

Discourses of Good Motherhood among Rural Women in Teluk Awur

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Abstract. Becoming a mother is a phase that most women in Indonesia must carry out. Opportunities for higher education and careers cannot make women leave motherhood easily. Many women feel pressured to execute their role as mothers, especially during economic problems. The situation surrounding women has a significant effect on motherhood discourse. This qualitative research examines the life experience of becoming a mother among women in Teluk Awur village. As a society facing economic uncertainty, women's choices to become mothers and their perceptions of the role of mothers are important to observe. The results of this study indicate that women in Teluk Awur village perceive motherhood as a positive thing even during life's difficulties. Becoming a mother makes them feel they have a second chance to improve their lives by giving proper direction to their children.

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1 Introduction

Most Indonesian women act as mothers. Open access to education, politics, and the economy does not only allow them to leave their role as mothers. Nussbaum stated that no one would understand women's choices and limitations without knowing how they are placed socially, especially concerning where the women live. Moreover, regarding the position of women, Nussbaum concluded that the assessment of inequality that occurs in women in developing countries cannot be compared with women in developed countries. It can be said that we need local wisdom to understand women's problems.[1]. Women's opportunities and challenges in developing and developed regions are undoubtedly different. Rural areas have particular implications for women's perspectives and the opportunities they receive, where rural women generally have more significant access limitations than urban women. The perspective of rural women is essential to study, primarily related to motherhood. The complexity of the discourse on motherhood among urban women is usual, along with the high pressure they face as career women. The discourse regarding how rural women view the role of motherhood cannot be ignored because they face complex problems related to the economy. Therefore, this study examines women's perspectives regarding motherhood in Teluk Awur, Tahunan, Jepara, Central Java, Indonesia. Motherhood is a word sociologists use to refer to the social expectations, experiences, and structures associated with being a mother. Adrienne Rich found two overlapping meanings of motherhood. The term "motherhood" is more institutional, which refers to an oppressive patriarchal system. Motherhood is the word that sociologists tend to use to refer to the social expectations, experiences, and structures associated with being a mother. Adrienne Rich devised two superimposing meanings of motherhood. The term "motherhood" is more institutionalist that refers to the oppressive patriarchal system. In contrast, the term "mothering" is an experience that refers to a female's experience of mothering and is more empowering because it is female-defined and centered [2]. Motherhood is a site of power wherein mothers can perform the essential and crucial work of empowering children [3]. Feminist studies have long centered on women's writing about mothers in fiction and life writing [4]. Over the last three decades, almost without our noticing, there has been a revolution in our idea of motherhood. This revolution was silent, prompting no outcry or

debate, even though its goal was momentous: to put motherhood squarely back at the heart of women's lives [5].

Several studies related to motherhood have been conducted. Among them, Stone shows that even though a mother has career responsibilities or responsibilities as a mother at an early age, her role does not diminish [6]. Research with the theory of motherhood was also found in Yulianingsih and Masykur's research, which explained that children are one of the factors supporting the life of young single mothers. One of the main factors that cause adolescents to become single mothers is early marriage, economic conditions, and low education [7].

Furthermore, Hollay's research shows that professional, upper middle class and highly educated women have difficulty adjusting to the demands of being a 'mother' that they experience [8]. The relationship between the role of women as mothers has an enormous influence, especially in attention and health, in line that the correlation between nutritional status and psychosocial stimulation with toddler cognitive development is influenced by the mother's career status (working or housewife)[9]. The difference between the author's research and previous research is the emphasis on the role of women as mothers in Teluk Awur. This study specifically had a few intentions: 1) to identify the double burden of women in Teluk Awur, and 2) to identify women's perceptions in Teluk Awur regarding the role of being a mother in the middle of the double burden. This qualitative study utilized the technics of data collection by interviewing and Focus Group Discussions with women and children in Teluk Awur.

2 Result and Discussion

2.1 The Double Burden Faced by Women in Teluk Awur

The division of roles between men and women in the Teluk Awur community had begun to fluid. Even though women are burdened with responsibilities in the domestic sphere, they are involved in work. Even so, women's involvement in working to support the family economy cannot be seen as complete freedom. In this case, a woman's burden is increasing and affecting her role as a mother. Especially for working women, work achievements and household (domestic) affairs require full attention [10]. Based on the results of interviews and FGDs, several young women in Teluk Awur work in the garment sector.

Meanwhile, most older people are self-employed by opening grocery stores, food stalls, and home-based businesses. A job in a garment does provide more guarantees than in entrepreneurship. However, the consequences also follow in the form of activity levels and internal conflicts because the salary of a wife who works in garments is higher than that of her husband. Even so, this did not end in divorce; the wife tried to compromise and maintain her role as a responsible wife and mother.

