

The Challenge of Child Rearing in the Pandemic Era: Accommodating a Fair Manner treatment Based on the Religion

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Received: 2021-08-03; Accepted: 2021-12-20; Published: 2021-12-29

Abstract: Women's responsibility for the family increased with the Work from Home (WFH) situation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The entry of office and school into the family put excessive pressure on women, especially those who work. This study used the perspective of women's studies to find solutions to family problems during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This study took the setting of the urban situation in Cimahi City, West Java, Indonesia, in the early half of 2021, which is the time for the community to return to dealing with the lockdown conditions due to the emergence of the Delta Variant issue from COVID-19. This study uses a sociological analysis of 15 families through direct observation and interviews. This study found that men play a dual role between being a worker and being a nanny at home to help their wives. The presence of fathers who work at home makes them closer to their children, and they feel happy to be able to work at home while educating their children. Similarly, the family structure works well, and there is no overlap between the roles of husband and wife. The respondents felt it was a religious obligation, namely to help each other in goodness. This research can provide a solution for family resilience in the face of a social environment that changes attitudes and ways of working in the family.

Keywords: Child-rearing; domestic solution; family structure; religious awareness; social environment; work from home.

Abstrak: Tanggung jawab perempuan terhadap keluarga meningkat dengan situasi Work from Home (WFH) di masa Pandemi COVID-19. Masuknya kantor dan sekolah ke dalam keluarga memberikan tekanan yang berlebihan pada perempuan, terutama mereka yang bekerja. Penelitian ini menggunakan perspektif studi perempuan untuk mencari solusi permasalahan keluarga di masa Pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini mengambil setting situasi perkotaan di Kota Cimahi, Jawa Barat, Indonesia pada paruh pertama tahun 2021 yang merupakan saat bagi masyarakat untuk kembali menghadapi kondisi lockdown akibat munculnya isu Delta Variant dari COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis sosiologis terhadap 15 keluarga melalui observasi langsung dan wawancara. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pria memainkan peran ganda antara menjadi pekerja dan menjadi pengasuh di rumah untuk membantu istri mereka. Kehadiran ayah yang bekerja di rumah membuat mereka lebih dekat dengan anak-anaknya, dan mereka merasa senang bisa bekerja di rumah sambil mendidik anak-anaknya. Demikian pula, struktur keluarga berjalan dengan baik, dan tidak ada tumpang tindih antara peran suami dan istri. Responden merasa itu adalah kewajiban agama, yaitu saling membantu dalam kebaikan. Penelitian ini dapat memberikan solusi bagi ketahanan keluarga dalam menghadapi lingkungan sosial yang mengubah sikap dan cara bekerja dalam keluarga.

Kata Kunci: Mengasuh anak; solusi domestik; struktur keluarga; kesadaran beragama; lingkungan sosial; bekerja dari rumah.

1. Introduction

The global Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) outbreak has raised the risk of a shift in gender relations in family life (particularly in Indonesia) (Hashimoto et al., 2021; Huriani et al., 2021; Irawan et al., 2021). The uncontrolled spread of Covid-19 eventually forced several regional heads to take decisive action in Large-Scale Social Restrictions (Yuniti et al., 2020). This policy has the effect of limiting activities carried out outside the home (Borkowski et al., 2021). People are asked to carry out all their activities in their respective homes (Work From Home) (Machida et al., 2020; Putra, 2020). Consequently, men who usually do many activities outside the home (in front of the public) suddenly return home (Jenkins & Smith, 2021). The phenomenon of men being 'forced' to return home raises various economic, social, and even gender issues (Arenas-Arroyo et al., 2021).

The global Pandemic has had severe effects. Several studies reveal this. The burden on women after the Pandemic was increasing. Women who are already burdened with domestic activities must also be loaded with additional responsibilities such as child care, who are equally domesticated due to the prolonged Pandemic (Sigiro et al., 2020). A more or less the same situation occurs for women who have the good fortune of access to education and work in public spaces. Here, career women are faced with fostering their families and developing their careers (Haekal & Fitri, 2020). This dualism of focus is sometimes difficult to reconcile in life (Fairchild & Mikuska, 2021).

