



NEGOTIATING THE ROLE OF TRANSMIGRANT JAVANESE WOMEN IN DOMESTIC, PUBLIC, AND SOCIAL SPHERES

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Abstract: *This article seek to explore the roles of transmigrant Javanese women as small scale business owners, housewife, and active participants in traditional Javanese cultural practices. The aim of this article is to understand how transmigrant Javanese women in Pagaruyung and Sibua Village negotiate their multiple roles through agency, balancing between responsibilities in the domestic sphere, public sphere, and social sphere. The method used in this study is ethnography with emic approach in understanding behavior and culture from insider perspective through a series of participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentations, and fieldnotes. The findings shows that transmigrant Javanese women manage their multiple roles through exercising their agency of project in form of decision making, priority setting and time management. However, agency cannot always be fully exercised at certain moments because of existing cultural norms and power relation. This research holds significant not only for the transmigrant Javanese women community, but also provides valuable insights for readers interested in cultural and gender studies. It is important to understand how women negotiate multiple roles within the constraints of cultural norms and power structures.*

Keywords: Culture, Gender, Dual Roles, Agency.

INTRODUCTION

The word “wanita” or woman in Javanese is etymologically derived from the term “wani ditata” which indicates the inferior position of a woman as an individual who must obey the subject who regulates them. Woman in Javanese culture, also referred to “konco wingking” or “teman belakang,” a term that reflects the cultural interpretation of their role as being confined to the domestic sphere. The term highlights how women in Javanese are often associated with masak (cook), macak (to adorn oneself), and manak (to bear children) (Uyun in Panani, 2021). In the current context, Javanese culture has spread across various regions in Indonesia. One of the primary factors contributing to its widespread diffusion is the government's transmigration program. The target regions of the transmigration programs included the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, and Irian Jaya, with Riau Province being one of the key destinations on Sumatra. By 2011, a total of 131,149 households, or approximately 540,578 individuals, had transmigrated to Riau and were distributed across eleven regencies or cities. These transmigrants originated from Central Java, East Java, West Java, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Jakarta (DKI Jakarta), Banten, and Lampung.

Although transmigrants live away from their place of origin, according to Scott in Newman (2023), Javanese transmigrants are still regarded as some of the most resilient rural communities in the world with a strong communitarian heritage. Transmigrant from Java Island tend to have a stronger bond among the transmigrant group by preserving local knowledge and practice of reciprocal cooperation that has

been brought from their place of origin. This is evident through the continued practice of Javanese traditions, with communal events like Rewang still taking place in villages outside Java, including Pagaruyung and Sibuaik village in Riau, Sumatera Island that commonly dominated by Melayu culture. Both Pagaruyung and Sibuaik are ex-transmigrant villages that was part of Indonesia's transmigration program which primarily relocated people from Java to other regions. As these villages are predominantly inhabited by Javanese transmigrants, the communities continue reflect Javanese cultural values.

The transmigrant area of Tapung, Kampar where the villages of Pagaruyung and Sibuaik are located shows how culture is carried through transmigration that led to a degree of social integration between the Javanese and Ocu community in Riau (Syafrizal, 2021). However, within this context, Javanese women continue to be associated with the domestic sphere, especially during Rewang, a communal activity where women are expected to contribute by assisting with cooking and cleaning as part of event preparations. This aligns with the research findings, despite being geographically separated from Java and living in a socio-cultural environment where Javanese culture is not the dominant cultural framework, transmigrant Javanese women in Pagaruyung and Sibuaik villages continue practice Javanese cultural values in their everyday lives. This demonstrates that women's domestic responsibilities are not confined to the private household sphere but are also expected to extend into the community through collective practices. Consequently, women's roles are expanded, positioning them as key contributors to both household maintenance and community solidarity.

In modern times, Javanese women face increasing economic needs that push them to enter the public sphere, resulting in the addition of women's roles outside the domestic and social sphere. Modernization has shaped a new image for Javanese women who used to be underestimated in domestic matters. The concept of "konco wingking" is no longer limiting women's freedom to choose their own space. Despite their involvement in work, Javanese women remain closely tied to domestic responsibilities. This can be seen in the case of the owners of Lia Songket Pagaruyung and Batik Sibuaik, small-scale businesses in Kampar Regency, Riau. The owner of Lia Songket Pagaruyung is a transmigrant from Central Java residing in Pagaruyung Village, while the owner of Batik Sibuaik is a transmigrant from East Java living in Sibuaik Village. Both villages are inhabited by transmigrants from Java that is located in Tapung Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province.

