

Ethnography of Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) Couples in The Dual-Career Families

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Abstract

The higher level of education of women and many female formal sector workers increases the number of LDM couples. The condition of husband and wife as public workers have changed the relationship model in the division of family roles. The condition of husband and wife as public workers change the relationship model in the division of labor in household. This ethnographic research that uses a descriptive-analytic method aims to find a husband-wife relation model of LDM couples in dual-career families through three aspects, namely: the division of labor in household, breadwinning, and decision-making. The results showed that the ethnographic of LDM couples in dual-career families experienced inconsistencies from the ideological and practical aspects between the construction and implementation of the division of domestic work between husband and wife. The role construction of men and women of the LDM couples in dual-careers family still shows the strong influence of patriarchal culture and familialism ideology with the head-complement relation pattern. But at the practical level, the division of household work of LDM couples in dual-careers families is done more flexibly, with a head-complement relation pattern, senior-junior partner relation pattern, an equal partner relation pattern. Meanwhile, in the aspects of breadwinning and decision-making, the relation that is built in the LDM family is the implication of socio-cultural changes, the demands of public employment, and the factor of women's high education. Although ideologically, the influence of patriarchy and familialism ideology is still strong, but at the level of practice, the breadwinning and decision-making aspects of LDM couples in dual-career family are more dominated by the senior-junior partner relation pattern and equal partner relation pattern.

Keywords

ethnography; division of household work; husband-wife relation pattern; long-distance marriage; role construction

INTRODUCTION

The high level of education of women today has implications for the absorption of the number of women working in the public domain. Many women work in the public domain before marriage, resulting in these women getting husbands who work in the public sector as well. Moreover, the families of public sector workers who experience long-distance marriages. These conditions provide space for men and women to

adjust the roles that have been expected in men and women, namely men who are responsible in the public sector and women in the domestic sector. Recognized or not, an ideology of familialism and *Ibuism* is still a strong influence in shaping and constructing the roles of men and women in hous-

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eholds and communities (Nawangningrum, 1995: 14). This social construction becomes a reference for both families who live in the same house or live separately, like what was undertaken by the LDM couple in Semarang State University.

Long-distance marriage in a dual-career family is a result of an effort to accommodate the career demands of each partner (Gross, 1980), as a phenomenon that occurs in Semarang State University. When ideology of familialism who see women's primary role as wife and mother has made a lot of other women to sacrifice their jobs and careers for the sake of the family and follow her husband, career women undergoing LDM choose instead to maintain a career and stay separate from their husbands and oppose the traditional image of society about the ideal female figure, namely as a good wife and mother, who must obey to her husband, take care of the household, be ready to accompany and serve her husband, and nurture and educate children. As women who have careers and undergoing LDM, these two role demands are not easy to do, because of the rare frequency of meetings with their husbands and the bustle of women as a consequence of their work and career demands.

Various studies on working women and career women have been carried out at home and abroad, but more on women's autonomy, gender relations, division of gender roles, dual burdens, and career development of women. In Indonesia, studies on working women and career women have done by Iedarwati (1993) on female lecturers at private universities in Jakarta concerning professional women's autonomy in the family, Triwarmiyati (2009) concerning marriage relations in working women, Pambody (2003) regarding the double burden on women entrepreneurs in Jakarta, Kusujiarti (1995) on women working in rural areas in Java regarding hidden power in gender relations, Nawangningrum (1995) regarding factors that were considered to hinder the career of female servicemen in the Army, and Azis (in Ruspita, 2008: 20) concerning the career development of women civil servants in Setwilda Level I Sulawesi. While abroad,

studies on dual-career families have also been conducted by Risman and Sumerfold (1998), Rachlin (1987), and Komter (1989).

Another study that examined the LDM families was also carried out by Kismini, et al (2018). The research is similar to the research we are doing. If Kismini, et al focus their study on temporary LDM during the dry season as an economic strategy for the survival of farmers in the village, then our research focuses on LDM in high educated dual-career families living in cities.

Overseas, research on LDM of dual-career couples was conducted by Bunker et al (1992) by comparing the quality of life (level of satisfaction and stress) of dual-careers couples living separately with dual-career couples living together. While another study conducted by Gross (1980) describe the advantages and disadvantages faced by LDM marriage. The two studies have not shown that the research on LDM of dual-career families focused on the pattern of husband-wife relations, namely: the division of household work, breadwinning, and decision-making have carried out by previous researchers.

