

WHY WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN MAKING ONLINE LEARNING POLICIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IS MINIMAL?

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic reshaped schooling by shifting educational responsibilities from classrooms to homes, placing a concentrated load on women. In the suburban areas of Bekasi, Greater Jakarta, mothers and older sisters became the primary supervisors of elementary school children's online learning while managing everyday household demands. Yet, their experiences and insights rarely appear in regional education policies. This research examines how women handled the intensified tasks of supporting elementary-level online learning and explores the factors that limit their involvement in policy discussions. Elementary students were selected because their learning requires close and continuous supervision. Using a qualitative design, the research draws on focus group discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews, followed by a three-stage coding analysis. The findings identify three key factors shaping women's limited policymaking presence. (1) Ideological factors stem from persistent assumptions that public decision-making is not a women's domain. (2) Internal factors arise from tensions and emotional demands within the household. (3) External factors include social expectations and institutional arrangements that expand women's physical and mental workload. By documenting these layered pressures, the study demonstrates how women become the primary actors sustaining emergency education while remaining structurally sidelined from policy arenas. The analysis offers empirical insight into the gendered dynamics of home-based schooling in suburban Global South contexts.

Keyword: *women, online learning, elementary school student, policy-making, covid-19 pandemic.*

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered one of the most abrupt and far-reaching educational disruptions in modern history, forcing millions of elementary school children across the globe into home-based online learning. In this emergency shift, families, not schools, became the primary sites of educational practice. Yet, the burden of sustaining children's learning at home did not fall evenly. In many Global South contexts, including suburban communities in Greater Jakarta such as Bekasi, Indonesia deeply rooted gender norms positioned women as the default caregivers and "de facto" learning facilitators. As a result, the pandemic intensified a dual pressure on women, who were simultaneously expected to maintain family resilience and shoulder the pedagogical responsibilities of "home-schooling." Despite their central role in

sustaining emergency education on the ground, women's perspectives remain largely absent from policymaking processes. This disconnect underscores an urgent need to understand why women involvement in making online learning policies for elementary school is minimal.

While previous research has examined pandemic learning challenges, few studies have focused on how emergency education policies operate differently across student cohorts, and even fewer have investigated women's involvement in implementing elementary-level education at home during disasters. This research addresses that gap by analyzing the everyday strategies, pressures, and adaptations experienced by women caring for elementary school students in a crisis setting. By highlighting their central yet overlooked contributions, this research aims to advance a more gender-responsive understanding of emergency education and to emphasize (1) why women in suburban usually disconnect from policymaking eventhough they have bold experience and (2) why women must be meaningfully included in future crisis-based education policy design.

The pandemic has ended, but we can take lessons from it. Epidemiologists say that pandemics have a trend of occurring once every 100 years. Therefore, specific policies and experiences are essential for women and her family. This research examines the importance of the role of women in learning against the background of emergencies, which we know as, pandemics and disasters. Women are essential in communicating, supervising, assisting, and achieving learning with an emergency background for elementary school students. However, women are under pressure during online learning due to increased domestic tasks. Therefore, this research argues that the Government needs to provide a place for women to prepare learning policies with a disaster background that will be used in future disaster emergencies.

Each country has a different way of handling it because it thinks this virus is a common disease at first (Herliandry, Nurhasanah, Suban, & Kuswanto, 2020). The pandemic condition has forced people to avoid face-to-face contact to avoid transmission and to change their way of interacting in early 2020. This caused various institutions to be unprepared for fast and sudden changes. Various institutions must change governance and new protocols so their institutional goals can continue (Chitiyo & Meda, 2022).

Formal education is one of the most affected sectors (Reimers, 2021). Educational institutions carry out discussions and make policies for implementing sustainable emergency-based education (St-Hilaire, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic 'forced' formal education to seek ways of learning with a low level of risk, namely without face-to-face. Every educational

institution in various countries with varying levels of education carries out safe learning innovations to adapt to the pandemic situation (Johnson & Salter, 2023).

Each level of formal education should have a different form of governance. First, each level of education involves a particular cohort category. For example, elementary education involves students whose ages are six to eleven years, which is different from secondary and tertiary education. Second, parental involvement at every level of education has different characteristics. For example, elementary education involves parents in the learning process, differentiating it from the next level. Third, there are different learning characteristics between residents in cities (urban), residents in villages (rural), and suburbs (margins). Fourth, the locus of education in Indonesia has various characteristics, ranging from general education, religion, teacher training, languages, techniques, etc. Fifth, economic factors determine the learning process. Sixth, readiness to use technology (Mawhinney et al., 2020; U.S, 2015; Warren, 2011).

