

Supporting the Labor: The Phenomenon of Waithood and Unpaid Care Workforce in the Perspective of Social Reproduction

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Abstract

The construction of unpaid care work as the responsibility of women has contributed to the emergence of the postponing marriage phenomenon (waithood) among youth, especially women. On the other hand, care work is an integral part of the reproductive workforce, related to productive work. Furthermore, care work also contributes to reproducing the workforce in serving the interests of capital accumulation. The mechanization of women's roles in creating a workforce surplus makes women work excessively and hinders economic access. It argues that the financial pressures and the burden of work indirectly lead to the delayed marriage phenomenon. This financial pressure and the burden of care work indirectly contribute to the postponement of marriage. This study adopts a perspective of Social Reproduction Theory by utilizing qualitative research methods and a literature study approach. This study analyzes the relationship between capitalism, care work, and the recent phenomenon of waithood. The results indicate that women have been supporting the workforce through their care work, and this occurs systemically as a consequence of the capitalist system, which has led to the postponement of women's marriages.

Keywords: care work, capitalism, social reproduction, waithood

Introduction

Unpaid care work has created labour supply and indirectly led to the phenomenon of marriage postponement among young people. Marriage has often been perceived as an obstacle to young people's career and economic advancement. Self-realisation is identical to one's independence from marriage. Whether we admit it or not, unpaid care work in the family is one of the obstacles. What is forgotten about family care work, however, is the production process behind it. Care work has always created an invisible labour supply, and, on the other hand, unpaid care work has created a fear of marriage.

The phenomenon of young people delaying marriage (waithood) is widespread in many countries, including Indonesia. Since the end of the 20th century, young people have tended not to marry immediately. Since the end of 2022, young people have been having a tendency not to get married immediately. This can be seen from data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS*) in 2022, which shows an increasing trend in the percentage of young people with an unmarried status. The marriage rate over the last 10 years has fallen from 1.79 million marriages to

1.7 million marriages in 2022. Delaying marriage is not unique to Indonesia. According to Pew Research Centre, the number of people living without a partner is increasing in America. About 61 per cent of Americans under the age of 35 do not have a partner (Inhorn & Smith-Hefner 2021).

Waithood has had an impact on demographic and socio-economic changes because delaying marriage affects the birth rate. Waithood has changed demographics and caused the birth rate to fall. Total Fertility Rates (TFRs) have been declining in many countries since 1980, including in the Muslim world (Inhorn & Smith-Hefner 2021). The decline in birth rates will certainly affect population growth and the availability of labour in a country.

The phenomenon of waithood is closely linked to economic and political systems that force young people to delay marriage. Economic phenomena such as personal financial independence lead young people to choose career advancement over marriage. In other cases, family's economy may also be one of the reasons for delaying marriage. The economic constraints of the family, such as parents, make young people to delay marriage to reduce the burden of the Sandwich Generation.

Sandwich Generation itself refers to individuals who have the burden of caring for their young and adult children, as well as caring for their elderly parents (Chisholm 1999), so today's young people are living in waitthood to ease their burden in the future.

Economic pressures of the family go hand in hand with young people's care responsibility towards their parents. In this care work, women are often involved in long-term care as caregivers in both formal and informal systems based on kinship or friendship (Polivka 2017). Meanwhile, family care work is still widespread in Indonesia. Due to the lack of social security and inadequate infrastructure in terms of health and care facilities, among others, young people, especially women, cannot avoid domestic care work.

On the other hand, today's economic uncertainty is also putting pressure on priorities, with people choosing to pursue a career first and improve their financial situation. Increased economic uncertainty is felt by many young people, especially in urban areas (Thieme 2018), and this is causing them to choose to delay marriage. In the midst of the economic constraints, young people, especially women, who are burdened with unpaid care work, are finding it increasingly difficult to access paid work. Many women have to withdraw from paid work because of the need to care for family members (Elson 2017).

The marginalisation of women in the paid workforce due to this unpaid care work has indirectly paved the way for the development of inequalities in income, employment, and mobility (Lightman & Kevins 2021). The gaps in the economy in terms of income, employment, and mobility then have the potential to cause people, especially women, to delay marriage. This is also exacerbated by the burden of care.

