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Career Women and Double Burden in Feminist Sociological Perspective Today

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Abstract

This article offers a normative account of career women facing a double burden through feminist sociology. It explains how gendered expectations attach domestic responsibility to women while professional institutions reward an ideal worker model built on unlimited availability. The double burden is framed as a structural outcome of unequal distribution of unpaid care work, mental load, and emotional labor across household relations. The discussion highlights how moral scrutiny of motherhood creates a recurring legitimacy test, where women must prove professional competence while maintaining domestic respectability. Workplace cultures that prize visibility, rapid responsiveness, and after hours networking can magnify inequality when caregiving remains feminized. The article also notes how narratives of personal choice and symbolic praise may obscure injustice by relocating structural issues into individual coping. A conceptual framework is proposed around three domains: work distribution, recognition of care, and legitimacy within both household and workplace. The central claim is that gender justice requires shared responsibility for care and institutional norms that respect limits, dignity, and voice in everyday negotiations.

Keywords: career women, double burden, unpaid care, mental load, emotional labor, gender norms, feminist sociology.

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Introduction

The change in work structures and the expansion of access to education have opened up space for more women to enter the professional field with legitimate aspirations. The presence of women in paid work is often interpreted as an achievement of modernity, social mobility, and the strengthening of household economic capacity. This is in line with the view that the dynamics of societal movement in both rural and urban areas will always bring changes to the way people seek a livelihood (Amri & Khayru, 2021). However, the experience of pursuing a profession often goes hand in hand with social demands that place domestic responsibility as the primary measure of a woman's success. In daily life, work success may still be read as a complement, while household success is treated as a non-negotiable moral obligation. At this point, paid work does not necessarily replace domestic work, but rather piles on top of it. This accumulation forms a double burden that is often normalized through the language of devotion, patience, and sacrifice (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Challenges of this kind show that the social environment sometimes exerts heavy pressure on an individual's psychological condition (Darmawan et al., 2021). Normalization makes the burden appear natural even if it is exhausting, because it is framed as the characteristic of a "good woman." This process raises sociological questions regarding how social values, family rules, and work organizations meet to shape the experience of career women.

We need to realize that everyone has the same right to develop without having to feel pressured by their surroundings (Hariani et al., 2021). The modern workspace contains the promise of meritocracy, namely the assumption that achievement is determined by ability and effort. However, this promise often meets with a gender-based division of labor that remains strong in the domestic sphere. Working women are often expected to demonstrate high performance at the office, while simultaneously maintaining household order, managing family needs, and ensuring the emotional maintenance of family members (Acker, 1990). Women's involvement in decision-making within the home, including family consumption matters, is actually an important part of their role (Halizah & Nuraini, 2021). The task of emotional maintenance is often invisible, even though it consumes time and energy through reminders,

planning, and conflict management. When these tasks are not recognized as work, they are considered a woman's natural trait. As a result, women who demand a fairer distribution risk being labeled selfish or lacking maternal instincts. In the professional realm, expectations of time availability and flexibility are often built based on an "ideal worker" model who does not bear significant domestic responsibilities. In fact, in an advanced workplace, differences in backgrounds should be respected so that everyone can work comfortably (Irfan & Hariani, 2023). This ideal worker model forces women to prove loyalty through long working hours, quick responses, and readiness for overtime, while the household continues to demand presence. This tension demonstrates that the double burden is not merely a matter of time management, but a matter of the structural norms that regulate women's bodies, time, and reputation.

Problems within the household often arise due to a lack of understanding regarding shared responsibility (Aliyah et al., 2023). In family relations, the double burden is often formed through a division of labor that appears neutral but contains long-standing assumptions. For instance, decisions about who cooks, cleans, cares for children, or manages the needs of the elderly are often made implicitly, based on inherited habits (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The best interests of family members, especially children, should be the primary focus so that relationships remain harmonious (Fajar et al., 2021). These habits can persist even when both partners work full-time. When women experience exhaustion, complaints are often viewed as a lack of gratitude, while small domestic contributions from the other party may be praised as a great help. The language of "help" implies that the household is still considered the primary domain of women. In such situations, women must manage two types of legitimacy demands. In the office, she must be seen as competent and fit to lead. At home, she must be seen as warm and present. Every individual indeed has unique behaviors when within an organization or group (Darmawan, 2013). These two legitimacy demands often operate under different logics. The logic of the office values productivity, precision, and competitiveness. The logic of the home values sacrifice, attention, and emotional availability. When these two logics collide, women are placed in a position where they must constantly adjust, often without adequate structural support.

