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# Treasuring Career from Home: The Sustainability of Women Homeworkers and Household Divisions

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## Abstract

Women homeworkers in Indonesia also resulted in double role causes women to have double workload, namely the main work that makes money and household chores such as cleaning the house, cooking and so on. This is because women cannot leave their responsibilities in the household, yet they must continue to perform their main work. Accordingly, a discussion addressing the dual burden and mechanism of division of work between men and women in the household is needed. This research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative method aimed to describe a number of issues including how consensus was performed by women homeworkers in carrying out the division of work with men and the efforts of women homeworkers to do the division of work with their husbands in the domestic sphere. The research was conducted in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia with snowball sampling techniques on 37 women. Based on the research results, it was discovered that: 1) the division of work in the public and domestic spheres for women homeworkers was flexible; 2) Men more often did the heavy household chores such as washing and drying clothes, the division of work occurred at certain times such as in the morning; 3) Within the household, the division of work between men and women took place when the woman homeworkers' main work piled up and could not be abandoned.

**Keywords:** Career, Household Division, Women Homeworkers, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

Women homeworkers are women whose roles as wives in a family as well as people who help earn extra income for the family by working from home. This phenomenon is typically in Indonesia for recent years for optimizing women's capability in working and earning money by depending on their skills. Home-based workers in Indonesia are those who take jobs from patrons in certain industries (usually categorized in home industry or small industries), then the workers doing their jobs at home. Further, in Indonesia, home workers are included in the informal sector, which is working in contract-based, not chosen as fixed employers, paid in wholesale systems, fringe works and conducted by women (Hart, 2001; Sofiani, 2012). The homeworkers informalization has an impact for their sustainability working conditions. In Indonesia, their existence is not approved as productive workers and they are not counted as productive workers nationally but as housewives, because almost all the jobs are done in their home (Agusmidah, 2018).

Likewise, homeworkers are also familiar in Malang city, East Java Province, Indonesia. As second largest city in East Java, Indonesia with a fairly dense population, Malang city reported that the percentage of male population in Malang in 2020 was 49.32% while women percentage was 50.68%. Meanwhile, in 2021, the percentage of male population in Malang City was 49.31% while women were at 50.69%. Accordingly, based on this data, it is known that in the past one year the percentage of the female population is still higher than the men. The high number of populations also affects the number of job seekers in the community. Based on the Statistics Central Bureau of Malang City data in 2014, the number of working women was 160,305 people. Meanwhile, according to the updated Statistics Central Bureau of Malang data in 2020, the population of women in Malang was 415,690. As a result, based on the above data explanation, it can be concluded that there are still many women who do not work for various reasons, and they only depend their lives on the salary of their husbands.

On the other hand, development cannot be separated from economic factors. One of the aspects of economic activity is the development of entrepreneurship to guide and improve the economic status of the lower class. One of the most common ways to do this is through industry. Industrials usually refer to industry (companies), or institutions and organizations that produce goods or provide services. (Martono, 2014; Newman & Gauerholz, 2002). Interestingly, homeworker systems in Malang city, Indonesia in which a worker bulk-labors a certain task for a fixed amount of payment, is one of the types of occupations for women in the informal sector still attracting most women in Malang City, Indonesia. Especially for those who are not engaging with career. There is still a limited research attention given to this area of employment, both from the government and the academics.

The status held by wife as a representative of the husband in the matter of household affairs makes it unable for her to let go the obligation to carry out the responsibilities existing in the domestic realm such as in matters of caring for children, cleaning the house, cooking, and other domestic matters. This actually creates injustice against women because women workers who have the responsibility of being extra income earners for families are also required to engage in the domestic sphere. This results in a double burden on women who live together with their husbands because there is no clear division of work mechanism in the domestic sector (Purbasari & Lestari, 2015).

The role of women in the public sphere is only considered as an additional role while the role in the domestic sphere is the main responsibility of women which cannot be shared with men. Consequently, this causes the low appreciation of the domestic function of women. Even if women have responsibilities in the public sphere, they are remaining obliged to serve their families in the domestic sphere. This leads women to have a double burden that must be borne between the public and domestic spheres. This double burden takes place because there is no mechanism for the division of roles and functions between men and women in the domestic sphere, which occurs because women are in a non-dominant position in the household (Prabasmoro 2006: 28).

