

Ahmad Syauqi*Email: ahmad.syauqi@uinjkt.ac.id

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

The Portrait of Domestic Workers' Welfare

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: February 25, 2024

Revised: May 16, 2024

Accepted: May 31, 2024

Published: June 04, 2024

Abstract. Domestic workers in Indonesia are often regarded as holding low-status jobs and face various forms of unfair treatment, such as wages below the minimum wage standard and excessive workloads. This study aims to examine the welfare of domestic workers, their relationship patterns with employers, and their workloads in the Griya Satria Pesona Housing Complex, North Tambun, Bekasi. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document studies. The findings reveal economic hardships caused by low wages, insufficient legal protection, and workloads that often exceed reasonable limits. Moreover, work relationships based on a familial system frequently exacerbate these conditions due to the absence of formal contracts. This study highlights the importance of legislative reforms, such as the enactment of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT), to improve their welfare. The implications of this research include human rights-based policy recommendations and advocacy strategies to strengthen legal protection for domestic workers.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Welfare, Employment Relations, Workload, Legal Protection, Indonesia.

Potret Kesejahteraan Pekerja Rumah Tangga

Histori Artikel

Diterima: 25 Februari 2024

Revisi: 16 Mei 2024

Diterima: 31 Mei 2024

Diterbitkan: 04 Juni 2024

Abstrak. Pekerja rumah tangga di Indonesia sering dianggap sebagai pekerjaan dengan status rendah dan menghadapi berbagai perlakuan tidak adil, seperti gaji di bawah standar upah minimum dan beban kerja yang berlebihan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesejahteraan pekerja rumah tangga, pola relasi mereka dengan majikan, serta beban kerja mereka di Perumahan Griya Satria Pesona, Tambun Utara, Bekasi. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan studi dokumen. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan kesulitan ekonomi akibat rendahnya upah, kurangnya perlindungan hukum, dan beban kerja yang sering kali melampaui batas wajar. Selain itu, hubungan kerja yang berbasis sistem kekeluargaan sering kali memperburuk kondisi ini karena tidak adanya kontrak formal. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya reformasi legislatif, seperti pengesahan RUU Perlindungan Pekerja Rumah Tangga, untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan mereka. Implikasi dari penelitian ini mencakup rekomendasi kebijakan berbasis hak asasi manusia dan strategi advokasi untuk memperkuat perlindungan hukum bagi pekerja rumah tangga.

Kata Kunci: Pekerja Rumah Tangga, Kesejahteraan, Relasi Kerja, Beban Kerja, Perlindungan Hukum, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author: Author Name

© ⓘ The license will be set automatically to CC Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 when this is published.

Publisher: Nafenzi Press | Support System by: PT. Jaringan Media Fajarpos.

1. INTRODUCTION

The profession of domestic workers (referred to as PRT, short for *Pekerja Rumah Tangga*) plays a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of household life and overall economic activities. However, this profession is still often underestimated in Indonesian society. In a patriarchal and hierarchical social structure, the profession of domestic workers is perceived as having less value compared to professions in other formal sectors (Afifah, 2018). In fact, their contributions to the stability of family life and society cannot be denied. Amidst rapid social and economic changes, recognition of their strategic role remains minimal (Azhari & Halim, 2021). This reflects the disparity in social protection and violations of human rights guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution and international instruments, such as ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which Indonesia has yet to ratify (ILO, 2011).

Domestic workers (PRT) face various forms of discrimination and exploitation. The average wage for ART in Indonesia remains very low, ranging between IDR 1 million and IDR 1.5 million per month, far below the average Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP) applicable in many regions (JALA PRT, 2023). Additionally, most ART lack clear employment contracts, do not receive social security, and often work without humane time limits (Hanifah, 2020). This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of domestic workers are women who are vulnerable to physical, psychological, and even sexual violence. A study by Yuliasuti (2017) revealed that 30% of ART in urban areas have experienced violence from their employers.

