Countering Social and Cultural Constructs Towards Women: Realizing Gender Justice in The Household

Yulianti[1,*)], Nadya Kharima [2)]

[1]Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta
[2]Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta
[*)]*Correspondence e-mail: nengyuli0796@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The social and cultural constructions that develop in society have been formed so that there is an assumption that a mother is the most responsible person in the upbringing of children. But basically childcare is a shared responsibility between husband and wife. Even though the mother is the first school for her children, the father also has a great responsibility in the upbringing of the child. Then, mothers are not only given great responsibility in childcare, social and cultural constructions in Indonesia form that a wife or mother must be able to do housework and the husband is responsible for providing a living. The purpose of this study, researchers want to see how a mother eliminates the constructions that develop in society in realizing gender justice and equality in the household. The research method in this study is a descriptive qualitative method because it is to discuss the research results comprehensively. Data collection in this study used interviews with two young mothers. The results in this study show that in realizing gender justice in the household, each couple must prepare for marriage in terms of science and mentality so that each other understands each other regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. responsible for childcare and domestic work. and the establishment of a culture of communication in carrying out the division of roles in order to the emergence of justice in the household.

Keywords: *Construction, Women, Gender Justice*

INTRODUCTION

Being a mother is a very complex thing for a woman to do, because mothers not only think about how to provide good parenting to children but must also be required to be a good wife. In the article (Niemistö et al., 2021) it is also explained that the role of motherhood pinned to women can be defined as the state of being as a person can be described as a dynamic gender process. Being a mother is a social practice related to parenting, in this parenting the historical, social and cultural context requires a mother to be a good mother for her child according to the existing social and cultural circumstances.

In an article written by (Mullings, 2013) that being a mother is a challenging endeavor, regardless of the circumstances, resources, and support that exist around the venture. Then the female, almost always, should become a mother under pressure. Even the stereotypical "good" mother was considered a suspect at various times throughout her life.

A woman's response to the challenges of motherhood is strongly influenced by her own age when her first child is born. The theory of adult development suggests that during the early twenties, adults shifted their "center of gravity" from their native family to their own home base, whereas during the thirties, adults developed roots and settled down(Walter, 1989). In this case being a person can be influenced by the mental readiness and age of a woman.

The ideal of motherhood is also strongly shaped and shaped by individual choices and professional identity. In the context of modern motherhood it is partly produced and reproduced as an individualistic show . Thus, neoliberal and postfeminist values that embrace choice, empowerment, and individualism, as well as the post-feminist construction of 'moderate feminism' that combines feminist ideas with individual femininity are essential (Niemistö et al., 2021). In this case, a mother can be free in making her life choices to become a mother but can still do activities that can add skills and appear in front of the public.

In a study conducted in India by (Bhambhani & Inbanathan, 2018) explained that in Indian masryakat being a mother is a role and institution that defines a woman's identity and gives her adult status if she is already a mother. In India, a girl since childhood has been instilled and socialized to be a future mother. In this context, a woman is perceived as imperfect if she does not become a mother.

Motherhood is considered the core of the existence of women because it is related to their biology, that is, reproductive potential, thus distinguishing females from males. Feminist scholars argue that there is an excessive emphasis on the reproductive capacity of women, which limits them to their biology. It is not considered a "productive" activity despite generating labor for production; It is considered reasonable and does not generate any exchange rate, while the "productive" activity of males is recognized for its market value. Women, from an early age, are formed in patriarchal structures to become future caregivers, without questioning the male-female, productive-reproductive dichotomy (Bhambhani & Inbanathan, 2018). Based on the above explanation that there is still a construction from society that a mother is the most responsible person in the upbringing of children.

In a study conducted by (Green, 2015) citing a bell hooks article in 1984 on "Revolutionary Parenting" bell hooks observed that children and others came to believe that parenting is a vocation for women, and to see or imagine some examples of diverse parenting practices when parenting is carried out exclusively by women. To change these perceptions and attitudes, hooks argue that we must restructure society so that women do not exclusively provide that care, and ensure children have the right and access to effective childcare by both parents not just by a mother.

