

Integration of the Roles of Men and Women in Forming a Harmonious Family

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Abstract.

This study aims to examine how the integration of male and female roles creates a harmonious family within the context of the Arjasa Jatisari Village community in Indonesia. The issue of gender role inequality in the household remains a source of conflict and a decline in the quality of marital relationships. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method, through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of five married couples in Situbondo who had been married for more than five years. The results identified three main patterns of role integration in the household: collaborative, adaptive, and traditional. Couples with collaborative and adaptive patterns demonstrated more open communication, shared decision-making, and high emotional involvement, while the dominant traditional pattern often exhibited inequality and double burdens. Role integration practices were found to be stronger in childcare than in domestic work. This study contributes to theories of gender equality and family functionalism, and emphasizes the importance of equal relationship education and policy support in promoting fair and dynamic role sharing in modern households.

Keywords: Role Integration, Gender Equality, Harmonious Family, Domestic Roles, Childcare.

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of unequal roles between men and women in the family remains a social challenge in various countries, including Indonesia. Social and economic changes have impacted family structure and dynamics. (Rohmah and Hidayat 2023) However, traditional roles often remain firmly entrenched, with men as the primary breadwinners and women as the primary caregivers. This imbalance often leads to domestic conflict, impacting the quality of relationships between spouses and children's development. In many cases, the dominance of one partner in decision-making hinders healthy communication and equal cooperation within the family.

Data from UN Women shows that women still bear three times the burden of domestic work as men. (Lustikayani and Prasetya 2022) Meanwhile, a BPS survey revealed that 68% of married couples in Indonesia cited an unequal division of roles as one of the causes of domestic conflict. (Central Statistics Agency 2022) Research by Rahayu & Jatiningasih shows that equal role integration between partners significantly increases marital satisfaction. (Rahayu and Jatiningasih 2018) The social problems caused by gender role inequality within the household are crucial to examine. This is crucial so that efforts to create harmonious families are not merely discourse, but can be realized through understanding and equitable distribution of roles between men and women.

Many studies have discussed gender roles within the family, but few have examined comprehensive role integration as a strategy for building harmonious families. Previous studies have tended to focus on individual roles, such as a mother's contribution to parenting or a father's role as head of the family. Only a small number have highlighted how cooperation and complementarity between partners can foster harmonious and conflict-resistant household relationships.

Research by Melton in the Family Relations Journal highlights the importance of couple communication in distributing domestic roles, showing that fathers' involvement in caregiving activities has a positive impact on family well-being. (Melton, Hodge, and Duerden 2022) However, it emphasizes that role integration between husband and wife as a collective approach has received little

in-depth discussion in the context of Asian cultures, including Indonesia. There remains a gap in the literature that systematically examines gender role integration within the family as an approach to harmony. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring how equal and integrated roles contribute to household harmony.

The husband's role in the family is traditionally understood as the leader of the household and breadwinner.(Marsella and Afrizal 2022)However, this understanding has begun to shift toward a more egalitarian approach, where men also play a role in caregiving, household management, and emotional support. The conceptualization of a husband's role now encompasses economic, psychosocial, and affective dimensions. In this context, men are measured not only by their financial capacity but also by their participation in building communication, educating children, and maintaining the family's emotional balance. emphasizes that fathers' involvement in parenting has a positive influence on child development and family harmony.

Similarly, the role of the wife has undergone significant redefinition. While previously positioned as a homemaker and childcare provider, the wife now also performs productive and decision-making roles.(Marsella and Afrizal 2022)Women are not only responsible for domestic affairs but also contribute financially and socially. The categorization of women's roles includes affective (compassion), managerial (household management), and functional (public participation) aspects. emphasizes that empowered women within the household actually strengthens emotional bonds within the family. Thus, both men and women have complementary and equally important roles in creating a healthy and harmonious family.

