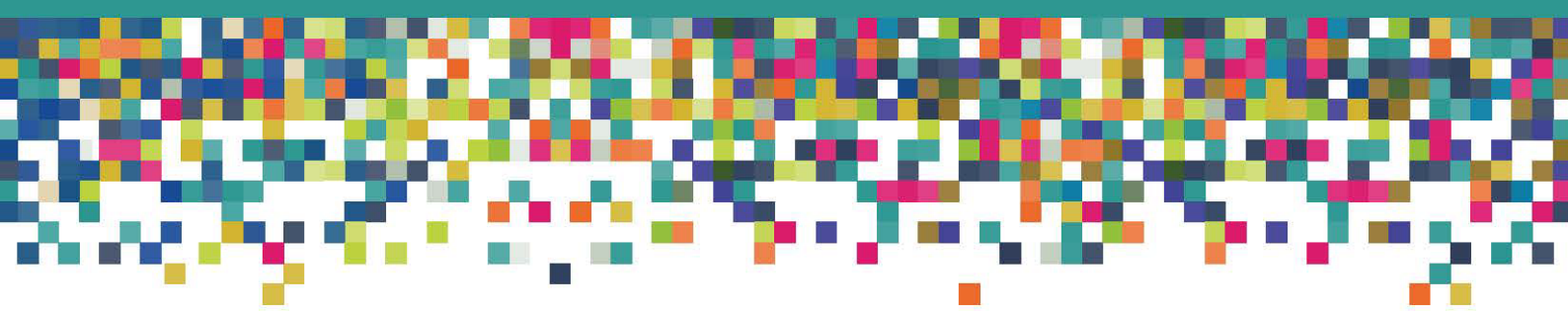




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‘CAN WOMEN REALLY HAVE IT ALL?’

A Discourse Analysis of Neoliberal Feminist Discourse’s
Roles in the Construction of Media Representation of
Professional Working Women in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyses how neoliberal feminist discourse constructs the media representation of professional working women in Indonesian media coverage. This dissertation analysis utilises Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, which mainly argues that discourse is contingent, that meaning can never be final, and that the struggle for hegemony can only be done partially. This dissertation mainly argues that the representation of women engaged in professional roles within Indonesian media is profoundly influenced by the complex interaction between neoliberal feminists, Islamic, and other local discourses, supporting the contingent nature of discourse highlighted by Laclau and Mouffe. This dissertation discovers four implications, including, first, the emergence of neoliberal feminist discourses in some of the articles while simultaneously observing the presence of Islamic discourses in the discourse. Second, departing from the concept of social antagonism from Laclau and Mouffe, there have been contestations to fixate on the meanings of being professional working women across six articles from The Jakarta Post and Republika. Third, despite the antagonism against each discourse, this dissertation has found the common ground/similarities of ideals which have been merged as each article and the broader social context which fixate on the meaning of professional working women interact. Lastly, despite the minimum conversation in the literature around men's role for professional working women, the intertextuality of this role has emerged from the six articles. This dissertation may become a foundation for future research regarding the power dynamics owned by media outlets to shape specific representations of professional working women, media representation of power dynamics between men and women in the workforce context, and lastly, an imperative for a more inclusive representation that reflects realities for all women from different social, economy, and race backgrounds in striving for success in the workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Finding a way to 'have it all' happily is virtually impossible for the vast majority of women (Rottenberg, 2018a: 25).

Over the past few decades, Indonesia has witnessed a growing number of women embracing feminism. As the nation leans toward neoliberal policies, the term 'career women' has emerged within the discourse of feminism. However, this pursuit is challenging as individuals experience the dual expectations of embodying a professional identity and conforming to the diverse ideals of womanhood in Indonesian society. On the one hand, neoliberal feminist discourses advocate for women's career advancement (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020; Orgad & Gill, 2022; Rottenberg, 2018a; Sandberg, 2013). Conversely, societal norms continue to emphasise familial responsibilities (Murtiningsih & E., 2017; Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022). This complexity mirrors Rottenberg's observation that women are often expected to 'have it all' (Rottenberg, 2018a: 25). This phenomenon inspires this research and seeks to explore how the media represent the diverse meanings associated with professional working women, particularly in alignment with neoliberal feminist discourse.

Authors such as Sandberg (2013) assert that professional working women have confidence, self-reliance, and leadership traits. Nevertheless, this Western perspective has been met with opposition from authors like Banet-Weiser, Gill, Orgad, and Rottenberg. Notably, considering the historical context of colonialism (Mohanty, 1991) and cultural imperialism (Mohammadi, 1997), womanhood may have undergone a universal transformation from Western nations to the Global South. Upon reaching Indonesia, this perspective intertwines the Western viewpoints and Middle Eastern Islamic discourse to form a localised interpretation, wherein women can pursue careers while prioritising familial duties (Oktaviani et al., 2021: 1169; Jones, 2010: 275; Rinaldo, 2013: 140).

This study aims to examine the influence of neoliberal feminist discourses on the media representation of professional working women in Indonesia. Addressing this, the research will explore two supporting questions: the nodal points of professional working women

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within neoliberal feminist discourses and the antagonism between discourses in fixating on the meaning of professional working women. Additionally, by employing Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of intertextuality, the study will investigate how these discourses blend their ideals. The methodology involves using Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis framework, encompassing nodal points, floating signifiers, social antagonism, and hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The analysis will focus on two distinct publications, The Jakarta Post and Republika, each with distinct viewpoints on the portrayal of women.

The primary thesis of this dissertation is that the portrayal of professional working women in Indonesian media is intricately shaped by the interaction between neoliberal feminist and Islamic discourses. Supporting this, the study highlights how neoliberal feminist discourses emerge within articles and even slightly hinted by opposing viewpoints, while Islamic discourses also emerge in the dialogue. Furthermore, the research uncovers that although both neoliberal feminist discourses and Islamic discourses are evident, modifications, combinations, and intertwining in the perception of professional working women arise from surrounding discourses, explained through the concept of intertextuality. Lastly, the analysis emphasises the importance of media representations to reflect critical aspects of professional working women and the associated antagonism deriving from dominant narratives and consider the challenges and experiences faced by women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

This study is significant for its contribution to the limited literature addressing the portrayal of women in professional roles within media representation in Indonesia, specifically through Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. By examining discourse complexities within two distinct media platforms, this research fills a knowledge gap, revealing how these publications may disclose the complex interplay between antagonism and intertextual meanings associated with professional women. Additionally, the intertwining and intertextuality of feminist discourses within Indonesian media discourse have received limited attention. Moreover, in terms of theoretical innovation, this dissertation integrates Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory with Mikhail Bakhtin's intertextuality concept, underscoring the contingent nature of feminist discourses, especially concerning the

representation of professional women and how they dynamically intersect and combine with other discourses.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Neoliberalism and its role in shaping media representation

Watts (2022) outlined four perspectives of neoliberalism. While primarily known as ‘a theory of political economic practices’ (Harvey, 2007: 2), neoliberalism has also become ‘a hegemonic ideological project’ (Watts, 2022: 459), ‘hegemonic as a mode of discourse’ (Harvey, 2007: 3), and ‘the organisation of subjectivity’ (Brown, 2006: 693). As an ideology and a dominant dogma, neoliberalism aims to maintain the power of the elites through the process referred to as neoliberalisation, with different interpretations across multiple contexts (Harvey as cited in Ampuja, 2011: 292; Watts, 2022). Neoliberalism is also contended to exert influence across various domains, including media (Harvey, 2007).

The contextualisation of media representation is crucial for this research. In explaining media studies, Stuart Hall illustrated how media produce ‘meaningful discourse’ when encoding specific messages to its audience (Hall, 1980: 119). Consequently, decoding media messages can result in varied interpretations contingent upon diverse contexts, with their significance confined to particular cultural frameworks (Orgad, 2012: 55). One perspective reveals that the media, with its function in delivering ‘encoded messages’ (Hall, 1980: 119), possesses the capacity to alter the prevailing power dynamics and discourse formations (Foucault, 1987). From another perspective, media validate and perpetuate certain discourses (Orgad, 2012: 66). This explanation is crucial as the foundation for subsequent sections, which will delve into how media portrayal in Indonesia shape and alter the representation of professional working women.

The association between neoliberalism and media representation is underscored by their shared ability to maintain specific discourses, predominantly manifested through the transmission of media structures from the Global North to shape media representation, structure, and discourses within the Global South context. Couldry asserts that media ownership practices under the influence of neoliberalism often amplify voices within the

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media by corporate entities vested with authoritative power (Meyers, 2019: 62). This phenomenon is tied to the central principles of neoliberalism, wherein media content is strategically tailored to cater to commercial interests and ratings viability (Phelan, 2018: 6). Such practices extend their influence across the Asian media, including Indonesia (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000). This tends to marginalise women's voices and experiential narratives, consequently neglecting their perspectives (Burke and Lockhart, as cited in Meyers, 2019: 62; Mendes & Carter, 2008: 1704; Thornham, 2007: 98).

Drawing upon Orgad's discourse on media representation and its role in knowledge construction, and Couldry's argument on neoliberal media ownership practices, this dissertation arguably implies that the portrayal of women in the media may not necessarily embody all diverse groups of women. This resonates with Banet-Weiser's (2020: 12) and Ticknel's (as cited in Gill & Kanai, 2018: 320) argument, which underscore the media's function in disseminating subjects of neoliberal feminism, often promoting an idealistic vision of personal transformation to conform to the values of neoliberal discourses (Gill & Kanai, 2018 :320). In light of this, Matos (2017: 70) saw the contrary media stance, which empowers women on the one hand and oppresses women on the other. For a deeper understanding of the media's distribution of prevailing neoliberal feminist discourses, the next section will explore this topic further.

Neoliberal feminist discourses

The trajectory of feminist movements has evolved, progressing from the initial wave, which centred on equal compensation and agency over bodily autonomy, to the contemporary fourth wave, marked by its emphasis on identity constructs and feminist activism (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015: 397). Feminism operates not merely as a movement; but also assumes the role of discourse (Fraser, 2013a). Considering this ongoing progression, it is notable that neoliberal feminism has emerged as a distinct viewpoint.

