

## New Masculinities: The Redistribution of Care Work in Feminist Perspective

Abby Gina Boang Manalu<sup>1</sup> & Iqraa Runi Aprilia<sup>2</sup>

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, University of Indonesia<sup>1</sup> & Jurnal Perempuan<sup>2</sup>  
Jalan Prof. Dr Selo Soemardjan, Pondok Cina, Beji, Depok, West Java 16424<sup>1</sup> and  
Jalan T. B. Simatupang kav. 23-24, South Jakarta, DKI Jakarta 12430<sup>2</sup>

abby.gina07@ui.ac.id<sup>1</sup> and iqraa@jurnalperempuan.com<sup>2</sup>

Manuscript Chronology: received 8 December 2023, revised 11 December 2023, accepted 24 December 2023

### Abstract

Gender inequality in the workplace is rooted in patriarchal norms within families, institutions, and states. Gender roles exclude women from job opportunities, promotions, equal income, and more. Care work, associated with women, often forces them to choose between a career and family caregiving. However, the feminist perspective advocates for the redistribution of care work involving men. This research emphasizes the importance of changing men's understanding and practices in care work to achieve gender equality in the workforce. Through in-depth interviews, the study critiques and synthesizes challenges in care work redistribution, shares successful practices, and recommends practical and conceptual suggestions to ensure men's involvement in caregiving within the workplace context.

Keywords: care work, masculinity, redistribution, family-friendly policies, paternity leave

### Introduction

Indonesia has made some progress on gender equality. However, this has not yet translated into an increase in women's participation in the labour market. Marriage remains the strongest predictor of women leaving the labour force. Trends in Indonesia's labour force participation rates suggest that the gender gap in labour force participation remains wide. Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) has stagnated at around 52 per cent over the past two decades, lower than the male FLFP of around 85 per cent. Indonesia's female FLFP is much lower than that of other East Asian countries (World Bank 2020).

The data in Table 1 show that although there has been a slight increase in women's FLFP over time, the gender gap is still very large at almost 30 per cent per year.

The main factors in women's absence from the labour market are marriage and childbearing. Marriage reduces the participation of all women except those with higher education. In urban areas, a married woman is 25 per cent less likely to be working or looking for work than a single woman. Gender norms and the division of labour are among the challenges to women's participation. They are often overburdened with unpaid care work and domestic responsibilities, which limit the time available to participate in other productive economic work and result in their exclusion from promotion and placement in strategic career positions (Halim et al. 2018; Mason 2022). Another issue found is that they often do not return to work due to a lack of family commitment to share the care workload, and also due to a lack of flexible working hours (Cameron et al. 2018). Women often face a dilemma between paid work and care work. A number of studies show that women sacrifice more of their careers and take on more responsibilities than their male counterparts (Becker & Moen 1999; Singley & Hynes 2005). This suggests that some serious problems with women's participation in the labour force, namely

**Table 1. Labour Force Participation Rate in Indonesia by Gender in the Last 5 Years**

Year	Male	Women
2018	82,80	51,80
2019	83,25	51,81
2020	82,41	53,13
2021	82,27	53,34
2022	83,87	53,41

Source: Sakernas/BPS

gender gaps in women's participation in the labour force, occur during the childcare years and that strong cultural norms perpetuate that women are responsible for more care work because of their gender or the assumption that women earn relatively low incomes and are not the main breadwinners in the family (Bittman et al. 2003; Johansson 2011; Peutere et al. 2017).

These gender stereotypes, which then become gender beliefs, are even manifested in state policy, namely Law No. 1 /1974 on Marriage, which perpetuates many gender norms and does not favour women. This situation shows that there is an urgent need to redistribute unpaid care work so that women can have equal opportunities in the world of work. There is also a need to deconstruct the meaning of care work so that unpaid care work can be shared equally in communities and families. One of the ways in which the redistribution of care work can be promoted is through the active participation of men. The World Bank (2020) notes that efforts have been made in Indonesia to change cultural norms in terms of policy and practice in order to achieve a more equitable distribution of care work.

This study aims to shed light on the redistribution of unpaid care work, which includes the sharing of care responsibilities among family and community members. A number of previous studies have talked about the attachment of care work to women. However, they have emphasised only the female aspect and paid little attention to the perceptions and practices of care work redistribution involving men. However, discussions on gender equity in the world of work include the understanding that there needs to be a shift in perceptions and practices of the distribution of responsibilities that takes into account paid work, family, nurturing, and care work (Peutere et al. 2017; O'Brien & Wall 2017).

The main question to be answered in this research is how men's involvement in the redistribution of care work relates to changes in the meaning and ideal of masculinity. Changes in the meaning of masculinity mean that the roles of men and women are not dichotomous or women (domestic) and men (public). This means that efforts to redistribute care work can be accepted by men through a new understanding of masculinity, that men can contribute to the domestic sector. Using a feminist perspective, this research will show how the norms and practices of redistributing care work are crucial not only

for achieving gender equality, but also for stimulating normative changes in concepts of masculinity and femininity.

## Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, including a literature review and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders. The research focuses on the urgency of assessing men's participation in care work as a crucial element in achieving gender equality in the context of the world of work. Through in-depth multi-stakeholder interviews, the research aims to explore concrete practices and efforts to promote men's participation in care work. By applying a feminist lens to the analysis of this phenomenon, the research will examine the implementation of policies and initiatives that support men's active role in family care, including paternity leave policies and gender equality campaigns in the workplace.

This research also aims to provide insights into how changes in the redistribution of care work involving men can be an important aspect of achieving gender equality in Indonesia. It is hoped that a deeper understanding of the role of men in the context of care work will provide a strong basis for promoting positive change towards a more equal and inclusive work environment.

