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# THE RELIGIOUS ROLES OF MUSLIMAH INFLUENCERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the social and religious roles of Muslimah influencers in shaping the values, norms, and behaviors of contemporary Muslim families, particularly within the context of rising digital religiosity and increasing reliance on social media as a source of life guidance. The central research question addresses how Muslimah influencers contribute to the construction of the ideal modern family among Muslim communities. The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on gender－based religious authority in digital spaces—an aspect that remains underexplored in Islamic family discourse. Employing a qualitative approach through digital ethnography and content analysis of selected Muslimah influencers' platforms (YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok), this research explores how religious messages, lifestyle narratives, and visual representations serve as tools for disseminating models of piety, gender roles, and family ethics. The findings reveal that Muslimah influencers act as cultural agents who bridge traditional Islamic teachings with modern lifestyles and actively shape new family values through aspirational content that highlights simplicity, emotional sensitivity, and spiritual motherhood. In conclusion, these influencers play a significant role in popularizing new forms of religious authority and redefining the ideal Muslim family in the digital era. The academic contribution of this study lies in offering new insights into the relationship between gender, religious authority, and the transformation of family values within modern Muslim societies.

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran sosial dan keagamaan Muslimah influencer dalam membentuk nilai-nilai, norma, dan perilaku keluarga Muslim kontemporer, khususnya dalam konteks meningkatnya religiositas digital dan ketergantungan masyarakat Muslim terhadap media sosial sebagai sumber panduan hidup. Pertanyaan utama yang diangkat adalah bagaimana Muslimah influencer berkontribusi dalam konstruksi ideal keluarga modern di kalangan komunitas Muslim. Studi ini menawarkan kebaruan melalui sorotan terhadap otoritas keagamaan berbasis gender di ruang digital—sebuah aspek yang masih jarang dibahas dalam diskursus keluarga Islam. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui metode etnografi digital dan analisis konten pada platform media sosial seperti YouTube, Instagram, dan TikTok, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pesan-pesan keagamaan, narasi gaya hidup, dan representasi visual digunakan sebagai sarana penyebaran model kesalehan, peran gender, dan etika keluarga. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Muslimah influencer berperan sebagai agen kultural yang menjembatani ajaran Islam tradisional dengan gaya hidup modern, dan secara aktif membentuk nilai-nilai keluarga baru melalui konten aspiratif yang menekankan kesederhanaan, kepekaan emosional, serta spiritualitas keibuan. Kesimpulannya, mereka tidak hanya memopulerkan bentuk baru otoritas religius, tetapi juga turut mendefinisikan ulang ideal keluarga Muslim di era digital. Kontribusi akademik dari penelitian ini terletak pada pemahaman baru mengenai relasi antara gender, otoritas keagamaan, dan transformasi nilai keluarga dalam masyarakat Muslim modern.*

## INTRDUCTION

The family in contemporary society remains the most essential social institution, serving as the foundation for moral (Abror et al., 2025), emotional, and cultural development across generations. Within Islamic thought, the family is not merely a social construct but a sacred institution ordained to cultivate faith, virtue, and mutual responsibility among its members. It provides a moral structure where values such as compassion, justice, and cooperation are first experienced and transmitted. However, the increasing complexity of modern life has brought significant transformations to family structures and gender relations (Belanche et al., 2021). Economic challenges, global mobility, and the advancement of technology have reshaped the traditional perception of domestic roles. Muslim women today participate more actively in the public sphere through education, career (Novita et al., 2025), and community engagement while maintaining their obligations to religious and familial duties (Li et al., 2023). This dual engagement challenges conventional interpretations of gender division within Muslim societies. These transformations have also produced new forms of female leadership in which Muslimah influencers play strategic roles in shaping religious understanding, promoting moral awareness, and reinforcing family values through digital communication platforms that reach global audiences.