This literature review will centre around the debate on neoliberal feminist discourses, specifically around the argument about how Western-originated neoliberal feminism has shaped and globalised ideal women's subjectivity, focusing on the self. (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020; Gill & Scharff, 2011; Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012; Orgad & Gill, 2022; Rottenberg,

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2018b; Scharff et al., 2016; Watts, 2022). Rottenberg argued that ‘feminist themes have not merely been popularised and “mainstreamed,” but have also become increasingly compatible with neoliberal and neoconservative political and economic agendas’ (2018: 5).

There have been various ideals that have underscored the construct of professional working women. The first ideal revolves around the personal attributes characterising such individuals. Rottenberg asserts that professional working women are ‘individualised, entrepreneurial, and self-investing – also cast as entirely responsible for their self-care and well-being’ (2018: 4). Moreover, Rottenberg illustrates the presence of more ‘high-powered women who embraced feminism’ (2018: 5).

This assertion finds resonance in Fraser's argument, which emphasises that neoliberalism has made ‘feminism an individualist’ far from social solidarity (as cited in Gill, 2007: 93). A complementary perspective emerges from the discourse of authors like Sheryl Sandberg. On the one hand, Sandberg emphasises the urgency to have more individualised and accomplished women. Furthermore, she stresses the importance of addressing internal barriers within women, including self-confidence, as pivotal factors in attaining leadership positions (Sandberg, 2013: 13). The debate surrounding the importance of working on internal barriers in response to challenges is closely intertwined with neoliberal ideals that prescribe a capacity to fight adversity—an attribute inserted by the concept of resilience as argued by Gill & Orgad (2018). This ideal which is also associated with the discourses of empowerment (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Miller & Plencher, 2018), promotes a disposition wherein women acquire the aptitude to rebound, engage in self-help, foster self-assurance, repel negativities, (Sandberg, 2013: 32) and consequently, persevere despite challenges, ultimately diverting attention from ‘structural inequality’ (Orgad & Gill, 2022: 75). However, this perspective raises disagreement, as it tends to propel women towards internalised empowerment, thereby eliminating the importance of securing access to ‘the structural, social, and material resources’ requisite for empowerment (Rutherford, 2018: 623). Rutherford proposes an alternative criticism, arguing that neoliberalism generates a gendered subjectivity, particularly tailored to women and girls, wherein autonomy and well-being are perceived as individually assumed responsibilities (Rich, 2005; Rutherford, 2018). Notably, the discourse has not frequently mentioned a supportive environment

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framework designed to address systemic problems. However, select authors acknowledge mentorship's significance in bolstering women's professional achievements (Gill & Orgad, 2018).

The second point is about the balance between work and personal life. Adamson argued that professional working women are intertwined with the concept of 'a work-family balance' (Adamson, 2017: 135). In this second point, an ongoing discourse has unfolded, with authors like Adamson (ibid) and Sandberg (2013) advocating for women's pursuit of a balanced career-life. Conversely, an opposing viewpoint contends that neoliberal feminist discourses impose an ideal upon professional working women through the notion of 'having it all' (Rottenberg, 2018a: 25). As argued by Rottenberg, this construct implies a paradigm wherein women are expected to achieve comprehensive fulfilment while doing it in 'the right way' (Rottenberg, 2018: 33). While on the one hand, the opportunities amid the neoliberalism world allow women to 'have it all,' Rottenberg proposes that the 'having it all' ethos also creates a dilemma for women, propelling women into a state of dilemma as they try to harmonise familial happiness and professional pursuits, navigating the landscape of conflicting expectations in these dual domains while striving to keep them separate (Rottenberg, 2018: 26). Amidst this discourse, while some scholars endorse the notion of a balance (Adamson, 2017; Sandberg, 2013), Rottenberg (2018) counters this proposition by asserting that achieving such a balance poses challenges.

The third point related to the discourse surrounding these ideals and expectations for women, which may be argued to align with neoliberalism, an economic orientation underscored by its market-centric focus on capital (Mohanty, 1991). Feminist discourse, within the context of neoliberalism, has been articulated as fundamental, positioning women as essential human capital crucial for economic growth within the neoliberal world (Fraser, 2013b). This assertion is two-fold: firstly, women are the targets of consumer markets and becoming the commodification to reinforce conventional notions of womanhood and femininity (Savigny & Warner, 2015); secondly, the combination of neoliberal and feminist paradigms further positions women to the status of commodities. As Savigny & Warner asserts, this stresses women's successes and accomplishments. Concurrently, the media landscape, as an extension of neoliberalism, exacerbates challenges

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in women's representation. Banet-Weiser contends that in this contemporary world, media constructs primarily emphasise 'individual empowerment,' particularly within the entrepreneurial sphere (Banet-Weiser, 2018: 103). In the digital media era, Tincknell similarly underscores the influence of global digital media in shaping notions of 'personal transformation' and characterising the parameters of expected conduct for women and girls within the ideal neoliberal subjects (as cited in Gill & Kanai, 2018: 320). Moreover, alongside neoliberal feminism, the past decades have witnessed the emergence of the term 'postfeminism,' linked to the neoliberal economic agenda (Gill, as cited in Carter et al., 2013: 283). This postfeminist classification incorporates diverse categories of neoliberal subjects, such as those deemed 'active, freely choosing, self-reinventing' (Ringrose as cited in Gill & Schraff, 2011: 283).

This literature review aims to grasp the core concepts of neoliberal feminist discourses as they relate to professional working women in Indonesia. It also critically examines these discourses. These concepts are essential for a deeper understanding of prevailing ideas about professional women in Indonesia, including traits like 'individualised, entrepreneurial, and self-investing' (Rottenberg, 2018: 4). Some scholars argue that universalising feminist values can overshadow diverse feminist perspectives (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Fraser, 2013b; Mohanty, 1991; Rottenberg, 2016). However, gaps remain in criticising neoliberal feminism, including women's agency to diverge from its influence, to conform to potential alternatives, and the rationale underscoring the relevance and suitability of these alternatives. Despite occasional mentions (Sandberg, 2013), the literature also requires an exploration of men's roles within these discourses. Notably, (Rottenberg, 2018b) suggests men are commodified in the neoliberal world, but their role and position within these feminist discourses require further investigation.

The transnational factor of neoliberal feminism

Building upon the preceding discourse that interrogates neoliberal feminist discourses, this literature review will portray the transmission of Western feminist discourses—among which neoliberal paradigms hold prominence—from their origination in the Global North to their universalisation, thereby highlighting their potential incompatibility within the

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sociocultural context of the Global South (Mohanty, 2003). The transnational factor of Western feminist discourses could be associated with the concept of cultural imperialism defined as the Western dominance seen in the 'coherent cultural-economic-geographical totality at the centre of global processes, over the rest' (Mohammadi, 1997: 186). Similarly, Amos and Parmar argued that 'that like gender, the category of feminism emerged from the historical context of modern European colonialism and anti-colonial struggles; histories of feminism must therefore engage with its imperialist origins' (as cited in McEwan, 2001: 97).

Regarding the transnationality of Western feminist discourses from their origins in the Western sphere to the Global South, Grewal and Kaplan, Jamal, and Spivak have collectively acknowledged the influential agency of Western nations in shaping and standardising the female experience through the development of diverse feminist theories (as cited in Mendes & Carter, 2008: 1703).

Consequently, Mohanty stressed that the dissemination of this universal experience, which endorses Western feminism discourses, not only generates the over-generalisation of women's experiences but also substantiates the authority vested in entities such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Western governments to portray and represent the lives of women within developing nations (Mohanty as cited in Matos, 2017: 85). This portrayal often depicts women in these nations as victims in contrast to empowered Western women (Calkin, 2015: 657). For countries such as Indonesia, characterised by a predominantly Muslim population (Mulya & Sakhhiya, 2021), Mohanty further criticises specific works that perpetuate the universalisation of experiences within Muslim societies, characterising women therein as relegated to the realms of the 'patriarchal family,' thereby positioning them as 'sexual-political subjects' (Mohanty, 1991: 27).

In a context more aligned with the locale and distinct focus of this dissertation, drawing on the insights of Mohanty, Paramaditha underscores the imperative of acknowledging the presence of characterised 'borders' that divide nations, races, socioeconomic strata, sexual orientations, religious affiliations, and disabilities (Paramaditha, 2022: 43). Understanding these distinctions leads to a deeper grasp of the diverse expressions of Global South

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feminism, which are rooted in the historical legacy of colonialism (ibid), which continues to this day.

The literature in this section has revolved around the phenomenon of cultural imperialism and the transfer of Western feminist discourses from their origins in Western nations to the Indonesian context. The examination of transnational factors of neoliberal feminism through the conduit of cultural imperialism assumes significance within the framework of this dissertation. Insights gained from scholars such as Rottenberg (2016), Fraser (2013b), and Tincknell (as cited in Gill & Kanai, 2018) underscore the contention that Western feminist discourses tend to overlook alternative discourses and divergent contextual realities. A historical trajectory traced back to Mohanty's discourse on women's experience universalisation reveals its resonance in contemporary times through the influence of neoliberal subjectivities propagated by Western nations (Watts, 2022: 459). The previous scholarly writings provide a robust basis for this study. However, looking deeper into how transnational influences and cultural imperialism affect how Indonesian women are portrayed in their country is crucial. These crucial works cover various situations, leading to different effects of Western feminist ideas in local contexts and whether there are alternative contestations towards these ideas.

Feminist discourses in Indonesia and the media representation around it

The preceding sections have shed light on the neoliberal constructs imposed upon women. In the subsequent segment, the attention has turned to the discourses of feminism within the Indonesian context, wherein this dissertation shall demonstrate diverse narratives that define the prevailing ideals and subjectivity attributed to women in this sociocultural context. It is important to recognise that discourse is inherently intertwined within a complex web of intersecting discursive frameworks. In his explanation of the concept of intertextuality, Mikhail Bakhtin stressed the notion that discourse engages with the other's discourse along its paths to the subject, sparking dynamic interaction (as cited in Todorov, 1984: 62). Building on Bakhtin's argument, Fairclough also stressed the potential for texts to be drawn upon and combined with other discourses contingent upon the social context during their production (Fairclough, 1992b, 1992a). This perspective highlights discourse's

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capacity for dynamic engagement with ideas, perspectives, and values from other discourses while addressing specific themes or subjects.

