



## Glass-Ceiling in a Single Mother's Life

Oksiana Jatningsih<sup>1\*</sup>, Sarmini<sup>2</sup>, Siti Maizul Habibah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Study Program of Pancasila and Citizenship Education, Faculty of Social Science and Law, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia  
Jalan Ketintang, Surabaya, Indonesia  
Email: oksianajatningsih@unesa.ac.id  
Email: sarmini@unesa.ac.id  
Email: siti Habibah@unesa.ac.id

### **Abstract**

*Single mothers face problems not only because of their own status so they have to struggle hard to meet their needs, but also because of patriarchal social construction that presents many challenges to women. This qualitative research is aimed at revealing: the form of glass-ceiling for single mother and their strategies taken to deal with that. This research was conducted in Sidoarjo on five single mothers. Data were collected using in-depth interviews. The theory used is symbolic interaction because it allows researchers to identify research subjects. The results of this study reveal that the glass-ceiling faced by women are domestic responsibilities, sosial control, and underestimation of women. Strategies for dealing with it are sharing work and ignorant of negative responses. The response to the glass-ceiling depends very much on the way of thinking (mind) of women in seeing themselves. When women put themselves away as objects (me) that are powerless against the values that apply, then the choice of action to face the challenges of their lives (glass-ceiling) tends to be compromising and accommodating, whereas if the means adopted are based more on how to see themselves as subjects (I), then the method adopted tends to be uncompromising.*

**Keywords:** single mother, patriarkhi, glass-ceiling

### **Abstrak**

*Ibu tunggal menghadapi masalah bukan hanya karena statusnya yang sendiri, sehingga mereka harus berjuang keras untuk memenuhi kebutuhan mereka, tetapi juga karena konstruksi sosial patriarkhi yang menghadirkan banyak tantangan baginya. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan mengungkap bentuk glass-ceiling yang dihadapi oleh seorang ibu tunggal dan strategi yang dilakukan untuk menghadapinya. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Sidoarjo pada lima ibu tunggal. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan wawancara mendalam. Teori yang digunakan adalah interaksi simbolik sebab memudahkan peneliti mengidentifikasi subyek penelitian. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa glass-ceiling yang dihadapi perempuan adalah tanggung jawab rumah tangga, kontrol sosial, dan meremehkan perempuan. Strategi untuk menghadapinya adalah berbagi pekerjaan dan mengabaikan tanggapan negatif. Respons terhadap glass-ceiling sangat tergantung pada cara berpikir (pikiran) perempuan dalam melihat diri mereka sendiri. Sesuai dengan cara seseorang melihat dirinya, sebagai me, perempuan tidak berdaya melawan nilai-nilai yang berlaku, sehingga pilihan tindakannya untuk menghadapi glass-ceiling*

*cenderung dilakukan dengan cara kompromi dan akomodatif, sedangkan sebagai I, perempuan lebih bersikap tidak peduli, tanpa kompromi.*

**Kata kunci:** *ibu tunggal, patriarkhi, glass-ceiling*

## INTRODUCTION

A single-family caused by divorce or partner-death always brings a variety of stigma within the society. A divorced-caused single-family is considered as a failure in fostering the relationship, meanwhile the second type of single-family causes social mockery. It is never easy to be a single parent, especially for women (Rahayu, Liestyasari, and Nurhadi 2017).

Patriarchal society creates rules that tend to "limit" the space for women in the domestic sphere and men in the public sphere. Societies constructed by traditional gender values tend to be of the view that women are inappropriate, unnatural, or unable to move outside the family and household environment. As a single mother, a woman takes a dual role in the family; the role that was originally performed by the father will be held by a single mother. But people often put a single mother in a difficult situation, because of gender values that create public-domestic duality and negative stigma against it. Single mothers experience more disadvantages and discrimination in the labor market than other women (Güngör and Biernat 2009).

Female-headed households tend to be more vulnerable to poverty because of carrying the family's burden alone to meet family needs. This is because in general women do not have sufficient skills to obtain jobs with good income. Women do not prepare for their life as well as those of men. The strength of patriarchal ideology makes women not prioritized to get educational opportunities, so that this can further strengthen their possibility to be poor. Therefore, single mothers consistently have been shown to have lower incomes than those with other household structures (Waring and Meyer 2020). Therefore, it is only natural that the majority of families with female households are in poor condition. This describes feminization of poverty. It is not easy to lift them from their poverty (Asmorowati, Schubert, and Reindrawati 2019) (Damaske, Bratter, and Frech 2017). Financial hardship identified multiple aspects of poverty (Stack

and Meredith 2018). Special ways are needed to help women escape their poverty (Marwati and Astuti 2012).

The essence of the patriarchal gender ideology are "motherism," "familialism," and "the secondary sex" that places women in domestic and secondary positions still influences various fields of life, because their "nature" is active in the domestic sphere, women who work in the public sphere are required to remain responsible for their domestic activities. Women who are active in public spaces are demanded not to leave their responsibilities in the domestic sphere. This is another form of space that limits women's activities, which is experiencing double burdens.

Women must live their lives differently from men. There are challenges and obstacles for women to pursue a career. It is not easy for women to reach top positions in their career. There are obstacles experienced by women but not men. These barriers are not visible, but become a barrier for women in a career that makes it difficult to reach the peak of her career. Therefore, it is natural that the percentage of women working in the public sector is still below that of men. This is called *glass-ceiling*.