It is not uncommon for workplace rules to make people feel they must choose between career or family (Infante & Darmawan, 2022). The double burden is also formed by organizational cultures that define commitment through the sacrifice of personal time. Many workplaces consider sudden meetings, extended working hours, and communication outside of office hours as signs of professionalism (Eby et al., 2005). This practice disadvantages workers who have caregiving responsibilities, which are socially more often attached to women. In career evaluations, physical presence and visibility often serve as currency. Women who limit their working hours for domestic needs may be considered less ambitious, even if their work results are good. On the other hand, when women maintain work intensity, they may be judged as neglecting the home. Thus, women face a double valuation trap, where any choice carries the risk of stigma. If protection and support from the surrounding system are not provided, then the individual will continue to be in a weak position (Aidan Bin Abdullah, 2021). This stigma is not always stated overtly but is present as whispers, innuendos, or reduced access to important projects. This experience shows that work structures and family structures reinforce each other. Both place women in a position of having to prove their worth repeatedly, as if their presence in the professional space is always conditional.

Furthermore, changes at the global level also require us to be more open to various social identities (Fariz, 2021). From a feminist sociological perspective, the double burden is a symptom of inequality sustained by a gender-based division of labor, family ideology, and an economic system that benefits from unpaid care work. Domestic work produces social reproduction the maintenance of daily life that enables paid work to take place. However, social reproduction is often regarded as a private matter that does not require public recognition. When care work is left to women, society gains stability without paying an equivalent cost (Federici, 2012). At a symbolic level, women are praised as the pillars of the family, yet that praise can mask the injustice of burden distribution. At the policy level, childcare support, leave, and work flexibility are often treated as additional facilities rather than prerequisites for equality. Consequently, career women are forced to arrange continuous compromises that sacrifice rest time, health, or career

opportunities. The feminist framework helps to assess that this issue is not merely a matter of individual choice, but the result of norms and institutions that lock in gender roles. This framework also demands a critical reading of the definition of success, which still primarily positions women as the managers of the home.

The description of the problem in this topic stems from the reality that the double burden is often understood as a personal matter, which blurs structural explanations. When women experience exhaustion and role conflict, social responses often suggest time management, self-resilience, or the ability to set priorities (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). Such responses divert attention from the institutional mechanisms that shape inequality, such as unequal household norms, a work culture that demands limitless availability, and social judgments biased against motherhood and professionalism. Consequently, women are positioned as the party that must continuously adapt, while the structures producing the burden remain unchanged. In the family sphere, the division of domestic labor is often maintained through the language of tradition and propriety, such that negotiation is seen as disrupting harmony. In the workplace, flexibility policies can be framed as a privilege, making their use perceived as a weakness. A feminist sociological framework is necessary to name this inequality as a problem of social order, not merely a matter of individual capacity. Without proper naming, the double burden continues to be passed down as a normality that is difficult to criticize.

The next problem description concerns how career women are often trapped in conflicting moral standards, such that every choice evokes guilt and social judgment. The first moral standard demands that women be ideal workers who are always ready, pressure-resistant, and results-oriented. The second moral standard demands that women be attentive domestic managers who are emotionally available and maintain the family's image (Haynes, 2008). When a woman prioritizes work, she may be suspected of violating her social nature. When a woman prioritizes the home, she may be judged as less professional. These two standards form a powerful field of social control. Social control occurs through the comments of extended family, evaluations from superiors, and comparisons with other women. In such situations, women often regulate themselves through internal discipline—for example, by

suppressing complaints, hiding exhaustion, and attempting to meet all demands simultaneously. Internal discipline incurs a significant psychological cost and can obscure structural issues. Furthermore, this structure can hinder solidarity, as women judge one another based on the same standards. This issue requires a normative discussion on how patriarchy operates through everyday morality and how the double burden is maintained through social judgment.

Academic discussion is necessary so that the experience of career women is not condensed into a story of individual resilience, but is instead understood as a result of unwritten rules governing the distribution of labor, the legitimacy of caregiving, and the definition of professional commitment (Lynch, 2007). With a feminist sociological framework, this writing can clarify how domestic work and paid work exist within a single mutually sustaining system, yet the allocation of responsibility is asymmetrical. Urgency also arises because the double burden is often linked to moral choices, such that critiques of injustice are viewed as a rejection of the family. This writing is needed to separate structural critique from personal judgment, as well as to provide a conceptual language that can be used in education, workplace policies, and family discussions. Thus, this writing seeks to broaden the understanding of gender justice through orderly and accountable normative reasoning.

