

## Chapter 7

# Between Care Work and Academic Work: Indonesian Female Academics' Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic

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### A. COVID-19, Gender and Academia

The COVID-19 pandemic and its policy responses have differently impacted men and women globally. Women are more vulnerable to the social and economic impacts of the pandemic (United Nations, 2020). These impacts include reduced economic income, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services, increased unpaid care work, and gender-based violence (United Nations, 2020; Hidayatulloh, 2021). Regrettably, women's organizations across Europe and Central Asia reported that women and girls are widely excluded from the COVID-19 recovery responses (UN Women, 2020).

The Indonesian government officially announced the first case of COVID-19 on March 2, 2020. In responding to the national health crisis caused by the pandemic, President Joko Widodo (known as

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Jokowi) introduced Large Scale Social Restrictions (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/PSBB*) on March 31, 2020 (Cabinet Secretariat, 2020). Since then, Indonesian women have faced more significant social and economic consequences of the pandemic than men. For example, 83% of 4,144 Indonesian migrant workers who returned home in April 2020 were women (MoWECIP Indonesia, 2020). Furthermore, the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan/Komnas Perempuan*) reported a significant increase in the number of complaints concerning domestic violence (Komnas Perempuan, 2021). Many have associated the increase in gender-based violence with the lockdown measure imposed by the government. This situation demonstrates that the pandemic has widened pre-existing gender inequalities, and its policy responses have reproduced other forms of gender inequalities.

This chapter focuses on a particular group of women who are often overlooked in policy developments: women in academia. The literature on gender (in)equality in academia has shown that although women have made tremendous progress in higher education and are now acquiring more degrees than men, they remain underrepresented in academic leadership positions (Fitzgerald, 2014; Alcalde & Subramaniam, 2020; Farmer, 2022). At the time of the pandemic, recent studies have found that the pandemic has forced female faculty to ‘face a short-term reorganization of care and work time’ (Minello, 2020). More importantly, the pandemic also impacted their academic productivity, which in the long run, could affect their careers (Yildirim & Elsen-Ziya, 2020). It is reported that women academics have submitted fewer academic articles during the COVID-19 crisis, while the submission from their male counterparts has increased up to 50% (Frederickson, 2020; Kitchener, 2020; Squazzoni et al., 2021).

In this chapter, I explore the experience of female academics in Indonesia in navigating the impact of the pandemic after the PSBB was put in place. To do so, I draw upon my previous research conducted between March and May 2020, when the first wave of COVID-19 hit Indonesia. The research from which this chapter is

derived employed a feminist methodology (Hesse-Biber, 2015) and used a mix-method approach (Hodgkin, 2008; Jenskin et al., 2019), combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. To collect data, I conducted online surveys and an online group discussion. Online survey questions were designed to investigate the gendered nature of work (both care work and academic work) and to understand how policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (in this case, the PSBB) affect Indonesian female academics. There were 110 survey responses from Indonesian female academics with diverse backgrounds regarding of their ages, marital and parental statuses, geographical locations, and types of home organizations (public universities, private universities, and research institutes). Meanwhile, an online group discussion was conducted to understand how Indonesian female academics felt or thought about their experience during the pandemic. The discussion also explored the tension between care work and academic work and the hindrance to the career advancement of Indonesian female academics. There were 13 female academic respondents participated in the online focus group. Throughout this chapter, the respondents' identities are pseudonymized (i.e., P1, P2, P3...P13).

Two important insights can be learned from this chapter by exploring the pandemic's impact on female academics in Indonesia. First, the pandemic has increased the tension between care work and academic work among Indonesian female academics. Second, the pandemic has exacerbated female academics' challenges in advancing their career. It is argued in this chapter that while these gender inequalities existed even before the pandemic due to the pervasive patriarchal culture in Indonesian society, the PSBB imposed by the government has reproduced other forms of gender inequalities among Indonesian female academics. This policy measure has resulted in their reorganization of work (between care work and academic work) at home, increasing their care work responsibilities and decreasing academic productivity.