The emergence of the feminist movement cannot be separated from the roots of patriarchal culture in the broader community (M. T. Rahman, 2019; Rimmer, 2021). Feminist activists try so hard to voice the equality of women's rights amid the hegemony of men (M. T. Rahman, 2018). Women are often regarded as subordinate to men, both in customs and religious doctrine (Wessinger, 2020). This reality leads to inequality in gender relations between men and women in various aspects of life, such as decision-making in the family, for example, or the division of roles related to family functions (Aziz, 2017; Huriani & Annibras, 2020). The most apparent feature of inequality in the division of gender roles in many cultures is childcare. Parenting is considered an extension of women's biological role who have become pregnant and give birth. Since the days of the Hunter-Gatherer, childcare has been the duty of a woman (mother) because she has been pregnant, given birth, and breastfeeding. Ironically, it is not uncommon for the duties of care and care to be legitimized by cultural norms where men are 'forbidden' to enter. The task of caring for, cleaning dirt, or feeding children is taboo a man (father) does because it is considered an act that demeans male dignity (Maulidiyah, 2014).

In the author's perspective, the occurrence of a pandemic that forces men to return home opens up opportunities for changes in gender relations in the family, especially in terms of child care. This change in relations is possible given the intense communication between men and women in the domestic area. This paper will reveal how gender relations in parenting occurred in a Pandemic situation. In other words, this paper offers the novelty of discussing domestic life as a result of the Pandemic from gender analysis.

2. Pre-Pandemic Gender Relations as Domestic-Public Dichotomy

Gender relations are understood as social relations between men and women based on quality, skills, roles, and functions in dynamic social conventions and follow the times (Jewkes et al., 2015). Gender is either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considering social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female (Stevenson, 2010). This ideal relationship pattern, in reality, does not work as it should. There is an imbalance there that makes the relationship between the two inhumane. Women experience dehumanization due to the injustices that have befallen them in various ways, while men are also trapped in inhumane conditions because they perpetuate injustice against women (Fujiati, 2014).

The injustice of gender relations that afflicts women in the family sector, for example, can be seen from the domestic-public dichotomy that arises due to stereotypes in the culture/tradition of society or religious doctrines that are widely accepted by the wider community. Women's movements are

restricted to domestic matters, such as taking care of household needs (washing, cooking, maintaining, and cleaning furniture), child care, to the issues of sexual reproduction. On the other hand, men freely have broad access to public spaces. Men functioned as the primary breadwinners who were entirely responsible for the maintenance of their families. Even if women appear in public areas, they are usually placed in sectors that do not require high intelligence or skills. They are valued much lower than men (Yuliatin, 2019). This reality, in the end, gave birth to unequal patterns of relations in the family, such as women must obey and respect the husband's decisions, a woman must ask permission and say goodbye when she wants to do activities outside the home, or a woman must be responsible for domestic affairs. This reality causes women to be treated as second-class citizens, inferior, and material dependent on their partners (Fujiati, 2014).

The analysis is gender, which systematically analyzes data and information about men and women to identify and reveal the positions, functions, roles, and responsibilities of men and women and the factors that influence them (Kennedy et al., 2020). The main task of gender analysis is to give meaning, concepts, assumptions, ideologies, and practices to new relationships between men and women and their implications for broader social life (economics, politics, culture, etc.) (Marlow, 2020). Here the analysis used is in the area of religion and culture.

Religious Factors

Islam as a religion embraced by the majority of Indonesian people plays a vital role in building the social order of society (Mamahit, 2021). It regulates the relationship between humans and their God, and the relationship between humans (Manullang, 2020). For example, in a family context, Islam holds how the relationship between family members built and what rights and obligations are in it (M Taufiq Rahman et al., 2018). In general, Muslims think that women are not equal to men (Sidani, 2018). Men are above women or have the edge over them. The origin of the belief that men are superior to women comes from three theological assumptions: (a) God's main creation is man, and woman is created from man's rib. It means women are derivative beings and ontologically secondary. Ordinary Muslims, like Jews and Christians, believe in the above myth. Hasan (Hassan, 2001) mentions that it has no basis in the Qur'an.