There are three notable previous studies that examine the phenomenon of educated women and their roles within family structures. The first study, conducted by Elis Setiawati, Elly Malihah, and Stiti Komariah, explores several internal and external driving factors that influence highly educated women in family decision－making, emphasizing how educational attainment contributes to autonomy and shared authority within the household (Rahayu et al., 2024). The second research, by Ida Kristiawati, Rini Iswari, and Antari Ayuning Arsi, investigates the reasons why highly educated housewives choose not to engage in formal employment. Their findings indicate that these decisions are shaped by the inability to manage dual roles effectively, limited earning potential, sufficient spousal income, and in some cases, the husband's disapproval of external work (Harry et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study by Arif Suginata and Moh. Zakariya analyzes the relational patterns between educated husbands and wives, showing that mutual understanding fosters alternating public and domestic roles in a cooperative manner (Alam et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies reveal the evolving dynamics of gender relations within educated Muslim families, yet they have not sufficiently addressed how digital religiosity and Muslimah influencers reinterpret these roles through online engagement and moral authority.

There are three previous studies that discuss educated women, namely by Elis Setiawati, Elly Malihah and Stiti Komariah, this study discusses several driving factors (internal and external) of highly educated women in family decision making that influence them (Rahayu et al., 2024)**.** The second research by Ida Kristiawati, Rini Iswari and Antari Ayuning Arsi discusses the reasons why highly educated housewives do not work because they are unable to carry out dual roles, low women's income, sufficient husband's income, husband does not allow work (Harry et al., 2024). Furthermore, research by Arif Suginata and Moh. Zakariya, his research discusses the existence of a pattern of relationships (closeness) between educated husbands and wives in carrying out public and domestic roles by alternating roles (Alam et al., 2025).

Empirical observations and academic studies indicate that the growing participation of Muslim women in educational, professional, and religious environments has produced complex dynamics within the structure and values of modern Muslim families. Earlier

studies have largely focused on the domestic and decision－making roles of women, yet few have examined how digital environments transform these responsibilities through religious engagement (Mahmudah et al., 2022). The emergence of Muslimah influencers represents a new social phenomenon in which digital platforms become channels for spiritual teaching (AYKUL, 2022), moral education, and community dialogue. Through religious reflections, parenting advice (De Clercq et al., 2019), and motivational narratives, these figures reinterpret Islamic ethics in ways that align with the realities of modern family life. Their content inspires diverse audiences to reconcile faith with productivity, devotion with ambition, and motherhood with professionalism (Islam, 2023). Consequently, Muslimah influencers act not only as role models of piety but also as cultural mediators who redefine how Islam engages with social transformation. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how Muslimah influencers embody and communicate religious roles that shape public perceptions of womanhood, piety, and the meaning of family in contemporary Muslim societies. Their influence extends beyond personal narratives, cultivating collective consciousness regarding family ethics, parenting ideals, and the equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities among family members.

The objective of this study is to illuminate how Muslimah influencers function as transformative agents of religious and cultural change in the digital age. It argues that their online visibility and credibility establish a new form of moral authority that fuses Islamic values with the adaptive demands of global modernity. This research seeks to explain how their digital discourse constructs the concept of a contemporary family anchored in faith, equality, and mutual respect while also revealing its broader implications for Islamic thought, gender relations, and social policy. By analyzing their narratives, interactions, and symbolic representations, this study enriches the conceptual understanding of religious communication and gender identity within Islamic frameworks. Moreover, it provides practical insights for promoting responsible digital engagement and reinforcing the moral foundations of Muslim families amid rapid social and technological shifts. Ultimately, the study underscores the potential of Muslimah influencers to redefine pious femininity and family identity in ways that harmonize spiritual devotion, social participation, and ethical modernity, thus contributing to the renewal of Islamic family values in the digital era.

## METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative field research design with a descriptive－interpretative approach to explore in depth the social and religious roles of *Muslimah* influencers in shaping contemporary Muslim family values. The qualitative method is chosen due to the need to interpret symbolic meanings, gendered narratives, and religious expressions embedded in digital interactions, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative metrics (Lone et al., 2025). Fieldwork was conducted in three major urban centers in Indonesia—Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta—where the density of social media users and the presence of modern Muslim communities are notably high (Arli et al., 2018). Informants were selected through purposive sampling, with key criteria including: being a Muslim woman who actively maintains a public persona as an influencer with at least 50,000 followers on social media; consistently producing Islamic, family－related, or faith－based lifestyle content over the past year; and willingness to participate in interviews (Arofah et al., 2025). A total of six Muslimah influencers were selected as primary informants, while eight of their active followers were interviewed as supporting informants to gain insights into audience reception and engagement (Casidy

et al., 2016). In－depth interviews were conducted using a semi－structured guide to allow flexibility and thematic exploration, either face－to－face or via online platforms like Zoom and Google Meet, depending on participant availability and preference (Yuval－Davis, 2006).

