

# Invisible Burden: Gender Inequality in Unpaid Household Labor in Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study explores gender inequality in unpaid household labor through a time use analysis of Indonesian women. Drawing on feminist economic theory, gender role perspectives, and intersectionality, it reveals that women bear a disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities, regardless of employment or education status. Data from BPS and previous literature confirm the persistence of time poverty as a structural and cultural issue. The findings highlight that patriarchal norms, insufficient public care infrastructure, and policy gaps jointly reinforce this imbalance. These unpaid duties limit women's participation in the labor market, education, and political life, ultimately hindering gender equity and national development. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks with empirical data, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of how unpaid labor perpetuates systemic inequality. It calls for gender-sensitive time use surveys, redistribution policies, and cultural transformation to achieve meaningful change. Time must be valued as a resource central to women's empowerment and social justice.

## Keywords

time poverty; unpaid labor; gender inequality; Indonesian women; domestic work

## INTRODUCTION

Unpaid household labor remains one of the most significant but undervalued forms of gender inequality in modern societies. Despite global recognition of women's increased involvement in paid work, domestic responsibilities disproportionately fall upon women (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014). In Indonesia, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced due to a combination of socio-cultural expectations, traditional gender roles, and lack of institutional support for shared domestic responsibilities (World Bank, 2019). While national development programs increasingly

emphasize female labor force participation, they often overlook the burdens of unpaid labor that persistently affect Indonesian women's time and opportunities.

The theoretical relevance of analyzing unpaid labor lies in its role as a hidden barrier to gender equity. Feminist economists have long argued that excluding unpaid household work from national accounting systems renders women's contributions invisible, leading to systemic underrepresentation in economic policies (Elson, 1999). Empirical studies globally show that time poverty caused by unpaid labor reduces women's productivity, limits access to education, and perpetuates intergenerational cycles of gendered labor division (Folbre, 2006). In the Indonesian context, disparities in time allocation between men and women not only limit economic mobility but also reinforce structural inequalities rooted in family and societal institutions (UNDP Indonesia, 2016).

The significance of this issue is underscored by time use surveys and national gender statistics, which reveal consistent patterns of labor division within Indonesian households. According to BPS–Statistics Indonesia (2018), women spend approximately three to four times more hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work compared to men. These findings are corroborated by research from Asian Development Bank (2017), highlighting a lack of formal mechanisms to redistribute care responsibilities within Indonesian families. This imbalance is particularly acute among lower-income households, where women face the double burden of poverty and domestic obligation, thereby exacerbating socioeconomic exclusion.

Despite substantial evidence on the consequences of unpaid labor, research gaps remain concerning the socio-cultural dynamics that shape gendered time use in Indonesia. Much of the existing literature emphasizes economic output or labor participation, without adequately addressing the hidden costs associated with unpaid work. Furthermore, limited regional and cultural disaggregation in existing datasets restricts our understanding of how time poverty manifests across different communities. These gaps limit policy innovation and hinder the development of targeted interventions that could alleviate women's unpaid labor burden (BPS, 2020; UN Women, 2017).

This study aims to address these gaps by conducting a comprehensive analysis of time use among Indonesian women in unpaid household labor. It draws on feminist theoretical frameworks and socio-economic data to examine three key dimensions: (1) how unpaid labor is distributed between genders; (2) what structural factors contribute to time poverty; and (3) how unpaid labor affects women's agency and development. The research thus explores: How do Indonesian women experience time poverty in unpaid domestic labor? What socio-cultural and institutional structures contribute to the persistence of this inequality? And how does this inequality affect women's broader participation in economic and public life?

The objective of this study is to advance a nuanced understanding of gendered labor division in Indonesia by analyzing both macro-structural influences and micro-social practices. By centering unpaid labor in the discourse on gender equality, the research contributes to existing literature with fresh insights that can inform policy and advocacy. This article argues that addressing unpaid labor is crucial not only for women's empowerment but also for Indonesia's inclusive development agenda.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The issue of unpaid household labor and its disproportionate impact on women has been widely examined in gender studies, economics, and development literature. Foundational work by Becker (1991) introduced the household production function, illustrating how time allocation within households reflects economic trade-offs. However, feminist critiques argue that this approach underestimates the structural nature of gender inequality, as it treats unpaid labor as a rational choice rather than a consequence of societal norms (Folbre, 2006). Subsequent research has emphasized the need to incorporate care and domestic labor into macroeconomic models, recognizing it as foundational to the functioning of societies (Elson, 1999). In developing countries like Indonesia, the lack of policy attention to unpaid work reflects deep-seated gender hierarchies that normalize women's domestic roles (UN Women, 2017).

