The Unwritten Conventions: Gender-Based Role Expectations and Rivalry among Indonesia Army Wives

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Abstract
This paper deploys an ethnographic research of gender-based role expectation of Indonesia army wives. Its aim is to question wives’ positionality vis-à-vis the military institution and consider the implication for how to understand the unwritten conventions and codes to be army wives itself. This paper asserts that the expectation for wives are culturally gendered role that are different for seniors’ and junior’s army wives. To address these points, we discuss the meaning of gendered roles, then progress through a brief history of military marriage procedures, then discuss current expectations for and perception of army wives. We then evaluate the extent to which gendered role expectations continue to reflect rivalry among army wives before concluding with assertion about what today’s stereotypes and role expectation say about social progress in Indonesia army.

Keywords: army wives, gender role, military marriage, military codes
INTRODUCTION

We frequently hear about the heroic soldiers struggle for their nation, but we seldomly hear about what their wives have made. Army wives are conjoined by unwritten codes. They are expected to endure hardships with kindness and tragedies with heads held high (Moelker, Andres, and Poot 2006). The media commonly relies only on the families’ sorrowful goodbyes and touching reunions. Yet the reality is far more complex and hair-raising. The lives of Army wives themselves are the things of drama. These women are enacted to conventions in conditions that are sometimes solid, precarious, and too often painful (Rosen, Carpenter, and Moghadam 2018). Yet what life is really like to be an army wives has never been precisely portrayed.

Biank (2016) through Under the Saber, delivers thought-provoking chronicle explaining the complex personal and challenges army wives face, portraying a provoking new look at army life. Biank goes beyond the edge and depiction of military life and shows what it is really like to be an army wife, such as: comforting your son who wants his dad home from deployment for his four birthday or carrying furnishings off the truck by yourself at a new duty station when your husband is in the office.

From her seminal work, she realized the unseen story of army wives set in the ruins of sad and melodramatic summer in 2004, in Fort Bragg, a privilege military duty station. She knew the truth, wives were the fortitude of the army. They were resilient, not powerless and deserved more than sweet-coating things that often ascribed to their stories in the media. It tells the story of four different Army wives, who find themselves relentlessly dependent on conditions that keenly push them to redefine who they are as women and army wives. In this interesting and striving research account, Biank grabs the reader to pass the army’s gateways; where everyone has a role to perform, rules are strictly obeyed, perfection praised, discipline is expected and perception often triumphs reality. She discovers what happens when real life strikes with army conventions. Obviously, she explicates what it requires to be a wife and mother in a subculture and in continuous situation of readiness for war. In this thought-provoking and persuasive work, she takes an adjacent viewpoint at the other woman and the army conventions influence on wives’ sentiment, marriages, and home life. This story of resilience and strength is a heart-opener for those who have never experienced military
life and everyday conduct of the women who each day deal with the “unwritten codes.”

In line with U.S Army wives’ life, Indonesia Army (TNI AD)\textsuperscript{12} wives’ positionality provides similar portrayal and there is critical point to discuss. They are conjoined with Persit Kartika Candra Kirana (Army Wives Union), and regularly conduct a monthly meeting\textsuperscript{13} in their husband duty stations. Each duty station led by a commander’s wife and regulations is all under her command. Persit established in 1946 and serves as women organization to support Indonesian army, especially husband’s duty. The mission is to help army’s wives in developing their mental, physical and moral behavior, as well as supporting TNI AD policy by fostering a sense of sisterhood and kinship, a sense of unity.