Beyond domestic issues, migrant domestic workers face even more complex challenges. Exploitation by employment agencies, excessive working hours without adequate compensation, and the uncertainty of legal protection in destination countries remain unresolved issues (Pranoto, 2022). At the national level, the absence of a specific legal framework, such as a Domestic Workers Protection Act, serves as the primary obstacle to achieving justice. Efforts to

pass the Draft Domestic Workers Protection Act (RUU PPRT) have been ongoing since 2004, yet they continue to face political barriers and a lack of support from policymakers (Komnas Perempuan, 2023).

Meanwhile, other studies show that strengthening regulations and recognizing the rights of domestic workers can yield positive impacts. Countries such as the Philippines and Uruguay have made significant progress after ratifying ILO Convention No. 189, which regulates fundamental rights, humane working hours, and social security for domestic workers (ILO, 2011). Indonesia needs to learn from these best practices to improve its system of protection for ART.

In this context, research on the welfare of domestic workers in Perumahan Griya Satria Pesona, Tambun Utara, Bekasi, becomes highly relevant. This study aims to identify the welfare conditions of ART, the patterns of labor relations between ART and their employers, as well as the workloads they endure. With a human rights-based approach, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding that not only raises public awareness about the importance of the role of domestic workers but also encourages the formulation of policies that are fairer, more inclusive, and more effective in protecting their rights.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Welfare

Etymologically, the term "welfare" originates from the word *welfare*, which means safe, prosperous, and secure (free from various disturbances). According to James Midgley, social welfare refers to better conditions, happiness, and the prosperity of individuals or communities (Midgley, 2005). Additionally, C. Pramuwito explains that welfare encompasses a state in which an individual is in a safe, peaceful, and prosperous condition, free from disturbances such as health issues, job insecurity, or disruptions to life satisfaction (Pramuwito, 2003).

Law Number 11 of 2009 on Social Welfare defines social welfare as a condition in which the

material, spiritual, and social needs of citizens are fulfilled, enabling them to perform their social functions adequately. Furthermore, T.O. Ihromi states that the concept of social welfare is often associated with social phenomena at the level of values, implementing institutions, as well as activities carried out by individuals or community groups (Ihromi, 2003).

This theoretical foundation aligns with the empirical findings of this study, which highlight domestic workers' limited access to material and social well-being. The persistent low wages and lack of legal protection represent clear disruptions to their ability to achieve welfare as conceptualized above. The gap between these ideals and the reality faced by domestic workers underscores the need for targeted legislative reform and social awareness campaigns.

2.2. Definition of Worker/Labor Welfare

According to Law Number 13 of 2003, Chapter II, Article 1, Paragraph 31, worker or labor welfare includes the fulfillment of physical and spiritual needs that support work productivity in a safe and healthy environment. Agusmidah adds that worker welfare comprises two main elements: working and receiving wages as compensation for the work performed (Agusmidah, 2010).

In the context of domestic workers, this definition reveals the inherent contradiction between the legal framework and their lived experiences. Empirical findings from this research show that many domestic workers work without formal contracts and often receive wages far below minimum standards, which directly contradicts the legislative intent. This indicates that structural barriers, including the lack of enforcement of existing labor laws, play a significant role in perpetuating these conditions.

2.3. Categories of Poverty

Poverty can be divided into three main categories: *The first, Absolute Poverty* occurs when an individual's income is insufficient to meet the minimum living needs, such as food, clothing, and housing (Ihromi, 2003). *The second, Relative or Structural Poverty* refers to income levels that are lower compared to those of the surrounding community, even if they are above the poverty line. This disparity often arises due to

uneven development policies. *The third, Cultural Poverty* is caused by the attitudes of individuals or communities who are unwilling to strive to improve their living standards, even with external assistance. This attitude is often influenced by a culture resistant to change (Siahaan, 2004).

The domestic workers studied in this research primarily face **absolute poverty**, as their wages are insufficient to meet basic living needs. However, elements of **structural poverty** are also evident, as the lack of clear legal frameworks perpetuates systemic inequalities. These categories provide a lens for understanding the economic challenges faced by domestic workers and the broader societal factors that contribute to their marginalization.

