

SUBALTERN AGENCY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY IN ACEH

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ABSTRACT - This article examines the gender practices of a marginal community based on economic resilience among traditional women parking attendants in Aceh, Indonesia. It specifically aims to challenge the framing of prior scholarship, which generally states that the daily gender practice of the marginal Muslim community does not provide ample room for a woman's autonomy. The data was collected using semi-structural interviews and non-participatory observations of ten traditional women parking attendants in Langsa, Aceh. Using the concepts of agency, the article shows the way the women of marginal community formulate and redefine gender relations in their socio-cultural sphere. Finally, the finding shows the ambivalences and the contribution of the gender practice within the marginal community in Aceh over the enrichment of gender equality discourse in Muslim societies.

Keywords: Agency, gender practice, women resiliency

ABSTRAK – *Agensi Subaltern dan Resiliensi Ekonomi Kaum Marginal di Aceh.* Artikel ini membahas praktik gender komunitas marginal berdasarkan resiliensi ekonomi perempuan petugas parkir tradisional di Aceh, Indonesia. Secara spesifik, studi ini bertujuan menantang pembingkai kesarjanaan terdahulu yang mayoritas menyatakan praktik gender sehari-hari komunitas Muslim marginal tidak memberi ruang memadai terhadap otonomi perempuan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi terstruktur dan observasi non-partisipatoris terhadap sepuluh petugas parkir perempuan tradisional di Langsa, Aceh. Hasil analisis dengan konsep agensi, tulisan ini memperlihatkan cara dimana perempuan pada komunitas marginal memformulasi dan meredefinisirelasi gender dalam ruang sosio-kulturalnya. Temuan kajian juga memperlihatkan ambivalensi dan kontribusi praktik gender dalam komunitas marginal di Aceh terhadap pengayaan wacana kesetaraan gender dalam masyarakat Muslim.

Kata Kunci: Agensi, praktik gender, resiliensi perempuan.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the gender practices of marginalized communities based on everyday form of economic resilience among Muslim women's traditional parking attendants in Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia. The paper starts from the argument that women's gender practices describe the articulation of agencies that are formed through the intersectional relationship between agents and structures (Archer 2017; Misra and Akins 1998; Sewell Jr 1992; Stacki 2008). In line with Anthony Giddens (1984), the gender practices of women is not only formed by the structures, but also formed the social structures. The agency's articulation reflects their socio-economic position in their social environment (Ahmed 2019). Articulated agencies besides reflecting empowerment, (Briones 2009; Kabeer 1999; Mishra and Tripathi 2011), submission, (Chapman 2016; Mahmood 2005, 2006) critical compliance (Rinaldo 2014) as well as resistance (Ansor and Amri 2020; Bilge 2010; McNay 2000, 2008) towards the surrounding structures, also describes their strategy to resilient in overcoming the challenges they faced (Ibrahim, 2012).

The gender practice of traditional parking attendant challenges the framing of scholars who argue that Muslim women in marginalized communities are subordinated to patriarchal culture (Barlas 2002; Mir-Hosseini 2006; Mohanty 1984; Okin 1999). The women are considered to have less autonomy over themselves. Socio-cultural conditions and economic pressures experienced are considered to make them weak in dealing with patriarchal culture (Nussbaum 2000). The subordination occurs in multi-layered aspects (Al-Amin and Mathbor 2019). Therefore, Okin (1998, 1999), Butler (1997, 2004), Benhabib (1992) and McNay (2000, 2004), state that women's autonomy can only be obtained if women are able to resist the shackles and social structures that restrain them.

While some of these views are accepted, this paper presents a different argument. Although the majority of women in Muslim societies live in a patriarchal culture, they always have a way of articulating agency and resilience when faced with adversity (Mohanty 1984; Spivak 1988). According to Willemsse (2007) women are active subjects in compiling the narrative of their respective lives and social practices. Although they cannot avoid the pressure of a patriarchal structure, they have resilience either through adaptation, negotiation, resistance or a combination of the various variants of the agency.