In addition to interviews, data collection included participant observation of social media activities across Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, focusing on content related to gender roles, family ethics, motherhood, and Islamic identity (Casidy et al., 2016). The observation period lasted three months, allowing the researcher to document content consistency and thematic evolution over time (Dilmaghani, 2018). Digital data—such as screenshots, video transcripts, post captions, and comment threads—were archived systematically. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, using open and axial coding methods as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This approach enabled the identification of key patterns in how Muslimah influencers construct idealized family models and religious femininity (Upenieks et al., 2024). Analytical categories emerged inductively and were refined through iterative reading and coding of the data corpus. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation of sources (influencers and followers), methods (interviews and observation), and time (recurrent engagement) (Munthe et al., 2024). Member－checking was also used, in which selected participants reviewed the researcher's interpretations for accuracy and contextual fit. By applying this rigorous methodological framework, the study not only offers empirical insight into the lived experiences and practices of Muslimah influencers but also critically examines their role in negotiating traditional Islamic teachings with modern digital lifestyles in the shaping of Muslim family ideals (Machado & Da Silva, 2019).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

#### The Role of Educated Wives in Muslim Families

An influencer is is someone who has the ability to influence others through their digital platform (social media). The forms of influence can be in the form of opinions, attitudes and behavior, this makes influencers have thousands of followers and even hundreds of followers (Beddu et al., 2024). Besides influencing their followers, influencers also have the aspect of "engagement" which means two－way communication, being able to connect with followers. Usually influencers have a lot of insight, knowledge especially about a particular subject (Afandi et al., 2023). In general, the platforms (social media) used by influencers can be categorized into five: Instagram, YouTube, blogs, Facebook and Snapchat (Muthohar et al., 2025). Interestingly, the Instagram platform is the most active user of social media today, with Indonesia occupying the fourth position in the world with the highest number of Instagram users. Instagram itself is a social media application for sharing photos and videos (Sonfield et al., 2016). Uploaded photos or videos can be accompanied by text captions to explain about the photo video.

#### Dewi Nur Aisyah

Dewi Nur Aisyah is a mother as well as an active role as an epidemiologist, infectious disease informatics expert in Indonesia, besides that she now serves as an honorary senior research associate at the Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care University College London (UCL), deputy secretary general of the Association of Public Health Experts (IAKMI), senior researcher at the Indonesia One Health University Network (INDOHUN) and Senior Epidemiology and Informatics Adviser by the Australia Indonesia Health

Security Partnership (AIHSP). Dewi's life during her education often received awards, when the undergraduate level was named the Outstanding Student of FKM UI in 2009, then when S2 received a DIKTI Excellence Scholarship at Imperial College London in the field of Modern Epidemiology, not long after her S2 education, she continued her doctoral education at University College London (UCL) in the field of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Informatics and received the prestigious BPRI scholarship (President of the Republic of Indonesia Scholarship). Dewi is known to have many achievements with a myriad of works due to her national and international competencies, besides that she has filled many seminars, workshops, Islamic and Muslim studies. Although Dewi underwent education up to S3, the role as a wife and mother for her must still be balanced, for example taking turns taking care of children with her husband. Both of them are committed to supporting each other in achieving their goals and being useful for others.
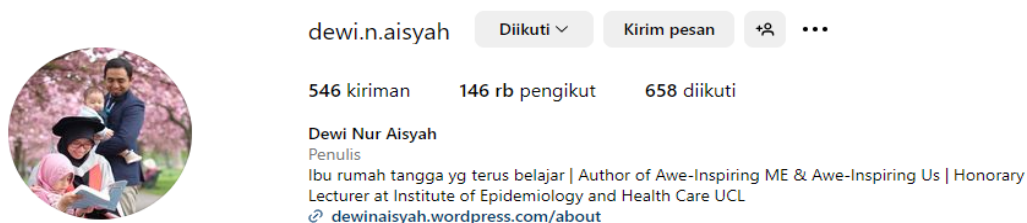