Previously, the term *glass-ceiling* was used in economics and management. This is something that prevents women from promoting opportunities and prevents women from reaching top positions (leaders) in their careers, but this is not experienced by men (Grover 2015; Akpinar-Sposito 2013). *Glass-ceiling* is limitation for women on professional advancement. The glass-ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women. (Jellal, Nordman, and Wolff 2011) suggested "Glass-ceiling is an invisible barrier that inhibits promotion opportunities for women, but not for men, and prevents them from teaching top positions," because these obstacles are only experienced and fetter women, then the barriers are discriminatory, felt unfair for women (Hamilton and Pitt 2011; Morgan 2015). That is why, generally women stay behind men almost in all their activities, jobs, carier, manufacturing or formal jobs.

Glass-ceiling is an internal and external challenge. Barriers to women leading to the top of their careers as leaders can be external or internal. The commission reported several barriers to the success of women and minorities in

reaching the top echelons of management. These included societal, governmental, internal business, and business structural barriers (Commission 1995; Johns 2013). Internal challenges consist of socialization, personality, level of aspiration, individual beliefs and attitudes, motivation, and an impression of oneself; while external challenges include stereotyping sex roles, sex discrimination, lack of professional preparation, and family responsibilities. (Jatiningsih 2009) revealed, "the family factor has a very important contribution in carrying out the leadership tasks of a woman. A woman can hold an important position in an organization as long as she has the ability, which includes formal abilities (leadership quotient) but also other conditions that allow her to be able to be a leader in multiple roles. Therefore, family support, for example, is in the form of an "understanding" of the headmaster's activities and activities as well as assistance in completing work and household responsibilities, which is very important in supporting a woman's career. Due to her many roles, it is difficult for a woman to concentrate doing their job. "... by the decade's close poverty was a norm for single mothers, affecting the majority of women who are not employed full-time, and disproportionately impacting women of color and their children..."(Damaske et al. 2017). Futhermore, (Sharma and Kaur 2019) revealed that women managers face glass-ceiling in terms of organizational and societal barriers at an above-average level. It is not easy for women to step up in their career.

Glass-ceiling is the effect of the existence of certain values in life such as those related to gender, race, ethnicity, or religion. In a patriarchal society, men are more powerful than women; men in central positions and women in marginal positions, because of its importance, men have the power to regulate, define and control women, even life. Men define, build knowledge and truth about how a woman should make herself. Socially, women are placed as the second and the other, while men are the first and the genuine subject (Beauvoir 2014). This social definition gives the signs how an individual must make herself. In society, if a woman moves outside her domestic sphere (in the public sector), then she is still required to act as a wife and mother who must take full responsibility for domestic affairs. As (McCrary 2012) puts it, "Women are forced to make choices about work and family." Motherhood becomes the key of glass-ceiling. As a result, it is natural that women's productivity is lower than men, because besides working in the public sector, women must spend energy to manage the household. Glass-

ceiling is systematic, although it is often unrecognized, form of discrimination and oppression based in gender values and stereotypes. Patriarchal gender values support sexually segregated roles, and what are called "traditional cultural values" hinder women's progress, development, and participation. Women's energy and time are divided between the completion of her work and her domestic affairs. Women do not realize it, because those values have long been socialized to them.

This unseen obstacle almost always occurs in every type of career or work for women, because it lags behind women when they pursue a career that is not as bright as men, who do not experience obstacles as women. (Bjerk 2008) states that men and women have different promotion opportunities. (Nozawa 2010) revealed that the glass ceiling phenomenon will also be found in nonprofit institutions. She further explained that this could be changed by increasing awareness and understanding affiliated to actions that could reduce barriers for women to be promoted to higher positions. Such complexity the problem of glass-ceiling colors women's career and work, that women are not only hampered to step into a better career path, but also are fixated on their themselves steps to continue their career path (Rennie 1992). (Hejase and Dah 2014) said that in Lebanon, women still face both the sticky floor and the glass-ceiling in their life, although this is not the major discrimination traits of the banking sector.

The challenge for women to tackle their career successes becomes even more difficult, when the woman is a single parent. The woman is the head of the household and a single mother for her child. This means that the two roles that are usually carried out by a man (husband / father) and woman (wife / mother) are carried out by one woman. Empirically, the data from the Sidoarjo BKKBN in 2018 showed 8,333 (9.14%) families with single mother. If we look closely, from this number, the level of family welfare in families headed by men tends to be better than those headed by women. The number of families with male-headed families' welfare levels has increased along with the increase in the stages of family welfare, while families headed by women tend to increase in numbers at a declining level of family welfare.

In general, in the construction of gender patriarchy women are more highlighted and "punished" socially than men. Like the glass-ceiling in women's careers, women's lives as a single parent are not easy to pass; not to achieve a

better career path, but to continue his life for the better. The struggle to "fight" the situation is already a personal problem and challenge for women. This is compounded by a glass-ceiling which is a barrier in a career. This article is not only about women who are social-culturally positioned as subordinated people, but also about women as heads of families who have more difficult life challenges because they are women and single mothers.

The novelty of this research results in an explanation of single women with careers struggling for their lives amid social pressures and glass ceiling constraints. The novelty based the problems in this study are: (1) The shape of the glass-ceiling faced by single women head of a career household, (2) The strategy of a single career female household head to survive in facing the challenges of her life in the public sphere.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative exploratory approach regarding single career women head of households in Sidoarjo. The informants in this study were five women as single household heads and working or having a career. They are: Sundari Asih, Istianah, Wageyah, Mujiatun, and Nila. They were chosen based on considerations, namely: have been at least three years a head of the family, have children, work, and are willing to be used as research informants.