The objective of this writing is to construct a normative conceptual framework regarding the double burden of career women from a feminist sociological perspective. This writing aims to outline the social mechanisms that regulate the division of domestic labor, professional demands, and the moral standards that judge women. This writing also aims to explain how unpaid care work sustains the paid work system and how social judgments reinforce this inequality. This framework is expected to enrich academic arguments concerning gender relations, social reproduction, and the legitimacy of women's work. Practically, this framework provides a basis for reasoning in the development of organizational policies and fairer family norms.

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative literature study to develop a conceptual synthesis regarding career women and the double burden through a feminist sociological perspective. The exploration of ideas is directed toward themes of the domestic division of labor, unpaid care work, organizational culture regarding the ideal worker, and social control mechanisms that judge women. Gomm (2008) emphasizes the importance of critically examining methodological assumptions, including alertness to how concepts are formed and utilized in social explanations. Kalof and Dan (2008) stress the orderliness of social research design, particularly in formulating questions and organizing conceptual categories so that arguments do not become overextended. In this writing, sources were selected based on clarity of definition, relevance to the issue of the double burden, and the work's ability to explain the relationship between gender norms, family institutions, and work institutions. Synthesis was conducted by grouping key concepts, organizing relationships between concepts, and formulating normative propositions that address the research problems without presenting empirical data.

The processing of materials was carried out through repeated readings, thematic notation, and the construction of an argumentative flow that maintains consistency in terminology. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) emphasize that the construction of social research demands the traceability of thought steps from the selection of concepts to the method of constructing claims so that readers can assess the coherence of the reasoning. Sarantakos (2017) asserts that social research requires precision in distinguishing between description, interpretation, and normative judgment, ensuring that the synthesis does not devolve into free-form opinion. In this study, normative judgments are maintained through criteria such as justice in the distribution of labor, recognition of care work, and the legitimacy of women's voices in household and organizational negotiations. Because this study does not utilize interviews or observations, its primary strength lies in conceptual clarity, systematic thematic organization, and the ability to link feminist ideas about structure with work and domestic experiences as social relation.

Result and Discussion

The double burden of career women can be understood as the convergence of two regimes of obligation that both demand totality: the paid work regime and the domestic work regime. The paid work regime evaluates individuals through productivity, precision, and availability. The domestic regime evaluates women through the adequacy of caregiving, household order, and the maintenance of family relationships. This phenomenon shows how complex the gender structures are that women must face in their daily lives (Khairi, 2021). From a feminist sociological perspective, the fundamental issue is not merely the number of hours, but the evaluative structure that places two obligations on a single subject with strict moral standards (MacDonald et al., 2005). The double burden also demonstrates that the household is not a neutral space, but rather a space with a division of labor and a symbolic hierarchy. When domestic work is regarded as a natural expression of love, it becomes difficult to negotiate as work that can be shared. Consequently, women who work still carry the primary responsibility for invisible tasks. This condition often makes women feel extremely exhausted because they must constantly care about many things at once (Khayru & Darmawan, 2023). This reading demands an acknowledgment that the double burden is not born from individual weakness, but from a system that regards care work as a free resource. This system reinforces inequality because women bear the cost of exhaustion and sacrificed career opportunities, while the benefits of family stability are enjoyed collectively.

We must see that everyone needs a balance between work and personal life to remain mentally healthy (Irfan et al., 2023). The concept of the "ideal worker" within organizations is often built on the assumption that the worker has adequate domestic support and is free from intensive caregiving responsibilities. The ideal worker is expected to be responsive, flexible, and ready to be present at any time. This assumption appears neutral, yet socially it aligns with the traditional division of labor that leaves household matters to women. When career women must meet the ideal worker standard, they are faced with difficult moral decisions (Williams, 2001). They must choose between meeting organizational demands or family demands, while both are viewed as obligations.

