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# The perishment of the economics sector in women's domestication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic, considered a force that restores family institutions, has led to the domestication of women who have become professional workers. This paper aims to show how the return of women to the home causes the loss of women's status as professional workers on the one hand and the return of women as mothers and wives on the other. In this context, gender relations have also been redefined. The data used for this paper are derived from qualitative research, using various discussions in online media and relevant literature. The results of the study show that a series of government policies have forced women to return home and ignored women's autonomy which had been hard built. This paper concludes that the position of women is increasingly crucial in crises, but at the same time, women lose their bargaining position and authority as professional workers.

**Keywords:** economic perishment; woman domestication; COVID-19 pandemic.

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# 1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is seen as a force that restores the family institution, has led to the domestication of women. As professional workers, women involved in the public sphere must return to their duties as mothers and wives. This is mainly due to the impact of the pandemic, which has caused women to lose their jobs in various sectors. Based on records from the Ministry of Social Affairs, 40% of formal female workers have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sixty percent of the total 740 million female workers from the informal sector have lost their jobs since the COVID-19

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pandemic (CNN Indonesia, 2021, January 5). The loss of women's economic base changes the constellation of gender relations in the family. The equality that had become a best practice has become a status that must be fought for again. At the same time, women are carrying the extra burden of the crisis experienced by the family during the pandemic (Bangun and Widana, 2021; Chairani, 2020; Profeta, 2020).

So far, studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women tend to look at two things. First, a study looks at the pandemic as a factor that causes women to experience violence in various forms. Women experience violence in public and domestic spaces (Sánchez et al., 2020; Solórzano et al., 2020). Second, studies examining COVID-19 have given birth to psychological trauma in women. Women experience pressure not only due to the experience of contracting the coronavirus but also due to social and economic burdens that must be borne (Aziz et al., 2022; Mustafa et al., 2021; Utami & Prafitri, 2021). From the two trends in the study of women during the COVID-19 period, it appears that the effects of the pandemic on the structural relationships of men and women have received less attention. The domestication process of women that occurred widely during the pandemic needs to be studied carefully.

The purpose of this paper is to carefully examine the turning point of gender relations when women leave the economic sector, which has been the basis of equality back home to do domestic tasks. This paper, apart from showing the consequences of women returning home due to losing their role in the economic sector during the pandemic, also analyses how the loss of women's economic base has implications for women's weak bargaining power. Women experience a domestication process in the household which directly returns them to their original definition as housewives and as wives subordinate to their husbands as legitimised by tradition.

This paper is based on an argument that the involvement of women in domestic tasks that are justified by custom has been considered the natural will of women to return to their nature as mothers and wives as idealised in society. The presence of women at home has been seen as perfection, especially in crises where the presence and role of the wife or mother are always idealised. At the same time, women's empowerment is needed in crisis situations (Capel et al., 2017). This was mainly due to the crisis factor that returned women to the domestic space in line with the strengthening of familial ideology in society.

#### 2 Literature review

# 2.1 The Perishment of economics

Various pieces of literature, including the Shariah economic literature, explain that economics directs humans to try to fulfil relatively limited needs to fulfil their unlimited desires with limited resources (Dahliah, 2020; Ismaulina, 2020; Menne et al., 2022; Mirowski, 2021). Economics provides a step for humans to choose and determine the goods to be purchased with their income, besides the ability to allocate time, energy, and capital with a certain amount to achieve maximum profit (Xiu and Zhao, 2021).

Regarding the role of women in the family economy, it is a general phenomenon that reaches the entire socioeconomic system of society (Tuwu, 2018). In times of crisis, the role of women can save the household economy (Celik et al., 2020; Ge et al., 2022; Hukom, 2011; Jabeen et al., 2020). This is in line with the statement about women, which

states that in today's pandemic situation, women are at a high level of awareness to save their families and nation (Afrizal and Hardika Legiani, 2020). But on the other hand, the changes brought by the COVID-19 outbreak have added to a long series of women's vulnerabilities (Werdiningsih, 2021; Clavijo, 2020; Datta and Mete, 2022). These vulnerabilities relate to implementing policies for women workers in both the public and domestic sectors (Dewi, 2021) which requires women to balance the work and family environment (Reiss et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, women work in the informal sector with limited protection mechanisms (Afni, 2021; Ropiah and Taftazani, 2022). It has resulted, among other things, in the vulnerability of wage cuts on women's performance, as happened in India (Chakraborty, 2020).