A number of feminist theories argue that gender inequality can only be addressed by examining family structures, as this is where gender roles are perpetuated (Hook 2006; Okin 1989). The thinking of a number of feminist philosophers has recognised the importance of involving men in promoting gender justice in relation to women's participation in the labour market.

This research interviewed a range of representatives of relevant parties, namely academics involved in advocating gender equality policies in paid and unpaid care work; civil society organisations involved in efforts to change social understandings and practices related to men; trade unions; small businesses; multinational companies; and state institutions that oversee a range of gender equality policies. This research focuses on several aspects, including policies related to men's involvement in unpaid care work, their implementation, challenges, and good practices. For ethical reasons, the identities of the interviewees are written in accordance with the agreement of the authors and the interviewees.

**Table 2. Identity and Description of the Interviewees**

Source	Agency
Nur Hasyim	Founder of <i>Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru</i>
Kokok Herdhianto Dirgantoro	CEO Opal Communication (Start Up with family friendly policy best practices)
Elly Rosita Silaban	President of <i>Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (KSBSI)</i>
Andy Yentriyani	Chief Commissioner of the National Commission on Violence Against Women ( <i>Komnas Perempuan</i> )
SS	Industrial Relations Officer (PT XYZ)
Sri Wiyanti Eddyono	Lecturer at Faculty of Law of Gadjah Mada University (UGM) and Policy Expert

This research does not aim to provide an overview of the situation of men’s participation in care work. The focus of the paper is to show the situation of men’s participation in unpaid care work in the context of formal employment. The implications of the research do not capture the challenges and knowledge related to the dilemmas of work, family and care work in the context of informal and other workers.

**Feminism: Understanding and Unravelling the Gender Dimensions of Care Work**

Susan Moller Okin (1989) argues that the institution of the family is the axis on which gender structures are maintained. According to her, the gender assumption that men’s primary role is to earn money while women take care of the family is unfavourable and even detrimental to women. For Okin, the structure of the world of work actually assumes that a worker has a wife at home who cooks, cleans the house, and looks after the children. This understanding underpins various practices that perpetuate the double burden on working women. Not only are they expected to do productive work, but they are also expected to do reproductive work.

A number of feminist scholars have argued that the distribution of domestic work, as well as the elimination of gender roles, is one of the conditions for gender justice in the world of work. For Okin (1989), the distribution of domestic work, including parental leave, must be equitable. Meanwhile, according to bell hooks (1984), best known for her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, we cannot stop at the effort to share care work equally with men, but it is important to change our perception of what domestic work is. According to hooks, we are internalised to value the work traditionally associated with men, while devaluing the work associated with women.

According to hooks, this internalisation takes place from the nurturing stage, when boys and girls begin to form perceptions of care work. Boys believe that care work is women’s work and tend to rely on women for fulfilment. Meanwhile, girls feel that the work is forced and required of them, leading to a sense of reluctance and constraint. In fact, care work is a skill that everyone should have, master, and do. Care work should be seen in terms of its contribution to individual wellbeing, the promotion of aesthetic development, and the reduction of distress (hooks 2015, p. 105). Supporting the internalised idea of the ideology of care work, Nancy Chodorow (1978) also argues for the importance of dual care, provided by both men and women, in promoting gender equity. This idea of dual care serves as a reminder of the need for men to be meaningfully involved in care work - particularly caregiving.

According to Okin and Chodorow, in order to ensure gender justice in the world of work, labour policies should neither disadvantage primary caregivers nor assume that primary caregivers are women (Okin 1989; Chodorow 1978). So far, in our efforts to achieve gender justice in the world of work, we have often been trapped in the assumption that women’s status and functions are in the realm of production or productive work that is public. In fact, women’s status and function also exist in the realm of reproduction, child socialisation, and sexuality (Mitchell in Tong 2009). If this is not discussed, the urgency of gender justice issues in the world of work will not address the needs of women.

Family leave after the birth of a child should be equitably distributed and should assume that every worker (male or female) has caring responsibilities; and should present flexible working as the norm in the workplace. The most widely recognised traditional family leave is maternity leave, where women are guaranteed

paid and unpaid leave during their maternity period. Feminist discourse has focused on the inclusion and redistribution of care work for men. This has been linked to efforts to normalise a new egalitarian masculinity, for example through efforts to increase paternity leave (Peutere et al. 2017; Schouten 2019).

In order to achieve gender justice in the world of work, the relationship between work and care responsibilities in relation to paid or professional work needs to be examined. Aspects such as state policies; institutional workplace practices; definitions and practices of masculinity are three areas that this research seeks to examine from a feminist perspective. The matrix of domination needs to recognise the different forms of challenge at each of its levels. According to Collins & Bilge (2016), the entanglement between macro and micro levels of oppression needs to be unravelled and addressed.

Through the lens of feminism, this research shows that the implications of the division of paid and unpaid labour from policy to everyday practice are not mutually exclusive. Culturally, childcare and care work responsibilities are strongly associated with women. A number of studies have shown that working women are more responsible for both than men (Peutere et al. 2017, p. 549). The division of labour in the family reflects how gender relations are organised in specific cultural, economic and political contexts (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard 2010; Bühlmann et al. 2010).

A number of previous studies or findings also show that the existence of paternity leave policies, for example, has a positive impact on men's involvement in unpaid care work in the family (Hook 2006). Two aspects that will be of interest and analysed in this research are how family-friendly and affirmative policies affect the practice of men's involvement in unpaid care work. Firstly, the research highlights how affirmative policies affect the understanding and practice of sharing care responsibilities. Secondly, the research analyses ideas and practices of masculinity in relation to the redistribution of care work.