As stated by Siapno (2000), agency ambiguity is something that cannot be denied by its role in shaping women's gender practices.

The gender practice among Muslim women as parking attendants in Langsa demonstrates the experience of economic resilience. The concept of resilience is broadly understood as the capability of individuals to imitate, adapt or mobilize their resources to overcome a crisis, or even in an effort to remove obstacles in achieving the desired goals (Hutcheon and Lashewicz 2014; Nystad 2014). The concept of resilience in this discussion is combined with the concept of agency and explores aspects that influence the formation of gender practices for marginalized women and show their capability to overcome their problems.

It is recognized that the profession of parking attendants in most cities in Indonesia is identical to men's job. Parking management in malls, hotels, or even apartments in big cities is relatively not facing the problem of gender segregation. However, traditional parking jobs in some small towns are dominated by men. Aniningsih (2015) identifies parking attendance with images of masculinity, thuggery, or conflict and violence due to struggles for territory. Therefore, the everyday narrative of the traditional female parking attendants in Langsa is useful for re-discussing the construction of gender relations among Muslim communities (Kamri, Ramlan, & Ibrahim, 2014).

This paper uses the concept of positional identity to discuss gender practices and the formation of women's identities in marginalized communities. According to Holland et al. (1998) the concept of positional identity refers to situations where daily routines and interactions in certain social spaces form individual identities. Positional identity is something that is fluid, temporary (Appiah 1994; Korsgaard 2009) and strongly influenced by the style of power relations that occur in it (Lefebvre 1991). Discourse on power, status, and privilege systematically circulate among individuals in interacting with the surrounding environment. At any time, the individual always renews his position and identity as a form of self-negotiation on a dynamic structure (Hoffman, Tierney, and Robertson 2017).

In line with Willemmse (2007), Holland et al. (1998) state that the individual is an active subject in "drawing the world" and reproducing the "third space". According to them, "drawing the world" means that someone connects his experience to a wider context, that is the events that occur in other parts of the



world. At the same time, a person also holds his experience, agency, and individual awareness as something unique, that is a response to what happens in the context of his locality (Usman et al., 2020). In other words, drawing the world is an individual's capacity to reproduce social identity according to the spatial context on the one hand and the capability to relate it to other events that occur in the world on the other hand. Positioning social practices as part of events that occur in the world is one form of agency articulation (Rinaldo 2014).

The concept of third space is used to discuss the convergence of various histories in which personal history cannot be articulated in its original version but forms a new knowledge (Bhabha 1994, 1998). The actor redefines his position in the spatial context in which he is located. The third space is a hybrid identity formed as a result of negotiations between the self in an imagined version by considering the empirical reality and the surrounding structure (Bhabha 1998). The women's narrative identity of marginalized communities in this study is analyzed by emphasizing how women imagine the ideals that are expected and negotiate with the reality of the patriarchal space to form gender practices as hybrid identities according to their social environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative methods are used to explore the problems posed in this article (Creswell 2007; Maykut and Morehouse 1994). In line with that, an ethnographic approach was chosen to detail observations on empirical data which were then used as the basis for arguing (Ariff 2012; Spradley 1979). As stated by Berger and Luckmann, knowledge is often understood according to the social, historical, and cultural context surrounding it (Berger 1969; Berger and Luckmann 1966). This paper acknowledges that the meaning of social practice is derived according to its socio-cultural context: the social environment in which the subject under study performs daily activities. Therefore, the practice of marginalized women's gender is trying to be understood as a social interaction that takes place continuously in creating meaning, negotiating mainstream understanding, and promoting new conceptions that are adapted to the personal experiences of participants that take place in their respective work environments (Ansor and Amri 2020; Okin 1998, 1999).