Regarding the economic role of women, neoliberalism has brought about two critical consequences (Bahramitash and Esfahani, 2016). First, gender-related economic policies focus on increasing employment opportunities for women, which contributes to economic empowerment. Second, attention focuses on expanding women's role as entrepreneurs in tiny and medium enterprises. This shows how the economic role of women is closely related to empowerment (Prantiasih, 2014). Empowerment of women and economic development will bring about changes in decision-making that directly impact achieving equality between men and women (Duflo, 2012). Gender equality is closely related to access (Agarwal, 2018), where increasing women's access to resources will positively affect women's economies (Fletschner and Kenney, 2014). This is in line with the policy of the Prime Minister of Japan, who views women's empowerment through increasing employment opportunities as being able to provide more opportunities for women and revitalise economic growth (Song, 2015). This is because the increased involvement of women in the world of work will build diversity, which is considered to positively impact competitiveness and economic profit.

## 2.2 Female domestication

Domestication in Hage's idea is related to affirming the concept of domination (Jones, 2019). Hage interprets domestication as human practices that place themselves as regulators of their life and environment for their own sake. Concerning women, the domestication process is socio-culturally constructed and positions women to accept domestication as a routine necessity without rejection (Nduna and Tshona, 2021; Sopamena, 2020). For example, through the ideology of state mothers, the idea of an ideal woman that limits them to the domestic space with various provisions related to their identities, such as wives, mothers, and citizens, has made them separate from men (Hyunanda et al., 2021). This has implications for the discrimination in the division of labour that women must accept (Salaa, 2015). This discrimination is inseparable from sexual differences, which shows that there is inequality in the quality of work between men and women, both in terms of the labour market structure and norms regarding the status and role of women in society (Salaa, 2015). Thus, these unfavourable conditions lead women to their lack of opportunities to participate in the public sphere (Jaim, 2021; Qorib et al., 2020; Weeks and Gilmore, 2020).

The exclusion of women as subjects with lower spatial and social positions and tight control over them is a form of the procession of domestication of women in the world of work (Coelho, 2016). Women are always placed in the domestic sphere so that all household work is considered less valuable, as well as when women enter the public sphere. Their performance is regarded as supporting or supplementary (Reigada et al.,

2021). This is in line with Kasiyan's perspective (Siswati, 2019), which mentions that women's domestication occurs not only in household work activities but also in the public sphere, where women are placed in lower jobs. The subordination of women is inseparable from the socio-cultural construction of determining roles based on sexuality (Lilius, 2016). Men are associated as breadwinners who occupy public spaces (masculinity), while women are owners of the private sphere who are close to household activities and become vulnerable figures. In the new normal era, women are still imagined as weak (Kalingga, 2021) with a domestic burden of layered because of the necessity of activities at home. However, the domestication of women through efforts to bring them into the house is not an attempt to solve the right problem.

#### 2.3 New normal era

Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was first identified in the Wuhan area, China, in December 2019 (Moulahoum et al., 2020). Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a virus that causes acute respiratory syndrome, fever, pneumonia, headache, cough, and loss of sense of taste or smell, which often leads to death (Siegler et al., 2021). COVID-19 is transmitted through close personal contact with droplets or aerosols from an infected person that may be generated when sneezing, coughing, and exhaling (Nabi et al., 2020). The rapid and dramatic increase has caused COVID-19 to become a global pandemic spreading worldwide (Baig, 2020; Wong et al., 2020b; Lillard, 2020). The global pandemic has made many countries ask their people to make various behavioural changes called the new normal era (Cahapay, 2021). The term new normal is described in the urban dictionary as a situation that occurs after an intense change (Elshami et al., 2021). The global pandemic has not only caused an international public health emergency but has also changed the patterns of communication and collective community interaction to overcome the challenges and risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus (Fetansa et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020a).

The new normal era refers to how people must adapt to protect themselves from the worst effects of the pandemic (Blumler and Coleman, 2021). In the new normal era, various lifestyle changes were adopted to control transmission, including measures to avoid crowds and area closures (Uchiyama and Kohsaka, 2020; Cahapay, 2021). Social distancing has become a fundamental part of the new normal era (Cortese Coelho, 2021; Jamaludin et al., 2020; Sparrow et al., 2020). In addition, lifestyle changes with healthy behaviour are an important part of the new normal era. Changes in healthy lifestyles are part of the government's policies with various preventive measures to avoid and minimise the increasingly massive spread of the virus (Nanda et al., 2021; Hyder et al., 2021; Souliotis et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused people to change their behaviour by taking preventive measures such as frequent hand washing, spending less time outdoors, wearing protective masks, social distancing, testing, isolating confirmed cases, and even quarantining themselves at home to avoid contact with other people (Zhou et al., 2020; Gunawan et al., 2020; Maylawati and Ramdhani, 2022).