The profiles of the owners of the two small-scale businesses show that they entered the public sector because of the need to contribute to the family economy. Simultaneously, they must bear the responsibility of managing household needs while actively participating in social activities such as Rewang, as part of the Javanese transmigrant community. Both of them often face challenges in managing household responsibilities, work demands, and the obligation to participate in community activities concurrently. The production process is frequently hindered due to household chores and the social expectation to attend Rewang and other Javanese traditional practices. At the same time, domestic tasks tend to pile up when they receive a large number of business orders.

According to Ortner (2011) agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act intentionally guided by their thoughts, emotions, and goals while navigating broader social structure that may limit their actions. As found in the research of Mardhianti, J. Y., & Imelda, J. D. (2019), women's agency is reflected through their ability to navigate

and negotiate their roles within power dynamics and social limitation that exists in their community. In managing multiple roles, women exercise agency in a form of making intentional decision and strategic time management to fulfill every responsibility. These actions reflect how women are not passive recipients of their circumstances but actively practice agency within their limitations and possibilities.

In the context of Javanese women Maulana (2020) study highlights how women in Paciran have undergone tradition moderation to avoid being marginalized by the domestic roles of *konco wingking*. They have managed to actively contribute to the public sphere without losing their identity as Javanese women. Tradition moderation reflects women's agency, emphasizing how women act independently and make decisions based on their internal capacity as they empower themselves to step into spheres that they had not previously occupied. It implies how Javanese women has their own way to practice their agency to achieve their goals although being constrained with their assigned role as a "*konco wingking*".

Few studies, such as Sri Wahyuni et.,al (2022), Mardhianti, J. Y., & Imelda, J. D. (2019), and Herlina Dedy Listiani et., al (2025) show findings of how important women's agency is in coping with their dual roles. The studies emphasize how women negotiate their dual roles through their agency by dividing their responsibilities and managing their time to pursue their goals without being restricted to the domestic spheres that have traditionally defined them. Another study by Nurcahyani, A., & Isbah, M. F. (2020) which focuses on women as business owner also highlights a significant expression of agency in how they negotiate overlapping roles through effective time management, prioritizing family responsibilities, and seeking support from family member. Athirah (2023) also highlights the importance of agency for women in negotiating their position within a system that constrain their ability to act and make decisions. The study shows that women possess agency in taking control over themselves and adapting to existing sociocultural structures.

However, there is still limited research exploring the overlapping roles of transmigrant Javanese women in the domestic, public, and social spheres, and how they exercise their agency despite constraining social norms. This study takes as its starting point the experiences of the owners of Lia Songket Pagaruyung and Batik Sibuk, who, as transmigrant Javanese women, navigate multiple roles as small-scale business owners, housewives, and active participants in traditional practices. Their experiences highlight how women's agency allows them to navigate, negotiate, and manage these multiple responsibilities. Therefore, the goal of this study is to learn and understand how transmigrant Javanese women manage their multiple roles through agency, balancing between responsibilities in the domestic sphere and the public sphere, particularly their obligations to actively contribute to Javanese traditional practices in the social sphere.

METHOD

The method used in this study is ethnography, which falls under qualitative methodology. Ethnography could provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding of socio-cultural aspects. According to Harris and Johnson (2000), ethnography is a method that involves participant observation and in-depth interviews to gain a deep understanding of cultural interpretations. The approach applied in this ethnographic research is the emic approach, which focuses on understanding behavior and culture from insider perspective through long-term observation interviews, and fieldwork in purpose to understand the culture from within (El Amady, 2015). Through

this approach, the study aims to understand how the owners of Batik Sibuk and Lia Songket Pagaruyung, as transmigrant Javanese women exercise their agency through their lived experiences in managing dual roles. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as being transmigrant Javanese women who simultaneously fulfill dual roles as housewives, small business owners, and active participants in traditional Javanese cultural practices within their communities.