Educational variations require different approaches to the implementation of learning policies. Emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic need special handling, which aims to provide opportunities for a more micro approach at the daily level of society. Therefore, policies based on the micro level, culture, and locus are essential.

Various things cover pedagogical culture, starting from local culture, state policies, and political economy (Mawhinney et al., 2020). This forced him to participate in the regulations of the state apparatus (Giroux, 2021; Sengupta & Ali, 2011). Therefore, every educational praxis must be subject to the regulatory framework from the government, which is sometimes detrimental to everyday experience. Education policies regarding online learning during a pandemic should consider daily experiences' specifications. The policy should pay attention to the level, economic level of the family and the involvement of stakeholders who experience pressure in their daily lives, such as women.

School is out, but class is on. Classes run abnormally during the Covid-19 pandemic, and schools are closed, but every country is trying to find ways to keep the learning process going. Learning must change from conventional space to virtual space. At first, the teacher taught in front of the screen, which the teacher had never done before. Meanwhile, student also experience stuttering in different ways. Students are not familiar with the online learning environment, learning technology is not qualified, there is a lack of online learning applications, and learning activities are mixed with domestic activities (GÜNBAĞ & GÖZÜKÜÇÜK, 2020; Kong, 2020). Learning activities in the domestic space impact women (mothers and older sisters) at home.

Women (mothers and older sisters) are actively involved in supervising and helping with their children/siblings' at home. Women's tasks become even more complicated when faced with various conditions, for example, low economic levels, younger children, mytification of naughty male children, and higher online school hours (Ribeiro, Cunha, Andrade E Silva, Carvalho, & Vital, 2021). Women are the determinants of the success of online learning during the pandemic. Several studies show that women have a strong relationship with the success of learning objectives (Gao et al., 2021). Women can improve a conducive atmosphere, moral support, and economic support for teaching participants at home affected by Covid-19. At the same time, women are neglected in the decision-making process, including in the implementation of online learning. This is inseparable from women's lack of access, opportunity, and awareness to speak up. This happens because women are pressured because they have to carry out additional daily domestic tasks due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Women face inequality. During a disaster such as a pandemic, women in the middle class of third-world countries experience psychological, physical, and sexual pressure. Women who already have families tend to prioritize the welfare of their children and their male partners. Women play an essential role in shaping the welfare of their families (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020; Ghouaibi, 2021).

Women's voices are often neglected in public spaces. This also happens because of society's cultural norms, which partially legitimize the positioning of the roles of men and women. In other words, society (including women herself) legitimizes that men tend to be more assertive and independent. Men use language to perpetuate their status in culture and discourse. Men, for society, are more appropriate to provide information, advice, and policies. Meanwhile, women are in the opposite position. Women, for society, should be more tentative, patient, and waiting for directions (Navaneeth & Siddiqui, 2022).

This research analyzed the variations and characteristics of the handling of emergency-based online learning processes involving women and elementary school children in Teluk Pucung, Bekasi. There are several locus of concern in the research experience of this emergency-based online learning process. First is women's experience carrying out daily domestic tasks during the pandemic. Second, women's experience dealing with their children/siblings when learning online at home is in the cohort category of elementary school students. Third, women's involvement in making online learning policies during the pandemic.

This research focuses on the practical experience of women during online learning by taking into account the various cultural conditions surrounding them. Women are highly

involved in elementary school students' learning process at home. This condition causes women to feel various pressures. Women's involvement in making online learning policies involving elementary school students at the general, sectoral, local, and national levels still needs to be higher. This impacts the lack of pro-women policies because they are not studied based on the émic principle of women's

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques for this research were (in-depth) interviews, involved observation, and focus group discussions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). On its way, this research focuses on the characteristics of research subjects to be the relationship of women at home with children attending elementary school. More specifically, this research characterize the subject with these criteria women who actively supervised the online learning are mothers or older sisters, and reside in Teluk Pucung, Bekasi. The purpose of the characteristics of the research subjects is twofold. First, the goal is a research limitation. Second, the goal is for the researcher to have a deeper and holistic understanding of the subject whose characteristics have been determined. The holistic principle in this research is that the researcher considers all aspects surrounding the phenomenon important (Babbie, 2008). Therefore, data collection through interviews in this research emphasizes the covert and probing principles using semi-structured interview techniques.

