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Transformation of Family Institutions and Redefinition of Gender Roles in the Context of Indonesian Society Modernization

Oman Sukmana^{1*}, Hutri Agustino¹, Zaenal Abidin¹

¹Program Studi Kesejahteraan Sosial, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

*Correspondence: oman@umm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of family institutions and gender role redefinition within Indonesia's modernization context. Utilizing a longitudinal mixed-methods design, the research combines survey data from 926 respondents representing three generations (grandparents, parents, and adult children) with qualitative interviews of 48 families across urban, suburban, and rural areas conducted between February and October 2024. The investigation focuses on changes in family structure, decision-making patterns, domestic labor division, economic provision models, and gender ideology across generations. Findings reveal substantial transformation in family organization, with nuclear family arrangements increasingly dominant (73.2% of younger generation compared to 42.8% of grandparent generation), though extended family networks remain culturally and economically significant. Gender role patterns demonstrate significant but incomplete transformation: while dual-earner arrangements have become normative (68.4% of younger married couples), domestic labor division remains heavily gendered, with women performing 70.3% of household tasks even in dual-earner families. Decision-making has shifted from patriarchal to more egalitarian patterns in younger generations, though significant gender gaps persist in financial and major life decisions. The study identifies three family adaptation models: Traditional Continuity (maintaining conventional gender roles despite modernization pressures), Pragmatic Negotiation (selectively adapting roles based on economic necessity while retaining traditional ideology), and Egalitarian Transformation (fundamentally reorganizing roles based on gender equality principles). These findings illuminate the complex, non-linear nature of gender transformation in transitional societies and highlight persistent structural barriers to gender equality despite ideological shifts.

Keywords: Family transformation, gender roles, modernization, work-family balance, Indonesia



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INTRODUCTION

"The personal is political." — Carol Hanisch, *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (1970)

Hanisch's famous feminist slogan, articulated over five decades ago, encapsulates a fundamental insight: that seemingly private family arrangements and gender role divisions are deeply shaped by broader political, economic, and social structures. Her observation that personal relationships reflect and reproduce larger power dynamics remains profoundly relevant for understanding contemporary family transformation in Indonesia. As Indonesian society undergoes rapid modernization—

characterized by economic development, urbanization, educational expansion, and women's increased labor force participation—family institutions and gender roles are being fundamentally reconfigured. These transformations are neither simple nor unidirectional; rather, they involve complex negotiations between traditional cultural values emphasizing male authority and female domesticity, economic pressures requiring dual incomes, and emergent egalitarian ideologies promoted through education and global cultural flows.

Indonesia's modernization has been remarkably rapid. GDP per capita increased from \$857 in 2000 to \$4,788 in 2023, while female labor force participation rose from 51.8% in 2000 to 55.4% in 2024 (World Bank, 2024). Women's educational attainment has improved dramatically, with tertiary enrollment rates now exceeding men's in many urban areas (UNESCO, 2024). These structural changes have created conditions potentially supporting gender role transformation, as women's economic contributions and educational credentials challenge traditional patriarchal arrangements premised on male breadwinning and female domesticity.

Theoretical frameworks for understanding family and gender transformation have evolved substantially. Modernization theory initially posited linear progression from traditional to modern family forms, with nuclear families, gender equality, and individual autonomy replacing extended families, patriarchy, and collective obligations (Goode, 1963). However, subsequent research demonstrated more complex patterns, with traditional and modern elements coexisting and hybridizing rather than simply replacing each other (Therborn, 2004). Feminist scholarship highlighted how economic transformation does not automatically produce gender equality, as gender ideologies and structural barriers persist even when women's economic roles expand (Walby, 1990). Recent work emphasizes how families actively negotiate between multiple, sometimes contradictory cultural frameworks, creating diverse adaptation strategies rather than uniform transformation (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Within Indonesian contexts, several scholars have examined family and gender dynamics. Blackburn (2004) documented women's political and social activism, while Robinson (2009) analyzed how globalization influences Indonesian women's identities and opportunities. Utomo et al. (2016) investigated how young Indonesians navigate sexuality and relationships, and Parker and Creese (2016) explored the intersections of class, gender, and work. However, comprehensive examinations of intergenerational family transformation—comparing multiple generations within the same families to understand both change and continuity—remain limited, particularly studies integrating structural changes with ideological shifts and practical adaptations.