Based on the description above, there are no articles that discuss the husband-wife relation pattern of LDM couples in dual-careers family before. So, the focus of this paper is directed to the husband-wife relation pattern of LDM couples in dual-careers family by not ignoring the socio-cultural and educational construction of the actors and the environment in the process of gender role socialization. To analyze the relationship model in question, the authors use the concept of Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981) which divides the pattern of husband-wife relations in families into four patterns, namely (a) *Owner-Property Pattern*, (b) *Head-Complement Pattern*, (c) *Senior-Junior Partner Pattern*, and *Equal Partner Pattern*.

RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects in this study were LDM couples in dual-careers family at Semarang State University and selected 5 informants consisting of 1 male (husband) and 4 female

(wives) spread across various faculties at Semarang State University. In order to uncover how the informants construct the roles of men and women that have implications on decision-making process, division of household work, and the husband-wife relation pattern formed, the study was conducted comprehensively on some research focuses. The data collection techniques used are observation and in-depth interviews. The author explores the data based on ethnographic research and based on the principle of *Saturation*. Exploration of the data is complete when the information obtained is saturated (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999: 262). For data analysis, the authors use analytic ethnography that is a *thick description* by applying the concept of husband-wife relation patterns according to Scanzoni and Scanzoni.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Role Construction of Men and Women of Long-Distance Marriage Couples in Dual-Career Family

Women's progress in education and women's public roles (career) are not strong enough to challenge the ideology of familism that has long been produced and reproduced in a patriarchal society. The strong ideology of familism that defines the primary role of women as mothers and wives (Abdullah, 2006) is shown through various views of LDM actors, both women, and men, regarding the different roles of women and men, the concept of wife compliance, and the concept of women ideal. However, in practice the role division between LDM couples is far more flexible and relatively equal. The results of this study also strengthened the results of Pambudy's research (2003) where although women have entered the public sphere, the main responsibility in the domestic sphere is still the responsibility of women, and women's activities are adjusted to the task of caring for their husband and children. In more detail, the description of role construction of men and women in long-distance marriage of dual-career fami-

lies is as follows:

Role Differences between Men and Women

The view that distinguishes explicitly the role differences between women and men is seen from the view of F who believes that the husband is an *imam* (leader), so the main task of the husband is as a breadwinner, while the main task of women is taking care of the household, there for a women must get permission from their husbands to work

"The husband is obliged to work because he is an imam the family. He is obliged to support the family. However, working for women is mubah. Woman may work as long as her husband allows her. For me, a job as a teacher is a side job, while while being a housewife who serves the husband is my main occupation as a wife."

F's view is in line with Budhy Prianto's research (2013) which outlines that in marriage, there will be a personal commitment between the couple that influences the relationship between the two, for example, the matter of earning a living is an agreement carried out by the husband, while the wife is committed in handling domestic affairs

Ihromi (1993) states that there is still a general view among Indonesian women who consider marriage, husband, and children to be the most important. F also saw that women's and men's tasks differ physically, where women do light work, whereas men do heavy work, such as lifting things. Although before married F was accustomed to doing heavy work, but since married F no longer does it because her husband forbade her, and in practice, F did all the housework. This F's view is in line with the views of other female informants, A and E, as well as D as male informants. According to D, the difference in work performed by men and women lies in the aspect of strength, in which the male job more requires a large force (outdoors activities/public works), while women work more on the things that do not need a large power (household activities/domestic works).

Different views emerge from S. According to S, the roles of men and women in

the household are more equal and there are no jobs that can be done by men or women only, except those related to nature.

“... There is no work done by men or women only, except those related to nature, for example, breastfeeding can only be done by women, but when it comes to domestic work in general, both can do it. So, both can play that role. The duties of husband and wife in the household are the same, especially if they both works.”

The Division of Household Work and the Husband-Wife Relation Pattern of Long-Distance Marriage Couples in Dual-Career Family

Budiman (1985) said that differences between men and women both biologically and psychologically made most people believe that women naturally live around the family. This division of roles is considered natural because women will be associated with the task of giving birth and raising children around the house, as well as cooking and caring their husbands so that their households are at peace and then welfare can be achieved. The task of the woman is considered as an embodiment of the division of labor based on sex differences to create a happy life, although men and women can exchange jobs. Men can do work that has been identified as women's work, such as cleaning the house, shopping, caring for children, and cooking in the kitchen. Otherwise, women have also “taken over” public activities that have been identified as men's work, such as being pilots, drivers, architects, and so forth.