Table 1

Name	Description
Sundari Asih (57 years old)	Sundari Asih has two children. She is a teacher. She started working as a non-permanent teacher (GTT) in 1987 and became a civil servant in 2006 with the 2C group. In 2015, she graduated from S1 and therefore her group was adjusted to 3B. Sundari Asih has been being a single parent for four years, because her husband passed away. At that time, her two children were still in school, one in high school (class XII) and another in junior high (class VIII). Now her daughter is in college and her son is in class XII of high school.
Istianah (43 years old)	Istianah has two children. She works in a factory. Her husband died when he was 37 years old, when her son was still in middle and high school. She started working 6 years ago when her husband died and her children still needed a lot of money to go to school. At present one of her children has become a graduate and her son has also worked.
Wageyah (57 years old)	Wageyah has two children. She is a factory worker. When she was divorced from her husband. She was 47 years old, and her first child attended middle school. Now her first child is studying at a public higher school and her second child attends grade 4 in elementary school.
Mujiatun (44 years old)	Mujatun has a child. She works as a supervisor in a private company. She has been a single parent for a child since she was 30 years old. At that time her education was only in high school and then she was enrolled again at the S1 level and that let her to be promoted to be a supervisor at her place of work.
Nila (38 years old)	Nila has three children. She works as an employee in a private bank. She has been a single parent for three children since she was 35 years old. Her education is S1. Work as a secretary in a private company.

*The Research Informants*

They were chosen based on consideration of their willingness to be the subject of research and purposive sampling, i.e. they have been the minimum head of household for one year. The instrument in this study is the researcher. The data were collected using in-depth interview and then analyzed qualitatively. Basically, this analysis is based on simplification and interpretation of data. This process consists of three sub-processes of analysis, namely data presentation, data reduction, and verification.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Shape of Glass-ceiling Faced by Single Mothers. Based on the data, there are three shapes of glass-ceiling that must be faced by single mothers. Those are domestic responsibility, social control, and assumption of incapable woman.

Domestic Responsibility. Women are created with the responsibility to settle domestic affairs and care for children. These two tasks reflect the strengths of women as well as their weaknesses. In accordance with the patriarchal gender values they have and the experience of socialization experienced by informants shows that women are responsible for domestic affairs.

One of the informants, Wageyah (57 years old) said that in the position of being a single mother, the hardest burden of working is to leave her child at dawn and at night. As a factory worker, she revealed that her job requires a long time and must give up time with her family lost. However, there is a daughter who can understand the condition of her mother. Before separating from her husband, Wageyah made ends meet every day. The role of her ex-husband as a breadwinner that was not carried out properly became a problem in her domestic life, so in the end she asked to part with her husband because in the end she made more sacrifices.

After separating from her husband all childcare rights were transferred to her. The responsibility to raise and fully support her child also rests with her. When she is working, her first child is in charge to look after her younger sibling at home. So a good collaboration happens between the mother and the child. Every day before going to work, Wageyah cooks and takes her child to school. Wageyah never takes the role as a burden, she always tries to maintain and carry out her role well, because it was all a responsibility that must be done. Wageyah stated that since childhood she had been taught by her parents to carry out tasks at home. Doing domestic work is taught as a form of activity that must be mastered by women. Because that's where women's superiority is measured. Therefore, for Wageyah to do domestic work is normal. she stated,

"During my duties as head of the family, I did not require my daughter to carry out and replace my duties at home. All of that I free my child to do it or not, because my child is also a student so she has other duties or interests so she is also busy. So, for all activities at home, if I can do it yes, I do if not yes, I live. Like my son, this little guy, she doesn't want it, bro, I did everything. If you say... you are tired, but what else if there is no one to clean it later like a broken ship, the name is the duty of parents. But at my own house like a man's activity like a rooftop attachment or something else I ask for help" (Interview, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Willingness to work "desperately" is seen as an obligation that must be carried out as a consequence and obligation to fulfill her responsibilities as a



parent. Feeling that the mother's job is to provide the best service to her child is a wish that she hopes can be fulfilled. Running domestic affairs is an obligation that must be carried out. This requires a separate struggle because sometimes it is done by ignoring the fatigue in her. The solution is often done by delaying it for a moment until she had time to do it.

Likewise, delivered by Sundari Asih. As a teacher who has responsibilities in school, she must be good at dividing time for both matters. Domestic responsibilities which are also her responsibilities are not well taken care of in the midst of her official work obligations. But in general, sharing tasks with her children is a way that is usually done in completing light tasks at home.

Like Wageyah's childhood experience, Sundari Asih's socialization experience teaches that women are obliged to carry out their domestic responsibilities. She is accustomed to carry out her domestic duties from the time she was a child and the more solid she experienced until she grew up and married. Therefore, when she has to do a variety of domestic work herself, so she does not feel many problems. Sundari Asih stated,

“To carry out two roles as a mother and worker for me is simple, every day there is an assignment for my child. An example for room cleanliness is their responsibility. If there is a woman or my child who goes to college, all my work will be replaced. The man does not want to do it, she is less patient when doing it. So, for other tasks, it is often my daughter who replaces. If not, then I will do what I can. Yes, her name is a housekeeper. But I have given a boy an assignment, but for house cleaning she cannot. I only want to clean the bathroom, because I think it's important” (Interview, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

The domestic task of preparing food is generally the main task of the mother. To carry out her domestic role as a mother, taking care of house cleaning and food preparation, Sundari Asih uses her nights after she comes home from work. Because she lives with her son, Sundari Asih has to complete all of her domestic tasks on her own. "Actually, I am tired, but what else can I do? Because no one helps me resolving it. It's my duty. " My son, yes, I don't do my homework. he does his own business. " The obligation to take care of this household becomes lighter when her daughter returns. At that time, she assisted her mother. Domestic affairs are apparently still constructed solely as a matter for women.