In Indonesia, the cultural construction related to housewives is very strong regarding the responsibility of a woman. In the research conducted by (Limilia, 2016) that there are two groupings of responsibilities that must be carried out by a woman when she is married and becomes a mother. A mother's first responsibility is to raise and educate the child directly, in other words, the mother should not delegate the task to others. The second responsibility of a mother is to raise and educate children and help the family economy. This concept gives mothers the opportunity to have a career outside the home. It's just

that mothers are required to be able to balance their domestic roles as responsible parties in raising and educating children with their roles as parties who have a career outside the home with various interests.

With the socio-cultural construction related to the role of a mother which is pinned on women, it is a great responsibility for women because mothers are not only responsible for childcare but also must be able to do domestic work in the household. Based on the background of these problems, researchers want to see further how a mother understands the roles and responsibilities of a housewife and wife in the family.

METHODS

Research methods in this writing, the author uses descriptive qualitative research methods. According to Bogdan and Taylor stated that qualitative research is a study that produces descriptive data based on written words from people who are the object of the study (Moleong, 2010). Thus, in this study, the author aims to describe the data obtained in detail and in depth. In collecting the research data, the authors conducted interviews with two mothers who married at a young age to find out how the experience of motherhood and what challenges were experienced during parenting.

Then, in analyzing the data from the research carried out, researchers used analytical techniques proposed by Miles and Hubermen. Miles and Hubermen explained that in analyzing a qualitative research data there are three processes that must be carried out by the researcher. Three processes were carried out in analyzing data in this study, namely data codification, data presentation and drawing conclusions (Afrizal, 2014). At the data codification stage, the author tries to collect data from interviews that have been conducted with an informant of a young mother After the data is collected neatly, the author will present data in the form of narasai, tables or diagrams. At the last stage, the authors draw conclusions from the findings and the presentation of the data. Researchers try to interpret the findings and analyze them using theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Gender

The word "gender" has a meaning as a difference in roles, functions and responsibilities in men and women as a result of the formation or construction of social and cultural embedded through the process of socialization from one generation to the next. Thus, gender is the result of human agreement that is not natural. Therefore, gender varies from place to place and from one time to the next. Gender is not natural, changeable and interchangeable in one human being to another depending on the time and local culture (Puspitawati, 2012).

The difference in gender roles is very important so that the order of life in society does not mix gender roles and natural things owned by women and men. Then, gender differences are also very helpful in rethinking the division of roles of men and women in domestic life that has been developing in society.

Thus gender concerns social rules relating to the human sex of men and women. Biological differences in terms of the reproductive apparatus between men and women do carry different reproductive function consequences (women have menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation; males fertilize with spermatozoa). It is this biological gender that is God's creation, nature, immutable, non-interchangeable and applicable throughout the ages.

Nevertheless, cultures driven by patriarchal cultures interpret these biological differences as indicators of appropriateness in behavior that ultimately lead to restrictions on rights, access, participation, control and enjoying the benefits of resources and information. Finally, the demands of roles, duties, positions and obligations that are appropriate for men or women and that are inappropriate for men or women vary greatly from society to society. There are some societies that are very rigid in limiting the roles that are appropriate for both men and women, for example, it is taboo for a man to enter the kitchen or hold his child in public and a taboo for a woman to often leave the house to work (Puspitawati, 2012).

To see how gender roles on the male and female side we can look at some of the gender roles inherent in men and women respectively so as not to cause gender bias.

Socio-Cultural Construction

In the socio-cultural construction of Indonesia, mothers are expected to play a leading role as transmitters of social values and therefore become the main actors in choosing and passing on socio-cultural values that she considers important. This hope can cause various conflicts when there is a clash of interests, needs, and demands for women's responsibilities as young mothers. Moreover, the romanticization of women as mothers is still reinforced by the existence of myths and stereotypes about the "maternal instinct", about the "nature" of women, and about women whose affection for children cannot be exchanged or measured. The myths and stereotypes that apply to women are at once a mirror that women are designated as different beings from men. On the contrary, it has an effect on women's passion for dinya as a wife, mother, and person (Sadli, 2010).

Research conducted by (Limilia, 2016) that every woman who has given birth is given the responsibility of raising and providing a decent livelihood for children. The responsibility given to the mother will be ingrained by a mother at the time of giving birth to a child until the child grows up. Based on this definition, the mother is seen as someone who has responsibilities in childcare.

The study also cited the opinion of Shari L Turer that culture intervened in the change in the ideology of maternal upbringing from the stone age to the present. In the stone age, parenting was considered a natural one, where mothers were only required to raise children without having to educate with a special purpose. We find different things in today's mothers, where parenting ideologies tend to be equated with the purpose and identity of the mother (Limilia, 2016). It is understood that cultural constructions related to parenting are already charged to a mother.