Drawing a different case to the portrayal of aforementioned U.S army wives who deal with the everyday conduct of unwritten codes. This paper will particularly explore ethnographic approach on gender-based role expectation and discuss the meaning of gendered roles, unique cultural realm of Indonesia military life and duty stations, then progress through a brief history of military marriage procedures, then discuss current expectations for and perception of Indonesia army wives.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This article uses a qualitative method (Djamba and Neuman 2002) and deploys ethnographic research of gender-based role expectations of Indonesia army wives in negotiating everyday conduct of the unwritten codes. This research is explanatory by documenting, contextualizing and questioning wives’ positionality vis-à-vis the military institution and consider the implication for how to understand the unwritten codes to be army wives itself. In this article, we explore why and how expectation for wives are culturally gendered role that are different for seniors’ and junior’s enlisted wives. There are several stages in collecting data on the discourses of army wives. First, we collected and identified several journals, books, articles, research paper and news linked to brief history of military marriage procedures, then discuss current expectations for and perception of army wives. Second, we conducted a theoretical mapping on those two subjects, which were then followed by compiling

\textsuperscript{12}TNI AD stands for Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Darat (Indonesia Army). Basically, there are three military institutions in Indonesia. Those are: army, marine and air force.

\textsuperscript{13}The meeting is mandatory and each member is responsible to use complete uniforms.
it in a descriptive and reflexive arguments. Third, we conducted in-depth interviews with the informants within three military bases in different cities in East Java to get an overview of unwritten codes. Due to ethical and safety concerns, we changed the name of informants to initialed-names. Data analysis was carried out by making reflexive field note based on the context of research and methodology on senior and junior’s army wives. Lastly, we evaluate the extent to which gendered role expectations continue to reflect rivalry among army wives before concluding with assertion about what today’s stereotypes and role expectation say about social progress in Indonesia army.

THE LIFE ARMY WIVES IN THE DUTY STATION

We conducted interviews to provide a voice to spouses, who tend to be unheard and anonymous within the military community. We selected three women for interviews because they challenge and support the ranked-based stereotypes of enlisted spouses. While these are the portrayals of only three women, they take the experiences of the many other enlisted, non-commissioned and officer spouses we interviewed during the course of this research, and their problems are constant with the challenges other army spouses face.

All of these spouses identified certain hurdles that they face in their everyday lives and that were a consistent among many spouses we interviewed. One of these is the split-up between officers and junior enlisted personnel, which brings over to the spouses. Dana describes the social hurdles between officers and enlisted spouses, and Eka is aware that her friendship with the battalion commander’s wife is an exception to the general situation. Many enlisted wives are also isolated from other enlisted spouses, either by their own choice (because they feel many of their peers fit the negative stereotype) or because they live far from the military station and do not have the opportunity to meet other army enlisted spouses. The military leadership and policymakers should be aware that the experiences of military spouses differ considerably by rank and should strive to consider the views of junior personnel and their families when establishing policies.

Another hurdle is the split-up between the wife’s private life and her husband’s professional life. This split-up is very dissimilar from the experience of officers’ spouses, who tend to maintain a more active community among themselves and are often expected to participate in
unit activities and/or social gatherings. In contrast, the wives of enlisted soldiers are more likely to be isolated from engagement to higher-ranked army wives and post activities and resources, but it is mandatory to conjoin with monthly gathering.

This conditions is further exacerbated by the huge percentage of junior enlisted families residing in military housing. Because many of these families mostly cannot afford to buy adequate housing, the wives are left home alone and sometimes without the means to travel to the military base and take advantage of the resources there. Army Community Services’ outreach efforts are well-envisioned but are often grossly understaffed to inform and to encourage the involvement of young spouses. This work signified the extent to which the lack of military housing is also a causative factor in the most harsh problem of most young enlisted families: financial adversity.

