



Research Paper

Dynamics of Mothers as Breadwinners in Family Structure Changes: A Sociological Study on Sociology Education Students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University

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Abstract

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This study focuses on analyzing the dynamics of mothers as the primary breadwinners amid changing family structures, with a focus on Sociology Education students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. The phenomenon of women becoming the main income earners is increasingly common due to social changes, economic needs, and gender equality. This shift brings complex impacts on families, including increased income, psychological stress, and changes in marital dynamics. The study examines changes in family authority, the dominance of patriarchal culture, and the evolution of gender equality within the family structure. A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of modern family dynamics and their implications for family members' well-being, as well as offer insights for developing policies that support women's dual roles in both family and work environments.

Keywords: Mother's Role; Family Dynamics; Family Structure Change; Sociology Education.

1. Introduction

Historically, the construction of gender roles in the family context has often identified men as the primary breadwinners, while women have been directed toward domestic and caregiving roles [1]. However, in the modern era, significant social and economic changes have drastically altered family structures. Based on the 2020 Indonesian Population Census released



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by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), socio-economic changes have also influenced family structures and dynamics in Indonesia. The decline in the average population growth rate of 1.25% per year during the 2010-2020 decade was influenced by family planning policies and shifts in socio-economic patterns in society, which had an impact on fertility and household composition [2]. In addition, the redistribution of population between regions—with a decline in the percentage of population in Java and an increase in Kalimantan—has also influenced social dynamics and family structure in various regions.

Women play a central role within the family. Today, many women take on multiple responsibilities, not only managing household duties but also working to contribute to the family's economic needs [3]. The phenomenon of women as the main breadwinners is becoming increasingly common, triggered by factors such as social change, increasing economic needs, and changing views of gender equality in society [4]. In some cases, the role of primary breadwinner shifts to women because their husbands are unable to meet financial needs due to health conditions, difficulty finding work, or other factors. In addition, women's increasing levels of education open wider employment opportunities for them [5]. Concerns about the role and status of women in Indonesia are reflected in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on gender mainstreaming in national development. This Gender Mainstreaming Strategy aims to promote gender equality and justice by ensuring that policies and programs consider the experiences, aspirations, needs, and challenges faced by both men and women [6].

The family, as the primary social institution, has a division of tasks and responsibilities among its members [7]. Family welfare is highly dependent on the synergy between the roles of the father and mother in carrying out their respective functions. When the mother becomes the primary breadwinner, there is a change in the division of tasks and roles among family members. Mothers not only manage domestic affairs but are also responsible for meeting the family's economic needs. This transformation of the social structure and family institutions is a result of women's participation in performing dual roles at home and in society. On the positive side, these changes can increase family income and provide opportunities for women to develop their potential and achieve gender equality. Economic growth and globalization have made the labor market more complex and opened employment opportunities for women, although most work limited hours or in the informal sector. However, these changes also pose challenges, such as increased stress and workload for mothers, as well as changes in the dynamics of marital relationships.

Husbands may feel that they have lost their role as head of the family, which could potentially affect the harmony of the marital relationship. On the other hand, children may feel that they are receiving less attention and affection from their mothers, so a deep understanding of how families adjust to these dynamics is needed. This study aims to analyze how the transformation of the mother's role as the primary breadwinner affects family structure and dynamics. The research focuses on the factors that encourage mothers to take on the role of breadwinner, the impact of role changes on marital and parent-child relationships, and family adaptation strategies in facing emerging challenges. It is hoped that this study will provide deeper insights into the function of contemporary families and its implications for the well-being of family members [8].

In addition, this study is expected to enrich the study of women's emancipation theory by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the changing role of mothers in the family. Analysis of the influence of social and cultural structures in the formation of gender roles is an important aspect in understanding the dynamics of modern families. This study will also

contribute to broadening the understanding of gender equality issues, especially regarding the role of women as primary breadwinners and its impact on social relations in society. Based on the above description, the researcher was motivated to conduct research entitled “Dynamics of Mothers as Breadwinners in Family Structure Changes: A Sociological Study on Sociology Education Students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University.”

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the dynamics of the role of mothers as breadwinners in changing family structures among Sociology Education students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena holistically through the narratives and experiences of the research subjects.

Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through two main techniques, namely in-depth interviews and participatory observation. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain direct narratives from mothers who were the main breadwinners in their families. These interviews focused on understanding their roles and responsibilities in meeting family needs, their self-perceptions, communication experiences, and the challenges they faced in performing their dual roles as breadwinners and homemakers. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow respondents to express themselves broadly and deeply. Participatory observation was conducted to obtain an objective picture of how mothers carry out their daily roles, interactions between family members, and family adjustment mechanisms to changes in structure and roles. This observation was conducted directly in the respondents' family environment with systematic field notes.

Informant Selection

This study used purposive sampling to select informants relevant to the study focus. There were eight informants consisting of mothers of Sociology Education students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University who acted as the main breadwinners in their families. This selection was based on the informants' ability to provide rich and in-depth information related to the research topic.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from interviews and observations will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, namely by identifying, organizing, and interpreting the main themes that emerge from the data. The analysis process includes the stages of interview transcription, data coding, theme search, and interpretation of meanings relevant to the research objectives.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study used source triangulation techniques by comparing data from interviews and observations. In addition, the researcher conducted member checks with informants to ensure data accuracy and interpretation.

3. Result and Discussion

In traditional family structures, the role of the father is generally focused on being the main breadwinner, while mothers are more responsible for caring for and looking after children at home [9]. However, changes in the social and economic conditions of modern society have led

to the emergence of new patterns in which caregiving roles are also beginning to be carried out by fathers [10]. This shift in roles is not only experienced by fathers, but also by mothers, who are now increasingly taking on the position of primary breadwinner in the family. According to Parsons and Bales (1955), in traditional families there is a clear division of roles between husbands as “instrumental” (providers of economic needs) and wives as “expressive” (caregivers and homemakers). However, social and economic changes have shifted this pattern, opening opportunities for women to play a broader instrumental role. This phenomenon reflects significant changes in family structure and function, especially in the context of modern society's demands for gender equality and flexibility in the division of domestic and public roles. As stated by Risman (2004), modern family structures are increasingly dynamic and gender roles are becoming more fluid, so that women now not only carry out domestic tasks at home, but also actively participate in the world of work outside the home to meet the economic needs of the family [11]. Gender equality is widely seen as a key foundation for achieving fair and inclusive development. This perspective has encouraged a range of global initiatives, including the integration of gender equality into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It reflects a shared global understanding that addressing gender inequality is essential for reaching sustainable development and building a more just and inclusive society [12].

Student Perspectives on the Dynamics of the Role of Mothers as Breadwinners in Changing Family Structures.

Among students majoring in Sociology at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, particularly those from families where the mother is the primary breadwinner, this change in roles has influenced their perspectives, social experiences, and family relationships. Some students view this phenomenon as a form of gender equality and women's emancipation. They appreciate the dual role of mothers who can manage household chores while also contributing economically to meeting the family's needs. According to Parsons and Bales (1955), in traditional family structures, there is a division of instrumental and expressive roles between fathers and mothers, with fathers as breadwinners and mothers responsible for managing the household and caring for children. However, as Hochschild (1989) argues through the concept of the second shift, modern women face dual demands, namely working outside the home and continuing to manage domestic responsibilities, which creates new dynamics and pressures within the family. Other students realized that roles within the family are not fixed, but rather dynamic and subject to change in line with social and economic developments. Mothers who become the main breadwinners are a clear example of a shift in roles in line with the demands of their status within the family [13]. This is in line with social role theory developed by George Herbert Mead and Robert K. Merton, which emphasizes that roles are a dynamic part of social status that are carried out in accordance with social expectations and actual conditions [13].

In Family Strategies in Managing Changes in Family Structure

In facing changes in family structure due to the shift in the role of mothers as primary breadwinners, families need to adapt to new strategies so that family functions are maintained properly. This study shows that student families experiencing this situation implement various strategies to maintain a balance of roles and household functions. According to Minuchin (1974) in his family systems theory, the family is a dynamic and interactive system, so that changes in one member will affect the entire system. Therefore, flexible role sharing and open communication are very important for the family system to remain stable and adaptive [15]. In families with working mothers, fathers and children also take part in domestic work such as

housekeeping and childcare. Some students stated that they actively help with household chores as a form of support for their families.

Hoffman (2000) emphasizes the importance of communication within the family as the primary tool for resolving conflicts and maintaining harmony, especially in situations where dual roles require effective time and role management. The use of digital media as a means of intensive communication between family members who are busy working is also in line with the family communication theory proposed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002). The role of fathers in child rearing is vital, as stated by Wahyuni et al. (2021) in their study entitled "The role of fathers (fathering) in early childhood care," which shows that fathers' involvement in domestic affairs and childcare has a positive impact on child development and role balance within the family. Children are also taught to be independent in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which states that the family and social environment influence individual development [16].