Later in the research carried out by Douglas and Michaels (2004) showed that social construction also plays a role in constructing the responsibilities or roles of a mother. Douglas and Michaels (2004) reveal that social construction also plays a role in shaping the concept of the "ideal" mother. They revealed that mothers in the 12th century defined the ideal mother as a mother who could perform two responsibilities at once. That is to have children, a career, and have free time to make healthy food for the family.

Based on the socio-cultural constuction related to the responsibility of a mother, it is a burden for a mother to have to get a great responsibility in terms of ideal childcare according to social construction. Then the mother must also be responsible for her husband and also domestic work in the household. Socio-cultural construction instills that a mother is valued as a superpower who can do all the work at the same time simultaneously.

Realizing Gender Justice

In realizing gender justice and efforts to eliminate social and cultural constuctions in mothers, the authors tried to conduct interviews with two mothers who performed young marriages. Informant F with the initials F is 24 years old and has one child. The 25-year-old informant W with the initials W had one child. This interview is intended to see the extent to which the two young mothers apply the principles of gender justice in their respective households.

Implementation in realizing gender justice in the household must be understood by every couple between husband and wife. Understanding gender justice in the household should be studied by men and women before carrying out marriage. The understanding of gender justice is carried out before marriage so that each couple understands their respective roles and responsibilities. Based on the interviews conducted, the first informant explained that a marriage must be carefully prepared so that in building a household it can run well, what must be prepared in marriage is science, mental and spiritual. The information is obtained in the following excerpts of the interview:

> *"What I am most prepared is knowledge, mental and spiritual in building a household so that my household can survive and not be as busy as halfway"*

Then, informant W also explained that in a marriage there must be preparation. According to informant W, the most important thing to be prepared is mental because after marriage, he will be in a family that is very different from himself. In the interview excerpts, the informant tells the story as follows:

> *"Mentally, that's definitely true, because we're going to adapt to a family that's obviously all very different from what the family is doing/daily habits2. We have a commit, want to*

live independently, at first it was difficult to be independent because the wida husband did not have a permanent job so help wida jalanin selling wida which long before marriage was already wida jalanin. Alhamdulillah, I have been able to live independently because wida stays with the wida business and the husband also opens his own business."

The most important preparation in building a household is learning about childcare. Childcare is very important to learn because in carrying out according to the socio-cultural construction in society that childcare is generally carried out by a mother. After learning about childcare, it is hoped that each couple will understand that childcare in the household is not the main responsibility of a wife. In the research conducted by (Davies et al., 2003) also explained that the existence of a good portrait of the romanticization of mothers in a childcare is a problem in a household because the mother is emphasized in the responsibility of childcare.

As a result of interviews from the two informants, informant F argued that she and her husband were open to each other regarding the upbringing of children not only the responsibility of a wife but also a shared responsibility. Here's an excerpt of an interview with informant F.

"Oohh no. Parenting is mainly husband and wife, Because children are entrusted mainly to their parents, while the family or environment also sometimes participates in parenting. And I'm the same type of family. So my husband and I are the same. Have equal responsibility. Because we're his parents"

Informant W is also of the same opinion with informant F that childcare is not only the responsibility of a mother and father. The following is the information provided by informant W

"No, this is a child with the responsibility of both. Just for the task. It just so happens that Wida's son is only one and a boy. So if you want to educate him on this daily basis and the same introduction to all things, yes, it must be wida because of the wida who spends a lot of time with this child. But if for example solat, from the way he dresses, his papa because it was possible because he often saw wida solat using mukena so he knew that solat was using mukena so wida told his husband to ask him to be dressed so that he would know that this is for men and it is for women"

However, in practice in society the two informants are often considered that as the main responsible person in carrying out childcare and the husband is duty to make a living. Informant F explained that sometimes getting such a presumption, informant F also argued that mothers often get the assumption that the mother is the main responsibility in childcare, resulting in a burden felt by the mother due to social construction.

"Pernaah, it's her husband's job to make a living. And if that happens often so sedih that one, kasian the mother then"

Similarly, the informant W also experienced, that the child's first school was a mother. Although the existence of such a presumption does not mean that the father runs away from responsibility.