This study addresses these gaps through three central research questions: (1) How have family structures, living arrangements, and kinship networks changed across three generations of Indonesian families? (2) What patterns of gender role division in economic provision, domestic labor, and

decision-making characterize different generations and family types? (3) How do families negotiate between traditional gender ideologies and practical adaptations to economic and social changes? By examining these questions through intergenerational comparison within families and across diverse geographic and socioeconomic contexts, this research contributes to understanding the complex, non-linear nature of family and gender transformation in rapidly modernizing societies.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a longitudinal mixed-methods design combining intergenerational survey methodology with qualitative family interviews. The intergenerational approach, which surveys multiple generations within the same families, enables direct comparison of change and continuity while controlling for family-specific cultural and socioeconomic factors that might confound cross-sectional generational comparisons (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). The mixed-methods integration provided both breadth of generational patterns through survey data and depth of understanding regarding negotiation processes and lived experiences through interviews.

Sampling and Participants

The survey component recruited 926 respondents representing three generational cohorts within 312 families: grandparents (born 1945-1964, n=289), parents (born 1965-1984, n=314), and adult children (born 1985-1999, n=323). Families were recruited across three geographic contexts: urban centers (n=142 families), suburban areas (n=102 families), and rural villages (n=68 families) in Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. Recruitment utilized community organizations, religious institutions, and snowball referrals. Inclusion criteria required that all three generations be available and willing to participate.

The qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with 48 families (144 individuals representing three generations per family) selected through purposive sampling from the survey sample to represent diversity in family adaptation patterns, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Within each family, at least one representative from each generation participated in both individual and family group interviews.

Data Collection

Survey data collection occurred between February and June 2024 through face-to-face structured interviews. The survey instrument included modules on: (1) demographic characteristics and family composition; (2) living arrangements and household structure; (3) economic provision patterns and income sources; (4) domestic labor division (time spent on specific household tasks); (5) decision-making processes for various household matters; (6) gender ideology measures (attitudes toward appropriate gender roles); and (7) work-family balance experiences. Questions about past family

arrangements allowed retrospective construction of family histories. All instruments were translated to Indonesian and pilot-tested with 30 families before full deployment.

Qualitative interviews, conducted between May and October 2024, included both individual interviews (60-90 minutes each) and family group interviews (90-120 minutes). Individual interviews explored personal experiences of family life, gender role negotiation, generational differences, and work-family management. Family group interviews examined how families collectively discuss and negotiate gender arrangements, with particular attention to differences between generations' perspectives and conflict resolution processes. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Survey data analysis employed hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to account for the nested structure of individuals within families, using HLM 8 software. This approach appropriately models both individual-level variation and family-level clustering. Dependent variables included gender ideology scores, domestic labor hours, decision-making participation, and work-family conflict measures. Independent variables included generation, gender, education, employment status, and geographic location. Interaction terms tested whether generation effects varied by gender, examining whether gender gaps narrowed across generations.

Latent class analysis (LCA) using Mplus 8.8 identified distinct family adaptation patterns based on economic provision arrangements, domestic labor division, decision-making processes, and gender ideology. Model fit indices (AIC, BIC, entropy) determined the optimal number of classes. Chi-square tests and ANOVAs examined class differences in outcomes including marital satisfaction, work-family balance, and psychological well-being.

Qualitative data analysis utilized thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with attention to both generational patterns and intergenerational dynamics. Initial coding identified themes regarding family organization, gender practices, and negotiation strategies. Focused coding developed analytical categories capturing processes of change, continuity, and conflict. The research team, comprising two male and one female sociologist, met weekly to discuss coding and interpretation, with particular attention to how researchers' own gender positions might influence analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Protocol No. E.5.a/160/UMM/II/2024). All participants provided written informed consent. Special procedures addressed potential family group interview risks, including confidentiality protocols, voluntary participation assurances, and researcher intervention guidelines if conflicts became heated. Follow-up support resources were provided to families experiencing significant

conflicts. All identifying information has been removed from reported findings, with pseudonyms used throughout.

