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When I Become a Woman with Multiple Roles: A Phenomenological Study of Women's Experiences in Dual Roles and Long-Distance Marriage

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Abstract: The phenomenon of women undertaking dual roles remains a persistent and multifaceted challenge, particularly for those who are simultaneously fulfilling responsibilities as wives, mothers, professionals, and students. This complexity is further heightened in the context of Long-Distance Marriages (LDM), especially when young children are involved. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of women managing dual roles within the framework of LDM. Employing a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with women who are engaged in professional work and higher education, while also navigating long-distance marital relationships and caring for preschool-aged children. The findings reveal that women in dual roles frequently experience role conflict, particularly in fulfilling their maternal duties, which often leads to feelings of guilt and anxiety. Moreover, social support plays a significant role in enabling these women to make informed decisions regarding role management and enhances their capacity for self-regulation. The involvement of extended family members during periods of marital separation also serves as a crucial source of childcare support, facilitating the preservation of emotional bonds between mothers and their children.

Keywords: Women, Dual Roles, Long-Distance Marriage, Phenomenological Study

INTRODUCTION

As society continues to evolve, the need for women to pursue self-actualization has significantly increased. Before the women's emancipation movement, women were traditionally confined to domestic roles as wives or homemakers who stayed at home. Culturally, women have often been characterized as gentle, graceful, maternal, and emotional beings (Faqih, 1996). Such portrayals suggest that women are passive, emotionally driven, and in need of protection from a life partner. Consequently, women were historically expected to support their husbands, manage household needs, and take responsibility for nurturing and educating their children. According to Qaimi (Na'imah, 2009), the mother's role includes not only managing domestic affairs but also acting as the emotional anchor of the household.

However, recent studies indicate that women's roles in society have transformed considerably. Smith et al. (2021) emphasized that modern women are no longer limited to domestic spheres but are increasingly occupying influential roles in professional and public sectors. Similarly, UN Women (2023) reported that gender equality initiatives have empowered more women to explore their potential and contribute to societal and economic development. These changes are supported by inclusive policies and a heightened awareness of the importance of women's empowerment, leading to a more dynamic and multifaceted understanding of women's roles.

While the roles of wife and mother remain inherent to many women after marriage, there is a growing trend among women to pursue higher education and engage in professional careers as a means of asserting their presence in society. Zhang et al. (2022) found that women who pursue postgraduate education often develop stronger leadership skills, which subsequently benefit their careers. Moreover, data from the World Economic Forum (2023) shows that the increasing number of women in leadership and professional roles has contributed to gender equality in the workplace. Nevertheless, many women face the dilemma of choosing between continuing their education or entering the workforce, while also contending with societal pressures to marry. In practice, continuing education often serves as a stepping stone toward professional careers, particularly in fields such as education, where women increasingly occupy high-level positions.

According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the 2021 National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) recorded that 39.52% (51.79 million) of Indonesian women were employed a 1.09 million increase from the previous year. Additionally, BPS reported that the percentage of women attending higher education surpassed that of men, with 10.06% of women having completed tertiary education compared to 9.28% of men. These statistics highlight that nearly one in ten women in Indonesia has attained a university degree.

Women who choose to marry while continuing their studies or pursuing a career inevitably face the challenge of managing dual roles as wives, mothers, students, and workers. This dual-role phenomenon reflects the concept of "dualistic culture," which encompasses both the domestic and public spheres (Michele & Louise; Afrida, 2017). According to Meriko & Hadiwirawan (2019), women with dual roles are those who must fulfill both domestic tasks and engage in paid work outside the home. Blackburn (2004) adds that these women not only care for their families but also support their households economically. A woman may simultaneously serve as a wife, mother, and professional or student—assuming multiple roles both inside and outside the home.

Although the issue of dual roles is not new, it becomes particularly compelling when examined through the lens of Long-Distance Marriage (LDM). Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) refers to a marital arrangement in which spouses live apart and meet periodically, often due to career or educational obligations (Arditti & Kauffman, 2003).

Johnson et al. (2022) found that women in LDMs face significant emotional challenges, such as loneliness, guilt related to childcare, and mental fatigue due to the demands of balancing dual roles. Nonetheless, the study highlights that regular, quality communication contributes positively to emotional well-being and relationship stability. Similarly, Carter et al. (2023) pointed out that while women with dual roles face challenges in time management and psychological pressure, they also report increased self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Zhao et al. (2023) emphasized that strong social support systems help women balance domestic and professional responsibilities and maintain higher marital satisfaction. Technology, such as video calls and instant messaging, also plays a vital role in maintaining emotional closeness despite geographical separation.

Women in LDMs often experience dilemmas, particularly concerning parenting and their role as partners. Pitole, Roberts, & Chapman (2010) reported that stressors in LDMs include separation, travel-related stress, and uncertainty about the future of the relationship. These

couples tend to experience higher levels of attachment-related anxiety. However, Williams et al. (2023) found that structured and consistent communication—such as regular video calls and scheduled visits—can reduce this anxiety and enhance relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, Lee & Zhang (2022) noted that social support from family and friends significantly reduces stress and strengthens emotional resilience in LDM couples, thereby helping them better manage parenting responsibilities and maintain their marital roles despite physical distance.