Because these interviews were narrowed to military wives, we cannot make judgements with similar wives in civilian life. Therefore, we cannot say whether financial hardship, for example, are more predominant in civilian wives or in military families. More general and more-methodical data would be required to evaluate the influences of civilian versus military environments on such difficulties. Many analysts provide that enlisted soldiers are paid adequately for their professional experience and education. However, that position fails to reflect key differences between military and civilian employment, and thus resulting the invalidity of any direct comparison of wage rates. First, many army spouses are incapable to contribute to the household income to the same extent they would in a civilian condition. This is because some stations are often located among economically depressed areas, where spouses cannot find proper employment. Frequent moves also worsen this problem by denying wives the opportunity to develop experience and tenure. Moreover, civilian employers often actively refuse hiring military wives because of the turnover. The irregular schedule of army soldiers also makes it problematic for spouses to work; they are often incapable to depend on their soldier husbands to watch the children, share the family vehicle, et cetera. Undeniably, while soldiers are deployed, many wives who have children find it particularly difficult to work and care for their families. Second, the living expenses of many young couples are different while in the army than at home, where they might live with their parents or depend on a family member to give child care. Third, military work schedules hinder most soldiers from finding a second
job, which would increase their family income were they working in a civilian context. Additionally, unlike many civilian jobs, which pay overtime, the army wishes long hours but does not compensate for additional time. Fourth, the monthly income of many enlisted families varies extensively, depends on the deployment schedule of the unit. Should the soldier spend some time either deployed or in the field, some of his separate rations will be deducted. While the army conserves that this amount is envisioned only to feed the soldier, the circumstances for many of these families is mostly different. For these families, a dependable and steady amount would help them evade financial crisis. A system that would pay them a constant amount, based on the unit’s planned deployment or training schedule, would grant these families more control over their financial hurdles.

Additional factor of the financial adversity many enlisted military families’ evidence is extreme debt. Because of the allotment system whereby merchants and others are paid directly by the government from a soldier’s wages are offered debt opportunities for which they would not restrict were they civilians with the same income. Thus, young soldiers and wives purchase stereos, cars, and other luxurious items beyond their financial means. The allotment system advances the question of the extent to which the military should act paternalistically, either by restraining the merchants with whom military personnel can do business or by removing allotment agreements between enlisted personnel and the merchants. Regrettably, while some individuals will claim that the military should not be so linked in personal lives, these issues do depressingly influence the military workplace, as first sergeants and commander report that large percentages of their time are dominated with the personal financial problems of their soldiers.

The everyday circumstances portrayed here has consequences for military leaders and policymakers concerned with the military institutions and programs that affect or serve the junior enlisted community. But because no solution will suit all members of the military community, deciding the most proper role for the military in directing problems. The experiences and qualities of the population vary vastly. While many of the hurdles junior enlisted soldiers and their spouses experience are financial and thus linked to the pay structure, pay increases are not essentially the best way to solve the problems. Some other possible changes are stated clearly, such as stabilizing the payment structure for separate rations and abolishing allotment payment...
agreements between junior enlisted personnel and soldiers are not intended to lose their separate rations when deployed overseas, but there have been cases in which deployments labelled “training missions” or other technicalities have prohibited families from getting separate rations while their soldiers are died. Such changes, which could likely be applied without adverse effects on the rest of the military community, deserve deliberation but entail closer examination. Other changes, however, would enforce substantial costs and thus are more difficult. For example, any reallocation of military housing to give greater benefit to junior enlisted personnel would have obvious negative consequences for the rest of the military community, for which there would be less housing. Assessing the consequences of existing family support programs was beyond the scope of this effort. Obviously, further research is needed to determine the best programmatic and institutional way out for the problems.

THE PREREQUISITES AND PROCEDURES OF INDONESIA MILITARY MARRIAGE

The standing of marrying Indonesia Army personnel among female has become a timeless discourse in Indonesia. There are formative rationalities of romanticizing the army’s marriage such as their honourable duties for the countries, their powerful yet modesty image beyond chivalry, and other benefits which will gained by the wives like joining remarkable army wives organization namely Persit (Hastanto 2020). Mainstream mass media in Indonesia also reiterates the glorification of dating with the uniformed man’s trend (Paramesti 2020). Furthermore, Hartanto (2020) also reifies their rationalities as female tends to develop a stereotype of army’s established livelihood; in essence of having a decent life and do not have to struggle to overcome every predicament.