#### 3 Method

Economic perishment due to the domestication of women is a crucial focus of attention in line with the COVID-19 pandemic. Women who have experienced a change in their role

from the domestic to the public sphere, which allows them to become active subjects in various economic activities, are forced to return to the domestic sphere. Research is not only needed to look at the transformation of public space to domestic, but also to examine the effects on gender equality that women have been fighting for and enjoying.

This type of research is a literature review. The literature study method is a series of activities related to collecting library data, reading, and taking notes, and managing research materials. Literature studies are carried out by each researcher with the primary objective of finding a basis for obtaining and building theoretical foundations, frameworks of thought, and determining provisional conjectures, also called research hypotheses (Kraus et al., 2020; Snyder, 2019). So that researchers can classify, allocate, organise, and use a variety of libraries in their fields. At the same time, the population in this study are people who have relationships in the areas of economics and gender.

The literature study research design used is a narrative review. A narrative review is a type of research that summarises theory, examines studies, and investigates the methods used in existing research. The review compiles a spectrum of literature written on the topic. It synthesises it into a coherent interpretation that highlights the main issues, trends, complexities, and controversies to which it is central. The article search procedure is carried out on the Google Scholar page, the publish or perish application, and science direct by typing Metaverse and Education. The articles sought are from international journals, accredited and non-accredited national journals, proceedings, and theses from 2017–2022. The validation and review process includes several provisions, including journals that can be accessed for free through the *Open Journal System*, quality of research methodologies in articles, and quality of data presentation and discussion.

#### 4 Result

## 4.1 The return of women to the domestic sphere

The pandemic has brought women back to their homes. It indicates that there has been a change in women's orientation from the public sector to the domestic sector. According to history, since the strengthening of the gender equality movement in the 1990s, women have had a place in the public sphere. Women have a status as career women in various business fields and company workers in various strata, including daily labourers in all public sectors. At the same time, besides women's contribution to the household economy becoming more significant, women also experience increased autonomy with the freedom to choose. Gender equality is aligned with the expansion of women's socio-political space due to the more powerful female modalities.

The presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is in line with the birth of government policies such as work from home (WFH), large-scale social restrictions (PSBB), and the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM), are factors for changing the position and role of women. Social restrictions have made 69% of women and 61% of men spend more time doing household chores. This figure shows that women carry the heaviest burden, considering that 61% of women also spend more time caring for and accompanying children compared to only 48% of men.

Women are re-establishing roles in household institutions such as taking care of the house, cooking, washing, raising children, and educating children at home. Apart from changing work patterns from offline to online, changes in women's activities are also

caused by layoffs, laying off employees, and cutting salaries. Because since the pandemic, findings from the Report "Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Gender and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Indonesia" stated that as many as 36% of women informal workers had to reduce their paid work time compared to only 30% of men who experienced it. In addition, many women in Indonesia depend on family businesses. However, 82% of them have experienced a significant decrease in their source of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in economic activity and women's public space activities is part of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that has made women domesticated.

# 4.2 Domestic burden and responsibilities of working women

Economic pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic has narrowed the space for women in the public sphere. A policy limiting space movement is a significant factor in checking activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon then forced women who had previously been active in the more expansive public space to move to the domestic sector, which had long been abandoned. Two categories indicate this change. First, women return to doing household tasks. This is due to his presence at home, like being a teacher for children and accompanying children in online school learning. Second, women who had been involved in earning a living and contributing to the family later returned as housewives and as wives. The ideology of familial is re-attached to women. These two things can then be seen in Table 1 by showing various domestic activities carried out by women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 shows how women fulfil their domestic responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women do not only take care of the kitchen and take care of children, but women's domestic affairs have also undergone various changes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women during the COVID-19 pandemic must also take care of their children's education by providing online learning assistance and doing children's learning tasks during online learning. In addition, women's domestic affairs during the COVID-19 pandemic are also seen in the field of family health. As mothers and wives in the household, women must pay attention to family compliance with COVID-19 health protocols such as wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining distance and other rules related to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Things that were not carried out before the pandemic was regulated later by the Government in various ways, such as literacy of house hygiene by disinfecting the most frequently touched surfaces at home are critical preventive measures that can reduce the risk of transmission. The focus is also on following the instructions for cleaning products to be safe and effective, including recommendations for user safety – such as wearing gloves and ensuring good room circulation. Although every house has different habits, some surfaces are most often touched that are very clean. Namely, door handles, tables, chairs, fences, kitchen and bathroom tables, water taps, toilets, light switches, cell phones, computers, tablets, keyboards, television and game console accessories, and children's toys.