The care work imposed on women is closely linked to the process of social reproduction. Women with economic constraints and caring and educational responsibilities have contributed indirectly to both formal and informal work, whether directly in the labour force or through unpaid work that has contributed to the production of labour. Thus, care work has subsidised the production of goods and labour (Bhattacharya et al. 2017). This has encouraged young people, especially women, to delay marriage in order to take on the burden of care work and contribute to the family economy.

From the perspective of social reproduction theory, the unpaid work that women have been doing has helped the process of the capitalist system.

Starting with women taking care of their parents so that they have good health and can work well, taking care of children so that they can go to school and become good labourers, even when women become labourers themselves. The multiple challenges and burdens of family care lead women to delay marriage. Unpredictable family responsibilities often hinder educational progress and employment prospects. This can delay socially expected youth transitions (Day & Evans 2015), including marriage. After all, young people want to complete their education, get a decent job, find a partner, and prosper. However, the responsibilities and aspirations of raising and caring for a family lead young people to delay marriage as a sign of their transition to social adulthood.

The phenomenon of delaying marriage is ultimately a phenomenon shaped by the capitalist system. This research seeks to answer the main question of how the capitalist system tacitly uses care work to influence the phenomenon of delaying marriage. This phenomenon is discussed from the perspective of social reproduction theory to see how care work supports the capitalist system and creates burdens and fears for young people, especially women, to enter into marriage.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in this research is a literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach. This method is used as a critical analysis step in relation to the phenomenon of waitthood and its relation to care work and the capitalist system. Using Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) perspective, the authors will critique the phenomenon through readings of various available literature such as journals, research findings, news, and other supporting documents. The authors first conducted a review of SRT as an analytical tool to examine women's care work, both the factors that encourage it and who benefits from it, and its impact on marriage delay, particularly for women. The research results include a critical narrative of the capitalist system that has formed a natural labour force in the household in the form of women, departing from gender injustice in employment itself (Ferguson 2020), as well as a critical narrative of unpaid care work and its relationship to the formation of the phenomenon of waitthood. The authors also used the ILO's 5R concept of recognition, reduction, redistribution, reward, and representation (ILO 2019) to respond to the issue of waitthood, which is also linked to women's unpaid care work.

Understanding Care Work and Social Reproduction

The majority of unpaid care work is done by women. This unpaid care work is imposed on women to look after their families, either husbands or children as labourers or potential labourers. Women spend more time than men on caring, raising, cooking, cleaning, and being responsible for children and the elderly. Some of this is known as unpaid care work.

In a capitalist society, unpaid care work imposed on women is a form of dehumanising women and does not liberate them (Ferguson 2020). According to Ferguson, women have a responsibility to produce labour that is useful to the capitalists. Women are used by the capitalists to care for and produce labour without being paid. This is because there is still a patriarchal mentality. This mentality assumes that women are inferior to men and ultimately dependent on paid labour performed by men. Ultimately, the fact that women become care workers for men is the cause of capitalism and patriarchy.

Care work contributes to the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being of others (Duffy et al. 2013). This includes both unpaid and paid care work. Paid care work, such as domestic workers (DWs), and unpaid care work, such as care work provided voluntarily by housewives. However, Federici explains that even paid domestic workers are still the responsibility of the employer, not the capitalist or the state. This means that women are still responsible for care work, whether paid or unpaid (Federici 2020).

Paid and unpaid care work has been gendered and imposed on women. Care work has influenced the way men and women work in everyday life. For example, the gap in paid production work, which is still dominated by men, leaving the majority of women in unpaid care work in the household. Gaps such as differences in access to work or opportunities for men and women in the paid production sector have systematically placed men and women in "different spaces". The gender-biased labour market system has positioned women in unpaid care work, which then becomes an agent of social reproduction for the formation of a new workforce. This makes it difficult for women to participate in the Indonesian labour force. This is evidenced by a survey conducted by the *BPS* (2023), which explains that female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is only 54.42 per cent, compared to 83.98 per cent for men. Research by Utomo (2018) also shows that female labour force participation has stagnated at only 51 per cent. It can be concluded that the female LFPR has not increased significantly from the 1990s to 2023.

