

The Double Stage of Working Mothers in Media Company

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Abstract

The phenomenon of working mothers balancing dual roles as professionals and homemakers is a significant concern within the media industry context, including those working in online media, Kompas.com. This study aims to understand how working mothers in Kompas.com manage these two roles. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with three informants from Megapolitan's editorial division. The results show that informants play a professional role at the "front stage" as self-disciplined, target-oriented, and communicative workers, while doubling as homemakers "backstage" who care for children and the household. An analysis using Erving Goffman's dramaturgy theory shows that they balance these roles and identities by utilizing impression management. This study shows that working mothers in the media industry are active actors who develop social strategies to play their dual roles, highlighting the importance of support for women in both the workplace and the household.

Fenomena ibu bekerja yang menjalankan peran ganda sebagai profesional dan ibu rumah tangga menjadi perhatian dalam konteks industri media, termasuk mereka yang bekerja di media daring, Kompas.com. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana ibu bekerja di Kompas.com mengelola dua peran tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap tiga informan dari divisi redaksi Megapolitan. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa informan menjalankan peran profesional "panggung depan" dengan menjaga kedisiplinan, memenuhi target, dan menjaga komunikasi kerja. Sementara itu, peran domestik ("panggung belakang") dijalankan melalui aktivitas seperti mengurus anak dan rumah tangga. Analisis menggunakan teori dramaturgi Erving Goffman menunjukkan adanya manajemen kesan yang dilakukan untuk mempertahankan dua identitas secara seimbang. Penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa ibu bekerja di industri media adalah aktor aktif yang menyusun strategi sosial untuk menjalankan peran ganda mereka, menunjukkan pentingnya dukungan dalam dunia kerja dan keluarga bagi perempuan.

Keywords: double stage; dramaturgy; personal roles; professional roles; working mothers

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Introduction

Working women play an important role in modern socio-economic dynamics, not only as domestic actors, but also as active contributors in the public sphere. In sociological studies, women's involvement in the workforce marks a major shift in social structure. Women are no longer seen as only supporting figures at home, but also as key contributors to their economic stability and the organizations where they work (Sabariman 2019). These changes are driven by various factors, including economic needs and self-actualization (Rizky and Santoso 2018). However, behind the increasing participation of women in the workforce, there is a double burden: balancing a professional role in the public sphere with their roles as mothers and household managers (Buzzanell et al. 2005). This burden is increasingly complex in a media industry, where the fast-paced work environment and high demands for flexibility add additional pressure. For example, mothers working as journalists, editors, and news anchors at Kompas.com must produce content creatively every day, then carry out household functions when they get home. They must be able to balance the two roles as a professional in the office and a mother/wife at home. This situation deserves close attention to understand how working women interpret, manage, and negotiate their dual roles in daily life.

The double stage concept is adopted from Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, which argues that human social life is like performing on stage, both at the "front stage" (professional roles in public spaces) and at the "backstage" (personal roles in private spaces). Hence, the dual roles of working mothers are as professionals at work and as mothers/wives at home (Asry, Simabur, and Bailussy 2022). This concept provides an analytical framework for

analyzing how individuals manage social impressions and expectations in their roles.

The dual roles of working mothers have been extensively researched in sociology. Buzzanell et al. (2005) revealed that women often face balancing job demands and household responsibilities, especially those in urban areas. However, the dual role of women is not exclusive to workers in urban areas. Even in the agrarian communities, women contribute actively as breadwinners and household managers. Arsini (2014) found that the wives of farm workers in Putat Village, Grobogan, also generate income through the informal sector while managing full-time household responsibilities. Another study by Camilleri and Spiteri (2021) shows that working mothers face challenges in achieving work-life balance.