This research was conducted in Langsa, an administrative city located about 434 kilometers from Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, and about 166



kilometers from the city center of Medan, the capital city of North Sumatra province (Ansor 2014a, 2014b). The places where women work as parking attendants at Langsa dominate some parking areas, such Merdeka Square, Mayor's Hall Area, Teuku Umar Street, and Ahmad Yani Street. It should be added that although the recruitment of women as parking attendants at Langsa is carried out at the local government's initiative, women's participation in this work occurs voluntarily. The phenomenon in Langsa is relatively different from several other cities in Aceh where traditional parking attendants are dominated by men. Based on information from CV Trans Langsa (a company that manages traditional parking), the number of traditional parking attendants in Langsa during 2022 is 166 persons consisting of 83 men and 83 women. Women parking attendants in Langsa generally come from marginal economic backgrounds, the aged rank to 20 and 60, are married or ever been married, and rely on income as traditional parking attendants for their basic livelihood.

The primary ethnographic data were collected in 2017, and additional data were completed in 2019-2022 through semi-structured interviews (Smith 2001), on-participatory observations (Gillham 2008) as well as casual group conversations (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2001). The sampling technique used to select ten women as participants in this study is a purposive method, that is, by targeting sample diversity based on specific variables such as age diversity, duration of work as traditional parking attendants, social background (ethnicity or regional origin). Non-participatory observations were carried out by observing the daily activities of several female parking attendants during their work. Meanwhile, casual group conversations were conducted with 2-5 parking attendants to chat casually on the sidelines of work activities in a relatively short duration, about thirty minutes to one hour. The topics of discussion include but are not limited to research issues.

All participants were informed that the interviews were part of an academic study and were open to publication (Bernard 2006). We do not hide our identities as researchers. Before the interviews, they also received sufficient information regarding the freedom to continue and discontinue their participation in this study. We recorded the interviews with the permission of the informants. In addition, all the names of the female study participants were withheld (Creswell 2007, 141–42). Likewise, other social identities presented in this study were disguised to ensure that participants were not affected by things not needed (Dawis 2010).



Data analysis was carried out thematically guided by research questions that had been used in interviews. Although the thematic analysis adopted in this study is usually used in research that uses the realism paradigm in exploring the experiences of the subjects studied (Aronson 1994; Roulston 2001), Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the same method can be used in both essentialist and constructionist research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis in a constructionist framework is still used to assemble theoretical interpretations of the socio-cultural and structural contexts that shape the individual social practices studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results are presented in several subdiscussions. First, the researcher explores the biographical narrative of female participants related to the background of being a female parking attendant. The author tries to show the intersection between structures and agents in influencing the course of their lives, so they choose this profession. The second subdiscussion identifies gender practice as a form of women's capability in redefining identity in their new social space. The third sub-discussion explores how female research participants negotiate between their domestic roles as mothers or wives and their professions as parking attendants. The author also explores their efforts to ensure that 'all pearls' (family and work) remain within their grasp.

Research Participant and the Making of Subaltern Agency

The social practice of female parking attendants shows an intersectional relationship with the surrounding structure. Becoming a parking attendant is not an option without a bargaining process. The said social practice reflects a model of agency formed in its social space (Lucas 2018). As it will be shown, their background in pursuing the profession of parking attendant is not motivated merely by the economic needs but also as an effort to gain autonomy or recognition in their respective socio-cultural environment.

The participant's decision to become a female parking attendant, according to Michel Foucault's perspective indicates the practice of "discursive resistance" to gender construction that has been established in society (1980). They reject the mainstream framing of women's jobs, like cooking, or jobs that are limited to females. They choose jobs that they think are more appropriate, though it is against gender segregation and normality in society. The chosen profession implies a rejection of the definition of some people regarding the dichotomy of



gender identity based on work, especially the framing of the traditional parking attendance as a male profession.

They show various ways of expressing their rejection of the framing that the profession of parking attendance profession is a male monopoly. NL (27 years old), a wife with three children, rejects this view. Even though she works as a parking attendant at the fish market area in Langsa, she considers this profession more appropriate for her than working as a household assistant. NL does not deny that the job assessment as a household assistant is more suitable for women in general. However, she prefers a job as a parking attendant over a household assistant, because apart from ensuring more independence in time management, it can also generate daily incentives. According to him, “working as a parking attendant can earn you money every day, but being a household assistant must wait at the beginning of the month after the employer gets a salary” (interview with NL). Independence over time and daily income are one of NL's ways of the articulating agency.