Before its independence in 1945, Indonesia had witnessed the emergence of the feminist movement. Oktaviani and colleagues (2021: 1153) recognise the rise of feminist activism, tracing back to its initial version in the 1900s under the emergence of a feminist figure, RA Kartini. This development path has led to different types of feminism, including liberal, neoliberal, and Islamic perspectives. With a specific focus on neoliberal feminist discourses within the Indonesian context, the influence of this paradigm has been manifested through the imagery term 'the modern professional woman' (*Wanita Karir* or career women) (Oktaviani et al. 2021: 1154). The term *Wanita karir* first emerged alongside Indonesia's integration into the global sphere and democratisation, particularly in the 1990s, coinciding with the emergence of neoliberal policies taking place at the same time as the dissolution of Suharto's regime in 1998 (Saraswati & Beta, 2021: 758). However, along with Indonesia's expanded participation in global trade during the period, Oktaviani and colleagues illustrated the importance of acknowledging alternative representation discourses. One of which is the Islamic feminist discourse, considering the country is the largest Muslim population (Mulya & Sakhhiya, 2021). The underpinning point of Islamic feminism is a call for women to align their lives with an Islamic ethos, such as wearing veils and following Sharia-based rules for their work (Oktaviani et al., 2021: 1154). This family-oriented perspective, underpinned by Islamic values, also emphasises the husband's role in permitting women's role in the workforce, thereby prioritising family over individual career pursuits (Manderson, 1983; Oktaviani et al., 2021).

In contrast, despite the Islamic values that traditionally prioritise familial responsibilities, Beta also stressed that alongside the emergence of employment and globalisation, Muslim women continue to redefine and reinterpret the construct of Muslim womanhood, striving to reconcile their professional aspirations and financial necessity with their familial obligations (2021: 827). The contestation between neoliberal feminism and Islamic feminism, wherein one arises from Western influence while the other emerges from Middle Eastern influence, coupled with another arising discourse like the Javanese patriarchal discourse, has put Indonesian women in a dilemmatic position professionally (Oktaviani et al., 2021:

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1169; Jones, 2010: 275; Rinaldo, 2013: 140). Javanese patriarchal discourse puts heavy emphasis on the state of motherhood (Oktaviani et al., 2021: 1169). Underpinning this influence is the pressure of familial obligation as an inseparable aspect of women's lives (Andaya, 2018: 39).

To complement the work of Oktaviani, Paramaditha underscores the production foundation of feminism and gender equality within Indonesia, tracing their origins to the legacy of Dutch colonialism (Paramaditha, 2022: 42). This historical legacy is also evident in the symbolic figure of RA Kartini, recognised as the forefront icon of Indonesian feminism (Paramaditha, 2022: 42). Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that even her pioneering role is not immune to the influences of colonialism, which strategically appropriated her as a representative of feminist ideal. The patriarchal narratives highlighted by Oktaviani are further reflected through the media portrayals concerning gender equality. Murtiningsih and E. (2017) contend that these media representations fall short of incorporating a substantive gender equality perspective, often focusing on physical appearances and the female body within news and advertising. Furthermore, within recent instances wherein women's empowerment occupies media discourse, the concept of 'ethical femininity' emerges as a discursive framework. This framework, also stressed by Indonesian media, underscores women's dual roles as mothers and professional working women (Oktaviani et al., 2021: 1167).

This section complements the discourse on feminism in Indonesia, mainly focusing on neoliberal feminism. While neoliberal feminism seeks global universality, Indonesia's feminist narrative is shaped by diverse discourses, including Islamic and localised perspectives. Indonesian women advocate for rights influenced by Islamic principles, blending with 'transnational feminism' (Rinaldo, 2013: 195) and 'Islamic cosmopolitanism' (Robinson, 2006: 175) as an alternative to Western ideals. More scholarly attention should be directed towards examining media representation and its relationship with neo-liberal policy orientations. Chadha and Kavoori revealed that Indonesia's inclination towards neo-liberal policy measures, particularly since the new order era, has coincided with the country's openness to global trade (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000: 488). This aligns with Indonesia's 'localisation' strategy, adapting Western-influenced media policies to resonate

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with cultural contexts and showcasing media agencies in resisting Western-centric content (ibid).

The literature above has captured discourses' contestation and intertextuality within the Indonesian context. These scholarly conversations have become a foundation that will subsequently be reflected through the discourse analysis of two news publications in Indonesia. Notably, an area that remains relatively underexplored within the discourse surrounding Indonesian feminist paradigms is their representation within the media. Specifically, the examination regarding how certain media outlets have produced discourses to perpetuate their authority and antagonise other media to maintain discursive narratives they have intended from the beginning.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The initial phase of this dissertation's literature review establishes the foundational framework by outlining the concept of neoliberalism and its influence on the landscape of media representation. Neoliberalism assumes significance, representing a hegemonic paradigm that extends its influence across various global domains, including the media realm (Harvey, 2007). While the dissertation does not aim to explore the dynamics encompassing the encoding of neoliberal feminist discourses behind Indonesian media agencies and their subsequent decoding by the audience, it is imperative to recognise the diverse discursive orientations embraced by various media entities. Notably, this difference is emphasised around the aspirations and subjectivities associated with professional women.

Subsequently, the second section of the dissertation examines more specific explanations of neoliberal subjects, with a specific emphasis on feminist underpinnings. Within this thematic framework, this dissertation has disclosed the role played by neoliberal feminist narratives in shaping broader conversations pertaining to women, both within a general or specifically around professional working women narratives. The study attempts to comprehensively analyse the interplay between neoliberal feminism and its manifestation within the sphere of media representation concerning professional women in the

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Indonesian context. In the analysis chapter, the analysis will be done by exploring the nodal points around neoliberal feminist discourses represented in the media coverage annotated below. Engaging with this discourse, the dissertation will then argue that neoliberal feminist discourses exercise a role in constructing the media representation of professional women.

Proceeding to the dimension of transnationality, a crucial insight to understanding from this discourse is that feminism, precisely neoliberal feminism, traces its origins back to the era of colonialism (Mohanty, 2003). This dynamic underscores not only the global universalisation of women's experiences but also embeds the incorporation of ideals and subjectivities that may differ significantly from the realities of women across diverse contextual landscapes (Calkin, 2015; Mendes & Carter, 2008; Mohanty, 2003; Paramaditha, 2022). Building on the third section, the last section encapsulates the discourses of feminism in the Indonesian context. Then this dissertation argues that while neoliberal feminist discourses have been in the conversation, other discourses, such as Islamic and localised discourses, are simultaneously occurring in Indonesia. However, as previously outlined, there is minimum literature exploring the conversation of this contestation within the media context.

Each of the four sections explores the array of topics that this dissertation aims to address, which is to seek to bridge an existing gap in the literature by scrutinising the discourse and contestation of feminist media narratives surrounding professional working women in Indonesia, employing the theoretical framework of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. Central to this theoretical approach are the nodal points, which serve as representational ideals associated with professional working women in the Indonesian context. Concurrently, the concept of social antagonism and hegemony assume significance in providing an analytical lens that showcases the discourses' partial fixation to achieve hegemony among ideals of professional working women across discourses persisting in the Indonesian context (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

The antagonising discourse around professional working women is exciting and has yet to be explored thoroughly in the Indonesian context. Building on this idea, the main point of

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this dissertation is to show how the media representation of professional working women has been shaped by different discourses, such as neoliberal and Islamic discourses. It is crucial to remember that they are not fixed and are contingent. They can transform through time, and more importantly, one can take the crucial points of the other and implement them to partially fixate on the meaning of being a professional working woman in the Indonesian context. Considering the theoretical and conceptual ideas mentioned earlier, the focus of this dissertation is to answer the following main research question with two subsequent research questions.

To what extent have neoliberal feminist discourses constructed professional working women's media representation in Indonesia?

RQ1a: How does media representation construct nodal points of neoliberal ideals such as individualised, entrepreneurial, and self-investing women?

RQ1b: Using the concept of hegemony and antagonism from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, how do feminist discourses antagonise each other through the different media agencies in Indonesia?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Drawing upon the critical examination of the literature and conceptual framework earlier, the utilisation of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory emerges as a crucial methodology for this dissertation. Its deployment is motivated by the ability of this theory to construct identities through concepts such as nodal points and signifiers and another ability to investigating antagonism between neoliberal discourses and other discourses that have influenced the portrayal of professional working women within the media landscape. This dissertation aims to critically explore which constructions deployed within news narratives serve as a discourse that shape ideals of professional working women.

Discourse analysis is chosen as the analytical approach for studying media coverage since it entails the examination of language in its actual use (Brown and Yule, as cited in Richardson, 2007: 24). This analytical orientation also aligns with Gill's argument of

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discourse as a 'social practice' wherein 'language is viewed not merely as an epiphenomenon but as a practice in its own right' (Gill, 1996: 142). In this logic, this research aims to uncover the discursive construction and contestation of discourses around professional working women in media.

Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory

The adoption of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is chosen mainly because it provides a lens through which discourse emerges to construct reality, create meaning, and, crucially, be contingent (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The influence of neoliberal ideas on how the media portrays professional working women and their experiences in Indonesia is essential to recognise. However, it is also crucial to understand that these ideas are not fixed and can change. They can be shaped and contested by other discourses.

Drawing from Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, discourse is defined as 'the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 97). Jørgensen & Phillips (2002: 4) extend this understanding by stipulating that 'a discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain nodal points' where 'nodal points are signifiers or discursive points that help to define discourse' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 104). One crucial aspect emphasised by Laclau and Mouffe is that 'every social practice is articulatory' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 105), rejecting the 'distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 99). They argue that discourses are incomplete frameworks with spaces for struggles about how they should be structured and cannot definitively establish final meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 99; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 7). From this book, several key concepts that will be used in the analysis are; 1) nodal points, 2) floating signifiers, and 3) social antagonism. These three concepts will later help to divide the discussion according to the sub-research questions.

First, 'nodal points are signifiers or discursive points that help define discourse' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 104). Nodal points can also be defined as 'a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4). The discourse under examination in this dissertation is the neoliberal discourse. In the context of scrutinising neoliberal

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discourses, critical nodal points around professional working women may include individualism, entrepreneurship, and self-investment (Rottenberg, 2018: 4). Nodal points are the key concept to answer the first sub-research question. Second, floating signifiers are implied as the 'signs that different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their particular way' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6). To extend this further, Torfing argued that in discursivity, each discourse aims to dominate this field by 'partially fixing the meaning of the floating signifier' (1999: 98). These meanings are context-dependent and subject to interpretation, which is relevant when analysing the term 'professional working women' and its diverse interpretations in different social and cultural contexts (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5). The floating signifiers concept will help explain the third concept, antagonism. It emerges in 'the impossibility of a final suture – the experience of the limit of the social' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 115). Phelan (2022) further explained that antagonism tends to require the naming of the other opposed by certain groups.