In contrast to the general role construction, the educational status of the wife of an LDM couples is equal to that of the husband, even higher than the husband's education. The wives of LDM couples already worked in public spaces as their husbands before they are married. This condition affects the division of domestic work, breadwinning, and decision making in the family. In this section, will be described husband-wife relation patterns of LDM couples on those three aspects mentioned, based on the typology from Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1981).

Distribution of Domestic Work between LDM Couples in Dual-Career Families

The division of labor within the LDM household also needs to be negotiated between couples, given that they live separately. This problem is not merely related to real activities in the household, but also relates to the problem of cultural ideology that affects the roles in the household taken by both husband and wife.

The division of labor in the dual-career family conducted by F is more influenced by their religious beliefs. The division of labor in F's household arranged together by both husband and wife. F considers that the role of woman in the status as a wife is obliged to serve the husband and family the best she can. For F, carrying out duties as a wife is the primary obligation, while his public work is merely a side job. F's view on the concept of family is in line with research by Diyah Utami et al (2014) regarding analysis of framing in the text of a marriage sermon which states that a wife who works outside the home is not a good wife and does not reflect an ideal family.

Gender roles in F family are clearly distinguished between her and her husbands. All household affairs that are usually done by the wife, starting from cleaning the house, preparing meals, serving the husband by preparing the husband's work clothes, and others are always done by F.

“Husband and wife are partners, therefore anyone who can do it and has time to do it, he/she does it. But usually I have finished everything related to housework.”

This division of roles reflects a form of sexual division of labor in which men and women are distinguished following the culture in society. Considering the large number of domestic and public activities that must be carried out and cared for by F, this naturally implies a double burden. However, doing all activities related to her obligations as a wife is an important part of F's life and is a form of devotion to F's husband in order to seek the pleasure of Allah. There is still a general view among Indonesian women who

consider marriage, husband, and children to be the most important thing (Ihromi, 1993). Likewise, for F the role as a wife is the most prioritized. As much as possible F always finishes her public work at the office and frees all office work when she is at home. While at home, time is fully used to carry out its domestic role. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Azis in 1996 in which civil servant women in Setwilda Level I North Sulawesi tended to consider their families and sacrifice their careers to carry out their obligations as wives and mothers in the family (in Ruspita, 2008: 20).

In fact, doing work that is usually done by men is not something new, strange or taboo for F. F feels that when he is able to do something, he will do it and will not feel ashamed or feel that it is not his role. When her husband is not at home, F returns to the activities that he left behind since marriage, such as replacing broken lights, repairing a leaky roof, and others.

The description above shows that F understands that actually the division of labor in the household is neither sexist nor given. F's view on the division of roles is certainly far from gender bias. However, F's religious principles made her accept various gender roles that were socially constructed as women's roles without questioning the consequences. Especially for domestic matters, F will try to minimize the husband's dissatisfaction with the devotion done to him, so that for F it is better to get a reprimand from the leadership because office work is not completed than an angry husband because his obligations as a wife (domestic domain) are not carried out properly. Especially in domestic matters, F will try to minimize the husband's dissatisfaction with the dedication he has done, even for F it is better to be reprimanded by the office leader because his work is not completed than being scolded by the husband because his obligations as a wife (his domestic domain) are not carried out properly. This finding is apparently different from the findings of Sri Budi Lestari, et al (2014) which shows that gender injustice as a cultural nature is only questioned by educated or highly educated

women.

The condition of household F is not much different from household E. The absence of a husband at home makes E have to complete almost all domestic work, although in practice E is assisted by household assistants and the use of laundry services to wash clothes.

"My husband can't go home every week, Sir, so, I have to prepare my needs in Semarang alone. I do all household matters, Mas. Alhamdulillah, I was assisted by a household assistant, even though only when I was at work, so when I got home I returned to do all household activities. When it comes to washing clothes, I don't wash myself. I use laundry services. Sometimes I want to wash myself, but because work in the office is finished until the evening, even at night, when I get home I am tired and do not have time to wash, so I better take a break and take care of children."