### Family Friendly Affirmative Policies

Okin in Mason (2022) argues that it is important to make radical improvements/changes in policy and law, including marriage law. The definition of roles in the household needs to be redefined. Both argue that paternal responsibility should be upheld. In addition, employment policies should not assume that women

are the primary carers of children (Mason 2022, p. 46). A number of studies have shown that government intervention can reduce the gender division of labour (Peutere et al. 2017; Schouten 2019). The question is, what about Indonesia? Do we have family-friendly policies, and are we working to change social meanings and practices around the division of labour in care?

Affirmative action is an umbrella term for a range of public policies designed to increase the representation of under-represented groups through a range of direct assessments/measures. Affirmative action can take the form of quotas, minimising barriers for vulnerable groups, active recruitment, and others. Three common justifications for affirmative action are to redress past wrongs; to ensure equal distribution to vulnerable groups; and to compensate for harmful prejudice (Mason 2022, pp. 43-44).

Family-friendly policies aim to support both female and male workers in balancing work and care responsibilities, especially for parents (Kameran & Moss 2009; ILO 2014; Moss 2015). In the Indonesian context, there is Law No. 52/2009 on Population and Family Development, which has the potential to promote men's participation in unpaid care work, although its implementation is far from expected.

In general, maternity leave was the first form of affirmative action, followed by day-care, and in the last 20 years paternity leave policies have been introduced around the world. Paternity leave is a policy designed to encourage male participation in the care of new-born children. In the Indonesian context, the two-day paternity leave has not demonstrated the state's sensitivity or commitment to ensuring changes in the understanding and practice of the gender division of labour within the family (Ariyani 2017). Labour Law No. 13/2003 only provides for two days of paternity leave,<sup>1</sup> suggesting that there is no serious commitment to the redistribution of care work. Nur Hasyim, an activist with the civil society organisation Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru (ALB), says Indonesia's paternity leave policy is ineffective.

What can you do with 2 days? 2 days for paternity leave. The labour process for example, I think the labour process alone can take time and then not to mention when the wife goes through the 40-day postpartum process. Not to mention starting breastfeeding and so on (Nur Hasyim 2023, interview 21 October).

The discourse on increasing paternity leave in public policy is part of an affirmative action to improve the division of domestic labour between married couples.

This is also done to demonstrate the role of men as fathers in the world of work and to remove the stigma of care work (Peutere et al. 2021, p. 549; Schouten 2019). In the draft Law on Mother and Child Welfare (RUU KIA), there is a discourse on increasing maternity leave to 6 months and paternity leave to 40 days. This effort should be appreciated as RUU KIA has increased the duration of maternity leave from 13 weeks to 40 weeks (6 months). Maternity leave has been brought in line

with the minimum standard of ILO Convention No. 183 of 2000, which is 14 weeks. It is also important to note that the term has been changed to paternity leave. The change in terminology opens up opportunities for a redistribution of care responsibilities for fathers in childcare. Nevertheless, RUU KIA still raises a number of criticisms because it still contains articles that legitimise the traditional role of women. The problematic articles in RUU KIA are as follows:

**Table 3. Problematic Articles in RUU KIA**

Article	Contents	Analysis
1 paragraph 1	Mother and child welfare is a condition that ensures the fulfilment of the rights and basic needs of mothers and children in the family, which are physical, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual, so that they can develop optimally through adaptation, relationships, growth, affection, and resolution according to <b>social functions in the development of community life.</b>	The narrative of social function in society will return women to the private sphere and care work as work that is not recognised, let alone paid for.
1 paragraph 3	Mother is a woman who conceives, gives birth to, breast-feeds and/or <b>raises, nurtures and/or cares for a child.</b>	There is a point about raising children, but all the leave arrangements are for women after childbirth. There is no parental leave - time to care for a sick child, for example.  RUU KIA is designed to respond to maternal mortality and stunting, so those who will benefit are women with "traditional" choices and roles, ignoring the plural identities of caregivers..
4 paragraph 1 J	Receive <b>family economic empowerment</b> assistance.	<b>Family economic empowerment</b> assistance means that women have not been made subjects in RUU KIA.  So far, social assistance in Indonesia is paid in the name of the head of the family (husband) if it refers to the Marriage Law.
10 paragraph 1	<b>Every mother must:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. maintain personal health during pregnancy;</li> <li>b. safeguarding the survival and development of the child from the womb;</li> <li>c. have periodic pregnancy health checks;</li> <li>d. nurture, educate, and protect the child with affection;</li> <li>e. strive for breastfeeding for at least 6 (six) months unless there are medical indications, the mother dies, or the mother is separated from the child;</li> <li>f. provide the child with the cultivation of the value of faith in God Almighty and ethics;</li> <li>g. provide balanced nutrition for the child;</li> <li>h. provide an environment that supports the child's growth and development; and</li> <li>i. periodically check the health of the mother and the child at health facilities.</li> </ul>	Specifying maternal duties would lead to the state dictating women's choices. This is contrary to women's right to freedom of choice and expression. The article also fails to take into account the plural experiences, limitations, and constraints of each woman depending on her context and situation. It also confines the role of childcare and education to women alone and does not offer any new breakthroughs in egalitarian parenting.
10 paragraph 2	The obligations referred to in paragraph 1 shall be fulfilled and <b>borne jointly by the mother and the father</b> for the benefit of the child, with the support of the family and the environment.	Details of the support provided by fathers need to be developed so that implementation does not clash with societal norms of a traditional division of labour.

Source: Processed by the authors based on RUU KIA 2022

According to Sri Wiyanti Eddyono, the country's gender ideology influences the policies that are produced:

“When we talk about gender ideology, actually the policy cannot be separated from the gender ideology of the state. Currently, there are still laws that are very strategic, but they have a very traditional concept of the division of roles of men and women, and this will certainly affect the regulation of the labour sector” (Sri Wiyanti Eddyono 2023, interview 1 November).