Global and regional studies have reinforced the notion that women's unpaid labor is a critical barrier to gender equality. The International Labour Organization (2016) found that across Asia and the Pacific, women dedicate on average 4.1 hours daily to unpaid care work—more than double that of men. In Indonesia, this discrepancy is intensified by cultural expectations rooted in traditional gender roles, as highlighted in national surveys and policy assessments (BPS, 2020). Time use research has increasingly emerged as a key method for quantifying this invisible labor. Studies by Budlender (2008) and Hirway (2010) demonstrate how time diaries and household surveys can illuminate gender disparities, supporting arguments for redistributive social policies.

Despite the growing body of literature, existing studies on Indonesia rarely integrate socio-cultural and economic dimensions in a unified framework. Much of the Indonesian-focused research either concentrates on employment metrics or qualitative assessments of gender norms, without linking these to time poverty data. Furthermore, there is limited exploration of how unpaid work affects long-term opportunities for women, including education, mobility, and civic participation. This study builds upon international frameworks while localizing the analysis to Indonesia's unique socio-cultural context, filling a critical gap in both theory and applied research.

## Theoretical Framework

The analysis of gender inequality in unpaid household labor within this study is grounded in feminist economic theory. Feminist economics critiques the exclusion of unpaid domestic work from conventional economic analysis and national accounting systems (Elson, 1999). It posits that household labor, although unremunerated, is essential for reproducing labor power and maintaining social well-being. By challenging the male-centric view of economic productivity, feminist economists argue for the inclusion of care work as a legitimate and quantifiable economic activity (Folbre, 2006). In the Indonesian context, this framework enables a deeper understanding of how women's domestic responsibilities sustain not only households but also broader economic systems.

Complementing this is the gender role theory, which explains how societal expectations shape behavior and labor division. West and Zimmerman (1987) describe gender as a set of enacted behaviors reinforced through social interaction and institutional norms. In Indonesia, traditional constructs such as *kodrat wanita* (women's destiny) perpetuate the belief that domestic duties are inherently female responsibilities (Blackwood, 2005, p. 92). This theory helps to contextualize why unpaid labor remains largely invisible and disproportionately borne by women. It provides a lens to interpret time use data not as mere preferences but as outcomes of social conditioning.

Structural functionalism also contributes to the theoretical base, particularly in explaining how household roles are systematized for perceived social equilibrium. Parsons and Bales (1955) argued that family structures function efficiently when tasks are divided along gendered lines. While this theory has been critiqued for reinforcing patriarchal norms, it remains useful for understanding how institutions, including religion and education, legitimize traditional household roles. In Indonesia, state-endorsed moral education and media narratives frequently portray women as primary caregivers, reinforcing these functionalist ideals (Suryakusuma, 2011, p. 127).

Intersectionality theory provides a critical expansion to the above models by highlighting how overlapping identities—such as class, region, and education—shape the experience of unpaid labor. Crenshaw (1989) emphasized that gender inequality cannot be examined in isolation but must be analyzed in conjunction with other axes of oppression. In Indonesia, rural women often bear a higher unpaid labor burden than their urban counterparts due to lack of infrastructure and social services (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Intersectionality thus aids in dissecting how diverse social positions influence the degree and impact of unpaid domestic work.

Finally, time allocation theory offers methodological grounding by treating time as a finite resource distributed among various activities. Becker's (1965) model assumes individuals allocate time to maximize utility, balancing market work, leisure, and household production. However, this theory often fails to account for the gendered constraints imposed by societal norms. Feminist reinterpretations of time allocation emphasize that women's choices are not entirely autonomous but shaped by unequal power relations (Hirway, 2010). Applying this to Indonesian women enables an analysis of time poverty not merely as a result of personal choices, but as a product of entrenched gender systems.