Data collection in this study involves a series of participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentations, and fieldnotes. According to Kawulich (2005), participant observation is a method where the researcher immerses themselves in the natural setting of the informants by actively engaging in and observing their daily activities, interactions, and cultural practices while maintaining a balanced perspective between participation and objectivity. In this study, participant observation was conducted through a live-in approach with both informants, allowing the researcher to take part in their daily routines as batik and songket artisans, housewives, and Javanese transmigrant women fulfilling various societal roles. Participant observation is crucial in this research because it provides access to nonverbal and contextual information. Additionally, it also results in a more holistic understanding as it enables cultural immersion with the informant. Therefore, this research conducted participant observation through a live-in approach with Lia, as the owner of Songket Pagaruyung in Pagaruyung village, and Wuliyati, as the owner of batik sibuk in Sibuk village. Both villages are located in Tapung Sub-district, Kampar Regency, Riau Province.

Participatory observation extended beyond mere observation and includes natural conversation or informal conversation that occurred to blend into the daily lives of the informants. In addition to informal conversations, in-depth interviews were also conducted with both business owners. According to Morris (2015), an in-depth interview is a method where the researcher and informant engage in conversation to explore a certain topic deeply and thoroughly. This method enables the researcher to gain insights into the lived experiences of the informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Transmigrant Javanese Women in Domestic, Public, and Social Sphere

a. Domestic Sphere

In Javanese culture, women across generations have been instructed in grooming, cooking, and serving their husbands (Nugroho, 2021). This expectation applies to Lia and Wuliyati, who have been taught throughout their lives to be responsible for domestic work. They continue to bear household responsibilities as these remain inseparable from their identities as women. The awareness of household responsibilities can be seen in Wuliyati's response during interview as follows,

"Kalo bukan saya yang nyetrika siapa lagi? Yang lain punya urusannya masing-masing, jarang di rumah" ("If I don't do the ironing, then who will? Everyone else has their own stuff to take care of—they're hardly ever home.") (Wuliyati, interview, April 15, 2025)

Correspondingly, Lia's daily commitment in fulfilling domestic chores is partly driven by her sense of obligation as stay at home wife. Since her husband work most of the day, she feels responsible to manage the household tasks as she is the one primarily stays at home.

Based on ethnographic studies during this research, it shows that Lia and Wuliyati have a similar daily routine around domestic sphere. Both of them are engaged in

routine domestic tasks such as cleaning, cooking, dishwashing, and laundry. They have to wake up early to clean the house. This routine marks the beginning of their day before doing any other activities. They also carry the responsibility for doing the laundry, preparing meals, caring for their children, and attending to their husbands' needs. This indicates their important roles in managing household food security and nurturing their family.

In terms of household food security, women take a central role as food producers, household food managers, and consumers. This highlights the importance role of women in growing or providing food, planning meals, and making choices about the food should be purchased and consumed by family (Agarwal, 2018). Based on the observation during this research, both Lia and Wuliyati are also in charge of meal preparation as part of their domestic routine. While cooking may appear simple, it requires thorough planning to prepare meals that accommodate each family member's preferences. This includes ensuring the availability of ingredients, and when they're running out of supplies, they need to do grocery shopping while staying within the household budget. Their roles in food security are crucial, as each family member depends on them to meet their nutritional needs. That aligns with what Wuliyati said during the observation,

"Kalo saya gak masak, keluarga saya makan apa?" (If I don't cook, what will my family eat) (Wuliyati, interview, March, 12, 2025)

Lia also encounters similar roles like Wuliyati regarding meal preparation. When her husband come back from work and finds no meal on the table, he often asks whether she forget to cook. This reflects Lia's important role in ensuring her family's food security. If she does not cook or in some point forgets to cook, it essentially means the family is left without food and not having a meal.