Islam as a religion does not deny biological differences, but these differences are not used as a basis for privileging certain genders. The Qur'an itself provides the basis for these differences as an effort to achieve the quality of individuals and harmonious society (H. N. Umar, 2014). Several principles can be used as references regarding gender equality in Islam, namely (N. Umar, 1999); (a) the position of men and women as servants. It shows that humans (regardless of gender) are required to worship God (Qur'an 51:56). In another verse, (Qur'an 49:13), God mentions that there is no difference between men and women as His servants except in the quality of their piety. (b) The position of men and women as caliphs in the world (QS.6:165 and QS.2:30) emphasizes that men and women together carry out God's mandate as His vicegerents on earth. (c) men and women both accept the primordial agreement, which is to testify to the oneness of God (Qur'an 7:172) so that men and women are equally honored (QS.17:70). (d) The argument for the fall of man to the earth (cosmic drama) due to the active actions of Adam and Eve, for example, is described in QS. 2:35, 107, QS. 7:22,27 and 35. (e) men and women have the same competence to achieve achievements described in the Qur'an in QS.3:195, 4:124, 16:97 and 40:40.

Islamic feminists such as Fatima Mernissi, Riffat Hasan, Yvonne Haddad, Amina Wadud, Asghar Ali, and others view that the spirit brought by Islam is to free women from oppression (Spencer & Chesler, 2007). Muhammad, however, was not sent by God other than as a mercy to the universe. In addition, the hadith of the Prophet also reveals that he was assigned to perfect human character. The gradual changes made by the Prophet were adapted to the conditions of society at that time so that several life contexts were adopted from the traditions of pre-Islamic and Jewish communities (Dabashi, 2017).

Islamic feminists see that many injustices against women are carried out based on religious interpretations that are influenced by local traditions and cultures. They offer an understanding and

reinterpretation of several women's issues in Islam, such as polygamy, inheritance law, sexuality, witnessing, hijab, women's leadership, and other issues. The texts of the verses must also be understood contextually, following the development of society. The gradual changes made by the Prophet stopped when he died. Islamic community, after the death of the Prophet developed a patriarchal power structure, thus subordinating women. The Prophet's goal of realizing justice for women had not been fully achieved. The changes made were evolutionary and had not yet become a blueprint because the death of the Prophet. Meanwhile, the Islamic world after the Prophet did not constantly develop the vision and mission of the Prophet. On that basis, the reference to post-Prophet developments regarding the position of women in Islamic history is highly biased (Nasarudin, 2001). To get the ideal concept, today's thinkers must look at the context of the revelation of the Quran and the reason for the disclosure of the hadith on women.

Cultural Factors

The inequality of gender relations in society is not only based on religious doctrine factors (Hajjar, 2004). Habits and cultural traditions that develop amid community also cause the dehumanization of gender relations (Fiel, 2021). The construction of women's gender identity is interdependent with cultural experiences and their self-existence. Citing Foucault's theory of power relations and discourse, the position of women as subordinates to men in the structure of society in Indonesia has also colored the traditions that developed in community (Foucault, 2020; Kamahi & Foucault, 2017).

In the androcentric construct, marriage is interpreted as the surrender of women in their economic, social, and cultural powerlessness. The context is a control that has cultural and religious legitimacy. Marriage is the culmination of the supremacy of men over the weaknesses of women in various aspects of life (Papanek, 2019). In this context, the position of women in marriage becomes inferior because (a) in the institution of marriage, women are treated as sexual objects of men and produce offspring. (b) marriage is based on matchmaking. It makes women unable to free themselves from the stab of patriarchal culture. (c) wedding in the shackles of the Cinderella complex, a psychological event of the coming of a prince who makes himself happy in the marriage ceremony. (d) marital orientation to avoid the term "old maid", which is a construct of social norms for the status of single women, has a negative connotation. The position of women in this marriage causes women not to be in their conscious choice and freedom of self, but to be in marriage texts that are dictated and contaminated by patriarchal ideology (Subiantoro, 2001). Marriage, thus, suppresses women's autonomy because it is not an individual's free and conscious choice but as a social obligation in traditional societies or as a social contract in modern society.