This research conducted two weeks of interviews (also focus group discussion) and observations through longitudinal and multiple visits, taking cases from five elementary schools in the area: SDN Teluk Pucung 01, SDN Teluk Pucung 03, SDN Teluk Pucung 07, SDN Teluk Pucung 08, and SDN Teluk Pucung 11. The researcher also visited the homes of three students. The observation followed what Spradley describes as passive observation (Spradley, 2017), in which the researcher did not fully engage in the online learning activities but observed from a distance while conducting interviews with the students' mother and older sibling at home. This research also employed fieldnotes, documenting the setting, participants, activities, and emerging meanings.

Table 1. Passive Observation during The Research

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Setting | Where does the study take place, at home or at school? Is the surrounding environment conducive during the online learning activities? |
| Participant | Focusing on subject, who is involve in the online learning process? |
| Activities | What exactly happens during the online learning? What do the teacher and student communicate about during online learning? What does the older sister/mother do while the online learning is taking place at home? |
| Meaning | Reflection: Is there any indication of pressure in the assistance provided by the siblings or the mother? |

This research employed a three-stage coding procedure as outlined by Wenzel and Babbie (2016) to generate emergent themes from the raw data. This analytic sequence is consistent with grounded theory traditions and enables a systematic movement from descriptive fragments to conceptual abstraction. (1) Open coding facilitated the initial fracturing of the data, allowing the researcher to identify and label salient concepts embedded within the participants' accounts. (2) Axial coding supported the reassembly of these codes by specifying relationships among categories, thereby integrating previously disparate segments of data into more coherent analytic structures. (3) Selective coding refined these analytic structures into overarching thematic categories that informed the development of an empirically grounded narrative. The study is situated within a constructivist paradigm, acknowledging that meaning-making arises through the interaction between researcher and participants during the interpretive process. Three stages of coding aim to develop categories and themes of pressure and policy barriers that emerge directly from the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The nuclear family (home) is a place affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning has become a new concept during the Covid-19 pandemic. Homes have more responsibility for organizing learning during the hard time. Not all families are ready to face this condition, for

several fundamental reasons the family was never designed to be a place of regular learning. Thus, homes made sudden adjustments. Homes need to adapt to the economic and psychological changes resulting from the sudden changes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Families have obstacles in carrying out learning with a pandemic background. Some families with economic vulnerability must make more efforts so that the learning process at home can run well. The inhibiting factors for online learning include the family's ability to get super-fast internet and gadgets. In addition, families have to deal with child stress, technology stuttering, and other psychological barriers (Wongprasert, 2022).

The characteristics of children's learning by cohort category are also a concern. The learning characteristics of elementary school children with teenagers are different. Elementary school student are at an age where learning is intertwined with play. They need interaction with classmates and teachers. During the online learning period, women have a new challenge to participate in their child's online learning process at home. So, women at home have a dual function (Maryville University, 2022), caregiver and teacher.

Elementary school education is the level most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Students affected by the Covid-19 pandemic at the elementary school level reached 29.4 million. Meanwhile, 24 million students will be affected at the next level in Indonesia, at least in early 2022 (Unesco, 2022). The pandemic situation has indeed limited the teaching process, but implementing education in a pandemic emergency condition is considered a solution.

Disaster emergency policies have different nuances in each country (Chifari et al., 2021). The Indonesian government enforces a policy of learning without direct contact. The teaching-learning process moves to virtual space (Hendarman, 2022). This policy raises new problems for women in the domestic space. The disaster emergency education policy emerged in the middle of a pandemic. Chifari et al. (2021) call this condition Emergency Remote Education (ERE). The government considers that the teaching and learning process needs to continue so that teachers and students are forced to be home.

Women are significant in the continuity of learning for elementary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic at home. Several studies also show that women's involvement during a pandemic is essential. For example, women are heavily involved in the health sector by becoming volunteers, nurses, and doctors. However, the representation of women in the legislature to make policy decisions could be much higher, especially at the executive level.