On the other hand, it must be understood that in many countries, including Indonesia, affirmative policies on care work still exclude informal workers (O'Brien & Wall 2017, p. 5). The Labour Law and RUU KIA, which talk about maternity and paternity leave, still do not take into account the redistribution of care work and informal worker groups, as well as different definitions of non-formal work.

Based on all the interviews, it can be concluded that affirmative action should be linked to efforts to change people's attitudes and behaviour, accompanied by budget/investment in care work and clear measurement and monitoring mechanisms. Otherwise, the policy intended as affirmative action is merely a formality without significant impact on changing the status of the targeted/advocated group (Andy Yentriyani; Nur Hasyim; & Elly Rosita Silaban 20-23, October interview).

Interestingly, although efforts to promote a fair redistribution of care work are far from satisfactory in terms of public policy, a number of good practices have been initiated by institutions, organisations, and the private sector. An interview with the CEO of a start-up company revealed that the company's policy on paternity leave was designed to promote gender equality in the workplace.

In 2015, we introduced six months' maternity leave for employees, and in 2017 we introduced one month's paternity leave. We allow employees to bring their child to the office. Everyone continues to receive the same salary and phone credit as if they were working. If the conditions at home are not adequate, (the child) can be brought to the office. There is a place for the child to rest, so he/she can work while looking after the child. ... My office policy is that if a male employee does not take paternity leave, I even make a note that he will not be promoted. We have a principle that workers belong to their families. Apart from the economic aspect, there is also the aspect of happiness, which should not be marginalised. They are not only the servants of the capitalists. This means that they also have families that need

to be taken care of with love (Kokok Herdhianto Dirgantoro 2023, interview 22 October).

The paternity leave policy in Kokok's company was developed by reflecting on his own and his wife's experience as an employee in another company. The pregnancy experience was particularly difficult for his wife, but the company had no empathy or affirmative policy to respond to the situation. Struggling to balance paid work and caring responsibilities, his wife decided to quit her job. The implications of a single income were not easy for a family, but the lack of support from the office made the decision a forced one.

This situation is highlighted by data from the World Bank (2022), which shows that without support and protection from the state and the workplace, women workers are often forced to choose between their careers and their care responsibilities (Hook 2006; Peutere et al. 2017). In Indonesia, there are still few companies that offer policies to help workers transition to parenthood, so it is not uncommon for low-income couples to be forced to sacrifice their paid work.

According to Kokok, the affirmative policy can be implemented in his company because there is a good will and commitment on the part of the company to provide a humane working situation and environment. In addition, in Kokok's case, the small size of the company makes it possible to provide salaries and benefits to employees who take parental leave. The larger the company, the higher the budgetary aspect of supporting maternity/paternity leave and childcare facilities. Therefore, government investment is required in the form of budgets, day-care facilities, and maternity insurance (O'Brien & Wall 2017).

In the Indonesian context, this public investment has not been prioritised by the government or companies. In fact, if we expect only corporate responsibility and commitment, it will be very difficult to achieve justice for women workers. Support for care responsibilities should be shared and a joint responsibility between the state and the private sector (Elly Rosita Silaban 2023, interview 23 October).

A multinational company in Indonesia has also made efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace. The company employs 60 per cent women out of a total workforce of 22,000.

We have a company policy on caring. There is the term primary caregiver and there is the term secondary caregiver. Primary caregivers are those who give birth to

a child or care for a child and take full responsibility for the child. An example would be an adoptive parent who decides to adopt a child or who has ongoing responsibility for the child. Another example is a husband who replaces his wife who dies during childbirth or illness, is imprisoned, or dies in the postpartum period, leaving the wife unable to provide care. The employee who takes over these care responsibilities is classified as the primary caregiver because he or she is the full-time caregiver for the child. For example, if he is the primary caregiver, he is entitled to 4.5 months of paid primary caregiver leave. Then the option to continue is 1.5 months unpaid. If before it was 3 months paid + 3 months unpaid, now it is 4.5 months paid + 1.5 months unpaid (SS 2023, interview 30 October).

According to SS, his company has introduced paid primary caregiver leave for both women and men in order to support an egalitarian work situation. The term "primary caregiver" is an attempt to redefine caring responsibilities in a way that does not, as has been argued, imagine only women as the subject (Okin 1989; Mason 2022, p. 46). The recognition of caring responsibilities for both women and men in policy is a manifestation of the normalisation of the idea that this is work that can be done by either men or women. This definition suggests that caring is not necessarily the domain of women.

Further, SS also mentioned that the majority of employees and workers take paid caregiver's leave, but rarely take unpaid leave. This suggests that financial considerations and forms of financial security also influence how employees respond to caregiver's leave policies. Meanwhile, related company policies are as follows:

In the past, male workers took 5 working days of paternity leave, we have unpaid paternity leave that can be taken for 3 months. So, 3 months plus 5 days. But it's rare that anyone takes it because it's unpaid. So even if they do, they usually only take a little bit. So, they rarely take the full three months. The maximum I see here that has taken 56 days is 28 people (SS 2023, interview 30 October).

The 28 people who took the maximum paid paternity leave (56 days) in the first six months or so after it was introduced at the end of 2022 represented about 10 per cent of male employees who were eligible to take paternity leave (SS 2023, interview 30 October).