The return of women to their homes not only restores women's domestic roles (which have long been abandoned) but also eliminates the bases of power and bargaining power of women in building equality and justice. In other words, the return of women to the house is, at the same time, subordinating women again. The class struggle carried out for decades returns to its starting point on the essential condition of women with their

inherent nature. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed the flow of history in women's lives. Women are no longer career women but return to being homemakers and good wives with the responsibility of controlling all affairs in the household (Dono et al., 2020; El Ouedrhiri and El Mesbahi, 2020).

**Table 1** Women's domestic responsibilities before the pandemic and in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

Women's activities in the domestic area	
Before the COVID-19 Pandemic	The COVID-19 Pandemic Period
Kitchen (cooking, washing, sweeping, mopping, cleaning the room)	The kitchen (cooking, washing, sweeping, mopping, cleaning the room) puts forward the pattern of maintaining the health standards of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia
Parenting (taking care of children, feeding and drinking, dressing)	Parenting (taking care of children, feeding and drinking, dressing) with strict arrangements according to the health standards of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia
Education by becoming a teacher and monitoring children's learning at home	Education (becoming a teacher at home, assisting online learning, reminding, and teaching Health protocol equipment such as masks, and sanitisers, accompanying children in limited school learning) following the rules of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia
Controlling and supervising children's interactions	Disciplining children in association with the home environment with health protocol standards (washing hands, wearing masks, and maintaining distance)
There are not any yet	Health (maintaining and providing health equipment, spraying disinfectant)

Source: Asriani et al. (2021), Davenport et al. (2020), Pieh et al. (2020) and Rodríguez-Rey et al. (2020)

# 4.3 Economic implications of the decreased contribution of women

Before the arrival of COVID-19, women were one of the powerhouses and sources of economic income that contributed greatly to the welfare of the family and, more broadly, to the business world's development. Data from the Central Statistics Agency states that the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK) reached 51.8% in 2018. Female workers mostly play a role as service business personnel. The dominance reached 58.04% compared to male service business workers in 2019. This condition increased by 0.87% compared to the previous year. Women work as service business personnel by 58.91% compared to men. The contribution of women is not only in the lower middle class but also in various medium and large business sectors. Data shows that 21.66% of women are involved in leadership and management, and women hold 35% of manager positions in large companies.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic with changes in the world economy, it has become a significant threat to many women in work, both formal and informal. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the decline in the contribution of women to the

economy. The statement of the Indonesian Minister of Manpower revealed that there were 623,407 female workers affected by the pandemic, which caused some of them to be laid off, laid off, and repatriated by the COVID-19 apprentices (CNN Indonesia, 2021). This is because women have experienced a double burden problem since the beginning of the pandemic and losing their livelihood. Female workers feel this implication as the absence of economic certainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, which also affects the economy of women who have jobs in the public sector (Indriani, 2020).

 Table 2
 Implications of decreased contribution of women in the economy

Implications before the COVID-19 pandemic	Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic era
60% of the number of MSMEs are managed by women who are engaged in 3 crucial fields, namely fashion, culinary, and craft, widely	50% Focused on home-based businesses only in the culinary field
The balance between unpaid care work and productive work	bear the double burden of increasing outstanding care work, which makes them must reduce their paid work time, even leave their jobs
Strengthening gender equality and equity in the economic sector	Weakening of equality and Justice in the economic sector and growing domestic violence due to the economic crash
The economy built by women has contributed to improving the family economy	The highest economic slowdown occurred in the education services sector (-10.39%) and the government administration sector (-8.54%), which women dominated. However, both sectors are dominated by women.

