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**Gender Relation in Family in Post-COVID-19 Era:  
Study Among Working Couple in Semarang, Indonesia**

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic which has been running for two years has resulted in changes in work patterns for employees, both private and public. Due to consideration of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, government agencies and private offices are imposing WFH (work from home). As a result, for working couples, the household arena becomes a joint work arena, in which formal and domestic work is carried out. This study aims to discuss the division of labor between husband and wife in the household before the pandemic; the division of labor during the pandemic, and the impact of the division of labor during WFH on the division of labor after the pandemic. The study used qualitative methods and field studies were analyzed using gender theory. Data collection is done by way of interviews, observation and documentation. This research found that there were three trends in relationship changes that were prior to the COVID pandemic, the division of labor was carried out based on the habits that had been built by the couple since they were married, namely families who had a commitment to work together since the beginning of the marriage, so with the pandemic this commitment made it stronger, but for families who do not have a commitment to gender relations, the work arena formed by the pandemic does not really affect gender relations. This finding reinforces the perspective that gender relations are socio-cultural formations so they are not easy to change.

**Keywords:** Gender relation, family study, COVID-19, working couple, unequal relation

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**Abstrak:** Pandemi COVID-19 yang berjalan selama dua tahun telah mengakibatkan perubahan pola kerja bagi karyawan, baik swasta maupun negeri. Karena pertimbangan pencegahan penyebaran virus COVID-19 maka lembaga pemerintah serta kantor swasta memberlakukan WFH (work from home). Akibatnya untuk pasangan yang bekerja, arena rumah tangga menjadi arena kerja bersama, yang di dalamnya dikerjakan pekerjaan formal serta domestik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas pembagian kerja antara suami istri dalam rumah tangga sebelum pandemi; pembagian kerja selama pandemi, dan dampak pembagian kerja selama WFH dalam pembagian kerja setelah pandemi. Kajian tersebut menggunakan metode kualitatif dan studi lapangan dianalisis dengan teori gender. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa ada tiga kecenderungan dalam perubahan relasi bahwa sebelum pandemi COVID pembagian kerja dilakukan berdasar kebiasaan yang telah dibangun oleh pasangan sejak mereka menikah, yaitu keluarga yang sejak awal pernikahan memiliki komitmen untuk bekerja sama maka dengan adanya pandemi membuat komitmen itu semakin kuat, namun untuk keluarga yang tidak memiliki komitmen relasi gender, arena bekerja yang terbentuk oleh pandemi tidak terlalu berpengaruh dalam relasi gender. Temuan ini menguatkan perspektif bahwa relasi gender merupakan bentukan social budaya sehingga tidak mudah untuk berubah.

**Keywords:** Relasi gender, kajian keluarga, COVID-19, pembagian kerja, relasi yang tidak setara

## Introduction

Gender relation is the the relation between men and women which is socially and culturally design.<sup>1</sup> Gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another.<sup>2</sup> Social and cultural enculturation resulted in the gender relation in the family become a strong construct.<sup>3</sup> Some examples of gender relations are girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing. Men are generally expected

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<sup>1</sup> H. Bravo-Baumann, *Livestock and Gender: A Winning Pair - Capitalisation of Experiences on the Contribution of Livestock Projects to Gender Issues* (Bern: Swiss Development, 2000). St. Rahmawati, "Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Islamic Family Law: Opportunities and Challenges," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 4, No. 2 (2020).

<sup>2</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender*, 14th ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 9–11.

<sup>3</sup> Judith E Owen Blakemore, Sheri A Berenbaum, and Lynn S Liben, *Gender Development* (New York: Psychology Press, 2013), p. 20–23.

to be strong, aggressive, and bold.<sup>4</sup> Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, so they can be very different from group to group.<sup>5</sup> Some examples girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing. Men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold. On the basis of these basic assumptions, society conceptualizes gender roles for men and women. Because men are assumed to be strong and able to lead, men should do public work. Meanwhile, because women are seen as weak, women are oriented socially and culturally to do domestic work. Various world tribes, as well as ethnic groups in Indonesia also conceptualize the same thing.