The issue of leave duration is important. This relates to the amount of time men have to engage in care work, particularly caring, and the impact on the sustainability of the employee's work. Care leave policies, which are intended to promote egalitarian parenting, should not instead lead to companies being reluctant to hire women, women being excluded from promotions,

women being harassed at work and women's position in the world of work being weakened. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the granting of paternity leave is also linked to an understanding and skills related to domestic responsibilities. Otherwise, leave, which is intended to ensure an egalitarian division of care work, has the potential to perpetuate gender inequalities and vulnerabilities, such as men's demands to be served; women's dependence on the support of uncooperative partners, leading to violence and gender injustice (Gheaus & Robeyns 2011).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that paternity leave is also linked to their high involvement in unpaid work within the family, be it domestic work or childcare. From 2021, Switzerland will be the first country to introduce 2 weeks of paid paternity leave, with the aim of bringing it into line with 14-17 weeks of paid maternity leave (ILO 2021). With the harmonised duration of paternity and maternity leave, Switzerland is one of the few countries where unpaid care work is equally distributed (Durrer 2019).

Parental leave is also linked to income or wage factors. In this case, time spent in paid work reduces time spent on domestic work, including care, for both women and men, and vice versa. A person's share of household income also affects their share of household responsibilities (Bianchi et al. 2000; Cunningham 2007; Moss & Deven 2015). The division of family and work care responsibilities can vary depending on financial considerations, the workplace, culture, and national policies that influence it (Peutere et al. 2017).

Komnas Perempuan supports male comrades who take paid leave when their wives give birth. But the challenge is whether those who take leave actually redistribute care work. It is also necessary to ensure that these men are trained (to do care work and childcare). If it is just leave without support and without a change of attitude, it will not be effective (Andy Yentriyani 2023, interview 25 October).

Based on in-depth interviews conducted with a number of relevant parties, there are several aspects that need to be considered. In the design and creation of affirmative public policies on care work, attention needs to be paid, among other things, to: aspects of the definition and subjects responsible for care; the duration of leave in relation to the commitment and contribution of care work that can be done; the linkage of leave with public investment in balancing paid work and care responsibilities; and the multiplication of comprehensive policy studies.

According to Mason (2022, pp. 43-48), affirmative action is an attempt to “treat” systemic injustice and institutional oppression of vulnerable groups. The starting point is to recognise the diversity of vulnerabilities and concrete situations of those responsible for providing care. Policies aimed at justice must have the flexibility and capacity to recognise plural situations of vulnerability and inequality.

### **Masculinity and Men’s Caring Responsibilities**

In recent decades, many feminists have come to believe that men’s role-making and care-giving experiences have a significant impact on gender equity in the family, contribute to children’s development (Lamb 1981 in O’Brien & Wall 2017), influence men (Chodorow 1978; Parke 1996 in O’Brien & Wall 2017) and contribute to women’s empowerment, the achievement of gender equality and wider social change (Pleck 1985; Okin 1989). As Sara Ruddick states, “the most revolutionary change we can make to motherhood is to involve men in every aspect of childcare” (1983, p. 89).

A number of studies in countries where paid paternity leave has been introduced have highlighted a number of problems. Fathers build emotional closeness and self-satisfaction in their interactions with their children. On the other hand, there are also cases where men feel uncomfortable and disrupted in their masculine identity when doing care work (O’Brien & Wall 2017). Although the intended policy situation in some Scandinavian countries is not the same as in Indonesia, a similar dilemma arises in the case of parental leave for primary and secondary carers in SS’ company. Idealised masculinity is perceived as conflicting with caring responsibilities.

When it comes to paternity leave, in the factory, if it’s a male employee, the consideration is that he doesn’t have to work overtime or that his income will be reduced if he takes paternity leave. In the office, it’s more about their existence, that their place is in the office and it feels awkward if they’re not working. Some employees who took paternity leave said that they felt uncomfortable doing caring work for too long... This situation arises because their role is to earn money and come home without sharing the housework, so they are suddenly told every day to look after the baby, do other housework, and so on. This is not a situation they like. This is more or less what we found (SS 2023, interview 30 October).

Nur Hasyim, of *Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru (ALB)*, said there was a need to normalise attachment and emotional involvement of children in care work.

In some workshops, mothers were seen as more dominant than fathers in building a bond with their children. Another issue is usually related to the self-image of fathers, which is associated with responsibilities related to finances, such as paying for children’s school fees and other school needs. Many fathers feel responsible for such things (Nur Hasyim 2023, interview 21 October).

In the feminist dimension, ways of thinking about gender roles, everyday practices, and the relationship between care and social justice become the framework for analysing the situation of the division of labour in care work in Indonesia. Affirmative measures such as parental leave, without a change in attitudes, are not effective in achieving gender justice in family and work.

Even if there is paternity leave, the dependency on the mother or mother-in-law is a bit problematic. I also remind workers not to rely too much on their parents and in-laws. They (men) must be able to prepare milk, change nappies, bathe their own children. Men must also be able to cook simple meals for themselves and their wives. With these skills, paternity leave is really useful for the wife (Kokok Herdhianto Dirgantoro 2023, interview 22 October).

Elly Rosita Silaban made a similar point in an interview. She said that in a dialogue on workers’ rights, a group of women workers wanted paternity leave. Meanwhile, the men’s group did not respond positively to this offer because they did not consider this leave to be important or relevant to them. In society, the idea that care is the domain of women leads to a rejection/dismissal of the division of care work that is regulated in the policies of companies/business communities. Therefore, efforts to develop policies should be accompanied by constant efforts to change gender norms and practices in society.

We need to change the mindset. Men need to understand that caring for family members is their responsibility too. We need to remove the stigma that men’s contribution to care work is just a favour or out of pity - and not a responsibility. For this to happen, women also need to be able to negotiate wisely, openly and more widely. Conversely, women also need to have an understanding of sharing domestic work... We still find that men who do care work are stigmatised by the community, including family, neighbours and even their own wives. For example, they are bullied for being men under their wives’ armpits & for doing inappropriate work... How can we change this stigma? I think it starts with us and our families. By modelling the husband’s involvement to the children, we teach that it is normal and natural for men to be able to take care of the household (Elly Rosita Silaban 2023, interview 23 October).