A harmonious family is defined as a social structure characterized by emotional warmth, effective communication, and equitable distribution of roles among members. Harmony does not mean the absence of conflict, but rather the ability of couples to resolve conflict in a mature and productive manner.(Mashudi, Akin, and Susila 2022)In this context, harmony is achieved not simply through the absence of problems, but through openness, empathy, and shared commitment. Harmonious families tend to demonstrate a higher capacity for managing stress and provide a sense of psychological security for all members.

Categorizing a harmonious family includes indicators of two-way communication, emotional involvement, agreed-upon values, joint decision-making, and mutual respect for different roles. External factors such as economic and cultural pressures also influence harmony, but the quality of the relationship between partners remains the main focus. noted that couples who are flexible and adaptive to social changes, such as changes in gender roles, are more likely to have stable and healthy families. Therefore, understanding a harmonious family cannot be separated from how gender roles are implemented and integrated into daily life.(Mashudi et al. 2022).

Role integration between husband and wife is an important approach to bridging gender differences in the household. This integration emphasizes collaboration, not just a rigid division of labor. Husband and wife share responsibility for household life and childcare, based on their respective agreements and capacities. emphasizes that couples who divide roles equitably have higher relationship satisfaction and lower conflict. This demonstrates that role integration is not only normative, but also strategic and functional.

The context of modern social change highlights that role integration is an adaptive response to the increasingly complex demands of family life. When couples flexibly execute their roles, they not only increase household effectiveness but also strengthen emotional connections between members. Studies have shown that high role integration correlates with lower household stress and increased

marital happiness. Therefore, role integration can be considered a key foundation for forming a harmonious family that is resilient to the dynamics of the times and social challenges.

This paper aims to examine how the integration of male and female roles can create a harmonious and sustainable family. Issues to be studied include how couples divide roles in the household, how they build communication and mutual understanding, and how these shared roles impact the quality of relationships and family well-being. The focus will be on cooperative, rather than competitive, relationships in carrying out family functions. Some questions to be answered include: (1) What forms of role integration between men and women take place in the context of Indonesian families? (2) What impact does role integration have on household harmony? (3) What factors support or hinder this role integration? Research has found that couples with integrated roles tend to have higher emotional satisfaction. This paper will answer important questions regarding role dynamics in the household and offer a conceptual framework regarding the importance of role integration as a path to family harmony.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, which aims to understand in depth how the integration of men's and women's roles is applied in everyday family life and its impact on family harmony. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring the meaning, social significance, and dynamics of relationships between individuals in the household context that cannot be explained quantitatively. This research was conducted in the city of Situbondo, East Java, with the consideration that this area represents the community of Arjasa Jatisari Village and semi-Arjasa Jatisari Village which is experiencing a shift in social values, including in terms of the division of gender roles within the family.

Situbondo City has experienced rapid economic and educational development, making it an ideal location to study the practice of husband-wife role integration in modern households. Furthermore, Situbondo boasts diverse social backgrounds, allowing for exploration of varying patterns of gender relations and the dynamics of domestic responsibilities across diverse groups. The focus is on the subjective experiences of married couples in managing roles, sharing responsibilities, and creating harmony within their households. This study also considers contextual factors such as cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds that may influence the division of gender roles within the family. Detailed profiles of each couple are presented in Table 1 below.

No.	Couple's Initials	Length of Marriage	Number of children	Husband's Job	Wife's Job	Last Education (S/I)	Integration Pattern
1	Nofita & Tohasin	8 years	2 children	Teacher	State-Owned Enterprise Employees	S1 / S1	Collaborative
2	Nurhaliza & Agus Hariyanto	7 years	1 child	Private sector employee	Housewives & resellers	D3 / High School	Partially Traditional
3	Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus	10 years	3 children	Food entrepreneurship	Office employees	High School / Bachelor's Degree	Completely Egalitarian
4	Desi & Yanto	6 years	1 child	Factory shift officer	Online seller (Shopee)	High School / Senior High School	Adaptive