Therefore, policies are often manifested through the eyes of men, who often ignore women's thinking in particular, especially during disaster emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Centrality of the Role of Mother in the Nuclear Family

For families with a middle-class economy, the mother's role is the main one in solving home problems. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought various new 'problems' to women at home. This cannot be separated from the notion that the father's job is to make a living outside, while the mother must remain dominant at home. Teachers at school also entrust their duties to mothers. Teachers consider mothers to be more trustworthy than fathers for two reasons. First, teachers assume that mothers are parents who are more capable of supervising children to carry out online learning. Second, the teacher considers mothers to have more closeness than fathers who, in their daily lives, work outside the home.

"So the teacher gives the assignment to me, then I tell the child. If I don't help, the child doesn't want to do the school's homework (...) (the child) is still lower level of elementary school, so the child has to be fully accompanied because the child still doesn't understand how to use (application) Zoom." (Mrs. D, informant)

School is not a home, and the home is not a school. Elementary school children's cognitive map never imagines the house's atmosphere as a place of learning. The house was forced to suddenly change its function to become a place of study due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Elementary school children need to prepare themselves to be taught at home. Elementary school children feel at home, not at school, because there are no monitoring devices—borrowing Althusser's term—school apparatus, such as teachers, bells, and uniforms (Althusser, 1976).

"(...) because (if the child study) with me, the child makes things easy and likes to fight. My child is more lazy about thinking like that because it's better for him to ask and I as a parent are the same, I rely more on Google." (Mrs. W, informant).

Elementary school children have limited meeting time with teachers during the pandemic. They only meet twice a week with the teacher in 'physical' school. These minimal meetings make it difficult for teachers to provide learning supervision to the child during online learning. Therefore, teachers 'force' mothers to have more roles in teaching assistance at home. Teachers think that mothers should have more time to supervise their children. However, simultaneously, mothers are tired of various domestic work pressures due to the accumulation of pandemic conditions.

"(...) that's why there are two things to take care of. We should be at school, we've handed it over to the teacher, but if it's like this, we want to have it online once we feel everything and do everything (...) because children don't necessarily want to do it themselves, it's a little difficult. If you don't want to, your child will be lazy about reading." (Mrs. W, informant).

A home is a place of struggle for mothers and older sisters during the pandemic. One of the increasing domestic duties of the mother is that the mother is dominant in completing the child's tasks, 'the mother even learns more from her child.' The relationship between mother and child differs from that between teacher and student. Online learning only sometimes runs smoothly at home. On the one hand, mothers feel sorry when they see their children having difficulties doing assignments.

Meanwhile, the mothers still has to be a figure with a firm and regulatory role on the other side. The emotional relationship between mother and child during the online learning process is not ideal if the expectations raised are the effectiveness of learning. Mothers often help with their children's assignments when their children find it challenging to do synchronous or asynchronous tasks. Therefore, children do not carry out the learning process as the school expects.

Mothers who should be assisting children are instead the ones who complete the child's assignments. It can happen for several reasons. First, the mother's domestic tasks are increasing. Second, mothers assume that assignments mean filling in children's answers. Third, the availability of Google as a sophisticated search that can provide instant answers. This condition causes the child's thinking, calculating, and emotional training processes to not work as expected when learning. This condition causes the goal of assisting children's learning to be minimal.

"If the child meet face to face with the teacher at School, the child can learn from the teacher so the teacher can explain. At home, me as parent can't always explain things, so they don't like to connect. Because we're not teachers. So, for us, it's a bit difficult, especially since there's a lot of homework, I'm already bothered by homework and children (...) as long as they're learning online, I'm really confused about how to explain it correctly, right? I'm not a teacher (...) my children are more lazy to think." (Mrs. D, informant).

Mothers do more learning processes than children. Sometimes, when their child has difficulty learning Mathematics, the mother forces herself to study again using the help of tutorials from Youtube. For efficiency, the mother chose to be responsible for filling in the

answers to the assignments given by the teacher from the school to her child at home. Therefore, some of the assignments of elementary school students at home are never completed independently by their students. As the School's teacher state

"Because they are (student and the teacher) Googling and all kinds of ways (looking for answers). But, after yesterday for a year (pandemic), they had problems, yes, that's all, like it or not, we just also consider it by assessing the results they have collected, and sometimes this is what their parents wrote, that's usually found out, right?" (Teacher G, informant).