This study focuses specifically on women who are married, have young children, and are enrolled in postgraduate programs while living separately from their spouses due to LDM. These women not only assume dual roles but also endure the emotional burden of separation from their partners or children. Postgraduate and professional program students often face intense academic demands, requiring both theoretical mastery and practical application in their respective fields.

Students, by nature, are expected to fulfill critical social roles. According to Suharyanto, Armansyah, & Taufik (2016), university students serve three strategic functions: (1) as agents of social control, (2) as agents of change, and (3) as future leaders (iron stock). For women in postgraduate programs who are also mothers, their responsibilities extend to nurturing early childhood development. A mother plays a crucial role during the first five years of a child's life, particularly in shaping personality traits such as emotional regulation and temperament. Research by Lapadi (2013) reveals that children who are frequently separated from their mothers may exhibit aggressive behavior, lack empathy, and become emotionally dissatisfied, often due to the absence of maternal affection and reliance on third-party caregivers. Based on this context, this study aims to explore in depth the lived experiences of women who navigate dual roles while engaged in a Long-Distance Marriage.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to investigate natural phenomena in the field and aimed to interpret the lived experiences of individuals within their contextual settings. The research adopted a phenomenological approach, which aligns with the objective of the study—namely, to explore the subjective experiences of individuals in relation to their unique circumstances.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and audio materials.

1. Interviews
   Interviews were used as a method for gathering data or information about individuals in order to describe their experiences (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2012). A semi-structured interview format was employed, whereby the researcher prepared core questions and applied probing techniques to encourage deeper elaboration from participants. This format allowed for flexibility while maintaining a focus on key topics relevant to the research objective. The interview guide was developed and refined in the field based on the dynamics of each session.
2. Audio Materials
   Audio recordings were utilized to complement and verify the interview process. A voice recording device (in this case, a mobile phone) was utilized to ensure that every word spoken by the participants was accurately captured. These recordings were made with the explicit consent of the participants and were subsequently transcribed verbatim to enable detailed analysis.

Participant Characteristics

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as recommended in qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2009). The criteria for inclusion were as follows: female participants who have young children, are currently pursuing higher education, are employed, and are engaged in a Long-Distance Marriage (LDM). The participants in this study were pseudonymously referred to as R, L, and Z.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the procedures outlined by Creswell (2015), consisting of the following steps: 1) Transcribing raw data verbatim; 2) Conducting preliminary analysis to ensure data completeness; 3) Coding the data; 4) Categorizing the codes into thematic clusters; 5) Identifying overarching themes or concepts from these categories; 6) Interpreting the themes through a theoretical lens to draw meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study yielded several findings related to the dual roles of women engaged in Long-Distance Marriage (LDM). The results are presented by first providing a brief profile of each participant and highlighting the main themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Participant 1

"R" is a midwife employed at a private hospital and is also a student in a professional midwifery program at a private university in Pringsewu. She is a mother of two children, aged 5 years and 19 months. R is currently in a Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) with her husband, who resides in Palembang. At present, R lives with her children and parents in Pringsewu. She decided to continue her studies in order to enhance her professional skills and to eventually open her own practice, which would allow her to have more flexible time to spend with her family.

Participant 2

"L" is a teacher and a student at a private university in Bandar Lampung. She is a mother to a 5-year-old child. L is in a Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) with her husband, who resides in Jakarta. For the time being, L lives with her child in Pringsewu. She decided to pursue further education to align her current job with her academic qualifications, with the goal of eventually qualifying for the PPPK (Public Sector Teacher Recruitment Program) and advancing her career in the teaching profession.

Participant 3

"Z" is a teacher and a student at a public university in Bandar Lampung. She is the mother of two children, aged 2 and 4 years. Z is in a Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) with her husband, who resides in Kalianda. Currently, she lives with her children in Pringsewu. Z chose to continue her education to attain a higher degree and enhance her career prospects in the field of education.

General Concepts

Women's Roles

A woman is an individual who does not only possess a singular, fixed role in her life. She is expected to carry out multiple roles simultaneously. Within the family, a woman plays the role of a wife to her husband and a mother to her children. If a woman decides to work to support her family financially, she assumes an additional role as an employee. When a woman chooses to pursue higher education, she assumes the role of a student.

Women with multiple roles are required to be responsible for the various interests and obligations arising from these roles. For example, when a woman acts as a wife, she is expected to be responsible for her husband's needs and interests. As a mother, she must understand the concept of motherhood and be responsible for her children's well-being. Similarly, if a woman chooses to work or study, she is expected to be accountable for her professional or academic responsibilities. Balancing multiple roles often presents challenges, as a woman is confronted with demands that must be fulfilled simultaneously. Failure to manage these roles effectively may result in role conflicts, which can affect her overall well-being and life.

Each participant in this study is a woman with dual roles, such as being a wife, mother, student, and employee. "R" is a woman who plays the roles of wife, mother, student, and employee. She has been married for seven years and has worked as a private-sector employee for eight years. She became a mother while working, and later assumed dual roles as a mother and professional. When her first child was five years old, "R" decided to further her education in her profession.

"I worked at a private hospital in Pringsewu for 8 years, until now."

"L" is a woman who has one child, a five-year-old daughter. In addition to being a mother, L currently plays the roles of teacher and student. She became a teacher and decided to pursue further education after getting married and having a child.