The remainder of this chapter is structured into five sections. Firstly, it reviews relevant literature by engaging with the existing feminist literature on care work and the studies on gender (in)equality in academia before and during the pandemic. The second and third sections discuss the diverse experience of Indonesian female academics during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the responses to online survey questions and focus groups. Then it is followed by a discussion on how the PSBB has reproduced gender inequalities among Indonesian female academics. Lastly, the conclusion highlights the contribution of this chapter and presents a critical reflection on what we can do to mitigate the gendered impacts of the pandemic on Indonesian female academics.

## **B. Care Work and Gender (In)equality in Academia**

In this section, I draw upon West and Zimmerman's (1987) seminal work entitled 'Doing Gender' and engage with feminist scholarship on care work and gender (in)equality in academia before and during the pandemic. This chapter considers the concept of 'doing gender' relevant to understanding care work and the division of labor. West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 126) defined doing gender as involving "a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures." In a patriarchal society where men with their masculinity subordinate women with their femininity, care work has always been associated with women. The women's traditional gender roles naturalize care work as women's moral duties towards their families (Folbre, 2011). In this context, 'doing gender' at home for women in a patriarchal society is to do care work as it is a legitimate way of being a woman. If women fail to perform care work or do gender appropriately, they as individuals—not the patriarchal system—may be called to account. In this context, feminist literature on care work defines *care* as "a specific gendered practice that is based on gender norms and manifests in the asymmetrical distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women" (Schmitt et al., 2016, p. 2).

With this in mind, Kabeer (2016) argued that (paid and unpaid) care work is linked with the existing capitalist economic system and continues to disadvantage women. In a similar vein, Agenjo-Calderón and Gálvez-Muñoz (2019) argued that unpaid care work and domestic labor, which women predominantly undertake, are embedded in the capitalist system of reproduction. They lead to gender inequality in the labor market and the gender pay gap. Therefore, feminist economists advocate the reconceptualization of the economy and put the care economy at the center of theorization (Schmitt et al., 2016). The recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work are crucial to addressing the gender employment gap and gender pay gap (Elson, 2017).

In the context of Indonesia, the New Order era successfully engineered women's traditional gender roles as self-sacrificing, submissive wives and mothers, which Suryakusuma (1987) termed 'State Ibuism.' State Ibuism is a gender state ideology through which the notion of *kodrat wanita* (women's ideal/nature) was propagated (Suryakusuma, 1987; Wieringa, 2003). It normatively regulates women to submit to their husbands as wives and mothers, characterized by unpaid care work. Although the New Order era ended more than two decades ago, the legacy of State Ibuism remains evident in Indonesian society (Suryakusuma 2012; Wieringa 2015).

Considered women's nature, unpaid care work is a reality for Indonesian women, including those working in formal sectors, public services, and academia. However, it has been argued that women's unpaid care work becomes one of the barriers to women's career advancement in public services (McLaren et al., 2019). Similarly, female academics, particularly in science departments, face a dilemma in choosing their career over family responsibilities, leading to their underrepresentation in senior academic and full professor positions (Monroe et al., 2008). Although the gender gap between male and female academics is relatively tiny in Indonesia, 55.8% and 44.2%, respectively (Pusdatin Kemenristekdikti Indonesia, 2018), Kholis (2012) found that Indonesian female academics are widely underrepresented

in managerial and leadership positions. Additionally, female professors only accounted for 15% of the total professors in Indonesia. Kholis (2017) argued that female faculty face several barriers in advancing their careers: family-related barriers, including family responsibilities (care work) and spousal restriction, and organizational-related barriers, including gender bias and discrimination.

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the COVID-19 pandemic is a global pandemic, extensive research has examined its gendered impacts. While the UN (2020) reported the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, resulting in widening gender inequalities, Alon et al.'s (2020) preliminary study argued that the crisis of COVID-19 may eventually promote gender equality in the labor market. In their argument, the potential long-term implementation of flexible working arrangements in business sectors and the increased fathers' role in childcare at home as many fathers work from home may close the unequal division of labor in domestic work and childcare.