Studies on gender relations in the family in the context of COVID-19 have been carried out by many researchers. There seem to be two trends from researchers in examining the phenomenon of gender in the family in the context of COVID-19. The first is that which observes pure gender relations in the family, as is done by Alon et al.<sup>6</sup> who found that man must take part in domestic work; Blaskó, Papadimitriou, and Manca<sup>7</sup> who found that pandemic forced men to be more increasingly involved in housework and caring duty in their family; Chung et al.<sup>8</sup> Craig<sup>9</sup> showed that mostly mothers were mainly responsible for housework and child care tasks both before and during the lockdown period, although this proportion has slightly declined during the pandemic. In households where fathers worked from home during the pandemic fathers were more likely to say that they were doing more housework and child care during the lockdown period than they were before.; and Fisher and Ryan,<sup>10</sup> Hupkau,<sup>11</sup> who found that gender inequality was getting stronger during the pandemic. Women, especially those with children, experience higher levels of stress due to health conditions and family life, the violence they experience, poverty, and leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender...*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Phillips, *Gender and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 21–22.

<sup>6</sup> Titan Alon, et al., “The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality” (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of economic research, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Zsuzsa Blaskó, et.al., *How Will the COVID-19 Crisis Affect Existing Gender Divides in Europe?* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), p. 13–14.

<sup>8</sup> Heejung Chung et al., “Covid-19, Flexible Working, and Implications for Gender Equality in the United Kingdom,” *Gender & Society* 35, no. 2 (2021), p. 218–232.

<sup>9</sup> Lyn Craig, “Coronavirus, Domestic Labour and Care: Gendered Roles Locked Down,” *Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 4 (2020), p. 684–92.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra N. Fisher and Michelle K. Ryan, “Gender Inequalities During COVID-19,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 24, no. 2 (2021), p. 237–45.

<sup>11</sup> Claudia Hupkau and Barbara Petrongolo, “Work, Care and Gender During the COVID-19 Crisis,” *Fiscal Studies* 41, no. 3 (2020), p. 623–51.

The second trend of the research on gender relation in the context of COVID-19 are the researches in work places, as done by Reichelt, Makovi, and Sargsyan<sup>12</sup> who found that men are more adabtive in accepting the changing in working system of the pandemic time. Farré et al.,<sup>13</sup> found that gender inequality was getting stronger during the pandemic among working partners. Work from home still makes women have more workload because they have to do household task while they still have to complete work in the office. Feng and Savani<sup>14</sup> have a similar research result to the research of Farre et. al. They showed that when couples are working from home the whole day and when schools are closed, women are expected to devote more time to housework and childcare; and Milliken, Kneeland, and Flynn,<sup>15</sup> Carli<sup>16</sup> also underlined that women got more house works so they are more burdened because the office works also a duty to do.

The third trends in the study of gender relation pertaining to the context of family and works in COVID-19 era. The study done by Yavorsky, Qian, and Sargent<sup>17</sup> showed that apart from taking many victims, the pandemic has changed the structure of human behavior in interacting and working. Restrictions that led to the implementation of work from home resulted in the changes of entire structure of life. Unemployment rates are increasing, children are not going to school and it is the parents' responsibility to continue their education processes, and everyone is centered at home. The unequal gender relations that were previously experienced by women are increasingly felt by women. Clark, et al.,<sup>18</sup> found that the condition of COVID-19 with a work system that combines domestic and formal work has made women very burdened, whereas men get

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<sup>12</sup> Malte Reichelt, et.al., "The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Inequality in the Labor Market and Gender-Role Attitudes," *European Societies* 23, no. 1 (2021), p. 228–45.

<sup>13</sup> Lidia Farre et al., "How the Covid-19 Lockdown Affected Gender Inequality in Paid and Unpaid Work in Spain," *IZA Discussion Paper*, 2020, p. 17–18.

<sup>14</sup> Zhiyu Feng and Krishna Savani, "COVID-19 Created a Gender Gap in Perceived Work Productivity and Job Satisfaction: Implications for Dual-Career Parents Working from Home," *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 35, no. 7/8 (2020), p. 719–36.

<sup>15</sup> Frances J Milliken, et.al., "Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Gender Equity Issues at Work," *Journal of Management Studies* 57, no. 8 (2020), p. 1767–72.

<sup>16</sup> Linda L Carli, "Women, Gender Equality and COVID-19," *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 35, no. 7/8 (2020), p. 647–55.

<sup>17</sup> Jill E Yavorsky, Yue Qian, and Amanda C Sargent, "The Gendered Pandemic: The Implications of COVID-19 for Work and Family," *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 6 (2021), p. 12881.