**Figure 1.** Social Media Profile (instagram) of Dewi Nur Aisyah

On her Instagram account, Dewi shares glimpses of her daily life as a wife, mother, and professional, often illustrating how she manages her time from morning to night. Her routine includes working while her baby sleeps, handling household chores, supporting her children's needs during the day, and continuing remote work at night. However, these activities are flexible and dependent on the nature of her job, which sometimes requires direct involvement, leading to a dynamic division of roles with her husband. In several posts, she reflects on their shared experiences as PhD parents, alternating responsibilities and supporting each other through challenges such as a high−risk pregnancy and the demands of parenting during the COVID−19 pandemic. For instance, during her participation in the SEAOHUN (Southeast Asia One Health University Network) National Coordinating Office meeting in Chiang Mai, she described the logistical challenges of arranging childcare, ultimately relying on her mother and husband to share responsibilities. These personal narratives demonstrate how Muslimah influencers like Dewi embody adaptive strategies in balancing domestic duties and professional commitments, offering a contemporary perspective on family roles and shared parenting.

According to Dewi, building a harmonious household requires cooperation, mutual assistance, and sacrifice from all family members, including both parents and children. She believes that each member holds a strategic role in realizing shared aspirations and values, emphasizing that harmony emerges through collective effort. In her social media reflections, Dewi often highlights that a family cannot stand on the strength of one individual but on the unity of purpose between spouses and children. She explains that marriage is a collective journey in which personal identities merge into a shared mission, grounded in love, understanding, and collaboration. Dewi further asserts that women must possess adequate knowledge to fulfill their essential roles as wives, mothers, and the primary educators of future generations. Rejecting the notion that domestic duties negate the need for education, she argues that these responsibilities, in fact, demand intellectual

and spiritual readiness. Quoting her post, she reminds women that piety and knowledge are the foundations of motherhood and civilization, citing the example of Muhammad Al－Fatih's mother as an inspiring figure. For Dewi, education functions as a source of empowerment and moral guidance, enabling women to navigate family life with wisdom and faith while fostering a home rooted in love, ethics, and spiritual growth.

**Fefi Eka Wardiani**

Fefi is a Ph.D student at Chung Yuan Christian University Taiwan, also actively working as a research assistant. In addition, she participates in several organizations such as WWF Indonesia and PPI. Apart from being a student, Fefi's daily life acts as a wife, this is what she often shares her activities through her Instagram social media content.
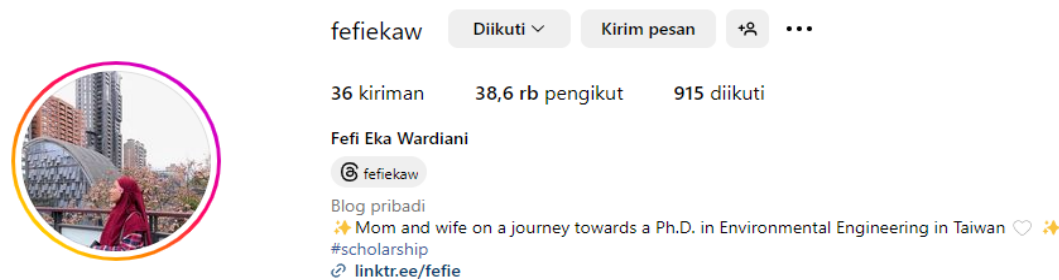


**Figure 2.** Social Media Profile (instagram) of Fefi Eka Wardani

In several of her social media posts, Fefi shares her experiences balancing multiple roles as a doctoral student in Taiwan and as a mother. She often describes how she and her husband coordinate responsibilities in caring for their young son while managing their academic commitments. There are occasions when their child accompanies her to campus, depending on the situation, weather, and schedule flexibility. In one post, she explains, "We try to coordinate our schedules so we can take turns caring for Alif. If something unexpected arises, we immediately inform each other. Sometimes, when neither of us can stay at home, we assess options—if the situation is manageable and safe, Alif comes with me to campus. Alternatively, if needed, we are grateful that some friends here are willing to help look after him." She further emphasizes the importance of mutual support in domestic duties, highlighting the value of sharing tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping to ease the household burden during their studies.