Therefore, companies actually need to have clear policies to support their employees' career advancement without ignoring the human side (Putra & Darmawan, 2022). In a feminist perspective, the ideal worker standard is a structural mechanism that transforms domestic injustice into professional disadvantage. Women may be considered less committed if they limit their working hours, even though those limits are set for the sake of care work that sustains social continuity. This disadvantage often manifests as reduced access to important projects, assessments that women are not ready to lead, or limited learning opportunities. Although the form can be subtle, its meaning is firm: a woman's career is treated as a conditional choice. Thus, organizations participate in the reproduction of inequality when standards of commitment are established without acknowledging the reality of care work.

It is important for us to realize that the role of women in advancing society is immense and valuable (Issalillah et al., 2022). Domestic work is often perceived as routine tasks such as cooking and cleaning, whereas it also encompasses complex coordination work. Coordination work includes planning, reminding, managing family schedules, monitoring health, and managing emotional needs. This coordination work is often called the mental load, which is the continuous thought process running behind other activities (Dean et al., 2022). From a feminist sociological perspective, the mental load is important because it consumes the attentional capacity required for professional work. Women who bear the mental load bring the home to the office through their thoughts, while the office is also brought home through unfinished tasks. The changing times now demand that men and women be more flexible in sharing roles both inside and outside the home (Negara & Khayru, 2022). This accumulation of attention results in a distinct type of fatigue an exhaustion that is difficult to recover from because there is no empty space. The mental load is also difficult for partners and institutions to see, so women often receive no recognition. When unacknowledged, women experience symbolic injustice, where essential work is considered worthless. Symbolic injustice drives women to constantly prove their capability, leading them to tend to do everything themselves. This pattern reinforces the double burden and locks out fair negotiation within the household.

An environment that is safe and free from social pressure is greatly needed so that everyone can recover from their fatigue (Issalillah & Khayru, 2021). Social expectations of motherhood are often framed as strict moral standards, such that a woman's presence in professional work is monitored through the lens of caregiving. This standard can take the form of a belief that a good mother is always available, always patient, and always prioritizes family needs. When a career woman works full-time, she may be seen as less present, even if she carries out caregiving in a responsible manner (Hays, 1996). In a feminist perspective, this moral surveillance is a form of social control that regulates women through guilt. Guilt causes women to suppress their own needs, stifle complaints, and devise strategies to appear perfect. This serves as a reminder that public policy must be able to balance economic affairs and the social welfare of the community (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021). These strategies may include working harder at the office so as not to be doubted, while simultaneously working harder at home so as not to be judged poorly. The result is normalized structural exhaustion. Meanwhile, equivalent standards are rarely applied to men, as their caregiving is often understood as a praiseworthy "help." This inequality of praise solidifies an unfair division of labor. Thus, the double burden is maintained by a social morality that judges women through caregiving standards that leave no room for the diversity of family practices.

Power relations within the household influence who can negotiate the division of labor and who must adapt. Power can stem from income, age, cultural legitimacy, or support from the extended family. In many situations, women who earn their own income still face symbolic power that positions the home as their domain (Bittman et al., 2003). Symbolic power operates through the language of "naturalness," for example, by assuming women are more meticulous, neater, or better suited for childcare. This language sounds positive, but its effect is to close off the possibility of an equal division. In a feminist perspective, symbolic power is strongest when it is not visible as power. It exists as habit and is regarded as nature. When a woman questions these habits, she may be accused of blowing problems out of proportion or disrupting harmony. Such accusations cause women to hold back. At this point, the double burden becomes the result of an unbalanced negotiation, because a

woman's objection is not treated as an argument, but rather as an emotion. Normative discussion demands the recognition that domestic negotiation is a micro-political arena, a place where inequality is produced and maintained through language, affection, and tradition.

In the world of work, gender often influences how competence is read and how mistakes are interpreted. Women may be judged as less decisive when being collaborative, or judged as aggressive when being firm. This dilemma forces women to manage their self-presentation strategically. We know that a person's experience in the world of work is often strongly influenced by their background and personal identity (Khayru et al., 2022). Managing self-presentation consumes energy, because women must weigh their words, tone, and gestures to remain accepted. In a feminist sociological perspective, this kind of management is the emotional labor required to survive within a biased structure (Hochschild, 1979). Emotional labor at the office then adds to the domestic burden which also demands emotional labor, such as soothing children, supporting a partner, and maintaining extended family relationships. Thus, the double burden is not just an accumulation of tasks, but an accumulation of emotional labor in two spheres. Furthermore, bias in evaluations can make women feel they must always be perfect to receive the same recognition. Satisfaction in working is indeed strongly influenced by how someone is guided and given opportunities to advance (Sinambela et al., 2023). Demands for perfection extend working hours and reduce recovery time. Ultimately, this structure places women in a condition of constant alertness, which normatively should be understood as a form of injustice that weakens the freedom to pursue a career.