The double burden is a dual task that must be carried out by women to fulfill their obligations in the public and domestic sphere. This leads to greater demands on women, namely helping the family economy and thinking about problems in the realm of the household (Salmah, 2014: 3). This article identifying and analyzing on how women in Malang city, Indonesia conducted their careers from home as women homeworkers and their sustainability in managing households. On the other hand, this paper intender in working consensus was performed by women homeworkers in carrying out the division of work with men as their husband and the efforts of women homeworkers to do the division of work with their husbands in the domestic sphere, while at the same time they run a job from home.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted by using a qualitative approach with descriptive research. The steps taken in conducting research were through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation (Cresswell, 2003, Sugiyono, 2017). The researchers conducted interviews with the woman homeworkers one by one and recorded the results of the interviews, then the researchers continued to actively conduct in-depth data digging by visiting

the residence of the woman homeworkers who acted as the interviewees. The main informants in this research were women homeworkers in Malang City, Indonesia.

Furthermore, the technique to select the informants was snowball sampling, namely the researchers first visited the chairman of Malang City JPPRI (Indonesian Women Homeworker Network) named Mrs. Yuyun Ekowati. Afterwards, the researchers were directed to the women homeworkers in Blimbing District, Malang City named Mrs. Kasianik whose role as JPPRI treasurer, then directed towards the chairperson of the POS sector worker in JPPRI named Mrs. Sri who later introduced the researchers to the other women homeworkers. Moreover, data analysis in qualitative research was performed by data reduction, which is an effort in organizing data by sorting them into manageable units, searching and finding patterns, and finding the important ones. Then this was followed by presenting data and drawing conclusions. The technique used in testing the validity of data was time triangulation. Time triangulation is data collection conducted at certain times where the informants feel refreshed, in example in the morning where the informants have not experienced many problems so that it will provide more valid and credible data.

### 3. Results

The establishment of Women Homeworkers Network in Indonesia began with research collaboration between Indonesia and Australia regarding the Home Net (Homeworkers). From this collaboration, an organization called MAMPU (Advanced Women for Economic Development) was formed, based in Jakarta. Furthermore, several branches in 7 provinces in Indonesia such as East Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, West Java, North Sumatra, Batam, and Riau were developed. Moreover, JPPRI (Indonesian Women Homeworker Network) in the Malang City area, Indonesia was established on 16 September 2015.

On the other hand, there are also some women who have jobs and these jobs do not require them to enter the public sphere. According to the data obtained from JPPRI (Indonesian Women Homeworker Network), Malang City has around 120 women becoming the members of Women Homeworkers Networking in Malang. These working women are under the auspices of JPPRI (Indonesian Women Homeworker Network). Based on the research results conducted by the researchers, it is known that there are 2 kinds of women homeworkers, namely POS (Putting Out System) and SE (Self Employment) homeworkers. Women who work in the POS (Putting Out System) sector are homeworkers who take work from employers or companies and work in their respective homes and deliver the work to the employers or companies that provide the work. The example of the worker is the onion peeling worker. Meanwhile, SE (Self Employment) homeworker is women who have their own business who often use female workers from the POS sector to complete the work.

Based on the observation, the type of tasks performed by women homeworkers at Malang, Indonesia is including putting a cover on raw materials and commodities to be processed further, convectional dressmaking, embroidering cloth pieces for making commodities, multi-purpose feather patching, different types of good packing, and other types of tasks which can be performed at home by women homeworkers. It can also be said that the tasks performed are mostly tasks exclusively attributed as women's skills.

Based on administrative data of women homeworkers obtained from the Chairperson of the Indonesian Women Homeworker Network (JPPRI) in Malang, Ms. Yuyun Ekowati, it was found that there were around 118 women homeworkers spread across Malang. In more detail, the number of women homeworkers who were under the auspices of JPPRI was divided into 7 groups, namely first, Dahlia group consisted of 13 working women, the majority of whom worked as tailors and workers who put on sequins (beads on wedding dresses). Second, Kenanga group with a total of 14 homeworkers with the majority worked as tailors and batik makers. Next, Anggrek and Melati groups consisted of 14 women with the majority worked as onion peelers, then the Nakula group with 6 members and the majority worked as tailors. Sixth, Wijaya Kusuma group with a total of 18 members with the majority worked as tailors, and the last was the Menur group with a total membership of 55 people, the majority of which had food or drink business as well as work as tailors.