Older Sister's Involvement

Mothers have a high domestic workload during online learning at home. Most of the mother's domestic work, which is slowly getting out of her control, makes her delegate some domestic tasks. The mother entrusts the task of 'supervising' and teaching to the older sisters (not fathers or brothers) of the students. It's interesting because mothers don't trust his husband, a male, to supervising their child.

This belief indicates that the mother perceives that the students' older sisters have abilities that include four things. First, the mother thinks the older sister can understand new technology better than she does (also her husband). Second, the mother thinks older sisters have better scholastic abilities than she does. Third, mothers think that older sisters are more diligent in carrying out their task of supervising their younger sibling's studies. Fourth, when doing online learning at home, elementary school children do not expect a mother's role like that of a teacher, so sometimes children do not want to obey their mother. The role of the older sister becomes significant. Sometimes, students obey the supervision and orders of older siblings (sisters) rather than their mothers.

"Most of the sister teach because they can (...) It's the sister who know (many things), in elementary school they are only given assignments from the WhatsApp group, for new exams from Google Meet. If it's via cellphone, she really likes to come -Suddenly scrolling through TikTok, then I said "Study first!" like that, then '*entar*' (later) if it's been said according to it then he'll learn." (Sister A, informant)

New Learning Application

The pandemic made many things happen suddenly. This includes how children adjust to different learning methods from the pre-pandemic period. Interface systems designed by

sophisticated learning platforms such as Google are still complicated when in new conditions. The students need to take time to understand the working system of the application. This becomes even more difficult because it is not only the students who have to understand the learning system but also the teachers at school. The distance between students and mothers at home makes it challenging to consolidate learning in the LMS (Learning Management System) that was built during the pandemic.

Online learning requires an understanding of the technology used. The conditions of the initial pandemic differed from those of the pandemic that followed. Users of online learning technology need help understanding the use of teaching and learning technology. Online learning support is quite complex. First, at the first time, Google Classroom has never been used as a learning platform to support online learning. Second, as two parties who play an essential role in online learning for elementary school children, teachers and mothers need to learn how the LMS works, its features, and its buttons. Thus, the online learning process is often carried out formally as a shortcut. Formal online learning is unsupervised, not carried out according to standard rules, and is oriented towards 'results,' not the learning process. The learning process is essential for students, especially in primary schools, who still need teacher assistance and guidance.

Teachers and mothers agree not to use the learning platform. Learning platforms are learning features that make online teaching easier. However, the initial perception when using online learning support features causes teachers and mothers to be reluctant to use the features of the learning platform that has been prepared. Thus, teachers and mothers prefer to use WhatsApp as a communication bridge between school and home. WhatsApp was never designed for learning. Thus, the teaching and learning process that occurs only sometimes runs effectively.

Mothers have no control over how involved they are in their children's learning at home. Mothers often use search engines like Google to help their children complete school assignments. This use of Google occurs for two reasons. First, there is no place to ask questions and understand the material because teachers at school also have limitations during the pandemic (before emergence of Generative AI). Second, using Google is a mother's habit of shortening her additional domestic work because there are still many other domestic chores she needs to complete at home.

Teachers communicate more often with the mother as a representative of the home. Thus, there is an assumption that mothers are responsible for teaching their children new ways of learning through LMS during a pandemic. Meanwhile, the school prepared an initial online learning guide that was prepared for learning at home. Mother felt that home was not the right

place to carry out the teaching and learning process for several reasons. First, elementary school children think the home atmosphere differs from a school (for learning). Second, elementary school children cannot assume that mothers can change roles from parents to teachers. If older siblings are in the house, the mother is responsible for teaching younger students (sisters).

Child Emotional Exhaustion

Screen usage activity increased, while children's physical activity decreased. Student learning in elementary school usually involves the teacher's attention as a substitute for parents at home. Children are learning to play a role in society during elementary school. The child is learning what the role of the teacher and the parents' roles should be for him. The pandemic period made the process of understanding social roles 'messy.'

On the other hand, school, for elementary school students, is a place to interact with peers. The child is in a phase, borrowing Mead's term in West & Turner, as the play stage level (West & Turner, 2010). Children do more imitation and are not yet dominant in determining their actions at this stage. Children are more dominant in playing games with peers and need a lot of adult assistance as a place for self-learning so that it becomes a reference for their actions or responses in the future.

The pandemic conditions forced more children to stay at home to carry out the teaching and learning process. The expectation that elementary school students expect is to be able to do face-to-face learning at school. They expect learning interactions with people they agree with as 'teachers.' Meanwhile, they also expect to be able to play games with their peers.