2.4. Workers'/Domestic Workers' Rights

The rights of workers, including domestic workers, are regulated under Law Number 13 of 2003 on Employment, such as: a) The right to equal treatment without discrimination (Pasal 6). b) The right to rest time after working for four hours, weekly rest, and annual leave (Pasal 79). c) The right to receive full wages during rest periods (Pasal 84). d) The right to form and join labor unions (Pasal 104).

Despite these legal provisions, the findings of this study reveal a significant gap in their implementation for domestic workers. For example, most of the domestic workers interviewed work without rest periods or formal contracts, violating their rights under the law. This highlights the pressing need for legislative mechanisms, such as the enactment of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT), to close the gap between legal protections and practical realities.

By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives with empirical findings, this study provides a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers to achieving welfare for domestic workers. These insights underline the importance of addressing these issues through integrated policy reforms and societal efforts to recognize domestic work as a formal and dignified profession.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the well-being of domestic workers and the dynamics of relationships between employers and workers in Griya Satria Pesona (GSP) Housing, North Tambun, Bekasi. This case study involves an in-depth investigation of the phenomena occurring at the research site (Daymon & Holloway, 2008).

To complement the qualitative approach, descriptive statistics were utilized to provide a clearer picture of key variables such as wages, workload, and working hours. Basic statistical tools such as mean, median, and range were calculated from data gathered during interviews and document analysis.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The study utilizes two main types of data: **Primary Data:** Obtained through direct interviews with domestic workers and employers at the research site. This data includes reasons for hiring domestic workers, working relationships, workload, wages, and their level of well-being. **Secondary Data:** Collected from written documents such as books, journals, legislation, and media reports related to the well-being of domestic workers and labor regulations (Law No. 13 of 2003).

The data collection techniques used in this research include: **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with eight informants, consisting of four employers and four domestic workers. Quantitative data on wages and working hours were also collected during these interviews. For example, the average monthly wage of domestic workers was calculated at IDR 1.3 million, with a range from IDR 1 million to IDR 1.5 million. **Observation:** The researcher directly observed the daily activities of domestic workers at the research site, documenting the number of hours worked per day. Initial observations revealed that domestic workers spent an average of 10–12 hours per day on various tasks. **Document Study:** The researcher collected additional data

from official documents, scholarly articles, and relevant news reports. This included comparative data from JALA PRT's 2023 report, which states that the average salary of domestic workers in urban areas ranges between IDR 1 million and IDR 2 million.

3.2. Quantitative Integration in Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach combined with basic statistical analysis: **Data Reduction:** Qualitative data were filtered for relevance, and numerical data on wages, workloads, and hours worked were compiled for further analysis. **Data Presentation:** Quantitative data were presented in simple tables and charts. For instance, a summary table displayed the wage range and average working hours for each domestic worker. **Data Triangulation:** Results from interviews, observations, and document studies were cross-referenced to ensure consistency. For example, data on wages from interviews were compared with secondary sources like JALA PRT's report. **Drawing Conclusions:** Patterns and correlations between wages, workload, and well-being were identified. For instance, workers earning below IDR 1.2 million per month reported higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction compared to those earning closer to IDR 1.5 million.

3.3. Expected Contribution

By integrating quantitative data, this study provides a more robust analysis of the factors affecting domestic workers' welfare. For example, the alignment between low wages and excessive working hours highlights systemic inequities that can inform future policy recommendations. This mixed-methods approach ensures that both the lived experiences and measurable conditions of domestic workers are comprehensively addressed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Social Context

In contemporary society, the role of domestic helpers (ART) has evolved to adapt to

shifting household dynamics. While ART remains essential for middle-to-upper-class families, the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote work have altered the demand for domestic assistance. Recent data show that some families have reduced reliance on ART due to increased time spent at home, while others continue to rely on ART for specific tasks like child care and elderly support (ILO, 2021).