<sup>18</sup> Serena Clark et al., "'You're a Teacher You're a Mother, You're a Worker': Gender Inequality during COVID-19 in Ireland," *Gender, Work & Organization* 28, no. 4 (2021), p. 1352–62.

lighter work formulations. İlkaracan, and Memiş<sup>19</sup> showed that men's participation in unpaid work increased, particularly for men who switched to working from home, the relative increase for women further widened the gender gap in unpaid work. The gender gap in paid work narrowed due to relatively less employment disruption for women and a relatively higher decrease in men's paid work. The total workload of employed women reached levels that make it hard to sustain a decent work–life balance. Disparities in unpaid work among women by education and employment status decreased, reflecting how purchasing power became somewhat irrelevant under the pandemic measures. These findings unveil simultaneously the fragility of the work–life balance conditions faced by employed women and a window of opportunity created by men's increased participation in unpaid work.

Craig, and Churchill found that working mothers have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 in relation to their psychological well-being, experiences of negative emotions, and the redefinition of family dynamics, in which working mothers have adopted additional and disproportionate care burden.<sup>20</sup> These findings are consistent with the current research arguing that COVID-19 has highlighted an increase in the gender gap in domestic labor as well as the undermining of career advancement for working mothers.

From the studies on gender relations and family pertaining to the context of COVID-19, it is found that mostly the studies are in the context of the time when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Studies on gender relations in the family during the post-COVID 19 era are still very limited. This study is focused on gender relations in the family in the post-Covid-19 period. The focus of study on gender relations during the post-pandemic COVID-19 period is a novelty in the study of gender relations within the family in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. But the basic context of the time before and during the COVID-19 pandemic became important points to consider. The purpose of this study is to reveal the job divisions in the family before COVID-19; the job division in the COVID-19 era; the job division in Post-COVID-19 era. This research questions are based on the assumption that it is possible for the gender-based division of labor in the family to change with time and experiences shared by the couple.

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<sup>19</sup> İpek İlkaracan and Emel Memiş, “Transformations in the Gender Gaps in Paid and Unpaid Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Findings from Turkey,” *Feminist Economics* 27, no. 1–2 (2021), p. 288–309.

<sup>20</sup> Lyn Craig and Brendan Churchill, “Working and Caring at Home: Gender Differences in the Effects of Covid-19 on Paid and Unpaid Labor in Australia,” *Feminist Economics* 27, no. 1–2 (2021), p. 310–26.

However, because gender roles are culturally instilled roles it is sometimes difficult to change.

The method applied in this study is a qualitative method with a type of field research, analyzed using gender theory. Qualitative method is a research method that does not use statistical analysis.<sup>21</sup> Field research is a type of research carried out in the context of a particular locus with certain specifications.<sup>22</sup> The locus of this research is in a housing complex in the Ngaliyan area, Semarang. The specifications in this study are young couples, each of whom has a job, either as a civil servant or in the private sector. All of them are residents of Semarang. All families are also specified as having children, either one or two children. The gender of the child does not become consideration. The reason for establishing a family as an analysis unit has the argument that in a family the workload will be well represented, both formal work and domestic work.

Data collection was carried out by doing interviews and observations. Interviews and observations were conducted on informants. There are five couple informants used as data sources in this study with the pattern of job and the number of children as follows:

**Table 1: Informant Names**

No	Name	Husband 's Job	Wife's Job	Numbers of Children
1	Ari-Rita	Civil servant	Civil servant	One
2	Andi-Yuli	Civil servant	Private sector	Two
3	Donny-Bella	Private sector	Civil servant	Two
4	Barri-Lydia	Private sector	Private sector	One
5	Lukman-Sania	Private sector	Private sector	Two

Source: Primary Data

The reason of determining the five informants was because the young couple in the housing complex, which became the focus of the research, could represent the entire family of working couple in the housing complex. Data analysis was carried out by collecting data according to the flow of questions posed in the research, then sorting it into the appropriate frame, and mapping and interpreting the mapping.<sup>23</sup> In this flow, data of the three questions are combined,

<sup>21</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc, 2009), p.6. Anne Phillips, *Gender and Culture*, p. 21–22. Linda L Carli, *Women, Gender Equality...*, p. 647–55.

<sup>22</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative...*, p. 201–2.

<sup>23</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative...*, p. 242–44.

sorted out based on the themes researched, mapped into more systematic ways, analysed and interpreted. Substantively, the data were analyzed using a gender perspective.

