he wants...I'll just stay at home, that's why, he said, sometimes he feels sorry for me, working, tired of working, taking care of the house, taking care of children too, so that... so that I don't get too tired so I can...if I'm home, for example, there is a business or something that can be done at home, I can monitor my children too, so I don't lose time together with my children, that's how it is...” (RIE, dual-earner family)

Despite the unequal distribution of housework and child care, some women feel that the division is fair. On the other hand, some women feel that it is unfair, while others feel that the existing inequality is their fault, not their partners. Apart from the interpretation of justice, the desire to negotiate the division of roles, both working and non-working women, appears to be minimal.

As stated by West and Zimmerman (1987), in the household, the allocation of doing 'what' activities to 'who' for reasons related to gender is one form of demonstration and dramatization of doing gender itself. In this context, allocating 'housework' activities to 'women' on the grounds of 'natural' or 'duties of a wife' is one of the demonstrations of doing gender.

This study argues that housework is one way for women to “doing gender.” According to West & Zimmerman, gender is a “routine” and the result of a process of repeated action. Women in this study managed their actions to express themselves as “women in the household” through housework and childcare activities. Young women feel that by getting involved and making housework and child care their responsibilities, they have fulfilled their role as women. Young women formulate about what is “different” and “natural” from men and women through knowledge or definitions of “nature,” which then leads women and their partners to allocate more housework division to women. By doing this division, women and their partners strengthen gender inequality in society.

Contrary to the traditional division of housework, NAD and her partner shared housework responsibilities more equally. NAD believed that each of them was

responsible for doing housework and did not link this responsibility to gender mapping. Housework in NAD household was conducted on the initiative of the spouse and herself. Routine work such as cooking and washing clothes were done alternately. In fact, according to NAD, her partner was more skilled at doing housework than she was. Unfortunately, this egalitarian division of housework was not accompanied by attitudes towards child care. Although NAD felt that she tried to resist unequal gender values and present herself as an individual with egalitarian gender values, traditional gender expectations still characterized NAD's attitudes and beliefs. NAD decided to stop working in an office when she decided to have children. She stated that she wanted to be "100% there for my kids when I decide to have kids." Although NAD denied that the decision related to a woman's gender expectations, mapping women as primary responsibility for providing child care was undeniably a traditional gender division of work. Unconsciously, traditional gender norms still colored NAD's gender beliefs.

Among the various categories of primary responsibility for housework and child care, all involve women. Women are primarily responsible for both housework and child care. On the other hand, male participation in the primary responsibility for housework was only found in one young couple household. Despite the lack of an equal division of housework, this shows a shift in gender values towards a more egalitarian order in society.

Rationalization of Inequality in the Division of domestic work among Young Middle-Class Families

In families with an unequal division of work, the researchers found several categories of rationalization, namely standards, expertise, gender, time availability, religion, and avoiding conflict. Whereas in families with an egalitarian division of work, the explanation for their division of housework only focuses on individual initiatives in doing housework.

Division of Housework

The standard of doing housework is why young women often offer to explain the division of housework in their families. In general, these reasons explain why they do more housework than their husbands. The traditional rules of housework in question is

usually related to tidiness and cleanliness. One of the informants, BEG thought that she was a perfectionist individual, so she was not sure if her partner could complete housework activities such as mopping, sweeping, folding clothes, and putting clothes in the closet according to neatness and cleanliness standards:

“And uh...this is the problem I’m also a very, very perfectionist person, well, if for example uh...I give my husband more portions, I’m sure I...won’t be satisfied with the results. ...Then the third one put clothes into the closet, it was all of me, starting with my clothes, his clothes, children’s clothes, then... socks and all kinds of things, basically I put all of them because he really is not a patient person (laughs) and can’t be neat, that’s why”. (BEG, dual-earner family)

CIC, an informant, also gave a similar reason for her participation in domestic work more than her partner. CIC felt that her cleaning standards were higher than her partner’s, so she preferred to do it herself for cleaning activities. Following CIC’s view, RIE reasoned that her husband’s lower standard of cleanliness made her perform more cleaning activities such as sweeping and mopping than her husband. SAF, an informant, refused her husband’s assistance in washing clothes, ironing, and folding clothes.