"Uhh, yes, I'm currently a student in the education program. I have one child, a daughter, who is 5 years old."

"I had also taken a Bachelor's degree before, in Geography Education. After finishing my studies, I got married, and now I want to continue my studies again."

"Z" is a woman who has worked as a teacher for five years. After getting married, she did not live with her husband because they had to work in different locations. Z decided to pursue further education to obtain a higher degree and enhance her career in education.

"I graduated from college, then applied for the civil service exam and started working. After passing the exam, I got married and had a child. When my child was almost four years old, I decided to continue my studies."

Becoming a Worker

A woman who works assumes the role of an employee. A working woman strives to fulfill her responsibilities as an employee by performing the tasks assigned to her and achieving the outcomes of her work. When a working woman decides to marry and have children, she faces the challenge of balancing her work duties with caring for her children. Meeting the needs of her husband and children can become a specific issue for a working mother.

The participants in this study are employees working in various institutions. Furthermore, all participants chose to pursue further education alongside their busy lives as wives, mothers, and workers. "R" has been working as an employee in a private hospital for eight years.

"Previously, I worked at a private hospital in Pringsewu for 8 years."

After completing her undergraduate degree in Education, "L" got married and has now been working for two years at a public school in Pringsewu. She is also currently pursuing a Postgraduate Professional Education (PPG) program at a university. Thus, "L" is balancing roles as a wife, mother, student, and worker.

"Well, I've finished, and I'm still working, now in my second year. My child was three years old when I first registered as a teacher at an elementary school. At that time, I was also in a long-distance relationship with my husband, as he was in Jakarta for work."

"Z" began her career as a teacher after completing her undergraduate degree. Her children are currently two and four years old. Z is also pursuing a master's degree in education to achieve a higher level of education and enhance her career.

> *"I studied from 2010 to 2014, then started working in 2015 until now. In 2023, I resumed my graduate studies and am continuing them."*

Role of a Student

A woman who pursues higher education assumes the role of a student. She is required to engage in all aspects of the educational process. The demands placed on a student differ from those placed on a worker. Working women tend to experience heavier burdens compared to the responsibilities they face during their studies. A woman's experience in fulfilling her role as a student will also differ depending on whether she has children or not.

The participants in this study are university students in Lampung, who are married and have children. Each participant decided to continue their studies due to the demands of their profession. The academic demands are perceived as more challenging when the participants also assume the role of a mother.

"R" became a student to continue her studies in order to enhance her professional skills and to eventually establish her own practice, which would provide her with more flexible time to spend with her family.

> *"That's why we decided to go back to school. So if you ask how I feel about leaving my child when I attend classes, it's not much different from when I'm working."*

"L" had previously worked, but she is currently pursuing a master's degree in education. She fulfills her role as a student while also being a mother, which indirectly involves raising her children.

> *"I took my undergraduate degree, then worked for a while. After that, I got married and now I am studying in the field of education."*

"Z" became a master's student in education after working as a teacher for eight years. Z worked while raising her children, who were four years old when she decided to pursue further education.

> *"I studied from 2010 to 2015, then I worked. After I graduated, I worked for eight years, then my second child, A, was born two years later. There was an eight-year gap between my graduation and starting my master's degree because I went through many processes."*

Role of a Wife

Long Distance Marriage (LDM) refers to a condition in which a married couple maintains their relationship while living apart. This situation arises when the husband and wife do not reside in the same location. In LDM, a woman may be separated from her husband and/or children due to shared responsibilities or goals. Previous analysis indicated that all participants in this study are married and currently in an LDM arrangement as a result of their husbands being relocated for work.

Participant "R" currently lives with her two children and her parents, while being separated from her husband, who has been assigned to work in Palembang.

> "*Umm... I live with my children and parents. My husband had to move to Palembang for work. So yes, I'm currently in a long-distance relationship with my husband."*

Participant "L" began her LDM experience when she had to live apart from her husband due to his job transfer. At the beginning of the LDM, their child was three years old. L is currently living apart from her husband, who is based in Jakarta.

"We started our LDM when my child was three years old. My husband was relocated to Jakarta, so we've been in a long-distance marriage for two years now."

Participant "Z" started her LDM immediately after marriage. Her husband is currently working in Kalianda, while she remains in Pringsewu. Due to work-related regulations, neither of them has been permitted to transfer, requiring them to maintain a long-distance arrangement.

"...We met and got married after both of us were accepted as civil servants. However, he was assigned to Kalianda and I was placed in Pringsewu. Since we're not yet allowed to transfer, we've had to maintain a long-distance marriage."

Mother's Role

Becoming a mother is one of the key roles undertaken by women after marriage and childbirth. The experience of motherhood is inherently connected to the processes of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and subsequently, childrearing and education. A mother who is actively involved in raising her children will closely monitor their development. However, working mothers often have to leave their children at home. In certain cases, when a child falls ill, a mother may bring the child to her workplace to continue caregiving and breastfeeding. Similarly, mothers who are also students face the challenge of sacrificing time with their children, as academic responsibilities on campus and assignment deadlines demand most of their attention. Despite these demands, a mother continues to strive to maintain her bond with her child.