Similar to F, E also often has to do domestic work that is usually done by men, such as replacing broken lights. Just like in F's household, when E's husband was at home, he was also not burdened with domestic work, but he was more involved in childcare work

"In my family, the division of domestic work is very clear, which one should be done by the wife or husband. When my husband returned home, he focused more on the child. I feel sorry for my husband who was already tired during his work time in J City, coupled with a tiring journey home. So, my husband is more devoted to his child while at home, even though at bedtime, my child must sleep with me, because this has become my child's habit. "

The description above is in accordance with Coltrane's (2004) statement that the employment of household assistants can indeed reduce women's domestic work hours but does not have much effect on the husband's privileged position in the family. Once a woman enters a marriage institution, a line of work entitled "giving birth, caring for children, husband and household" awaits women. These series of domestic tasks are unwittingly realized by women, and

especially by men, will bind women's body, heart, and minds to home, from the time they wake up in the morning until they go to sleep at night. Even women's work outside the home does not free women from their main obligations (Ratih, 2002: 47). This finding is also not much different from the results of a study by Triwarmiyati (2009) who found there is a double burden on working wives, because in addition to responsibility for their public duties, working women also have to be responsible for their domestic duties, namely caring for children and husband. Working women even have to think about how to make all those responsibilities go well. Pambudy's research (2003) also provides similar findings which conclude that the inclusion of women in the public (business world) does not make women detached from their primary responsibilities in the domestic realm and women's activities are tailored to their domestic needs and tasks. Cultural factors and internalization of cultural values in women have helped determine women's perceptions about their roles and status

In LDM of the dual-career family, there are certain situations where the division of domestic work can be more flexible, as seen in A's family. In A's family, there was a situation where her husband did not work, while A was pregnant for the second child. At that time housework and childcare affairs were delegated to the husband, while A carried out his duties as a lecturer.

"My husband and I help each other and whoever can do, it becomes part of the division of roles. I felt comfortable because at that time my husband had no work, so household chores were done together without helpers. My husband took on the role of parenting while I was teaching. My husband can bathe children, because at that time I was pregnant and practically unable to do housework. So, the husband is ready to help his wife do all the household chores. At that time my husband served me. "

A's household conditions similar to D's household. In certain situations, D also sometimes does domestic work which is usually done by his wife.

"When my wife is busy, I do the housework and vice versa. There is a bad feeling if no one does domestic work. So domestic affairs are our shared affairs. This is indeed a consequence that I must live with my wife."

What A and D said showed that men actually have the ability to carry out childcare activities and do domestic work. This is as Coltrane (2004: 219) says that in the long run the involvement of husbands in the domestic realm can be expected to bring change and encourage the benefits and fairer distribution of domestic work. However, the work carried out by the husband is only temporary and cannot be said to fully provide freedom for the wife in the public sphere.

Even though household affairs are carried out together, domestic division of labor is still carried out with a certain ratio. Compared to men, women's domestic roles are still more dominant and revolves around internal house affairs, while men are related to outside house matters.

"In my opinion 60% of domestic work is done by the wife while 40% is distributed to the husband. The wife does work inside the house, while the husband does things outside the house, like repairing tiles and so on."

The findings related to the division of domestic work of LDM couples in a dual-career family are relatively more equal than the findings of the study of Iedarwati (1993) on female lecturers in private universities in Jakarta which show that almost all domestic tasks are assigned to wives.

Meanwhile, the division of labor in households that is different from F and A is experienced by S. In S's households, the division of labor between husband and wife is not based on sex but based on the principle of ability. The wife can do the activities that are usually done by men as long as she is able to do. The division of labor in S's households is done through an agreement between husband and wife.

"If I can do it myself, I will do it myself. For example, about installing a regulator hose on gas, my husband is often afraid,

but instead I am the brave one, so I installed it myself. Unfortunately, I do not understand about repairing electricity and roofs, so I ask and hope that my husband does it. But if my husband cannot fix it, we call a handyman. In my household there is no work that can only be done by men or women. The division of our domestic work is I cook, my husband sweeps and mops the floor, while caring for the children is done together. If my husband is in Semarang, he takes care of the house. For us, the division of domestic work is flexible. Domestic work does not mean only women's business, but also the husband's business. Whoever can do, he/she who does. "

Husband-Wife Relation Pattern of Long-Distance Marriage in Dual-Careers Family

Based on the various descriptions above, it can be concluded that according to the husband-wife relation pattern of Scanzoni and Scanzoni, the domestic work distribution in F and E's households follow the head-complement relation pattern in which the husband as the head of the household while the wife as the housekeeper who does most of the housework. Whereas the domestic work division in A and D's households are more in line with the senior-junior partner relation pattern where the husband and wife can switch roles in doing domestic work according to the situation in the household. Meanwhile, in S's households, the division of domestic work is based more on the equal partner relations pattern where the husband and wife share domestic work based on the ability of each partner, not based on gender. The husband-wife relations pattern of LDM in a dual-career family will be explained in more detail through the description of how the husband and wife share in the aspects of breadwinning and decision making as follows:

Breadwinning Aspect of LDM in Dual-Careers Family

The phenomenon of LDM in dual-career families is mostly found at Semarang State University as the result of efforts to

accommodate the career demands of each partner, because both husband and wife work (Gross, 1980). As a couple who has a job and career, then the husband and wife have their own income, even the wife's income is not infrequently greater than the husband. Therefore, in meeting the needs of the family, arrangements and negotiations between partners are needed.