## Gender Relations in the Family During the COVID-19 Period

### 1. Job Division in Family Before COVID-19

Informants gave various answers to questions about the division of labor in the family before COVID-19. The couple of Ari-Rita stated that since they planned their marriage they had built an agreement that they would do all the housework together because the both met when they already became employees. Ari explained that:

“My wife and I met on the time we had been civil servants, so we can imagine each other's busy lives. Therefore, when committed to living together in a marriage bond, we agreed to work together and support each other for the progress of all of us. So, from the start we did all domestic work together, and helped each other.”<sup>24</sup>

The couple Andi and Yuli conveyed different things. Because Yuli is a private employee who works on a shift basis, Yuli tries to do as much household works as she can, so Andi is less involved in domestic work. This is stated by Andi:

“I just help with homework, for example my wife is in a hurry to go to work, the children are not ready to go to school, so I help prepare the children. Or sometimes preparing food. But rarely, because my wife is used to doing the housework herself. If she is so busy there are also neighbors who are ready to help. That's what we do.”<sup>25</sup>

Donny-Bella and Barry-Lydia are almost the same as those of Andi and Yuli. Bella and Lydia were used to doing the housework themselves, and their husbands helped out when needed. However, Bella and Lydia felt more comfortable doing the household works themselves. This was stated by Bella and confirmed by Lydia:

“Although my husband is willing to help me with the household works, I am more comfortable doing household works alone. I feel bad if it bothers my husband. Even though I also have a lot of work in the office, which I sometimes take them home, however I prefer to do household works myself.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ari, a husband in Semarang, June 25, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Andi, a husband in Semarang, June 18, 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Lydia, a wife in Semarang, June 19 2022.

Lukman and Sania have a different working relationship. Lukman has never helped his wife with household works or raising children. All household works are done by Sania, even with the help of a maid. Sania says:

"I'm used to doing everything. Even though the husband is not busy with work, he rarely goes to work or helps with household works. Once, for example, helped bathe my child, but that is very rarely. Because I never expected my husband's help in doing household works, I didn't feel burdened. That is something ordinary for me to do them all."<sup>27</sup>

Based on the above data, it can be mapped that there are some patterns in job division in a family that involve husband and wife as the expression of gender relation. The map is as shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2: Job Division in Family Before COVID-19**

Couple	Domestic Works									
	House Keeping		Washing		Cooking		Shopping		Child Caring	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Ari-Rita	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Andi-Yuli		v		v	v	v		v	v	v
Donny-Bella		v		v	v	v		v	v	v
Barry-Lydia		v		v	v	v		v	v	v
Lukman-Sania		v		v		v		v		v

Source: Primary data

Based on table 2 above, it appears that in general, domestic work in working families is dominated by women. This data illustrates gender relations

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Sania, a wife in Semarang, June 26, 2022.



in families that are not equal.<sup>28</sup> Women do all domestic work, and when women enter the public world, women also carry out their duties in the public sphere.<sup>29</sup> Such a kind of gender relations are seen as normal because socially and culturally stated that domestic work is women's work.<sup>30</sup> Referring to the concept of gender justice, what women experience is a form of women's injustice in the form of an excessive or over burden.<sup>31</sup> The couple Ari and Rita represent a family that has equal gender relations because they have an initial commitment that does not differentiate between domestic work and formal work. Changing the concept of gender relations with formal justice is not an easy matter because it involves changes in social and cultural constructs.<sup>32</sup> Ari and Rita have dismantled gender relations socially and culturally.

Refers to views of Golombok, and Fivush<sup>33</sup> and Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben.<sup>34</sup> gender relations that are expressed in the form of gender roles have been instilled in the process of growing community members within their communities, making the concept of gender relations a concept that is firmly attached to individuals. In a patriarchal society as in Javanese society, the phenomenon of the couple of Ari and Rita is a phenomenon of transformation in gender relation. The process of transforming the concept of gender occurs from the formation of a knowledge system which then shapes behavior of the individual.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Job Division in the COVID-19 Era

At a time when the pandemic is increasing, government policy emphasizes Work from Home (WFH). It is in this context that studies on gender relations are carried out. The reason for the focus of the study at this point is because in this WFH condition all family members carry out tasks together both formal and domestic throughout the day. The measure of gender relations is in carrying out

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<sup>28</sup> Feng and Savani, "COVID-19 Created a Gender Gap in Perceived Work Productivity and Job Satisfaction: Implications for Dual-Career Parents Working from Home."

<sup>29</sup> Milliken, Kneeland, and Flynn, "Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Gender Equity Issues at Work."

<sup>30</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender*, p. 141–44.