Participant "R" is the mother of a 5-year-and-7-month-old daughter. She had her child while working as a midwife. R experienced a deep emotional dilemma when she had to leave her baby at home to fulfill her professional duties. This dilemma grew more intense when she later chose to pursue higher education, which meant spending even more time away from her child.

"In the beginning, it was truly a dilemma. My baby was just three months old, still so small—so fragile, just flesh and bones, not yet ready… not yet fit to be left alone."
"So, for about six months, I was working and studying while leaving my child—essentially for almost 12 hours a day."

Participant "L" became pregnant before starting her career. After her child turned three years old, she accepted a position as a public-school teacher in Pringsewu. At that time, L also began living apart from her husband, who worked in Jakarta, thus entering a long-distance marriage arrangement. The childrearing responsibilities were shared with her parents, as she lived only with her child at home while simultaneously beginning her teaching career.

"Honestly, I was really happy during the pregnancy. After a year of marriage, we were finally expecting a child. We really took care of the baby—from the pregnancy to the birth, we gave our best in everything: from prenatal milk and food, to the best complementary foods when the baby started solids."
"But then… when I tried applying for a teaching position, I got accepted. At that time, my child was about three years old."

Participant "Z" is a mother of two children under the age of five. During her first pregnancy, she and her husband lived apart due to work-related reasons. Z went through a difficult experience carrying her first child without the physical and emotional support of her husband.

"From the very beginning of my pregnancy until now, I've been in a long-distance relationship."

When her second child was born, Z faced difficulties in breastfeeding. Her milk supply was low, and her baby required a tongue-tie release procedure. To overcome this, Z had to undergo an intensive relactation program. This situation forced her to choose between continuing her career or prioritizing her child's feeding needs.

> *"When I gave birth to my second child, I had problems with breastfeeding—my milk production was low… my baby had to have his tongue clipped. To ensure smooth breastfeeding, I had to follow an intensive relactation program. That couldn't be done like other working mothers who express their milk and store it in the fridge. I had to do direct breastfeeding using the kangaroo care method, where both mother and baby are skin-to-skin, without clothing—my baby had to be pressed directly to my chest."*

Each participant navigated her own set of challenges in balancing work, education, and parenting. These challenges often required them to adapt their parenting strategies based on available support systems, personal beliefs, and their children's developmental needs.

Participant "R" expressed that despite not being rigid or idealistic in her approach, she remained committed to her child's development. She viewed parenting as a flexible process and prioritized quality interactions over quantity. In her view, exposure to books and positive role modeling were essential aspects of early development. Weekend routines became important moments for building emotional closeness with both her child and husband, providing a much-needed balance between work, study, and family.

Participant "L", on the other hand, demonstrated strong intentionality in her parenting practices, particularly concerning child safety and independence. Her insistence on using a car seat reflects her commitment to instilling good habits and ensuring safety from an early age. However, these modern parenting practices sometimes clashed with her own mother's traditional views, requiring negotiation and mutual understanding. L gradually introduced her preferred methods while maintaining family harmony, showing that parenting within a multigenerational household involves continuous adaptation. By refusing to employ a babysitter, she maintained direct control over the values and approaches used in raising her child, emphasizing consistency and trust.

Participant "Z" took an active role in her children's developmental journey, particularly due to her early struggles with breastfeeding. Her commitment to providing breast milk led her to seek specialized assistance and undergo an intensive relactation program. She viewed breastfeeding not only from a nutritional perspective but also as a religious and emotional responsibility. Z's parenting style focused on creating a structured environment that encourages reading, learning, and religious understanding. She invested in educational resources and designed her home environment to support independent exploration. By planning a variety of developmental activities and religious education, she strived to nurture both cognitive and moral growth in her children.

> *"I've planned numerous activities for my children to support their growth and development."*
>
> *"From a young age, I've surrounded them with children's books placed on shelves designed at their eye level, so they've grown up accustomed to reading."*

These narratives illustrate how mothers in long-distance marriage (LDM) situations navigate the complexities of caregiving. Despite their demanding roles as workers and students, the participants actively sought ways to ensure their children's emotional, intellectual, and moral development. They employed both practical strategies—such as using car seats and educational materials—and emotional presence, like dedicating weekends to family, to maintain meaningful relationships with their children.

In their approach to parenting, participants were influenced by the values instilled during their own upbringing. They chose to carry forward the positive practices learned from their parents while consciously rejecting those they deemed less appropriate. However, in the process of raising their children, many participants encountered significant differences in parenting styles and values between themselves, their in-laws, spouses, and domestic helpers. The most notable discrepancies were observed between participants and their in-laws or domestic helpers. For example, one participant expressed concern that her in-laws and helper encouraged behaviors she disagreed with, such as excessive television viewing or adherence to animistic beliefs, which were fundamentally at odds with her own worldview.

Participants also reported differing parenting perspectives with their spouses. One participant described her husband as being overly indulgent, forbidding the child from running around, and occasionally scolding the child in ways she did not agree with. However, through extensive dialogue and discussion, the participant and her husband were eventually able to align their family vision and values. Consequently, childcare responsibilities were predominantly entrusted to the participant's own biological family, with whom she shared a more coherent parenting philosophy.