By integrating these theoretical lenses, the study constructs a robust framework to analyze the persistence of unpaid household labor among Indonesian women. This multifaceted approach facilitates both macro-level policy insights and micro-level behavioral understanding, positioning the research within a comprehensive gender analysis paradigm.

## **Previous Research**

One of the earliest relevant studies is by Benería (2003), who explored the invisibility of women's unpaid labor within global economic systems. Using feminist economic theory, Benería argued that excluding household labor from GDP calculations distorts economic policy and undervalues women's contributions. Though global in scope, her work laid a foundational critique that inspired subsequent efforts to quantify unpaid labor in national accounts and informed the conceptual basis for this study.

Building on this foundation, Budlender (2008) conducted empirical research across multiple countries, including Indonesia, using time use surveys to estimate the economic value of unpaid care work. Her findings revealed that women in developing countries perform more than 70% of unpaid household work. This research highlighted the practical utility of time-use data for policy formulation and emphasized the importance of gender-disaggregated statistics, a key methodological feature also employed in the present study.

Hirway (2010) expanded the analysis by examining the implications of unpaid work for time poverty. She demonstrated how excessive domestic responsibilities limit women's opportunities for income generation, education, and social participation. Her findings from India paralleled similar trends in Indonesia and provided a framework for understanding the multidimensional effects of unpaid labor. This work contributes a methodological model for evaluating how unpaid work affects broader indicators of gender inequality.

In the Indonesian context, Blackwood (2005, p. 88) explored the cultural and religious narratives that shape gendered expectations around household responsibilities. Her ethnographic research in West Java revealed how Islamic teachings and local customs reinforce women's domestic roles, even among working women. Her work provides cultural depth to the present study, showing that structural inequalities are not only economic but also socio-religious in nature.

A more recent study by the Asian Development Bank (2017) focused specifically on Indonesia, analyzing gender inequality through labor market participation and unpaid work. The report identified unpaid care labor as a significant constraint to female economic participation, particularly in rural areas. It recommended time use surveys and gender-responsive budgeting as policy responses. This study offers a policy-oriented backdrop that aligns with the present research's advocacy for structural reforms.

Finally, the World Bank (2019) provided updated gender statistics for Indonesia, including data on time use, employment, and social roles. The report emphasized that Indonesian women still carry the bulk of domestic duties, regardless of educational attainment or employment status. It serves as an empirical anchor for validating the study's findings and recommendations.

Despite these contributions, few studies have synthesized cultural, structural, and temporal aspects of unpaid labor into a comprehensive analysis specific to Indonesian women. Most focus either on economic statistics or cultural narratives in isolation. This gap justifies the present study's integrated approach, which combines feminist theory, intersectionality, and time use data to construct a holistic understanding of gender inequality in domestic labor. By doing so, the study addresses an underexplored intersection in the literature and offers a contextualized analysis that contributes both theoretically and empirically.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The type of data employed in this study is primarily qualitative and conceptual, with a focus on document-based analysis. Rather than relying on primary field data, the study synthesizes insights from secondary sources such as policy documents, gender-disaggregated national surveys, and published academic research. This approach allows for a rich, interpretive understanding of gendered time use and its broader implications (Moser, 1993). It also aligns with feminist research methodologies that prioritize lived experiences and contextual meaning over quantitative generalization (Harding, 1991, p. 125).

The data sources are drawn from a wide range of verifiable academic and institutional materials. These include international journals such as *World Development* and *Feminist Economics*, global and regional reports from institutions like the World Bank, UN Women, and the Asian Development Bank, and Indonesian publications from BPS–Statistics Indonesia and Sinta-Garuda-indexed journals. These sources provide comprehensive information on gender inequality, time use, and household labor in both global and Indonesian contexts (BPS, 2020; UN Women, 2017). Books and theses from internationally recognized universities also supplement the analysis with theoretical grounding and case-based examples (Folbre, 2006; Elson, 1999).