<sup>31</sup> Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben, *Gender Development*, p. 20–23.

<sup>32</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender*, p. 43–44.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Golombok and Robyn Fivush, *Gender Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 187.

<sup>34</sup> Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben, *Gender Development*, p. 20–23.

<sup>35</sup> James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Illionis: Waveland Press, 2016), p. 4–8.

domestic tasks. It appears that there is a relationship map that has changed due to the pandemic conditions. This can be seen in the statements of informants, for example Rita:

“Indeed, my husband and I always share work, both domestic work and our formal work. With us being at home together within twenty-four hours makes us truly a solid team-work. We complement each other so that we can overcome the crush we feel due to the pandemic together.”<sup>36</sup>

Rita's statement is corroborated by Ari's statement as her husband. According to him, the cooperation he did with his wife was an obligation that he had to do.

“I can't let my wife work alone, finish housework, and finish office work. I can't bear it. Therefore, without having to ask my wife, I do what my wife has not done. For example, my wife cooks, and my child asks me to play, so I serve my child. Or I help my wife cook, or I clean the house. Everything is normal for me.”<sup>37</sup>

The other couple also stated almost the same thing, namely that they did domestic work together, although with different levels of work. An example is what Andi and Yuli gave. Andi said that his wife often asks for help with domestic works, such as cooking, cleaning the house, or accompanying children in doing school work. It is stated as follows:

“Sometimes my wife asks me to help her cook, so it's fast. For example, my wife prepares the spices, I prepare the vegetables to be cooked. Or sweep. Or accompany my child to study. Because school children go online, so I can accompany my children to study. Because I know everything must be done so I do it. As much as I can do.”<sup>38</sup>

Yuli added that her husband helped her because Yuli needed help. Yuli as a private employee has quite a lot of workloads. Therefore, even though doing domestic work is normal for Yuli, sometimes under certain conditions Yuli asks her husband to help her.

“I rarely ask my husband for help with household works. I'm used to doing everything myself. But in certain conditions I need help. Especially if there is work that must be completed in a short time. So, I asked my husband to help me. My husband is also willing to help if I ask him to help. Any job my husband is willing to help.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Rita, a wife in Semarang, June 4, 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Ari, a husband in Semarang, June 11, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Andi, a husband in Semarang, June 5 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Yuli, a wife in Semarang, June 18, 2022.

Bella and Lydia also stated that they could do their own domestic works as best they could. But under certain circumstances she asked for her husband's help, and he was happy to help her with her work. Bella says:

“I feel that I can do enough household works. Therefore, I try to do it myself. But my husband is there to help when I'm really busy. Specially to look after my child. Sometimes when I cook, my children want to come with me, so my husband invites my children to play so I can cook faster without being bothered by my children.”<sup>40</sup>

Lydia stated in a different way:

"If it's not too urgent, I won't ask my husband for help. But because during the pandemic my husband was also at home, the children also went to online school, so all the work became one. If I can't do it myself, I ask my husband for help. My husband is also willing to help if I ask. Any job husband is willing. But I also consider my husband's condition when asking for help. If my husband is very busy then I also hold back.”<sup>41</sup>

Another informant, namely Lukman, who in his previous life experience was rarely involved in domestic work also said that during the COVID-19 pandemic he was involved in various domestic work. Lukman's statement on this matter is as follows:

“Indeed, before that it could almost be said that I had never been involved in domestic work. But because I see my wife doing all the work, both domestic and formal work, I am called to help my wife. Therefore, I quick to help my wife when my wife needs help. Even though I never help my wife in doing it, I do it to the best of my ability. My wife also understands.”<sup>42</sup>

Sania also gave a statement supporting Lukman's statement, with his statement as follows:

“Indeed, my husband never helped me with domestic work, but when we were WFH, my husband often helped me with various household works, whether cooking, cleaning the house, and accompanying my child. I also never asked my husband to help me, but my husband witnessed my hassles in dividing his time between domestic work and formal work so he was moved to help me.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Bella, a wife in Semarang, June 11, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Lydia, a wife in Semarang, June 5 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Lukman, a husband in Semarang, June 11, 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Sania, a wife in Semarang, June 26, 2022.

**Table 3: Job Division in Family During Pandemic of COVID-19**

Couple	Domestic Works									
	House-keeping		Washing		Cooking		Shopping		Child Caring	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Ari-Rita	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	V
Andi-Yuli	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	V
Donny-Bella	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	V
Barry-Lydia	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	V
Lukman-Sania	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	V

Source: Primary data.