However, Alon et al.'s (2020) findings were not corroborated in the recent scholarship on gender (in)equality in academia during the pandemic (Chitsamatanga & Malinga, 2021; Das et al., 2021; Minello et al., 2021; Ipe et al., 2021; Parlak et al., 2021; Pereira, 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2021; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). Sutherland et al. (2021) found that the development of many universities' COVID-19 policy responses in Australia has given little attention to the gendered dynamics of the crises. The pandemic and gender-blind policy responses from academic institutions resulted in the widening gender inequalities in academia. The emerging literature in this field found that the most reported challenge for female academics is incompatibly demanding domestic duties and professional responsibilities. Consequently, their academic productivity—often measured by the number of publications—decreases significantly compared to male academics (Ipe et al., 2021; Parlak et al., 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2021). Moreover, academic mothers experienced more severe impacts of the pandemic as they must take on more childcare duties (Minello

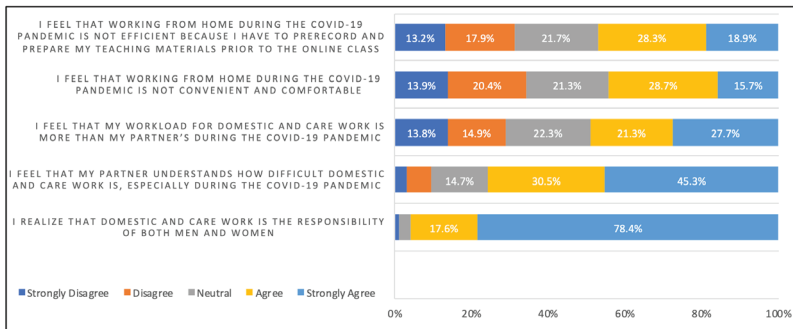
et al., 2021; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). It is further impacted by new online learning modes that require academics to adapt to the new system and prepare online teaching materials (Chitsamatanga & Malinga, 2021). Other challenges facing female academics as the potential consequences of the pandemic are mental health issues and difficulties in advancing their future careers (Das et al., 2021). These studies linked the impacts of the pandemic on female academics with lockdown or social restriction policies that resulted in the closure of childcare services and the impossibility of benefiting from informal care.

Despite the increasing number of research revealing the severe impacts of the pandemic on female academics, Pereira (2021) reminded gender scholars to be more careful in conducting research on gender (in)equality in academia by not reproducing some problematic assumptions about gender and academic work. She also highlighted many possibilities on how the pandemic can help us imagine and transform the new normal of academic labor. Miller (2021), through her reflection from the lens of the ethics of care, elaborated on how the pandemic has enabled her to positively develop caring relationships at home and reallocate her time for household responsibilities. Similarly, another female academic saw the potential of the pandemic to harness self-compassion and create resistance against the existing neoliberal universities (Newcomb, 2021). Meanwhile, Arnold (2020) described that creative writing had become a cathartic exercise for academics during the pandemic as the members of this community of practice engaged personally and professionally with one another in more meaningful ways.

By building on this literature, this chapter explores how Indonesian female academics experience the first pandemic wave during the PSBB by focusing on these two questions: (1) Does the PSBB increase the tension between care work and academic work among Indonesian female academics? (2) Does the PSBB further hinder the future career advancement of Indonesian female academics?

### C. Indonesian Female Academics and COVID-19 Pandemic

In this section, I will show that Indonesian female academics have diversely experienced the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. To do so, this section discusses the online survey responses from 110 Indonesian female academic respondents to explore whether the PSBB increases the tension between care work and academic work among Indonesian female academics and whether it further hinders their future career advancement. Regarding the first question, I operationalize the conflict between care work and academic work among the Indonesian female academics by looking at the recognition and redistribution of care work in households and the perception and experience of the respondents in performing their academic work when working from home during the PSBB. It is important to note that the term “care work” in this chapter describes both domestic works and caring for children, the elderly, and other dependents in households. The online survey responses on the tension between care work and academic work among Indonesian female academic respondents are presented in Figure 7.1.