Pandemic conditions make children experience fatigue. This fatigue can mean two things, fatigue from feeling 'isolated' from the outside and interacting too much with the screen. "Children like to be cranky by themselves. They hate online school and lots of assignments." (H, informant). The psychological and mental conditions children experience instability when learning at home.

Conflicts often involve mothers and students at home. This happened for several reasons. First, the child experiences emotional changes when the mother gives orders to do online learning. This often happens because the child thinks the mother should not give him learning orders. Meanwhile, the child hopes his mother will have the behavior naturally expected of a mother, nurturing, not ordering, and not forcing. This condition makes mothers experience emotional exhaustion in their child's 'tantrums' when online learning at home.

"My child still experiences things like that, sometimes he still has tantrums and he still gets emotional. Sometimes he still likes to sulk like that (...) that's because, for example, online, when my child's mood really affects him, sometimes he still I like to do it often, so wait for him to be in a good mood, if he doesn't want to do the work, we'll wait or not (...) My child's mood, especially his mood swings, sometimes like this and that, so if he's already crying, what else do he want to do? I have to wait for him to finish crying, At least it's finished, and even then it doesn't necessarily mean the mood will come back." (Mrs. W, informant)

Child emotional exhaustion puts the mother under double pressure. Mother has to deal with domestic work on the one hand. Mother forced herself to build a new habitus on the other side, she must come to terms with foreign routines that are different from their daily routines before the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, mothers have to study children's school material, deal with children's emotional problems, and find ways out of increasing economic pressure during a pandemic.

Economic Pressure

The Covid-19 pandemic forces homes to increase expenses. Lower middle-class families in this research have never been ready to face the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic situation makes their expenses even higher. Homes need to widen domestic spending. Internet service at home is another need besides food, drink, electricity, water, and other daily needs. Online learning during the pandemic brought a variety of additional expenses that put pressure on the economy of middle-class families. The house needs to provide additional devices such as supporting devices, speakers, additional microphones, and up to additional lighting.

"Sir, I made the assignment later, yes, at that hour because the cell phone is being used, or for example I usually (finish the assignment) at that hour" (Teacher F, informant).

Middle-class mothers who worked before the pandemic often worked in the non-formal sector. The jobs include trading and opening a laundry service. Mothers from the middle class with better economic capacity usually work in the formal sector, such as offices, real estate promotion, marketing, and shop trading.

The pandemic has changed the routines of mothers working in the formal or non-formal sector. Household income taps are becoming increasingly erratic as mothers stop working while fully entrusting the task of earning family income to husbands whose income is also threatened due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Pandemic conditions force mothers to stay at home by

supervising their children's learning with the economic pressure that accompanies their daily lives.

Discussion

This research consolidates the five findings into three main factors that explain why women's involvement in policymaking for elementary school online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bekasi remained minimal.

Table 2. Data Categorization

| Ideological | Internal | External |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mother's central role | Child emotional exhaustion | New-learning application |
| Older sister involvement | Economic pressure | |

In the praxis of online learning involving elementary school children, in the case of this research, women are a social category with criteria that must be involved in making public policies, especially concerning online learning. This is inseparable from the rich experience of women interacting with an online learning environment that involves elementary school students in the landscape of the Covid-19 pandemic. Women's domestic problems during the pandemic limited their opportunities to enter into learning policy-making during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research argues that it can happen for three reasons: the ideological factor, the internal factor, and the external factor

Consequently, policies related to learning in a disaster setting, such as a pandemic, are not in favor of women. This can happen because women experience being overwhelmed in their daily work. At the same time, women's ideology legitimizes that their participation in discussions to make learning policies is not essential.