Based on the data and then mapped in the table above it appears that the gender relations depicted in the division of labor in household work during the COVID-19 period, and especially when restrictions on social activities were imposed and for workers the work from home work system was implemented, it appears that in the conditions certain division of labor between husband and wife in the household can be mutually cooperated. This cooperation can be shown as a gender relation that can complement and exchange each other. Several points can be mapped here. The first is related to work from home. This work system is a work system that accommodates pandemic conditions. Based on efforts to prevent transmission through restrictions, working conditions are also regulated so as not to open opportunities for the spread of the COVID-19 Virus.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, around the globe workers were being asked to telecommute or perform work from home.<sup>45</sup> On the time the formal works is done in the domestic sphere, this is where an anomaly occurs in behavior. The anomaly here is related to gender roles. Women who are dominant in carrying out domestic tasks, still

<sup>44</sup> Vasil Yasenov, “Who Can Work from Home?,” IZA Discussion Paper, 2020, <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/13197/who-can-work-from-home>.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Dey et al., “Ability to Work from Home: Evidence from Two Surveys and Implications for the Labor Market in the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Monthly Labor Review*, June 24, 2020, p. 5. Erik Brynjolfsson et al., “COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Early Look at US Data” (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020), p. 4.

showing dominance during the COVID-19 period.<sup>46</sup> However, even though the arena of household life has changed, the domestic role of women has not changed. Indeed, men adapt to this anonymous condition and do domestic work that they have never done before, that men showed more egalitarian attitudes.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Job Division in Post-COVID-19 era

The pandemic period which lasted for two years and made relations between family members very intensive has been assumed to change the pattern of gender relations in doing household works. However, due to certain reasons, changes in the pattern of gender relations in the family have not changed significantly, as shown in the data obtained in this study. Ari-Rita, who from the beginning of their marriage had a commitment to help each other, the pandemic has made them strengthen their commitment. Ari's statement regarding this matter is as follows:

"For my wife and me, because from the beginning of our marriage we have committed to helping each other and working together in carrying out any task, then the two years of pandemic experience, which I spent working at home together, made me even stronger in holding this commitment to help each other. and love each other. Moreover, my wife during the pandemic also coordinated assistance for neighbors affected by COVID-19, so I am fully aware of how cooperation and mutual support, mutual assistance between husband and wife is inevitable and must be carried out not only during a pandemic, but forever."<sup>48</sup>

Rita added regarding how the collaboration was getting stronger:

"I remember how busy we were during the pandemic and we had to do WFH. Domestic work is in sight, office work must be completed, but social work must also be carried out. I do it all. My husband knows how busy I am. Because my husband also encourages me to be able to do social work, my husband helps me fully in all my activities."<sup>49</sup>

Andi as a husband is always ready to help when his wife needs help. However, Andi had an extraordinary experience during the pandemic because Andi was infected and had to undergo independent isolation and Yuli had to

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<sup>46</sup> Karsten Hank and Anja Steinbach, "The Virus Changed Everything, Didn't It? Couples' Division of Housework and Childcare before and during the Corona Crisis," *Journal of Family Research* 33, no. 1 (2021), p. 99–114.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel L Carlson, Richard J Petts, and Joanna R Pepin, "Changes in US Parents' Domestic Labor During the Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Sociological Inquiry* 92, no. 3 (2022), p. 1217–44.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ari, a husband in Semarang, June 25, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Rita, a wife in Semarang, June 4, 2022.

provide the best possible care, while also having to take care of the health of herself and her children. As stated by Andi:

“I experienced firsthand how my wife Rita took care of me who was infected with COVID-19. My wife takes care of me very carefully because at home we also have our children who are still in elementary school. I reflect on myself, imagining how hard the duty of a wife is. Therefore, I apologize to my wife because all this time I let my wife work alone. I only help when asked. In my opinion, I should not be like that. Therefore, now we share the task of doing domestic work.”<sup>50</sup>

The couple Donny-Bella and Barry-Lydia feel that the pandemic process is a process that they really have to go through. Therefore, they do not get a deep reflection process from working at the shared house. With that process the condition of the relationship with their partner is as before. Donny stated:

“There is no process of change in my relationship with my wife related to domestic work. My wife does the domestic work herself, but I'm ready to help with whatever she wants. So now I am also like that. My wife also understands the conditions we decided on. The principle is that we can cooperate if needed.”<sup>51</sup>