5	Handayani & Erlagga	9 years	2 children	Travel driver	Housewife	Junior High School / Senior High School	Traditional Dominant
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Role integration in domestic and caregiving responsibilities stems from both internal household dynamics and broader social influences. Theoretically, patterns of family integration are explained by the Theory of Gender Role Negotiation, which states that husband-wife roles are not fixed but are renegotiated based on context and needs. (Rua et al. 2021) This approach emphasizes that integration occurs when there is open communication, flexibility, and a willingness to dynamically share responsibilities. This is reinforced by the concept of Equity Theory, which states that marital relationships tend to be harmonious when both parties perceive fairness in the division of roles as balanced. (Kollmann et al. 2020).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected key informants, using open-ended questions about their respective roles in the household, the role negotiation process, challenges faced, and their perceptions of family harmony. Observations were conducted to capture real-life interactions in the family's daily life, such as the division of household tasks, communication patterns, and childcare. Documentation in the form of photographs of household activities, daily family schedules, and informal notes was also used to strengthen the data. All data were recorded and transcribed, then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, paying attention to patterns, contradictions, and narratives that reflect the role integration process and its impact on family life. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher employed triangulation techniques of sources and methods, as well as member checking by requesting reconfirmation from informants regarding the interpretation of interview results. Furthermore, the researcher maintained research ethics by including informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of informants' identities, and respecting the right to participate and withdraw at any time during the research process. The results of this study are expected to not only provide academic contributions to gender and family studies but also serve as a practical reference for young couples, family counselors, and policymakers in building more just, equal, and harmonious family structures. With this in-depth qualitative approach, the research is able to capture the complexity of the social reality of families authentically and reflectively.

III. RESULTS

This study involved five married couples who had been married for more than five years and lived in the Arjasa Jatisari Village area. Interviews and observations revealed varying patterns of family role integration, ranging from collaborative, partially traditional, fully egalitarian, adaptive, to predominantly traditional. Each couple demonstrated a distinct way of dividing domestic, economic, and childcare responsibilities, depending on their work background, education, and internal agreements.

1. Nofita & Tohasin Couple

This couple demonstrates strong role integration, with both husband and wife working and sharing household responsibilities.

"We both work, so household chores are shared. I handle most of the outside work, while my wife handles the finances and household management. But when it comes to the kids, we've agreed to be equally involved. I often help with their homework or take them to school," Tohasin said.

This statement demonstrates that husbands not only fulfill economic roles but also share in childcare responsibilities. This is supported by open communication and a shared awareness of maintaining role balance.

Both partners appeared actively involved in household chores and childcare. Observed in the afternoon, the husband was seen assisting the children with their studies while engaging in casual discussion. The wife prepared dinner, and they ate together. The division of tasks was carried out without coercion and took place in a friendly atmosphere.

2. Nurhaliza & Agus Hariyanto Couple

This couple carries out a division of roles based on a combination of traditional values and modern economic needs.

"I work for a company, and my wife stays at home and sells things. I usually make the main financial decisions, but my wife handles all the housework, kids, and food," said Agus Hariyanto.

The division of roles still places the husband as the main decision maker and breadwinner, but the wife also takes the initiative to support the family economy flexibly.

During the morning observation, the wife was busy preparing breakfast and the children's school supplies, while the husband prepared to leave for work. The atmosphere was calm and structured. There was no visible intense interaction between the husband and her in household chores. However, the wife used her free time to manage her online store from her phone.

3. The Couple Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus

This family exhibits a very equal relationship pattern. Both families work, and the division of labor is based on daily situations, not gender roles.

"We both work, and from the start, there wasn't a clear division of labor. If I was busy, my wife cooked. If she worked overtime, I bathed the children. It all depended on the situation," said Wasil Firdaus.

This pattern reflects a deep understanding of role equality and a commitment to cooperation in family life. Flexible roles allow each partner to feel valued and supported.