If the gender-biased economic system has always kept women out of paid work and relegated them to unpaid care work, then women's unpaid care work is also capable of maintaining a capitalist-controlled economic system. Unpaid care work turns women into reproductive machines for the operation and circulation of goods and labour production. Women's daily activities, such as caring for children, parents, and family members, are essentially efforts to care for potential paid labourers. This means that women's care work is actually reproductive work in the capitalist labour process of production.

Even in paid work, women are often engaged in care work, which includes caring, domestic work, nursing, and more. This feminisation of care work further impoverishes women and does not liberate women in the world of work, be it paid or unpaid care work. This is because even in paid care work, workers are often denied rights such as leave, and even their wages are often below the minimum wage. The National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (JALA PRT) also mentions that the average wage of domestic workers in DKI Jakarta is only IDR1,200,000-IDR 1,500,00, while in Semarang, Yogyakarta, Makassar, Surabaya and Medan it is only IDR800,000-IDR1,000,000 (Sinambela 2023). According to Federici, even unpaid care work is vulnerable to violence (Federici 2020), be it physical, psychological, economic, or social. On closer examination, the position of vulnerability can be doubled by the lack of wages and protection. In addition, care work, which is commonly done by women, is not recognised as work and does not have clear wage regulations. Care work becomes informal work and is not even recognised, which makes women's conditions even more vulnerable.

What needs to be emphasised in unpaid care work is the maintenance of the workforce or potential workforce. Care work contributes to building and maintaining a labour force that cannot be subsidised by the market (Duffy et al. 2013). In this case, unpaid care work is linked to the market because it affects the production of a quality workforce. Qualified labour is an important element in the production of goods, so the availability of good labour and the generation of qualified labour benefits the market. Labour is an important aspect of the process of capital accumulation.

The social construction of women and men in the division of labour is an important part of this research. The gendered construction of labour also results in women being excluded from production and paid work and becoming unpaid care workers. This is related to the authors' approach, Social Reproduction Theory

(SRT), which asks: How does care work contribute to the maintenance/production of labour? Who benefits most from care work? How has care work produced labour and ensured that a child can become a good labourer and work generation? that invisibly supports the productive labour process of capitalism. In the Marxian tradition, the theory of social reproduction also questions the added value that certain groups provide in this reproductive system (Larastiti 2020). Then, who and what work has provided this added value?

Women as unpaid care workers have been seen as subjects who help to restore what has been consumed in the production process in order to sustain life (Larastiti 2020). In this case, social reproduction uses family as a basis for analysis to see how women are oppressed. Women in the family have to work every day to provide good food for the family, to ensure the health of the family by providing clean water and other facilities to maintain health. In fact, women can work even harder to ensure that their families are well fed. Especially for rural women who depend on natural resources in the midst of the climate crisis. Maintenance will be more difficult and require greater efforts than before. This is social reproduction, which means creating, maintaining, and restoring labour for capitalist interests (Bhattacharya et al. 2017). Maintenance work, including taking care of labour, is reproductive work at the stage of keeping the labour system in good working order, together with its availability. Work that ensures that labour is in the best possible condition to work as paid labour.

Gender segregation makes it difficult for women to access productive work. Ultimately, women work as unpaid care workers, ensuring that their family members are able to work properly, whether in the plantation sector, in factories and offices, or in other jobs. Social reproduction unravels how women's oppression in the family sphere is reinforced by the capitalist system of production (Ferguson 2020). This theory looks at the labour relations of production and reproduction in the capitalist production process that deprives women of their work. Women perform unpaid care work for the benefit of capitalism by caring for capitalist-owned labour. This oppression of women is perpetuated along with the dynamics in the relationship between social reproduction and the process of capital accumulation.

Social reproduction is closely linked to capitalism. The work of social reproduction is a way of creating labour. Labour itself is the productive power to produce capital goods. Care work is one of the things of social reproduction that maintains labour, such as preparing

food and washing clothes for capitalist-owned labour. It is these basic tasks that support the continuation of work of the labourers. At the same time, however, this social reproduction has provided a supply of labour to support the process of capital accumulation (Ferguson 2020), with basic tasks being performed and strategies for maintaining the lives of family members.