The data collection technique used in this study is document analysis. This involves systematic examination of published texts to identify recurring themes, patterns, and contradictions related to gendered time use (Bowen, 2009). The selected documents were screened for relevance, credibility, and traceability. Time use surveys, policy briefs, and gender statistics were reviewed in relation to socio-cultural analyses from journal articles and books. This method supports triangulation by allowing for the validation of claims across multiple sources (Yin, 2016, p. 97).

The data analysis technique applied is thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were constructed around three key dimensions: (1) the distribution of unpaid household labor by gender; (2) structural and cultural contributors to time poverty; and (3) the socio-economic consequences of unequal time burdens. This thematic structure enables coherent integration of theory and evidence, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the subject matter (Nowell et al., 2017).

Conclusion drawing in this study involves synthesizing themes into broader analytical insights that respond directly to the research questions. This synthesis connects empirical findings with theoretical constructs such as gender role theory and feminist economics, thereby reinforcing both conceptual clarity and policy relevance (Creswell, 2013, p. 169). Patterns of time inequality were interpreted not only as isolated behaviors but also as reflections of larger socio-economic structures. The resulting conclusions advocate for multi-level interventions, offering theoretical implications and practical solutions tailored to Indonesia's context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are rooted in a sustained and critical dialogue between empirical evidence and theoretical inquiry, creating a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of how unpaid household labor functions and persists within



Indonesian society. By drawing from feminist economics and gender role theory, the research exposes unpaid domestic work not as a matter of individual choice or isolated circumstance but as a structural phenomenon embedded in cultural, economic, and institutional systems. Feminist economists such as Elson (1999) and Folbre (2006) have long emphasized the systemic invisibility of unpaid labor in national accounts and macroeconomic policymaking. This study echoes and extends those critiques, situating time poverty within a broader constellation of intersecting gender norms, labor policies, and socio-political frameworks.

Building upon earlier foundational research—such as Budlender’s (2008) empirical efforts to quantify unpaid labor through time use surveys, and Hirway’s (2010) analysis of time poverty and capability deprivation—this study advances the conversation by centering the Indonesian experience. It contextualizes the issue within Indonesia’s unique blend of cultural expectations, religious doctrines, and limited institutional care infrastructure. In doing so, it deepens the analysis beyond what previous global or regional studies have offered, revealing how normative ideologies like *kodrat wanita* function as powerful discursive tools that naturalize and reinforce women’s unpaid responsibilities.

This critical dialogue also unveils significant disparities in unpaid labor burdens when analyzed through an intersectional lens. Incorporating insights from Crenshaw’s (1989) intersectionality framework, the study reveals that rural, low-income, and marginalized women face intensified time poverty due to compounded disadvantages such as lack of access to public services, infrastructure, and social safety nets (Asian Development Bank, 2016). These conditions not only lengthen the time women spend on unpaid work but also widen inequalities in education, mobility, and income-generation opportunities. Such stratified experiences of unpaid labor illustrate that gender inequality is not monolithic but varies substantially across socio-economic and geographic divides. This localized, intersectional perspective contributes to the academic discourse by illuminating the need for context-specific policy interventions that move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions.

Moreover, the study bridges a critical empirical-theoretical gap identified in the Introduction. Previous literature has often bifurcated the treatment of unpaid labor, focusing either on numerical quantification or on normative cultural critique. In contrast, this study synthesizes both dimensions, producing a holistic analysis that incorporates macro-level statistical data—such as that from BPS (2015)—alongside rich socio-cultural narratives and gender theory. This integrative approach enhances analytical depth and ensures that unpaid labor is not only made visible but also understood as central to the discourse on gender justice and development.

By weaving together empirical data, feminist and intersectional theories, and Indonesia-specific socio-cultural insights, the research establishes a robust foundation



for the thematic findings that follow. It reframes unpaid household labor as both a measurable economic issue and a cultural practice shaped by power and tradition. In doing so, it strengthens the call for gender-aware policy reforms, particularly the institutionalization of time use data collection, investment in care infrastructure, and the cultural reframing of domestic responsibilities. This multi-layered engagement sets the stage for the subsequent results and discussion sections, where each research question is addressed thematically and analytically.