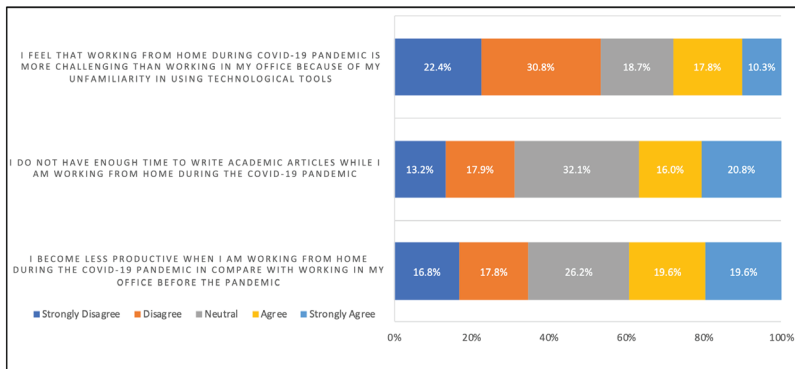
**Figure 7.1** The Tension Between Care Work and Academic Work Among Indonesian Female Academics

From Figure 7.1, almost all respondents (96%) recognized that care work is the responsibility of both men and women. Similarly,



respondents generally agreed (30.5%) and strongly agreed (45.3%) that their partners understand how difficult care work is, particularly during the pandemic. However, despite the recognition of care work, the redistribution of care work remains a challenge. While 28.7% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that they have more workload for care work than their partner's, almost half of the respondents (49% agreed and strongly agreed combined) claimed the opposite. This number resonated with a significant number of respondents (44.4%) who agreed and strongly agreed that working from home as an academician during the pandemic is not convenient and comfortable. However, 34.3% of them disagreed and strongly disagreed. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents (47.2%) agreed and strongly agreed that working from home is inefficient because they have to prerecord and prepare the materials beforehand. Most of these respondents were those who felt the inconvenience and discomfort of working from home.

The second question focuses on whether the PSBB further hinders the career advancement of female academics in Indonesia. Three different yet overlapping factors relevant to female academics' career advancement are considered in this chapter: academic productivity (i.e., teaching, research, and engagement), the capacity to write academic articles, and the adaptability of using technological tools, considering that technology has become an essential instrument in learning and teaching delivery during the pandemic. The online survey responses on the hindrance to female academics' career advancement are presented in Figure 7.2.



**Figure 7.2** Hindrance to Career Advancement Among Indonesian Female Academics

As illustrated in Figure 7.2, it can be identified that, regarding the academic productivity of female academics, 39.2% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they are less productive when working from home during the pandemic. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed was slightly lower than the former, 34.6%. A similar trend can also be identified regarding female academics' ability to write scholarly articles when working from home. The percentage of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed that they do not have time to produce academic papers was relatively higher than those who disagreed and strongly disagreed, 36.8% and 31.1%, respectively. Meanwhile, regarding the adaptability of using technology to perform their academic work, more than half of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed (53.2%) that they are unfamiliar with the technology for online teaching, and 28.1% of respondents felt the opposite.

The statistical data presented above provides us with an initial glimpse of how female academics in Indonesia have diversely experienced the pandemic. Generally, the PSBB, which required Indonesian female academics to work from home, has increased tension between care work and academic work despite a high level of partners' recognition of care work values. This gendered experience of Indonesian

female academics during the pandemic corresponds with the existing studies on how the pandemic has increased conflict between care work and academic work among female academics in Turkey (Parlak et al., 2021) and South Africa (Chitsamatanga & Malinga, 2021). In addition, the heightening tension between career and family responsibilities during the pandemic would potentially hinder women's career advancement during the pandemic because it reduces their academic productivity (McLaren et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2008). It is evident that the pandemic has reduced female academics' productivity, measured by the number of papers submitted to journals and publications (Das et al., 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2021). As Chitsamatanga and Malinga's (2021) study suggests, another reason for their decreased academic productivity during the pandemic is the adoption of new online learning modes. However, among Indonesian female academic respondents, there was a pretty diverse response regarding the use of technology as the primary tool to perform academic work during the pandemic. These diverse responses are potentially caused by the diverse ages and geographical locations of respondents. Indeed, a recent study by the International Telecommunication Union (2016) found that age and geographical location (rural-urban) become essential factors in the gender digital divide. In the following section, I will delve into the diversity of COVID-19 experience among Indonesian female academics.