In the media industry, working mothers frequently feel pressured to conceal their maternal identity to sustain their careers, facing a work culture often unsupportive of dual roles. Women balancing dual roles face significant challenges, often experiencing role conflicts, chronic stress, and emotional strain that affect their performance in both professional and domestic spheres (Liddy and O'Brien 2021; O'Brien and Arnold 2024; O'Brien and Liddy 2021). For working mothers juggling dual roles, achieving work-life balance is essential to safeguarding their mental health and preventing stress, depression, anxiety, etc. (Mayangsari and Amalia 2018).

The media industry's unique work environment, characterized by flexible schedules, heavy workloads, and intense professional expectations, creates distinct challenges for working mothers that differ from other sectors. According to Suharnanik (2019), women in high-visibility professions face the compounded challenge of maintaining impeccable profes-

sional personas while fulfilling domestic obligations, adding complexities in their dual-role management.

Previous research has discussed how working mothers balance work and family from multiple perspectives. For example, Maume, Sebastian, and Bardo (2010) examined how women balance work and family care. Rutman (1996) investigated how this balance affects childcare arrangements. Dryburgh (1999) explored how female workers manage professional impressions, and McLroy (1922) studied the challenges working mothers face. However, despite this breadth of research, few studies have employed a dramaturgical approach to examine how working mothers perform their dual identities across distinct social spheres. A novelty in this study is using the concept of double stage from dramaturgy theory to understand the dynamics of the dual role of working mothers, especially in a dynamic media work environment.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research focuses on Kompas.com, a media company that is part of Kompas Gramedia, one of the largest media companies in Indonesia. This study involved key informants who were working mothers in the editorial department of Kompas.com.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation. The data were qualitatively analyzed using Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory to see how informants played their roles in two different social stages. The analysis is carried out with interpretive techniques to capture the meaning behind the social actions displayed by the informants.

Based on the established theoretical background, this study addresses three core questions regarding female employees at

Kompas.com: 1) How do Kompas.com's female employees negotiate and perform their dual roles as professionals and domestic caregivers? 2) What conflicts emerge from the simultaneous performance of these professional and domestic roles? 3) What strategies do these working women employ to manage and resolve such role conflicts? This research departs from the assumption that working mothers consciously manage impressions to maintain an ideal professional and personal image in front of different audiences in the workplace and the domestic space.

Professional and Personal Roles of Working Mothers

The working mothers who became the informants in this study were assistant editors in the Megapolitan Division of Kompas.com. They edited news from field reporters, created video scripts, and hosted live newsroom programs. Furthermore, they actively participate in news packaging for social media dissemination, a critical component of Kompas.com's digital transformation strategy. Their professional responsibilities extend beyond standard working hours, reflecting the media industry's inherent demands for flexibility and rapid response to meet daily production targets.

Working hours in Kompas.com are dynamic and flexible, where workers are not required to be present from nine in the morning to five in the afternoon, like in conventional companies. The nature of their work requires meeting strict daily targets under a flexible but demanding schedule. Although not confined to traditional 9-to-5 hours, editorial staff must adhere to roster schedules that mandate office availability at any time, with departure only permitted after completing all assignments. For instance,

preparing the 5-8 PM newsroom program typically demands extended shifts, often from 2 PM until 11 PM, including post-production evaluation. The informant mentioned that despite the freedom to set working hours. Stress levels remain high, originating from time-sensitive accuracy demands, live performance expectations, and multimedia production requirements. One of the informants stated that she often comes to the office even though she does not have to. He wanted to show dedication and maintain professional relationships. Ji (32 years old) said that she prefers to work in the office even though she has a WFH (Work from Home) schedule, because in the office she feels more professional and can communicate with the team and show a good attitude to the leader.

In practice, working mothers at Kompas.com navigate unique challenges stemming from their dual roles. Despite significant domestic responsibilities, they must simultaneously meet the rigorous demands of digital journalism. Fa (29 years old) mentioned that professional roles are very important and must always be maintained because work has a specific target that must be met. Ab (32 years old) and Ji (32 years old) said that their strategy to appear professional is to maintain positive interactions with colleagues and superiors. Despite being mothers with numerous household responsibilities and challenges, Ab (32) and Ji (32) consistently uphold a professional image by fostering good relationships and composure at work. In addition, Ab (32 years old) said that in interactions, maintaining a professional role also requires a good attitude—being polite, respectful, and avoiding offensive behavior—to leave a positive impression on colleagues and superiors.