Furthermore, Jørgensen & Phillips, in their exposition of Laclau and Mouffe's theory, further highlighted social antagonism wherein 'different identities mutually exclude each other' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 24). Different identities and discourses may mutually exclude each other, as explored in the literature review, evident in the tensions faced by Indonesian women. Finally, grounded in Gramsci's theory, which Laclau and Mouffe quoted, 'hegemony becomes the key concept in understanding the very unity existing in a concrete social formation' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 20). Mouffe (2005: 18) also stressed that all efforts to consolidate fixed meanings can be referred to as 'hegemonic practices', and it is always prone to be challenged. Laclau and Mouffe further argued that hegemonic discourse is 'constructed through the process of articulation' (as cited in Torfing, 1999: 101) that can be defined as a 'practice establishing relations among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 105). Within this analytical framework, the analysis of six selected news coverages aims to explore the prominence of neoliberal discourses in shaping the representation of professional working women within the Indonesian context.

Sampling of data

A purposive sampling technique was utilised to select the six articles for this dissertation. The first three articles were procured from The Jakarta Post, a prominent Indonesian media outlet recognised for its comprehensive coverage of national and international issues. The Jakarta Post profiles itself as a bold and independent media (Suhenda, 2022). The fourth to sixth article was obtained from Republika, the most extensive media publication catering to a Muslim readership and encompassing various topics spanning from national affairs to lifestyle (Steele, 2013). A decade-long timeframe was considered during the selection process to ensure the articles' relevance to the portrayal of professional working women. Furthermore, each article consists of criteria, ideals, or subjects about professional working women as determined by the opinion writers. The articles are:

- Article 1: Women make good leaders. Can more of them rise to the top? – The Jakarta Post
- Article 2: Overcoming the lack of female leaders – The Jakarta Post
- Article 3: How employers in Indonesia can harness the full potential of female employees – The Jakarta Post
- Article 4: Muslim Women's Right to Work, What Are They Like? – Republika
- Article 5: Household and Career for Women in Islam – Republika
- Article 6: Becoming a Career Woman – Republika

Coding and annotation

Aligning Gill's discourse analysis framework detailed in 'Discourse Analysis: Practical Implementation,' this dissertation will undertake three sequential steps. The initial phase encompasses data collection, followed by coding procedures (Gill, 1996). The main themes from each article will be identified and colour-coded through this coding process. The colour-coding will be divided into five themes; 1) nodal points/discursive points of neoliberal discourses (red), 2) nodal points/discursive points of other discourses (yellow),

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3) floating signifiers (green), 4) hegemonic narratives (purple), and 5) antagonism (blue). The dissertation explores various themes, such as the portrayal of professional working women, in news coverage from two different media outlets: The Jakarta Post and Republika. The Jakarta Post, from the titles, showcases the tendency to lean towards neoliberal feminist discourses. Conversely, from the other media outlet, Republika, the dissertation will explore the emergence of alternative subjects, realities, and portrayals of professional working women beyond feminist neoliberal discourses.

Discourse Analysis

The coding process will be the foundation for discourse analysis, focusing on these thematic areas. Although Laclau and Mouffe do not explicitly outline this particular methodological approach, Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) enrich our understanding of it by proposing a series of questions to guide the analysis, including:

what different understandings of reality are at stake, and where are they in antagonistic opposition to one another? What are the social consequences if the one or the other wins out and hegemonically pins down the meaning of the floating signifier? (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 28).

In contrast to Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis, the adoption of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is driven by its focus on the construction of identities and meanings through concepts like nodal points and floating signifiers. By adopting their framework, analysts are empowered to explore how neoliberal discourses are constructed within the media, shaping specific portrayals of professional working women that align with neoliberal ideals. These portrayals highlight notions of individual success, competition, and self-reliance. This theoretical framework facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the broader social and political context in which nodal points of media representations are produced, highlighting the interaction among discourses, and shedding light on the underlying discursive mechanisms that shape representation of professional working women. In contrast, Fairclough's three critical discourse analysis primarily concentrates on language and textual analysis, potentially restricting the understanding of the broader elements, signifiers, nodal points outside language, and discourses interplay in

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constructing media representations (Fairclough, 2013). This choice also has considered how Laclau and Mouffe challenge the distinction between 'linguistic and material practices' (Dahlberg & Phelan, 2011: 4) and distinction between 'discursive and non-discursive practices' asserting that every element can be seen as discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 99). This suggests that every analysed element contributes to partial meaning. Additionally, while Fairclough emphasises power dynamics, the dissertation will focus on signifiers/nodal points that construct meanings, discourse interactions, and antagonism.

Ethics and Reflexivity

Discourse analysis offers valuable insights into the complexities of discourses surrounding news coverage. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge certain limitations and engage in a reflective examination of certain constraints within the scope of this dissertation. First, Schegloff criticised how discourse analysts often prioritise their chosen contexts over those experienced and emphasised by the participants themselves (Schegloff, 1997: 183). This underscores the necessity of attending to participants' perspectives and conversations rather than imposing preconceived contexts. Furthermore, as referenced in Poole (2010: 147), Widdowson's assertion underscores the analysts' capacity to select the features and texts for the research and the analysis within discourse analysis. Second, Billig further emphasised how discourse analysis requires the analysts' awareness of the 'social, political and cultural trends and contexts to which our texts refer' (Gill, 1996: 146). This reflexivity becomes a constant reminder to thoroughly understand the contexts and text referred to while acknowledging potential limitations in my knowledge, perspective, and familiarity with certain discourses. Therefore, Alvesson and Skoldberg underscore the significance of reflexive self-scrutiny on the part of analysts engaged in discourse analysis (as cited in Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). Finally, another reflexivity is that the process of encoding and decoding texts is not unidirectional, as it is influenced by the analyst's background and worldview (Breeze, 2011: 508). In conclusion, while analysing the construction of neoliberal discourses concerning professional working women in Indonesia, I remain mindful of the contexts in which I have been raised and the subjectivity that may impact my interpretations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Nodal points around professional working women based on neoliberal feminist discourse

Professional working women's representation can vary based on different discourses. These variations are illustrated through signifying chains, referred to as nodal points. Expanding on this, Torfing further emphasises the role of nodal points in establishing and maintaining the identity of a particular discourse by forming what can be seen as a common understanding or 'a knot of definite meanings' (1999: 98). In the context of neoliberal feminist discourses, specific aspects define the nodal points of being a professional working woman. This will become the first part of the results and discussion, specifically to answer the first sub-research question: 'How does media representation construct nodal points of neoliberal ideals such as individualised, entrepreneurial, and self-investing women?'

The first point from the literature review has highlighted nodal points of professional working women, as argued by Rottenberg, including 'individualised, entrepreneurial, and self-investing – also cast as entirely responsible for their self-care and well-being' (2018: 4). Sandberg (2013) also underlined the importance of being a leader for professional working women.

By closely examining and annotating six news articles from both The Jakarta Post and Republika, it becomes evident that The Jakarta Post's pieces concerning professional working women or female leaders tend to align more with neoliberal feminist discourses. The first keywords, 'women leaders,' were prominently featured in three articles in The Jakarta Post. In articles 1,2,3, the phrases 'women leader' or 'female leader' or simply 'leader' have emerged at least five times. Beyond emphasising the importance of women assuming leadership roles, in line with Sandberg's (2013) viewpoint that men still occupy dominant positions, these three articles from The Jakarta Post also tend to highlight conflicts and attribute the current lack of women in leadership positions to men. For example, article 1 tends to argue that certain qualities, such as self-awareness, are more prevalent among female leaders compared to their male counterparts. Correspondingly, article 2 draws

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attention to men's greater self-assuredness, while women are more likely to underestimate their capabilities. This linkage between women and leadership and the criticism of men as the existing leaders not only spotlight women's leadership abilities but also arguably suggests that leadership is a necessary and ultimate objective for women in their careers. Some of these assertions and tensions with men also motivate women to assume the roles currently held by men as leaders (Sandberg, 2013).

The term empowered women are also a floating signifier with different meanings across discourses. In the neoliberal feminist discourse, it can be argued that women must be empowered (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Miller & Plencher, 2018). Empowerment has emerged in article 2 through the phrase 'empowered women'. As an empowered entity, women should have personal traits such as 'confidence, bounce back and do self-help' (Banet-Weiser, 2018: 30; Miller & Plencher, 2018: 53). In articles 1 and 2, being confident and assertive seemed to be crucial traits for women, as Sandberg (2013) and Gill & Orgad (2018) argued. Article 2 not only arguably encourages women to be confident, but the writer also expresses how, currently, 'women often undersell themselves'.

In Article 1, the notion of 'low confidence' is argued as a contributing factor to the existing gender gap. Consequently, a common thread emerges from both articles, arguably suggesting that addressing low confidence is a requisite for women. Furthermore, Hearn's perspective, as detailed in the literature review, underscores the necessity for women's empowerment efforts to revolve around the concept of 'the self' (as cited in Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012: 27). In article 2, it was mentioned that 'women are advised to be more proactive in developing a broad range of skills.' Although the article does not emphasise internal mechanisms for fostering confidence, it is noteworthy that Article 1 tend to accentuate the issue of low confidence. An apparent alignment also emerges from article 5 from *Republika*, which hinted the importance of women 'having clear schedule and priority so that women's performance is more organised and more productive.' In terms of the self, these articles reflect resonances with the ideals identified by authors in the literature review. This appears to align with the propositions stressed by neoliberal feminist discourses, which underscore the imperative for women to undertake a personal, internally focused journey in their pursuit of professional roles (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Sandberg, 2013).