Indeed, it is not easy to manage household affairs and work simultaneously without strong support from the surrounding environment. Social reproduction is a key concept to understand why care work is often not given equal value to paid work. Social reproduction includes activities that ensure daily life continues, such as caregiving, cooking, health care, and maintaining household order. These activities produce a ready workforce and generate the stability that allows the economy to function. However, because it occurs in the private sphere, social reproduction is often treated as a family matter, not a public matter

(Bhattacharya, 2017). Welfare problems within the household, especially for those who are less fortunate, often become a heavy burden (Mahmudah, 2021). In a feminist perspective, this separation is political because it allows society to take benefits without paying the costs. Women bear the costs through time, energy, and lost career opportunities. When women enter paid work, those costs do not disappear; they become layered. Therefore, the discussion of the double burden must include normative questions about how society recognizes care work as work that has public value. Support from the community is greatly needed so that every individual feels helped in facing life's problems (Zulkarnain et al., 2021). Recognition is not merely praise, but fair institutional arrangements. Without recognition, women will continue to be in a position of having to patch the system's deficiencies with personal energy. This framework shows that the double burden is not an individual problem, but a symptom of an economic and cultural order that has not yet placed care at the center.

Everyone has the right to the same opportunity to learn and achieve their dreams (Rojak & Khayru, 2022). The double burden is often maintained through the narrative of free choice the assumption that women choose to work and choose to manage the home, so the consequence of exhaustion is considered natural. The free choice narrative ignores that choices always occur within structures of norms and limitations. Women may work because of economic necessity, because of aspirations, or because of both (Hakim, 2002). Women may also manage the home due to the absence of alternative care services, because of pressure from extended family, or due to religious and cultural norms. Often, existing social rules actually make human relationships full of challenges (Sulistyo & Hartanto, 2023). In a feminist sociological perspective, the free choice narrative can function as a mechanism of depoliticization, because it transforms structural issues into matters of preference. Consequently, critiques of inequality are dismissed as personal complaints. This narrative can also fracture solidarity, as women who can afford to pay for domestic help may be considered more successful, while women who cannot are considered less clever at organizing. Such judgments mask the class inequalities that affect the ability to manage the burden. Thus, normative discussion needs to

separate truly free choices from choices shaped by social pressure. This is very important so that we do not get trapped in superficial judgments of other people's lives.

In large cities, the pressures of life sometimes make social inequality feel increasingly real for many people (Mardikaningsih, 2021). Social expectations regarding the household are often accompanied by demands for aesthetics and order directed primarily at women. A tidy home, well-groomed children, and prepared meals can become indicators of a family's reputation, and women are often made the guardians of those indicators. Reputation demands transform domestic work into performative work—work done to look good in the eyes of others (Goffman, 2023). Performative work increases the burden because the standard is no longer family needs, but social judgment. In a feminist perspective, this social judgment is a disciplinary tool that maintains the traditional division of labor. Women may feel they must hide natural chaos, such as messy toys, for fear of being judged a failure. This fear causes women to add more domestic work hours after professional working hours. If conflict occurs within the family, the role of legal institutions is also very decisive in seeking a fair way out (Zahid et al., 2021). In the office, performative demands are also present in the form of requirements to appear professional, neat, and ready, which often have gendered standards. These two performative spheres narrow the space for rest. As a result, women experience a situation without a recovery space, where each sphere demands an ideal appearance. Normative discussion demands a critique of unfair reputation standards, as such standards shift social burdens onto women's bodies and turn care into work that must be constantly proven.

Flexible work is often seen as a solution to the double burden, yet from a feminist perspective, flexibility can be a double-edged sword. Flexibility can provide room to organize schedules, but it can also extend working hours because the boundary between the office and the home becomes blurred. When work can be done from home, women may be expected to remain productive while simultaneously managing the household (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020). This expectation turns flexibility into a new way to accumulate burdens rather than reduce them. Furthermore, flexibility can be interpreted as permanent availability that is,

always being reachable. Permanent availability reinforces the ideal worker model that demands quick responses. In a normative perspective, fair flexibility must be accompanied by the recognition of boundaries. Boundaries mean the right to stop working at a certain time and the right not to respond outside of working hours, except in special circumstances. Without boundaries, flexibility magnifies gender inequality because the domestic burden remains attached to women. Women then have to combine two jobs at the same time, which ultimately damages the quality of both work and caregiving. Thus, this discussion emphasizes that the double burden requires a reading of work design, not just schedule choices.