Working mothers made deliberate efforts to maintain strong emotional bonds with their children despite their external commitments. They engaged in various bonding activities to ensure the continuity of emotional closeness between mother and child. Participant R, for instance, sought to foster closeness by immediately seeking out and calling for her child upon returning home. This gesture was warmly reciprocated by the child, who would run to greet her. Shared routines and activities were a norm, and the participant felt that early bonding efforts laid a strong foundation that lessened the impact of physical separation.

Participant L maintained closeness with her child primarily through breastfeeding, which she described as a unique and irreplaceable opportunity for emotional connection. She reported a sense of emotional loss once the breastfeeding period ended and often struggled with the emotional burden of leaving her child behind when she had to attend classes.

> *"It's a kind of closeness that words can't describe. When a mother is breastfeeding, it becomes a special moment to be close to the child and truly feel the child's presence."*

Participant Z sustained closeness with her children by engaging in daily activities together. She believed that a mother's emotional state could significantly affect the psychological well-being of her child. Separation from her children was emotionally challenging, and she found it difficult to leave them even for short periods. Her children were accustomed to doing everything with her, from eating and using the bathroom to other daily routines, and they rarely sought comfort from others.

> *"My children are not close to anyone else—they want to do everything with me. From going to the bathroom, eating, everything—they always want me."*

In fulfilling their multiple roles, the women experienced various forms of anxiety. As mothers, they faced difficulties in managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously. They were often plagued by fears that their children might become emotionally distant due to the time they had to spend away from home for work or study. They also worried about their ability to provide proper care for their children and the emotional impact of being absent when their children needed them most. As students, they faced additional stress related to academic demands, particularly when they had to cope with a heavy workload.

Participant R expressed a fear that her child might grow more attached to the grandmother or the nanny, as the child spent more time with them than with her. However, over time, she realized that this situation was not as alarming as she had initially imagined. She accepted that it was natural for her child to form a bond with the grandmother, given the amount of time spent

together. She also believed that a mother's emotions could be sensed by the child, implying that when a mother is anxious or worried about her child, the child is likely to feel the same way. At the same time, participant R struggled with the stress of academic demands and the mental load of caring for her child, which often created distractions and added pressure.

> *"There was a time when I felt afraid… she spends more time with the caregiver, or the babysitter, or now with her grandmother. So I wondered, how would our relationship be?"*

Participant L experienced feelings of failure, confusion, fear, doubt, and helplessness in her attempt to complete her academic journey. She worried about whether she could manage all her responsibilities. She also felt that she was not performing optimally either in her studies or in parenting. Being in a long-distance marriage (LDM) and having to leave her children to attend university made her feel sad and emotionally burdened. She also felt guilty for returning home late and, at times, being unable to care for her children when they were unwell.

> *"I've felt like a failure. I've also thought, 'What will happen after this?' I had this fear—like I was trapped in the situation…"*

Participant Z also experienced anxiety in performing multiple roles. She felt emotional distress when leaving her children to attend university and was particularly affected by the guilt of leaving them during times when they still needed a mother figure. Her concerns stemmed from a lack of alignment in parenting values with her husband, especially regarding his views on child-rearing, his personality differences, their different levels of religiosity, and the spiritual beliefs (such as animism) held by the household helper. These issues contributed to her discomfort and led her to entrust childcare responsibilities to her own family instead. In the academic domain, she also felt anxious about the possibility of not graduating on time.

> *"It's hard, I mean, it's really hard to juggle everything… the multi-roles."*

Women undertaking multiple roles frequently experience guilt when unable to fulfill their overlapping responsibilities. When a woman is simultaneously a worker, a mother, and a student, she is frequently forced to prioritize certain responsibilities while sacrificing others. Guilt tends to arise when a woman is unable to directly care for her children due to the obligations associated with her roles as an employee or a student. The previous analysis revealed that each participant reported experiencing guilt when they felt they were not fulfilling their responsibilities adequately.

R, for instance, expressed anxiety when she had to leave her child. However, she made a conscious effort to manage her emotions so that they would not negatively affect her child. Although she was able to maintain a sense of calm when leaving her child, she at one point considered resigning from her job in order to have more time with her child.

> *"That feeling—being preoccupied, guilty—it's definitely there, but we have to hold it in, that's what I think…"*
>
> *"Even though I've gotten used to leaving my child, that feeling is still there. Sometimes I want to resign because I just can't do it anymore…"*

L experienced guilt for leaving her children in order to attend classes, often from early morning until late at night. She frequently apologized to her children for this, and justified her actions by believing that what she was doing was ultimately for their benefit.

> *"I feel guilty, honestly, toward my kids. I always apologize to them… I just think this is the path I have to take for now—maybe just for two years. After that, I'll be with them again."*

Z experienced guilt for not being able to breastfeed her first child for the full two years. This sense of guilt fueled her determination to breastfeed her second child. However, due to a tongue-related issue with the second child, she was once again challenged emotionally, and had to go through a difficult process of accepting her circumstances. She also felt guilty for frequently being away from her children during the first year of her studies, which required her to travel a considerable distance from home.

> *"That's what made me sad. For the past year, I haven't been able to be there with them, and the main feeling in my heart is guilt—guilt for leaving them at a time when they still really needed their mother."*

Social Support

In fulfilling their roles, the participants received various forms of support from those closest to them. The presence of these individuals played a crucial role in assisting the participants throughout their journey. Several sources of social support were identified, including husbands, mothers (parents), sisters-in-law, domestic helpers, and friends.

