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# Double Burden and Women's Well-Being Issues: Implications for Social Relations from the Perspective of Hannah Arendt's Vita Activa

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## Abstract

This study explores the double burden of women through the lens of Hannah Arendt's *vita activa*, encompassing its three main dimensions: labor, work, and action. The analysis highlights how women face structural challenges in balancing domestic and public roles due to gender biases and patriarchal norms that place them in a subordinate position. This double burden not only creates physical and mental strain but also negatively impacts women's overall well-being in economic, health, and social aspects. The labor dimension reflects repetitive and undervalued domestic work, reinforcing women's subordination within the family and community spheres. In the work dimension, women encounter wage discrimination, limited access to leadership positions, and exclusion from more prestigious job sectors, directly affecting their economic well-being. Within the action dimension, social barriers restrict women's participation in the public sphere and decision-making processes, reducing their opportunities to influence policies that could enhance well-being and gender equality. The lack of policies supporting the redistribution of domestic roles further exacerbates gender inequality and hinders women's empowerment. This study underscores the need for structural changes in social and economic policies to foster more inclusive and equitable well-being for women. The philosophical-hermeneutic approach employed in this research provides a deeper understanding of the social construction of gender and the urgency for more progressive and transformative policy solutions.

## Keywords

double burden, gender inequality, subordination, *vita activa*, women's well-being

## 1 Introduction

Dowling, as cited in Kamilna, Sari, & Muliawati (2022), discusses the concept of double burden through the framework of cultural dualism, which refers to a clear division of labor between men in the public sphere (working outside the home) and women in the domestic sphere (managing household responsibilities). This concept highlights that the double burden is linked to women's participation in both traditional and transitional roles. This idea aligns with the concept of motherism, which asserts that women cannot separate themselves from their roles as mothers and wives. If they fulfill these roles well, they are regarded as complete social and cultural beings (Murniati, 2004; Udasmoro, 2018).

This division of roles creates significant gender inequality, where women often become victims of patriarchal culture, while men maintain greater control over the public sphere, including decision-making within the family. This gender-biased patriarchal culture continues to evolve and be preserved in society.

The heavier workload placed on women positions them in a subordinate role, as if their contributions are of lesser value than those of men. Fakih (2013, p. 13) describes the economic marginalization of women as a consequence of stereotypes that perpetuate subordination, which subsequently manifest in societal beliefs and ideologies. Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), along with Frone, Russell, & Cooper (1992), argue that double burden conflict arises from the pressures of work responsibilities conflicting with family demands, making it difficult for women to balance both spheres.

The subordination of women is also reinforced by non-inclusive policies. Women are often perceived as emotional and less competent in leadership, in contrast to men, who are associated with being the primary breadwinners. Fakih (2013, p. 74) further states that women's work is frequently considered "supplementary" and, therefore, deemed deserving of lower wages, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes.

Gender injustice, subordination, and the double burden are interconnected and passed down through generations within societal culture. As a result, women often experience guilt when they are unable to fulfill domestic roles. Frone (as cited in Roboth, 2015), and Ananda (2024) demonstrate that this double burden can lead to stress, depression, and anxiety. Sumarna, Naiem, & Russeng (2013) found that female workers experience higher stress levels than their male counterparts due to general emotional fluctuations caused by biological conditions and more intense emotional factors. Beyond biological factors, this difference is largely shaped by broader social dynamics, where women's work pressures are often exacerbated by intersectional factors. Udasmoro & Nayati (2020) emphasize that gender intersects with other social categories such as age, ethnicity, social class, and education, intensifying experiences of gender inequality. In this context, various specific aspects influence the interaction between gender and these social categories, which should be considered when analyzing social phenomena from a gender perspective.