Negotiations within the household are often determined by norms regarding who is considered an expert in domestic affairs. Women are frequently positioned as experts, so even when a partner performs domestic work, the woman is still expected to direct and supervise. Directing and supervising are additional forms of labor that are rarely recognized. From a feminist perspective, this pattern shows that the division of labor cannot be measured solely by physical actions, but also by the burden of coordination and the burden of responsibility (Medved, 2016). If the woman remains the controller of standards, she continues to carry the mental load. At this point, the division of labor appears to occur, but the burden does not truly shift. Furthermore, domestic standards can become a source of conflict because women are judged based on results rather than the process. If the house is untidy, the woman is considered negligent, even if she works full-time. This evaluative injustice leads women to choose to take over tasks to avoid being blamed. Taking over reinforces inequality. Normative discussion demands evaluative justice, where responsibility for the home is understood as a shared responsibility. Without evaluative justice, domestic negotiations will always be one-sided because women bear the reputational risk.

Feminist sociology highlights that the female body often becomes a field of regulation, including in the way society judges working mothers. The body is judged through appearance, energy, and the willingness to be present. A woman who appears tired may be considered incapable of managing her life. A woman who appears too focused on work may be considered cold. These bodily assessments are moral in nature, thus

affecting one's sense of self and worth. In a normative perspective, such judgments reduce a woman's freedom to pursue a professional life without the burden of stigma (Gatrell, 2011). Additionally, bodily assessments influence women's decisions to postpone promotions, reject projects, or reduce ambition not due to a lack of ability, but due to social costs. These social costs are rarely visible in career discussions that emphasize motivation. This discussion asserts that a woman's motivation is insufficient to explain her career trajectory, as the structure of public morality also plays a role. If a woman must always maintain her image, the energy that should be used for professional development is diverted toward managing stigma. Thus, the double burden is also a symbolic burden: the burden of appearing to meet expectations, even when those expectations are unrealistic. This framework directs understanding toward inequalities that operate through subtle norms rather than explicit prohibitions.

Career women often face the expectation that professional success must be paid for with domestic sacrifice, as if the two realms cannot coexist. This expectation can trigger moral questions from the environment for example, who looks after the children, who cooks, or whether the house is still well-maintained. These questions are rarely directed at men with the same intensity. From a feminist perspective, this asymmetry in questioning demonstrates an asymmetry in the burden of proof. Women must prove that they still meet domestic standards despite working (Johnston & Swanson, 2006). This burden of proof generates pressure to perform compensation, such as replacing family time with late-night domestic work. This compensation reduces rest time and worsens health. In a normative reading, health is not merely a private matter, as health is influenced by the distribution of social labor. When women experience chronic exhaustion, it is an indicator that the labor distribution system is unjust. Furthermore, the expectation of sacrifice makes women tend to avoid external help for fear of being deemed incapable. In fact, external help can be a form of labor redistribution. Thus, the double burden is shaped by a morality of sacrifice that glorifies hardship rather than glorifying justice. This discussion critiques that morality by showing how it benefits an unequal order.

Public spaces often praise working women as symbols of progress, yet such praise can be ambivalent because it is not always accompanied by changes in domestic norms. Praise can become a way to silence criticism, as women are seen as having been given opportunities and therefore have no right to complain. From a feminist perspective, praise without labor redistribution is a superficial symbolic recognition. Symbolic recognition does not reduce the care burden, does not improve work design, and does not change the moral standards of caregiving (Lewis, 2001). Consequently, women still face the same structures, only with additional professional demands. Praise can also mask the reality that women often work out of economic necessity, not merely aspiration. When economic necessity is ignored, the double burden is read as a lifestyle choice rather than a consequence of the family's economic structure. Normative discussion demands an understanding that gender justice requires simultaneous changes in three realms: the household realm, the organizational realm, and the cultural realm of evaluation. If one realm remains unchanged, the burden will simply shift form. For example, if an organization provides career opportunities but the family does not share labor, the woman remains burdened. If the family is more equal but the organization demands limitless availability, the woman remains burdened. Thus, the double burden is the result of a convergence of injustices across realms.