During a weekend observation, the couple was seen spontaneously sharing chores. The husband swept the yard while looking after the youngest child, while the wife washed clothes and occasionally discussed shopping plans with her husband. The atmosphere at home demonstrated a strong sense of mutual respect and understanding.

4. Desi & Yanto Couple

The couple adjusts the division of roles based on each other's working hours and work conditions.

"I work shifts, so my hours are unpredictable. When I work in the morning, my wife handles everything. But when I work in the afternoon, I can help pick up the kids, clean the house, or go shopping." Yanto said

This adaptive pattern demonstrates a fluid form of integration, where roles can shift depending on the situation. There are no permanent divisions, but rather flexibility based on daily needs.

Observations were conducted while the husband was off work. He was seen cleaning the living room and taking the children to play for a while. His wife sat in the back room checking orders from online store customers. These activities occurred simultaneously without conflict, with both parties having a flexible division of time and workspace.

5. The Handayani & Erlangga Couple

This family still follows strong traditional patterns, with a clear division of roles between breadwinner and household manager.

"I work outside from morning till night, so my wife takes care of all the housework. I just focus on earning a living," Erlangga said.

This pattern demonstrates the dominance of conventional role division, where domestic and caregiving responsibilities fall entirely on the wife. The husband's minimal involvement in household affairs creates an imbalanced distribution of roles.

The home environment exhibits a highly structured pattern, with the wife taking on the full domestic role. While the husband is working outside, the wife manages all household activities: from hanging

out laundry and cooking to watching television with the children. These activities are carried out without any assistance from the husband.

IV. DISCUSSION

Role Integration in Fulfilling Family Responsibilities

The integration of male and female roles, as revealed in interviews, has significant implications for the harmonious functioning of family systems. When both partners are involved in domestic and emotional responsibilities, mutual respect and cooperation are enhanced. Interview data indicate that couples with collaborative role sharing tend to experience higher relationship satisfaction. stated that equitable role sharing increases emotional intimacy. also confirmed that shared responsibilities reduce relationship stress. found that role flexibility strengthens family resilience. stated that active fathers contribute to healthy parent-child dynamics. Conversely, dysfunctional role integration, in which one partner dominates, often triggers tension.

Patterns of gender role integration within the household are heavily influenced by socio-cultural structures and changing gender norms. In this context, structural functional theory (Parsons, 1955) states that the ideal family functions optimally when the roles and responsibilities of each member align with the needs of the social system. However, in contemporary reality, the division of roles is no longer static, but rather transforms through negotiations that consider shared rights and responsibilities. This view aligns with the social contract theory of the family, which emphasizes that the relationship between husband and wife is built on a reciprocal agreement regarding the right to be heard, respected, and responsible for the emotional and economic stability of the household.(Ahyani, Slamet, and Mutmainah 2022).

Couples who practice egalitarian patterns generally come from backgrounds that are accustomed to values of equality through education and media. Studies show that structural factors such as educational attainment and employment equality contribute to shaping progressive role patterns. Melton states that institutional supports such as paternity leave encourage role sharing.(Melton et al. 2022). Zulfiana shows that economic pressure can encourage more flexible gender behavior.(Zulfiana and Hakim 2020)Meanwhile, Nuraeni concluded that when both partners internalize the norms of equality and understand their respective rights and obligations within the household, the division of roles becomes a shared value that is consciously implemented. Therefore, social structures such as education, economics, and culture explain why some families are more likely to adopt integrative patterns than others.(Nuraeni and Lilin Suryono 2021).