One interesting thing found by researchers was that one of JPPRI's goals was to train women's independence to earn their own income without having to rely too much on their husbands. However, in fact, these working women were not allowed to leave their house or be responsibility as housewives who took care of all domestic matters such as cooking, cleaning the house, and so on. Furthermore, JPPRI also directed these women who worked under its auspices to be independent and did not rely too much on their lives based on their husband's salaries. Based on interview with the JPPRI founder in Malang City, Indonesia, there are still many women who are burdened with this condition and wanting to do something useful instead of working from home:

*"Many of women homeworkers are trapped in patriarchy system based on Indonesia's culture. They feel so hard to speak up about what their own necessity. JPPRI is always here to support many women for giving them an understanding that they also need a time for self actualization. Some of them are still in fear to talk with us because their spouse is not agreed with this activity. The husbands' thoughts that if the wife following all our agenda for a long time, they will left their family to work outside. It is ridiculous things in modernization era, which people are competing each other to gain in the workforce for better quality life, but in here (Malang-Indonesia) there are still many women not allowed to participate in working. So, as the solution, working from home is the better way even though they (women homeworkers) have not paid in a good salary like others" (Ibu Yuyun, 47 years old)*

Another activity performed by women who were the members of JPPRI was participating in the Woman School held in Blimbing District, Malang City. The Woman School is an activity initiated by JPPRI as a venue for interaction of women homeworkers in Malang City. The activities at this Woman School are conducted once a week including understanding financial-related material, training conducted by fellow network members such as sewing skills training, and training on organization and administration which is beneficial for developing knowledge and skills for women homeworkers as their future provisions.

Further, based on the results of the observations, the process of work division occurred when the women homeworkers' main jobs piled up or when they received a lot of work orders. This was when men or husbands allowed women to focus on their main jobs while all household matters including cooking or cleaning the house were done by the husbands without any instructions from their wives. Moreover, the process of work division between the public and domestic spheres occurring within the families of homeworker female informants was also based on the level of difficulty of existing house chores. For example, washing heavy clothes. This work was performed by the husband since this work was considered as a hard work. Nonetheless, the man performed these domestic works only when the man or husband was in the house or if the woman or the wife had a main job that could not be left behind.

On the other hand, women homeworkers who did not have a mechanism of work division at home chose to prioritize their house chores or domestic works. This was because the women considered that their domestic works were a responsibility that could not be abandoned. In addition, the nature of women who liked cleanliness made them choose to prioritize domestic works rather than their main works. As mentioned by one of informants below:

*"As wife and mother, the priority is working in domestic works firstly. Everyday, I must cook, serving a breakfast for my family first, after that I am cleaning my house. I can do my tasks (as onion peeler and chili slicer) mostly after my husband and my children left this home for going to work and going to school. I have ever done my tasks on weekend when they are at home, but I feel so uncomfortable. My husband gets angry to me because he thought that I had neglected him and my children, so I promise to them not to repeat those mistakes." (Ibu Jurinah, 35 years old)*

It is similarly with previous research which found the role of women in the public sphere is only considered as an additional role while the role in the domestic sphere is the main responsibility of women which cannot be shared with men. Consequently, this causes the low appreciation of the domestic function of women. Even if women have responsibilities in the public sphere, they are remaining obliged to serve their families in the domestic sphere. This leads women to have a double burden that must be borne between the public and domestic

spheres. Therefore, by doing works from home, women homeworkers are seeming enjoyed their roles in realm, without complain and it should be perceived as a part of women's nature. As said by one of informants:

*"I think (women) are taboo to said about how life burdened us in domestic and public works. We must think, said wisely, although we are tired with this condition. Many women in here (Malang, Indonesia) must be accepted this role as a God's gift, as the Javanese (our ancestor) does, so we can do all the things in life sincerely. Women are also human; we need to be respected by each other. But, in fact, women are still seeming like can not doing something better than men does." (Ibu Sahila, 44 years old)*

What is said before by informant, are also strengthen by another informant from Malang city, Indonesia:

