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THE ROLE OF HOUSEWIVES AS BRICK INDUSTRY LABORERS IN ENHANCING HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY: AN ISLAMIC ECONOMICS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study examines the role of housewives working as laborers in the brick-making home industry in Pagar Dewa Village, South Bengkulu, and their contribution to improving the family economy within the framework of Islamic economics. The phenomenon of dual roles among rural women managing domestic responsibilities while simultaneously engaging in productive income-generating activities is becoming increasingly common, especially in households with limited economic resources. This qualitative research employs purposive sampling to select eight housewives working in the brick industry, supported by observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation techniques. The findings show that these women significantly contribute to household finances through their wages, which are used to fulfill daily needs, children's education, food security, and debt relief. Despite facing challenges such as physical exhaustion, time division, and social expectations, the women are able to perform their reproductive and productive roles simultaneously. From the perspective of Islamic economics, their work is categorized as a productive effort (kasb) that aligns with Islamic principles, provided it does not neglect their primary responsibilities at home and is carried out ethically. Their economic contribution also reflects the values of ta'awun (mutual help), maslahah (public benefit), and falah (holistic welfare). This study concludes that the involvement of housewives in the brick industry plays a transformative role in strengthening family resilience and supporting long-term welfare.

Keywords: housewives, dual roles, family economy, brick industry, Islamic economics.

1. Introduction

Households or families require various goods and services for all family members. Goods and services are used to meet primary, secondary, and tertiary needs. Household economic activity involves consumption. Some of the goods and services consumed by households can be produced locally. They can obtain them directly from nature or by manufacturing them. Therefore, in addition to consumption, households can also engage in production activities. In societies that increasingly prioritize specialization, almost all goods and services needed by households are obtained through exchange. The *fuqaha* (jurists) agree that the amount of sustenance required is what is considered makruf (virtuous), appropriate, or reasonable. The majority of followers of the Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali schools of thought limit the amount of sustenance to what is sufficient for daily needs. This sufficiency varies depending on the circumstances of the husband and wife. A judge then decides the case in case of dispute.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ۚ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"And it is the father's obligation to feed and clothe mothers in a virtuous manner. A person is not burdened except according to the level of his ability." (QS. al-Baqarah: 233).

On the other hand , the perspective Islamic economics offers a more holistic and comprehensive view. Islam does not limit women's roles to domestic affairs, but rather highly values every effort made for the benefit of the family. In Islam, a housewife's contribution to managing finances, educating children, and even participating in productive economic activities (both formal and informal) is seen as a noble form of worship and jihad. This view demonstrates that housewives are active economic agents, not mere consumers.

According to Caroline Moser, the *Triple Role Framework Theory* is an important analytical framework within *the Gender and Development* (GAD) approach. This theory offers a way to understand and map the diverse roles played by women, particularly in developing countries. *The Triple Role Framework* highlights that women do not have a single role, but rather three interacting and often overlapping roles: the Reproductive Role, the Productive Role, and the Community Role.

According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2025), there are currently 42 million micro and small businesses. It is reported that nearly 60% of all micro and small businesses (MSEs) in Indonesia are managed by women. This large home industry potential undoubtedly has a significant impact on gross domestic product (GDP) for regional and central governments, as well as on employment. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2025, approximately 14.37% of families depend on income from economic activities run by housewives, including small businesses and home industries. This figure confirms that women's role in supporting the family economy is not marginal, but strategic.

The role of housewives in the family economy has experienced significant development, especially in rural communities with low incomes. Increasing economic needs have led many housewives to not only carry out reproductive duties but also engage in productive activities to help meet family needs. In Pagar Dewa Village, Kota Manna District, South Bengkulu, the majority of housewives work as laborers in a brick-making home industry. This work is an important source of income for families, given the limited employment opportunities for men and the high cost of living. From an Islamic economic perspective, women's contributions to supporting the family economy are permissible as long as they uphold sharia values and do not neglect primary responsibilities at home. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Setiawan's (2023) research, which found that rural women's economic participation improves their social standing. An Islamic Economic Perspective on the Role of Housewives as Brick-Making Industry Workers in Improving the Family Economy.