Domestic tasks that are always delegated to women. This makes single mother does not optimal when working in the public sphere. Naturally, with

limited energy and time, besides being a mother who has domestic duties and child responsibilities, a single mother also has the task of earning a living to meet the economic needs of the family. In practice, self-understanding as a mother who is obliged to provide for her child's basic needs overcomes her fatigue. Considering the cost that must be incurred is an important consideration why she prefers cooking to meet food needs rather than buying food at a food stall. Istianah stated,

“Yes. Otherwise they are angry, because if you buy expensive food. So, cook it. Yes, it's done, yeah, my job is to be a mother and my child can't cook. For children ... yes, I do even though I'm tired. In the past when I was a student because there were many assignments. If they have graduated, they will cook it themselves. After all, my children are still at home and no one has a family” (Interview, September 9<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Preparing food for children is a task that must always be done on the sidelines of other tasks. According to Istianah, she must always take the time to be able to prepare breakfast and lunch for her children. This responsibility must be carried out, because if the task is not carried out, then she must spend more money to buy food. This economic calculation (savings) is often a strong reason for women as single mothers to harmonize and regulate their various domestic activities. Consequently, she had to spend a lot of extra time and energy after she returned from her workplace. Wageyah said, "Yes ... just do it, if you are not tired from coming home from work. Rest first and then do it."

In general, women who work and earn money have readiness to live alone. Some of the factors underlying women's difficulties in doing work or completing work outside the home / factory are the loads at home that are so much related to taking care of children and the home.

“I am a mother of one son, a single mother and a career mother in my opinion two ordinary things, mas. But I separated from my husband because of the reason that we are both busy with each other's work. My husband works and I work too, we are separated. We can't give up having to go out with one job. " (Interview, September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Mujiatun explained that when she was married there was a decision they had to separate or divorced because of fundamental factors. Working gives a woman the opportunity to earn their own income so that they have the flexibility to use their finances.

“Yes, I can't, I also have parents who have needs such as medical treatment and sending their children to school. Because at that time I also

had a lot of needs and my husband was also not enough to fulfill it, so the best way was to separate. My responsibility towards my parents is something I can't ignore ... it's already been separated" (Interview, September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Mujiatun's decision to work was the best decision she made. If not, then another problem that is more difficult would be experienced by Mujiatun when she became a single mother. Aside from Mujiatun, who has experienced limitations while working in the public sphere, Sundari Asih has also experienced such limitations or actions.

"I have been working since my husband was there, even when I was young and pregnant with my child. My husband used to disagree and object when I worked as a teacher, but I explained all of that that I worked as well as worship. In the past, my husband told me to leave because my husband had a lot of work and no one to take care of her children. Luckily I did not do that, because the school phak supports supporting bringing their children to work "(Interview, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Before becoming a Civil Servant Teacher at SMPN 1 Waru Sidoarjo Sundari Asih was once banned from working her husband. At first, she was not allowed to teach at school, because she was expected to help her husband's activities at home as a shoe entrepreneur. However, she explained that her intention to teach was to want to transmit or practice the knowledge she had so far, even though the burden she got would be heavier. The same thing was expressed by Nila, she explained that when entering the workforce her son did not agree, because according to her mother's mother's duty at home was.

"Since their father is not around; I have to cover all the family's needs. However, when their father was still alive, their children disagreed. They express like "Father already work, why does mama work anyway?" However, after their father died 3 years ago, they without me asked to understand the situation they already understood. They understood that to fulfill all these needs, Mama was alone to fulfill them. (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019)

Looking for a living to meet the needs of the family as well as being responsible for all family matters sometimes feels heavy. Nila said, "Domestic work is a common thing to do. Hopefully always healthy, so that you can do household chores well. When my child was still a child, it was rather difficult. I have to go home as soon as I finish work, because at home I also have work to do.

Aligning all matters in order to run properly is the most important obligation maintained by single mother. Domestic responsibilities cannot be ignored by these mothers even though she also has to work to meet the needs of her family. When dealing with many roles, the ability to manage time becomes an important variable in completing the task.

**Social Control on Women.** Women are "destined" to be responsible for domestic affairs. As a result, work at home, such as cooking, cleaning the house, and looking after children is the main task of a mother, especially if her children are still small. Settling domestic affairs is a kind of criteria for a woman's goodness. That is why, women will always be bound by these obligations, even when they also work in public spaces.

Working hard is a consequence of a single mother, because she does not have a partner to meet the economic needs of the family. This is not an easy matter to run. Because in the process, single women often also bump into difficult situations that causes them to be monitored by others. Women seem to be an interesting topic for discussion. Wageyah revealed,

"Yes, still ... But behind my words like that. Women according to the community if working outside, it is rather inappropriate. Especially those who don't have a husband, are definitely talking about it. Accused of nonsense and ugliness. Like "you have a new boyfriend, you get a lot of money from your new boyfriend, huh?" (Interview, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Agreeing with Wageyah, Istianah also often received responses from residents around "wes dolan sobbing." Although joking, these words are often heard when she will go to work. The meaning of the statement is a protest raised by several people because it is still morning time to go out of the house that should not be done by women, especially those who bear the title of widow. As expressed by Nila.