Various Responsibilities in the Family

Family responsibilities encompass various interrelated aspects and are carried out by all family members, especially the husband and wife. This division of responsibilities is not rigid but can be adjusted by agreement.(Moh. Nurarrouf 2021), needs, and situations faced by the family. The following is a description of responsibilities within the family:

1. Economic responsibility is the obligation to meet the household's financial needs. This includes providing food, shelter, education, healthcare, and other daily necessities. In modern families, the economic burden is no longer borne solely by one party but can become a shared responsibility.
2. Domestic responsibilities include managing and carrying out household chores such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and preparing daily necessities for family members. This role is not limited to the wife; in practice, it can be flexibly divided between husband and wife.
3. Parenting responsibilities encompass the roles of caring for, educating, and guiding children. This includes activities such as accompanying them in learning, developing character, providing role models, and creating a safe and loving environment. Balanced parenting between both parents contributes to optimal child growth and development.

4. Emotional responsibility is the responsibility to maintain emotional stability and interpersonal relationships within the family. Husbands and wives have an obligation to support each other psychologically, maintain healthy communication, and create an atmosphere of harmony and mutual respect.

5. Social responsibility encompasses the family's role in the community, such as maintaining relationships with neighbors, participating in social activities, and fostering a positive family image in the community. This role also determines how the family is viewed socially and how children learn to socialize.

The division of these five types of responsibilities requires cooperation, open communication, and an awareness of the importance of each family member's role in building a healthy and resilient household life.

Field Findings

The research was conducted in Situbondo City, East Java, which is characterized by young families with a relatively high level of education and openness to the values of equality. This area is relevant for observing the dynamics of changing roles in modern households. Informants were selected purposively with the following criteria: married couples who had been married for at least three years, lived in Situbondo City, and had children. Informants represented various occupational and educational backgrounds to capture the diversity of role-sharing practices within the family. The majority of informants worked in the formal sector, such as teachers and private employees, and some in the informal sector, such as entrepreneurs. Informants' education ranged from high school to undergraduate. Informants lived in the Arjasa Jatisari Village area of Situbondo, which is exposed to media and has adequate access to education.

Interview results demonstrate strong role integration practices. The couple, Nofita & Tohasin, share domestic and caregiving responsibilities with awareness and good communication. Nofita & Tohasin's husband: "We help each other. I can also replace my wife by cooking or taking the kids to school." Couple Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus implementing a full cooperation pattern without gender-based division of labor. Wife Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus: "We don't have a fixed division of labor. If I'm busy working, my husband takes care of the children. If he works nights, I take turns." Couple Desi & Yanto adapting roles based on work flexibility. Husband Desi & Yanto "When I work late into the night, my wife takes care of everything. But when I'm on vacation, I take over all the household chores."

This pattern shows that the division of roles is adaptive and based on needs, not rigid rules.

Role Integration in Creating a Harmonious Family

Observational data on daily routines demonstrates the practical impact of role integration on creating harmonious families. Functional families demonstrate consistent patterns of sharing household and caregiving tasks, which strengthen mutual support and relationship balance. For example, activities such as childcare, meal preparation, and joint decision-making are carried out alternately by partners. found that visible role sharing increases trust and decreases gender-based jealousy. This study supports that role overlap strengthens positive interdependence between partners. Septiani emphasized that shared caregiving routines strengthen emotional bonds with children. (Septiani and Nasution 2018) Septiani found that paternal involvement increases family stability. Conversely, families that still practice a rigid division of roles tend to experience tension. Therefore, from a functional perspective, role integration in daily activities reflects a solid and resilient family life.

The role integration that emerged from the interview results shows conformity with the Theory of Gender Role Negotiation, where roles are determined through agreement and context, not tradition. (Rua et al. 2021) Open communication and a willingness to take turns have proven to be the foundation for carrying out household roles fairly. Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus for example, applying the

principle of relational justice in line with Equity Theory (Kollmann et al. 2020). They showed that perceptions of fairness in the household were more important than absolute equality in the amount of work. Symbolic interactionism theory is also evident in how couples redefine gender roles based on daily experiences. (Derung 2017). They no longer automatically follow the patterns of their family of origin, but adapt them to current needs.