Another observation from this research indicates that the most difficult household chores are ironing and folding clothes. This came from both informants, Lia and Wuliyati. They admit that they tend to postpone these particular domestic chores as it takes so much time and energy. However, since it is their responsibility, they usually allocate an entire day for ironing and folding clothes. For Lia, doing laundry is also another difficult task since she has been busy taking care of her children every day. This indicates a significant difference between Lia and Wuliyati in terms of childcare responsibilities within the domestic sphere. Lia, who is currently caring for a 9-month-old infant and a 6-year-old child, dedicates most of her time to nurturing her children. Lia consistently prioritizes her baby above all other responsibilities, as she explains in the following interview,

"Kalo anak nangis, saya harus berhenti dulu mau aktivitas apapun. Ngurus anak dulu baru lanjut lagi" ("If my baby cries, I have to stop whatever I'm doing. I have to take care of my baby first then continue my activity later") (Lia, interview, February 24, 2025)

Lia's domestic role in the context of maternal parenting could be seen from her immediate responses to her baby. It refers to the important role of a mother who should always be alert towards her child whenever the baby is crying, hungry, or tired. Observing her baby attentively when the baby is wide awake is also an important aspect of Lia's role, as it reflects a mother's tendency to acknowledge the child's thoughts and intentions. In comparison, Wuliyati's maternal demands have lessened as her child has matured and become more independent. However, she continues to fulfill a supportive maternal role within daily routines to facilitate her family's daily activities.

b. Public Sphere

Lia and Wuliyati reflect women's growing participation in the public sphere by contributing economically to their families as small business owners. Lia runs a small songket business known as "Lia Songket Pagaruyung" while Wuliyati manages a small batik business known as "Batik Sibua". The public sphere in this context is evident in the production of songket and batik, which are sold to a broader consumer base. Their interactions with customers to discuss orders further position these activities within the realm of the public sphere.

As business owners, Lia and Wuliyati have several responsibilities that they need to fulfill daily basis, which include managing the entire business process from production and distribution to marketing. They are also responsible for tracking the cash flow and ensuring both operational continuity and financial sustainability. In addition, they handle operational management tasks that consist of checking the quality of the product, managing the stock of raw materials, and tracking production efficiency. Therefore, they need to set a plan and target to complete customer orders while juggling various responsibilities.

Lia is the pillar of her family, as the income she earns from making songket is used to support her family's needs. Her capabilities to produce songket are demonstrated by her skill in completing two or more sets on her own. On average, she produces a minimum of two and a maximum of three sets of songket per month. The time required to complete each songket order depends on weather conditions and Lia's availability as she balances her work with caring for her nine-month-old baby. Therefore, Lia accepts orders actively, depending on her available capacity at the time. This indicates how Lia's roles as a business owner is not limited to managing the business only, but also directly involved in producing the orders herself, as she does not have any employees.



Figure 1. Lia's non-mechanized loom, located on her porch

Besides working on the production by herself, Lia also manages the marketing of her songket through online promotion, primarily by posting on her WhatsApp status. While for the distribution of her orders, on some occasions, she delivers the completed orders to customers directly. She often expresses concern about her sales, acknowledging the difficulty of selling fabric that is targeted for the middle class as songket is considered expensive, as she explained during the interview,

"Jualan kain yang harganya dua juta susah mbak. Dikit yang mau beli cuman orang-orang kelas atas. Padahal saya lebih semangat kalo banyak yang beli dua juta" ("Selling songket that cost two million is tough. Only upper-class people that want to buy. Honestly, I'm more motivated when people buy the two million ones") (Lia,

interview, March 2, 2025)

On the other hand, Wuliyati, the owner of Batik Sibuk, faces similar responsibilities as Lia. The key difference is that Wuliyati has employees who could help her handle the batik orders. However, with the current number of employees decreasing, she is experiencing difficulties in managing large volumes of orders. Therefore, she accepts orders based on her own and employees' capacity to complete each batik fabric before the deadline. Human resources or the availability of skilled batik employees often becomes a major concern for Wuliyati as a business owner. She must carefully plan and assign tasks according to the number of employees available to meet deadlines. Wuliyati admits that she faces various challenges in the batik-making process, especially since it involves many risks that can affect the quality of the fabric, so any negligence can be highly consequential.