“...I’m the type of person who doesn’t like my work being done by people, it’s not necessarily satisfying for me like that, you know. So, it would be better if I did it myself...” (CIC, dual-earner family)

“Then, I usually handle the house cleaning. Like...like how, like having a clean standard, that’s how it is. Yes, he can clean it, husband, it’s just um...my husband rarely sweeps, mops, mostly I do on weekends. On weekdays, the household assistant has helped. Ehm... just like that.” (RIE, dual-earner family)

“Yes, for example, one of them is bathing children. Bathing the children...it’s always me who does it because...he’s not very patient, the same as washing, ironing, and folding clothes. Because it must be done in detail, yes, so I don’t like it when he helps because his work is not neat when it comes to things like that.” (SAF, single-earner family)

Although young married women stated that standards of cleanliness and tidiness were the reason for the unequal division of housework, young women in this study did not have the will to negotiate with their partners by asking their partners to improve their hygiene standards. The attitude that seems to take for granted the non-participation of

their partner in housework shows that standards are not the only reason for the division of housework in young couples' households.

RIE, an informant with higher tidiness standards, in the end, chose to do housework activities with more portions than her partner because when she asked her husband to contribute, she did not necessarily get the freedom not to do housework. On the other hand, she still had to supervise her husband to do housework to evaluate whether the housework given is up to her standards or not:

“Then...if you organize your house, such as arranging things in a cupboard, you can ask for help from him, from the outside it also looks neat, but the inside looks like it were inserted in a random way, so I still have to help direct, “This is put here, this is put here.” So, they have to be grouped so that it's easy to find.” (RIE, dual-earner family)

Some women felt that their partner did not have a high standard of hygiene was something natural and “understandable.” It is related to their knowledge and understanding of the definition of what is “natural” and “not natural” in the gender category. BEG revealed: *“Ah... if it's my husband.... this is.... I... think, this is okay, men, maybe they can't really clean up...”* (BEG, dual-earner family). In the case of BEG, she related hygiene standards to her husband's gender category. BEG used gender as the basis for legitimacy in organizing the division of work in their household.

Division of Domestic Work among Young Middle-Class Families

In addition to standard reasons, expertise is also a reason often cited by young women in this study. Activities that are usually associated with expertise are cooking and child care activities. In some young couple households, cooking activities are allocated to women, and the husband's inability to cook is understood to be very clear: “When it comes to cooking, it's clear that I'm the one doing it...” (OKKY, single-earner family). Women view their primary task of cooking as something taken for granted. Several other young women reasoned that their husbands could only cook instant and simple meals so that in everyday household life, it was usually women who were in charge of cooking food for the family:

“...the second is cooking, obviously my husband can't cook (laughing), he can only cook fried eggs and boiled noodles.” (BEG, dual-earner family)

This reason is not limited to justifying the minimal participation of men in cooking activities. In childcare activities, this reason is also repeatedly stated. Situations, where men do not take part in the primary responsibility for child care are justified through the husband's inability to carry out care activities such as bathing children, feeding children, and changing children's diapers. Informants used the word "less painstaking" to rationalize inequality in the distribution of care activities:

"Yes, one example is bathing children. Bathing the child...it's always me who does it because.... he's not very patient." (SAF, dual-earner family)

"There is, of course, the first task is to feed the children, that's what I do because my husband is not patient (laughs) to feed the children and my second child likes to pocketing food, you know, so it takes extra patience," (BEG, dual-earner family)

RIE, an informant, had attempted to negotiate the division of housework by encouraging her partner to bathe the child and change the child's diaper. However, in the end, the negotiation effort was unsuccessful, and the more significant portion of child care fell back on her shoulders:

"The work I have to do is ... taking care of the children. It's because my husband sometimes seems afraid to take care of children, such as bathing or changing diapers, I once asked him to try, but in the end, I was like... ah, I'd better do it, just like that." (RIE, dual-earner family)

The BEG family has two children, while RIE already has a one-year-old child, but until now, they still condone their partner's incompetence in caring for children. BEG and RIE never require their partners to practice good child care to share childcare activities more equally between husband and wife. The passive attitude of young women towards unequal distribution represents their gender belief that children are "the responsibility of women" and not "the responsibility of men and women."