Feminism's view of marriage is related to the subordination of women's identities and the violence in the area. The institution of marriage is a form of slavery because women's ambition, creativity, and will are turned off and immersed in routines that are not oriented (Beauvoir, 1953). Feminists such as Shulamith Firestone, August Babel, Naomi Wolf, and Mary Wollstonecraft often reveal how the institution of marriage used as an instrument for men to perpetuate their patriarchal ideology and allow violence against women, not only in the area of sexual (marital rape) but also economically and socially. The institution of marriage and family castrates the happiness of women's sexuality because unwittingly married women will deny all possibilities to find life energy, become passive, lose opportunities to be free, which will keep them from achieving quality satisfying life (Greer, 1971).

However, in feminist theory, several figures see the importance of the institution of marriage. Naturally, women have the qualities to carry out the duties of a mother, with which women can appreciate their generous nature for their families and fellow human beings (Miller, 2012). Women with self-esteem can filter the value system that can oppress them to have an equal role with men in the marital structure. Likewise, Luce Irigaray said that if a marriage is based on a free and conscious choice, it cannot be prevented as long as its existence is not made an object, ideology, or male authority.

In the Sundanese tradition, for example, proverbs such as "*awewe mah dulang tinande*" (women follow what men say) hint at the inequality of gender relations in the Sundanese society (Abdullah, 2013; Huriani & Annibras, 2020). The same thing happened to the Javanese tradition. The number of ethical sayings regarding unequal gender relations used as a philosophy of life in Javanese culture shows how superior men are to women. For example, the stereotype that states that the woman is *kanca wingking*. This stereotype contains a philosophy about women who are described as "back" friends of men who are required to manage domestic household affairs, such as washing, cooking, raising children, and the like (Hermawati, 2007). Women are not decision-makers in the family. They are subordinate to men who must obey whatever their partner orders, whether getting heaven or hell (*swargo nunut nerako katut*).

3. Changes of Gender Relations in the Pandemic Era

The outbreak of the Covid-19 virus throughout the world (including in Indonesia) has created several new problems in gender relations, especially in the family sector (Bangun & Widana, 2021; Huriani et al., 2021; Park & Inocencio, 2020). The emergence of the Pandemic increases women's physical burden, such as cleaning the house and all the furniture in it, to their psychological one, such as facing the management of the household economy (Taylor, 2019). This burden increases due to increased household consumption costs. It is also for the burden of caring for children's education conducted online due to the implementation of School From Home (SFH) or distance learning by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim (Sigiro et al., 2020).

In addition, the burden resulting from the domestic-public dichotomy which has been a symbol of gender inequality has suddenly shifted slightly along with the return of men (husbands) to their homes. Forcing men to work from home creates a new burden for women (wives). The psychological burden of men because they are not used to doing activities in the domestic sector, feeling bored doing all activities from home (work from home), or increasing economic responsibilities in the end triggers fights after fights, some of which lead to cases of violence against women, both verbally and physically in their household. As a result, the divorce rate during the Pandemic has also increased (Tristanto, 2020).

The increasing number of divorces during the Pandemic can be seen through the statistical data on divorce claims. For example, the number of divorce cases at the Bandung Religious Court entered September 1, 2020 showed 2843 lawsuits. This figure has increased from the number of lawsuits submitted before the Pandemic, ranging from 300 to 400 lawsuits per month (Ramadhan, 2020).

Interestingly, aside from the negative side of the changing domestic-public dichotomy in gender relations in the family sector, the domestication of men opens up a new opportunity for gender equality. Men can share roles with women in managing domestic matters, such as cleaning the house, cooking, to caring for and educating their children. For example, the researcher found various ways that fathers feed their children in overcoming children's eating patterns.