"f the people directly seem to understand my condition right now, even though someone said that before, mas. There was also a time when I talked about being unkind like "naughty woman, never at home, incompetent to take care of my family" people who say like that directly I oppose mas. That is to say immediately I made it clear that I did not do that and asked for help so that they stay away from the wrong thought. Because why, bro, it is very annoying to be heard directly by my child, even though I am not like that. I carry out my duties and roles as a single mother well now. Finding money for my child's needs, taking care of everything, is the first responsibility in the family. Even though I praise God, my parents-in-law still help me in taking my children to school and other tutoring and support me to stay strong" (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Women face barriers to being free from work and expression. These barriers stem from the view of the community which places women always at the domestic level. In addition to the obstacles obtained from the view of domestication of women, other obstacles also come from views that are unjust and misogynistic. This view did not come from men who felt themselves humiliated by women and defeated. However, this view was also practiced by other women, who held a negative view of women with widowed status. Nila explained,

“Being a single woman is not very easy. her life is almost always watched by people. It was wrong to be talked about everywhere. Being the talk of mothers who like to talk. It seems they don't understand that someone like me has to devote a lot of attention and energy to all matters. The important thing is straight down the road....” (interview, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2019)

He time, morning, afternoon and night time limits appear to be more stringent on women than on men. If you have to work late at night because of overtime or because you are assigned out of town, neighbors often see it with suspicion. Mujiatun (interview, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2019) revealed,

“Sometimes that person knows everything. Suspecting others for reasons that she thinks is right. It was as if people came home that night because they were always caused by the wrong reasons. There are people who whisper, if out of town so sleep where? Once told at the hotel then immediately allergic and suspicious, as if seeing it by associating as a person who is booked ... Crazy right?”

Silence the social eye so as not to see and question women is not easy. The woman herself sometimes becomes a social aggressor against other women through her sexual activity and suspicion. Feelings are shy, uncomfortable, worried that being the subject of conversation causes women to be more constrained, so that they have to become more self-limiting so that they are not the object of conversation by others.

Assumption that women are not capable. When women enter the workforce, there must be some consequences to them. One of them is the division of work tasks that put them in a position to be underestimated by other workers. Like in the world of a company or a factory. Often women are placed in parts that make them feel marginalized. The marginalized work does not get a negative place for women themselves. Because women have also agreed to this view which ultimately considers women as weak figures.

Jobs that are taken lightly by other workers are like production. As in consumption factories, women are often placed in the goods production section while men are in the distribution section. Actually, men and women can do both jobs, but the understanding that develops in the community always puts women in the production section because of the habits in the domestic section.

One example, a food factory located in the Sidoarjo Regency Temple. In the factory, female workers are placed in the production division, while male workers are assigned the task of marketing the product. As Istinah, who works as a factory worker, said, "In a factory, my friends are women who are positioned in the production department and the distributors are men. Women who are part of the production are therefore very suitable jobs, because everyday women are like that, mas. As for women, the distribution is not like men who are more hardworking and stronger".

Istinah explained that in the factory where she works, female workers are placed in the production department. Laying the section is in accordance with the conditions every day experienced by women. According to her, women's work cannot be separated or cannot be far from cooking. The statement uttered by Istinah shows that so far, the image of a weak woman is a true thing. Both the distribution and production of women can actually do that, regardless of the habits of women who are always struggling in the domestic world. Istianah said, "The distribution portion is heavier, because the product must be exhausted later. And the task of selling or distribution is heavy, so it's more precisely for women. If women carry out these tasks later it is not quite right. Because it is not in accordance with the habit of only production.

Furthermore, Istianah explained that work that was easy and suitable for women was part of the production at her factory. According to her, production is an effective part of work for women because it is not heavy and easy. In the production section, it has been equipped with assistive devices, so that this can relieve the female workers in the factory. In addition, when women work in the distribution or marketing division, the work is considered too hard. According to her, women are not right to shop around, sell, and market products. For these reasons, the workers in the distribution or marketing section are male workers. Istianah stated,

“The difference in the work role ultimately leads to different income for each worker. Income in the distribution is more than production, but it's the work that keeps us from commuting. Well if you have this difficult, Mas. There are children and households that must be taken care of. Plus, it doesn't go back and forth ... well, people sometimes talk about us sometimes, then guess what the bad things are.” (Interview, September 9<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Placement that is always in the lowest structure makes women workers are always underestimated in carrying out their duties. Besides Istinah who works in a staple food factory. In other factories there is also a fair division of performance, but it is systematic and structured. Wageyah is a shoe factory worker located in the Sidoarjo area. she revealed that in her work there is also a division of labor and women are usually placed in the shoe making or sewing process of shoe products. Istianah says,

“Shoe production, shoe production parts. Yes, the women all put that part. she said it's easier, lighter and not heavy. But that's how it is ... the male workers sometimes say "work a little, finish long." Yes, there is such an unfair division of labor in the factory. Men see it lightly, whereas in practice we take a short break and from morning to night sewing. For men, just watching the full stock is lifted like that. Actually, the same, but our work is considered too trivial. " (Interview, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Placement of the realm of work that causes negative stigma turns out to occur in all lines of the work environment. Women are always portrayed as weak and incompetent. Not the judgment of others, but there are indeed some women who agree that their image is as stated by others. According to Wageyah, the shoe production department at her workplace has become a rule for women. In their work women are assigned to sew shoes. Because that part is the easiest part of the job. With this division, other workers gave stereotypes and insults to female workers.

The division of labor that is always placed at the bottom of the structure makes women workers are always underestimated in completing their duties. Although in its completion women workers also get a very important role. Although in the end because of the tasks that are considered easy and low, often women workers are underestimated and not relied on. As stated by Wageyah, male workers underestimate that the tasks or work of women workers is not heavy, but women workers do it slowly.

Women workers who are always given basic tasks that are light to make them get some oppression and humiliation. With the humiliation and oppression, it often makes women workers to survive in a position which according to them is appropriate for them to get and do. Another reason, women workers cannot leave their present positions is a factor in their education. As stated by Istinah and Wageyah, they cannot be more than what they have now because of their education at the elementary level.