“Ribet kan mbak pembuatan batik. Makanya resikonya lebih besar. Salah langkah dikit bisa rugi, kualitas jelek” (“Making batik is complicated. That’s why the risk is higher. One small mistake could lead you to loss because of bad quality”) (Wuliyati, interview, March, 12, 2025)



Figure 2. The process of ngelorod, process of boiling and rinsing the batik fabric to remove the wax

Another challenge that Wuliyati has to face as a business owner is dealing with customers. Sometimes there has been a several miscommunications that leads to wrong designs of batik customs, which is critical because the entire process depends on the customer's requested design.

“Kadang saya harus ngasih pengertian ke pembeli soal gimana cara buat batik supaya mereka paham kalau pembuatan batik itu prosesnya rumit”, (“Sometimes, I have to explain to the customers about the process of making batik so that they will understand that the process is truly complicated”) (Wuliyati, interview, March, 17, 2025)

Furthermore, since Wuliyati has employees and rents a small building for her production house, she must carefully track the cash flow to cover rent and employee salaries.

Based on comprehensive observation during ethnographic research, it could be seen that both Lia and Wuliyati play a critical role in the public sector as business owners in the public sphere, overseeing all process from production to distribution and marketing. Both businesses also involve complex, traditional handcrafting process. Additionally, they face challenges in managing orders and maintaining product quality, showing their strong commitment for customer satisfaction.

c. Social Sphere

Living in a rural village might shape a sense of community among the individuals. In the Javanese context, the rural community highly values the principle of “gotong royong” or mutual cooperation, as they believe that social being must have a sense of empathy toward each other’s (Derung, 2019). As transmigrant Javanese women, Lia and Wuliyati still hold strongly to those values as they live in a rural village that consists of Javanese transmigrants who still emphasize the importance of solidarity. It aligns with what Wuliyati said during observation in this research, which goes as follows,

“Desa itu kan kecil, semuanya saling kenal jadi kalo ada apa-apa kita harus saling bantu. Kalo gak bantu ya ketahuan wong kenal” (“Village is small, everyone knows each other, so if something happens, we have to help one another. If you don’t help, people will easily notice”) (Wuliyati, wawanacra, April, 18, 2025)

Based on ethnographic studies during this research, it shows how both Lia and Wuliyati live in a village that demonstrates the great importance of communal spirit. It could be seen through various community activities that are held almost every week. The majority of the activities consist of group dining events, where women are typically involved in cooking and cleaning tasks. Such practices have indirectly extended women’s roles in the social sphere, as they are expected to show contribution in cooking and cleaning during various community events.

Since women in Javanese are being portrayed through the term “konco wingking” that confines women to domestic roles, they are often expected to contribute to community activities by cooking and cleaning even when they are not the primary organizers of the event. This strongly implies traditional Javanese practices that are still being conducted in both villages, Pagaruyung and Sibuk. The common tradition that they usually do is “Rewang” which refers to mutual assistance during communal events. In Rewang, Javanese women hold an important role that becomes the determinants of the success of the event based on the meals they have provided from cooperative food preparation. Rewang is a celebratory or communal activity in Javanese culture that involves women helping each other to prepare food and decorations. This implies how women hold significant legitimacy as determinants of the success of Rewang, regardless of their busy lives as housewives (Budiono in Winarsih, 2023).

Based on the observation during the research, both Lia and Wuliyati actively participate in Rewang as they feel a strong sense of social obligation to fulfill their roles within the Javanese community. During Rewang, they join other women in preparing food, working together to cook and serve meals for the guests. Apart from cooking, they also carry the responsibility to clean the dirty plates after the communal events are over. While Rewang refers to the preparation activities preceding a communal event, the event themselves may vary, such as Wirid, Among-Among, or Hajatan. During the fieldwork for this research, most Rewang were held in preparation for Wirid. For instance, observation during research shows that Lia actively participates in Rewang and Wirid. Wirid is a religious practice that involves recitation that being perform as a routine in the community (Malichatun, 2025). Besides considering it as a social obligation, she sees communal events in the village as a warm moment to spend with the neighbors. She enjoys the conversation she’s having with others and the moment to eat together during any communal events which goes as following interview,

“Kalo saya malah senang sih mbak ikut kegiatan gini. Itung-itung rehat dari kerjaan” (“For me, I actually enjoying joining activities like this. Consider it as a nice

break from work”)(Lia, interview, April 25, 2025)