## 1. Gendered Division of Unpaid Labor in Indonesian Households

This section addresses the first research question by examining how unpaid labor is distributed between men and women in Indonesian households. Time use statistics from BPS–Statistics Indonesia (2015) reveal that women spend an average of 4.2 hours per day on unpaid domestic work, while men contribute only around 1.3 hours. This pattern holds across employment status, education level, and region, demonstrating the entrenched nature of gendered labor roles within Indonesian society. The consistency of this disparity underscores the influence of socio-cultural norms rather than individual preference or capability.

Feminist economic theory helps to interpret these findings by emphasizing that unpaid domestic work—though essential—is excluded from national accounting systems and formal economic discourse (Elson, 1999). As a result, women’s domestic contributions are rendered invisible, leading to their marginalization in policy design and economic recognition. The observed inequality in time use reflects not only economic undervaluation but also structural neglect. According to Hirway (2010), time poverty constitutes a form of capability deprivation, limiting women’s ability to pursue education, income-generating activities, and civic engagement.

Cultural constructs, particularly the widespread belief in *kodrat wanita* (a woman’s destiny or natural role), further reinforce this division of labor. As Blackwood (2005, p. 92) observed, even among working women in West Java, the expectation to prioritize domestic responsibilities persists. This internalization of gender norms leads to the acceptance—and sometimes defense—of unequal time burdens, thereby reproducing inequality across generations. Gender role theory, as discussed by West and Zimmerman (1987), illustrates how these roles are enacted and reinforced in everyday social interactions.

Structural factors also contribute to the unequal distribution of unpaid labor. Indonesia’s limited investment in care infrastructure, such as community-based

childcare or eldercare services, means that domestic responsibilities fall primarily on families—and within families, on women (UN Women, 2016). Furthermore, the lack of time-saving appliances or reliable utilities in rural areas increases the duration and intensity of domestic work. These institutional voids exacerbate time poverty and reflect a broader failure of gender-responsive planning.

Intersectional analysis reveals that the burden of unpaid labor is heaviest for women in low-income or rural households. Data from the Asian Development Bank (2016) indicate that women in Eastern Indonesia spend significantly more time on water collection, fuel gathering, and food preparation due to inadequate infrastructure. These findings support Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, which posits that gender inequality cannot be fully understood without examining overlapping systems of oppression such as class, geography, and access to services.

Finally, the long-term effects of this labor imbalance extend beyond the household. The time constraints imposed by unpaid work limit women's mobility, reduce their access to economic opportunities, and reinforce existing inequalities in education, health, and public participation (Budlender, 2008). Despite rising female literacy and employment rates, these gains are offset by the persistent "second shift" of domestic labor that women must navigate daily. Addressing this inequality is not only a matter of justice but a precondition for inclusive and sustainable development.

## **2. Structural and Cultural Roots of Time Poverty**

This section addresses the second research question: What socio-cultural and institutional structures contribute to the persistence of unpaid labor inequality among Indonesian women? The analysis shows that deeply rooted cultural ideologies and insufficient institutional support jointly perpetuate time poverty. Gender role theory explains that domestic responsibilities are normalized as "women's work" within Indonesian society, often upheld through religious teachings and state-supported educational content (Blackwood, 2005, p. 93; Suryakusuma, 2011, p. 128). Such norms are embedded in both daily practices and public discourse, where *kodrat wanita* remains a dominant cultural reference to women's duties within the home.

Structurally, state policies in Indonesia have historically focused on promoting women's access to education and labor markets but have overlooked the redistribution of domestic responsibilities (UN Women, 2016). Government

programs such as *PKK* (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga) reinforce traditional roles by framing women's social contributions through family welfare and domestic management rather than individual autonomy (Suryakusuma, 2011, p. 132). As a result, even as women enter formal employment, their unpaid household burden remains unchanged.

Institutional gaps further entrench this inequality. For example, data from BPS (2015) show that time allocated to unpaid labor remains overwhelmingly skewed toward women, regardless of employment status. In the absence of public childcare facilities or elder care services, women are left to fulfill care responsibilities without state support. These institutional deficiencies mirror the critiques made by Elson (1999), who argued that gender-blind policies render women's unpaid contributions invisible, thereby failing to address core structural inequalities.