The experience of being a woman who is still quite young and as a single mother shows that the environment is not always welcoming and friendly. Generally, the status of a single woman is an interesting phenomenon to consider. Society tends to be interested to pay attention to women with single status. Because of that, they then discussed it. In general, families with a single status of women also describe a mediocre or modest economic status, therefore, when a single woman with a high economic status raises a particular concern for society. An attitude of curiosity arises, which is sometimes also accompanied by an attitude of suspicion and community cynicism. Nila said that because of her status, she sometimes gets harassment from her male colleagues.

“As a young widow, bro, age 38 and still beautiful (he smiled) a lot of teasing me. Some say that the work I get is my result with the boss. In fact, one day before my husband died, I was given permission by my boss to go to the hospital to accompany my husband who suddenly entered the ER. ... in the end I got this position because of my hard work, and my boss knew my education was in the secretary. Besides, usually in the office I get a talk like this "weh want this or not to be invited to watch, eat together, often go out with the boss, we want to, huh" ... If there are people like that indeed, I don't care because, my reason is work they don't know how much it is but only prejudice is raised. Harassment and humiliation with my current position, yes, with new employees who haven't known me for a long time, so she said that” (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Nila revealed that in her office sometimes she is verbally abused sexually from a male coworker in her office. Verbal harassment such as sneering, temptation, and ridicule because the work relies on the physical form of the body is sometimes accepted from the work environment. The community sometimes suspects women's success as a product of "tempting behavior" and not work performance. Nila said,

“No one has directly debased my process, bro. But when I bought a new car, someone gave a question like this, "How come I can buy a car, it seems like there is another help," they indirectly looked down on me like I couldn't buy the item, even though I was working really hard. They think I



bought this car in another way without work, like a savings, a new boyfriend or something. Even though I am determined to focus right now, I only want to raise my three children well. Delivering them to reach their respective dreams. But in the end I was able to buy a new car because I used to sell my used car and added it to my work savings for several years” (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

According to her, when she was able to buy a new car that was obtained from her hard work the community had never seen her hard work. In reality the community considered that the hard work she was doing was only the assistance of a man who was rich in stash. Negative assumptions about society towards women as ingrained, become a habit, and inherited socially. Patriarchal gender values that have been transformed as a benchmark of life place women in subordinate and inferior positions. The dominance of these values is also often used as a perspective or benchmark in seeing the success and life of women.

Strategies of Single Mothers in Facing Life's Challenges in the Public Sphere. There are some strategies that single mothers do when they do their roles as a mother, a family head, a bread winner, and a worker in their life that seems is not easy for them. They are sharing domestic responsibilities with family and having indifferent to negative responses from the surrounding environment.

Sharing domestic responsibilities with family. When a woman has a family, she will get a role as a mother. In carrying out their role as mothers, they must carry out some of their obligations. Examples of cooking, taking care of the house and caring for the baby, although the task can also be done by a husband as well. However, everyday women are more emphasized to carry out these activities. In the end, this view makes women have priority tasks to carry out all tasks that are domestic. Women often get obstacles to being able to work freely, these obstacles arise from families and tasks that cannot be shared between domestic and public.

Being a mother and worker is both a heavy burden for every woman. The heavy burden that must be understood is that when a mother has a job outside the home, then she will have a dual role that sometimes gives difficulties in completing her duties properly in her daily life. In contrast, if a person still has a reliable figure such as her younger sibling and biological mother. Working for a single woman is a necessity, but sometimes women are asked to stop working

because of other reasons or needs. demanding that she focus on a dilemma situation. As revealed by Sundari Asih before her husband died.

"I have worked since my husband was there, even when I was young and pregnant with my child. My husband used to disagree and object when I worked as a teacher, but I explained all of that that I worked as well as worship. In the past, my husband told me to leave because my husband had a lot of work and no one to take care of her children. But from school they support to invite their children to work." (Interview, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Before he died, Sundari Asih's husband worked as a shoe craftsman. At first Sundari Asih's husband did not approve of her working as a teacher, but this changed after an explanation was given to her. Finally, she got her husband's permission to work. Sundari Asih left her husband since 2015, since then her first child is still in the early semester studying at a state university.

When Sundari Asih became a teacher, she brought her child to work. And finally, in 2015 she was given full responsibility to take care of the household and become head.

"To carry out my two roles as a mother and worker for me is simple, every day there is a task for my child. An example for room cleanliness is their responsibility. If there is a woman or my child who goes to college, all of my duties will be replaced. The man does not want to do it, she is less patient when doing it. So, for other tasks, it is often my daughter who replaces. If not, then I will do what I can. Yes, her name is a housekeeper. But I have given a boy an assignment, but for house cleaning she cannot. I just want to clean the bathroom, because I think it's important" (Interview, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

In her daily work for homework, Sundari Asih does it without the help of her current son. But when there is a daughter at home the task is completed. According to her, the division had been done by her with her son but the boy did not want to do it well. In addition to the obstacles that are obtained from the family, women workers also always get obstacles when they have children. Even more so if the child is under the age of five. Women seem to be one subject that has the greatest responsibility in the growth and development of a child. That responsibility is actually from both the father and mother subject, but as long as culture places women's position in the domestic realm women's habits cannot be changed.

Acting as a single mother, a worker and a parent is certainly not easy. The work of caring for and supervising children and meeting daily needs takes a lot of

energy and time. Mujiatun did not object to carry these tasks, moreover in her daily life she was assisted by her extended family. She stated, "I am very grateful for living this life not by myself. Thank God I was helped by my family, my sister and my mother with me. I live with them so they also really helped me. "

Children, especially when they are still young may be a "barrier" for women at work, because they do not yet understand why their mothers have to work. But sometimes children also give their own strength to their parents to work hard. Child compliance with parents is the happiness of parents who will encourage them to work. As revealed by Wageyah.