Participant R received support from her sister-in-law, domestic helper, mother, and husband. Her sister-in-law played a role in supervising the babysitter and child while R was at work, ensuring someone was monitoring them. Although R had considered relying on her neighbors, this was not feasible due to a lack of closeness and community cohesion. R's mother played a significant role, particularly in caring for the child after childbirth and currently while R is pursuing her studies. Furthermore, her husband contributed greatly, especially by helping her consider and make decisions, such as the choice to return to university.

> *"My mother really supports my career; that's why she's willing to make sacrifices when it comes to childcare."*

Participant L also received support from her mother, husband, children, and friends. Her mother played a major role by partnering with L in managing household tasks and caring for the children. Her parents also supported her during the weaning process. L's husband played a supportive role as well, participating in tasks related to childcare—such as changing diapers and sweeping—and encouraging her decision to continue her education. L expressed gratitude for having a partner who was willing to share responsibilities and understand her situation. In addition, she felt supported by her child, who remained attached to her and rarely fussed despite the limited time they spent together. Friends also contributed by offering help when needed.

> *"Actually, I've always wanted to go back to school. My mom really supports that, and so does my husband."*

Participant Z was supported by her husband, parents, teachers, and domestic helper. Besides providing financially, her husband supported Z in pursuing her dreams. He was also independent in managing parenting tasks in her absence and was willing to spend time with their children even when he was busy. Z's parents also played a significant role by staying at her house to accompany the children while she was away. Moreover, teachers provided educational support by coming to the house and spending time with the children outside of school hours. The domestic helper also contributed by managing household chores and helping with the children.

> *"The reason I rely on the extended family (my parents) in raising my children while I'm away."*

Women each have their own way of managing themselves in their efforts to achieve their goals. For instance, when women feel stressed by excessively high standards, they adjust their expectations. Additionally, when faced with challenges as mothers, women may find that their plans do not unfold as expected. However, they reflect on the situation and remind themselves

that nothing is perfect, thinking that education can be revisited when they are together with their children. Similarly, when women experience stress in academic matters, such as an overwhelming amount of tasks, they cope by not dwelling on them. Instead, they focus on completing their work without overthinking it.

Participant R experienced a moment when the knowledge gained from her studies seemed to fade, particularly in terms of child-rearing and education. Nevertheless, R and her husband continuously strive to learn more about parenting and education. When R faced stress, especially during her academic journey, she tried to manage it by not letting it overwhelm her. She remained focused on the ultimate goal she wanted to achieve, rather than getting bogged down by the immediate problems.

> *"I have to admit that the numerous tasks did make me... well, stressed, you could say. But not to the point where I carry the burden in my mind or let it demotivate me, because it's still within a level I can handle."*

For participant L, various factors contributed to her anxiety and stress while balancing the roles of mother, wife, worker, and student. When she was too busy and couldn't return home, she would refrain from contacting her mother or children, as she felt it would make her emotional. Moreover, as a mother, L once felt that her child's education would not go according to plan. However, she reflected on this and reminded herself that nothing can be perfect and that sacrifices must be made to achieve her goals. L firmly believed that once they were all living together again, she could continue to educate and guide her children.

> *"But later, for example, I'll just comfort myself and think that once everything is over and we're together at home, I can educate them again, shape them again."*

In terms of her academic life, L held high standards regarding tasks and grades. However, she gradually lowered these standards to avoid stress, acknowledging that her roles as a wife and mother required her attention. By doing so, she accepted that she couldn't always excel in her studies, and she learned to cope with it.

Participant Z also had her own approach to self-management when experiencing stress. Z felt the need to have resilience in times of conflict. In terms of academics, she held herself to high standards but also adjusted her expectations to avoid feeling stressed. Additionally, Z recognized both her weaknesses and strengths, such as feeling tired easily and working at a slower pace. In cases of conflict with her husband, Z made an effort to understand his shortcomings. She was grateful to have a strong love in their relationship, feeling that both of them were the best for each other.

> *"That's my stress management technique: lowering my standards and prioritizing what's important."*

Women with dual roles are faced with numerous demands that they must fulfill. The various demands push women to make decisions about which role to prioritize or which demands they must meet first. Decision-making for women may encompass a variety of matters related to their roles, such as decisions to marry, have children, raise children, work, continue education, choose a major, and select an appropriate university, as well as decisions regarding separation from children and setting personal goals. Previous analyses have shown that each participant goes through similar decision-making processes related to work, child-rearing, and continuing their studies.

Participant R decided to pursue further education to enhance her professional skills and to eventually open her own practice, allowing for a more flexible schedule to spend time with her family. The role of the husband is crucial when participant L made the decision to continue her studies.

> *"The reason I decided to continue my education is for the future of my family. Maybe right now I have to be far from my children because I have to work and study again. But in the future, this will be for them."*

Participant L decided to get married due to pressure from her future in-laws, who wanted her to marry after a long period of dating. After becoming a mother, participant L faced a decision between continuing her studies for a master's degree (S2) or completing her bachelor's degree (S1) in a field that aligned with her current work.