Figure 3. Rewang at Pagaruyung village, Javanese transmigrant women, including Lia, preparing meals for communal event

In comparison with Lia, Wuliyati tends to see communal events or any Javanese traditional practices as a social obligation that she needs to fulfill. She considers participation in communal activities as an important aspect of a Javanese woman's role. As the wife of a respected village head, she feels a strong sense of responsibility and believes that her absence from communal events might disappoint others. Therefore, she always makes time to help others with cooking and cleaning during Rewang. As she explained during the interview,

“Gak enak lah mbak kalo gak dateng Rewang, kan saya dikenal disini” (“It wouldn't feel right if I didn't come help in Rewang since I'm well known around here”) (Wuliyati, interview, April, 16th 2025)



Figure 4. Wirid at Sibua Village, Javanese transmigrant women, including Wuliyati, eating together after praying

Based on a previous study, not attending Rewang can be a serious issue for Javanese women. It may negatively affect their social relation within the community, as they may be perceived as failing to fulfill their social obligations. When someone does not show their presence during Rewang, the rest of the community will likely reciprocate by not attending or supporting such similar events hosted by that person (Winarsih, 2023). This not only applies to Rewang but also to other communal events, reflecting a strong expectation towards women's role within the Javanese community.

2. Agency Practice of Transmigrant Javanese Women

Lia and Wuliyati, as women with multiple roles in public, domestic, and social spheres, do not merely perform their roles passively but also navigate them through the agency they possess. In the context of multiple roles, women's agency in negotiating

these roles is often shaped by the cultural values they uphold. Sherry B. Ortner interprets women's agency as their ability to act and make decisions daily. The agency provides women with opportunities to navigate and negotiate existing socio-cultural practices they have implemented throughout their lives. Lia and Wuliyati exercise their agency through decision making, setting priorities, and managing their time to navigate multiple roles. Despite being constrained by the cultural values, they remain actively exercise their agency by making independent choices. This indicates how agencies take part in the negotiation of multiple roles that are carried out by the owners of Batik Sibuk and Songket Pagaruyung.

Ortner (2006) describes the factors that shape agency through intentionality, cultural constructions, and systems of power. She explains that in addition to cultural constructions and power relations, intentionality, which refers to an individual's internal conditions, is also one of the factors that shapes the formation of agency. In managing multiple roles, the owners of Batik Sibuk and Songket Pagaruyung also involve the factor of intentionality, which is demonstrated through strategies or plans aimed at achieving a balance between household, work, and social obligations.

Ortner defines agency as an individual's socially grounded capacity to act and make choices, which depends on their context and position within cultural and social structure. This implies that agency may vary between individuals depending on their cultural context. As transmigrant Javanese women, Lia and Wuliyati remain strongly tied to domestic roles despite their multiple roles in the public and social sphere. Regardless of how many roles they take on, they are still expected to manage domestic tasks. This reflects how both of them are constrained by Javanese social norms that confine domestic responsibilities primarily to women, highlighting how cultural construction plays a significant role in shaping one's agency.

The Javanese cultural values held by Lia and Wuliyati are demonstrated through the traditional practices they continue to uphold within their daily lives and community involvement. Despite being a transmigrant that lives far away from their place of origin, Lia, Wuliyati, and their local community actively maintain customs such as Rewang and Wirid. As Lia described in the interview,

"Ya disini semuanya masih ngelakuin tradisi-tradisi Jawa mbak terutama kegiatan makan bareng-bareng. Kan walaupun di Riau, satu desa isinya transmigran dari Jawa" ("Here, everyone still practice Javanese traditions especially activities like eating together. Even though we're in Riau, the whole village of Pagaruyung is filled by Javanese transmigrants") (Lia, interview, February, 25, 2025)

The persistence of Javanese cultural values in Lia and Wuliyati show how they remain attached to domestic roles. However, Lia and Wuliyati's participation in the public sphere demonstrates that, as a woman, they are able to maintain their cultural values while also contributing to their family's economic well-being. This reflects the way they negotiate and enact their agency within cultural constraints. Although Lia and Wuliyati are both influenced by similar Javanese cultural norms, they exercise their agency differently, as each individual expresses their form of agency in distinct ways. In particular, Wuliyati's agency is also influenced by the Islamic norms she has internalized throughout her life. As she described in the interview,