"I am very grateful. Yes, children are already very obedient to my words, the thing that they have faithfully accompanied is me. Actually, as long as I work from an independent woman who is a guy who hasn't, ... But gradually my son is aware that life must be hard and I must work to support the family. Maybe, my child has these thoughts from the habitual traits shown by her brother about how to live independently ... it really became my strength not to feel tired at work. " (Interview, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

It seems that for women, children give their own strengths and responsibilities that make them able and eager to work on other responsibilities in their lives. Family attention and assistance are also important things that make single mothers have the power of struggle in life. Supportive family policies and high levels of gender equality greatly increase the life satisfaction of single mothers and substantially reduce their life satisfaction (Pollmann-Schult 2018).

Having indifferent to negative responses from the surrounding environment. In fact, individuals are someone who lives in a community or group. To be able to develop and survive in social life, a person must go through several processes that require sacrifice. Sometimes some individuals in the environment have disruptive or even troublesome qualities. Being a single mother and a career certainly get some stigma from the community, both positive and negative.

According to Sundari Asih, in her neighborhood, the community understands the conditions she experiences, so that the stigma does not exist. Sundari stated, "In society, I am a typical person who is simple in responding to a matter. But for some time has passed there are no people who think like that here. Everyone knows where I am and where I work, there is nothing like that. For example, if there is only given an understanding or understanding, if I have an assignment like this, so please understand".

Sundari Asih (57 years old) revealed that the community would understand if given understanding. "I'll give you an understanding, if it's still yes already. I leave it, the problem is that life is still ahead, not always what the neighbors say is always used as a benchmark. After all, this is also a job that I really need to support my family. So, it still continues, even though there are those who talk from behind".

The principle in her life is through all obstacles that interfere with her path. These barriers such as scolding or negative stigma. Because according to her when someone ignores all the words of her neighbors who do not understand her life will spend time. Istinah (43 years old) said the same thing, "I was underestimated by a male neighbor, if I worked, I didn't make enough money like my husband used to. And there are some who say "a lot of money, work every day, morning and night. But the results were not "the scorn I did not care about, because I worked for my child and my life, and other people did not know my true condition".

Negative comments don't always have to be responded to. Istinah never listens to her neighbor's negative comments, because according to her the comments have never been constructive and there is no meaning for her in fulfilling her life's needs, because ultimately life must go on and there are still many needs. Istianah said, "... I work indeed to meet the needs at home to pay for children's schooling. To save my child later on to get married and others". The same thing was expressed by Nila.

"... because they really judge only limited to the cover, I'm with the boss out right for work so my job is to accompany her. If there are people like that indeed, I don't care because, the reason I work is they don't know exactly how but only prejudice is raised. Harassment and being demeaned to my current position are with new employees who haven't known me for a long time, so she said that. " (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Nila revealed that one of the attitudes she had upheld to be strong in living the life of a single mother was to ignore negative assumptions from various circles. "Because life is a form of living a peace without paying attention to negative comments from the surrounding community, because it is not them who live my life". The same view was expressed by Wageyah,

"In the community, bro, many people here like me become laborers even though I have a husband. There are those who say that a woman's sobbing can be stunned, such a preliminary start. Assuming working

women are familiar with the people here, actually, there are only a few who seem to see that it is not the realm of women, bro. Women say they should cook at home, take care at home and so on. But, if it's like that who makes a living? My husband also doesn't work, so I support my family. No. But eventually they all understood. " (Interview, September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Responsibility for efforts to meet the needs of life requires a person to work and earn a living. Because of the large necessities of life, these work activities must sometimes be done within a reasonable time limit for people to work. Because working overtime sometimes people have to leave other social activities in their environment. In the beginning, because of ignorance, the surrounding environment might discuss it, but in the end the community will understand it. Although she had never heard negative criticism directly against her, Wageyah said, "Although initially many did not understand the situation, they slowly understood mas. But even though I heard firsthand when someone said that women work like this late at night, I don't care. Life goes on, eating every day neighbors who do not feed it anyway. So, I will continue".

Likewise, what was conveyed by Mujiatun who revealed that so far people did not give a negative impression so far to her, "The environment here is also all women workers, bro, but not all become single mother like me. When I get home from work later than my friends, they all understand what my position in the factory is, and it's not possible or impossible if someone says "not worthy". But if it's like there and I don't know, let it go, bro, I live straight, just walk without having to pay attention to what people say".

Mujiatun revealed that in the community the scope of work is not only her. The majority of women as workers make the culture of the community around their neighborhood provide reinforcement. Strengthening is like no one has given a sneer or negative assumption on it. The surrounding community seemed to understand the conditions experienced by her with evidence that Mujiatun did not often get negative assumptions or comments from the surrounding community. However, it is different from what is obtained by Nila who sometimes gets bad prejudice from the people around her current profession.

"If the people directly seem to understand my condition right now, even though someone said that before, mas. There was also a time when I talked about being unkind like "naughty women, never at home, incompetent to take care of my family" people who say like that directly I oppose mas. I

immediately made it clear that I did not do that and asked for help so that they stay away from the wrong thought. Because why, bro, it is very annoying to be heard directly by my child, even though I am not like that. I carry out my duties and roles as a single mother well now. Finding money for my child's needs, taking care of everything, is the first responsibility in the family. Even though I praise God, my parents-in-law still help me in taking my children to school and other tutoring matters and supporting me to stay strong" (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Nila explained that as long as she gets a negative impression or bad prejudice from the people around her, but she is behaving to let it go by. Nila said, "I don't have to make everything my business. Let those who mind their own mind. " When it comes to negative impressions that cause noise, the effort she did was to give the person understanding that what was thought was completely untrue and not in accordance with the current situation. All she does is work and meet the needs of her family now. Nila also explained that she was always looking for opportunities without thinking about negative impressions and assumptions expressed by the community and her office colleagues.