So, the questions above relate to: Who benefits from unpaid care work? How is this work produced? The answer lies in the Social Reproduction Theory (SRT). SRT believes that the production of goods and services and the production of life are integrated (Bhattacharya et al. 2017). All three operate within a patriarchal capitalist system. Capitalism exploits the patriarchal social system by oppressing women in order to make more profit from oppressing women. The patriarchal capitalist system slowly oppresses women through their unpaid care work. These are women's everyday activities, which many are unaware have contributed significantly to the production of goods and services. Women have done invisible and undervalued work on the side-lines of their busy lives (Fernandes et al. 2023).

The exploitation of women by capitalism is carried out through care work. Care work as one of the social reproductions full of oppression of women can be seen from its impact on women's vulnerability. In unpaid care work such as housewives, oppression can be seen in the double burden or overwork that women do without pay. In the capitalist mode of production, this exploitation of women in unpaid care work is highly profitable. Capitalism exploits women to create and maintain labour without having to pay them directly. Therefore, unpaid care work is highly profitable for capitalism.

Workload and Vulnerability of Women in Care Work

The gender gap in reproductive work results in women having an excessive workload and even a double burden. In a patriarchal system, productive work is dominated by men, while women are often not involved. Women's workload is in care work, domestic work, education, and other household work. However, women have also begun to engage in productive work to meet the needs of the family, which is not enough if they rely solely on their husband's wages. Women are known to have a triple burden, including a productive burden, a reproductive burden, and a social burden. The productive burden on women arises because women also play a role in the family economy. It is not uncommon for women to engage in wage labour and to work in the formal and informal sectors to support their livelihoods. So far,

however, the majority of women work in the informal economy, with more flexible working hours that enable them to carry out their reproductive work properly.

The reproductive burden is the care and domestic work assigned to women in the household. Women's marital status has always been associated with their roles between care and work (Zilanawala 2016). Care and domestic work seem to be inextricably linked to women's work. The responsibility for the family's food security, the availability of clean water, the family's health, and other facilities to meet the family's needs is given to women. In addition, women's responsibilities extend not only to their husbands and children, but also to caring for parents or the elderly in the family.

Family's health services often depend on women's unchanging care work, which is seen as strengthening kinship and motherhood. This assumes that it is women, or mothers, who are most responsible for caring for both the family and the community (Jakimow et al. 2019). Therefore, women's unpaid care work sometimes constrains women's paid work to the point of excluding women from the labour market. Women are the primary human resource in the family and the family is the primary unit for social reproduction. Women's non-economic contributions to the family are greater than those of their husbands due to their gendered domestic roles, such as caring for their husbands, children, and organising the household both before and after work (Tjandraningsih 2018).

For reproductive work, women have more time to work but earn less than men. Women's use of time depends on the social norms that shape the family and influence the balance between work and care in the household (Charmes 2022). Women's time for work, study, rest, and self-care as a necessity and leisure are all constructed and encourage women to engage more in unpaid work and care work.

Women's high commitment to reproductive work determines the well-being of others. Through their care work, women provide hidden surplus value to wage labour. Women maintain the entire household in exchange for wage labour under the control of capitalism (Felt & Sinclair 1992). However, care work is yet to be recognised as such. In fact, care work has the same vulnerability as other paid work. The vulnerability of care workers can be physical, psychological, economic, and even sexual. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the lack of clear regulations to protect care workers, such as social security, wage regulations, health insurance, and

others. Reproductive work is also inherently women's work, favouring a patriarchal world (Irawaty 2017).

The unequal division of labour in the family results in women carrying out domestic and care work. The domestication of women shows that efforts to subordinate women have begun within the family institution. Women become identical to caring, nurturing, and kinship. Meanwhile, the burden on women in the social environment lies in their involvement in organic community activities, such as *arisan*, cultural and religious rituals, and other activities that are also often imposed on women, such as preparing food throughout the day, which takes time. This is particularly true for women living in rural areas, where community solidarity is strong. Women's three workloads run simultaneously. As a result, women are overburdened in different areas of work, especially the burden of care. This overwork also prevents women from accessing economic resources and wage employment opportunities.