The decline in women's contributions to the economy impacted their income during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is indicated by the lower purchasing power of basic needs. This is in line with a survey released by McKinsey & Company, which states that a decline in economic activity has disrupted people's spending needs (Indriani, 2020). Furthermore, the serious effect of reducing the contribution of women has an impact on the welfare and mentality of working women by having the burden of being a housewife as well as a career woman who is under pressure both from the world of work and family problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Director of IBCWE indicates that 40% of female workers experienced health problems, while the other 30% were experienced by men (Tribunnews.com, 2021). Changes in the economy of women with their work in the public sector make autonomous women must return to the choices at home by having full responsibility for the family. Women have experienced a decrease in bargaining power in the public sphere in line with the declining contribution of women in the family economy. Therefore, the decline in the contribution of women is a force that threatens the financial security of individuals and families.

# 5 Discussion

This study aims to determine the state of the economy through the activities of women in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has changed the orientation of women from the public sector to the domestic sector. The study found that the pandemic had changed the orientation of women from the public sector to the domestic sector. It limited the space

for women in the public sphere and returned women to those responsible for the family and found implications for this in the economic sphere.

The return of women to domestic tasks shows that the crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, has become a force that causes a reorientation of women's lives. A crisis is a crucial space to see how the condition of women. In every crisis, women appear as family saviours (Abdullah, 2016), but a crisis like a pandemic has not received enough attention. Very little is known about how women sacrifice during a pandemic and how women lose the economic and political bases that allow them to stand on a par with men. Crisis can be a reason for the reproduction of gender inequality (Girón and Correa, 2016; Post et al., 2019; Ragasa and Lambrecht, 2020; Abdullah, 2020).

The pandemic that limits women's movement in the public sphere has become a force for the domestication process that places women in charge of the family. On the one hand, the return of women to the domestic space is a consequence of the fundamental changes that are taking place in which women bear the effects of a pandemic or crisis. The pandemic that brought about the economic crisis had narrowed the space for women's expression as professional workers, making women passive objects. Women must accept the situation imposed on them because of the objectivation process that places women in a passive position to accept the situation. Returning women to the domestic space can be seen as a process of deauthorising women in line with the loss of women's economic bases, which have been the capital in gender equality negotiations.

The return of women to the domestic sector reaffirms the application of the ideology of familial that places women as good mothers and wives. Women are often trapped in an iron cage that sees and places them as domestic workers who do not get the proper respect (Britton, 2003; Yüksel, 2014). This change process causes the outstanding contribution of women in the public sector, which is the result of decades of struggle, to be neglected and under-appreciated. Even gender struggle, as this research shows, must start from the starting point.

The return of women to the domestic sphere during the pandemic can also be seen as a process that causes a decrease in women's contribution to the economy. The contribution of women as professional workers and in the development of the business world is hampered. Before the pandemic, women had economic autonomy and power to reach leadership positions in large agencies and companies. Various studies show that Muslim women always play an active role in negotiating their status and rights when facing patriarchal forces in line with the success of the gender mainstreaming movement. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has enforced patriarchal ideology by affirming the existence of women as mothers of children, guardians of home stability, and educators of the family environment with various activity structures in it. Various rules applied, from laws to regional regulations, are increasingly strengthening so that women decide to return to rearranging domestic life by building traditional idealised households (Nasution and Jazuli, 2020; Nurhadi, 2019).

In line with the return of women to the domestic sphere on the one hand and the need to provide power bases for women's equality, two approaches can be taken. First, it is necessary to develop a creative economy that allows women to contribute to the economic space while simultaneously accommodating demands for women to save the family. These efforts provide technological literacy so women can work, such as buying and selling online. Second, upholding women's rights as active subjects contributes to the ongoing socioeconomic process. This requires the defense of women's rights through the rule of law and support for women's independence.

#### 6 Conclusions

It turns out that what has been believed so far is that the strong economy due to the role of women in the public sphere persists. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought women back to the domestic sphere. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic, which is seen as a force that restores family institutions, has become a force that returns women to traditional roles as mothers and wives. The study of the return of women to the domestic space during the pandemic has shown a new perspective that complements the current approach. Women's return to domestic tasks means that women return to zero in the struggle to strengthen the economy. This study confirms that the involvement of women in the duties of mothers and wives is traditionally a form of inequality in social reproduction. This paper provides a new concept in sharpening the analysis, which initially saw the return of women to the domestic sphere as a form of economic and psychological pressure into a political arena where gender relations are contested. The study uses qualitative methods through a literature review approach, so it is impossible to generalise. A more general and comprehensive understanding of Women's Domestication in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic is urgently needed to formulate more specific policies. In line with this, it is suggested the importance of further research by accommodating survey research methods with a sufficiently representative sample for comparative analysis. In addition, research needs to accommodate male perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding.

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