"Saya dari dulu diajarin kalau di Islam, perempuan harus nurut sama suami. Jadi kalau suami minta dimasakin ya saya harus nurut sebagai isteri. Dulu saya sempat takut kalau saya gak bisa jalanin peran ini tapi sekarang lebih santai" ("I was taught that in Islam, a wife should obey her husband. So, if my husband asks me to cook, I have to obey as his wife. I used to be afraid I wouldn't fulfilled this role but now I'm more

relaxed about it”)(Wuliyati, interview, April, 16, 2025)

In exploring women's agency, it is essential to understand the subjectivity that enables their agency. Ortnner emphasizes that agency is shaped by the subjectivity of the agent, which includes the individual's views, feelings, goals, desires, and concerns as a result of cultural constructions and power relations. Subjectivity is important in acknowledging how individuals become aware of their interests or needs in order to express their agency. In the context of transmigrant Javanese women's multiple roles, understanding their subjectivity is essential to explore how it shapes their agency in managing the multiple roles they have. Lia and Wuliyati's subjectivities shape how they respond to their multiple roles, revealing both similarities and differences in their internal perspectives. Both of them are fully aware of their responsibilities within domestic sphere. They recognize that social expectations and Javanese cultural values have positioned them in roles that revolve around domestic responsibilities.

In addition to their awareness of domestic roles, they are also attentive to their roles as business owners in the public sphere. Since both of them are business owners, both share common concerns about completing orders and ensuring the satisfaction of their customers, despite the challenges their multiple roles often pose to their work. However, certain goals and desires push them to keep up with their multiple roles. Lia possesses a strong desire to improve her family's well fare and support them to meet their needs. While Wuliyati also aims to support herself and her family independently, she holds a stronger aspiration to empower women, particularly her batik employees who work in her small batik business.

Drawing from Lia and Wuliyati's subjective experience in navigating their multiple roles, intentionality emerges as a key factor that shapes women's agency. Intentionality is the internal drive that enables individuals to strategically exercise their agency within a specific cultural and social context. It serves as the foundation of women's agency in decision-making and goal-setting. In the case of transmigrant Javanese women navigating overlapping roles, intentionality is reflected in strategic actions such as decision making, setting priorities, and managing time efficiently. These strategies enable them to maintain balance across their roles in public, domestic, and social spheres. Both Lia and Wuliyati place their work as a top priority. However, this prioritization is not fixed, as it shifts depending on the urgency of each role they occupy. For Lia, her children often take precedence; when they require her attention, she postpones her work and compensates for the lost time by working late at night or continuing on another day. In some cases, she seeks support from family members to look after her children while she works on her batik orders.

On the other hand, Wuliyati often prioritizes certain communal events in the village as she's fully aware that her role as the wife of the village head requires active participation in community affairs. To navigate her overlapping roles, Wuliyati sets specific targets for each stage of the batik-making process and frequently divides tasks among her employees. However, agency cannot always be fully exercised at certain moments. For instance, Wuliyati sometimes has to sacrifice the time allocated for batik production to attend *rewang* because she has a sense of obligation to meet the community's expectations, despite her workload. Similarly, Lia's ability to exercise agency is often constrained by culture and existing power structures. This is evident in her limited participation in social events or business-related training outside her town. Her domestic responsibilities, especially caring for her children alongside her husband's disapproval of her traveling far from home, significantly limit her actions and choices. As Lia described in the interview,

“Sekarang saya udah jarang pergi karena susah dapet izin dari suami. Suami pingin saya ngurusin anak aja di rumah” (Nowadays, I rarely go out because it’s hard to get permission from my husband. He wants me to just take care of the children at home), (Lia, interview, April, 19, 2025)

These constraints highlight how women’s agency is negotiated within the cultural expectations and structural limitations they face. It also shows that Lia and Wuliyati is not the only agent in their decision-making process, as other agent also involves in their social space with their own intention and varying degrees of power. When these agents interact, it will create a power relation within the social field. In the context of Javanese transmigrant women, Lia and Wuliyati are often positioned as dominated one whereas key decisions are frequently in the hands of their husbands. This reflects what Ortner suggests that one form of women’s subordination is evident through social rules or system that constrained women from being a part of particular areas of society (R. Jon McGee & Warms, 2024). This could be seen in Lia and Wuliyati’s experiences where they often need their husband’s permission to go out or take part in activities outside household, even to start their current business, they had to gain their husband’s approval.