Furthermore, in the field of entrepreneurship, Teluk Awur women have attempted to create new economic opportunities for their families and local communities, but both have faced challenges. At the private business level, most Teluk Awur women ran businesses at home. The woman with the initials ZN has been running the business for five years, but this has also experienced ups and downs due to the instability of raw materials. The income earned is also low and is used up for daily needs. ZN works to help her husband (a gardener at an institution). Teluk Awur women faced challenges in surviving amidst economic uncertainty. Based on the results of interviews, most women experience economic constraints in building a business, and their husband's income is mediocre.

Apart from opening a home business, many Teluk Awur women sell things around the beach, as it is known that Teluk Awur is famous for its beach area as a tourist destination. Even so, the intensity of visitors who are not booming and the number of competitors makes the stalls also less successful. Even so, they try to survive selling. Based on the data collected, it can be mapped that most Teluk Awur women struggled in the economic field. They faced economic instability that forced them to work hard to support their families.

Nonetheless, most of them have children based on their wishes. Childfree is not a trend in this society, including the younger generation. Peter L. Berger inferred that humans live in an objective reality, which brings leverage from their places, and this influence becomes a habituation form [11]. Therefore, people are married, and children have the habitualization that refers to reproduction. This argument is proven and linear that childfree supposedly be a choice. Still, the habitualization that grows within our society says that after we get married, we must have children. Indonesia is a country that is pro-natalist. Hence, childfree is still a taboo topic to be discussed.

Moreover, the mindset that infers from the tagline "*the more children you had, the more fortune you could earn*" has been rooted and

has become common knowledge in our society. The practices that occur to be habituation still occupy a meaning that becomes its characteristic. However, the meaning is rooted within it only as a thing to be a habit in common knowledge. The child-free quote does not apply to women in the lower middle class or rural areas. After all the challenges women face have been explored, their perceptions of the role of motherhood will be examined.

2.2 Woman's Perception in Teluk Awur Regarding Motherhood

Women's perceptions of their role as mothers are essential to analyze, primarily when associated with all the burdens they face. The intensity of the conflict is increasingly mushrooming as a woman's maternal instincts progress. Even so, the role of being a mother can never be separated from a woman. According to cultural views, the birth of a baby and the gentle care of a mother signifies a good transition in life. It also happened to the Teluk Awur community. Based on the mindset of loyalty to their husbands, they assumed that all burdens that occurred in the family were a shared responsibility. The wife's acceptance of the situation she is experiencing made the husband also not prohibit women from working. In this case, the man does not force his wife to work. Based on the mindset of the importance of loyalty and cooperation, women carried out this double burden voluntarily. They still chose the role of mother, and they are eager to change the fate of their children to be better than them both in education and economically.

SR (respondent) stated that although she did not have a tertiary education, she tried to send her two daughters to the tertiary level. They didn't want their children to be ignored and thus face hardships in the future. Most women view tertiary education as necessary for their children, even though this goes back to their economic capabilities. Women direct their children to attend college and attend Islamic boarding schools. United Nations held a Summit Conference in 1997 – 2006 about mitigating poverty through education with the topic *"Eradicating Poverty is an urgent, ethical, social, political and economic task of humanity."* According to Jeffrey Sachs, one of the ways to mitigate poverty is to develop human capital, especially education and health[12]. Educational quote as a step for women to improve the quality of life of their children. Women also did not have the trauma of their role as mothers in economic

shocks. They always tried to maintain their authority as mothers during conflicts they experienced with their husbands, including those related to low-income and economic problems.

Another piece of evidence that Teluk Awur women carried out their role as mothers optimally are by looking at their children's responses. Referred to Afyanti's research, it is known that a good mother is perceived as a mother who: (1) is patient in caring for children (2) has the responsibility to care for her own child, (3) is able to manage her time well, and (4) prioritizes her child's needs over her own needs Alone [13]. Based on the results of the FGDs with the children, they know the role of the mother as something positive and admirable in their eyes. It means that mothers in Teluk Awur accepted their role and tried to do it as best they could so their children could feel that love. A child with the initials DK stated that his mother could manage all matters in the family well. Mothers gave their children direction but did not make them chase their mother's dreams. They are indeed seeking education for children without depriving children of the right to determine their goals.

3 Conclusion

Women in Teluk Awur interpreted their role as mothers positively. Their economic difficulties did not dampen their spirit to be the best mother for their children. In economic pressure, the women of Teluk Awur did not make their children dependent or shortcuts to get them out of poverty. They try their best to give their children opportunities in education, an option they didn't get before. They believe that education is one way that can improve individual life. Women see the role of the mother as a means to bring a better life. They tried to direct their children in a better direction without taking away the children's right to determine their life.

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