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The second point from the literature review, as evident in articles 2 & 3, could suggest similarities with the point made by Savigny & Warner (2015) concerning the commodification of women within the realm of neoliberalism, wherein women assume the role of human capital contributing to economic growth (Fraser, 2013b). In article 2, for instance, in the last paragraph, the author emphasised that 'gender diversity in high-level positions has significant benefits for both productivity and profits.' While in article 3, it is quoted that 'no better time than now for Indonesian employers to harness the full potential of the women in their workforce'. The point of women as human capital might be suggested to be projected and fixated as the future of an ideal workforce echoed across the three articles. For instance, article 3 precisely phrased 'the immense future potential for women in the Indonesian workforce' while article 2 emphasised 'gender diversity to optimise growth'. Collectively, these articles could be suggested to converge in envisioning women as pivotal human capital targeted to drive economic growth, encompassing efforts to increase women's participation and foster the cultivation of specific traits and identities, as mentioned earlier (Fraser, 2013b).

Drawing from these two points, on the one hand, the three articles manifest a direction that aligns with the ideals previously outlined. On the other hand, in contrast to Gill and Orgad's (2018) argument on neoliberal feminist discourses, wherein structural constraints tend to be marginalised, the media representation conveyed by The Jakarta Post arguably endorses the significance of sociocultural norms. In particular, the patriarchal societal framework, as evident in articles 1 and 2. Consequently, the proposed solution across the three articles encompasses establishing a supporting system for women's pursuit of professional careers. This acknowledgement of patriarchal underpinnings in media representation, hint to counter to the inclinations of neoliberal feminist discourses on individualism (Rottenberg, 2018: 4) and inclinations to overlook structural issues (ibid), underscoring the fluid and contextually contingent nature of discourses. Moreover, the proposition of a supporting system covered in the three articles suggests the underlining of the imperative of forging connections to challenge prevailing power dynamics that prioritise men, a notion underscored by several literatures (Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022; Robinson, 2006; Sandberg, 2013). The examination of these articles unveils the complex interplay

between media representations, women's career, and the broader societal frameworks in the process of fixating the nodal points around professional working women.

Working Women in Islam

In addressing the second sub-research question regarding the antagonism and contestation between two discourses in fixating on the meaning of being a professional working woman, this section aims to present the results/findings from three articles in *Republika* around Islamic discourses. While the articles from *The Jakarta Post* exhibit an inclination towards the neoliberal feminist discourses, the rest three articles from *Republika* drew attention to the professional working women based on Islamic values in Indonesia.

First, the three articles from *Republika* have managed to portray the nodal points around the roles and traits of women, which resonate with a family-centric orientation rooted in Islamic feminism (Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022; Rinaldo, 2011). As an illustration, in article 4, in the first paragraph, the author wrote about the limitation of women's roles of 'sexual encounters, laundry, and cooking', all of which are contextualised within the framework of their 'nature as a wife'. Resonating with this, article 5 emphasises 'the domestic role as a woman with a family is an irreplaceable task for woman,' article 6 also reinforces the duty of women to be at home.

Secondly, the analysis shifts to the role of husbands granting women workforce consent while ensuring continued prioritisation despite having professional careers. (Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022). Within Article 4, a strong suggestion is articulated through the deployment of the phrase 'main task,' thereby could suggest that notwithstanding women's professional pursuits, their husbands should remain prioritised. Furthermore, article 5 arguably exhibits the preference for women to secure 'permission from her husband' even in the context of a professional career. Unlike articles 4 and 5, article 6 did not focus on the role of women towards the husband. The presence of a husband can indeed be a determinant factor in the pursuit of a career, a circumstance determined particularly in the scenario of being a widow.

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Thirdly, the examination focuses on the constraints of 'success' and 'work' for women. Notably, article 4 provides more examples of permissible occupations for women, including 'assisting with childbirth,' 'beauty salons for women', and 'private teacher for women,' among other examples. In consonance with this, article 5 underscores the restrictions on women's occupation to: 'agendas of change in the community' and 'must be carried out according to Sharia guidelines' in line with arguments from Oktaviani and colleagues (2021). Resonating with articles 4 and 6, there are nine criteria as prerequisites for women's professional engagement, including 'complying with Islamic morals, stability of Her family, and security'. An interesting point from article 6 is that it stands out from the other articles by highlighting that women's career selections should be a personal agency rather than obligatory mandates, hinting resonance with thematic dialogues of neoliberal feminist discourses (Sandberg, 2013).

Across the three articles, the most important result for evaluating women's careers is their capacity to yield societal benefits and for the afterlife, thereby aligning with the notions of piety and righteousness (as evident in Articles 4, 5, and 6). This might infer the resonance with the argument wherein piety emerges as a pivotal instrument through which Muslim women may engage in diverse professional and communal activities (Rinaldo, 2011, 2013). Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the limitations, a common theme seems to emerge in the three articles, which showcase the husband's responsibility to alleviate the burden of women, thereby enabling their effective engagement within both the private and public domains (articles 4,5,6). Furthermore, despite some regulations that must be adhered to by women in the workforce, there have been narratives across articles that Islam does not hold women back from working, thereby presenting a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between Islamic beliefs and female professional agency (Oktaviani et al., 2021; Rinaldo, 2011).

This brief explanation of findings drawn from the three articles introduces an alternative interpretation or the other meaning of being a working woman. This discourse contrasts the hegemonic narratives fixated on neoliberal feminist discourses. Within the diverse contexts of Indonesia, this underscores the complex interaction of media representations,

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influenced not solely by neoliberal paradigms but also by cultural, religious, and societal variables.

Comparing the insights from these three articles with the previous articles from The Jakarta Post has showcased a bigger picture. This helps us to understand the ideas presented by Oktaviani et al. (2021), Paramaditha (2022), and Rinaldo (2011) regarding the diversity of feminist discourses present in Indonesia. However, this dissertation is not limited to two individual viewpoints. The following sections regarding antagonism will further explore the dynamics through which different nodal points around working women are translated as antagonism.

Antagonism and Contestation of Discourses in Indonesian Media Coverage

As argued in prior discussions, Laclau and Mouffe's perspective underscores the potential for antagonism among discourses, a phenomenon that can manifest even within the media (Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006). In the present analysis, such antagonism is evident in the dynamic contestation spanning these two publications. The two selected media outlets have illustrated the different nodal points attached to working women between neoliberal feminist and Islamic values. While the two nodal points are different within two different discourses, this section addresses the second sub-research question: 'how do feminist discourses antagonise each other through the different media agencies in Indonesia?'

In the conversation of these articles, each of the articles arguably has exhibited a form of antagonism directed towards the alternative discourses. First, from The Jakarta Post, the three articles are antagonising barriers or constraints that curtail women's accomplishments, encompassing factors like patriarchy and hierarchical systems. For instance, in article 2, the author used a strong phrase characterising Indonesian society as being 'strongly influenced by the patriarchy', possibly emphasising the hegemonic narratives and underlying structural challenges that impede women's progress within the Indonesian context (Mulya & Sakhhiya, 2021; Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022; Saraswati & Beta, 2021). This antagonism extends further to address how the patriarchal framework plausibly exerts its influence on terms like motherhood and the familial responsibilities that women shoulder. Resonating with this, article 1 also utilises another term, 'control of women's bodies', as the

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consequence of patriarchal communities as argued by some authors (Andaya, 2018; Murtiningsih & E., 2017).

Furthermore, in article 2, echoing the sentiments of article 3, a narrative of antagonism emerges, highlighting the challenge women face in achieving their desired work-life balance due to inadequate support for their familial responsibilities. On top of scrutinising prevailing social norms and systemic challenges hindering women's career advancement, article 1 criticises male counterparts, conveying a slightly strong sense of antagonism. The author employs assertions like 'women are better leaders than their male counterparts', 'men are more confident even when they are underqualified', or 'enough men without principles running the show.' These statements tend to imply a tendency of preference for women's leadership over men. Furthermore, the author also has outlined attributes for competent leadership. Within this context, the article, which subtly positions men in a subordinate role in leadership, signals a contradiction within The Jakarta Post's stance. While projecting men as a crucial supportive environment for women, the article could be argued to employ a depreciating tone towards men in other sections. As previously noted, article 2 compares women and men, potentially suggesting that women often undervalue their abilities, while men tend to display confidence even when their qualifications are lacking.

While The Jakarta Post subtly hints at antagonising particular feminist perspectives through its critic of concepts like 'motherhood' and 'family responsibilities', the sense of antagonism underscored within *Republika* is more direct, frequent, and linear across the three featured articles.

First, a shared theme among the three *Republika* articles is their tendency to challenge women to prioritise a career over their familial duties (Andaya, 2018; Oktaviani et al., 2021). For instance, Article 6 contends, 'Women leave the house to work and forget their essential roles as mothers.' Meanwhile, article 4 laments the prospect of a wife pursuing a career while entrusting her children's education to a domestic helper, underlining a 'requirement not to neglect main obligations'. Article 5 also emphasised that 'the noble task should not be forgotten or neglected by any material or cultural factors.' While these additional factors

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remain unspecified, they insinuate an antagonism with roles outside being a mother and a dedicated wife. Article 5 also employs phrases such as 'ironically they assume they have succeeded', suggesting that this negligence is an irony that women should not pursue.

Second, the three highlighted underscore the complexities arising from the concept of 'equality' championed in alternative discourse. For instance, article 6 mentioned, 'those who call for equality between men and women have been discriminatory' and 'she will work twice as hard as a man'. Additionally, article 4 adopts a more direct approach in antagonising another discourse by stating 'women's emancipation as an excuse' and 'women are even more aggressive than men in the career world'. This potentially suggest that in this globalised world, women should set limitations to the scope of their professional endeavours. Article 5 also employs expressions like 'obsessions of many women in big cities,' arguably connoting a less favourable interpretation of the aspiration for a successful career. Another antagonism mentioned by article 5 is 'women's liberation of feminist movements that have sprung up in the West' and that it is associated with the abandonment of traditional female roles within the household (ibid). Another antagonism mentioned by Article 5 is that women 'should not rely on this success like a superwoman' and acknowledges the limitation of women, which requires help from others.

Floating Signifier of Being Professional Working Women

Although not directly related to the research question, it is essential to address the concept of the floating signifier before delving into intertextuality, which illuminates common signifiers in portraying professional working women. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that these floating signifiers exemplify how various discourses fixate on specific meanings. In this context, the definition of a working woman diverges among the six articles, underscoring the disparate interpretations associated with this term across discourses. These floating signifiers denote different meanings within different discursive contexts. Two emerging concepts from the six articles revolve around success and equality.