In the public sphere, Lia and Wuliyati have increased autonomy to negotiate their agency within existing power relations, as their roles as business owners grant them more authority and control over their business. Yet, their presence in the public sphere does not necessarily mean that they can exercise their agency freely. Lia and Wuliyati’s role in public sphere as business owners reflect their position as both owners and workers in the textile industry whereas Lia in songket weaving while Wuliyati in batik production. Their role in this field is shaped by socio-cultural constructions that associate women with traits such as persistence and patience, which are more likely ideal for textile work. Society often assumes that women are better suited for jobs involving repetitive task and attention to details, skills that unconsciously linked to domestic works (Anggia, 2022).

Ortner categorizes agency into two forms: the agency of project and the agency of power. The agency of project refers to individual actions motivated by intentions that are culturally constructed. This conceptualization suggests that individuals are shaped by the socio-cultural dynamics that influence their subjectivity within society. The agency exercised by Lia and Wuliyati takes the form of agency of project. In the case of Batik Sibuk and Songket Pagaruyung owners, the way they navigate and manage their multiple roles reflects a form of culturally informed decision-making shaped by their internalized values and intentions, demonstrating what Ortner conceptualizes as the agency of project. Women’s agency in this context reflects how women do not merely accept multiple roles passively, but they also adapt and develop strategies to achieve balance between domestic, public, and social spheres within the existing cultural system.

CONCLUSIONS

In modern times, Javanese women remain to be associated with domestic responsibilities despite their active participation in the public sphere. The enduring influence of “Konco Wingking” concept continues to shape women’s roles within domestic spheres including cooking, cleaning, child rearing, and attending to husband’s needs. In addition, Javanese women are also expected to actively participate in communal activities, particularly that involving cooking and cleaning as part of traditional practices they are expected to uphold. Communal activities such as Rewang

which require women to perform domestic responsibilities outside their private household reflects the expansion of women's roles into the broader social sphere. Consequently, women are obliged to juggle multiple roles as mothers, housewife, business owners, and active participants in local traditional practices. These overlapping roles are not only experienced by women in Java but also by transmigrant Javanese women in Riau such as Lia of Lia Songket Pagaruyung and Wuliyati of Batik Sibua. Both women experience the strain of simultaneously performing multiple roles, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion. Fulfilling each role optimally proves challenging, often resulting in certain responsibilities being set aside or left unfulfilled. However, they possess the ability to navigate and negotiate these roles through agency.

Lia and Wuliyati are not passive agents, they actively navigate and negotiate their multiple roles through agency rooted in subjectivity and shaped by intentionality that they have. Lia and Wuliyati's subjectivities are reflected in their awareness of the roles they occupy within the domestic, public, and social sphere as they carry out as a natural part of their lives. This subjectivity shapes their intentionality which takes the form of women's agency. Lia and Wuliyati's intentionality arises from their desire to support their families, particularly in Wuliyati's case, to empower people around her especially the women employed in her batik business. The form of their intentionality is reflected in strategic actions such as setting priorities, managing time efficiently, and making decisions. Each action is decided based on the urgency and demands of the role they occupy. For Lia, her children often take precedence while Wuliyati tends to prioritize certain communal events.

However, it is important to remember that agency cannot always be fully exercised due to cultural norms and existing power structures that may constrain it. Lia and Wuliyati face these constraints while exercising their agency, evident in the strong influence of Javanese cultural norms and the presence of their husbands, who often make decisions on their behalf. Although Lia and Wuliyati are often positioned as dominated parties, they successfully negotiate their roles in the public sphere as their status as business owners grants them greater authority and control over their business. Overall, the agency exercised by Lia and Wuliyati can be categorized as agency of project, reflecting how women actively adapt and develop strategic acts to achieve their goals and intentions within the constraints of the existing cultural system.

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