Some conservative couples and families still hold the gender ideology that children are better cared for

by mothers than by fathers or other parties, such as nurseries, domestic workers and others (Mason 2017, p. 47). This view can be held by both men and women. As Silaban (2023) noted in an interview, in some situations women are often suspicious of men or others doing care work. As a result, women often decide to give up paid work and become full-time housewives. Meanwhile, men involved in care work feel unappreciated and excluded.

The gendered division of labour is internalised by both men and women. Mistrust, belittlement and exclusion of male involvement in care work are also commonplace (Oakley 2018). The State of the World's Father's (STWF) report shows that in 16 out of 17 countries surveyed, 70-90 per cent of men reported that they felt responsible for domestic care work - as did their partners (wives) (STWF 2023). However, the social structure of unavailability of paternity leave, lack of support and a sense of devaluation (stigma against men with domestic work) prevent them from doing so.

This is also seen in the way that interactions within the day-care centre tend to be exclusive to women, without considering that working men also need these facilities. There is still a stigma that men are interlopers or aliens in the care arena (Doucet in O'brien & Wall 2017 p. 17). However, we also need to highlight the importance of gender-responsive care in order to deconstruct the dichotomy between female and male gender roles in care.

Challenging the ways in which men negotiate old and new masculinities needs to be addressed in policy making, institutional practices and individual actions in "undoing gender". Wall & Leitão (2017) state that it is important to promote a general consensus around the idea of a new masculinity, which is about the ideal of a caring father who is not only involved in education and responding to the public world, but also a masculinity that is involved in emotional growth and development. This new idea of masculinity is important as a keyword for challenging traditional masculinity. This is confirmed in the Indonesian context.

There have been a number of social transformation efforts to promote men's involvement in care work. Reflective and critical dialogue is one way of dismantling sexist thinking.

For example, in workshops run by ALB in a number of rural areas, male participants were asked to talk about how they remembered their fathers. The majority of participants said that the father figures they remembered tended to be negative: cold, strict, harsh, and distant. Although they

appreciated their father's contribution to the person they are today, the majority of male participants did not want the same pattern of parenting (Nur Hasyim 2023, interview 21 October).

This means that awareness and opportunities for social transformation are indeed open if supported by education, training, and a supportive system.

Extended families tend to believe that caring roles are not suitable for men. There are still many assumptions that men are incompetent, that it is better for a man not to bathe a baby so as not to cause harm. This is a way of excluding men from caring responsibilities. In one of our trainees' stories, it was considered *pamali* for a man to wash dishes or hold a baby in Lombok, but there was one man from the father's class. He defied *pamali* by carrying his baby in public. This shows that carrying can be done by anyone (Nur Hasyim 2023, interview 21 October).

Interestingly, this practice of an ALB's "champion" was followed by several other men. This practice demonstrates the "doing" and "undoing" of gender, showing that gender equality in relation to caring responsibilities depends not only on policy and normative contexts, but also on the agency and personal perspectives of social actors themselves (Butler 2004; Walby 1997 in O'brien & Wall 2017). The previously rigid boundaries of the gendered division of labour are slowly changing. Gender is an action that is continuously imitated and repeated, resulting in a natural and self-reinforcing effect. This means that as knowledge, socialisation and the performativity of egalitarian care work increases, we are in the process of transforming to understand fluid and egalitarian notions of masculinity and femininity.

The understanding and practice of caring responsibilities also need to be understood through the lens of intersectionality. Men's situations are highly pluralised in terms of education, occupation, social class, age, geographical location and their various interrelated aspects that shape one's identity, consciousness, meaning, choices and actions, including views on how to engage in childcare (Johansson 2011).

Actually, if we look at it, there is a tendency for gender practices to change. But we need to use an intersectional lens because men's experiences are not homogeneous; they are plural. In one study I saw that the male group, the alpha parents (those aged 20 to 30), have different parenting patterns. Those who live in big cities and not with their parents tend to practice co-parenting and a more equal sharing of caring responsibilities (Andy Yentriyani 2023, interview 25 October).

Rather than excluding men from caring, it is important to build supportive systems and new understandings of

the benefits of caring. Not just financial, but also in terms of love, building relationships with children, happiness, wellbeing, and personal development (Lewis et al. 2009; O'Brien & Wall 2017).

Men's happiness index increases because it is important to show or make visible the incentives for men's involvement in care work for men themselves - not just economic incentives (Nur Hasyim 2023, interview 21 October).

This sub-discussion argues that there is a close relationship between gender justice in the family and women's participation in the public sphere. Traditional interpretations of masculinity and femininity are still an obstacle to promoting recognition of care work, reduction of care work and equal redistribution. However, based on the expertise and work experience of a number of research participants, it can be argued that in addition to policy, issues such as: agency; performativity and normalisation of new masculinities; and recognition and valuing of care work are important things to intervene in to promote social transformation that is equitable for all.

## Closing

The literature review, supported by interviews with relevant stakeholders, shows that equal opportunities and gender equity in women's participation in paid work exist at the intersection of domestic and public life.

A number of feminist theoretical propositions, and their application in the form of affirmative policies on the distribution of care work, are seen as having a significant impact on changing people's attitudes and behaviours towards the gendered division of labour (Schouten 2019). A number of interviewees also agreed that social justice for women in terms of access to and sustainability of paid work requires a range of government interventions. These include affirmative policies that rewrite the definition of women and men in an egalitarian way. Care responsibilities need to be defined in ways that do not necessarily refer to women, but recognise other situations, such as fathers as primary carers, adoptive parents, relatives, and other carers.