The Relevance of the Dynamic Role of Mothers as Breadwinners in Family Structure Changes with Sociological Theory

Based on Hyoscyamina's (2011) research in the Journal of Psychology on the Role of the Family in Building Children's Character, the family is the first and most important educational institution and the basis for the formation of an individual's character [17]. The findings of this study reveal changes in family structure when women take on the role of breadwinner. In the context of Sociology Education students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, mothers who work and have a steady income show an increase in their position and role in the family. Their opinions are more valued, they actively participate in decision-making, and they discuss family and economic matters equally with their husbands. This is in line with the feminist theory developed by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and Betty Friedan (1963), which emphasizes women's struggle to gain freedom of speech, political rights, ownership, and economic rights as the core of emancipation [18]. When women enter marriage with their own employment status and income, this contributes to a reduction in female subordination within the family. This phenomenon can be analyzed through feminist theory from an emancipation perspective, as proposed by Nancy Fraser (1997) with her concepts of redistribution and recognition, which emphasize economic independence as one of the main factors of gender equality within the family structure.

The following table presents a summary of the key findings, along with their corresponding analysis and recommendations. It highlights the main patterns identified in this study regarding the shifting roles of women within the family and the implications for social dynamics and family structures.

Tabel 1. Key Findings, Analysis, and Recommendations

Key Findings	Analysis and Recommendations
Women now not only carry out domestic tasks at home, but also actively participate in the workforce outside the home to meet the economic needs of their families.	Analysis: There has been a shift in gender roles within the family, whereby women are no longer limited to expressive roles (according to Talcott Parsons), but also take on instrumental roles. This indicates a transformation in the structure and function of the family because of economic demands and social change. Recommendations: Awareness needs to be raised through education (e.g., Family Sociology curriculum) about the

	importance of a fair and adaptive division of roles between men and women in the family, as well as policy support for the protection of working women.
Modern women face dual demands, namely working outside the home and continuing to manage domestic responsibilities, which creates new dynamics and pressures within the family.	Analysis: The demands of this dual role can cause stress, fatigue, and role imbalance, which can potentially affect family harmony. This shows that even though women's economic roles are increasing, the burden of domestic work has not been fully shared fairly. Recommendations: There needs to be awareness within families about the importance of equal division of household labor, as well as social and institutional support (such as paternity leave policies, affordable daycare, or work flexibility for mothers) to reduce the pressure of dual roles.
Role changes affect perspectives, social experiences, and relationships within the family	Analysis: The shift in roles within the family, especially when mothers become breadwinners, affects the structure of interactions within the household. Traditional values are beginning to be replaced by more equal relationship patterns. This also shapes new social experiences for family members, especially children and husbands, in adjusting to these conditions. Recommendations: An educational approach and dialogue among family members are needed to build collective awareness of the importance of role adaptation and healthy communication.

4. Conclusion

Social and economic changes in the modern era have led to significant shifts in gender roles within the family, particularly the role of mothers as primary breadwinners [19]. With increasing economic needs, awareness of gender equality, and higher levels of education among women, the classic family structure that separates the roles of men as economic providers and women as homemakers is beginning to shift. This shift not only changes the dynamics of roles within the family, but also affects relationships between family members, especially between husbands and wives and parents and children.

This study found that Sociology Education students at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University who come from families with mothers as the primary breadwinners view these changes positively. They see it as a form of women's emancipation as well as family adaptation to the demands of the times. These findings reinforce the relevance of feminist theory and social role theory in explaining the dynamics of gender roles in modern families. Although there are benefits such as improved economic welfare and the strengthening of women's bargaining position in the family, the dual role of mothers also poses challenges, including double workloads and potential economic instability. Mothers who play dual roles often experience physical and psychological fatigue, so wise time and energy management is needed to balance domestic and public roles [20]. Therefore, a deep understanding and effective adaptation strategies are essential for families to remain harmonious and able to perform their social functions optimally. This study not only describes the social reality that exists but also

contributes to the development of sociological theory and understanding related to changes in family structure and dynamics in the contemporary era.

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Authors' contributions and responsibilities

Natania Handayani: conceptualization, methodology, writing – original draft. Yustika Irfani Lindawati: supervision, writing – review.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

Additional information

No additional information from the authors.

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