The first point concerns the utilisation of various terms and adjectives to define the attributes of a successful woman, along with their implications. For instance, in article 2, the phrase 'empowering women with socioeconomic impacts' is employed. Article 4

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mentioned how women's 'career has benefits,' while article 5 mentioned how 'everyone wants to achieve success in life' and 'progressive woman for charity.' Furthermore, article 6 underscores the importance of women's contributions to societal welfare, emphasising 'equality between men and women' in this sphere. Within this framework, a consensus is seemingly evident among the authors of the six articles that women should strive for success. While initially, Islamic beliefs emphasised women's focus on family and children (Murtiningsih & E., 2017; Oktaviani et al., 2021; Paramaditha, 2022), there has been a shift towards acknowledging women's capacity for employment. However, the interpretation of 'empowered' and 'progressive' women as written in the articles diverges across the two discourses. The articles from The Jakarta Post lean towards fostering corporate growth and profits (Fraser, 2013b; Rottenberg, 2016), whereas those in Republika emphasise positive contributions to communities (Rinaldo, 2011, 2013).

The second point related to the floating signifier revolves around equality. In article 3, there is a distinct reference to 'equal opportunities for women.' Conversely, article 4 regards that 'both men and women have the opportunity to do good deeds.' Furthermore, Article 5 underscores notions of 'equal rights and responsibilities' and maintains that 'men and women are equally intelligent.' Similar to the preceding point, the concept of equal opportunities is subject to varying interpretations. The article from The Jakarta Post appears inclined towards equal opportunities within the corporate and profit realm align with the argument from Gill (2007). At the same time, the assertions in Republika tend to emphasise humanity's contributions to this world, aimed at highlighting the significance of the afterlife (Rinaldo, 2011, 2013). The main point to address here is how different goals of success affect the overall interpretation of women's success and empowerment. This complex interaction of floating signifiers helps us understand the broader societal focus in each perspective.

The Intertextuality of Islamic Discourses and Other Discourses in Indonesian Media Coverage

This study uncovers another discovery: despite the contrasts in opposing views and focal aspects concerning professional women across various discourses, there exists a realm of conversation, dialogue, and resemblances spanning the six analysed articles. While

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intertextuality was briefly touched upon in the discourse segment, this dissertation acknowledges the emergence of a conversation/dialogue within the articles, particularly concerning the depiction of working women.

A prevailing theme observed within these six articles centres on the idea that women face limitations to have it all (Rottenberg, 2018b). Article 2, for instance, contends that 'women could not be expected to have all the responsibilities at home'. Article 1 adopts a slightly different perspective in highlighting women's burdens, such as 'motherhood and family as reasons for their decisions to quit their jobs' (Andaya, 2018; Jones, 2010; Oktaviani et al., 2021). In a different publication, *Republika*, in article 5, the author emphasised the importance of 'synergy with husbands and sharing roles'. In article 6, by antagonising equality, the author mentioned, 'if a woman does outside work besides carrying out her duties at home as a wife and mother, she will work twice as hard as a man'. Consequently, across these discourses, the consensus plausibly emerges that women's pursuits require a support system, regardless of their careers.

Discussion

Having explored the various sections discussed thus far, this dissertation aims to answer the main research question, 'To what extent have neoliberal feminist discourses constructed the media representation of professional working women?' Before going into details of the supporting arguments, the central argument of this study is that the representation of professional working women in Indonesia has been intricately shaped by the interaction and antagonism between neoliberal feminists, Islamic, and other localised discourses. This implies that the final meaning of being professional working women is contingent and open for antagonism and contestation in the struggle for hegemony.

First, one might reasonably infer that to recognise the significant role neoliberal feminist discourses have played in constructing the perception of being a professional woman within *The Jakarta Post's* narrative. As aforementioned, key terms surfaced across three articles in *The Jakarta Post*, such as 'women leader,' 'confidence', 'women are advised to be more proactive in developing a broad range of skills,' 'productivity and profits,' and 'potential for women in the Indonesian workforce.' These terms potentially embody the

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ideal portrayal of working women as defined by neoliberal feminist discourses (Sandberg, 2013). Additionally, the preceding section of this chapter examines publications like *Republika*, which incline Islamic perspectives and engage in contestation against neoliberal feminist ideals. Despite this, *Republika* arguably acknowledges and aligns with certain notions from neoliberal feminist discourse, particularly the concept of women needing to be 'organised and productive.' However, it could be suggested that it is crucial to note that the three articles within *The Jakarta Post* also recognise structural challenges that hinder women's effective engagement in the workforce. This acknowledgement appears to contrast the stance often adopted by Gill and Orgad (2018) in neoliberal feminist discourses, which tend to overlook such structural barriers. A shared tendency of emphasis among all three articles is the significance of attaining a work-life balance, a narrative particularly favoured by women pursuing careers (Adamson, 2017). Article 2 could be argued to underscore the persistence of patriarchal and hierarchical systems in Indonesia, which hinder the realisation of this desired work-life balance. The acknowledgement of patriarchal norms within media representation, despite differing from the tendency within neoliberal feminist discourses to downplay structural challenges (Rottenberg, 2018b), highlights the dynamic interplay of discourses as they are contingent and are not always fixed to their initial meanings.

Second, it becomes evident that while neoliberal feminist discourses seek to establish a partial fixation on the meaning of working women, predominantly outlined within *The Jakarta Post*, this dissertation will contend that, based on these two sources, the prevalent discourse arguably remains absent. This observation, though it counters the attempts at fixation by neoliberal feminism, is explained with the theoretical concepts of nodal points and antagonisms within discourse theory. The embodiment of neoliberal feminism within *The Jakarta Post* distinctly forms nodal points, shaping the understanding of working women. Nevertheless, Islamic discourses challenging and contesting these nodal points introduces alternative viewpoints of such identification. Given Indonesia's predominantly Islamic population (Mulya & Sakhhiya, 2021), a publication like *Republika* serves as a platform that accommodates these imperatives (Steele, 2013), shaping the ideals of working women in alignment with Islamic principles (Beta, 2021; Manderson, 1983; Oktaviani et al.,

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2021). These principles encompass notions such as women's central role within the family and adherence to Islamic ethical standards, ensuring their safety and well-being (article 4-6).

Moreover, two articles from *Republika* seem to oppose Western feminism, which contradicts Islamic values directly. The specific ideals championed by Islamic discourses, reflected in women's familial roles and commitment to Islamic ethics, serve as exemplars of meaning construction through articulation processes. The direct antagonism towards Western feminism, a departure from Islamic values, illustrates how discourses are engaged in a struggle for hegemony and legitimacy.

Furthermore, this antagonism and contestation underline the distinctiveness of each discourse through the presence of different meanings, where the floating signifiers related to key themes such as 'equality' and 'success' also diverge between these two discourses. This signifier variation implies contrasting interpretations of women's achievement and empowerment, particularly among writers writing and female readers consuming these articles. This interplay additionally provides insights into the broader landscapes of representations and feminist discourses presented in the literature review sections. Moreover, it underscores the alignment between neoliberal feminist and Islamic discourses and the discourse theory advanced by Laclau and Mouffe, particularly concerning the concept of floating signifiers, wherein the interpretation of equality and achievement arguably diverges.

The third point underscores the emergence of intertextuality amidst the antagonism. This analytical intertextuality chapter reveals another finding: despite the prevalence of antagonism and the pursuit of hegemonic narratives, a degree of intertextual exchange has emerged. This exchange is shown by the interaction of discourses during the fixation of nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), which ultimately results in a mutual adoption and transformation of the ideals attributed to being a working woman. For instance, spanning the six articles encompassing both *The Jakarta Post* and *Republika*, a consensus emerges among the authors regarding the pursuit of work-life balance (Adamson, 2017; Rottenberg, 2018a) as a central aspiration, alongside acknowledging men's role in alleviating women's

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responsibilities. As previously outlined by Laclau and Mouffe, the concept of hegemonic narratives involves a partial fixation to counteract antagonistic forces (Torfing, 1999). By integrating and using Mikhail Bakhtin's assertion of intertextuality, which involves considering other speakers' viewpoints (as cited in Morson, 1986), and Fairclough's explanations on the possibility of discourses' combination (Fairclough, 1992b, 1992a) with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory's, this study illustrates the dynamics within Indonesian media discourses concerning professional working women. While instances of othering and antagonising among media outlets are evident, a deeper examination reveals an interplay of discourses wherein one discourse intertwines with and revolves around others. Emphasising the significance of intertextuality and identifying similarities among discourses, this study could suggest the need to underscore their collective effort to partially fixate on the meaning of being a professional working woman, presenting a more comprehensive understanding of the media's portrayal of this demographic.

The intertextuality also reflects the transnationality chapter discussed in the literature review. On one side, Indonesia's history since colonial times, as highlighted (Oktaviani et al., 2021), may reflect the incorporation of liberal and neoliberal perspectives within the feminist movements. On the other hand, Beta (2021) and Oktaviani and colleagues (2021) underscore how Islamic values in Indonesia trace their origins to the Middle East. This combination aligns with points raised by Rinaldo (2011), who emphasises the contingent and contested nature of Indonesian women and feminist ideals over time. This new localised version of being professional working women are shaped by global neoliberal feminism and transnational Islam, which Indonesian women adapt to and translate in their way. One of the examples is the Javanese patriarchal discourse (Oktaviani et al., 2021). While not explicitly addressing colonialism, these two publications have indirectly recognised the influence of colonial history and enduring cultural norms in shaping perceptions of womanhood within the country. This insight, combined with the intertextual relationships among the six articles, forms the foundation for the argument presented in this dissertation — a new meaning making on the construction of the identity of professional working women. However, this dissertation may suggest that the new dynamics of global and local influences should be explored even further.

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Lastly, a notable concern arising from the analysis and annotations within the dissertation's six articles is the limitation in discussing barriers. While 'patriarchal,' 'hierarchical,' 'internal' challenges, and the 'lack of mentorship' are underscored, these focal points tend to shadow the wider socioeconomic disparities experienced by diverse groups of women (Mohanty, 2003). By primarily centring the discourse on these four challenges, the media representation unintentionally overlooks an array of additional barriers, including unequal access to education, poverty, and fundamental rights (Cook & Pincus, 2014). This limited presentation results in an incomplete public grasp of the various challenges encountered by different categories of professional women. In the context of this research, The Jakarta Post and Republika spotlighting patriarchal obstacles have yet to address the constraints faced by women spanning diverse socioeconomic strata, not solely those positioned as professional working women. This oversight sidelines the structural inequalities that significantly influence the experiences of Indonesian women when they aim to be a professional worker.