In feminist sociology, the concept of patriarchy helps explain how social structures regulate the distribution of resources, authority, and legitimacy through gender norms. Patriarchy does not always appear as a prohibition, but rather as habits that are considered natural. In the double burden, patriarchy is visible when care work is considered a woman's obligation, while paid work is considered the primary measure of achievement. A woman pursuing paid achievement is faced with accusations of violating her obligations, whereas a man pursuing paid achievement is seen as fulfilling his duty. This difference regulates behavior through social rewards and sanctions (Walby, 1989). From a normative perspective, these social rewards and sanctions are instruments of power that limit women's life choices. These limitations cause women to adjust their aspirations in order to remain accepted. Adjustment of aspirations may take the form of choosing jobs considered

"suitable," selecting career paths that do not demand mobility, or refraining from leadership. Thus, the double burden also affects the structure of opportunity. It is not just a burden of time, but a burden on the horizon of the future. This discussion emphasizes that liberation from the double burden requires a change in norms regarding who is responsible for care, as well as a change in norms regarding what constitutes an ideal worker. Without change, patriarchy continues to operate through the logic of propriety that evaluates women differently.

Justice in the division of domestic labor is often discussed as 50/50, but a feminist perspective emphasizes that justice cannot be condensed into simple numbers. Justice must consider the mental load, the emotional burden, and the ultimate responsibility. Many households divide physical tasks, but the ultimate responsibility remains with the woman. Ultimate responsibility means the woman is the one who remembers, organizes, and ensures the work is completed (Robertson et al., 2019). In a normative reading, ultimate responsibility is the core of the double burden because it creates constant alertness. Justice must also consider that domestic standards are often imposed on women through social judgment. If a woman lowers her standards in order to survive, she is still blamed. Thus, justice demands a change in social standards, not just a change in individual behavior. Furthermore, justice demands the recognition that care work has public value because it maintains the sustainability of life. By positioning care as a public value, the division of domestic labor can be discussed as a matter of social responsibility rather than as a private preference. In this way, the double burden can be understood as an indicator of injustice that demands corrections in norms, institutions, and the culture of evaluation.

The discussion on the double burden also needs to assess how social class shapes the variations in the experiences of career women. Class influences access to domestic help, access to childcare services, and the ability to buy time through services. Women with greater resources can outsource part of their domestic work, but outsourcing does not always erase the mental load. Women can still remain the primary organizers ensuring that services run smoothly (Lareau, 2002). Women with limited resources are more vulnerable to bearing all the burdens themselves, as there are no secure paths for outsourcing. From a feminist

perspective, class variation shows that the double burden cannot be understood as a uniform story. However, class differences do not negate gender structures, as caregiving norms and moral standards are still directed at women. In a normative reading, it is important to ensure that discussions of the double burden do not turn into judgments of individual choices based on economic ability. A woman who utilizes help is not "less of a mother," and a woman who does not is not "more noble." What needs to be assessed is whether the system provides fair options for everyone. Thus, a feminist perspective directs attention to the distribution of opportunities to reduce the burden, rather than to the judgment of how women survive.

In the professional realm, networks and work culture are often built through activities outside of working hours, such as dinners, business trips, or informal meetings. These activities function as spaces for building trust and accessing information. However, for women bearing the domestic workload, activities outside of office hours can be difficult to attend. This difficulty is not due to a lack of interest, but due to household responsibilities. From a feminist perspective, this kind of networking structure produces subtle inequalities in access (Oldford & Fiset, 2021). Women can fall behind in information, support, and promotion opportunities. This inequality is then read as a "lack of ambition," when it is actually a consequence of structure. Normative reading demands that organizations re-evaluate the definitions of commitment and leadership. If commitment is measured by a willingness to sacrifice the home, women will always be disadvantaged. If leadership is measured by the ability to work without limits, women will always be forced to choose. Thus, the double burden spreads into career structures through informal channels, not just through formal policies. This discussion underscores the importance of examining the daily practices of organizations, as it is there that the "ideal worker" norm is produced and passed down.