#### **D. Understanding the Diversity of COVID-19 Experience among Female Academics**

By using insights from the online focus group, this section zooms into the intersection between gender and the diversity of participants' marital and parental status, age, and geographical locations to understand how Indonesian female academics diversely experience the COVID-19 pandemic during the PSBB. Two themes evident in the analysis of the online focus group are presented here: the reorganization of work at home and challenges for academic career advancement. Each of these themes addresses the two questions asked in this chapter.

## 1. Reorganization of work at home

Most participants reflected that working from home has forced them to face a sudden reorganization of care work and academic work at home. This reorganization of work occurred because, as my interlocutor (P1) explained, academic work and care work are situated in one site: home. She compared her experience with the situation before the pandemic: "...without working from home, everything [care work and academic work] seems manageable. After I finished my work in the office, I returned home. I can do the remaining house chores, which my partners and I did not share." Another participant (P7) expressed that relocating their academic work into their domestic space without having a personal office at home made her experience work-life unbalance during the beginning of the PSBB.

My respondents' experiences re-organizing their work at home during the pandemic vary depending on their marital and parental status and their capacity to employ domestic workers. For example, some married participants claimed that their partners recognize that care work is their shared responsibility due to similar educational and professional backgrounds. However, many shared similar experiences: they had more care work burdens than their spouses. For example, two participants (P2 and P9) expressed in the following way:

Although my partner knows that domestic work is our responsibility and should be done together, working from home brings our academic work home. Moreover, when working from home, I find it difficult to focus on my academic work because there is always a time when I realize that I still have household responsibilities. (P2)

I felt exhausted when I first started working from home because I had more work, such as cooking and preparing meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, which I was not used to before the pandemic. My spouse and I are not used to having breakfast, and we always have lunch on campus. I only live with my husband, so I occasionally cook because our campus provides food for lunch, and we often bring the food home, so I don't even need to cook for dinner. Now, because the campus is closed, I must automatically spare my time to cook. (P9)

From the previous two stories, I highlight that the pandemic has shaped different realities for academics, particularly women. It can be observed from P2's story demonstrates that academic work before the pandemic was perceived as something distant from, or outside of, their private sphere. Meanwhile, P9's story depicts a more dramatic change in academia's life after the lockdown was put in place. Before the pandemic, she minimally performed women's traditional gender role as a caregiver in her family (i.e., preparing and cooking meals) because other people or institutions (in this context, the university where both she and her husband worked) have compensated the domestic division of labor. Since the PSBB was implemented, the so-called 'new normal' was more about re-enacting traditional gender norms in their family, resulting in the increased amount of (unpaid) care work female academics had to bear.

However, the increased amount of care work they perform varies depending on their marital and parental status. The married respondents who did not have children (P8 and P10) felt less burdened because they did not have children to care for. Meanwhile, academic mothers expressed that they were overwhelmed with the amount of work (care work and academic work) they did at once (P1, P2, P4, P5, and P9). The reorganization of work at home was very challenging for an academic mother who hired a domestic worker before the pandemic. She described her experience in the following way:

Prior to the pandemic, I employed a domestic worker. Nevertheless, because of the current situation, she returned home. That leads to the dramatic reorganization of work at my home. However, this situation does not change the whole tradition at home. My kids, who usually do their activities outside the house, cannot adapt well to the pandemic when they must stay home because they usually have someone to assist them. Also, my husband is a strict person who assumes that care work is a responsibility of a mother and a wife. (P4)

P4's experience demonstrates entrenched patriarchal norms within family structures in which women's primary role is to be good wives for their husbands and good mothers for their children.