This portrayal demonstrates that double burden represent a form of role conflict within individuals due to the pressures of work and family responsibilities. This idea aligns with Hannah Arendt's analysis in *The Human Condition*, where she argues that there is no freedom in the domestic sphere, while true freedom can only be attained in the political sphere, where all individuals are equal (Arendt, 1998, p. 32). Arendt employs a phenomenological analysis to explain human activities through the three dimensions of *vita activa*: (i) Labor, work activity driven by biological necessity and the need for survival. This activity does not require the presence of others; in this realm, humans actualize themselves as animal laborans (working beings) and are considered yet to find their true identity as they remain trapped in the cycle of labor and consumption; (ii) Work, the act of creating objects to facilitate human life, with a fundamentally instrumental logic; (iii) Action, the highest form of human activity, which requires freedom and plurality. Action also involves the process of thinking as a pre-action phase (Arendt, 1958, p. 7). This action dimension expresses the political essence of human existence.

This study does not solely focus on Arendt's ideas and patriarchy as the primary factors of gender inequality but also considers other factors such as economic policies, globalization, and labor market dynamics, which contribute to gender disparities. In addition to a literature review incorporating Arendt's thoughts and those of feminist philosophers, this research is supported by empirical data obtained through interviews with individuals who have direct experiences with the double burden and gender inequality. These interviews provide deeper insights into how women navigate structural challenges in the workforce and how economic and global policies shape their societal position. By engaging with Arendt's *vita activa* concept, this study unpacks the double burden faced by women and explores gender well-being within a relevant discourse.

## 2 Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using the philosophical-hermeneutic method to analyze the application of Hannah Arendt's *vita activa* concept—which encompasses three main dimensions: labor, work, and action—in understanding the construction of gender in modern human activity. To support the

theoretical analysis, this research also integrates empirical data through in-depth interviews with several women in Indonesia who experience the double burden across various professions and levels, as well as surveys to collect their experiences related to gender roles in daily life. This data is expected to provide concrete evidence that strengthens the philosophical arguments and bridges the gap between theory and practice.

The primary data in this study includes Arendt's works, particularly *The Human Condition* (1958), interview findings, and survey responses from purposively selected participants. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from journal articles, books, and previous studies relevant to gender theory and contemporary feminist scholarship. The literature review examines both primary and secondary texts, where the primary texts offer direct access to Arendt's core arguments, while secondary texts enrich the interpretation by providing historical and contemporary contexts (Daly, 2010). The data collection techniques involve literature study and semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The analysis links the dimensions of *vita activa* with gender roles in modern society, exploring the interaction between these dimensions and gender dynamics while considering contemporary feminist theories, including the thoughts of Nancy Folbre, Diane Elson, and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

The validity of the study is ensured through data triangulation (Denzin, 1978), which includes theoretical analysis, interviews, and surveys, as well as contextualizing the data within a philosophical-hermeneutic framework. This research aims to produce a recontextualization of *vita activa* in relation to gender issues, providing a deeper understanding of gender roles in modern human activity, and offering a critical reflection on the broader implications for gender equality and social justice.

### 3 Discussion

#### 3.1 Labor: The Repetitive Cycle of Domestic 'Work' and the Fulfillment of Physical Needs

In *vita activa*, labor refers to the biological process that grows spontaneously, undergoes metabolism, and is bound to the process of production (Arendt, 1958, p. 7). This dimension has several distinctive characteristics: (i) Labor is a private activity, as it is closely related to how humans fulfill their basic needs. Labor is an individual activity carried out "alone" for survival. With the emergence of social institutions, the natural function of work in the private sphere was eventually brought into the public realm. However, this does not change the fact that a person whose life is dominated by labor is not necessarily any less human; rather, they become "silent specimens of the human species" (Arendt, 1958, p. 99); (ii) Labor is natural, as it is specifically directed toward meeting human biological needs. Arendt draws this term from Marx's perspective that "labor is man's metabolism with nature" (Arendt, 1958, p. 92). This indicates that labor is an activity driven by the natural demand to sustain life; (iii) Labor is cyclical, forming part of the natural cycle of life, from growth to death. The results of labor must be continuously produced, repeated, and never reach a final point.

From Aristotle's perspective, labor is the type of activity most closely related to the human body's condition, making it inherently linked to private needs. This dimension refers to the process of human life, which is fundamentally obligated to work and produce something to meet its necessities (Arendt, 1958, pp. 97–99). These activities are oriented toward the basic goal of human survival, such as cooking, cleaning, and household maintenance. They are typically associated with the domestic sphere and are regarded as repetitive tasks without long-lasting outcomes.