Career women also frequently face demands to maintain household harmony through never-ending emotional labor. Emotional labor includes de-escalating tension, negotiating compromises, and maintaining the atmosphere. In many households, the woman is considered the primary person responsible for the family's "mood." When

conflict arises due to an unfair division of labor, the woman may feel she must resolve the conflict while still fulfilling her duties. From a feminist perspective, this is a form of double injustice, as the woman carries both a material burden and a relational burden (Erickson, 2005). The relational burden is difficult to see, yet it determines the quality of life. Furthermore, emotional labor can cause women to postpone discussions about injustice for fear that the conflict will escalate. This delay prolongs the inequality. In a normative reading, a just household requires the courage to discuss the division of labor without making the woman the "cause" of the conflict. However, social norms often blame the woman when harmony is disrupted. Consequently, women are trapped in a detrimental logic: if she remains silent, she is burdened; if she speaks up, she is accused of being disruptive. Thus, the double burden is maintained through a morality of harmony that forces women to endure injustice for the sake of the family's image. This discussion shows that domestic justice cannot be achieved without changing how society views conflict and negotiation within the home.

Feminist sociology views knowledge of women's experiences as an essential source for dismantling the norms that mask inequality. The experiences of career women reveal how policies and habits operate at a micro level, such as extended meeting schedules, family comments regarding a mother's presence, and social judgments of a tidy home. These experiences are not merely stories, but reflections of structure. In a normative reading, using experience as an entry point does not mean ignoring theory, but rather placing theory within real life (Smith, 1987). Feminist theory helps name mechanisms that are often considered natural, such as the naturalization of care work and the morality of sacrifice. Through naming, inequality becomes debatable. Without naming, inequality is only felt as private exhaustion. This discussion also emphasizes that the double burden results in time injustice. A woman's time is fragmented, thereby narrowing the space for self-development. Space for self-development includes learning, resting, and networking. When this space narrows, a woman's career is structurally hindered. Thus, the double burden is not simply a matter of fatigue, but a matter of the distribution of opportunity. A feminist perspective directs

attention to how the distribution of opportunity is shaped by family and organizational norms that mutually reinforce one another.

A normative framework regarding the double burden can be formulated through three interrelated realms: the realm of labor distribution, the realm of recognition, and the realm of legitimacy. Labor distribution concerns who does what, including the mental load and emotional burden. Recognition concerns whether care work is seen as valuable work and whether a woman's contribution is recognized without unequal moral conditions. Legitimacy concerns whether a woman is viewed as a legitimate professional without having to prove domestic perfection, as well as whether an equal division of labor is considered legitimate within family culture (Fraser, 2000). Through these three realms, the double burden can be understood as a systemic inequality that arises when the distribution of labor is unequal, recognition is withheld, and a woman's legitimacy is conditional. This framework addresses the research problem by demonstrating that social structures shape the double burden through caregiving norms, the ideal worker standard, and gender-based social control. This framework also shows that the experience of career women is the result of the relationship between the public and domestic spheres, which are never truly separate. Thus, the double burden is an indicator that the social order still relies on women's care work while demanding professional productivity, without providing adequate changes in norms.

Conclusion

Career women and the double burden from a feminist sociological perspective represent a problem of social structure built by the gender-based division of labor, standards of the ideal worker, and the morality of caregiving that judges women more strictly. The double burden is formed because unpaid care work remains attached to women, while paid work demands high availability and performance. Social evaluation produces a layered burden of proof, requiring women to maintain professional legitimacy and domestic legitimacy simultaneously. Mental and emotional labor are vital elements that are often unacknowledged, despite determining the intensity of the burden. The discussion shows that narratives of free choice and symbolic praise can mask inequality

because both shift attention away from family norms, organizational culture, and the structures of recognition for care. Thus, the double burden is understood as an injustice in the distribution of time, energy, and opportunity, maintained through habit and moral judgment rather than solely through formal rules.

Implications and suggestions emphasize the need to rearrange norms and practices within the family and organizational spheres using measures of justice in labor distribution, recognition of care work, and equal legitimacy for women as professionals. In the household, the division of labor needs to be evaluated based on ultimate responsibility, mental load, and emotional labor, so that domestic work does not stop at sporadic physical assistance. In organizations, the definition of professional commitment needs to be separated from limitless availability and from after-hours networking rituals that restrict access. Evaluative language also needs to be corrected so that motherhood is not used as a moral standard to diminish professional recognition. Further writing is suggested to detail normative indicators for assessing procedural justice in the domestic division of labor and in career evaluation, including indicators regarding the right to time boundaries, the right to rest, and the right to a voice in family negotiations. With these indicators, the discussion on gender justice can move from general appeals toward more orderly measurement.

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