Being a working mother with two professional and parental roles is undoubtedly challenging. She must remain committed and

professional at work while also fulfilling her responsibilities at home as a mother. From the results of the interview with Fa (29 years old), she explained her roles as a housewife include taking care of her husband, doing household chores such as mopping the floor, cooking, washing clothes, and others. Informant Ab (32 years old), a mother of a four-year-old child, explained that her role as a working mother is caring for her husband and a toddler. Ab explained that household responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, are entirely hers as part of her role at home. Similarly, Ji (32 years old) has a four-year-old child. She does all the household chores, including taking care of her child.

In addition to exploring how they describe their responsibilities as mothers, the researchers also examined how they divide their time between professional and personal roles and how they interact and behave as stay-at-home mothers. Fa (29) years old explained that, at home, she carries out all her household responsibilities, including doing the laundry, taking care of her husband, and cooking. She also explains how she divides her time between professional and personal roles. Although it is difficult, she feels she must handle everything independently. She tries to catch up on these tasks when she has free time, such as on weekends. However, if time is limited, her husband helps by buying food instead of expecting her to cook. Ab (32 years old) explained that each day involves balancing office work and household chores simultaneously, often through multitasking. Communication tends to be limited, and at home, she takes on the role of a mother in the most general sense, caring for the family while managing her responsibilities. In addition to Ab, Ji (32 years old) explained that balancing personal and professional roles often requires sacrifice—either

leaving her child at daycare or compromising her work time. She noted that behavioral shifts are inevitable; while she must remain professional at work, she often continues her office tasks at home while fulfilling her mother role.

In essence, the professional role built by working mothers at Kompas.com is reflected in their efforts to maintain positive relationships and interactions with colleagues and superiors, presenting themselves as though there are no issues at home. Flexible working hours, remote work (WFH) options, and rotating administrative duties encourage them to demonstrate their dedication by choosing to work from the office whenever possible. Meanwhile, in their personal or domestic roles, they continue to fulfill responsibilities as mothers and household, such as washing and cooking. Some, especially those with young children, rely on daycare services. In addition, they maintain good relationships with their husbands and, when applicable, domestic assistants who help manage household tasks.

Erving Goffman explained in his theory of drama that social interaction can be analogous to a theatrical performance, in which individuals play the role of actors who act in front of an audience (Szatkowski 2019). In this context, there are two main stages, namely the "front stage," which is a public space in which actors perform ideal social roles, and the "backstage," which becomes a private space where individuals let go of their roles and act more authentically (Clark and Mangham 2004). Working mothers at Kompas.com actively play both roles alternately.

At the "front stage", working mothers present themselves as professionals who can meet work targets, maintain good relationships with colleagues and superiors, and commit to their duties. It is reflected in the statements of

informants willing to come to the office even if they are not scheduled, only to maintain a professional image and build social relationships. Goffman calls this a form of "performance", in which the actor displays the identity expected by the audience (Benford and Hunt 1992). This professional image is built by maintaining the way of speaking, manners, and appearance, which Goffman calls manner (Ritzer 2011).

Meanwhile, in the "backstage," mothers take on their roles as wives and caregivers, engaging in household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for their children. It contrasts with the "front stage," where they present an idealized, professional image. The backstage allows them to be more spontaneous, emotional, and honest, especially about the exhaustion and burnout they experience (Goffman 1959). This space serves as a moment of pause, where they renegotiate their roles before returning to the "stage" to perform their professional identities (Sullivan et al. 2014). Goffman explained that "backstage" is a place to strategize and reflect on personal identities that may not be publicly displayed (Aspling 2011).