The following is the researcher's interview with the resource person on feeding the children:

I am paying attention to children's eating patterns, which are the same as people's treatment in general. But because this is done only now, I have to give more memorable and special attention to children. Because I'm afraid why if the child has problems with his diet. In the lockdown conditions of the Covid-19 outbreak, I like to remind the children to eat two to three times a day. I give them breakfast in the morning before zooming in with the school, then in the afternoon when the online school is finished, and in the afternoon. I pay more attention to children and often give food bites to children to maintain their diet, even though the child is playing (RM, father, Personal Communication, February 12, 2022).

This preferential treatment in feeding can make a child much closer to his father than to his mother. Because situations and conditions like this are sometimes not encountered when the child is with his mother. The mother is more indifferent in paying attention to the child's diet with the busy life. Therefore, the child is more comfortable with the father.

4. Islam and Parenting Patterns; From Mother Centered to Parent Centered

The good or bad growth and development of a child, both physically and mentally, is greatly influenced by who plays an essential role in guarding or nurturing the child from infancy. Parenting is limited to meeting physical needs and needs support, attention, and time to complete the mental and social needs of the child who is still growing. Parenting is defined as an effort in education and cares for children from eating and drinking, clothing, and success from birth to adulthood. Parenting usually carried out by biological parents includes various activities to enable children to develop optimally, survive well, and accept and be accepted by the surrounding environment (Rakhmawati, 2015). There are at least three kinds of parenting patterns carried out by parents for their children, namely: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic parenting (Rakhmawati, 2015).

Authoritarian parenting is a parenting model with a coercive pattern and regulates children cruelly or naturally. Parents impose their will on the child without wanting to be denied the slightest. As a result, the psychological development of children tends to be negative. Children find it difficult to control themselves and their emotions in front of others. Usually, children will have problems with self-confidence, are not creative, and are not independent. Children will tend to have high levels of stress or trauma.

Permissive parenting is a parenting pattern that gives the child the broadest possible freedom. Children are given the freedom to do whatever they want. Parents tend to be less concerned about the growth and development of children. The concern for children's growth and development is measured by the amount of material they provide without knowing how they use or utilize their parents' various facilities. As a result, children tend to have selfish character and do not have good self-control.

In contrast to the previous two patterns, parents who apply democratic parenting give more freedom to their children by including the guidance process. As a result, children grow and develop naturally and well. Children are more open and wise as a result of two-way communication between parents and children.

Unfortunately, the three parenting patterns proposed by Istina (Rakhmawati, 2015) often go hand in hand. Men and women who should play an active role in guarding the growth and development of children often go the other way. The primary function in child care is often left to women rather than being done together. This situation occurs, for example, in the culture of the Sundanese people. The philosophy of "*indung nu ngandung father nu ngayuga; Munjung lain ka gunung muja lain ka sagara, tapi munjung kudu ka indung muja kudu ka bapa* (Mother who is pregnant with the father is the cause; flattering not to the mountain, worshipping not to the sea, but flattering the mother, worshipping the father) shows that there are different roles in parenting child (Heryana, 2012). The same thing happened in Javanese culture. The pattern of parenting in Javanese culture prioritizes the mother figure as a protective figure. On the other hand, the father figure is an authoritarian figure where all his orders must be followed (Somaiah & Yeoh, 2021).

But the Covid-19 condition that made my father also at home has made the situation different. The father can also be permissive and democratic. Here, the child likes to be invited to play and have a dialogue. Games Play is an important activity that fathers can do to meet the needs of children who have a sense of pleasure when invited to play. In addition, games can support children's development, encourage children to be creative, innovative, imaginative, and other benefits. The researcher found the treatments of fathers in giving games or inviting their children to play, such as Children are invited to dance, stay at home, sing, watch children's television, go outside, piggyback, carry, pretending schools, and the like.