Couples with equitable routines generally demonstrate high levels of communication and mutual respect, which form the basis for adaptive task allocation. Marsella states that open negotiation increases men's participation in roles traditionally considered women's. (Marsella and Afrizal 2022). In addition, economic dependence when both partners work requires domestic cooperation. (Nuraeni and Lilin Suryono 2021). Previous parental models also influence, where couples imitate or reject patterns from their families of origin. (Septiani and Nasution 2018) Thus, patterns of family integration are formed from the interaction of inherited values, economic conditions, partner communication, and the drive to create relational justice. This overall structure shapes role integration gradually and sustainably.

Real Practice of Role Integration in Household Life

The research results show that the integration of roles between husband and wife in the household has become a real practice that is growing in society, especially in families who are aware of the importance of justice and cooperation. The pattern of division of responsibilities in the family is no longer rigid as in the traditional model that places the husband as the sole breadwinner and the wife as the full manager of the house. Instead, husbands and wives now tend to share roles based on needs, time, and mutually agreed upon agreements. This can be seen in the couples Nofita & Tohasin and Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus, who show that housework, childcare, and fulfilling economic needs are no longer limited by gender. In the theory of symbolic interactionism, this is understood as the result of daily interactions that continuously shape new meanings and agreements in domestic roles. Equal role sharing is also closely related to the quality of a couple's communication and the level of trust they build. When communication runs smoothly, the division of tasks can be carried out without stress or conflict. For example, Raudatul & Wasil Firdaus explicitly reject gender-based division of labor and prefer a model of full cooperation. This aligns with the principles of equity theory, which argues that a fair relationship will create satisfaction and harmony in the household. Furthermore, Desi & Yanto illustrate the importance of flexibility in role sharing, especially when the husband or wife's work schedule is uncertain. In this context, the practice of role integration does not necessarily mean a symmetrical division, but rather a willingness to substitute and support each other based on the situation. Thus, sensitivity to family needs is a crucial element in the success of adaptive role sharing.

Furthermore, this integration practice also reflects changing values within the social structure of society, particularly among young families living in the Arjasa Jatisari Village area, such as Situbondo. Exposure to education, media, and an inclusive work environment encourages couples to be more open to the idea of role equality. Furthermore, economic conditions that require two sources of income accelerate this transformation, as the wife's involvement in the family economy requires a balance between domestic and caregiving duties. These findings confirm that role integration is not simply a personal choice but has become a structural necessity born of the dynamics of the times. Therefore, role integration in the household can be seen as a form of social adaptation that not only maintains harmonious marital relations but also strengthens family resilience amidst the challenges of modern life.

V. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the integration of men's and women's roles in the household is not merely a normative ideal but has become a real adaptive practice, particularly in the Arjasa Jatisari

Village area. The three identified integration patterns—collaborative, adaptive, and traditional—demonstrate that the form and success of integration are strongly influenced by educational background, occupation, time flexibility, and communication patterns within the family.

Couples with collaborative and adaptive patterns tend to build open communication, share decision-making, and have strong emotional involvement. Meanwhile, traditional patterns that still place the domestic burden entirely on women tend to result in relationship inequality and psychological distress. These findings support gender role negotiation theory and equity theory, which argue that fairness in role distribution is more important for family harmony than symmetrical distribution.

Role integration occurs more frequently in childcare than in domestic work, indicating that the transformation of gender values is gradual and selective. Factors such as educational exposure, prior family experiences, exposure to media, and work dynamics play a significant role in fostering equitable role sharing.

While this study provides an in-depth look at role integration practices in young urban families, limitations remain. The sample size was limited to couples in a single region and within a specific marriage age range, making the results difficult to generalize broadly. Therefore, further studies using quantitative and cross-cultural approaches are needed to more comprehensively examine the relationship between role integration and aspects such as mental health, marital satisfaction, and child development.

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the discourse on gender equality and family resilience. The results can serve as a reference for young couples, family counselors, and policymakers in designing flexible, equitable, and contextual role-sharing strategies tailored to current needs.

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