Following her previous story, she added that she felt like a ‘public enemy’ at home as she did not conform to the norm.

I feel like I am their public enemy. I always feel under pressure when sharing domestic work with my kids, such as tidying their bedrooms. They are not used to it because our domestic workers usually do it for them. So, they often shout at me... I also feel that I don’t get enough appreciation for what I have done at home. I, honestly, can’t cook, but since there is no one helping me to cook during the pandemic, I need to do it myself. And knowing that I can’t really cook but still do it anyway, a warm appreciation from them like ‘the food is yummy’ from my family would make me feel comfortable at home. (P4)

The perception of P4 about herself as a public enemy shows that women who fail to conform to the gender norm that has pervasively confined their bodies in a domestic realm would be called to account. Furthermore, she added that even to do her academic work, she expressed that “a gaze from my surroundings simply speaks to me this is home, this is not your office.”

However, P4’s experience of re-organizing work at home was not shared by another academic mother (P5). For example, P5 shared that performing care work has made her happier.

Since I work from home, it is not easy to manage my time for academic work because I find it more interesting to cook, clean the house, and teach my kids. However, I am happy psychologically because I am satisfied when the house is clean and everyone at home eats healthy food. I am also happy because I can assist my kids with their studies. I feel that I have achieved something, although it is not for my academic career. (P5)

The diverse experience of academic mothers (P4 and P5) coping with the pandemic shows a need to understand their social trajectories, particularly in navigating between making good parents for their children and performing care work (doing gender) for their families during the PSBB. Another important note on ‘doing gender’ is demonstrated by the married interlocutor without children (P10). She claimed that she chose to do domestic work instead of trusting her partner to do it due to her upbringing.

While married female academics—with and without children—experienced an increasing burden in care work, the single female academics respondents who lived by themselves generally felt that working from home changed how they performed academic work. However, it did not necessarily increase the amount of care work (P7, P11, P12, P13). P13, for instance, shared that she was unaware of the time when conducting her research at home. The reason for this is, she stated, “there was no time limitation when I work from home as if I was expected to work constantly without taking any breaks.” Meanwhile, another single interlocutor (P3) who lived with her parents and siblings claimed that she shared similar experiences with married respondents about the increased amount of care work and believed that care work should also be shared equally among family members.

The main issue shared by most of the respondents, regardless of their marital and parental status, was how re-organizing work at home was stressful and harmful to their mental health. The strategies used by respondents to cope with stress were varied, ranging from exercising in the morning, staying connected with friends, and doing their hobbies such as learning other languages online and online shopping. The following theme discusses how female academic participants feel about the impact of the pandemic on their career advancement.

## **2. Challenges for academic career advancement**

The second theme of the online focus group is challenging academic career advancement. It is also important to highlight how the participants defined their academic careers. For example, one participant (P3) distinguished between academic career (assistant professor, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor) and leadership rank (i.e., head of a department, dean, rector, etc.). P3 described that the former was adversely affected because the progress of academic positions relies upon academic achievements, including conducting research and publishing journal articles. Meanwhile, the latter was challenging to measure, given that acquiring leadership positions requires

long procedural processes. Under this second theme, I particularly highlight the challenges for female academics in advancing their academic positions.

As discussed above, female academics experienced an increased burden in care work and, therefore, reduced academic productivity central to their careers, including those still pursuing their doctorate degrees. P4 expressed this point in the following:

These care work burdens reduce my productivity as an academic, especially in writing articles. Moreover, I am currently still pursuing my Ph.D., and since working from home, I do not make any progress on my Ph.D. dissertation, not even one page, because I can't focus.

Apart from the increased burden of care work, some respondents (P6, P11, P4, P7, P2) explained how the pandemic dramatically changed how they conducted research and teaching, primarily because of the reduced human interaction and communication and the difficulties in adapting with new technologies.