Religious and moral frameworks also reinforce traditional divisions of labor. In regions such as West Java and Aceh, studies have shown that interpretations of Islamic values often emphasize the woman's role as a homemaker, particularly within conservative communities (Blackwood, 2005, p. 90). Such narratives are echoed in educational materials and community guidance programs, aligning with Parsons and Bales' (1955) notion of functional family roles. However, when examined through a feminist lens, these roles are revealed to be tools of social reproduction that maintain patriarchal control over women's time and labor (Folbre, 2006).

Additionally, the lack of gender-disaggregated budgeting and policy evaluation prevents effective intervention. Although Indonesia committed to gender mainstreaming through Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000, actual implementation has been inconsistent and rarely addresses unpaid work directly (ADB, 2016). This reflects a broader institutional neglect of time use as a critical gender equality metric. Hirway (2010) emphasized the importance of integrating time use surveys into national policy to make visible the hidden economy of care.

Intersectional factors exacerbate these structural issues. Poor women, especially in rural or remote areas, experience more acute forms of time poverty due to infrastructural deficits like limited access to clean water, electricity, and transportation. According to the Asian Development Bank (2016), this leads to extended time required for domestic chores, compounding the burden on already disadvantaged populations. These disparities illustrate Crenshaw's (1989) argument that gender must be examined in conjunction with class, region, and other social categories to understand its full impact.

In summary, cultural norms and institutional shortcomings form a dual structure that sustains the unequal distribution of unpaid labor. This section underscores the need for a multidimensional policy response that simultaneously addresses cultural expectations, legal frameworks, and service provisions to effectively combat time poverty among Indonesian women.

### **3. Consequences of Time Poverty on Women's Participation and Autonomy**

This section addresses the third research question by exploring how gendered time poverty influences women's broader participation in economic, social, and political spheres in Indonesia. Drawing on feminist economics and intersectionality, the findings suggest that women's disproportionate engagement in unpaid domestic labor significantly restricts their autonomy and public involvement. Time, as a finite resource, when consumed by unpaid responsibilities, limits women's capacity to engage in income-generating activities, education, leadership, or leisure (Folbre, 2006). This "time squeeze" contributes to systemic underrepresentation of women in the labor market and decision-making arenas.

Theoretical insights from time allocation models reveal that individuals constrained by social expectations and unpaid workloads are unable to maximize their utility or make autonomous choices (Becker, 1965; Hirway, 2010). For Indonesian women, domestic obligations often dictate daily routines, leaving little space for professional development or political participation. Budlender (2008) notes that this pattern creates a self-reinforcing cycle of disempowerment, where time poverty leads to economic dependency, which in turn diminishes bargaining power within both the household and society.

Empirical data supports this linkage. According to BPS (2015), even among highly educated and formally employed women, the unpaid workload remains disproportionately high, leading to increased stress, lower productivity, and reduced retention in the formal labor market. These outcomes highlight how the private domain of household labor has public consequences, undermining national goals of gender equity and economic inclusivity (UN Women, 2016). Moreover, time poverty contributes to the "feminization of informality," as many women seek flexible but low-paid informal work to manage dual responsibilities (ADB, 2016).

The social ramifications extend beyond economics. The heavy unpaid burden inhibits women's participation in community organizations, local governance,

and public discourse. Blackwood (2005, p. 97) emphasizes that in culturally conservative areas, women's domestic roles are seen as incompatible with public leadership, further restricting their visibility in social decision-making. These constraints reduce women's collective agency and hinder their ability to influence policies that might alleviate the very inequalities they face.

Health and psychological effects are also notable. The double burden of paid and unpaid work leads to fatigue, chronic stress, and reduced mental well-being (Folbre, 2006). For many women, especially those in marginalized communities, time poverty translates into limited access to healthcare and self-care, reinforcing intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. The cumulative impact of these constraints demonstrates that unpaid labor is not only a gender issue but a multidimensional barrier to sustainable development.

In summary, gendered time poverty in Indonesia significantly undermines women's participation, autonomy, and well-being. Addressing this issue requires a shift from individual-based interventions to structural reforms that redistribute time and responsibility through policy, infrastructure, and cultural change. By centering unpaid labor in the discourse on gender equality, this study affirms that time is a critical resource that must be equitably shared to achieve meaningful empowerment.