*"If women do not have a distinction work in their home, it can be sure that she has a less bargain position or have no bargain position at all. Because for us (women homeworkers), working from home is not easy as people seen. Some of us (women homeworkers) are not allowed by our husband, or even family for having an opportunities on working outside. Actually, its hard for us in facing this, but...we have to realize if husband should have a greater authorization in our family as a norm in our culture (Javanese culture), and we must respect to it." (Ibu Nina, 29 years old)*

#### 4. Discussion

Many of the women homeworkers in Malang City, Indonesia still experiences double workload in the domestic sphere. This double workload occurs because the women homeworkers in Polehan Village still own the responsibility to take care of all domestic matters in their houses. This causes women to have greater responsibility in taking care of the domestic territory, especially if the women also work to meet the daily needs of the family, this of course will double the burden. The structure of power in the household between husband and wife also influences the determination of the burden that women have on the domestic sphere. Men who are considered dominant in the family have more power than women which causes women in a family to experience subordination or to be in a non-dominant position (Nugroho, 2008). The impact of this position causes the low bargaining position held by women. This is because women do not have the power in making decisions regarding the division of work in their households.

Further, the low bargaining position of the wife can also be caused by the status of the women, the level of the last education of the women, the authority of women as wives in the family, and the background of kinship and wealth owned by women in the household. The low bargaining position of women will ultimately have an impact on the occurrence of more workload experienced by women (Anggaunitakiranantika, 2019). Comprehension of the bargaining position in the family aims to explain how the bargaining position of women homeworkers in conducting consensus or discussions regarding the division of work with their husbands in the domestic realm.

Moreover, the low bargaining position of women in the household can be explained further through the theory of Levy Blood & Wolfe, Roger, White about variations in decision patterns in the family (Coleman, 1990; Newman & Gauerholz, 2002). This theory suggests that one important aspect in the family structure is the position of the family due to the distribution of power that causes the division of work within the family. On the basis of this distribution of power, several patterns of decision making that often affect the structure of the division of work within the family emerged, including:

1. Decision making by husband only
2. Decision making by husband and wife where the wife's dominance is greater
3. Decision making by husband and wife in which there is no dominance of both parties (both have the same bargaining position)
4. Decision making by husband and wife where the husband's dominance is greater
5. Decision making by wife only (Kusumawarti, 2016; Newman & Gauerholz, 2002)

Other factors that influence family decision making are:

1. The higher the husband's income, the higher the husband's power in the family
2. The existence of additional income given by the wife will increase the wife's power within the family
3. The higher the wife's education level compared to the husband, the higher the wife's power in the household (Kiranantika, A., 2015: 53)

What needs to be underlined is that the bargaining position of women in the household is not always low. Several things can increase the bargaining position of women in the family, namely (Hariadi in Kiranantika, A, 2015: 53):

1. Education level of women in the family
2. Employment status of women in the family
3. Income earned by the women

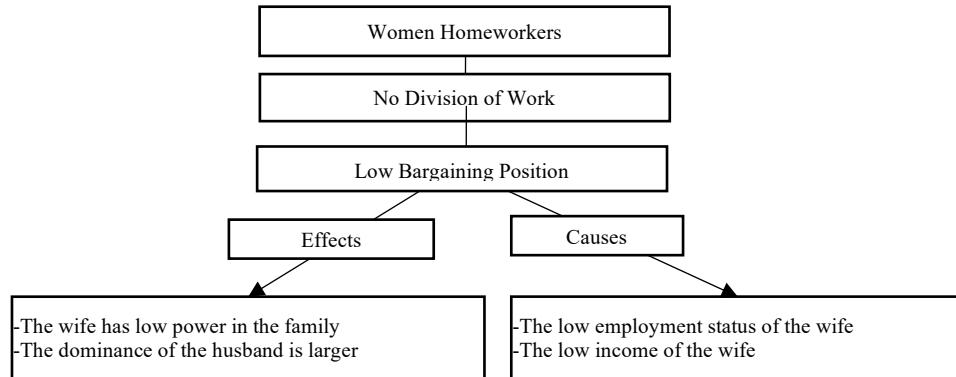
The above theory is expected to be able to explain the power held by women in the household as well as the pattern of decision making in division of work with husbands in the families of women homeworkers. Moreover, based on the observations, it was discovered that there were some women homeworkers who still experienced a double burden in the family, the double burden made the women homeworkers had a double workload, namely the main work and the domestic work which by some informants was considered as a compulsory work that could not be abandoned by women.