The work-from-home policy limits human interaction and communication, significantly affecting our research projects. We designed our fieldwork and were forced to change it into online interviews and desktop research. We experience difficulties using new technologies, which challenges our research project. (P6)

In addition, P11, as a researcher, expressed that the pandemic has changed the research agenda of her home organization to focus more on the pandemic, resulting in the delay of the completion of her main research project. Adding to P6's statement, P4 pointed out that the reduced intensity of face-to-face human interaction and communication among academic colleagues consequently decreases the motivation that she gained from looking at the progress made by her colleagues.

From my experience so far, I perceive one thing as 'dangerous' when we work from home. It is that we can't see the progress made by our colleagues. As an academic, I need to be physically present in the office



and know what other colleagues are doing to motivate me to continue doing research and improve my capacity. (P4)

On another challenge, which is the difficulties adapting to new technologies, P7 and P2 described their experience when they conducted online teaching.

Because of the pandemic, now teaching and learning processes are moved online. And we, as academics, also must adapt to new technologies. Before the pandemic, e-learning was something that we did flexibly four times in one semester. However, now, it is the current more of teaching. I am not used to operating e-learning features alone, and now I have to do it no matter what. (P7)

I am not a tech-savvy person. So, I have no idea about Zoom or Google Classroom when I need to conduct my class online. Before this pandemic happened, I conducted my class conventionally. It forces me to adapt, and my husband assists me in using these online applications effectively. But, because I live in rural areas in Maluku, having a zoom meeting like this with my students is extremely difficult, considering some of my students have a limited internet connection. Consequently, I do not deliver my materials through video conferences, so I just use Google Classroom to distribute my teaching materials. (P2)

Reflecting on P2's online teaching experience, I highlight the technological divide between men and women and urban and rural areas. Such a divide was also evident during the online focus group because some participants struggled using Zoom due to unfamiliarity with the software and the unstable internet connection.

While these stories show how the pandemic has impacted female academics in conducting their research and teaching and thus hindering career advancement, two participants (P7, P10) shared more positive stories. They shared their story about gaining new skills in operating new technologies and obtaining non-academic opportunities for their development, including attending online workshops and webinars as participants and speakers, calling the pandemic 'a blessing in disguise.'

The pandemic has told us [academics] how to face the current disruption era of industrial revolution 4.0. that requires us to be technology-savvy and transform the way we teach and do things using technology. It is also needed to know the characteristic of the millennial generation, who are now more and more advanced in operating technologies. (P10)

For me, there are some positive sides to the pandemic for my career, not in academia. As I am also a trained practitioner and consultant, there are many online learning platforms that I can use to make myself becoming more productive. It is a blessing in disguise. Soft skills, such as technological skills, are something that I gained due to the pandemic. So, I start sharing my knowledge and expertise with other people [the non-academic audience] using these video conference platforms. (P7)

Considering the participants' diversity, the two themes presented above—reorganization of work at home and challenges for academic career advancement—help understand better how Indonesian women in academia experience the pandemic. From here, I found that the experience of female academics in navigating the tension between care work and academic work during the beginning of the pandemic was diverse, with academic mothers as the most affected group and single female academics who live by themselves as the least affected. The implementation of PSBB that required female academics to work from home and the closure of universities and schools has forced female academics to re-organize their work at home. The lockdown re-enacted traditional gender norms, increasing the tension between academic work and care work among female academics, especially those who live with their family members—either the nuclear family or extended family. However, the reorganization of their work was perceived differently by them, entailing their different social trajectories.

I identified that the escalating tension between care work and academic work at home reduces the performance of female academics, especially in writing and publishing journal articles or conducting research. Apart from this, the PSBB implementation, which limits face-to-face human interaction and communication and the difficulties in utilizing new technologies, also contributes to

female academics' challenges in advancing their career. However, the pandemic also provided female academics with 'a blessing in disguise' such as obtaining new skills in operating new technologies and non-academic opportunities for their development. Having delved into the diversity of female academics' experiences during the pandemic, the following section discusses the PSBB and its gendered dynamic among Indonesian female academics.