There is a tendency for the two stages of a mother's work to differ, both in what is shown through each role and in the audience's expectations. In this context, the audience refers to those connected to her professional and personal roles. The front stage reflects her professional role, while the backstage represents her role—each with its overlaps and distinctions.

The main findings in this case show that the drive to perform optimally on the professional stage or to work is not only due to institutional demands, but also the sense of independence and the desire for self-actualization. They feel that their status as wives and mothers should not

hinder their work performance. In addition, economic demands are also one of the main drivers that make informants try to maintain their professional roles optimally, so that they are still considered equal to other colleagues and do not lose the trust of their superiors.

From the perspective of dramaturgy, this professional role is part of the front stage, where actors (working mothers) present the ideal image to the audience (superiors, co-workers, or clients). They engage in impression management (efforts to control how others perceive them) by maintaining work performance through consistent communication with the team and superiors, staying online beyond regular hours to signal dedication, using professional language, and maintaining a physically and virtually stable presence. The desire to remain a reliable worker despite domestic burdens reflects how individuals shape and maintain their social identity in the presence of a larger audience.

According to Goffman (1959), the success of social performances on the "front stage" is highly dependent on the dramaturgical discipline and control over access to information from the "backstage". In this context, working mothers strive to keep fatigue and household problems from affecting their performance in the workplace. Despite the emotional and physical pressure behind the scenes, they present a fresh, confident, and professional demeanor.

Double-Stage Role Conflict

Navigating dual roles across two distinct stages is not easy, as each role comes with different demands and expectations that must be met and performed accordingly. Role and workload conflicts are major factors affecting work-life balance, significantly negatively related

to work-life balance (Yusnita and Nurlinawaty 2022). Family-work conflict significantly impacts the decline in working mothers' welfare (Nona and Sumargi 2022). Activities in one role (work/family) will interfere with activities in other roles (Iswadi 2021).

The working mothers in the media company, Kompas.com, explained how the two dual-stage roles intersect or contradict each other. Fa (29 years old) explained that indeed the two roles can sometimes contradict when working longer hours, such as coming home from work at 9 or 11 PM. It is very contrary to her role as a mother and wife. Ab (32 years old) also explained that when fulfilling her role as a mother while preparing for or doing work, she often becomes less focused, as both roles are carried out simultaneously. Similarly, Ji (32 years old) said that performing both roles simultaneously makes her less focused and prevents her from giving her best at work. In addition, Ji (32 years old) explained that her caregiving is sometimes not optimal; for example, feeding her child normally requires three spoonfuls, but due to work demands, it may be reduced to two. She also acknowledged that when things become unmanageable, one role inevitably has to be sacrificed, either by taking leave from work or, regrettably, the child missing out on quality time with their mother.

It can be concluded that the conflict they get here is the first is the conflict of time between professional and personal/household roles, the second is that they have to sacrifice one role to be able to maximize in the other, the third is emotional and mental fatigue where they feel that they cannot perform perfectly in two roles due to mental load. Problems also arise because of the demands of expectations from different roles, such as personal roles, and there are expectations from the husband. Likewise, in

professional roles, there are expectations from superiors and colleagues. These results align with a previous study by Murangi and Groenewald (2024), where family-work conflicts hinder mothers' participation in the workplace. Kan et al. (2022) argue that, despite rising female labor force participation across various countries, the burden of household work continues to fall disproportionately on women. In East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, the stagnation of gender convergence has further reinforced the double burden faced by working mothers.

In Goffman's dramaturgy, as mothers bridging these two roles, the informants apply various forms of "impression management." In dramaturgy theory, it is a conscious attempt to control other people's perceptions of oneself. Despite being busy at work, they maintain a professional attitude despite facing domestic pressure, and still show concern as mothers. This impression management is important so that their two identities remain balanced. As Goffman says, individuals often build teams to maintain an impression, whether it is with co-workers or partners at home (Clark and Mangham 2004).