Furthermore, the work process by women homeworkers who did not get help from their husbands was first, they performed the house chores in the morning such as cooking, cleaning the house and so forth, then they proceeded to do the main job that earned money. However, if they still had the house chores which had not been completed in the morning, they still needed to finish them after completing the main job. This was usually done in the afternoon and evening.

Based on the description, it can be seen that women homeworkers who do not have a work distribution system in their family have a fairly low bargaining position. This is because the wife do not have the power to talk about what work should be done by men or women in the household. Bargaining position itself is a bargaining position held by women in their efforts to get the distribution of power in the family domain. There are 2 types of the bargaining position of women homeworkers related to the division of work that must be carried out between the Public and Domestic spheres, which further determines the position of women in their families. This double burden takes place because there is no mechanism for the division of roles and functions between men and women in the domestic sphere, which occurs because women are in a non-dominant position in the household (Prabasmoro, 2006).

Based on the results of interviews conducted, the low bargaining position of these women homeworkers could be seen from the employment status of these women where their status was only as homeworkers and the low income generated by these women homeworkers. On the other hand, the wife's decision in domestic work was greater yet the dominance of power remained in the hands of the husband, where husband as the dominant party did not feel that he had the obligation to do or assist his wife in doing domestic work. This further could be seen through the scheme below:

Figure 1: Decision Making of Women Homeworkers



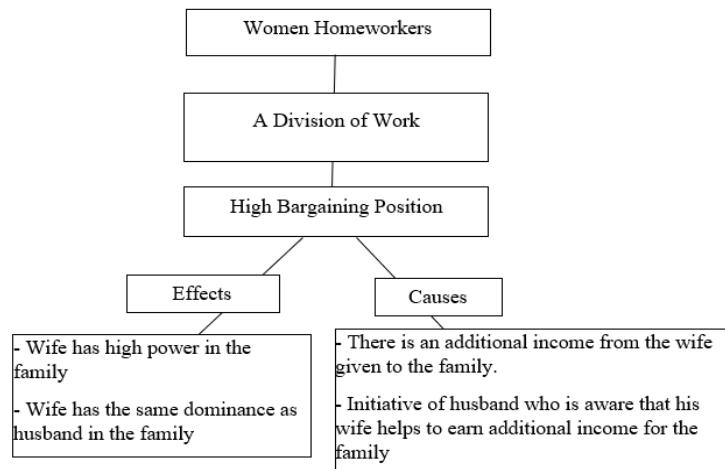
*Source: Primary Data, Analyzed, 2021*

Conversely, women homeworkers who had a work distribution process within their family would find it easier to do their main job because their husbands were willing to help with the household chores. This indicates that women homeworkers have a high bargaining position within the family. The husband's participation in helping the wife's work was done without any orders or coercion from the wife, where this decision-making came purely from the husband's initiative.

The work division occurred at certain times, for example, in the morning when the wife was having the hassle of taking care of the house chores, the husband's initiative arose to do other domestic work such as preparing the needs of their children to go to school. Other division of work also took place when the woman homeworkers' main job piled up, the heavy domestic works such as cooking, cleaning the house, and washing clothes would be immediately transferred to the men.

This division of work makes women have a fairly high bargaining position in the family. The division of work is also initiated by the decision making done jointly by the husband and wife where there is no dominance from both parties or both have the same bargaining position due to the husband's awareness that the wife helps to make a living in the household, or in other words there is an additional income given by the wife which will ultimately increase the power of the wife in the family.

Figure I.2: Variations in the Decision Making of Women Homeworkers



*Source: Primary Data, Analyzed, 2021*

Based on the research findings, it was discovered that women who had a work division with their husbands held a bargaining position within the family since the division of work occurred due to the husband's own initiative to do house chores or domestic works. The high bargaining position of women will certainly have an impact on the decision-making process in the household of the woman homeworkers, which in turn will affect the pattern of women's power within their household.

## Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion described above, it is found that the division of work process occurs when the women homeworkers' main job piles up or when they get a lot of work orders. Furthermore, the process of work division in households within the family of women homeworker informants is also based on the difficulty level of the existing house chores. In addition, women homeworkers who do not have a division of work in their family choose to do their house chores first before doing the main jobs that earn money.

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