The ethnographic data show that even though the reason for pursuing the profession of female parking attendance is due to the urgency of economic conditions, they still have autonomy over their decisions, they still have autonomy over the decisions they make (Musa et al., 2021). To the writer, ML (40 years old) told that she has been working as a female parking attendant for a decade and a half. In 2003, her husband passed away, leaving three children. Her economic condition worsened after she lost a figure who previously became the backbone of the family's economy. The job as a daily laundry worker is not sufficient for daily needs. Therefore, to a connection who works as a staff at the transportation service, she asked for a job as a parking attendant. Leaving her old job to pursue a profession as a parking attendant is a way in which ML renegotiates the boundaries of gender segregation.

Other participants, MR (45 years old) and RT (34 years old), had a similar experience: becoming a parking attendant was an independent decision without coercion, despite realizing that the decision had limitations. Both have a husband, but the husband's income is insufficient to meet the family's economic needs. It is prompting him to choose a job as a parking attendant. MR, a wife with five children, said that her husband was a casual daily laborer and had no fixed income. Sometimes, her husband does not get any money at all after a hard day's work. MR chose a job as a parking attendant on her own initiative so that her children could go to school and eat properly. Meanwhile, RT, who



has a husband with two children, stated that economic factors were the main reason for her to work as a traditional parking attendant. Her husband works outside Langsa and is only able to send money for the family's needs on an irregular basis. Often their basic needs cannot be met from the remittances. Like MR, RT took up the parking attendant profession as an initiative to increase her family's economic income.

It has been mentioned that all research participants come from lower economic groups. They choose the profession of parking attendants due to the pressure of the family's economic needs. The majority of them are middle-aged (over 50 years old) and have a basic educational background or a maximum of junior secondary level. NL, MR, ML, and RT, to varying degrees, corrected the assumption of some Western liberal feminists that women from the east (Muslims) are weak figures and always depend on other parties (especially husbands) (Ansor and Amri 2016).

Although it is against the stereotype of women's dependence on their husbands, the women who participated in this study had very limited options. They are pressed for the economic needs of the family either because of the death of the husband, the limitation of the husband's income, divorce, or because the husband's job is out of the city. Of course, other options can be used as solutions to overcome the problems, but the research participants chose the parking attendant profession as a solution that was considered the most appropriate amid their limitations. The limited resources, skills, and education reduce their chances of getting a job in the formal sector (Mahmood 2005).

Gender Identity Negotiation in the Public Spaces

Ethnographic data found a phenomenon that Michel Foucault (1977) conceptualized as disciplinary power is a strategy in which women articulate power through the internalization process within the individual concerned. Disciplinary power is a more broad-based strategy than other modes of the exercise of power due to its anonymous and invisible nature. Disciplinary power is a process of individual internal control that results in body discipline accepting the normative prescriptions in society (McHoul and Grace 1993, 68–70).

Research participants have various ways of interpreting the profession of a parking attendant. Social background and previous experience quite influence the process of creating meaning (Broch 2011; Henrickson et al. 2013). The



majority of them, for example, perceive the parking attendant profession as a lawful job that does not conflict with their religion. Therefore, they have nothing to worry about when pursuing this profession. A research participant assessed that parking attendants are a noble profession because they do not interfere with other people's property. Another informant likens the profession of a parking attendant to selling a service. According to him, parking attendants are selling a service as well, not only by tidying up parked vehicles but, more importantly, ensuring the vehicle's safety while the owner leaves it.

We also met participants who said that the profession is not merely a legal job but also a job managed by local government institutions to empower women from marginalized communities. Another participant stated that the job of a parking attendant is a suitable profession for the lower class because there is no need to spend a large economic capital, but only with a piece of cardboard that has been split open, a handkerchief, uniforms, or other attributes that are used when on duty. In essence, the participants assessed that parking attendants are one of the professions that are equivalent to other professions. A person has the freedom to choose or not to choose the profession according to their respective situations and conditions.