In this case, the dramaturgical theory plays a role in identifying and addressing role conflicts that may arise in the staging process, similar to how individuals in real life must navigate the demands of their various social roles (Cattaneo 2021). The theory explains the problems that may arise if outsiders discover a performance that is not meant for them (Bleeker 2003). A glimpse of the back area can ruin the entire show. The key in Goffman's dramaturgy perspective is found here, which is the arrangement of access between different regions (Aspling 2011). Dramaturgy also describes conflict as a key element that depicts the tension or conflict between other characters or forces in

a narrative. These conflicts can occur on many levels between characters, within the characters themselves, or between characters and their environments (Bahtiyorovna 2022). It aligns with role conflict, where the "backstage," in this case, the personal role as a mother, can disrupt the "front stage" or professional role. Working mothers at Kompas.com describe how this conflict affects their focus and performance at work, often forcing them to sacrifice one role to fulfill the other. For example, children may have to give in due to limited time with their mother, especially when she works late, or the mother may need to take leave to spend time with her family.

This discussion found that role conflicts arise not because of incompetence, but because of overlapping double expectations. Mothers do not fail to perform the role, but are burdened with two stages that demand perfect performance. It shows that the source of conflict is not the actor, but the rigid social system. The two conflicts are time-consuming, emotional, and moral, as evidenced when the informant feels guilty when she is "not optimal" to be a mother and stressed because she is afraid of being considered less professional. In this case, conflict is not only about schedule, but also self-image and inner burden.

Strategies for Managing Role Conflicts

The working mothers in this study explained their strategy to manage their role conflicts. For example, Fa (29 years old) uses a predictive approach and takes advantage of free time to complete household tasks. She also relies on flexibility, such as buying food when work piles up. Meanwhile, Ab (32) adopts a multitasking strategy during WFH and reinforces her role through support systems such as daycare. This approach enables her to continue managing both roles simultaneously.

In contrast, Ji (32) chose to step down from her position to achieve a better balance between roles. She also adopts a compromise approach when conflicts arise, such as taking time off to prioritize her children. These strategies show that the mothers are actively working to manage the role through time adaptation, support systems, and structural decisions in the work.

In essence, working mothers in Kompas.com manage their strategies as working mothers and housewives. These strategies can help them optimize their dual-stage roles, such as taking advantage of free time when doing homework and finishing professional work during WFH. On the other hand, in the professional setting, some mothers bring their children to the office so they can be supervised while working. Others rely on daycare services. To balance their dual roles, some adopt different strategies; for example, one mother chose to step down from her position to better manage her responsibilities at home and work. Building positive communication with husbands and parents is also key, enabling spouses to share responsibilities when the mother cannot fulfill specific duties. The strategy in professional roles is the same as building good communication with the team and superiors, so that they can support each other.

It aligns with dramaturgy theory, where mothers navigating dual stages (professional and domestic) develop various strategies to manage conflicts between these roles. At Kompas.com, working mothers adopt approaches that help them maintain a balanced social performance across both stages. This strategy can be read through the dramaturgical approach developed by Erving Goffman, in which social life is analogous to theatrical performances that are divided into two "front stage" and "backstage" (Clark and Mangham 2004).

The first strategy is in informant Fi (29 years old), who relies on flexible time management, such as taking advantage of free time between jobs to complete household chores. She stated that she used her free time from work to wash, cook, and clean. This strategy shows the form "the discipline of dramaturgy", which is the ability of actors to maintain consistency in their roles so that there is no damage to their performance when performing in front of the stage (Aspling 2011). In addition, the time reflects the preparatory practice in "backstage", where the individual prepares themselves before entering the professional stage.

Ab (32 years old) relies on multitasking strategies and support systems such as childcare. She works while caring for children, especially when WFH. This strategy demonstrates the role of team performance in dramaturgy, where the success of performance in front of the stage is supported by solid team collaboration, including partner support and a work environment (Benford and Hunt 1992). Ab (32) continues to project a professional image by maintaining polite, respectful, and active interactions, even when she is not scheduled to be in the office. It reflects a consistent practice of impression management.