Another interesting rationality that lingers amidst female who have a dream of marrying army personnel is about their mesmerization of sword arch or pedang pora procedure on the army wedding party (Paramesti 2020). The aforementioned prompt has become a popular

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14Pedang Pora is a legitimate ceremonial procedure that signifies the army personnel (the groom) has dispatched his bachelor period. Conducted during the wedding ceremony by their junior or fraternity from the same batch with the groom—by arching the swords surrounds the bride and the groom. It aims to honor the married couple as they will build harmonious household and livelihood. However, it has a particular meaning
stereotype among female, especially among the professional female who works as a midwives or nurses to marry uniformed men (Paramesti 2020). The romanticization of Indonesia army marriage is strengthen by online dating community created by numbers of young women. Based on authors' findings on the fieldwork, we have found those young women community who become the army’s partner (girlfriend) have created private group on instant messenger platform namely WhatsApp. Their discussions are preferring to the morality aspects of gendered role expectation; where those young ladies codify their own ethics regarding a decent behaviour of becoming the partner of Indonesia army personnel. The young ladies’ community on the aforementioned WhatsApp group apparently plays an immense role in bracketing the norms that applicable to their circumstances. Becoming the partner of Indonesia army personnel’s pride has veined into a mindset of many Indonesian women.

To pursue the noble dream of marrying the Indonesia army personnel, there are numbers of procedure in which all the future brides must follow on. Those procedures are extended to health test, virginity test, mental test which emphasizes on the morality teaching’s comprehension, administrative applications such as verification paper from the state and the military institution, a statement of fidelity towards the army wives’ duties, an agreement from the bride’s parent, et cetera (Kumparan 2018, 2019, 2020; Utama 2017). Discussing the first procedure of health test, we would understand that the brides will be checked up at Army Central Hospital (Kumparan 2020). Hereafter, further examination on the health test are sorted into the physical examination, mental ideological tests, and bride’s psychological examination conducted by the regional committee (Munsi 2016).

The next procedure refers to the virginity test; which becomes the inexplicable aspect since that procedure was never being told from the first place on the pact—which surprisingly also becomes the seminal part of the health test. Referring from Kumparan (2018), the procedure of virginity test is conducted by examining the wholeness of a hymen within the female’s genital. The virginity test has been protested by many worldwide activism movements as it does not ingrain from an appropriate scientific argumentation—as it is also against the human right bill that accounted by the Indonesian Law No. 39 Year 1999; in

for the bride; as they are expected to become resilient by living within a challenging military environment
this context means by the conduct of women’s discrimination base on their moral status (Amalia 2018). A bias pervasive ideology such as the virginity test for civilians who wants to join the part of military force ramified from the legacy of New Order regime; where virginity becomes a signifier of Indonesian’s moral decency. The lose of virginity within pre-marital status inadvertently will distress women moral status, as it degrades their dignity in the eyes of society regarding marriage expectancy and family’s good reputation (Davies 2018). Virginity concept (hymen wholeness or never being penetrated during sexual intercourse) within an Indonesian morality context has embodied as a bio-border for women rooted from Islamic religious teachings alongside with the element of veil and beauty or grace (Davies 2018).

The next procedure after passing the health test that includes virginity test, the brides must proceed to pass on mental test (pembinaan mental). So far, authors found similarity which addressed for both the brides and grooms regarding the mental test procedure. Therefore, the mental test emphasizes on family and household managements; including a synchronization against inter couple’s contradictive principles, overcoming every family’s conflict, preparing future wives’ resilience in facing their husband’s duty deployment, and embracing wives to support their husband’s career faithfully (Herfina and Sukidi 2020). Mental test’s materials will be delivered and taught by religious clerics—depending on individual’s religion or belief preferences. According to Herfina and Sukidi (2020), mental test perceives as a beneficial lesson for the couple after marriage life. It portrays from both perspective of the bride and groom; especially for the bride, it gives an endurance for them to face the reality of becoming an army’s wife while their husbands leave for duties. The previous notion emerges another form of patriarchy’s subjugation for the brides since the mental test does not provide more lessons regarding social susceptible empowering activities—while their husbands leave the family for duties. As a conclusion, mental test’s main goals are to build a foundation of harmonious family for the rest of their life.