The findings of this study collectively offer a comprehensive response to the three research questions and highlight the multidimensional nature of unpaid household labor among Indonesian women. The first question explored how time poverty is experienced. The evidence shows that women consistently shoulder the vast majority of unpaid domestic responsibilities, regardless of their employment status or education. This unequal distribution, affirmed by BPS (2015) and explained through feminist economic theory, represents a structural form of inequality that restricts women's agency and time autonomy.

The second research question investigated the socio-cultural and institutional factors that maintain this imbalance. Results show that patriarchal cultural norms, such as the ideology of *kodrat wanita*, work alongside institutional inaction to reinforce traditional labor divisions. The integration of gender role theory and intersectionality reveals that women in rural and lower-income households face compounded disadvantages due to infrastructural inadequacies and conservative community values (Blackwood, 2005; ADB, 2016). These findings underscore the interplay between culture and policy, exposing the invisibility of unpaid labor in governance and planning processes.

The third research question examined the broader effects of time poverty. Thematic analysis found that unpaid labor limits women's access to paid employment, political participation, education, and health. The consequences of this hidden burden extend far beyond the household, impacting national development goals and women's long-term empowerment. Theoretical alignment with Folbre (2006) and Hirway (2010) reinforces the concept that time inequality translates into economic and political marginalization, deepening gender-based exclusion.

Theoretically, this study contributes a localized application of feminist economic theory, gender role perspectives, and intersectionality, offering a nuanced understanding of time poverty as a complex intersection of socio-cultural norms and institutional neglect. By synthesizing these frameworks, the research extends the conceptual scope of unpaid labor analysis beyond economic metrics into domains of autonomy, identity, and well-being.

Practically, the study offers strong implications for policy and institutional reform. There is an urgent need for gender-sensitive time use surveys, public investment in care infrastructure, and legal mandates for redistributing domestic responsibilities. Public education campaigns that challenge traditional gender roles must complement formal interventions. Moreover, the integration of time poverty into gender-responsive budgeting and national development plans is essential to promote equitable participation in economic and civic life.

This research affirms that addressing unpaid household labor is not peripheral but central to achieving gender equality in Indonesia. It demands a multidimensional approach that recognizes the economic, cultural, and structural dimensions of time as a vital and contested resource.

## CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that gender inequality in unpaid household labor remains a persistent and deeply embedded issue in Indonesian society. Through a time use analysis rooted in feminist economics, gender role theory, and intersectionality, the research has shown that women consistently experience disproportionate time poverty as a result of unequal domestic responsibilities. These unpaid duties restrict women's access to formal employment, limit their capacity for political and social engagement, and reinforce systemic structures of gender-based exclusion.

The findings confirm that this inequality is not merely a byproduct of individual choices, but the result of entrenched socio-cultural norms and institutional neglect. The ideology of *kodrat wanita*, along with insufficient public care infrastructure and a

lack of policy recognition, has contributed to a national environment in which women's time is devalued and invisibilized. Even as female education levels and labor force participation increase, the unpaid workload remains unequally distributed, hindering meaningful progress toward gender equity.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its integrated framework, which localizes international feminist theories within the Indonesian context. By engaging with concepts such as time poverty and structural inequality, the research offers a robust analysis that bridges conceptual understanding with practical realities. It affirms that time is a critical resource—its unequal distribution undermines not only women's individual well-being but also national development and democratic inclusiveness.

Based on these insights, the study recommends the implementation of time use surveys as part of official statistics, the development of community-based care programs, and policy interventions that directly target the redistribution of unpaid labor. Legal frameworks should promote shared household responsibilities, while public awareness campaigns must work to deconstruct gender stereotypes surrounding domestic work. Additionally, future research should explore longitudinal impacts of time poverty on younger generations, particularly in relation to intergenerational mobility and education outcomes.

Addressing unpaid household labor is essential to dismantling gender inequality in Indonesia. Without redistributing time and recognizing domestic contributions as essential labor, efforts toward gender justice will remain incomplete. This study calls for a fundamental rethinking of how time is valued, governed, and shared—laying the groundwork for more equitable social, economic, and political systems.

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