Division of Housework among Young Middle-Class Families

Gender is an excuse often given by young women to justify the division of tasks in their household. Gender norms in society still place women in domestic roles, so some informants did not try to cover up their belief that housework and child care are the primary duties of a married woman. The husband of the QOY informant, with the initials

REN, specifically categorized some housework activities as “women’s work.” Even though on weekends, REN participated in housework activities such as washing dishes, washing clothes, and cleaning the house, REN still interpreted cooking and ironing activities as jobs that women can only do:

“...except for activities that only women can do, I don’t participate. It’s not my job to actually cook, it’s not just boiling water, it’s not cooking noodles and eggs, it’s ironing too.” (REN, dual-earner family)

Although not as explicit as REN, PIR, an informant also believed that her husband did not participate in housework and care because he was a man:

“Maybe it’s because it’s a man, yes... the man, if not... his partner hasn’t been knocked out yet, she’s sick, she still looks healthy, strong, huh, a man will be like, that’s it, yes she’s still strong, so doesn’t need help.” (PIR, dual-earner family)

In some young couples, justification through gender is disguised through several other accompanying reasons. For example, some women justify their partner’s low participation in housework and child care based on low standards and skills. However, the reasons do not stop there; they attribute low standards of cleanliness and tidiness and low skills in cooking and caring for children with the gender of their partner.

“Because uhm...sometimes, my husband can’t...clean the house well, detail, just like women, like that....” (BEG, dual-earner family)

“...the one who tidies up the ironed clothes, it’s me, his clothes, children’s clothes, my own clothes, sometimes, I already tidied up, so, if it’s in a mess, I’m the one who tidy it up again, just a typical man, it seems that all men like that. So, when he takes a piece of cloth, take it...take the one bellow, he doesn’t take the one on it first, so in the end, it’s a mess, it’s a mess again...” (BEG, dual-earner family)

This kind of knowledge shows that young women have low gender awareness. They cannot distinguish what things are categorized as natural or natural and what are the result of social construction.

Division of Housework Based on Time Availability

Slightly different from the study of the housework division in Western societies, justification through time is not found in this study. The informants who used the reason for the availability of time were young women from single-earner families and one woman from dual-earner families with relatively flexible jobs. In single-earner families, KAK and SAF thought that the time and energy spent by their partners outside the home for work should be compensated by spending their time and energy on housework and child care:

“...for example, my husband’s duty is work outside the house, while I’m at home, I have some free time, so, I do what I can do.” (KAK, single-earner family)

“There’s no division, the one who has a spare time is the one who does it...” (SAF, single-earner family)

BEG also gave reasons similar to KAK. Because BEG’s work had flexible times and locations and generally BEG’s husband worked long hours, BEG had more available time at home than her partner. This availability of time was why BEG did more housework and child care for her family.

Division of Housework Based on Religion and Avoiding Conflict

This section discusses justifying the division of housework through religious reasons and avoiding conflict. There is a young woman who clearly stated that she mapped out the division of housework based on her religious interpretation:

“...Taking care of the house is originally in the religion (Islam), it is the same, including the living support from the husband. The wife only helps to take care of the house or do the housework.... So actually it’s all a living. Jadi, nafkah itu bukan berarti uang aja.... But like how to meet all the needs of the wife physically and mentally, that also includes a living.” (QOY, dual-earner family)

QOY stated that according to her religious teachings, housework is the responsibility of men, and she is only tasked with helping. However, in daily life, QOY still did more housework and maintenance work than her husband. Every morning, QOY prepared lunch for herself and her husband, then every Sunday, QOY had a habit of cooking his husband and family’s favorite dishes. Religion here is just a cover for the gender-biased allocation of domestic work in the QOY family. The QOY couple

themselves, as previously explained, still mapped out some housework activities as “women’s work.”

Apart from religion, the informant also used “avoiding conflict” as an excuse to perpetuate the unequal distribution of household chores.

“I don’t have enough patience (while laughing) rather than later, I will get upset, it’s alright. If I’m still able to do both, taking care of the children and the house, yeah...I do both. But... It shouldn’t happen, I realize, but...rather than unfinished chores? (laughing)” (PIR, dual-earner family)

Although PIR informant was aware that there was injustice in the distribution of her household work, PIR did not conduct meaningful negotiations with her husband to get out of the existing circle of injustice. PIR decided to opt for the “avoiding conflict” solution by doing more housework.

Gender Inequality Actors in Young Middle-Class Families

Determining the housework division and providing a rationalization for the division of work can perpetuate and strengthen gender inequality in society. This section describes the actors involved in determining the unequal division of work and the rationale for this division.