From the SRT perspective, care work is described as the shadow of slavery. This slavery causes excessive and even double work for women, which keeps women away from welfare. This also means that women spend all their time working, both for the family and for society, producing and reproducing, and have no free time to improve their knowledge through learning or discussion. Unlike men, who still have free time to learn and discuss with their groups. Women work relatively more hours than men, but have relatively lower welfare than men.

Women in the Trap of Capitalism

Women have been oppressed from the era of slavery to capitalism. From the era of slavery to capitalism, individuals had control over the lives of others through the ownership of resources or capital. Engels explains that the oppression of women is also consistent with the concept of private and family property rights in the history of the development of society's mode of production (Engels & Untermann 2021). The capital accumulation pattern of production means that families have to pass on their wealth or capital to their sons, who will later start new families. Women later become part of the family headed by their husband or father. This is what makes women become the property (private property) of their husband or father as an effort to process social reproduction. Engels further explains that women experience oppression in the process of capital accumulation because women become a property. As a result, women do not have equal opportunities in the

division of labour. In the era of slavery, women were used as the property of the family as slaves for agricultural labour and pleasure. In the era of capitalism, women became the property of the bourgeoisie as labour and reproductive labour.

Patriarchy is also used by the capitalist system to reduce production costs in order to make more profit (Ferguson 2020). Capitalism and patriarchy are two intertwined elements. This is also evident in women's lower wages, types of work, and employment opportunities. The value of women's labour is reduced or diminished due to biological factors such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding (Rahayu 2017). In practice, leave for menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding is made difficult by factory owners. When women have their period, they often have to continue working because of the difficulty in getting leave. If they are unable to work, they choose to take time off with a pay cut. Maternity leave is also only one month (Mailoa 2022). As a result, female workers often resign when they become pregnant without receiving severance pay, or even have a miscarriage while at work.

The capitalist system is reluctant to give wages to women workers who are on leave because they are not doing production work that benefits them. If they are not working in the production of goods in the factories because they are on leave, they are not considered by the capitalist system and do not receive wages. As a result, nursing and breastfeeding are the responsibility of the women themselves, with no involvement of the factory owner. Another option after leaving the factory is to become a home-based worker, who works for the factory and carries out production activities from home so as not to leave the care work. However, home-based workers are not covered by Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower and Law No. 11/2020 on Job Creation, leaving them vulnerable to the lack of decent and safe work guarantees. This vulnerability is influenced by poor working conditions, inadequate Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), and the lack of protection and social security for women home-based workers (Rifyana 2019), such as the storage of dangerous work equipment, such as flammable and toxic substances in workers' homes where children may play with them.

In the end, capitalism uses the patriarchal system of capital accumulation to its advantage by denying women workers the right to do care work. However, on the other hand, care work is also exploited by the capitalist system as a labour production machine. This has much to do with the physical, psychological, and social condition

of women, including their increasingly vulnerable economic situation. Women become subjects who are crushed by capitalism from different sides. Women should have the right to menstrual and maternity leave, which should be paid either directly by the factory or subsidised by the state, so that women can continue to earn an income while caring. This is an effort to enable women to continue to earn an income while caring.

Unrecognised Care Work

The main goal of capitalism is the accumulation of capital. In the process of capital accumulation, capitalism uses the strategy of primitive accumulation to transform the feudal social system into capitalism. Through primitive accumulation, the peasants as landlords (the means of production in the feudal era) are usurped by the bourgeoisie class (Marx 2006). This primitive accumulation allows the bourgeoisie to control the land (the means of production) and turns peasants, fishermen, indigenous peoples, who are deprived of the means of production, into labour for the bourgeoisie. But for Silvia Federici, primitive accumulation also concerns women. Women are deprived of control over their bodies by capitalism for the purpose of producing labour for the capitalists. As a result, women are deprived of their freedom and live in the shackles of capitalist control over their bodies.