RESULTS

Intergenerational Changes in Family Structure

Table 1 presents family structure and living arrangement patterns across the three generations. Nuclear family arrangements increased substantially from 42.8% among grandparents to 73.2% among adult children, with corresponding decreases in extended family households. However, proximity patterns revealed continued significance of extended family networks: while fewer younger generation members lived with extended family, 54.3% resided within the same neighborhood or village, facilitating regular interaction and mutual support.

Family Characteristic	Grand-parents	Parents	Adult Children
Nuclear family household	42.8%	61.5%	73.2%
Extended family household	57.2%	38.5%	26.8%
Extended family nearby	78.9%	67.2%	54.3%
Average household size	6.4	4.8	3.9

Table 1. Family Structure Characteristics Across Generations

Qualitative interviews revealed that nuclear family residence often resulted from practical necessity—employment opportunities, housing costs, educational access—rather than ideological preference for nuclear family autonomy. Many young couples expressed ambivalence about living separately from extended family, describing trade-offs between independence and support loss. Geographic mobility for education and employment appeared as the primary driver of nuclear family formation rather than cultural preference shifts.

Gender Patterns in Economic Provision

Women's labor force participation increased dramatically across generations: 34.6% of grandmothers worked outside the home during childrearing years, compared to 52.8% of mothers and 68.4% of adult daughters currently employed. Among married adult children, dual-earner arrangements constituted 64.7% of couples, male sole-earner 28.9%, female sole-earner 3.2%, and both unemployed 3.2%. This represents substantial change from grandparent generation patterns where male sole-earner arrangements dominated (67.3%).

However, economic contribution patterns revealed persistent gender gaps. Among dual-earner couples, wives contributed an average of 38.4% of household income, with most (71.2%) earning less than their husbands. Interview data indicated that wives' incomes were frequently conceptualized as 'supplementary' rather than essential, even in families where household budgets would be unsustainable without women's earnings. One participant described: "My wife works, but her salary is

for extras—children's enrichment classes, vacations. My salary covers the necessities" (Agus, 35, urban engineer), despite his wife's income constituting 42% of household earnings.

This ideological framing of women's work as supplementary had practical consequences. Several women described feeling obligated to sacrifice career advancement opportunities to accommodate family needs, while their husbands' career decisions received family priority. Career interruptions for childbearing and childcare remained almost exclusively women's responsibility, with only 8.3% of fathers taking any parental leave beyond the legally mandated three days.

Domestic Labor Division

Despite women's increased employment, domestic labor remained heavily gendered. Time diary data from dual-earner couples revealed that wives performed an average of 24.6 hours weekly of household tasks compared to husbands' 10.2 hours—a ratio of 70.7% to 29.3%. This gender gap persisted across educational levels and income contributions, though it narrowed slightly among highly educated couples (wives 65.8% of household labor) compared to less educated couples (wives 74.2%).

Task segregation patterns revealed that certain tasks remained almost exclusively female: cooking (93.7% female responsibility), laundry (91.4%), and daily cleaning (87.2%). Childcare showed more shared responsibility, with fathers averaging 12.3 hours weekly compared to mothers' 18.7 hours among dual-earner couples. However, qualitative data indicated that fathers' childcare involvement concentrated on play and educational activities, while mothers retained responsibility for routine care tasks (feeding, bathing, health management) and mental load aspects (scheduling, planning, coordinating).

Men's limited domestic participation was frequently justified through essentialist gender ideologies. Participants described men as naturally incompetent at domestic tasks or women as naturally better caregivers. One father explained: "I would help more, but I don't know how to cook properly. My wife is just better at these things" (Bambang, 33, urban accountant), despite having never attempted to learn cooking. These naturalized explanations obscured the socialization processes through which gendered skills were acquired and maintained.

Decision-Making Patterns

Decision-making patterns demonstrated significant but incomplete shifts toward gender equality. Survey respondents reported on decision-making authority across eight domains: major purchases, daily household spending, children's education, children's health, women's employment, social activities, financial investments, and living arrangements. Patriarchal decision-making (husband decides alone or has final say) decreased from 68.4% of grandparent couples to 34.7% of adult child couples. Joint decision-making increased correspondingly from 24.1% to 58.6%.