In the Indonesian context, efforts are being made to develop an affirmative policy for care work in RUU KIA. It is important to note that this policy needs to be accompanied by a budget that is geared towards investment in care. RUU KIA has yet to provide social security that emphasises that a person taking parental leave should not be discriminated against, dismissed, excluded from career advancement, or have their income reduced. In addition, support in the form of day-care and

more flexible working hours is needed to ensure that women and men can combine care and paid work in a sustainable way.

RUU KIA has the potential to achieve gender justice if it is formulated in an inclusive way. However, if it is formulated without a breakthrough in defining new femininities and masculinities, it has the potential to perpetuate gender and class inequalities and the exclusion of informal workers.

A number of good practices to change the definition and practice of the division of care work have been carried out by companies and civil society organisations and institutions. Although the impact is not large and generalised, there are at least good examples that can be replicated and scaled up. The practice of training to generate understanding and action on "new masculinities" shows that gender roles can be eroded through education and training.

All interviewees pointed to the importance of agency in supporting social transformation. Firstly, in everyday family practices, the performativity of new masculinities can have an impact on teaching the next generation and the surrounding male community to recognise and value the importance of care work. Secondly, it is important to generate the idea of shared care that allows for the reduction and redistribution of care work from women to men and others who may be involved. Thirdly, it is important to consider the interconnectedness of care work and the economy, so that it can generate rewards or even incentives/social guarantees to do this work safely and properly. Finally, there is the question of how to promote appropriate affirmative action without slipping into exclusion of identity diversity, class bias and gender bias. It is hoped that the four conclusions above will simultaneously promote women's FLFP.

This research certainly has limitations in revealing men's personal experiences of care work. Suggestions for future research can include more personal experiences of men about the redistribution of care work in an effort to support social transformation. As recommendations for the sustainability of the redistribution of care work in an effort to increase women's FLFP; 1) The importance of recognition and appreciation of care work, and the importance of reducing and redistributing care work from women to men and/or to other parties who may be involved; 2) Forms of recognition and reward can be through KPPPA policies and programmes supported by various stakeholders; 3) The importance of disseminating "good practices" related to changing the definition and practice of the division of care work by companies and

civil society organisations and institutions; 4) Campaigns for understanding and acting on “new masculinities” to show that gender-equitable role sharing can be achieved through changing attitudes and redefining concepts of masculinity and femininity.

## Bibliography

Ariyani, D. 2017. “Paternity Leave (Cuti Ayah): Apa, Bagaimana, dan Untuk Apa?”, *YINYANG Jurnal Studi Islam Gender dan Anak*, Vol. 12(2), pp. 351-366. DOI:10.24090/yinyang.v12i2.2017.pp351-366.

Becker, P. E. & Moen, P. 1999. “Scaling Back: Dual-earner Couples’ Work-family Strategies”, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 61(4), pp. 995-1007. <https://doi.org/10.2307/354019>.

Bianchi, S. M., Sayer, L. C., Milkie, M. A., & Robinson, J. P. 2012. “Housework: Who Did, Does or Will Do It, and How Much Does It Matter?”, *Social Forces; A Scientific Medium of Social Study and Interpretation*, Vol. 91(1), pp. 55-63. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos120>.

Bühlmann, F., Elcheroth, G., & Tettamanti, M. 2010. “The Division of Labour among European Couples: the Effects of Life Course and Welfare Policy on Value-practice Configurations”, *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 26(1), pp. 49-66. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcp004>.

Bittman, M. et al. 2003. “When Does Gender Trump Money? Bargaining and Time in Household Work”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 109(1), pp. 186-214. <https://doi.org/10.1086/378341>.

Butler, J. 2004. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge: New York.

Cameron, L., Contreras S. D., and Rowell, W. 2018. “Female Labour Force Participation in Indonesia: Why Has It Stalled”, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 55(2), pp. 157-192.

Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS). 2023. “Tingkat Partisipasi Angkatan Kerja Menurut Jenis Kelamin 2018”, *bps.go.id*, accessed on 23 November 2023, at <https://www.archive.bps.go.id/indicator/40/2200/3/tingkat-partisipasi-angkatan-kerja-menurut-jenis-kelamin.html>.

Chodorow, N. 1978. “Mothering, Object-Relations, and the Female Oedipal Configuration”, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 4 (1), p. 137. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177630>.

Collins, P. H. & Bilge, S. 2016. *Intersectionality*. John Wiley & Sons: New Jersey.

Cunningham, M. 2007. “Influences of Women’s Employment on the Gendered Division of Household Labour Over the Life Course: Evidence From a 31-Year Panel Study”, *Journal of family issues*, Vol. 28(3), pp. 422-444. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X06295198>.

Durrer, S. 2019. “Gender Equality in Switzerland”, *ohchr.org*, accessed on 19 December 2023, at [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Development/SR/visit-to-switzerland/foge\\_GE.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Development/SR/visit-to-switzerland/foge_GE.pdf).

Gheaus, A. & Robeyns, I. 2011. “Equality-Promoting Parental Leave”, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 42, pp. 173-191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2011.01525.x>.

Halim, D., Johnson, H., & Perova, E. 2017. “Could Childcare Services Improve Women’s Labour Market Outcomes in Indonesia?”, *East Asia and Pacific Gender Policy Brief No. 1*, accessed on 19 December 2023, at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/855851490958133680/pdf/113927-BRI-PUBLIC-EAP-abstract-sent.pdf>.

hooks, b. 2015. *Feminism is for Everybody*. Routledge: New York.

Hook, J. L. 2006. “Care in Context: Men’s Unpaid Work in 20 Countries, 1965-2003”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 71(4), pp. 639-660. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100406>.

House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI). 2022. Academic Paper of the Draft Law on Mother and Child Welfare (RUU KIA).