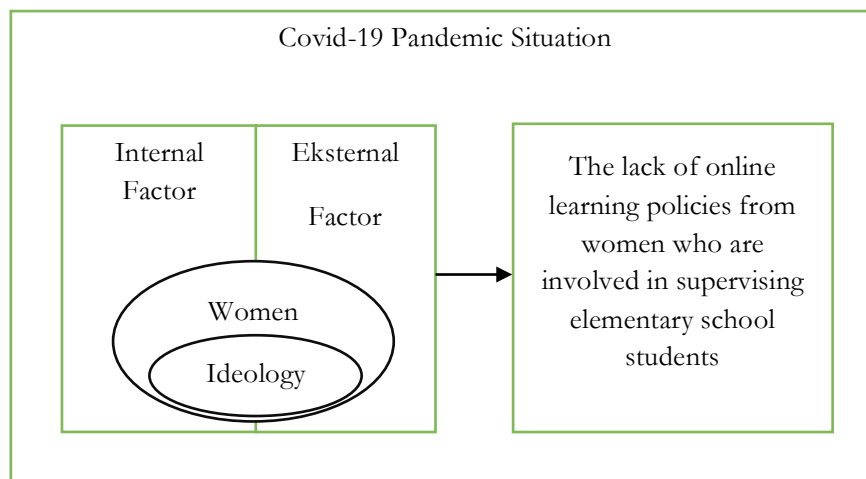


Figure 1. Research's Conceptual Framework

Ideological Factor

In this research, mothers and older sisters carry a socially constructed expectation to act as primary caregivers. This aligns with literature showing that caregiving is culturally feminized and attached to women through gendered norms (Bianchi et al., 2012; Glenn, 1994). The data demonstrate that teachers, who are also women, implicitly pressure mothers to assume a dual role as both caregiver and at-home teacher during online learning. At the same time, mothers tend to exclude men from participation in the learning process. Their refusal to involve their husbands reflects, as this research suggests, a form of compliance (*kepatuhan*) and a lack of trust in men's caregiving capacity. This dynamic illustrates an internalized gender ideology, what Bourdieu (2001) refers to as symbolic violence, where dominated groups accept and reproduce their subordinate position.

The findings also show that women's time becomes increasingly constrained by domestic responsibilities, which limits their opportunities to consider participation in policy-making spaces. Consistent with previous research, women's unpaid domestic labor significantly reduces their political engagement and civic participation (Fraser, 2016; Tronto, 2013). Their struggles in managing the praxis of online learning for elementary school children are substantial. Although mothers and older sisters possess rich empirical insights that could inform local-level decision-making, they simultaneously legitimize their subordinate status. In other words, the women in this research reproduce gendered norms by accepting that men should occupy bureaucratic and decision-making roles, an assumption deeply embedded in patriarchal ideology (Connell, 2005).

Moreover, this research argues that the involvement of older sisters as primary caregivers is part of a chain of patriarchal ideology that is also legitimized by mothers. The data show that teachers expect mothers to serve as the main caregivers during online learning, and mothers, in turn, expect older sisters

to assume similar caregiving responsibilities. This creates a recursive chain that perpetuates and normalizes hegemonic gender expectations within the household.

The persistence of gendered ideologies poses structural challenges to policy dynamics, as policy formulation continues to be viewed through a male-centered lens. Policies addressing women's needs, especially regarding how they can adapt during intense domestic pressure throughout online learning, are largely absent. Women experience multiple burdens during this period, including economic, psychological, and cognitive pressures. Yet, in this case, they are also reluctant to communicate these challenges to local authorities, reflecting both structural barriers and internalized norms about who is entitled to speak in the policy arena (Mazur, 2020).

Internal Factor

This research identifies children's emotional exhaustion and household economic pressure as key internal factors that shape women's limited involvement in public policymaking during the pandemic. Findings indicate that elementary-school students often experienced frustration and tantrums during online learning, creating a heightened emotional burden for mothers who were responsible for managing their children's moods while simultaneously ensuring compliance with teachers' expectations. Mothers, frequently acting alone, were required to absorb the emotional volatility produced by remote schooling, which in turn generated increased psychological strain.

In lower middle-class households, economic pressure exacerbated this condition. Many families faced declining and unpredictable income after the father lost his job due to corporate downsizing, compelling some mothers to enter semi-formal or informal work sectors to stabilize household finances. This dual load, navigating children's emotional fatigue while responding to economic insecurity, produced significant domestic pressure. This research argues that such internal pressures undermine women's capacity to participate in or influence public decision-making related to educational practices during the pandemic. The interplay between children's emotional exhaustion and household economic instability situates mothers in a persistent state of stress, ultimately constraining their time, energy, and political agency.