Based on this phenomenon, this research will discuss the contribution of housewives in the brick industry to the family economy, how they carry out their dual roles, and how Islamic economics views their activities. The formulation of the research problem is as follows: (1) How do housewives who work in the brick industry in Pagar Dewa Village contribute to improving the family economy? (2) How do these housewives carry out their dual roles between domestic and productive tasks? (3) How does Islamic economics view the role of housewives who work in the brick industry in improving the family economy?

The objectives of this research are as follows: (1) To explain the contribution of housewives who are brick industry workers in Pagar Dewa Village to improving the family economy. (2) To describe how housewives divide and carry out dual roles between domestic duties and productive work. (3) To analyze the role of housewives who are brick industry workers from an Islamic economic perspective. The contribution of this research is expected to provide theoretical input for Islamic economic and gender studies as well as practical input for regional policy makers.

2. Literature review

2.1 The Role of Housewives

A working mother impacts all aspects of life, both personal and family, as well as the lives of the surrounding community. The benefits include helping to ease the burden borne by a husband who may be unable to meet his needs. A mother can perform these duties as an additional duty to fulfill a wife's obligation to provide affection and love to her husband and children, as by working she provides additional income to her husband and helps improve the family's well-being. Mothers have the same potential and existence as men, both socially and economically.

Triple Role Framework theory is an important analytical framework within *the Gender and Development* (GAD) approach. It offers a way to understand and map the diverse roles women play, particularly in developing countries. As such, it provides a lens

through which to view the complexities of women's lives, ensuring that development projects not only benefit but also do not add to existing burdens (Moser, 1993).

Social Role Theory *states* that every individual in society has a specific role expected by their social environment. In the household context, mothers are positioned as primary household managers , child caretakers, and family financial supporters. This role is not merely a biological task, but rather a social construct internalized through culture, traditions, and societal values. This theory explains that Mother House ladder often carry burden double (*Double Burden*), namely look after House ladder while participating in economic activities to help meet family needs (Biddle, 1986).

Gender and Division of Labor Theory stems from the view that the division of labor within families is often differentiated by gender. Men are considered the primary breadwinners, while women (housewives) are positioned as managers of domestic affairs. However, in modern developments, this theory has changed as many housewives also contribute to the public sector to support the family economy. Thus, gender theory views the role of housewives as not only domestic but also economically productive (Oakley, 1974).

Human Capital Theory emphasizes that housewives play a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources within the family. Through nurturing and educating children, as well as instilling moral values and life skills, mothers serve as the "first and foremost educators." The investment mothers make in educating their children constitutes a form of human capital that will increase the family's productivity and future well-being. In other words, housewives play a role not only in the current economic landscape but also in the development of future generations (Schultz, 1961).

2.2 Family Economy

Carrying out economic activities, including production, distribution, and consumption, requires economic actors. The word "economics" comes from the Greek, meaning family, household, and "nomos," meaning rules/laws. It is broadly defined as household regulations or household management. Economics also functions as an applied science in family management, business, and government. Economic theory can also be applied in fields beyond monetary policy, such as research on family behavior and social welfare.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory states that the need for food, clothing, and shelter are part of basic human needs (physiological needs) that must be met before any other needs. This level is the foundation of the entire hierarchy and encompasses all things vital to human survival (Maslow, 1943).

Household Production Theory *extends* the scope of economics into non-market areas. The household is viewed as a production unit that uses inputs (purchased goods and time) to produce outputs (consumed goods and services). A housewife's economic contribution is the value of the output she produces at home and the additional income she earns to support the family's needs (Becker, 1965).

Social Capital Theory focuses on the importance of social relationships, networks, norms, and trust built within families and communities. Social capital manifests itself in the form of support from relatives, neighbors, and the community, whether in the form of labor, information on business opportunities, or access to economic resources (Coleman, 1988).

Family Welfare Theory emphasizes that the primary goal of family economics is not limited to meeting material needs, but also encompasses achieving overall well-being, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. Welfare is viewed as a dynamic condition involving both economic and non-economic aspects (Friedman, 2004).