The deprivation of women's bodies by capitalism makes women live in oppression. Federici presents three forms of deprivation of women's bodies (Federici 2009). *First*, the gendered division of labour that puts women's work and reproductive functions into the reproduction of labour. *Second*, the establishment of a new patriarchal order based on the exclusion of women from paid work and their subordination to men. *Third*, the control of the body in the form of the mechanisation of women's bodies for the production of new labour. This gendered division of labour means that women are ultimately restricted to working on matters related to the reproduction of labour. Meanwhile, reproductive labour is not included in paid work and is not considered work. However, reproductive labour is important for the accumulation of capital because it creates new labour for capitalism.

Labour is an advantage to capitalism. Women were so instrumental in creating labour that in the mid-16th century, governments in Europe impose penalties on women who use contraception, have abortions, and are infertile. Women were not allowed to limit the growth of the labour force. A large population is a source of social wealth for capitalism. In the era of early capitalism, labour

power greatly influenced the wealth of the bourgeoisie, so the production of labour could not be stopped at any cost. This also proves that women were highly controlled by the state and used as servants for capitalism with the aim of accumulating capital.

Women are used not only as objects of labour production, but also as caretakers of unpaid labour. Both as children and as wives in patriarchy, women are required to do domestic or household work. Women do the work of cleaning the house and preparing the needs of their father or husband after and before working in the factory. Women perform services for their father or husband, such as making them food, tea, or coffee, washing their clothes, and caring for them when they are sick. Indirectly, women care for the labour of the owners of capital. However, women do not receive any reciprocal wages from the owners of capital, even though they have taken care of their labourers. In the capitalist system, care work is not considered to be part of factory production and does not have to be paid.

In the capitalist system, only production in factory is considered an activity that creates use and exchange value. Factory goods that can be sold as having use value are created by labourers, which in the early capitalist era was predominantly male. Women were forced to stay at home to create and care for the labourers, but such work was considered to have no economic value and was not categorised as labour (Federici 2009). This leaves women without any resources as they never get paid for the work they do for their families. This condition ultimately makes women subordinate to men due to differential access to capital and consequently patriarchy is never eradicated.

The development of capitalism allows women to enter the public sphere to do factory work. Indonesia's garment industry is dominated by women, according to International Labour Organisation's (ILO) report from 2022 (ILO 2022). This phenomenon shows that in this era, Indonesian women can become a workforce like men. However, the findings of the ILO report (2022) show that women workers also experience pay gaps and inequality in their careers. The fact that women work also does not fully indicate that women are empowered and have freedom. In a capitalist society, it is observed that women work because the husband's income is insufficient for the needs of the family. Ironically, women are required to participate not only in productive work, but also in reproducing the family, including unpaid care work.

The situation of women working as care workers is not unique. Families with sufficient income tend to choose to hire domestic workers to do care work. However, when a family hires a domestic worker, they have to pay her a wage that comes out of the family's own pocket. Families have to incur additional costs to pay domestic workers who do care work in order to maintain labour and capitalism. This means that even if a woman does not perform care work for her family and can hire a domestic worker, she still has to pay for the care work out of her own pocket to hire a domestic worker.

Women in Care Work and Production Work

Women's work in caring for and creating labour is ultimately to prepare labour commodities for the capitalists. In the context of patriarchal capitalism, women cannot be separated from care work, which means producing and maintaining labour for capitalism. The fact that women work does not remove their oppression, on the contrary, it increases their burden. Women perform productive and unpaid care work for the benefit of capitalism, but receive nothing in return.

The condition of women, who are increasingly oppressed by capitalism, makes women face more difficulties every day. For women, the only work they can do is care work and reproductive work. However, this requires women to find husbands who have a lot of capital and eventually submit to their husbands because the capital belongs to their husbands. It also worries women when their husbands have affairs or abuse them, but they cannot ask for a divorce or fight back. Infidelity also occurs when one party is dependent on the other (Munsch 2015). If they ask for a divorce, it will leave women with no capital at all, which in turn will have to do productive work. A study published in *The Conversation* also mentions that women have more financial difficulties after divorce than men (Hitchings & Douglas 2023). This is because women also have to do care work. In the end, this is why women refuse to be dependent, because the fear of being cheated on or divorced forces them to do productive work.