External Factor

This research argues that external factors significantly intensify the pressures experienced by women during at-home online learning. One major source of external pressure is the requirement to adapt to new digital learning technologies and navigate school-related bureaucratic procedures. The data show that mothers struggled to understand unfamiliar platforms such as Google Classroom. As a practical negotiation, mothers shifted to WhatsApp, a more familiar and less cognitively demanding environment, despite its numerous limitations for

formal learning. This situation illustrates how women's time and mental energy are consumed not only by internal and ideological pressures, but also by technologically driven external demands.

This research further argues that new and unfamiliar learning applications create a distinct form of digital burden for women. Mothers and older sisters become the family members expected to first comprehend, troubleshoot, and facilitate the technological aspects of online learning, positioning them as default “digital intermediaries” within the household. Additionally, gadgets used for schooling serve dual functions, and children often switch from educational platforms to gaming applications. This behavior increases the emotional strain on mothers and older sisters, who must regulate device use while managing the child's learning discipline. These dynamics constitute external pressures that exacerbate women's already expanded domestic responsibilities during pandemic-era online learning.

This research argues that ideological, internal, and external factors collectively contribute to the limited participation of women in shaping online learning policies. The findings demonstrate that women possess substantial experiential knowledge that can significantly inform the implementation of at-home learning. Their involvement is essential, particularly in preparing future education policies within disaster or crisis contexts.

Online learning policy must also take into account the specific needs of women who care for elementary school students. For this reason, government agencies should meaningfully include women in policy formulation processes. Women are central to the well-being of the household, and their involvement has multiplier effects on family welfare (Ghouaibi, 2021). Incorporating their lived experiences would allow policymakers to design educational responses that reflect actual domestic realities during crises.

This research has limitations, primarily due to its narrow scope and qualitative nature. While the study highlights the often-overlooked role of women during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly their absence from education-related policymaking, it cannot be generalized to all contexts. Women in different regions or socioeconomic groups may experience distinct pressures or opportunities. Additionally, this research is written from the standpoint of one male researcher, which may introduce subtle interpretive biases. Future research should therefore include more perspectives of women researchers and explore how women from higher-income households negotiate the complexities of supporting elementary school children's education during crises.

CONCLUSION

Online learning policies during emergencies such as Covid-19 should pay greater attention to the role of women. This research shows that mothers and older sisters play a significant role in the everyday struggle of managing online learning during a pandemic or other disaster contexts. Their contributions range from preparing children's learning materials, accompanying them throughout the learning process, assisting with assignments, and serving as communication intermediaries with teachers and schools. These daily burdens during the pandemic further constrained women's opportunities to engage in policy-making processes, even at the local level. This aligns with broader patterns showing the minimal participation of women (mothers and older sisters) in school-based deliberations and in community-level governance structures such as the Neighborhood Association (*Rukun Tetangga*), Community Association (*Rukun Warga*), and Subdistrict (*Kelurahan*). Women's leadership within these sectoral environments remains minimal.

This research argues that women must be meaningfully included in shaping online learning policies for elementary school students, particularly within disaster-related contexts like the Covid-19 pandemic, because their daily experiences provide crucial insights. Their perspectives serve as valuable foundation for policy design. This research identifies three key factors that explain women's limited involvement in policy-making: ideological factors (social expectations of mothers as primary caregivers and the transfer of caregiving responsibilities to older sisters), internal factors (children's emotional exhaustion and economic pressures), and external factors (the burden of learning and adapting to new digital platforms).

Collectively, these factors generate compounded pressures on women, who are already responsible for supporting their children's daily learning. Therefore, this research recommends the creation of structured discussions and community forums to help reduce the domestic pressures women face. Additionally, cooperation from male partners is essential to addressing the internal and external challenges encountered by women. Strengthening women's leadership at micro and sectoral levels is equally important to ensure that women's perspectives are incorporated into educational policies, particularly policies related to online learning support.

What kind of policies should be prioritized? This research emphasizes that online learning is no longer limited to emergency situations; it has become part of contemporary educational practice and a normative option in the curriculum. Women's everyday struggles in supporting online learning at home persist. Therefore, interventions must also occur at the institutional and workplace levels. Employers, particularly those employing fathers of elementary

school children, should develop progressive policies that extend beyond maternity-related leave, enabling fathers to share caregiving responsibilities more equitably.

Furthermore, women leaders at the local community level, for instance, in the *Rukun Tetangga*, can help alleviate economic pressures by mobilizing community resources to support mothers in financial distress and by providing sustainable assistance. Local women's collectives or community-based support systems would be highly beneficial in addressing challenges.

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