In the context of the double burden, the labor dimension becomes a dominant element in women's domestic roles, which they are expected to perform continuously due to the unending demands of family and household responsibilities. This expectation confines women within a cycle of repetitive domestic tasks, often without recognition or social appreciation. In line with Arendt (1958, p. 39), individuals can become slaves to labor when they are trapped within this realm. This creates an imbalance between domestic and public roles, negatively impacting women's well-being and reinforcing gender inequality.

Although Arendt considers labor inherently tied to the concept of "slavery," she does not seek to eliminate it from the human condition, as labor is an inevitability:

Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of a laborer is life itself (Arendt, 1958, p. 7).

This responsibility is perceived as an integral part of women's lives, even when they also work in the formal sector. The rigid work schedules in many companies exacerbate this issue, as numerous workplaces still impose long hours without flexibility or remote work options. This limits women's ability to divide their time between domestic and professional responsibilities, trapping them in a repetitive labor cycle that can lead to feelings of alienation. Arendt (1958, p. 168) also states that the labor dimension, when applied as a social relationship, can condemn individuals to a state of being "imprisoned" within themselves.

Hannah Arendt highlights that although labor is an unavoidable activity, modern society tends to devalue it. In this context, the double burden is a tangible manifestation of the devaluation of domestic work, which is primarily performed by women. Patriarchal societies often perceive this activity as a "natural duty" of women rather than a contribution equal to work in the public sphere. From a feminist economic perspective, however, domestic labor is a fundamental element that sustains workforce productivity in the public sector. Yet, without social and economic recognition, women bearing the double burden remain trapped in a subordinate position that perpetuates structural injustice.

The gender injustice reinforced by this labor cycle reflects not only patriarchal cultural norms but also socio-economic structures that fail to provide equal recognition for women's domestic roles. When women's domestic work is viewed as an obligation rather than a choice, it restricts their participation in productive activities that could improve their societal position. In this context, women lack sufficient space to transition into the next dimension of *vita activa*—work, which allows for the creation of something more permanent—or action, which opens opportunities for political participation and social transformation.

### 3.2 Work: Productive Contribution, Creation, and Sustainability

The second type of human activity is work. Arendt (1958, p. 136) refers to humans in the realm of work as *homo faber*, meaning human as a creator or producer. For Arendt, work refers to activities that produce something durable, such as products, works of art, or other projects with permanence, rather than merely fulfilling basic human needs. Work began with the discovery of production tools that helped humans increase their productivity.

According to Arendt, humans spend much of their lives engaged in labor, which reduces them to mere animal laborans (working beings). However, through work, humans can elevate their dignity to that of *homo faber*. In the professional sphere, work enables women to make recognized contributions to society. However, the double burden forces women to divide their energy between domestic responsibilities (labor) and productive employment (work). Their well-being is compromised as they are expected to meet productivity standards in both spheres, leading to mental and physical exhaustion.

In fact, most women with a double burden interviewed in this study stated that their partners (husbands) did not participate in domestic roles, such as housework or childcare. Moreover, in a patriarchal social context, women's work is not always valued equally to men's. Fakihi (2013, p. 21) even categorizes women's labor as "unproductive," meaning it is not included in national economic statistics, further exacerbating gender inequality. Similarly, Folbre (2001) highlights how domestic and care work is a crucial part of the economy but remains financially unrecognized due to its exclusion from market transactions.

In the concept of work, Arendt argues that human activities that create something sustainable—such as projects or socially recognized achievements—provide professional satisfaction and societal value. In Indonesia, women often face conditions where their professional contributions are not equally valued compared to men's. For example, gender-based wage gaps and limited opportunities for promotion demonstrate that women's work is often overlooked. The assumption that men are more suitable for

leadership positions than women reflects a tangible and subjective gender bias (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011).

Summarizing the statements from interviewees, some informal sector companies grant leave for female employees but without special support facilities. The leave policies for female employees in the informal sector vary significantly across companies. While some companies provide leave, they do so without additional facilities such as lactation rooms, allowances, or flexible working hours. Others implement equal leave policies for both men and women, provided that requests are planned in advance. Meanwhile, some workplaces offer maternity leave with supporting facilities such as breastfeeding rooms, postnatal allowances, or flexible work policies.