Administrative applications (in a form of paper documents) definitely will determine the success factor of the application; as it tries to ensure a disconnection of the bride’s affiliated parties from the communist ideology in a nutshell. In general, those administrative requirements enshroud the legal permission of marriage proposal to the higher rank commander, the Opinion Letter of Religious Officials (Surat Pendapat
Pejabat Agama), the marriage permission letter from the authorized official, and the marriage book application. Herfina and Sukidi (2020) elaborates the procedure of the legal permission of marriage proposal are including official identity likened in a residential identification card (Kartu Tanda Penduduk) both for the brides and their parents. Secondly, the brides are obliged to fill in a letter of agreement in becoming the Indonesia army’s spouse that adhere to the normative household norms amidst Indonesia army institution. The brides of Indonesia army are supposed to on their minimum age of 19 years old which verified by the head of subdistrict. Without legal permission from their parents, the brides will not have legitimate power to continue their marriage. Alongside to that, all the brides also have to provide legal marital status whether entitled as a single individual or divorced from previous marriage. The significant role of the Religious Affairs Office has been set to guide the brides and grooms regarding military household.

As a finale chapter of administrative precondition for the army wives-to-be, they have to sign a formal document remarks as an 'Integrity Pact'. Herein data that authors have found on the field regarding the contents of an Integrity Pact that binds and prevails to all army wives; (1) ethic codes of the Persit’s memberships, (2) a letter/agreement of readiness to release the husband on duties, (3) and an agreement of readiness in accepting any impaired condition of the husband at the post-war or conflict tragedy. Nevertheless, the aforesaid three points surprisingly will not value as essentials for army wives; the bindings are more to the unwritten agreements which has a bias characteristic on its implementation. We can understand that the military marriage is not a trivial taking breath away expectation. The brides are mostly impacted with a normative regulation which in certain cases might become a barrier for themselves. Out of many literatures which discuss about Indonesia military marriage, many of them still inclined to the perspective of maintaining couple’s fidelity and obedience towards the religious teaching (Sa’adah 2019). To the most severe case, the higher officer also tends to apply the power of panopticism; where the enlisted military couples are being controlled while they cannot drive on their own direction or independent decision (Mason 2006; Sargiacomo 2009).
GENDERED ROLE EXPECTATIONS: IBUISME NEGARA DISCOURSE AMIDST INDONESIA ARMY WIVES

The discourse of constructing harmonious and faithful family (*keluarga sakinah*) has pervaded the main objectives of army marriage. Therefore, role of wives at marital status from military environment are obliged to understand all condition of their husbands; when wives also shall not raise their voice (thoughts and concerns) exceed than their husbands (Herfina and Sukidi 2020). Thereupon, more protective traits within the family are most likely counted heavily on husbands—who their wives are supposed to devout and help guiding husbands. Within the military (particularly Indonesia army) environment, all couples are directed to follow the religious guidance thoroughly for the sake of family resilience. Those resilience are expected in accordance to fulfil each couple’s gendered role in household. For the army wives, imperative obligation such as preparing their mental strength to release their husbands for state duties and joining activities organized by Persit are seen as a polarized gender role (Muhardeni 2018). Those obligations implicitly construct a maternity trait which strongly adheres to the concept of a standing behind figure or *kanca wingking* (Wulandari 2018).

A standing behind figure is an embodiment of ideal caregiver figure—who all husbands and children must taken care of by. Wulandari (2018) extends the afforested notion with the scripture interpretation by Bakri Syahid about women’s duty (strategic Quran interpreter in the New Order era) as he cited wive’s duty in praising, supporting, and maintaining their husband’s dignity. Moreover, wives have to be able in caring and educating their children while also being smart in managing domestic activities. Syahid’s interpretation regarding wive’s duty toward husbands and families incline to the New Order’s political interest of omitting women’s progressive movement (Gusmian 2015). The New Order’s provoking narration considers as a pretentious by diminishing the women’s progressive movement throughout Bakri Syahid’s Quran interpretation, especially Syahid himself was a part of military force during that time (Pamungkas 2019). Asymmetrical relationship between wives and their army husband highlights a gender bias ideology that instilled on their military marriage. On the other hand, the New Order allocates thought-provoking women movements into one medium that pejorates its original essentials; one of the victims of a women
movement’s pejoration object is *Persatuan Istri Tentara* (Persit) from its original empowering and chivalry goals.