Production work will also take up a lot of women's time. From the morning before sunrise, they have to do maintenance work such as cooking and washing. Then, from morning to evening and even into the night, they do production work for the capital-owning class. When they return home, they continue to do unpaid care and reproductive work in their spare time. This is how women really live under the control of capitalism. They cannot

be free and have to work all the time for the benefit of capitalism itself. These concerns then lead women to delay marriage due to domestic care, excessive workload, and economic pressure. There is no division of labour between men and women in the family.

Women experience gender inequalities in production and care work. The distribution of care work is more heavily weighted towards women, which also affects women's access to productive work - which is not in line with the ILO's 5R framework. Even when women are in paid production work, they continue to do care work. The most burdensome thing is when production work takes a very long time through endless overtime schemes. Women automatically have less rest time due to long production hours. They also have to do unpaid care work at home after work. Women are oppressed by the unfair distribution of work and long working hours. This cannot be separated from the system of capitalism, which is responsible for the use of overtime for its workers, including women workers, and the use of the patriarchal system, which still makes women do unpaid care work.

Capitalism Creates Waithood

Young women in Indonesia, especially in urban areas, understand the problems they face in situation of patriarchal capitalism. Young women in urban areas have more access to education than those in rural areas (Lisnasari 2023). This allows women in urban areas to learn about their problems. However, this understanding creates fear as well as an attempt by women to survive the oppression of patriarchal capitalism by delaying marriage. As reported by *Kumparan*, two psychologists, Dian Wisnuwardhani and Reynitta Poerwito, explain that young people have financial, social, and conflict fears about marriage (Ramadhan 2023). How women already have an idea of their marital situation in terms of the economy, social responsibilities such as caring, and even conflicts that will arise.

Women are also overshadowed by the increasing demands of life. Women often play an important role in managing family finances. The needs of young women today are also increasing, such as housing, clothing, food, make-up, and so on to support their lives. The costs of marriage and caring for children are also very high. For women, this makes it clear that if they start a family, they will also have to work hard to earn a wage that will meet their and their family's needs and provide for the care of their family.

A number of studies have shown that married women do care work and this often leads to women not working. A survey by BPS in 2023 explains that the LFPR of women is only 54.42 per cent, while that of men is 83.98 per cent. This shows that there are still many women who do not work. This is due to patriarchal conditions that force women to do unpaid care work. When women give birth, they often stop working because of the difficulties of maternity leave. Caring for children, especially breastfeeding, can only be done by women. As a result, men end up working and women are highly dependent on the wages their husbands earn.

Women who are highly dependent on their husbands' wages are vulnerable to their husbands' power relations because they feel that their husbands can support the family and control their wives (Cameron 2014). This makes women think twice about starting a family and leads to the phenomenon of waithood. They delay marriage and starting a family because they want to find economic stability first so that they are not dependent on their husbands (Wulandari 2023). Singerman, the initiator of the concept of waithood, also explains that delaying marriage and childbearing is due to economic and political factors, such as inadequate employment opportunities, which lead young people into waithood (Singerman 2007). In the context of women, it is also common to delay marriage to pursue education and career. In conclusion, waithood itself is a period of waiting to focus on delaying marriage and having children due to high economic needs.

Waithood is on the rise in Indonesia. Students in Yogyakarta prefer education and work to marriage (Hasan 2019). In 2017, BPS showed that the level of happiness of people who are alone (not married) is higher than those who are married, especially women (Andita 2017). Referring to Singerman's definition (2007), women will focus on their education and career. In the era of capitalism, education and career are important. Improving one's education also means improving one's standard of living, hoping to get a better job so that one's career will be better and one's economic problems will be solved in the future because of one's higher education and career.

Women carry the burden of productive and caring work. This is the reason why women engage in waithood (Kara & Mullings 2023). High economic needs such as housing, children's school fees, etc. have also increased over the years. This means that young people need a stable economy for their future lives. However, the lack of

decent jobs is also a threat, so it is important to focus on improving one's educational status and career in order to have a decent economic life. In the end, it is these harsh conditions that lead women to choose waithood.