However, decision-making equality varied substantially by domain. Joint decision-making was most common for children's education (73.2%) and health (71.4%), followed by daily household spending (64.8%) and social activities (62.1%). Major purchases (48.7% joint), financial investments (42.3% joint), and living arrangements (51.9% joint) remained more male-dominated. Women's employment decisions showed complex patterns: while 61.4% of couples reported joint decision-making, qualitative data revealed that 'joint decisions' often involved wives seeking husbands' permission or approval rather than truly equal negotiation.

The persistence of male authority in financial domains particularly constrained women's economic autonomy. Several employed women described lacking access to joint bank accounts or requiring husbands' approval for significant personal expenditures from their own earnings. This financial control sustained male authority even in dual-earner arrangements and contradicted stated egalitarian ideologies.

Family Adaptation Models

Latent class analysis identified three distinct family adaptation models characterized by different configurations of economic provision, domestic labor, decision-making, and gender ideology. Table 2 presents the characteristics of each model.

Dimension	Traditional Continuity (31%)	Pragmatic Negotiation (47%)	Egalitarian Transformation (22%)
Economic Model	Male breadwinner	Dual-earner, unequal	Dual-earner, equal
Domestic Labor	Highly gendered (wife 89%)	Moderately gendered (wife 71%)	Relatively equal (wife 56%)
Decision-Making	Patriarchal (husband 76%)	Mixed (joint 52%)	Egalitarian (joint 81%)
Gender Ideology	Traditional essentialist	Pragmatic hybrid	Egalitarian principled

Table 2. Family Adaptation Model Characteristics

Traditional Continuity families (31%) maintained conventional gender arrangements with male breadwinning, highly gendered domestic labor, patriarchal decision-making, and essentialist gender ideologies. These families were disproportionately rural, lower-educated, and older generation, though 18% of adult child couples fell into this category. Interviews revealed that some young couples in this category actively chose traditional arrangements based on religious or cultural values, while others found themselves constrained by limited employment opportunities for women or lack of affordable childcare.

Pragmatic Negotiation families (47%), the modal category, demonstrated dual-earner arrangements but maintained moderately gendered domestic labor and mixed decision-making patterns. These families espoused pragmatic rather than principled gender ideologies, adapting roles based on economic necessity while retaining traditional gender frameworks. One wife in this category

explained: "I work because we need the money, not because I'm trying to prove something about women's equality. At home, I still do most of the housework because that's just how it is" (Dewi, 32, suburban teacher).

Egalitarian Transformation families (22%) exhibited dual-earner arrangements with relatively equal income contributions, more equal domestic labor division, egalitarian decision-making, and principled commitment to gender equality. These families were disproportionately urban, highly educated, and younger generation. Qualitative data revealed that achieving relative equality required conscious, sustained effort to resist default gender patterns. Couples described explicit negotiations over household task division, intentional skill development (e.g., husbands learning cooking), and ongoing communication to maintain equitable arrangements.

DISCUSSION

This study's findings demonstrate that Indonesian family transformation is characterized by significant but incomplete change toward gender equality, with persistent structural and ideological barriers constraining full transformation despite substantial shifts in women's economic roles. The intergenerational comparison reveals both dramatic changes—particularly in women's labor force participation and nuclear family residence—and notable continuities, especially in domestic labor division and gender ideologies. These patterns align with broader feminist scholarship documenting the 'stalled revolution' wherein women's entry into paid employment has not been matched by men's proportionate assumption of domestic responsibilities (Hochschild & Machung, 2012; England, 2010).

The identification of three family adaptation models—Traditional Continuity, Pragmatic Negotiation, and Egalitarian Transformation—reveals significant heterogeneity in how families respond to modernization pressures. This diversity challenges linear modernization narratives predicting uniform progression toward Western-style nuclear families and gender equality (Goode, 1963). Instead, the findings support more recent theorizations emphasizing multiple modernities and diverse pathways through which societies incorporate modern economic and social forms while retaining culturally specific values and practices (Eisenstadt, 2000).

The persistence of gendered domestic labor despite women's employment reflects what Hochschild termed the 'second shift'—employed women's disproportionate responsibility for household work (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). The finding that this pattern persists even among highly educated dual-earner couples suggests that structural factors beyond individual preferences sustain gender inequality. These factors include workplace norms expecting unlimited worker availability, inadequate public childcare infrastructure, and cultural devaluation of domestic labor that discourages men's participation (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000).