Fefi also reflects on the broader significance of commitment, communication, and cooperation in maintaining a functional household during their academic journey. For her, these elements are essential for navigating the pressures of student life as a married couple. She notes, "Remember that commitment, understanding, and cooperation are very important in living a household while studying. Don't hesitate to be open and flexible in facing challenges." In addition, Fefi holds the conviction that motherhood does not end a woman's learning journey; rather, it deepens her responsibility as a child's first teacher. She affirms, "A mother is the first madrasah (school) for her child. Preparing her well means laying the foundation for a strong nation." For Fefi, higher education empowers women to engage in parenting with confidence, informed judgment, and scientific reasoning. She argues that well－educated mothers are better equipped to provide rational, evidence－based guidance, particularly in households where both partners are highly educated. This perspective underscores her belief that continued learning and intellectual preparedness are vital investments for both personal development and intergenerational progress.

**Davrina Rianda**

Davrina is a wife and mother who works as a researcher at the Human Nutrition Research Center (HNCR) Research Institute of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia, focusing on maternal and child nutritional health. She also founded a program called mama4planet to tackle the problem of household food waste. Her love for science makes Davrina now a doctoral student at the University of California Davis (UC Davis) in the United States. The role of wives in educated Muslim families in 3 Instagram influencer accounts (Dewi Nur Aisyah, Fefi Eka Wardiani and Davrina Rianda) and also their perspectives on households and educated women.

**Figure 3.** Social Media Profile (instagram) of Davrina Rianda

Davrina, a mother of two children, currently pursues her doctoral studies in California while simultaneously managing the responsibilities of motherhood without the physical presence of her husband, who works in Indonesia. She maintains a structured daily schedule to balance academic demands with household responsibilities. However, she intentionally sets aside weekends to focus exclusively on her children and domestic tasks. In one of her reflections, she notes, *"Take a break not only to rest, but so that we 'NEED' to work again,"* emphasizing the importance of rest in restoring motivation and productivity. During these weekend breaks, she avoids multitasking, choosing instead to dedicate her time fully to activities such as playing with her children, engaging in outdoor excursions, and cleaning the house. For Davrina, rest is not a form of neglecting responsibilities but a strategic practice that enhances long—term efficiency and mental well—being. She encourages others not to feel guilty for taking breaks, as these moments serve as crucial opportunities for personal and familial reconnection.

Navigating her academic journey while raising children abroad and apart from her spouse, Davrina describes her experience as living in a "new normal" that demands constant adaptation to shifting roles and emerging challenges. While acknowledging the physical distance, she emphasizes the exceptional emotional and moral support she receives from her husband. Nevertheless, she also confronts the practical implications of this arrangement, such as increased financial strain, intensified workloads, and the need to sustain meaningful interactions with her children. Drawing from her personal experience, Davrina advises women—especially mothers—who are considering further education to engage in thoughtful reflection before making such a commitment. She underscores the importance of aligning educational pursuits with one's broader life goals, posing a critical question: *"Is the education we want to take in line with our vision and mission in life?"* Her perspective highlights the intersection between academic ambition, family responsibilities, and the importance of intentional decision—making for long—term personal fulfillment.

## DISCUSSION

Islam teaches humans to continue to study, both men and women, because both have the same right to study (Roshdy, 2025). When the presence of Islam, women get an honorable position and equal to men, including in education, at the time of the Prophet many women who are famous in the field of knowledge such as Aliyah bint Al－Mahdi, and hadith expert named Al－Hapiz az－Zahabi (Nieto Cruz, 2020). Education for women in Islam is very important, especially the role of women will later become mothers, if the mother has good knowledge (Mustapha et al., 2024)., then she will educate her children well too, resulting in smart children (Kosim et al., 2024). In the contemporary era, attaining higher education has become an essential aspiration for women, reflecting a growing recognition of their intellectual and social potential. Higher education plays a transformative role in empowering women by enhancing their knowledge, critical thinking, and problem－solving abilities (Yılmaz, 2017). Educated women contribute significantly to improving the family economy, as their skills and competencies open broader opportunities for meaningful employment and entrepreneurship. Moreover, women with advanced education tend to achieve a higher quality of life while maintaining their personal and cultural identity. Education also enables them to exercise greater freedom in choosing professional paths that align with their values and aspirations. Beyond individual benefits, women's educational attainment drives broader social progress by fostering positive changes in mentality, attitudes, and perspectives within their communities. Thus, the pursuit of education among women is not merely a personal achievement but a catalyst for collective empowerment and societal development.