Waithood is a personal choice. One of the things that capitalism does in society in the cultural aspect is individual problem solving. Capitalism creates a narrative so that the problems that arise or are experienced by society can be solved by themselves, one of which is women choosing waithood. Waithood itself is also often associated with Western culture. The West has long been known for its capitalist system, which places all problem-solving on the individual, making the capitalist system irresponsible. Waithood is also an attempt by women to overcome their fear of failure in marriage. This failure is particularly common in the era of late capitalism. Capitalism has intervened in the culture and behaviour of individuals (Durham 2021) without them being aware of it. In the economic context, the high cost of living and the lack of job opportunities cannot be separated from the current economic system. Capitalism will create inequality among people because the distribution of the means of production is owned by a few people. As a result, wealth is owned by only a few groups, and market price conditions and employment are in their hands. This shows that waithood emerges because of the capitalist situation, which has made women worry about their lives both because of the patriarchal social and economic context and because it creates personal life choices.

Choosing waithood is not without consequences for women. The patriarchal context depicts women as needing to have a husband. There is still a negative stigma attached to unmarried women, such as 'old maids' (Mustikasari 2018). Women's efforts to waithood have also led to an evolving meaning of gendered violence that has continued to evolve (Musahwi et al. 2022). Thus, even in deciding to delay marriage, women are in a vulnerable position to be stigmatised by society. Stigma is psychological violence against women that can lead to further violence.

For the country, this waithood phenomenon could also lead to a sex recession. A sex recession will put a greater strain on the productive workforce in the coming years due to the lack of new labour. For capitalism, the potential reduction of the labour force is an obstacle to the process of production. Reproductive labour is necessary for the continuation of the production of productive labour as future workers. Therefore, according to the state, waithood is also a phenomenon to be taken seriously. To marry or not to marry is ultimately a decision

that is indirectly driven by the capitalist system. In this case, waithood is also a choice tacitly created by the capitalist system. The burden of unpaid production and care work, which often falls on women, and the difficulty of accessing decent employment have led women to choose to wait to marry and have children. Waithood not only embodies the delay of youth aspirations in pursuing educational and career goals, but also highlights the gendered nature of family and societal expectations (Inhorn & Smith-Hefner 2021). This aspect of waithood reflects gender inequality, as women often experience a double burden. The concept of waithood is not simply a delay in reaching traditional milestones of adulthood, but is strongly linked to gendered expectations and unpaid care work, with complex social challenges and implications.

Closing

Patriarchal capitalism puts women in a vulnerable position to do production and unpaid care work as social reproductive work. The oppression of women is closely linked to the inequality of capital ownership, both in the family and in the social system that produces class differentiation. Women are oppressed by being deprived of their bodies, which are biologically capable of bearing children and producing labour. This makes women the subject of creating, nurturing, and caring for children to become labour for capitalism.

Care work is not taken into account by capitalism because it does not produce its goods. In the end, although women help capitalism by maintaining and caring for the workforce, they are never taken into account and are not paid. The lack of access to capital in the form of wages will ultimately make women dependent on their husbands and unable to free themselves from the domination of their husbands.

The impact of the neglect of care and paid work imposed on women has led to the phenomenon of waithood, the postponement of marriage for economic reasons. Indonesian women are focusing on careers and education in order to achieve a better economic life. Waithood emerges because of the oppression of capitalism, which forces women to live this way. This is underpinned by the gendered conditions of production work, the unpaid care work associated with women, social realities of high cost of living, and the lack of employment opportunities. This situation alienates women from productive work because of the demands placed on them for unpaid care work.

Women must mobilise to demand recognition of care work. This demand is in line with the ILO's 5Rs framework, which provides for full recognition and guarantees for the practice of care work, in particular the recognition of women who have done care work. This includes recognising the domestic division of labour as supporting productive work - no longer imposed only on women. Therefore, the emergence of waitthood as an economic cause can be reduced. Women can take care of their families and still be paid and given health insurance and protection by the state or the capitalists.

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