The process of adaptation of research participants to their social environment shows that gender practices cannot be separated from the surrounding structure (Hemmings and Kabesh 2013; Kennelly 2009; Madhok 2013; Uppalury and Racherla 2014). An informant, ML, pseudonym (51 years old), admitted that at first, it was difficult for him to work as a parking attendant because of his status as a woman, although he later became used to it. KD (47 years old) initially felt awkward when wearing a vest and parking attributes. In the first three months, she admitted that she still felt shy about appearing with her new social identity, but then she got used to it. Adaptation is done by forcing oneself to wear a parking vest then, followed by other attributes. He also always pays attention to the other parking attendants at work. KD experienced the same thing. Although at first the parking attributes seemed foreign to him, after studying the surrounding environment (copying strategy), he admitted that he could adapt to his new environment and culture.

This study found a variety of adaptation patterns of research participants to a patriarchal social environment. Sometimes participants appear by imitating the performance of men to overcome people who lack respect for their profession (Johnstone, Bhagwanjee, and Bobat 2016). MY (46 years old) admitted that she



had scolded a resident who seemed to underestimate the parking attendant profession by not paying a fee. Another parking attendant, ML, recounted that she had once encountered a man who paid a parking fee by the coin of a hundred Rupiah. ML refused the payment and scolded the man since the smallest denomination was hard to use unless in certain places. According to him, such an attitude is expected to be a lesson for residents to respect the profession of parking attendants and pay parking fees.

It is recognized that there are a small number of community members in the research location who still demean the parking attendant profession, equate it with begging, or even consider them 'prostitutes' because they often return home from work at night. An informant, JD, 35 years old, expressed his negative assessment of the parking attendants. JD said:

“I never liked those parking attendants. In a moment we park the motorcycle they have come [asking for money]. To me, they are no different from beggars. They need no capital for this job. That's why when I park the motorcycle and then they put a cardboard box on my motorcycle [to cover it from sun heat], I take the cardboard with me and run away. I don't want to pay. What the hell!”

The majority of research participants are individuals who have had different work experiences before becoming parking attendants. Previous experience is also believed to influence the adaptation process. This study found that there were at least two directions of gender identity negotiations, those are negotiations in the work environment and on the social environment. In the work environment, a number of participants experience various forms of negative treatment, such as the behavior of vehicle owners who refuse to pay parking fees. In contrast, in the social environment, they are faced with stigma from community members who equate their profession with scrounge or even prostitution.

NH, 45 years old, said that at the beginning of being a parking attendant around 2003, she often experienced unpleasant treatment, both in the work environment and in the community. In her work environment, for example, she is often yelled at by vehicle owners who don't want to pay for parking, while in society she is stigmatized as 'a bad woman'. As a woman who works far away from her residence, this assessment has a negative impact on her domestic life. NH says:



“The parking attendant profession is often considered negatively by the public. Even once considered a ‘lady of the night’. For me, this is not a problem, but I am very sad that the accusations against me by society also affect my husband. My own husband also thinks of me as being accused by society. I was very hurt, I immediately said to my husband: ‘You don’t trust me anymore, you believe what people say instead, please come to Langsa to see what I’m doing. Above all, you have not been able to provide a living for me.’”

JM (45 years old) also feels a negative stigma from some members of the community because she works as a parking attendant. JM said the profession of parking attendant is considered a deviant job for women. The negative assessment is partly because female parking attendants sometimes return to their homes late at night. JM said:

“The challenge I faced in my society is that I often labeled negative. They think that I’m a bad woman since I often come home late at night. Some even say that I am a prostitute. I don’t really care about this comment. I assume that they are narrow-minded people who never go anywhere and just keep their large nose on other people’s business.”