These differences indicate the absence of uniform policy standards regarding leave rights for female employees in the informal sector. Factors such as company size, employer awareness of employee well-being, and regulations governing the informal sector influence these policy variations. Consequently, the well-being and protection of female workers remain dependent on individual company policies, which do not always account for the specific needs of women, particularly in balancing work and domestic responsibilities.

The disparity in leave policies and support facilities for female employees across companies reflects an uneven level of protection for women in the informal sector. According to Kabeer (2008), working-class women face greater challenges because they often work in the informal sector with long hours, low wages, and without social protection. Many of them are factory workers, street vendors, or freelance laborers who lack access to health insurance or social benefits.

Furthermore, the work dimension also intersects with Jeremy Bentham's philosophy of hedonism, in which Arendt suggests that modern society justifies actions as long as they avoid suffering. Work is often associated with labor that has high economic value or generates wealth. When women are trapped in labor activities and denied full access to work-oriented employment, they lose the opportunity to achieve economic independence. Women confined to the domestic sphere often lose social recognition in societies that prioritize productivity as an indicator of success. This inequality reinforces gender stereotypes that domestic roles are women's "natural obligations."

This perspective is supported by Nancy Folbre in her book *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (1994), in which she develops the concept of caring labor—most of which is performed by women without fair economic compensation. Folbre's feminist economic theory helps explain how the double burden in both domestic and public spheres contributes to economic and social inequalities.

Folbre argues that unpaid domestic work is a form of economic exploitation legitimized by patriarchal and capitalist systems (Folbre, 1994). Thus, her argument reinforces the idea that gender inequality in domestic and public labor creates economic pressures on women, ultimately affecting their well-being. The phenomenon of the double burden exposes the structural injustices that affect women. In patriarchal societies, women are often not prioritized for access to creative and productive workspaces. Gender norms that position women as the 'caretakers' of households reinforce stereotypes that they are not "suitable" for jobs requiring innovation or significant responsibility, unlike men. Moreover, this structural discrimination extends beyond formal employment to social, economic, and political spaces. When women are denied opportunities to engage in work activities with significant impact, they lose their ability to influence the social and political structures that could improve their conditions.

Women's motivation to work is driven by various factors, including economic necessity and the desire for self-development. One of the primary reasons women enter the workforce is to contribute to family income, thereby improving well-being and meeting life's demands. The lack of opportunities to create something socially recognized hinders women from achieving self-actualization. Within the framework of *vita activa*, this prevents women from transitioning from the repetitive activities of labor to work, where they could create something more meaningful and sustainable. This barrier also reduces their chances of progressing to the next dimension—action, which opens pathways to political participation and broader social transformation.



### 3.3 Action: Participation in the Public Sphere and Social Interaction

According to Arendt, action involves interactions between individuals in the public sphere and reflects human freedom to express opinions and shape personal identity. This dimension is considered the highest human activity because it demonstrates that individuals recognize freedom and understand plurality. Humans become responsible subjects, using their freedom to organize and control the world. In her work *On Violence*, Arendt argues that what makes humans political beings is their capacity for action—the ability that enables them to gather, pursue common goals, and act collectively (Arendt, 1972, p. 116).

Arendt (1958, p. 175) outlines two characteristics of a pluralistic society within the action dimension: first, if humans were not different, they would not be able to understand each other. Second, if humans did not live differently, individuals would be indistinguishable from one another. Unlike labor and work, political activity through action allows individuals to meet and communicate with others. In other words, the action dimension enables individuals to become part of a community and participate in social decision-making. Arendt adopts Aristotle's concept of *zoon politikon* (political beings living within the polis), which signifies human existence as a shared presence in communication free from self-interest, coercion, and violence (Arendt, 1958, p. 23). Through the polis (public space), humans fully realize their humanity by engaging in free communication, liberated from self-isolation and purely material relations.