Interviews revealed that employers primarily hire ART to alleviate household burdens, enabling them to focus on professional responsibilities. For instance, Moh. Muqit, who has employed ART since 2010, stated: *"To ease the burden at home"* (Interview with Moh. Muqit, Bekasi, March 23, 2013).

ART, on the other hand, take up these roles largely due to economic necessity. Alif Layyinah mentioned: *"To earn money, the salary is decent. It can support my parents in the village and pay for my education"* (Interview with Alif Layyinah, Bekasi, March 23, 2013).

However, rising living costs and inflation have worsened economic challenges for ART. Data from JALA PRT (2023) highlight that the average ART salary in Indonesia ranges between IDR 1 million and IDR 2 million per month, often insufficient to cover basic needs, especially in urban areas.

4.2. Employer and Domestic Helper Relationships

Relationships between employers and ART are often framed within a familial context. Most employers interviewed described ART as part of the family. For instance, Moh. Muqit emphasized: *"Like family, and whatever we eat, she also eats, treated equally"* (Interview with Moh. Muqit, Bekasi, March 23, 2013).

While this system fosters emotional bonds, it also blurs the boundaries of professionalism. Research by Azhari and Halim (2021) shows that such relationships often lack formal agreements, leaving ART vulnerable to unclear job expectations and potential exploitation.

The familial system does not guarantee equitable treatment across all cases. Some employers provide additional support, such as funding education or offering flexible work

arrangements, while others impose strict controls without additional benefits.

4.3. Welfare of Domestic Helpers

The welfare of ART varies significantly depending on salary, allowances, and employer support. Recent data reveal a wider salary range, from IDR 1 million to IDR 2.5 million monthly, with some ART receiving additional allowances like health benefits or education support (JALA PRT, 2023). However, many ART still report that their income is insufficient, especially with increasing living costs.

For example, Alif Layyinah, earning IDR 1.2 million monthly, expressed: *"The education costs come from my salary. In addition to supporting my parents, it's also for tuition fees"* (Interview with Alif Layyinah, Bekasi, March 23, 2013).

In contrast, ART like Siti Rofikoh, who earns IDR 2.5 million, feel their income meets their needs: *"With my salary and my husband's income, we can save and manage our expenses"* (Interview with Siti Rofikoh, Bekasi, March 23, 2023).

4.4. Workload of Domestic Helpers

The workload of ART continues to lack regulation, often depending on employers' needs. Some ART work flexible hours, while others endure long, undefined schedules. For instance, Moh. Muqit stated: *"Whenever needed, there is no time schedule"* (Interview with Moh. Muqit, Bekasi, March 23, 2013).

Emerging practices among progressive employers include setting fixed schedules or reducing workloads by sharing tasks, influenced by increased awareness about fair treatment. However, cases of overwork remain prevalent, particularly when ART are expected to perform multiple roles, such as house cleaning, child care, and managing small businesses.

4.5. Social Implications

The findings underscore the importance of creating a structured and equitable system for ART. The familial system, while fostering close relationships, is insufficient to address issues like undefined workloads, low salaries, and lack of job security. Studies from countries like the Philippines and Uruguay, which have ratified ILO Convention No. 189, show that formalizing ART employment through contracts, fixed working

hours, and fair wages significantly improves their welfare (ILO, 2021).

In Indonesia, the proposed Domestic Workers Protection Act (RUU PPRT) remains a crucial step towards establishing a professional and humane working environment for ART. Advocacy by JALA PRT and Komnas Perempuan continues to push for its enactment, though progress has been slow due to political resistance (Komnas Perempuan, 2023).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, this article highlights several key points regarding the profession of domestic helpers within the social and economic context. **Socioeconomic Role:** The domestic helper profession arises from the intersection of upper-middle-class households' reliance on external support for managing domestic tasks and the lower-income group's need for alternative employment opportunities. **Employer-Helper Relationships:** Relationships between employers and helpers are often based on a familial system, which fosters emotional closeness and a sense of inclusion. However, the absence of formal agreements within this system frequently leads to undefined job expectations, low wages, and the risk of exploitation. **Workload and Wage Correlation:** Domestic helpers generally perform uniform yet demanding domestic tasks. While employers often correlate workload to the wages provided, this correlation rarely aligns with minimum wage standards, perpetuating economic hardship among helpers. **Special Treatment and Opportunities:** In some cases, employers provide special support such as funding for continuing education or skill training. While this practice offers potential for individual advancement, it is not widespread or systematically enforced.