Actually, broadly speaking, there are two impacts of higher education on women, the first is the internal impact, this impact is the increasing quality of women in the form of intellectual, emotional and attitudinal intelligence that they have to face the twists and turns of life, the second external impact is women's ability to improve the quality of life aspects of society in various ways, as it will give birth to intelligent offspring as well as increase the productivity of the country due to women's participation in the world of work which can improve the economy and reduce poverty (Rokhmad & Susilo, 2017). In the context of women's pursuit of higher education, the role of women has experienced a significant transformation (Fithria et al., 2020). Women are no longer confined solely to the domestic sphere as wives and mothers, but are increasingly active in public and professional domains, including community empowerment through the development and utilization of their talents (Aly Wahb, 2023). This expanded role, however, does not negate their domestic responsibilities. Instead, it reflects a redefinition of gender roles that allows for greater participation in both private and public spheres. Consequently, when both husband and wife are engaged in public roles, the completion of household tasks is managed through mutual agreement and deliberation. The principle of task－sharing becomes essential to ensure that domestic responsibilities are distributed fairly and that neither party feels overburdened. This approach fosters a more balanced and cooperative family dynamic, supporting both personal and collective well－being.

Recommend reforms that are principled, pragmatic, and spiritually grounded, this study emphasizes the need to move beyond prescriptive domestic norms by embedding *Islamic ethical literacy* as an operational framework that transforms marital rights and obligations into measurable standards of harmony, equity, and shared responsibility rather than abstract ideals. Methodologically, the integration of digital ethnography with Islamic family jurisprudence can be developed into a replicable analytic tool that translates qualitative narratives into indicators of relational justice and spiritual well－being,

enabling comparative assessment across diverse Muslim contexts (Darmawijaya & Ma'ming, 2023). Policymakers and religious educators are urged to institutionalize family－oriented digital da'wah programs, standardize gender－sensitive counseling mechanisms, and strengthen community－based learning infrastructures that empower women as ethical communicators and moral educators within the household. Transparent engagement strategies should be introduced to enhance public accountability while avoiding ideological distortion or media sensationalism (Mohamad et al., 2016). Collaboration with Muslimah influencers must be formalized to ensure that their online religious content aligns with authentic Islamic principles and contributes to the cultivation of resilient, faith－centered families. Incremental recalibration, rather than rigid enforcement, is recommended to maintain socio－religious harmony amid cultural transformation. By aligning spiritual authenticity with contemporary adaptability, such initiatives can safeguard moral integrity, strengthen gender complementarity, and promote sustainable family models across global Muslim societies.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study reveals that highly educated women who carry dual roles as wives, mothers, and active individuals in academic and professional spheres are capable of managing the complex challenges of household life through adaptive and collaborative strategies. They not only fulfill traditional domestic roles but also make significant contributions in public spaces through knowledge development and community empowerment. The success in maintaining a harmonious family lies in principles of cooperation, open communication, equitable division of responsibilities, as well as emotional and practical support from their spouses. This study also finds that the ability to adapt to social, geographic, and academic dynamics—including pursuing education abroad without the presence of a partner—is a key factor in balancing these roles. The findings address the central issue of the study: how highly educated women manage dual responsibilities in both domestic and public spheres in a balanced and productive manner.

This research enriches the discourse on gender roles within the family and the contributions of educated women to social development through a family－based perspective. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for policymakers, educational institutions, and society at large in designing more inclusive support systems for women, especially mothers pursuing higher education. The implications of this research affirm that women's empowerment must be accompanied by strong support systems—emotional, structural, and institutional—provided by spouses, families, and academic environments. The limitation of this study lies in its descriptive qualitative approach and the narrow scope of individual experiences, which may not be generalizable to a broader population. Future research is therefore recommended to explore women's dual roles using quantitative methods and to expand the geographical and sociocultural contexts to obtain more comprehensive results.

## DECLARATIONS

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Deala Rosyida Petriani was solely responsible for the conceptualization, design, data collection, analysis, drafting, revision, and finalization of the manuscript. The author confirms that all aspects of the research were completed independently.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

## DECLARATION OF INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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