Several women admitted that one of the causes of the slow change in the existing division of work and the delay in the negotiation process on the division of work was their partner’s attitude of not caring about housework and being reluctant to do it. Although there was a desire to share housework more equally, this desire was not realized in a meaningful contestation process. In the end, the partner’s attitude also plays a role in the success or failure of the ongoing negotiation process:

“Hmm...it seems that there’s an injustice in my household (laughing). Actually...If I want to...I should be firm, I should be...actually, It’s my fault. I should have trusted my husband more to hmm...take care of the children, to do house chores...It’s just that I’m the type of person who...is not patient enough, I like to “come on, finish it quickly, do it quickly” finally, I take over everything.” (PIR, dual-earner family)

PIR failed to negotiate the existing division of housework because the partner was resistant to changes in the division of work. PIR’s husband was reluctant to help with

housework and child care. In the end, PIR accepted again the original distribution despite objections. In contrast, BEG successfully negotiated housework with her partner:

“So, in the early marriage, he is not considerate. But yeah...we need to teach him right? It means that we have to encourage our partner to help as well, you know, because the position is that we are alone, not him...not me or him alone, so the responsibility must be shared.” (BEG, dual-earner family)

BEG stated that she must approach and provide continuous encouragement throughout her marriage journey so that her partner is willing to contribute to the implementation of the existing domestic work. Despite BEG's efforts to negotiate the division of domestic work, BEG considers the low standards of cleanliness and tidiness of her partner and the low skills of her partner in doing housework as natural things for men. BEG's attitude in such a way follows the traditional notion of gender roles.

When interviewing QOY's partner about participation in housework, QOY's husband stated that he actively contributed to its implementation. However, QOY's husband still viewed housework such as cooking and ironing as jobs that only women could do.

Apart from being reluctant to do housework, some men also limit women's development by forbidding women to participate in formal work actively. Indirectly, this restrictive attitude makes women carry out most of their activities at home. Implicitly, the attitude of forbidding women to work formally is one of the men's efforts to domesticate women.

For some other women, the decision to maintain the existing work division was made by men and women. Some women believe that doing all the housework is the responsibility of an ideal housewife. Women also perceive that housework is their primary responsibility and feel resistant if their partner does the housework:

“...I do the laundry almost every day, though I don't do it by hands, still it's my responsibility, it's impossible for the husband to do the laundry, so David my husband is just like, as long as I don't have any problems, he's cool with it.” (CIC, dual-earner family)

CIC believed that housework was her responsibility, so she maintained the division of household chores that burdened her. CIC perpetuated existing gender inequality by taking over the entire household routine.

In some couples, extended family members also play an essential role in maintaining the inequality of the division of work that exists in young couples' households. When trying to find a formal job, CIC's parents expressed their disapproval because they thought that it was better for married women not to work: *"....What's important for a girl, why do you work, like that, after all, you'll have kids later, like this and that, who's going to take care of the children later..."*. Besides CIC, QOY also experienced the same thing. QOY stated that her partner's uncle advised QOY's husband not to allow her to work because of an assumption that working women were the wrong decision when they were married.

Many previous researchers have carried out housework studies that specifically analyze the rationalization and justification of the unequal housework division (Beagan, 2008; Lupton, 2000; Vanhoof, 2011). The reasons put forward by young couples to justify the allocation of housework to households are a window into investigating how gender role mechanisms work in the family setting.

Based on the findings of the data in this study, the unequal division of housework is rationalized with the following justifications: (1) standard; (2) skill; (3) gender; (4) time availability; (5) religion; and (6) conflict avoidance. Meanwhile, in families with an equal distribution of housework, there is a belief that each individual in the household is the main person in charge of the housework. Individuals will conduct domestic work activities if necessary. Husbands and wives take the initiative to do housework without throwing responsibilities at each other.

Regarding the standard division of housework, young women realize that they have to do more cleaning or tidying up activities than their partners due to their higher standards of tidiness and cleanliness. If analyzed more deeply, the reason for this standard is not as gender-neutral as it appears—young women associate standards of cleanliness and tidiness with the gender category of themselves and their partners. By normalizing the hygiene standards and their partners by gender, young women present what they perceive to be 'natural' from the male and female gender categories. Young women view that essentially, "women are neat and clean" and at the same time, "men are messy and unclean." In other words, when explaining standards of cleanliness and tidiness, young women are explaining about "men" and "women."

Knowledge and understanding of the nature of men and women is a consequence of differences in expectations and gender treatment since individuals are born. Women are faced with greater expectations to carry out cleaning and tidying activities than men. Previous studies have shown that girls and boys are encouraged to do different activities (Evertsson, 2006; Hu, 2018). Girls contribute more to activities in the home, such as family care work, while boys help more in activities outside the home. Regularly, girls are more involved in housework activities such as cleaning and cooking. As the West and Zimmerman concept views gender as “the result of repeated achievement,” in everyday life, women are faced with “continuous training” to “become a woman” according to societal standards.