This dissertation highlights the need to acknowledge the complex nature of the discourse concerning professional working women in Indonesia. This extends beyond mere news coverage, encompassing the broader aspects of women's lives in the country. Drawing upon the insights of Butler and Scott, who advocate for a comprehensive exploration of the concept of 'woman' across diverse discourses (Butler & Scott, 1992: 373), this study could emphasise the significance of exploring how various discourses define and portray the notion of 'woman,' especially when discussing their multiple roles as professional working women, wife, and as a mother.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation integrates the literature on neoliberal feminist discourses and their portrayal within Indonesian media coverage. While some literature from Western sources outlined key elements in the construction of professional working women, other critics emphasise the need for a more inclusive global perspective, including that of Indonesia. Within the Indonesian context, the literature above review underscores the ongoing contestation and evolving interpretations concerning the roles of professional women and

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the challenges they encounter. Employing discourse analysis as its methodology, this study examines six news articles from two distinct media outlets - The Jakarta Post, which arguably leans toward a neoliberal feminist discourse, and Republika, which arguably aligns with Islamic discourse.

The central thesis of this dissertation asserts that the interplay between neoliberal feminist, Islamic discourses, and a more localised narrative intricately influences the media representation of professional working women in Indonesia. Analysis of articles from The Jakarta Post and Republika reveals that while neoliberal feminist discourse emphasises empowerment and work-life balance, Islamic discourse counters these notions by highlighting familial responsibilities and ethical standards. This study underscores the intertextual dynamics, antagonism, and discursive struggles as these discourses engage with and antagonise each other. Furthermore, despite antagonism, whether direct or through divergent interpretations of shared terms, the research identifies a mutual adaptation and transformation of ideals around professional working women within the context of intertextuality, showcasing that discourses are contingent and not final.

This research's significance lies in its contribution to the limited existing literature concerning the representation of professional working women within media coverage, mainly through the lens of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. By exploring the discourse dynamics within two media publications, this study addresses a gap in the literature. It reveals how different outlets arguably embody the interplay of antagonism and intertextuality meanings regarding professional working women.

To note, this dissertation is without limitations. The focus on only two publications calls for further examination of broader media representations in Indonesia. Additionally, my biases deriving from cultural and discursive backgrounds could be further explored to comprehend better the socioeconomic nuances impacting professional working women beyond those covered by The Jakarta Post and Republika. Moreover, while the study employs discourse analysis inspired by Laclau and Mouffe, it recognises the need for future research to delve into power dynamics played by media outlets, especially regarding the

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maintenance of particular meanings and the neglect of other discourses by media representatives.

The implications for future research are noteworthy. First, it unveils how writers across diverse news media convey distinct meanings of professional working women, offering insights into issues such as marginalisation, oppression, and disparities from varied standpoints. Second, it draws attention to power dynamics that transcend the media's capacity to shape specific representations and highlights how differing media stances aim to encode specific narratives for their audiences. Third, the evolving power dynamics between men and women in society require further investigation, as existing literature primarily touches on women's roles. Fourth, the research opens avenues to explore working women from diverse socioeconomic contexts, expanding the understanding of challenges faced by different groups. A more inclusive representation of women from diverse backgrounds is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and accomplishments faced by professional women and for fostering a more equitable and empowering narrative that reflects the realities of all women striving for success in the workforce.

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APPENDICES

As outlined above, the coding and annotation of the news articles is divided into five themes: 1) nodal points/discursive points of neoliberal discourses (red), 2) nodal points/discursive points of other discourses (yellow), 3) floating signifiers (green), 4) hegemonic narratives (purple), and 5) antagonism (blue).

APPENDIX A

Women make good leaders. Can more of them rise to the top?



In this file photo taken on April 20, 2020 New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern speaks at a post-Cabinet media conference at Parliament House in Wellington. (Pool/AFP/Mark Mitchell)

- Nodal points/discursive points of neoliberal discourses █
- Nodal points/discursive points of other discourses █
- Floating signifiers █
- Hegemonic Narratives █
- Antagonism █

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As the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of female state leaders are managing this historical crisis in their respective

countries better than their male counterparts. antagonising male leaders and hegemonic narratives at the same time of how women can be better leader

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's clear, direct and empathic communication style got the country to come together to contain the new coronavirus. German Chancellor Angela Merkel based her response on science and has been blunt on how COVID-19 will stay in our lives for a long time. Under the leadership of President Tsai Ing-wen, China's neighbor Taiwan prioritized public health and managed to keep the number of cases below 500 and the death toll to seven people.

nodal points around female leaders' characters

antagonising and using othering word such as 'meanwhile' and 'strongmen'

Meanwhile, strongmen such as presidents Donald Trump in the United States, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Joko "Jokowi" Widodo in Indonesia underestimated the coronavirus in its early stages, dragging their feet in taking action and downplaying the health risk of COVID-19 on the people in their countries.

antagonising and using othering word such as 'dragging their feet' to antagonise men

Many scholars have argued that the world is safer and more humane where women are in charge. Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman wrote in the Harvard Business Review that research shows women score higher than men in most leadership skills.

aiming to fixate the hegemonic narratives of a better world when women are in charge

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aiming to fixate the hegemonic narratives of women leader with words like 'show effective leadership'

Women leaders not only show effective leadership capabilities that are IQ-based, such as having technical or professional expertise and the ability to analyze problems and come up with solutions; they also more commonly show behaviors that stem from high emotional intelligence, such as displaying high integrity and honesty, inspiring and motivating others, and collaborating and developing relationships – behaviors that build trust.

aside from hegemonic narratives, having expertise, and having the personality to be behavior and traits of women are also nodal points in neoliberal feminist discourses

another hegemonic narratives by saying 'when we look everywhere' fixating that few leaders are women

Yet despite this, when we look everywhere, few women are in decision-making positions. Nearly half of the world's population is women. But in 2020, out of 193 states that are members of the United Nations, only 12 are led by women.

antagonising several barriers to women leadership such as patriarchal communities and structural barriers

Around the world, legal discrimination against women, unfair social norms and attitudes, and the controlling of women's bodies by patriarchal communities and governments continue to create structural barriers to gender equality. For example, according to the UN's Economic, Social and Cultural Organization, more girls than boys are not getting an education. And according to the World Bank, in 2019 less than half (47.7 percent) of all women participated in the labor force.

narrating/fixating that gender inequalities as a current situation taking place for women leaders

Of those who have survived these hurdles, completing their education and securing jobs, many don't rise to leadership positions. In 2019, the world saw women holding only 29 percent of senior management roles in corporations.

motherhood can have different meaning across discourses in here it is a constraint/barrier

In addition to the gender inequalities in education and labor participation, women dropping off from the labor force after marriage and motherhood and low confidence among young women over their leadership capabilities contribute to this gender gap in leadership positions.

nodal points around women leaders to have self-confidence

hegemonic narratives of the situation/gap between men and women

So what can those who are already in leadership positions do to make sure more women sit in the top positions?

nodal points a direct statement of a woman leader

I am among few women who hold a top position in an organization. I lead The Conversation Indonesia, a nonprofit media startup that shares expert knowledge to help the public make informed decisions.

Learning from my journey as a woman leader as well as from the experience of my female peers who are raising children, I believe leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors can provide at least three things to enable more women to reach senior positions in organizations.

the narrative of work-life balance as an important hegemonic narrative to achieve

First, create a work culture that promotes work-life balance. Organizations can provide a flexible work arrangement, allowing workers to decide where to work and, if possible, when they start and end their work hours. COVID-19 social restrictions show that many work tasks can be completed anywhere with an internet connection, making office attendance unnecessary.

flexible work arrangement as part of nodal points of requirements of women leaders to pursue their career

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Flexible work arrangements will not only support more women, who disproportionately take on the bulk of domestic duties in the family, to stay in the workforce; it will also provide opportunities for men to contribute more to domestic chores and parenting.

maintaining women as human capital

floating signifier of what it means to be men. in here, men need to also contribute to domestic chores and parenting

In urban areas like Jakarta, female labor force participation rates are highest in women between 25 and 29 years – reaching nearly 67 percent. But when women enter their 30s, the rate drops to 53.82 percent. According to research by economist Diahhadi Setyonaluri 53 percent of women who have been married cite marriage, motherhood and family as reasons for their decisions to quit their jobs. Having to forgo long commutes and long hours at the office will help women avoid having to make the difficult decision of giving up their careers.

motherhood is antagonised to constrain women from being a leader

nodal points of building leadership skills in women as the neoliberal feminist discourse

Second, sponsor competent women workers to take on projects that can build their leadership skills. A lifetime of being told to be dutiful often makes women reliable workers. But this might also stop them from believing that they deserve to take charge. Many women often don't apply for a position unless they convinced that they are 100 percent qualified. Meanwhile, men are more confident in trying out for higher positions even when they are underqualified.

fixation of narratives that women are 'dutiful' and 'reliable workers'

antagonising women's dutiful trait

antagonising men by saying 'when they are underqualified'

Zenger and Folkman's research also compared how men and women assess their confidence. They found women under 25 have lower confidence than their male peers, and that this gap closes at 40. Having someone believing in their abilities provides the initial boost for young women to increase their confidence.

fixation of how women usually have lower confidence than men

mentorship, coaching, and training to enhance women's leadership skills as part of neoliberal discourses, where women are human capital

Third, after identifying emerging women leaders, provide them with resources, such as mentorship, coaching and training, to improve their leadership skills. Some people show leadership traits from a young age, but for many people, it's a learned skill acquired through experience. Mentor them along the way and watch them learn from their mistakes.

fixating the kind of leaders traits needed in society

We have seen enough men without principles running the show. We need more leaders with humility, self-awareness and empathy, traits commonly found in women. Imagine if more leaders – regardless of gender – exhibited these traits. Society would be better off as a whole.

antagonising men by condescending words such as 'without principles running the show'

indirectly saying that men don't have the traits of what women have

Executive editor, The Conversation Indonesia and a 2019 Asia-Pacific Obama leader

APPENDIX B

Menjadi Wanita Karier

Red: Agung Sasongko



Wanita karier

- Nodal points/discursive points of neoliberal discourses █
- Nodal points/discursive points of other discourses █
- Floating signifiers █
- Hegemonic Narratives █
- Antagonism █

nodal points of women's roles in Islamic discourse

acknowledging the presence of women who want to pursue career in this globalised world

REPUBLIKA.CO.ID, JAKARTA -- **Pemikiran klasik menganggap** peran wanita zaman dahulu tidak lebih dari urusan kasur, sumur, dan dapur. Waktu itu, kaum wanita dianggap tak perlu sekolah tinggi-tinggi. Toh pada akhirnya mereka akan menikah, menjadi istri, dan kembali ke "kodrat" mereka mengurus kasur, sumur, dan dapur tadi.