Unlike the previous two informants, Ji (32) chose to demote and take leave when she was unable to perform both roles optimally. She stated that if she could not manage the balance, one of the roles had to be sacrificed. From the perspective of dramaturgy, Ji's actions are a form of "dramaturgy loyalty", i.e., loyalty to certain social and team roles, by making decisions that maintain the overall stability of the show (Storm 2016). The strategy also shows the access control of "audience segregation", which is when actors consciously limit the audience from seeing other sides that can damage the main

performance (Cattaneo 2021). It reinforces the idea that the effectiveness of boundary work depends heavily on the underlying interpersonal relationships (Trefalt 2013). In this case, the success of working mothers in maintaining a balance of professional and domestic roles is largely determined by the support or resistance of the work and family environment. In addition, Omar et al. (2022) show that a supportive work culture and flexible organizational system play an important role in the success of mothers who play dual roles.

The support received from family members, as described by the informants, aligns with the findings of Laksmi, Darma, and Mahyuni (2024), which emphasize that family support and a positive work environment play a significant role in helping working mothers maintain work-life balance, especially those with young children.

The findings in this discussion are that the first working mothers make stage adjustments to avoid performance disruption, as evidenced by their consciously choosing to demote or postpone work to still perform "well" in two roles simultaneously. It shows that their strategy is not just reactive, but a form of strategic social image management. Both strategies are not only practical (time and help), but also emotional and symbolic as they rearrange expectations, frame difficult situations as "part of life", and organize emotions to remain stable in public, this includes "emotion work" and "impression management" to maintain professional and maternal identities at the same time. The three roles of husband, family, and daycare are part of a "social team" that maintains the performance of working mothers, as evidenced by the explanation that they are not a single actor, but perform with a "team" so that professional roles can be carried out without neglecting the domestic stage. It is a manifestation of the concept of "team performance" in Goffman's dramaturgy.

Conclusion

The study found that mothers who work in media, Kompas.com, play two main roles in their social lives: the professional role on the "front stage" as a media worker and the personal role behind the stage as a housewife. Both roles are performed in two different social spaces that Goffman calls the "front stage" and the "backstage". The informants demonstrate the ability to maintain a professional role in front of colleagues and superiors with communication strategies, work dedication, and time management, while in a personal role or backstage, they continue to carry out domestic roles through adjustments to activities at home. The difference in expectations of the two stages creates a role conflict that arises when the demands of time and expectations of the two stages collide, such as a lack of focus at work due to domestic stress, or vice versa. It is overcome by the strategies used, such as time-sharing communication with colleagues, daycare, work leave, and position adjustment. Goffman's dramaturgical approach is effective for reading about the emergence of two social identities of workers in media companies that alternate with each other, as well as how individuals maintain image consistency through impression management and dramaturgical loyalty.

The results of this study reinforce previous findings on the dual role of women in the world of work, but make a new contribution with a dramaturgical approach that is rarely used to examine the issue of mothers working in the media industry. This approach provides a deeper perspective on how individuals build social identities through role-playing in front of different audiences. This research also shows that support from the work environment and family is an important key in maintaining the stability of these two roles, and can be a

reference for organizational policies in creating a friendly work environment for women and families. This research reveals the other side of the media company—the dramaturgy of the media workplace is not always as seamless as it appears. Behind the scenes, there are complex dynamics at play. For female workers, who are constantly driven by time pressures while expected to maintain the quality of their output, role management becomes a strategic effort to sustain their professional and personal responsibilities.

Although it provides an in-depth understanding, this study has limitations in the number of informants and coverage of the media division studied. Therefore, further studies can expand participants from different media work sectors or geographical regions, integrate quantitative and digital ethnographic approaches, or use a more robust triangulation approach. This research also opens up further study space on how the development of digital technology, hybrid work systems, and new gender expectations have shaped the stage of women's lives in the contemporary world of work.[]

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