JM’s experience shows that the negative perception of society on female parking attendants is because they often go home late at night. In some societies in the Muslim world, women are considered abnormal when they are out of the house at night (Listerborn 2015; Phillips 2015; van der Schyff and Overbeeke 2011). Likewise, in the community where JM lives, women who often go home late at night are considered to have bad behavior. Sometimes these conditions also affect the harmony of family life of research participants. At least, that’s what happened to JM and her husband. Her husband suspects JM of having an affair because she often goes home late at night. JM said:

“What makes me a little bit sad is that people’s assessment of me turned out to affect my husband. My husband once suspected me of having an affair with a rickshaw driver. I said to him, don’t let it influenced you! Don’t be jealous! I may quit my job if you provide me ample earnings. I only ask for two thousand Rupiahs a day apart from daily expends. My husband said he couldn’t. Well then don’t be jealous. If you don’t believe me, you may investigate my activities in Langsa whether the hearsay true? I believe my husband watches me when I work in Langsa.”

The negative judgment of the community towards JM has an impact on her comfort at work. For this reason, JM and other research participants make efforts to negotiate and adapt to the social environment in which she lives. The ethnographic data found many resilience strategies of the research participants for being accepted in society. *First*, building a positive community response to



them. To build a positive response, female parking attendants do not necessarily fight against the community. Whatever bad the public's attitude towards them, they accepted it without open resistance (Scott 1985, 1990). According to JM, taking open resistance against the community will cause new problems. The pattern they carried out is quite good, polite, and friendly towards the community, even though some people do not accept us, it's not a problem, because gradually the whole community will accept our condition as parking attendants.

Second, establishing close friendships with members of the community. It is done by building interpersonal connections through mutual respect. They make time for various social activities with the community. For example, attending a wedding party, participating in social activities such as *Serikat Tolong Menolong* (Collective Help Union), attending religious lectures, participating in reciting Surah Yasin collectively (*Yasinan*), etc. When a local community member passes away, the female parking attendant takes the time to attend the funeral until the procession is over. Eventhough sometimes certain nosy woman quips, they don't take care. To them, the important thing is that they don't do what they were accused of.

Third, disseminating understanding to the public about the profession of being a parking attendant. This stage is a cultural dimension, where the public's negative view of "women often go home at night" is attached to the mind and trusted by all people. To change this perspective, female parking attendants take a cultural approach to the community. Persuasively they build an understanding in the community that the profession of parking attendant is not as bad as assumed by the community. To clarify this, female parking attendants do not directly justify themselves and their profession, but they do this indirectly. The story about the parking attendant is not made in an exclusive story but inserted in another story. The goal is to make people aware without having to judge and justify themselves.

The three resilience strategies described above are part of the research participants' efforts to be accepted in their social environment. The community's negative response, friendship in separatist relations, and their misinterpretations and judgments are expected to change for the better. This study found that these efforts ultimately made the presence of parking attendants in the community more acceptable without any subjective judgments. Several informants said that during the implementation period of



this research, parking attendants and the community had an attitude of mutual understanding and respect for each other's existence.

Practicing Gender in Domestic Sphere

This section discusses gender practices in the domestic arena. The discussion explores the extent to which the economic incentives obtained by women through the profession as parking attendants contribute to increasing their independence and autonomy; or how much the economic contribution affects the pattern of relations between wife and husband. In the following section, the author shows the gender experiences of research participants in the domestic sphere in more detail.

Several studies on the gender practices of the wife that have an economic contribution to the family show the diverse articulation patterns of agency (Ahmed 2019; Nussbaum 2000). Martha C. Nussbaum (2000) shows that the gender practice of working women has a higher level of autonomy than women who are economically completely dependent on their husbands. Sarah Ahmed (2019) refutes Nussbaum (2000) by showing that the economic contribution of women participating in the microcredit program in Pakistan is not correlated with their independence and autonomy. Ahmed's study shows that women's economic contribution has only a limited effect on the expansion of their autonomy in the domestic arena.