The second reason for the housework division is expertise. This second reason is widely used to justify the division of cooking and childcare activities. All women in this study were the main contributors to family cooking activities. Several young women stated that their husband’s inability to cook was why they took over the activity. However, they stated their husband’s inability to cook in languages that showed that this inability was an obvious problem, again representing a misunderstanding of the nature of men and women. Following this finding, the results of DeVault’s (1991) study show that family food work activities, one of which is cooking, are still normatively regarded as women’s work.

In addition to cooking, young women choose to do more child care, such as bathing, changing diapers, and feeding the children, because they perceive their partners to be “less painstaking” in caring for children. In both cooking and childcare activities, young women did not make any meaningful negotiation efforts regarding the low participation of their partners. Instead, they prefer to take over the work by being the main person in charge of cooking and child care activities. Although some women try to negotiate the work division by encouraging their partners to try activities they are not used to, these efforts end up just like that, with no results worth considering. There are gender-specific pretexts and justifications to underlie the contribution of men and women in child care. In gender norms, men are “allowed” to state that they are not competent in caring for children, while women are not (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). Gender norms in society will understand if men state that they are unreliable in caring for children. In contrast, gender norms do not allow women to display similar attitudes and actions.

As the description of gender role knowledge in general, housework and child care activities are interpreted explicitly as the primary responsibility of married women. Following this assumption, some young women try to explain the existing division of housework through gender-specific reasons. They view that taking care of the house and the children is their foremost duty as a wife and a mother. Some young women associate housework with the “responsibilities,” “obligations,” and “duties” of a wife. In addition to justifying their more significant share in housework and child care, young women also justify their husband’s absence or less share in housework and child care. Informants believe that “basically,” men are like that:

“Maybe because he’s a man, right... the man, if not... his partner hasn’t been knocked out yet, she’s sick, she still looks healthy, strong, huh, a man will be like, that’s it, yes she’s still strong, so doesn’t need help.” (PIR, dual-earner family)

Contrary to the results of Beagan’s (2008) study, which states that the availability of time is widely used to justify the existing division of housework, in this study, time is not the main reason to justify the division of housework. Young women who used the time availability explanation were women from single-earner families or dual-earner families where their partners worked longer hours. According to LaRossa & LaRossa (1981), women have a moral burden if they want to prioritize their work responsibilities rather than taking care of their children. However, this does not apply to men. Men are normatively allowed to prioritize their working hours over child care.

The justification for the division of housework through religion in this study shows a reverse role between men and women. Women understand that in the interpretation of their religious teachings, the responsibility falls on the husband’s shoulders, not the wife. However, there is no exchange of roles in the contribution of housework in daily life. The husband and wife do housework with a larger share of the wife, which is the traditional family pattern. Because they are dual-earner couples, most housework responsibilities are shifted to the household assistant and the informant’s parents-in-law. On weekends, QOY admitted that her partner does most of the housework, but women still do the cooking and ironing because the husband feels cooking and ironing are “women’s jobs.” Although at the outset QOY believed that housework was the responsibility of men, she justified her more significant contribution

to housework through religious justification, as she puts it: "...but what's wrong if the wife helps? The wife also gets the reward from helping her husband." (QOY, dual-earner family).

This finding follows that religion and gender are two processes carried out concurrently and in tandem (Avishai, 2008). Similar to Beagan's (2008) study, this study also finds that avoiding conflict is one of the women's pretexts to justify the work division. However, slightly different from Beagan, avoiding conflict is not a generally given justification. Domestic conflict due to housework is not visible in this study because women themselves agree with the domestic work. Even when some women object to their more significant domestic burdens, these objections are not manifested in the contestation of the division of work.

The inability of women to map out justice in the division of their family's household chores indicates that there is a dilemmatic situation. The trusted gender norms state that housework is her responsibility as a woman. Although the portion of housework and childcare that she does is more significant than her husband's, her husband's help has brought her knowledge of justice. Moreover, women themselves accept justifications that justify the partner's lack of participation in housework through reasons of expertise and availability of time. This finding follows Thompson's (1991) view of women's knowledge of justice. Thompson stated that when women accept reasons that justify men's unequal contribution in housework activities, women will continue to view that the existing division of housework has been divided fairly. Some women realize that their childcare activities and household chores are not equal. In such injustices, women prefer to blame themselves rather than their husbands for their lack of initiative. Women continue to experience an unfair distribution of housework and home care because they feel that, after all, taking care of the house and children is their responsibility as a woman. The attitude of young women who "take it for granted" the unfair division of housework is one of the reasons behind the low manifest conflict related to the division of housework in this study.