Responding to the post-independent revolutionary war in Indonesia, Persit Kartika Chandra Kirana organization (for Indonesia Army or TNI AD) was established in 3rd of December 1946 at Purwakarta Regency, West Java, Indonesia; in order gathering massive power from army wives during that time (Persit Pusat 2020). Originally, the establishment of *Persit Kartika Chandra Kirana* initiated by Ratu Aminah Hidayat. Persit during its first year resembles an avant-garde contribution to support their army husbands on the battlefield. Within the period of a year 1947, army wives are taught to sew, make army rank emblems, gain nursing skills (becoming the union of the red cross) for army’s injuries during revolutionary war, spy peril movements from the allies, and other heroic aspects of army wives (Persit Pusat 2020).

Transitioning to the New Order era, *Persit* was directed to reconstruct its organizational function likened with the government institution’s hierarchy (Persit Pusat 2020). Army husband’s position within the state institution is strongly defined by the benevolent behaviour of their wives (not being vocal in criticizing the New Order regime), unless their army husbands will got terminated from the current position (Wulandari 2018). In a nutshell, the New Order regime has constituted the gender ideology of *Ibuisme Negara* (the motherhood state) in latter infiltrates into every women organization in Indonesia, including *Persit Chandra Kartika*— which women’s significant entitlement determined from their appropriate role as a mother or wife (Herawati 2016).

Not only instilling the ideology of *Ibuisme Negara*, army wives unconsciously fortify double standard of being an appropriate wife or mother yet passively steadfast enough to let any kind of possibilities happened to their husbands (Damayanti 2019; Herawati 2016). It would be not surprising for us seeing army wives are prone of psychological depression; since they have been limited for any kind of mental cathartic activities. The religious and authoritarian doctrine are not accommodative enough for the wives; since it only emphasizes on the lesson of patience and endurance in the case of gaining God’s blessings. Another worrisome double standard prevails on army wives regarding their well-mannered obligation will determine their husband’s career sustainability in advance. In point of fact, army wives are not supposed to express the worst gimmick of life if they do not want to see their husband’s fluctuative career experiences.
*Ibuisme Negara* discourse nourishes so potent by its well-built representation on the official account of *Persit Kirana Chandra Kartika*. According to the author’s analysis of the *Persit Kirana Chandra Kartika* Pusat’s Instagram official account @persitkckpusat, many of Persit’s activity are focusing on social engagement activities; such as charity, community service, et cetera. That actions are suppose not to become a malevolent conduct since it grows the sense of social responsibility actions. However, army wives are not representing their own thoughts and personifications on the social media. In the case of the Head of Indonesia Army, General Andika Perkasa’s affiliated video post, his representation occupies rather large portion alongside with his wife representation, Mrs. Hetty Andika Perkasa as a General Chairwoman of *Persit Kirana Chandra Kartika* in Indonesia.

As a matter of fact, being a living army wife within military environment prompts every wife to: (1) be a loyal and modest partner, (2) nurture their maternal compassion for creating promising future generation, (3) be an unpretentious housewife, (4) and be an obedient Indonesian society. For the extent, military authority will have access for panopticizing every army household (including the wives and children’s behaviour) from conducting misbehaviours or hatred incitements—which not accordingly to the official orders, official regulations, or military order. Army wives are inseparably entangled with the terms and conditions of the military institution, even though their status are civilians. Moreover, the social status of enlisted army wives do not determine their political positions. It depends on husband’s position rank. Despite all the wives’ affluent social status yet married to enlisted army personnel, they must swallow their pride to be obedient towards senior enlisted army wives.

We theoretically argue that the extent to which traditional gender roles are perceived as life-changing in modern society actually varies in some parts of the world (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). Commonly, women throughout the world remain under revalued and poorly paid in the workforce relative to men. In this research we deploy that women are more likely than men to take responsibility for taking care of both elders and children as well as to assume housekeeping chores like laundry, cleaning, and cooking (World Economic Forum 2015). To the extent that gender roles have changed, the transformation have been unequal in the sense that women have involved male-dominated jobs in recent decades more massively than men have entered into jobs traditionally
preserved for women (Croft et al. 2014). While the value and social meaning of these changes in traditional gender roles continues to be discussed in all fields of public life, understanding why and under what conditions people resist change is of serious facts for those devoted in eliminating gender inequality. Gender roles alone speak to divisions of job segregation, household labor, and gender differences in terms of authority and status. Traditional gender roles relate males with the “breadwinner” roles and females with the “caretaker” roles (Eagly and Wood 1999). A dominant principle of social role theory is that women’s supposed communality derives from their historical distribution into home-maker roles, and that men’s presumed agency derives from their historical division into occupational roles, rather than these being distinctive qualities (Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000).