The following is the researcher's interview with the resource person:

The treatment I do in inviting children to play varies; I like to invite children to play by asking children to chat, singing together, dancing together, and other activities to keep children happy. In that way, as a father, I feel so glad, proud, and even touched when I see that my child can chat with me, sing, dance, and even test short letters from the Qur'an because my children are still

under five years old who can't do anything (RM, father, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

The inequality of gender relations seems to be strengthened by the emergence of *al-Umm Madrasatu al-Ulla* (mother is the first school for their children). This expression appears to legitimize the dichotomy of tasks between men and women, the domestic-public paradox. Women are fully responsible for the upbringing of their children from childhood to adulthood. As for men, it is the primary obligation to provide for their wives and children. The division of tasks like this at first glance is fair. But in reality, the division of functions like this is only a form of "sharing" the existence of women. The unwitting division of tasks is very detrimental to a woman. When a child makes a mistake, the first person to blame is the woman (mother). Fathers are free to let go of child care because they feel they have fulfilled their responsibilities as the primary breadwinner.

The forcing of men to return home due to the Covid-19 Pandemic opens up opportunities for a shift in gender relations that are more equitable in child care. Men have more time to interact with their family members, especially their wives and children. The impact is that they have an excellent opportunity to participate together with women in gender-just child care. From the psychological side of the child, togetherness in parenting can provide a cheerful color in monitoring children's growth and development, both physically, mentally, or in character.

Education is one of the essential things that fathers must give in supporting children's development, both formal education and non-formal education. Fathers have their way of educating their children. Fathers often prepare for an online school, remind children to come to class, and help children do their assignments. They like to invite their children to play school at home in the hope of forming a love for children towards education, teaching children to recognize the importance of education for life, and other activities related to education.

The following is the researcher's interview with the resource person, a father: "Because we work as teachers, we must provide good education to children. I often teach children to read the letters of the alphabet, the Arabic letters; I often tell the stories of the prophets and apostles; I often invite my children to sing children's songs and compulsory songs; I often help children with homework." (NS, father, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

From the interviews the researcher did above with the informants, the researcher saw that fathers' role in providing education to children is significant. And the educational process offered by the father can affect the brain development of every child. The following is the researcher's interview with one of the children's parents:

Thank God for the educational development that you can see from your child when caring for or entrusted to the father is very good. It is proven by the development of reading, writing, arithmetic that mothers can have now, children can read, write, count, memorize short letters in the Qur'an, mother's children become more active, and other developments. All developments owned by the mother's child cannot be separated from the father's role in providing good education to the mother's children (NA, father, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021).

The researcher became convinced that the role of fathers is significant for children's development, including children's education. The researcher saw that not all women or mothers have skills in educating and providing education to their children, and not every highly educated person has skills in educating children. So, the participation of fathers in educating their children is a great gift. The fathers said that the basis of their willingness and activity to help their wives was the teachings of Islam which stated that we Muslims must help each other in goodness and righteousness (NS, father, Personal Communication, February 10, 2021; RM, father, Personal Communication, February 12, 2021).

Many people think that this hadith only talks about the concept of *fitrah* (purity) in a child. This hadith also explains who the figure has a crucial role in child care. If you listen carefully, the figure who plays a vital role in the hadith above is in the word [أبوا]. The term is not intended for one party only but refers to the concept of parents as partners. The pattern of children's education from an

Islamic perspective is not *mother-centered* but rather *parent-centered*. The fathers' behavior in educating their children shows that they adhere to the hadith that a still pure child can be colored into whatever it depends on the parenting pattern built by his parents (father and mother). By holding this understanding, gender relations in child care in an Islamic perspective carry an attitude of *al-tawazun* or a fair balance in gender relations.

5. Conclusion

The outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which forced men to return to their respective homes due to the government's implementation of the work from home (WFH) policy, created a dilemma for women. Women are faced with a double burden in household matters with their husbands near them during work situations. On the other hand, the domestication of men opens up new opportunities for gender relations in a fair and friendly parenting style. This opportunity is open as communication becomes more intense between men (husbands) and women (wives) in the family. Men get many opportunities to share their roles with women in supervising and caring for their children. It is in line with the concept of gender relations offered by the religion, i.e., in the accentuation of helping each other. Here, urban men, whose wives work, have interpreted religious teachings in a practical framework, namely the instructions of helping each other for good. This study recommends the need for a family resilience education program for urban families to contribute to developing a more harmonious and resilient life. Further research on the details of activities in productive families during the Covid-19 Pandemic to get out of the crisis is highly expected for the continuity of research and results that can be useful for society.

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