Barry expressed his views and experiences in the context of gender relations with his wife in doing household works with the following expressions:

“I am always ready to help my wife if my wife needs it. Nothing has changed. My wife is used to doing her own work. Therefore, I don't want to make any changes. I think readiness to help is enough. So now I also emphasize to my wife, if needed I am ready to help her with household works.”<sup>52</sup>

The next informant, the couple Lukman and Sania, conveyed how their gender relations were in post-COVID-19. Luqman said:

“I've changed a bit now. The experience during COVID changed me. I know how busy my wife's work is. My wife does the household works, all works. So far, I never know. Even though my wife is also an employee. No matter what ever the work, now I am happy to help my wife. Whatever. I am now used to asking, 'how can I help you'. I've never done this before.”<sup>53</sup>

Sania also gave a statement regarding the change in her husband,

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Andi, a husband in Semarang, June 5, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Donny, a husband in Semarang, June 19, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Barry, a husband in Semarang, June 19, 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Lukman, a husband in Semarang, June 11, 2022.

“After COVID, my husband has changed in relation to household works. Previously my husband almost never did household works. I didn't expect my husband to help either. But now I care even more. I think my husband's behavior changed because he witnessed firsthand all day long during WFH so that he realized the severity of his wife's work.”<sup>54</sup>

**Table 4: Job Division in Family on Post-COVID-19 era**

Couple	Domestic Works									
	House Cleaning		Washing		Cooking		Shopping		Child Caring	
	Husb and	Wife	Husb and	Wife	Husb and	Wife	Husb and	Wife	Husb and	Wife
Ari-Rita	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	v	v
Andi-Yuli	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	v	v
Donny-Bella	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	v
Barry-Lydia	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	v
Lukman-Sania	V	v	v	v	v	V	v	V	V	v

Source: Primary data

Based on the data above, it appears that during the post-COVID-19 era, gender relations in the family showed little change related to gender roles. Work that was previously done by women, with a close relationship process brought about a change. Even though table 4 shows that there is a joint role of husband and wife in domestic work, there are differences in each of the informants. Table 5 below shows how the gradation of the work he does as an expression of gender relations.

**Table 5: Gender Relation Changing in Domestic Works**

Time term	Informant1 (Ari-Rita)	Informant 2 (Andi-Yuli)	Informant 3 (Donny-Bella)	Informant 4 (Barry-Lydia)	Informant 5 (Lukman-Sania)
Before COVID-19	Having commitment to cooperate and help each other	Husband is ready to help his wife  Wife is dominant in	Husband is ready to help his wife  Wife is dominant in	Husband is ready to help his wife  Wife is dominant in	Husband nearly never cares of the business of his wife in doing

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Sania, a wife in Semarang, June 26, 2022.

		doing domestic works	doing domestic works	doing domestic works	domestic work Wife did all domestic works without any effort to involve her husband
In COVID Era	Having stronger commitment in caring and helping each other	Help some domestic works because directly knew his wife bussiness in doing domestic works	Help some domestic works because directly knew his wife bussiness in doing domestic works	Help some domestic works because directly knew his wife bussiness in doing domestic works	Help some domestic works because directly knew his wife business in doing domestic works
Post-COVID	Having stronger commitment in caring and helping each other	Having more care of the business of the wife, so not always wait his wife request to help her	Having more care of the business of the wife, so not always wait his wife request to help her	Having more care of the business of the wife, so not always wait his wife request to help her	Husband would like to help his wife once his wife ask for help

Source: Primary data

Based on the map above, it appears that there are three trends revealed in the data above. The first is the working husband and wife pair who from the beginning had a commitment to work together and help each other, with the pandemic, this commitment has become even stronger and during the post-COVID-19 period this commitment has become even stronger. Observing this trend, it seems clear that a strong commitment based on the strength of cultural values regarding gender equality will allow couples to respect and work together, regardless of the type of work.<sup>55</sup> The basis of its value is appreciation

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<sup>55</sup> L A Rudman and P Glick, *The Social Psychology of Gender: How Power and Intimacy Shape Gender Relations* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2021), p. 41–42.



and respect for the partner.<sup>56</sup> This is a basic concept in gender equality, each of which has no negative stereotyping, giving burden, and violence<sup>57</sup>

The second tendency is for working couples who from the beginning of their marriage refer to traditional gender values which divide the domestic role as the role of women, and the public role as the role of men. With such concept of gender relations, men will depend on their wives in domestic roles. Men who hold this concept of gender relations do not care about the excessive burden their wife feels when she also plays a role in the public world.