Since action is the highest dimension in *vita activa*—as it involves the ability to initiate something new (natality) and create change in the shared world—Indonesian women's participation in the public sphere is often constrained by gender norms and household burdens. In Indonesia's social context, women who experience the double burden often lack the time and energy to engage in collective and interactive public activities.

Social interaction with family and the surrounding environment tends to decline for working women, as highlighted by the interviewees in this study. Most of their time is spent at work, reducing opportunities to interact with family, children, and the community. One interviewee stated that although interaction with their children had decreased, they still tried to set aside quality time on holidays to be with them. Another interviewee mentioned that balancing work and family time was challenging, leading to reduced participation in social activities with neighbors.

This reduction in social engagement limits women's involvement in community organizations, political participation, and even workplace social activities—important avenues for building social networks and gaining support. Domestic responsibilities are often regarded as repetitive, undervalued work, ultimately diminishing women's capacity to fully participate in action. As a result, Indonesian women frequently sacrifice public engagement to meet private sphere expectations, reinforcing the double burden.

For Arendt, the public sphere is where humans can act freely, speak, and create shared history. Ideally, when women engage in public spaces, they affirm their identity as agents of change and challenge traditional subordination. However, this remains a crisis of gender role inclusivity in Indonesian society. Policies that encourage women's social participation in the workplace—such as maternity leave policies or support for working mothers—are still limited. Moreover, few workplaces provide facilities to support women's participation in community activities or strong social support programs for female workers. This suggests that women's access to action remains restricted, preventing them from fully expressing and actualizing themselves.

Indonesian society, which is generally gender-biased, tends to perceive domestic roles, such as household management and childcare, as women's primary responsibilities, even when they also work outside the home. This assumption perpetuates the idea that women experiencing the double burden must fulfill both roles without considering the impact on their well-being. Men are often exempted from domestic responsibilities, while women are seen as having a "natural duty" to manage the household and support the family economy. According to Hochschild & Machung (2012), this mindset is reinforced by cultural and religious narratives that frame women as household caretakers and men as primary breadwinners.

As a result, women experiencing the double burden tend to accept this situation as normal, despite its detrimental effects on their well-being. Men in patriarchal households often view domestic tasks as

"unmasculine," making them reluctant to participate. Even when a woman has a professional career, she is still expected to manage housework and family responsibilities after returning home.

The action dimension in *Vita Activa* also highlights women's participation in the public sphere, which is often hindered by gender norms and domestic obligations. Women who are active in the public sphere tend to be perceived as violating traditional norms. For example, female political or professional leaders are often judged more harshly regarding their domestic responsibilities. Women face an identity conflict between their private (domestic) roles and their aspirations in the public domain. This often leads to exhaustion, stress, and a decline in emotional well-being. The absence of redistributing domestic labor to men within households reinforces structural gender inequality, depleting women's time and energy for public engagement. Women's access to education, training, and political or professional networks is often more restricted than men's, hindering their equal participation in the public sphere.

Gender disparities in public participation cannot be explained solely through the lens of patriarchy but must also be examined through the perspective of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which forms the foundation of feminist, legal, and social justice studies. This concept highlights how various forms of discrimination—including gender, race, and class—intersect to shape women's experiences in both domestic and public spaces (Crenshaw, 2013). Therefore, to understand the root causes and seek more inclusive solutions, an approach that acknowledges the complexity of identity and social dynamics affecting women's well-being is necessary.

This means that intersectionality relates to women's experiences, revealing how gender and racial discrimination intersect within legal and political systems. As a result, domestic and public roles intersect in women's everyday experiences. This aligns with the idea of intersectionality, in which women's experiences cannot be reduced to a single category of social identity.

### 3.4 Role Conflict, Women's Well-being Issues, and Social Policy

Globalization has driven the feminization of labor, increasing women's participation in the industrial and service sectors. However, most women remain trapped in low-wage, unstable jobs (Elson, 1999). Although more women are entering the public workforce, their domestic burdens remain unchanged. As a solution, they often delegate these roles to other women, such as domestic helpers or female family members (Hidayati, 2015). However, this solution frequently creates a new cycle of exploitation, where lower-class women bear similar workloads under even more disadvantaged conditions. In *Servants of Globalization* (2015), Parreñas reveals that female domestic workers from developing countries like Indonesia and the Philippines often face exploitation in developed nations. They are forced to work under unfair conditions, receive low wages, and become trapped in a social hierarchy that limits their mobility.