> *"When my child was around 3 years old, I decided whether I wanted to pursue S2 or a bachelor's degree that would align with my current job. If it were a bachelor's degree, I would want it to be aligned with my profession. Well, I was accepted here, so I chose this path."*

Participant Z went through a tough decision-making process when she decided to continue working while also breastfeeding her second child. The agreement with her husband was a key factor in making this decision. Similarly, her decision to continue her education was heavily influenced by her husband's encouragement.

> *"But after a lot of tears, prayers, and everything, I finally decided to continue working." "...Alright, just go ahead and pursue your education, chase your dream."*

Every woman has her own definition of success. In this context, success refers to what a woman hopes to achieve after completing her studies. Women are able to use the knowledge they acquire to help others. Moreover, after becoming professionals, women aspire to open their own clinic in order to have flexible time for their families.

Participant R views success as the ability to use the knowledge she has acquired without neglecting her role as a mother and wife. She desires a flexible job so that she can balance her roles effectively. Her hope is to open her own practice, allowing her to better manage her time. She also emphasizes that success involves happiness; therefore, success is something that brings joy. However, achieving success requires sacrifices along the way, such as leaving her child behind and engaging in a Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) with her husband.

> *"For me, success in school and after school is when I can utilize the knowledge I have without neglecting my roles as a mother and wife."*

Participant L believes that the path to success is long and continuous. However, at this point, she considers success in her studies to be passing the exit test, completing her studies smoothly, and graduating in a short period of time. Looking ahead, she hopes to remain consistent with her current job.

> *"When we can achieve what we dream of, that's success... doing something according to our passion—that's when we've achieved success. It's a long journey, in my opinion."*

Meanwhile, Participant Z sees success as acquiring knowledge, gaining a license, building networks and relationships, and being able to help and benefit others. She aspires to become a professional mother. Additionally, she wants to open a preschool or daycare and work in the field of child education, while also applying personal homeschooling to her own children. Participant Z's concept of success has evolved from her undergraduate (S1) to her graduate (S2) studies. During her undergraduate years, she focused on achievements and maintaining a high GPA. However, during her graduate studies, she wanted to graduate quickly without retaking courses because she planned to have more children.

Participant Z also has a personal definition of success regarding breastfeeding her children. This is based on her efforts to correct the failure she experienced with breastfeeding

her first child, and her desire to successfully breastfeed her second child. Although she ultimately did not succeed, she believes she put in her best effort.

"Being a successful professional means gaining knowledge, becoming competent in the field, and ultimately *obtaining a license to help others, especially benefiting my own family."*

Discussion

Based on the data analysis results regarding women managing dual roles within Long-Distance Marriages (LDM), six key concepts emerged as significant in navigating these roles, including being a student, employee, wife, and mother. These six concepts will be discussed in this section from a psychological perspective. The six concepts are: women's roles, being an employee, the role of a student, the role of a wife, the role of a mother, and social support.

The roles experienced by the participants included being a wife, mother, employee, and student. In performing these various roles, participants frequently encountered conflicts, especially in fulfilling the role of a mother. Participants who struggled to fulfill their role adequately often experienced feelings of guilt and anxiety, particularly concerning parenting. This aligns with the findings of Greenhaus and Beutell (David, 2003), where the numerous role demands lead to stress and guilt. On the other hand, anxiety and guilt were most intensely felt by Participant 3, compared to the other two participants. This occurred due to significant differences in values between the participant and significant others, such as the husband, parents, in-laws, and household assistants, regarding parenting and child education. In contrast, Participants 1 and 2 implemented a principle of full trust in their significant others, such as their husbands, parents, in-laws, and household assistants, leading to less anxiety and guilt.

Henderson et al. (2022) found in their research that anxiety and stress related to the role of a mother are more commonly experienced by women who feel they lack social support or have differing values in child-rearing. This results in feelings of inadequacy in fulfilling the maternal role, which triggers guilt and anxiety. This study also indicates that open communication and support from partners and family can reduce these feelings. Meanwhile, Roberts & Zhang (2023) found that women who trust the roles and decisions made by significant others, such as partners and family, tend to have better role balance, experiencing less stress and anxiety in child-rearing.

Social support plays a crucial role in helping women regulate themselves when managing role conflicts and in decision-making processes. Participants in this study stated that the social support they received from their parents, husbands, and children helped them manage their time in fulfilling their roles as mothers, students, and employees. Participants emphasized the need for good time management to establish effective study strategies and reduce anxiety, which in this case required the ability to self-regulate. Perry et al. (2015) found that social support from various sources can be an essential factor in improving self-regulation. Self-regulation is a multidimensional construct that includes learning strategies, time management, and anxiety reduction.

Adams et al. (2023) revealed that women receiving significant social support from their partners, family, or friends are better able to manage stress and anxiety arising from role conflicts, such as being both a mother and a student. This support also enhances self-regulation abilities, such as time management and study planning. The study found that women with access to social support are better able to plan effective study time and reduce feelings of anxiety, thereby improving their academic performance. Furthermore, Singh & Malhotra (2022) found that strong self-regulation, influenced by social support, helps individuals overcome challenges in managing dual roles, enhancing learning efficiency and maintaining a balance between personal and academic life.