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2000. “C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)”, accessed on 11 December 2023, at [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0:::55:P55\\_TYPE,P55\\_LANG,P55\\_DOCUMENT,P55\\_NODE:REV,en,C183,/Document](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0:::55:P55_TYPE,P55_LANG,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:REV,en,C183,/Document).

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2014. “Extending Childcare Services to Workers in the Informal Economy: Policy Lessons from Country Experiences”, accessed on 23 November 2023, at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_737555.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/genericdocument/wcms_737555.pdf).

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2021. “ILO Global Care Policy Portal”, accessed on 19 December 2023, at <https://www.ilo.org/globalcare/?language=en#home>.

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2022. “Care at Work in Indonesia Investing in Leave and Care Services for a More Gender Equal World of Work”, accessed on 13 November 2023, at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms\\_867840.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_867840.pdf).

Johansson, T. 2011. “Fatherhood in Transition: Paternity Leave and Changing Masculinities”, *Journal of Family Communication*, Vol. 11(3), pp. 165-180. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2011.561137>.

Kammerman, S. B. & Moss, P. (Eds.). 2009. *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, Parenting, Gender and the Labour Market* (1st ed.). Bristol University Press: UK. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qgmq0>.

Lachance-Grzela, M. & Bouchard, G. 2010. “Why Do Women Do the Lion’s Share of Housework? A Decade of Research”, *Sex Roles*, Vol. 63, pp. 767-780. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9797-z>.

Mason, E. 2022. *Feminist Philosophy*. Routledge: New York.

Moss, P. 2015. “There are Alternatives! Contestation and Hope in Early Childhood Education”, *Global Studies of Childhood*, Vol. 5(3), pp. 226-238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610615597130>.

Moss, P. & Deven, F. 2015. “Leave Policies in Challenging Times: Reviewing the Decade 2004-2014”, *Community, Work & Family*, Vol. 18(2), pp. 137-144, DOI: 10.1080/13668803.2015.1021094.

Oakley, A. 2018. *The Sociology of Housework*. Bristol University Press: United Kingdom.

O'Brien, M. & Wall, K. 2017. *Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality Fathers on Leave Alone*. Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Okin, S. M. 1989. "Justice, Gender, and the Family", *Hypatia*, Vol. 8 (1), pp. 209-214, <https://doi.org/10.1111/S0887536700005584>.

Peutere, L., Rautava, P., & Virtanen, P. 2017. "Domestic Responsibilities as Predictors of Labour Market Attachment Trajectories in Men and Women", *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 37(9/10), pp. 536-554. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-04-2016-0039>.

Peutere, L., Rosenström, T., Koskinen, A., Härmä, M., Kivimäki, M., Virtanen, M., Ervasti, J., & Ropponen, A. 2021. "Length of Exposure to Long Working Hours and Night Work and Risk of Sickness Absence: A Register-based Cohort Study", *BMC Health Services Research*, Vol. 21(1), p. 1199. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-07231-4>.

Pleck, J. H. 1985. *Working Wives, Working Husbands*. Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.

Republic of Indonesia. Law Number 1 Year 1974 on Marriage.

Republic of Indonesia. Law Number 13 Year 2003 on Labour.

Republic of Indonesia. Law Number 52 Year 2009 on Population and Family Development.

Ruddick, S. 1983. "Pacifying the Forces: Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society Women and Violence*, Vol. 8(3), pp. 471-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173948&gt;>.

Schouten, G. 2017. "Citizenship, Reciprocity, and the Gendered Division of Labour: A Stability Argument for Gender Egalitarian Political Interventions", *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, Vol. 16 (2), pp. 174-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470594X15600830>.

Schouten, G. 2019. *Liberalism, Neutrality, and the Gendered Division of Labour*. Oxford University Press: New York.

Singley, S. & Hynes, K. 2005. "Transitions to Parenthood: Work-Family Policies, Gender, and the Couple Context", *Gender & Society*, Vol. 19(3), pp. 376-397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204271515>.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). 2023. "Supporting Equal Parenting: Paid Parental Leave", [oecd-ilibrary.org](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/8f056391-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/8f056391-en), accessed on 19 December 2023, at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/8f056391-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/8f056391-en>.

Tong, R. 2009. *Feminist Thought*. Routledge: USA.

Van der Gaag, N. et al. 2023. "State of the World's Fathers 2023 Centering Care in a World in Crisis", [equimundo.org](https://www.equimundo.org), accessed on 3 October 2023, at <https://www.equimundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/State-of-the-Worlds-Fathers-2023.pdf>.

Wall, K. & Leitão, M. 2017. "Fathers on Leave Alone in Portugal: Lived Experiences and Impact of Forerunner Fathers" in O'Brien, M., Wall, K. (Eds.), "Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality Fathers on Leave Alone", *Life Course Research and Social Policies*, Vol. 6, pp. 45-67. Switzerland: Springer Open: Switzerland. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-42970-0\_4.

World Bank. 2020. *Indonesia Country Gender Assessment: Investing in Opportunities for Women*. World Bank: Washington DC.

World Bank. 2022. "Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have the Same Economic Rights as Men", [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org), accessed on 23 November 2023, at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/01/nearly-2-4-billion-women-globally-don-t-have-same-economic-rights-as-men>.

## (Endnotes)

- 1 Paternity leave in the terminology: Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower does not mention the term paternity leave. Rather, it refers to 2 days of leave to accompany the wife during childbirth, although in some journals and news reports the 2 days of leave in question are taken from the term paternity leave.
- 2 "In accordance with the provisions of Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower, paternity leave is granted for 2 days with full pay". See Ariyani, D. 2017. "Paternity Leave (Cuti Ayah): Apa, Bagaimana, dan Untuk Apa?", *YINYANG Jurnal Studi Islam Gender dan Anak*, 12(2): p. 364.