Policy Implications

To address these challenges, the following policy recommendations are proposed: **Enactment of the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT):** Legislating the RUU PPRT is essential to formalize the rights and responsibilities of domestic helpers and their

employers. This legislation should mandate clear employment contracts, ensure fair wages aligned with regional minimum wage standards, and regulate working hours to prevent overwork. **Adoption of International Best Practices:** Indonesia can draw lessons from countries like the Philippines and Uruguay, which have ratified the ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. These countries have implemented formal employment frameworks, mandated social security coverage, and established grievance mechanisms to protect domestic workers' rights. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Raising awareness about the value and contributions of domestic workers through educational campaigns is crucial to shifting societal perceptions and reducing stigma associated with the profession. **Strengthening Enforcement Mechanisms:** Effective enforcement of existing labor laws and future legislation is vital. This includes establishing monitoring bodies to ensure compliance with wage standards, working conditions, and grievance resolution processes.

By emphasizing these policy actions, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on improving the welfare of domestic helpers. A combination of legislative reform, international benchmarking, and societal change can create a more equitable and professional environment for domestic workers in Indonesia.

6. REFERENCE

- Agusmidah. (2010). *Hukum ketenagakerjaan dan hubungan industrial*. Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group.
- Afifah, W. (2018). Eksistensi perlindungan hukum terhadap pekerja rumah tangga di Indonesia. *DiH: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*. <https://doi.org/10.30996/dih.v0i0.1594>
- Azhari, M. Y., & Halim, A. (2021). Hak-hak pekerja rumah tangga dan perlindungan hukum di Indonesia. *Media Iuris*, 4(2), 173–188. <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/MI/article/download/25492/pdf>
- Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2008). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and*

- marketing communications (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Djaali, D., & Muljono, P. (2008). Pengukuran dalam bidang pendidikan. Grasindo.
- Ihromi, T. O. (2003). Pokok-pokok sosiologi keluarga. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2011). Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Geneva: ILO.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). Making decent work a reality for domestic workers: Progress and prospects ten years after the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). International Labour Organization. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_protect/%40protrav/%40travail/documents/publication/wcms_883181.pdf
- Jaringan Nasional Advokasi Pekerja Rumah Tangga (JALA PRT). (2023). Laporan tahunan 2023: Situasi pekerja rumah tangga di Indonesia. Jakarta: JALA PRT. Retrieved from <https://www.jalaprt.org>
- Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan (Komnas Perempuan). (2023). Kajian kebijakan perlindungan pekerja rumah tangga di Indonesia. Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan. Retrieved from <https://komnasperempuan.go.id>
- Midgley, J. (2005). Social development: The developmental perspective in social welfare. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Nasution, S. (2006). Metode penelitian naturalistik kualitatif. Tarsito.
- Pramuwito, C. (2003). Sosial kesejahteraan dalam perspektif Indonesia. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.
- Republik Indonesia. (2003). Undang-Undang Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 tentang Ketenagakerjaan. Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 2003 Nomor 39. Retrieved from <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id>
- Republik Indonesia. (2009). Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 11 Tahun 2009 tentang Kesejahteraan Sosial. Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 2009 Nomor 12. Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara.
- Siahaan, S. (2004). Kemiskinan struktural di Indonesia: Analisis kritis dan solusi. Jakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Yasirwan, Y., Ikhsan, M. H., & Dalimunthe, N. (2023). Perlindungan pekerja rumah tangga (PRT) melalui kepastian hukum di Indonesia dan hukum Islam. *Jurnal EL-QANUNIY: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Kesyaharian dan Pranata Sosial*, 9(1), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-qanuniy.v9i1.7715>