In the case of LDM in a dual-career family in Unnes, there is a strong perception of the patriarchal culture that sees men/husbands as the main breadwinners, while the wife as an additional breadwinner. However, at the practice level, it turns out that the LDM couples does not make an issue with whose income is greater or used to meet household needs. The couple's income of LDM in a dual-career family is collected as shared property. There is no husband's money or wife's money. Likewise, household goods and other facilities, although administratively (*de jure*) owned by the wife, are *de facto* shared property.

"No matter how much the husband's income, the husband is still the backbone of the family. Even if the husband's income is not more than mine, I still respect my husband as a man. Even though this is the case, my income is still for my family, not for personal matters only. "

F's statement is in line with other informants' statements. According to E, supporting the family is a joint responsibility between husband and wife. This statement is also not much different from D which states that because husband and wife work together, so both provide income to support the family. Even D has a joint account with his wife for savings in meeting family needs. Meanwhile, S and A also stated that they united their income with their husband's income.

Based on the description of the informants, it can be concluded according to the typology of the husband-wife relations pattern of Scanzoni and Scanzoni that the breadwinning aspect of LDM in dual-careers family is ideologically influenced by patriarchal culture, namely head-complement re-

lation pattern, but practically LDM couples apply equal partner relation pattern.

Decision Making Aspect of LDM in Dual-Careers Family

Women's education seems to contribute significantly to decision making aspects of LDM in dual-careers family. The husband of LDM couples in Unnes does not merely ask the wife's opinion in decision making, but the wife is directly involved in making the final decision. Even, a wife is given the freedom to determine the future of her career, although when making decisions many women are influenced by familialism ideology in which the role of wife and mother is the main consideration, as in the S's case.

"I have been offered to continue my studies abroad from the campus. And I have been given freedom by my husband to decide, but I did not take the opportunity because of the child's factors. "

How big, small, important, or trivial the problem also determines the decision-making process. Decisions on small or personal issues are left to each individual, while decisions that are considered big and important issues are taken jointly, as is the D's case below:

" If we want to buy furniture, we always discuss it, not based on personal decisions. We realize that we must learn to press our own ego. "

Similar to D, in making important decisions, such as buying a house, car, or land, E and A also need to discuss with their husbands. As for daily and trivial matters, such as buying clothes, the decision is left to each individual.

Different decision-making process is expressed by F. In F's household, the husband is more dominant where the wife only provides suggestions; and it is the husband who makes the final decision to meet the family needs.

"Like the decision to buy a house, my husband invited me to discuss it, but in practice my husband was more dominant in completing the matter."

According to F, her husband's domination in making decisions does not cause problems in her family. In every decision making, F's husband has considered F's wishes and feelings as the wife, so F is not disappointed with her husband's decision. This description of F submitting the final decision to her husband is in line with Ermanovida's study (2016) which says that men have domination in determining decisions in the family and the wife follows whatever decisions the husband makes.

Based on the description above, on decision-making aspects of LDM in dual-career family, four informants (S, D, A, and E) show an *equal partner* relation pattern where decision making is carried out jointly between partners, even for small issues or involving career, women given the freedom to decide. Whereas in F's case, decision making shows a tendency towards head-complement relation pattern where the role of the wife is only to give consideration, while the final decision is left to the husband.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above it can be concluded that higher education and broader role of women do not change much the construction of patriarchal culture and familialism ideology in society. The social construction of the division of domestic work that can be seen through the dichotomy of the public and domestic spheres shows a pattern of head-complement relation pattern. However, at the level of practice, the division of household work of LDM in dual-career families is done more flexibly. There are families that show head-complement relation pattern which the wife does most of the domestic work; there are families who in certain situations show senior-junior partner relation pattern which the husband can replace the domestic work of the wife; and there is family who follow an equal partner relation pattern which domestic work is done together with the partner based on the ability of each partner.

Meanwhile, in the aspect of breadwinning and decision-making, the hus-

band-wife relation pattern developed by LDM couples in dual-careers family is the implication of socio-cultural changes, the demands of public work, and the women's high education factors. Although ideologically the influence of patriarchy and familism ideology is still strong, the practice of breadwinning and decision making of LDM couples in dual-careers family is more dominated by senior-junior partner and equal partner relation patterns.

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