The double burden tends to isolate women from the public sphere, as they have less time and energy to engage in meaningful social interactions or political activities. This prevents women from taking the necessary actions to express their identities and aspirations in the social sphere. Many women implicitly express frustration that managing two roles simultaneously creates both internal and external barriers.

According to Frone, Russell, & Cooper (1992), double-burden conflicts within families are closely linked to depression and anxiety. Internal barriers include physical and mental exhaustion. When a woman's mental health deteriorates, her emotional stability is affected, which can negatively impact family relationships. External barriers relate to family, workplace, and societal environments. This is reinforced by research from Apperson, Schmidt, Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg (2002), which shows that women experience these conflicts more frequently than men. This phenomenon is closely related to women's traditional roles, which are difficult to escape—forcing them to balance work demands and domestic responsibilities that are expected to take priority over their professional roles.

Double-burden conflicts arise when women are required to fulfill expectations in both domestic and public spheres, each demanding time, energy, and commitment (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). This perspective aligns with Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), who categorize double burden conflicts into three types: (i) Time-based conflict: The time required to fulfill one responsibility (family/domestic or work/public) reduces the time available for the other; (ii) Strain-based conflict: Stress or tension from one



role affects performance in the other; (iii) Behavior-based conflict: A mismatch between behavior patterns and the expectations of both roles (work and family).

In general, social systems are shaped by rules, norms, beliefs, and social practices established by dominant male groups, ultimately reinforcing patriarchal structures that significantly influence social realities (Fraser, 2017). As a result, in male-dominated societies, women are often marginalized—not only in terms of social and political participation but also in the recognition of their experiences, values, and interests (Reilly, 2007; Phillips, 2002).

Arendt refers to humans as *homo faber*, creators of an artificial world that provides stability and deeper meaning beyond the repetitive cycle of labor. However, the double burden prevents women from fully participating in work, affecting their social, economic, and psychological well-being.

Diane Elson (1999) also highlights how economic policies often fail to consider women's double burden, leading to gender-insensitive policies. For example, development policies tend to focus on infrastructure such as industry and transportation, while neglecting investments in public services like childcare and family leave, which could alleviate women's burdens. In *Women's Empowerment in Indonesia: A Poor Community in Jakarta*, Eddyono (2019) emphasizes that despite efforts to push women beyond traditional gender roles since the reform era and introduce policies protecting women from gender-based violence, Indonesia's patriarchal structure remains resistant to social change—particularly in achieving equal distribution of domestic responsibilities.

In Indonesia, policies supporting women's well-being in the workforce, such as maternity leave and facilities for working mothers, remain inadequate. Additionally, few workplaces provide facilities that support women's participation in community activities or strong social support programs for female workers. This reflects the limited access women have to the action dimension within the *vita activa* framework, preventing them from fully expressing and actualizing themselves.

Indonesia's SDGs Roadmap 2023–2030 prioritizes increasing the proportion of women in managerial positions, recommending work flexibility to support women's work-life balance (Bappenas, 2023). However, this policy appears paradoxical. On one hand, the government encourages women to assume managerial roles; on the other, it pressures them to balance work and family responsibilities without addressing the challenges of their dual roles.

A similar critique is raised in Eddyono's study *Women's Work and State Policies: Contending Paid and Unpaid Care* (2023), which reveals that the lack of policies to equitably distribute unpaid care work remains a major obstacle for women seeking managerial positions. Earlier, Folbre (2001) discussed how care work, predominantly performed by women, holds significant economic value yet remains unrecognized in conventional economic calculations such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Parental leave policies or flexible working hours for women—especially after childbirth—are regulated under Law No. 13 of 2003 on Employment, Article 82 (1). However, this law does not explicitly address parental leave for fathers, reinforcing the expectation that childcare remains solely a mother's responsibility. Additionally, some companies, such as security service outsourcing firms, have internal policies that terminate female employees upon pregnancy rather than granting them maternity leave. Without adequate protection or sustainable support for domestic responsibilities, women face immense pressure that negatively affects their well-being.