The experiences of research participants reveal a more varied pattern. For some participants, the economic contribution does not have a significant impact on the autonomy of gender practices. However, it should be mentioned that the majority of participants stated that they had more flexibility in spending the money they earned from their activities as parking attendants. One of the research participants said that the profession of parking attendant is positioned only as a substitutive activity among the main roles as a housewife. NL is working as a parking attendant, not as a main source of income. NL decided to become a parking attendant after leaving her job as a household assistant since the job allowed her to provide more time to take care of her children. According to her:

“Working as a parking attendant is much easier because you only manage the position of motorbikes in a line. At first, the work felt heavy because we weren't used to it, but now it's easy. Likewise, the time, I just work until 12.00 at noon, after that, I can deal with my children and take them to school. If you are a



household assistant, you have to work from 8 in the morning until the afternoon. Who will take care of the children and take them to school? Moreover, working as a parking attendant can earn money every day, on the contrary, being a household assistant have to wait for the beginning of the month after the employer gets his salary.”

The interview excerpts show that NL chose the parking attendant as her profession was not only for economic reasons but also for saving her time so that she may have more time for her children. To her, being a parking attendant is better than being a household assistant. NL viewed that her job as a parking attendant promises an economic incentive that can solve various problems she faces while still being able to carry out her main role as a wife and mother to her children. NL's behavior shifts control of her actions in the parking profession to maximize profits. NL continues to rely on her husband's income for the family's economic needs. In other words, even though, at a certain level, the profession as a parking attendant increases independence, as a wife, NL still depends upon her husband as the head of the household.

JM, another participant, told a relatively different experience. The job as a parking attendant contributes to increasing her flexibility in managing her family's economy, although at the same time, it also contributes to worsening her family life. The society where JM lives tends to judge the habit of coming home late at night as deviant social behavior. Society's stereotype of JM also affects her husband's assessment of her. He was suspected of having an affair with a pedicab driver in the city where he worked. To overcome this problem, JM made several attempts to convince her husband about the untruth of this assumption. For example, JM gave an understanding of the profession she was working on and the untruth of the accusations against her. JM managed to improve her household life.

The experiences of JM and NL show the way women [research participants] articulate agency and resilience to overcome life's problems. Both show the attitude of a housewife and a good wife during her role as a parking attendant. The job as a parking attendant is not placed in a position that goes beyond the role of a wife or mother of their children. Therefore, as found in the experiences of other respondents, some research participants choose the profession of parking attendant over other jobs that require more time. It is part of the way they articulate agency and overcome the limitations they face.



The biographical narratives of some research participants show that their efforts to ensure the 'pearl stays in hand' are always on the agenda. The search for a balance between domestic roles and work has demonstrated how the agency and resilience of women in subaltern communities are articulated. In contrast to Ahmed's findings (2019) that view the correlation between economic contribution and women's autonomy, this study finds that the economic contribution of research participants to the economic life of the family does not necessarily reduce their domestic role. In line with the findings of Md. Al-Amin & Mathbor (2019) their domestic role did not experience a significant shift after their contribution to the economy of the family. Exchanging experiences is one of their strategies to strengthen solidarity among fellow community members. They realize the necessity of the support from fellow female community members in building a balance between their domestic roles and work as parking attendants.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the agency and resilience of marginalized communities in Langsa based on the experiences of female parking attendants. The writings have shown that these women choose the profession of a parking attendant in addition to fulfilling their economic needs as well as a way for them to increase their economic independence and self-autonomy in their social environment. The profession of a parking attendant opens a space for women's interaction to adapt to a new social environment. Challenges and obstacles that arise in the new environment and social identity require capabilities in adaptation and resilience. This paper shows at least two domains that influence the gender practices of female parking attendants, those are the public sphere (workplace environment and community), and the domestic sphere. This study finds that the gender practice of research participants in the public and domestic spheres are formed through the intersection between agents and the structure that surrounds them.

The paper finds that at the individual level, research participants articulate agency in a social structure that tends to be patriarchal through various patterns and strategies, whether carried out in the work environment, social space, or domestic arena. They do imitation, habituation, and exchange strategies with fellow community members in dealing with the social urgency they face. Their efforts to find a balance between the roles of parking workers and domestic roles signify the prevalence of women's gender practices in Muslim societies.



In the end, this study shows that women's agency in shaping gender practices is essentially a reflection of experience in their respective social environments.

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