OF RIVALRY AMIDST INDONESIA ARMY WIVES: THE AFTERMATH OF GENDERED ROLE EXPECTATIONS

To perpetuate the New Order legacy in a form of well manner wives’ discourse within army marriage, biased femininity standards are created for concretizing women’s subjugation in public domain and allocate it to private (domestic) domain. Women’s movement subjugation in public domain is one of the ways to restrain women’s prominent political contestation like in the Old Order era (Amaliatulwalidain and Kencana 2019). Creating a biased standard of women beauty has a subtle goal to bracket women’s empowerment only for physical and mental gracefulness—instead of forging an intellectual awareness against authoritarian social system. The first exemplification of feminine beauty standard is always maintaining a good shape of their body, not the curvy one. Army wives who are mostly a stay-at-home people compete to each other in order obtaining a lean body shape by doing sport activities.

The existence of mass media has also contributed to the eternization of Ibuisme Negara among Indonesia army wives. The representation of Indonesia army wives has been always adhered with the discourse of body objectivity based on their physical good-looking aspect. Retrieving from the news article “Potret Cantik Istri para Jenderal TNI dan Polri, Ada Mantan Presenter Televisi” published by Merdeka.com on 26/01/2020, many of this wives are portrayed as having pretty upbringings. Not only spotlighting their pretty upbringings, popular media tends to declutter the wives’ prior professional career from their current marital status. Not only decluttering the wives’ prior professional career, popular media
keen on spicing up the jealousy among army wives as they manage to exposes couple’s relationship goals or desirable life online after got married. To exemplify author’s argumentation, we would like to provide an evidence retrieved from IDN Times news article ”10 Potret Terbaru Jian Batari yang Kini Jadi Istri TNI, Masih Ingat?” uploaded on 21st of July 2020. That news article triggers its audiences to embrace the sense of growing jealousy by the representation of Jian Batari, ex-actress in Indonesian film industry who married to Indonesia army personnel knowns as Harry Danny. Besides Jian Batari, there is also Winda Khair as an ex-actress of Indonesian film industry (FTV) who decides to marry an army personal namely Achmad Zaki. Both Jian and Winda framed as wives who are ready dispatch her civilian live into the military environment.

The desires of dreaming an ideal life within military life seems not become a perfect dream for every army wife. After interviewing three army wives with pseudonym Dana, Rini, and Eka. For Dana, being a wife of enlisted junior army personnel has entangled her to live in a difficult financial stability. Her discretion of not to be as equal as other army wives enforces Dana to become not impulsive in buying many unnecessary items. However, still, the couple have to struggle for the family latter financial stability. In Rini case, it juxtaposes Dana as she comes from a middle-class family who not easily influenced by the problematic realities of army wives. However, as she married her husband at young age and become a young mother, she has lesser bargain power compared to other senior army wives; which caused her having a self-actualization crisis. Another issue of an ideal army family is the existence of children in the household. If the couple is not established yet, other enlisted army wives usually suggest them to prepare more savings for their children in advance. On the other hand, anomalies might occur to some of the enlisted army’s couple. Pseudonym Eka admits her family’s financial difficulties even though the family have not had any child yet.