This study reflects several key points for policymakers to consider in designing gender-equitable policies to support women's well-being, particularly concerning the double burden in the workplace. The legal framework should function as a "humanistic tool", emphasizing the importance of law in protecting individual well-being as a fundamental human value.

In this context, legal policies should create an environment that prioritizes women's basic rights as workers and individuals, including the right to rest, menstrual leave (which is often denied), opportunities for self-development, and support for work-life balance. Redistributing domestic responsibilities by encouraging greater male participation in household work can alleviate the burden on women (labor dimension). Other policies, such as equal parental leave for fathers and mothers, should be implemented to promote gender equality (work dimension).

This human-centered focus requires the law to accommodate the needs of female workers, ensuring they do not become trapped in a double burden that compromises their well-being. Legal policies must be firm and oriented toward humanistic values, including flexible work arrangements and rights to manage time, such as family leave or mental health breaks. These policies should prioritize women's well-being, allowing them to balance professional and personal demands without harming their physical or mental health.

Another critical issue in gender equality policies involves promotion opportunities, wage equality, and access to professional development, which remain under-implemented in Indonesia. Kabeer (2008) and Power (2020) argue that women's promotions are often hindered by patriarchal views that consider reproductive labor a natural female responsibility with no economic value, whereas productive labor—such as office, factory, or government work—is valued monetarily.

The key point of these policies is to ensure that women's contributions in all forms of work are recognized and valued, ultimately enhancing their well-being and reducing the negative impacts of the double burden. Elson (1999) highlights how the labor market structurally fails to account for women's double burden. Gender-insensitive economic policies often force women to accept poor working conditions while still bearing domestic responsibilities. This is exacerbated by a lack of social infrastructure, such as affordable childcare services, leaving women to find their own solutions for managing the double burden.

Supporting female workers requires structural workplace changes that enable them to fulfill double burden without sacrificing productivity (work dimension). Flexible work policies, affordable childcare services, and access to career development must be prioritized—such as affordable daycare facilities and family-friendly workplaces.

A practical example is PT Avo Innovation Technology, a beauty industry company that implements flexible working hours, lactation rooms, and childcare facilities, allowing women to bring their children to work as needed. With the right policies, women can contribute to community and economic development without being confined to domestic roles.

## 4 Conclusion

This study highlights women's double burden through the perspective of Hannah Arendt's *vita activa*, which encompasses three main dimensions: labor, work, and action. The analysis demonstrates that women continue to face significant structural challenges in balancing domestic and public roles due to a social system dominated by patriarchal norms. The double burden they experience not only creates physical and mental stress but also hinders their participation in broader professional and social activities.

The labor dimension in *vita activa* illustrates how women are continuously trapped in domestic work, which is perceived as their natural obligation. This repetitive work cycle, which is unrecognized as a productive activity, limits women's ability to develop their professional and economic potential. Meanwhile, within the work dimension, women encounter various obstacles, such as wage discrimination, restricted access to leadership positions, and unequal recognition of their professional contributions. Women's participation in productive activities is often considered secondary to their domestic responsibilities, further reinforcing structural injustice. At the highest level, the action dimension, women face challenges in accessing public spaces and participating in decision-making processes. Social and cultural norms still constrain their involvement in politics, the economy, and broader social communities. The concept of intersectionality also reveals that women from specific backgrounds—such as lower social classes or minority groups—face even greater barriers in achieving gender equality.

This study reveals that social and economic policies in Indonesia are still not fully responsive to the needs of women experiencing the double burden. The lack of policies that support the redistribution of domestic roles—such as equal parental leave for fathers or flexible work arrangements for mothers—worsens gender inequality. Additionally, the labor market continues to overlook women's contributions to unpaid domestic work, leaving them marginalized within the economic system.

Therefore, to mitigate the impact of the double burden and promote more equitable gender equality, structural changes in social and economic policies are necessary. More inclusive policies—such as recognizing domestic labor as part of the productive economy, supporting flexible work arrangements, and increasing men's participation in domestic responsibilities—must become priorities in sustainable development agendas.

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