## **E. The PSBB and Its Gendered Impact among Indonesian Female Academics**

While lockdown measures (the PSBB) have unprecedented economic impacts, this chapter has demonstrated that we also need to be aware of how such measures have widened pre-existing gender inequalities as women are exceptionally affected, including female academics. From the discussion above, the PSBB implementation for female academics means juggling their time for care and academic work. Despite the recognition of care work from their partners, the amount of care work they carried out had increased when they worked from home. However, it is worth noting that the amount of care work they carried out varied across different marital and parental statuses.

The explanation for this phenomenon argued in this chapter is twofold. First, the existing social construction and patriarchal culture are not restricted to a particular group of women regardless of their jobs and academic qualifications. It has been shown in this chapter that West and Zimmerman's (1987) 'Doing Gender' is evident among Indonesian female academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is contended that the PSBB, as a policy response to the pandemic, has gendered impacts in ways that re-enact the traditional gender roles among female academics, illustrating the deeply rooted social construction of women's roles in Indonesia's context (Suryakusuma, 1987). While the first reason has long existed in Indonesian society, even before the pandemic, the worsening tension between care work and academic work is caused by the new working environment of female academics situated in a domestic setting we called 'home'.

There are no boundaries in this domestic space (home) distinguishing the time and space for female academics to perform care work and academic work, especially when they do not have a specific time allocated for themselves and a personal office to work. Combined with the entrenched patriarchal culture, female academics have no choice but to prioritize care work over their academic work. However, as this chapter has shown, it is important to note that the increased amount of care work carried out by female academic respondents varied across marital and parental statuses. More importantly, their perceptions about it were diverse, considering their different social trajectories.

Despite the diversity of Indonesian female academics' pandemic experience, the increased amount of care work they carried out during lockdowns generally reduced their academic productivity in conducting research and writing journal articles, further hindering the advancement of their academic career. Apart from this, limited human interaction and communication and the difficulties in using new technologies due to the PSBB implementation affect how they conduct research and teaching. These gendered impacts of the pandemic corroborated the previous studies mentioned earlier (Chitsamatanga & Malinga, 2021; Das et al., 2021; Minello et al., 2021; Ipe et al., 2021; Parlak et al., 2021; Pereira, 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2021; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). However, it is also worth noting that some female academic respondents felt that the pandemic was 'blessing in disguise' because they could explore non-academic opportunities and improve their soft skills in areas they were lacking. Although this chapter does not have any relevant data to understand the pandemic's impact on female academics' leadership careers, chances are—based on the existing Indonesian literature on female academics' career advancement (Kholis, 2012, 2017)—they would have less opportunity to advance their leadership career in academia than men, resulting in gender disparity in academia in the future. In this context, it is essential to highlight that if policy responses to the pandemic are not carefully designed to be gender-sensitive, they will potentially result in widening pre-existing gender inequalities between men and women in academia and generally.

## F. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic and its policy responses have undoubtedly widened and reproduced gender inequalities. This chapter has explored the experience of Indonesian female academics during the first wave of COVID-19. It has shown that Indonesian female academics diversely experienced the tension between care work and academic work and challenges in pursuing their academic career. By doing so, it has contributed to the emerging literature on gender (in)equality in academia in Indonesia. On that note, two important points need to be considered here. Firstly, given a limited study in this field in Indonesia, this chapter would enrich our understanding of the gendered nature of work (both care work and academic work) in Indonesia. Secondly, it is also important to acknowledge the limitation of the research informing this chapter, particularly in terms of its small number of samples and the short research period. Future research can expand on the insight from this chapter and examine gender (in)equality among Indonesian academics post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflecting on the gendered impacts of the PSBB as a policy response to the pandemic, we learn that if policy responses to the pandemic are not carefully designed to be gender-sensitive, they will potentially result in widening pre-existing gender inequalities between men and women in academia and generally. To mitigate the gendered impact of policy responses to the pandemic, this chapter concludes by recalling Elson's work (2017) to help us imagine and transform the new normal of academic labor. It is not only recognition of care work that matters, but reduction and redistribution of care work need to be done. Designing gender-sensitive policies in the post-COVID-19 pandemic to reduce and redistribute care work between men and women is central to an effort to narrow gender inequalities and recover the economy.

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