The group with this tendency during a pandemic, and had to work at home, had just experienced a new knowledge process in their knowledge system. He witnessed how his wife did all the work, both domestic and formal work, so through personal reflection the husband began to be moved to help with domestic work.<sup>58</sup> When the pandemic ended, the husband changed slightly by showing concern for the domestic work his wife was doing. So, the husband's attitude change is based on personal reflection because of the experience of witnessing his wife's troubles firsthand. In this context, the change of gender concept because of the knowledge system. Knowledge only is not enough to make a change. It must be balanced by awareness on the gender equality. Knowledge system includes the full knowledge and its meaning as well as the to implement the knowledge<sup>59</sup>

The third trend is couples who refer to the concept of traditional gender relations. The concept of traditional gender relations strictly emphasizes the roles of men and women. Therefore, this couple defines domestic work as a wife's job.<sup>60</sup> With this concept, the husband does not care at all about his wife's domestic work. Based on their gender concept domestic works are obligatory works for women.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Elisabeth Kelan, *Performing Gender at Work* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 50–52. Elaine Swan, “Book Review: Performing Gender at Work Elisabeth K Kelan. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009,” *Management Learning* 42, no. 3 (2011), p. 359–63.

<sup>57</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender...*, p. 43–44.

<sup>58</sup> Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, *Gender at Work* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 52–55.

<sup>59</sup> James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Illionis: Waveland Press, 2016), p. 4–8.

<sup>60</sup> Ririh Megah Safitri, “Menjadi Perempuan Tambak Lorok: Konstruksi Gaya Hidup Perempuan Muslim Pesisir,” *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)* 2, no. 2 (2018), p. 149–68.

<sup>61</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender*, p. 43–44.

In a pandemic situation, when the husband and wife's workspaces are in the same arena, the husband knows firsthand the wife's workload.<sup>62</sup> As a result of his knowledge, the husband tries to change by helping his wife in doing domestic work.<sup>63</sup> There is a dialectic process between husband and wife during the pandemic era. The habit of helping his wife in doing domestic work slightly affects post-covid-19 gender relations. Husbands show relative concern for wives. Although not completely changed, but there is little concern for the wife's domestic work. Psychologically husband proceeded to think about the way of his wife did her house works as well as official works.<sup>64</sup> This kind of awareness is important as the outset of gender awareness that effected in equality gender relation.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

Gender relations are not simple relationships. The value base becomes the basis for the formation of gender relations. Therefore, gender relations are not easily changed by a short process. In the context of a pandemic, families of working partners already have a gender relationship pattern that was formed at the beginning of their marriage, with work from home which allows couples to interact more intensively, it turns out that post-pandemic has not changed their gender relations. During the pandemic, the couple worked to adjust to each other because they witnessed each other's activities firsthand, but after the pandemic, they applied the gender relations they had from the beginning. If there is a change, it is not because of the changing values, but an individual reflection because of seeing firsthand the busyness of the partner, thus giving rise to an intention to help. This research provides new results because the assumption of a pandemic that allows people to change based on values has not been found. This is because the experiences in the working from home time did not change the knowledge system of the couple so there is only little bit changes in their gender relation. One level that they generally get is the affection on the couple burden. So, the help just because of the un-nice feeling of the couple burden. This study has limitations because it was carried out in a small group of young working couples. Of course, other community groups have different concepts of gender relation that are important to be researched.

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<sup>62</sup> Kevin Shafer, et.al., "The Division of Domestic Labor before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada: Stagnation versus Shifts in Fathers' Contributions," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 57, no. 4 (2020), p. 523–49.

<sup>63</sup> Game and Pringle, *Gender at Work*..., p. 52–55.

<sup>64</sup> Kelan, *Performing Gender at Work*..., p. 45–48.

<sup>65</sup> Rudman and Glick, *The Social Psychology of Gender*..., p. 34–36.

This opens a chance for other researchers to do the similar research to other groups.

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## Interviews

Interview with Andi, a husband in Semarang, June 18, 2022.

Interview with Ari, a husband in Semarang, June 25, 2022.

Interview with Barry, a husband in Semarang, June 19, 2022.

Interview with Bella, a wife in Semarang, June 11, 2022.

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Interview with Sania, a wife in Semarang, June 26, 2022.

Interview with Yuli, a wife in Semarang, June 18, 2022.