2.3 Overview of Islamic Economics

In the Islamic economic system, all economic activities are based on moral and spiritual values derived from the Quran and Hadith. The primary goal is not merely to seek worldly gain, but also to achieve well-being (falah) in this world and the hereafter. Among the essential principles of Islamic economics are ta'awun , kasb, maslahah, and falah.

The principle of ta'awun means helping one another in goodness and piety. In an economic context, this principle emphasizes the importance of social cooperation and mutual support between individuals. The principle of kasb relates to the obligation of every Muslim to strive and work hard to earn a lawful livelihood. The principle of maslahah emphasizes that every economic activity must benefit humanity and prevent harm. The principle of falah illustrates the ultimate goal of the Islamic economic system, namely achieving happiness and prosperity in this world and the hereafter.

3. Research methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with field research . Informants were selected through purposive sampling from eight housewives who work as brick-making laborers in Pagar Dewa Village, Kota Manna District, South Bengkulu Regency. The research objectives included the economic contributions of brick-making housewives, their dual roles in domestic and productive activities, and the Islamic economic perspective on these activities.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher herself (human instrument), which was equipped with semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and photo documentation. The informant criteria included: (1) Women with the status of housewives who work as brick workers; (2) Have worked for at least two years in the brick industry; (3) Have a family (husband and children) who are economically dependent on their work; (4) Willing to provide information openly about work experiences and daily life.

Table 1. Research informants

No	*Informant Name*	*Age (Years)*	*Husband's Job*	*Length of Service (Years)*
1	Mrs. Eva	38	Farm workers	5
2	Mrs. Elvi	42	Construction workers	7
3	Mrs. Lela Maryana	35	Daily Laborer	4
4	Mother Niri	50	Farmer	10
5	Mrs. Ariy	40	Public transport driver	6
6	Mrs. Sumarni Panjuita	45	Traveling Merchant	8
7	Mrs. Rina	33	Construction workers	3
8	Mrs. Maya	37	Farm workers	5

Source : Research Results 2025

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes three stages: (1) Data Reduction: the results of interviews and observations are selected, categorized, and focused according to research themes such as economic contributions, role division, and Islamic economic perspectives. (2) Data Presentation: the reduced data is arranged in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic tables to facilitate understanding of information patterns. (3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification: temporary conclusions are tested through data rechecking, source triangulation, and conformity with theory, resulting in valid final findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Economic Contribution of Housewives as Brick Industry Workers

Interviews with eight informants revealed that their primary motivation for working in the brick industry was to help their husbands meet their family's basic needs. Almost all husbands work in the informal sector with irregular incomes, such as farm laborers, construction workers, or motorcycle taxi drivers, so women feel the need to contribute to the household economy.

Eva explained, "My husband is a farm laborer, and his income is uncertain. Sometimes when it rains, he can't work, so I help out so the kids can go to school and keep the kitchen burning." Elvi echoed this sentiment: "If my husband doesn't get a construction project, there's no income. So I help out with the bricklaying so I can eat and pay for my children's school."

Daily earnings for female laborers range from Rp 50,000 to Rp 90,000, depending on the weather and printing targets, with an average monthly income of Rp 1.5–2 million.

In the context of rural household economies, this contribution is significant, adding 30–50 percent to total family income. Most of the income is used for primary needs (food and kitchen supplies), children's education, and debt repayment. Female labor generates direct economic value through work in the brick industry and indirect value through household financial management.

These findings demonstrate that housewives are no longer passive domestic workers but rather active actors in the family economic system. This aligns with Gary Becker's (1981) theory of Household Production, which explains that households are not only consumption units but also production units, producing goods and services through the allocation of their members' time and energy.

Mrs. Lela Maryana explained: "If I didn't help, my husband wouldn't have enough money to pay for my children's college. So my money goes straight to their education. I don't want my children to have to work manual labor like us." This demonstrates that women's work in the brick-making sector is not solely driven by material needs, but also by an awareness of the importance of human investment in their children's education (Schultz, 1961).