When doing housework and family care work, at the same time, women are also in the process of doing gender. With all the justifications for the division of housework, these reasons always end in the belief that housework is a woman's primary responsibility. This belief is represented when women lead domestic life. When married,

women try to manage their actions by doing housework and child care to indicate that they are “married women.”

West & Zimmerman (1987) stated that moral consequences are imposed on individuals if the individual does not follow and comply with existing gender norms. This study reinforces the idea of West & Zimmerman. Young women's views of working wives are accompanied by “guilt” and an affirmation that taking care of the house, husband, and children remains a woman's primary task, even when women choose to work. In the view of men, if the house, husband, and children are not “taken care of,” then the “bad actors” in this situation are women. The moral burden of ensuring that housework and family care work is adequately completed still falls on women's shoulders. When women “doing gender” in housework, men are also “doing gender.” The informant's partner's decision to allocate some housework activities as “women's work” is an implicit statement that he does not want to do “women's work” because he is a “male.” By choosing not to take equal participation in housework and child care, men in the household try to manage their actions to show that they are “men in the household.” In other words, men are also doing gender by not participating in housework.

Young women in this study did not only do gender through housework, but they also did undoing gender. NAD and her husband viewed the roles of men and women in the family as egalitarian. This family did not specifically divide the role of the wife and the husband. This knowledge was then manifested in an egalitarian division of housework as well:

“...So the role that is socially constructed is that the wife should be like this or the husband should be like that, however, in my marriage...that doesn't apply like that ...” (NAD, dual-earner family)

NAD stated that when doing house cleaning activities, she did not do it because she was a “female,” but she did housework because it was her responsibility as the house owner. The activity of cooking breakfast was also conducted alternately between NAD and her husband. Although the informant's household knowledge was more egalitarian than traditional families, where she believed that both men and women could be the breadwinners of the family, her household still followed the traditional family pattern:

“...so I have my own income, my husband has his own income, but he is the one who fulfills all our basic needs, that’s how it is.” (NAD, dual-earner family)

Even though they both worked, NAD and her partner still decided that the income used to meet the family’s material needs was the income of men. However, NAD also financed household leisure activities when shopping or eating out. This ideology and knowledge of gender roles in the family prove a shift in gender values in society. Gender justice requires collective action. The struggle to achieve gender equality requires support from both men and women.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that women and men are socialized to perform different tasks and are given responsibilities to fulfill different roles. Young couples believe that doing domestic work and taking care of children is natural for women but not for men. On the other hand, working to earn a living is considered a natural task for men but not women.

When doing housework, women are also doing gender at the same time. Housework has a symbol of significance as a woman’s duty. Women agree and consider it a “women’s duty,” in conducting housework activities, individuals create an image of “women” who agree with gender norms. Inequality in the division of domestic work for young couples is justified by giving reasons that are considered legitimate. Informants believe that women should be responsible for housework while men do not. Families with an unequal division of housework rationalize gender inequality in their households. Various discourses in society are given to disguise the unequal division of housework between husband and wife. The wife is more responsible for housework and child care than the husband.

In traditional families, inequality in the division of housework is rationalized for the following reasons: gender, standards, time. In transitional families, inequality in housework is rationalized through gender, standards, skills, time, religion, and avoiding conflict. In egalitarian families, housework is done based on the responsibilities and initiatives of each family member. The actors perpetuating gender inequality in young families are husbands, husbands and wives, and extended family members. The behavior of husbands or wives or extended family members who facilitate inequality by rationalizing and justifying the unequal division of housework and child care and

choosing not to contest and negotiate with their partners is a behavior that perpetuates and reinforces gender inequality in the family.

This study shows that women's agreement with the sexist division of work is related to discourse, knowledge, and understanding of what is natural and essential for men and women. Through the family, gender ideology is socialized, developed, and perpetuated through values and norms instilled in individuals. Gender actions in the family are related to gender norms that have been embedded in them. Gender action cannot be conducted individually; collective action is needed to realize gender equality and justice.

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