Decision-making is influenced by both cognitive factors and external factors (Jamieson et al., 2015). The participants in this study believed that social support, particularly from their husbands and parents, played a crucial role in boosting a mother's confidence and determination

in deciding to continue her studies. This support enabled participants to decide to stay employed and pursue higher education. This finding aligns with the statement by McGaw and Candy (2010, in Jamieson et al., 2015), which highlights that an individual's experiences, family opinions, and the quality of information and social support available play an essential role in one's decision-making abilities. These factors were necessary for participants to succeed in managing their dual roles.

Recent research by Patel et al. (2023) demonstrated that decision-making within the context of dual roles for women is highly influenced by external factors such as family support, especially from partners and parents. This study revealed that when women feel emotionally and practically supported by their families, they are more likely to make important decisions, such as continuing their education or career, even if it means sacrificing other work commitments. Additionally, Wilson & Thompson (2022) emphasized that the quality of social support, whether in the form of advice, encouragement, or practical help, significantly influences a woman's success in balancing her dual roles. Women who receive this support feel more confident in facing challenges and are better able to make decisions that promote their personal and professional growth.

Family members play a crucial role in assisting participants in navigating Long-Distance Marriages, including supporting them in managing child-rearing responsibilities, especially in maintaining attachment with their children. In addition to the help from parents in child-rearing, participants also implemented their own parenting styles, tailored to the personality of both the mother and the child. As a result, although the mother-child time was significantly reduced due to studies and work, their relationship remained positive and warm. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Sultana, A. M., & Zanariah, N. (2012), which found that working mothers, despite not being able to spend much time with their children, could still develop strong and warm relationships with them.

Recent studies by Williams et al. (2023) revealed that, in the context of Long-Distance Marriage, family support, particularly from parents or other family members, plays a vital role in maintaining strong emotional bonds between mothers and children. The study found that although mothers could not always be physically present, regular communication, such as video calls or conversations, helped preserve emotional closeness. Furthermore, research by Zhang & Liu (2022) indicated that flexible parenting styles, tailored to the child's needs and the personalities of both the mother and the child, can strengthen attachment despite considerable physical distance. This approach allows mothers to remain emotionally engaged, even when physically separated, maintaining a warm relationship with their children.

Women are willing to take on dual roles with the responsibilities that come with them because they believe that what they are doing to the best of their abilities will lead to success in the future. Recent research by Johnson et al. (2023) found that the concept of success for women with dual roles changes as life progresses and family responsibilities evolve. In advanced education, particularly for women who are married or have children, the orientation of success shifts from achieving perfect academic performance to finding a balance between academic success and family responsibilities. This study also emphasized that professional goals, such as becoming a mother who successfully manages both career and family, have become more prevalent in defining modern success for women. Additionally, research by Kim & Park (2022) found that women pursuing higher education tend to prioritize learning experiences and professional networks over just academic grades. They are also more likely to aspire to contribute to society, for example, by opening daycare centers or educational institutions, combining both personal and social goals.

The limitations of this study include the fact that it involved a small number of participants selected based on specific criteria, meaning the findings cannot be generalized to all women in similar situations, especially those from different cultural, economic, or geographical backgrounds. The interpretation of the results is subjective, relying on the

experiences and perspectives of both the researcher and participants, making it susceptible to biases, despite efforts to maintain objectivity. Additionally, some psychological aspects, such as the coping strategies used by participants to deal with psychological and social pressures, remain unexplored and could be an area for future research.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the data analysis and interpretation, this section concludes by answering the research question regarding the experiences of women who manage dual roles within Long-Distance Marriages (LDM). Among the three participants who experienced dual roles within LDM, a common concept emerged. In navigating these various dual roles, participants frequently encountered conflicts, particularly in fulfilling their role as a mother. Participants who struggled to adequately perform their roles often experienced feelings of guilt and anxiety, particularly related to parenting. Consequently, all three participants emphasized the importance of social support from their husbands, parents, relatives, household assistants, and colleagues. Additionally, social support was found to play a key role in enabling women to regulate themselves in managing the emerging conflicts and making decisions necessary for achieving success in fulfilling their dual roles. For Participant 3, however, a unique emphasis was placed on the importance of values in applying a parenting style that differed from Participants 1 and 2, who relied on the principle of trust in significant others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that participants strengthen their self-regulation and time management skills to balance their multiple roles without feeling overly burdened. Techniques such as creating weekly schedules or setting priorities can help maintain balance. Families are also encouraged to be more proactive in offering both practical and emotional support, such as assisting with child-rearing or helping with domestic tasks when the wife is away. Additionally, fostering more effective communication to manage differing opinions on parenting approaches or decisions regarding children's education is crucial in preventing conflicts arising from these differences.

This study's findings are expected to serve as a basis for the development of policies within educational institutions and workplaces, promoting flexibility in work hours or offering work-from-home policies for women managing dual roles and LDM. These policies would provide women with the necessary space to fulfill their personal responsibilities without sacrificing their academic or career goals. Institutions could also provide mentoring and psychological counseling programs specifically designed for female students or employees facing challenges in managing dual roles.

Future researchers are encouraged to further explore the coping strategies used by women in various roles to manage psychological and social pressures. Moreover, future studies could delve deeper into how different forms of social support, both from family and community, influence the success of women in managing their dual roles.

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