The changing economic role of housewives in Pagar Dewa Village represents a shift from “consumption managers” to “secondary producers.” Ibu Niri describes this dynamic: “I used to just stay at home, but as needs increased, I started working on the bricklaying project. Now I’m used to it, and I feel useless just staying at home.” Ibu Ariy said: “Now people no longer judge women negatively when they work on the bricklaying project. They even say it’s great to be able to help my husband.”

4.2 Implementation of Dual Roles of Domestic and Productive Tasks

Interviews on the dual role of housewives between domestic and productive duties indicate that all respondents maintain a busy routine, with an average working day of 6–9 hours. Ms. Eva described her daily schedule: “I wake up at four in the morning to cook and clean the house. After the children leave for school, I go to the brick kiln. I get home around four in the afternoon and continue cooking for the evening.” Ms. Elvi added: “At night, I make sure I have time to help my children study even though I’m tired.”

In terms of family support, there has been a shift in gender roles. Five of the eight informants stated that their husbands occasionally help with domestic work. Mrs. Ariy admitted: "Now my husband sometimes helps sweep or look after the grandchildren when I'm at work. He never used to, but now it's normal." This phenomenon can be explained through Caroline Moser's Triple Role Framework (1989), in which women simultaneously carry out reproductive, productive, and community roles.

Mrs. Sumarni Panjuita revealed the physical stress she experienced: “Sometimes I am incredibly tired. Working from morning till evening, at night I still have to take care of the house and my sick husband. But I keep going because I have no other choice.” Mrs. Lela Maryana emphasized: “Even though I am tired, I feel that I have meaning. I can help my family and my children can go to college. That is a source of pride for me.” This finding

is in line with Friedman's Family Welfare Theory (2004) that well-being includes psychological aspects and empowerment.

4.3 Islamic Economic Views on the Role of Housewives

All informants stated that their work activities always began with their husbands' permission and the intention of helping the family. Mrs. Eva said: "I work with my husband's permission. He said, as long as the intention is good and we maintain modesty, it's fine. The important thing is that it's halal and we don't neglect prayer." Mrs. Niri emphasized: "We work under the hot sun, but we have peace of mind knowing that we earn our living from our own hands. We don't beg, we don't cheat, that's what's important."

This view is in line with the words of Allah SWT in the Qur'an:

وَقُلِ ٱعْمَلُوا۟ فَسَيَرَى ٱللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُۥ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"And say: Work, then Allah will see your work, and so will His Messenger and the believers..." (QS. At-Taubah: 105).

The four main principles of Islamic economics form the basis for evaluating their roles: (1) The Principle of Ta'awun: Mrs. Sumarni Panjuita stated that her work is a form of mutual assistance within the family. (2) The Principle of Kasb: A halal and independent business without begging. (3) The Principle of Maslahah: Maintaining the continuity of the family and the education of children as part of the Maqashid Syariah. (4) The Principle of Falah: Mrs. Lela Maryana believes that this halal work brings peace of mind and blessings in this world and the hereafter.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that housewives working as brick industry laborers in Pagar Dewa Village make a significant economic contribution to improving family welfare. Their presence can contribute approximately 30% to 50% of total household income. This income significantly serves as a lifeline for families to meet basic physiological needs such as food, pay off household debt, and even finance their children's higher education as a form of human capital investment. These mothers' primary motivation for working is driven by pressing economic conditions resulting from the unstable income of their husbands, who work in the informal sector.

In addition to their financial contributions, these housewives simultaneously shoulder a double burden, requiring meticulous time management. Socially, this active involvement in earning a living not only shifts rural communities' perspectives on the gender-based division of labor but also has positive impacts, increasing women's self-confidence, independence, and bargaining power in family decision-making.

From an Islamic economic perspective, all of the productive activities undertaken by these housewives are considered very positive and aligned with sharia values. Their hard work embodies the principles of kasb (striving to seek halal sustenance) and ta'awun (mutual assistance). Allocating income for children's nutrition and education fulfills the elements of maqasid sharia (hifzh an-nafs and hifzh an-nasl), which ultimately lead to the

achievement of falah, a holistic well-being that balances material happiness in this world and spiritual blessings in the afterlife.

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