"Once, the child's first madrasa was the mother. Yes, I totally agree because it's true. But that doesn't mean dad doesn't have a responsibility to educate. Because this child lost his father's name. So you have to be aware of what the posri is educating the child. According to wida"

To realize gender justice in the household is not only the division of roles in childcare but also the division of roles in domestic work. Domestic work is often imposed on women as a result of research conducted by (Hermawati, 2007) that a wife must be able to manak, macak, cook and how many words start with another 'm'. That a wife should be able to give offspring, should always dress up for her husband and should be able to cook for her husband. Other terms attached to a woman or wife are kitchen, pupur, mattress, well and there may be other "your-your" endings that can be passed on to attach to women.

In looking at gender justice in the household of the two informants that the researcher interviewed. Researchers asked how the division of domestic roles and childcare in their families. Informant F explained that in the division of domestic work and childcare, her husband really understood that the

two jobs were not only the work of a wife but a joint job. This understanding is because the informant and his partner prepare and understand gender justice.

> *"Domestic work is sesame's responsibility, Thank God my husband understands and I am free from understanding that to my own husband hehe"*

Unlike informant F, informant W explained that although domestic and parenting responsibilities are shared responsibilities, her husband still does not understand the division of the two jobs. Informant W explained that the incomprehension resulted from the difference in the care of the husband by his parents.

> *"If you cook Wida, your papa invites the children to play, the wida cleans up the house, the papa also takes care of the children. But more often wida work everything when the child is sleeping again, because if you wake up so riweuuuh because his father has to lecture first and then understand what he has to do"*

In order for gender justice to be realized and each couple carrying out their respective roles and responsibilities there must be a very clear division of roles. In the division of the two roles, informant F explained that there is no specific division but each other must be aware of each other if they see and have free time to do the two jobs.

> *"We don't have any divisions that are sacrosanct or written in nature, The point is that anyone who sees and feels free to do domestic work at home, yes he will do it without being told to While taking care of the child in the morning to evening I automatically hold, after the husband comes home from work later replace him who holds well I can teach or do other activities. The important thing is that we have one frequency, for example, children don't often play gadgets. So we agree when parenting is the same pattern as each other."*

Then, informant W also explained that there is no division of specific roles in carrying out the two roles. Usually the informant is just a reminder in a good way, but if the good way fails the informant will do some other alternatives.

> *"Speaking of it, it's fine if you can take care of your feelings, right, but if you fail once or twice the third time, you must be wida while nagging while wida jejerin alesan2 why do we have to do this and so, understand that the emotions are still high wida"*

Based on information obtained from two informants who have been interviewed and seen from several aspects of the theory in the concept of gender that two informants are open mothers and try to fight gender injustice that develops in society. In realizing gender justice in the domestic life of the two informants, there must be communication between husband and wife in the division of roles related to childcare and responsibility in completing domestic work.

Reflection

Social and cultural constructions related to the concept of gender in Indonesia still cannot be lost because it has existed since ancient times. The view that women are the primary responsibility in childcare as well as doing domestic work in the household is still growing in society. Based on interviews with the two informants, a socio-cultural context that is still developing in society can be countered by the knowledge between husband and wife regarding gender justice, establishing communication related to the division of roles between childcare and domestic work. Thus, the social and cultural constructions that develop in society can be resisted if the community is educated and aware of gender justice.

Explain the findings by presenting the data in a complete, accurate, systematic, and logical manner. Data visualization (tables, matrices, figures, or diagrams) must be presented and discussed in a clear and concise manner. In discussion, it is necessary to relate and explain the findings obtained with the concepts used/explained in the introduction and/or hypotheses. The discussion should include comparisons with previous articles related to the topic. The discussion also needs to show both theoretical and application implications.

CONCLUSION

Women in community life are still seen as weak creatures, but on the other hand women are also seen as creatures who get the burden of work if they are married. In the concept of gender, there is a social

and cultural construction related to the role of women in the household. The role of women is depicted as a primary caregiver in childcare and women also perform domestic work. The growing socio-cultural construction should be lost in the way a woman or mother must loudly voice gender justice so that women are not oppressed.

In this study, we can look at several ways that women can realize gender justice in domestic life. To achieve gender justice, every couple must learn about life after marriage, be responsible for childcare and domestic work. and the establishment of a culture of communication in carrying out the division of roles for the emergence of justice in the household.

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