Audiences are presented by an emotional-triggering content which romanticize the livelihood of army wives, who are obedience toward their husband and ready to sacrifice their prior bright career for the sake of family resilience (Azasya 2020; Muhfaqdilla 2019). The relationship goals shown by couple Jian Batari and Harry Danny also Winda Khair and Achmad Zaki are only snippets of bigger parts in the livelihood of army family. Based on our interview results from the field work, we have found the jealousy has infiltrated to the habit of hedonism;
particularly related to the issue of trapped in debt. In debt issues linger on many army wives to fulfil their self-entitlement and self-pride by the ownerships of particular kinds of property. Data gained from an interview procedure reveals the tendency of army wives who lived in the military housing area to feel envy toward other army wife fellows. Their habit in owing countless of money for their own good sake results in purchasing special properties, such as buying new vehicles and buying new furniture or electronic application. Responding to the hedonistic habit of army wives, it is pretty much common in knowing the bad blood relationships among army wives; in essence of competing to each other. It is very common of the army wives’ debts are affecting their husband’s revenues.

After discussing a part of hedonistic side of army wives, their double standard role sometimes might jeopardize their self-defence effort in protecting their own dignity. In the case of love affairs issue that happens on their husband (or even to the case of domestic violation), it is difficult to report their internal harmful problems to the higher officer. Even though the Indonesia Army has committed to the law enforcement of domestic violence in military environment, the morality issue which strongly adheres to military life will easily impede the enforcement process (Fadlurrahman and Rafiqi 2019; Sa’adah 2019). To prevent the love affairs, fornication conduct, and any attempts of separation (divorce) among military families, the routine sermon of religious teachings often being organized by the higher officers. Indeed, from the morality-nuanced approach by the higher officer, the advocacy actions are vulnerable to result of vanity; on one case that happened in real life condition, the wife of higher officer will strongly suggest the victim wives to restraint their anger. It is related to the worldview of Ibuisme Negara ideology which women/wives are not supposed to have an audacity against the power of husband as a leader—reporting their husband’s affairs will disgrace their own livelihood and jeopardize their husband’s rank and position. Apparently, the case of women supporting women against the suppression or silencing would not emerge easily as long as the moral ideology of Ibuisme Negara still prevails.

Rigid gendered role expectations according to the ideology of Ibuisme Negara seems to become a tangible form of questionable norm in the modern age. Army wives simultaneously got perplexed to actualize themselves in more progressive movements which require strategic political bargaining power. The discrimination among junior and
senior enlisted army wives are one of the consideration factors which impede the gender empowerment endeavour. To conclude, army wives’ noble expectation according to the moral values sometimes also creates a turbulence within themselves. To reify their bargaining power, army wives are competing to each other in the aspect of bragging their material wealth and social standings aligning with the context of *Ibuisme Negara*.

**CONCLUSION**

Competition among Indonesia army wives has become structural problems ramify from complex gendered role expectations that engraved on many Indonesian women—especially for women who strongly romanticizing on the military love story preferences. The case of gendered role expectations encapsulated with the moral ideology of *Ibuisme Negara* are instilled intensely toward junior enlisted army wives. All the gendered role expectations origin from the military marriage institutionalism; where women are contracted with the sworn of Integrity Pact that emphasizes on the obedience and resilience towards their husband’s military institution. However, we have found out the case of self-actualization crisis that lingers amidst army wives. Subsequently, army wives have timid bargaining power in which everyday life decision and situation they have chosen will influence their husband’s career sustainability.

Without a fierce competition happens among army wives, they would be seen as a failed embodiment of a motherhood ideological product. Army wives are supposed to behave nice, decent, and should not have an audacity to raise their voice louder than they ever imagined. Army wives do not want to become an outlier among their own kin; those where they start to showcase their pride in a form of materialistic well-being, since they are not allowed to occupy strategic position on professional career both by intellectual or political movements. Not only struggling with their own demarcation, the aforementioned competition has pushed themselves to the verge of desperation; like financial difficulties, trapped in debt, love affairs, and many more. All the predicaments of those army wives are a combination of systemic constraints, poor financial decisions, and personal crises—especially for the junior enlisted army wives.

The problems of army wives in general (as part of being enlisted army wives) are typical of those of many army spouses (especially for
the junior enlisted army one), regardless of race, age, family situation, or base to which the husband is assigned. These examples demonstrate the common pitfalls of life in the junior enlisted community, the isolation and invisibility of most of these spouses, and how very precarious the lives of these families can be.

REFERENCE