The ideological framing of women's income as 'supplementary' despite substantial economic contributions represents what Potuchek (1997) termed 'symbolic economy'—the meanings families attach to income that may diverge from objective economic realities. This symbolic devaluation of women's earnings sustains male authority and justifies women's disproportionate domestic responsibility, even contradicting families' stated egalitarian values. The disconnection between stated ideologies and actual practices suggests that gender transformation requires not merely ideological change but also structural supports enabling egalitarian practices.

The finding that decision-making equality varies by domain, with financial decisions remaining more male-dominated, reflects broader patterns of gendered power. Control over financial resources enables broader household authority, as financial decision-making power translates into influence over other life domains (Blumberg, 1988). The persistence of male financial control even when wives contribute substantially to household income suggests that gender transformation faces particular resistance in domains most directly connected to power and autonomy.

The nuclear family trend, driven primarily by economic necessity rather than ideological preference, illustrates how structural forces can produce family changes that may not reflect cultural values. This finding challenges assumptions that family structure changes necessarily indicate value transformations. The continued significance of extended family networks despite separate residence demonstrates how families creatively adapt to maintain valued social connections within new structural contexts.

These findings carry important policy implications. The persistence of gendered domestic labor despite women's employment suggests need for structural supports including affordable, quality childcare; workplace flexibility policies; and parental leave policies encouraging fathers' participation. The economic devaluation of women's contributions indicates need for financial literacy programs and legal protections ensuring women's economic autonomy. Educational interventions challenging essentialist gender ideologies and promoting egalitarian relationship skills may support cultural transformation.

However, policy interventions must recognize the diversity of family adaptation patterns and avoid imposing uniform models. The finding that some families actively choose traditional arrangements based on religious or cultural values suggests that promoting gender equality requires respecting diverse family forms while ensuring that traditional arrangements result from genuine choice rather than structural constraint or ideological coercion.

Several limitations warrant consideration. The intergenerational design, while enabling direct generational comparison, relied partially on retrospective reports of past family arrangements, potentially introducing recall bias. The focus on heterosexual married couples excludes other family

forms including single-parent families, cohabiting couples, and same-sex partnerships. The sample, while geographically diverse, may not fully represent Indonesia's extraordinary regional and ethnic diversity. Longitudinal research following families over time would strengthen causal inferences regarding transformation processes.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined family institution transformation and gender role redefinition in modernizing Indonesia, revealing complex patterns of change and continuity. While substantial transformation has occurred—particularly in family structure, women's employment, and decision-making patterns—persistent inequalities in domestic labor division, economic valuation of women's work, and gender ideologies constrain full gender equality realization.

The identification of three family adaptation models demonstrates that modernization does not produce uniform family transformation but rather diverse pathways reflecting different balances between traditional values and modern economic realities. Traditional Continuity families maintain conventional gender arrangements, Pragmatic Negotiation families selectively adapt based on economic necessity while retaining traditional ideologies, and Egalitarian Transformation families fundamentally reorganize roles based on gender equality principles. This diversity challenges simplistic narratives of linear progression toward Western family models.

The findings highlight the 'stalled revolution' phenomenon wherein women's economic role expansion has not been matched by corresponding transformation in domestic labor division or ideological frameworks. This stalling reflects both structural barriers—inadequate childcare, inflexible workplaces, economic inequality—and cultural persistence of essentialist gender ideologies naturalizing women's domestic responsibility and devaluing their economic contributions.

Moving forward, achieving greater gender equality requires comprehensive approaches addressing both structural barriers and cultural ideologies. Structural interventions including affordable childcare, workplace flexibility, equitable parental leave, and financial protections must combine with cultural efforts challenging essentialist gender frameworks and promoting egalitarian relationship models. However, these interventions must respect diverse family forms and values while ensuring that all individuals—regardless of gender—have genuine freedom to shape their family lives according to their own preferences and values rather than structural constraints or ideological coercion.

As Indonesian society continues modernizing, understanding these family transformation dynamics becomes increasingly crucial for developing policies and programs supporting family wellbeing while promoting gender justice. The complex, non-linear nature of transformation documented here suggests that progress toward equality requires sustained, multifaceted efforts addressing the

interconnected structural, ideological, and practical dimensions shaping family life in contemporary Indonesia.

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