Islamic discourse and a hegemonic narrative by Islamic discourse of women's roles

fixating the narratives of women's purpose in life

Semakin maju cara berpikir dan didukung teknologi dan informasi, kaum wanita tak mau lagi jika didoktrin demikian. Sebagaimana laki-laki, **wanita juga ingin mempunyai karier dan dunianya sendiri.** Namun, ada juga yang kebalasan dengan dalih emansipasi wanita. Kaum wanita bahkan lebih agresif dibanding laki-laki di dunia karier. Bagaimanakah sebenarnya tuntunan Islam dan batasan syariat bagi wanita yang ingin berkarier?

antagonising women's emancipation and emphasising that women are aggressive - not a positive connotation

Dalam beramal kebajikan, Allah SWT tidak membeda-bedakan gender. **Baik laki-laki maupun perempuan sama-sama memiliki kesempatan untuk beramal saleh sebaik-baiknya.** Firman Allah SWT, "Sesungguhnya Aku tidak menyia-nyiakan amal orang-orang yang beramal di antara kamu, baik laki-laki atau perempuan," (QS Ali Imran [3]: 195).

the 'equal opportunities' might have different meanings. good deeds also might have different meaning across different discourses

Laki-laki dan perempuan mendapatkan kesempatan yang sama dalam beramal saleh. Keduanya sama-sama mendapatkan balasan di akhirat kelak atas usaha mereka dalam bidang kebaikan. Jadi, dalam konteks fastabiqul khairat (berlomba-lomba dalam kebaikan) laki-laki dan perempuan benar-benar sama di hadapan Allah SWT.

the 'equal opportunities' might have different meanings. good deeds also might have different meaning across different discourses

Firman-Nya, "Siapa yang mengerjakan amal saleh, baik laki-laki maupun perempuan dalam keadaan beriman, maka sesungguhnya akan Kami berikan kepadanya kehidupan yang baik," (QS an-Nahl [16]: 97). Tak ada dalil secara **mutlak yang melarang kaum wanita bekerja.** Apalagi, konteks pekerjaan tersebut adalah amal saleh serta menyemai kebaikan di masyarakat.

limitation of work for women in the context of Islamic discourse

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limitation of how women should stay at home and men's job is to work

Sebagian kalangan memerintahkan kaum wanita hanya berdiam diri di rumah. Ada yang berpemahaman, cukup laki-laki saja yang bekerja, sementara istri dan anak perempuan mereka di rumah. Mereka berdalil dengan ayat, "Dan hendaklah kamu tetap di rumahmu dan janganlah kamu berhias dan bertingkah laku seperti orang-orang Jahiliyah yang dahulu." (QS al-Ahdzab [33]: 33).

emphasising the role of men to work instead of women

in this discourse there are some conditions where women can go out. meaning women don't always have to stay at home

Dalam tafsirnya, ayat ini tidak mutlak melarang kaum wanita untuk keluar rumah dengan sebab-sebab tertentu. Ayat ini tertuju kepada istri-istri Nabi SAW. Namun, dalam riwayat, istri-istri Nabi SAW pun didapati keluar rumah. Bahkan, Aisyah RA pernah mengikuti Perang Jamal sepeninggal Rasulullah SAW.

Para ulama menerapkan kaidah, al-ibrotu bikhusus as-sabab, la bi'umum al-lafaz. Maksudnya, pengambilan hukum dari suatu ayat diambil dari sebab-sebab khususnya, bukan dari keumuman lafaz hukumnya. Ayat ini menghukum kaum wanita secara umum (tidak hanya istri-istri Nabi SAW) agar tidak keluar rumah. Tetapi, ada sebab-sebab tertentu yang membolehkan mereka keluar rumah. Jadi, berdiam diri di rumah yang dimaksudkan ayat ini bukanlah tanpa pengecualian.

floating signifiers where the context of rules for women to go out might differ according to the interpretation of different entities in Islamic discourse

Pada masa Rasulullah SAW, ada beberapa sahabiyah yang punya karier di luar rumah. Ada di antara sahabiyah yang ikut berperang. Bahkan, istri Rasulullah SAW, Khadijah RA, adalah seorang pebisnis andal. Tak dimungkiri, kekayaan Khadijah RA-lah yang mendanai dakwah Rasulullah SAW di masa permulaan Islam.

emphasising the fixation of jobs that should be done by women

Bahkan, ada beberapa bidang karier bagi wanita yang kenyataannya sangat dibutuhkan. Misalkan, menjadi bidan atau dokter kandungan. Menolong persalinan seyogianya memang ditangani kaum wanita. Demikian juga menjadi guru privat bagi kaum wanita, membuka salon kecantikan khusus wanita, dan seterusnya. Pekerjaan-pekerjaan ini adalah bidang karier bagi kaum wanita. Jadi, melarang kaum wanita secara mutlak untuk berkarier di luar rumah justru memberi kesenjangan dalam masyarakat.

several career fields to be limited as the role for women

fixation of what careers are suitable for women

fixation of women's roles importance in these careers to avoid societal gap

Demikian juga kondisi rumah tangga yang memaksa wanita harus bekerja. Misalkan, janda yang ditinggal mati suaminya. Atau suami yang tidak sanggup lagi mencari nafkah bagi keluarganya. Baik karena sakit maupun uzur-uzur lainnya. Wanita tak bisa berdiam diri saja di rumah. Ia harus bekerja untuk menghidupi anak dan keluarganya.

several conditions in Islamic discourses that allow women to work

Atau, suami bekerja dengan gaji yang terlalu kecil sehingga tak mencukupi kebutuhan pokok keluarga. Istri terpaksa harus ikut bekerja. Memang tak ada salahnya, demi cita-cita keluarga mereka dan masa depan anak-anak mereka.

another condition in Islamic discourses that allow women to work

Tak dimungkiri, wanita yang telah bersuami milik mutlak suaminya. Tugas utamanya adalah menjadi istri seutuhnya bagi suami. Tugas kedua, mendidik dan mengasuh anak-anaknya dengan baik. Jika dua tugas utama ini dapat dijaga dengan baik dan sempurna, apa salahnya bagi istri untuk ikut berkarier di luar rumah.

using the word 'undeniably' and 'absolute' to fixate the property role of women to husband

women have to do the dual roles of being husband's property and caring for children in this discourse

in this discourse while it is hegemonic, this is also the nodal point of women in Islamic discourses

CAN WOMEN REALLY HAVE IT ALL?

	<p>Soal mengurus urusan rumah, seperti memasak, mencuci, beres-beres rumah, menyetrika, menyapu dan bersih-bersih, semua tugas ini bisa diwakilkan kepada pembantu. Namun, dua tugas utama, yakni melayani suami dan mendidik anak, tentu tak dapat digantikan. Alangkah malangnya jika istri punya karier di luar rumah, sementara pendidikan anak hanya dipercayakan pada pembantu.</p>	<p>emphasising the role of women to only serve husband and educate children</p> <p>antagonising women who cannot serve these purposes</p>
<p>antagonising the slander and security risks for some women which limit the kind of occupations women can have</p>	<p>Pembolehan bagi wanita untuk berkarier di luar rumah bukan dilepas begitu saja. Para ulama mensyaratkan, wanita yang bekerja haruslah pekerjaan-pekerjaan yang diizinkan syariat (halal) dan sesuai dengan kodrat mereka. Misalkan, wanita yang memilih jadi tukang ojek. Tentu akan banyak menimbulkan fitnah dan rawan keamanan bagi mereka. Ada unsur khalwat (berduaan dengan lawan jenis) sehingga mereka rawan diganggu. Serta pekerjaan-pekerjaan sejenisnya.</p>	<p>conditions/nodal points for women to have career according to Shari'a</p>
	<p>Selain itu, disyaratkan bagi wanita yang berkarier di luar rumah untuk memperhatikan adab-adab Islami. Hal ini mencakup cara berpakaian yang menutup aurat secara sempurna serta akhlak ketika berinteraksi dengan lawan jenis. Wanita tersebut juga harus menghindari khalwat dengan lawan jenis. Serta tidak menimbulkan fitnah dalam melakoni pekerjaan mereka.</p>	<p>hegemonic narratives in Islamic discourse to emphasises by stating 'imperative' for women to pay attention to Islamic etiquette</p> <p>using the word 'must' to emphasise regulations for women</p>
<p>antagonising the slander and security risks for some women which limit the kind of occupations women can have</p>	<p>Misalkan, wanita yang berbicara dengan lawan jenis tidak boleh melemahlembutkan kata-katanya sehingga membangkitkan syahwat laki-laki. Hal ini difirmankan Allah SWT, "Maka janganlah kamu tunduk dalam berbicara sehingga berkeinginan orang yang ada penyakit dalam hatinya dan ucapkanlah perkataan yang baik." (QS al-Ahdzab [33]: 32).</p>	
	<p>Di samping itu, wanita yang keluar rumah baik bekerja ataupun tidak haruslah seizin suami atau orang tua mereka. Syarat selanjutnya, karier wanita di luar rumah tidak mengabaikan kewajiban utamanya, yakni melayani suami dan mengurus anak-anaknya. Jika syarat-syarat tersebut dapat dipenuhi seorang wanita, ia bisa berkarier di luar rumah. Apalagi, kariernya mempunyai manfaat dan menebar kebaikan di masyarakat. Tentu menjadi ladang amal saleh pula baginya.</p>	<p>in Islamic discourse women have to submit and have permission from husbands and should not act on her own will based on this article</p> <p>antagonising women who 'neglect' their obligations</p>
<p>condition where a woman can have a career</p>		<p>the term 'career has benefits' might have different meaning across different discourses</p>

APPENDICES REFERENCES

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