"I have the opportunity to try out the business, I try everything. Like entrepreneurs and selling branded bags all I do. So that there is additional income. Initially did not intend to bro, but when I tried to make dishes many said that it was delicious, and suitable. So I continued to sell at school. Even though the sacrifice is time, like I wake up in the morning and can't enjoy the rest time like the others. Because of my principle, don't let me have time to think about this predetermined fate of God. I don't want to think about why God gave a destiny like this, because in the end it's a pointless thing. Because if we lament yes, it's useless. We are just grateful for the destiny and path that God has given us all this time. " (Interview, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019).

Managing time and making good use of time are two things that Nila always does. As a mother, she tries to be able to serve her children well. Nila revealed that every time she went to work, she took the time to take her child to school and complete homework, such as dealing with children's clothes tidied up in the car, so that when she arrived at the office she had free time to rest at the office before work began. Nila revealed that while leaving for work, she took the time to take her child to school. But she also realized that her long work was also exhausting for her body. For this reason, she employs helpers to help her with her domestic tasks during the days she has to work. Get around her daily activities that must start very early, Nila always uses her morning time to just close her eyes at work before work starts. As stated by Nila, "For weekdays all the housework is

cleaning the house, there is a maid. But for cooking, I am alone at home, and the preparations start at 3am. Until the office, work began at 8 am and I was never late. Arriving at the office at half past 8 and taking the time to sleep”.

In general, a single mother tends not to care about people's opinion. Because according to them the community does not understand the conditions, so better to continue life for the next phase. The most important thing they do is to keep their family life going well. Being immersed in a business that makes them unproductive will add to the burden and difficulties of their lives. (Kotwal and Prabhakar 2009) said most of single mothers faced economic, emotional and social problems but they must work hard and tried their best to rear their children. Therefore, they do not give priority to events that actually make their lives more burdened. The necessities of life are still many and require more serious struggle, so choosing which part of the matter that must be handled is a must. According to their research, (Taylor and Conger 2017) reveal that two resilience factors having potential to promote the well-being of single mothers are perceived social support and internal strengths, those are linked to positive coping strategies, specifically optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem of the women.

There are three premises raised by the theory of Symbolic Interactionism, namely: humans act on something based on the meanings that exist in something for them; the meaning comes from one's social interaction with others; the meanings are perfected during the process of social interaction. The subject's socialization experience tends to be colored by patriarchal gender values. Research subjects learn that they must be individuals who are capable of being responsible for their domestic roles. Therefore, for these single mothers completing domestic work is the main responsibility that must be done. Achieving scope outside of domestic means increasing the space for women. This does not mean that women leave the domestic space, but working in public means that women will accept many roles; not only carry out a role in the public sphere but also must continue to play a role in the domestic. Sacrificing her time off to do her domestic work is not a difficult thing and should be done by the mother as a form of her responsibility.

Domestic work is identical to mother's duty. Every working mother cannot leave her domestic role. This makes every woman involved in the public sphere

will also always be "loyal" to do their domestic work. Considering her body's fatigue after completing work in the office or workplace, the research subjects used the strategy of "short break" or the transfer of the task to others (other women as housemaids). Another strategy chosen was various domestic work with children.

The product of the long socialization experienced by the subjects of previous research developed a system of values in the subject of research that women are responsible for domestic work. In Jatiningsih's research (Jatiningsih 2014), it was revealed that the transformation began to take place within the tertiary level, but the process proceeded very slowly. One of the values that is difficult to transform is the value associated with domestic women. The role that is difficult to be exchanged between men and women is domestic work, although it is known that the concept is a gender concept that can be exchanged between men and women. That is why women who work in the public sphere are still positioned and feel they have to be responsible for domestic affairs. (Jatiningsih 2016) also revealed that as housewives and mothers at home, women have the responsibility to complete their domestic work, therefore harmonizing all matters with needs and domestic affairs is a fruit of awareness of cultural values and people's expectations of themselves. Women are almost always difficult to get out of their domestic sphere, no matter how much they get a high education or high status. In the transformation that occurred from patriarchy to egalitarian, it turns out that domestic problems are the most difficult problems to change and exchange between men and women.

In view of the theory of Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, Joas, Huebner, and Morris 2015), one's self-concept and actions are caused by interactions between forces from outside and from within. Acting to be able to carry out all of her roles shows that a person is "obedient" to the social rules for her, whatever the reasons stated. This is the power of self-awareness as a social object. The long process of socialization experienced by each person makes people take for granted that role as something that must be lived. Women are in the power of values that put them in the position of parents with various responsibilities, mothers who are responsible for domestic matters, and in social life, whose presence as a single parent takes a lot of social attention to pay attention to them while watching them.



The social consequence for women with children who live only with them is to take all the defined social duties and responsibilities for parents. Self-awareness as parents who must be responsible for their children and the social life that intervenes through social conversation gives birth to an awareness that makes women must not neglect these tasks. This is the power of "me" that makes one obey the role created socially for her. Managing the time and activity mechanism so that all roles can be carried out is the expression of carrying out socially defined tasks for herself. "A strategy of sharing responsibility" is the chosen way to make yourself able to survive and struggle to make ends meet.

George Herbert Mead mentioned that Symbolic Interaction theory on "Self" holds that a person might also see herself as a subject ("I"). As a subject, "I" is a non-reflective aspect of the self, which does not include memories of past actions or anticipations for the future. "I" is the response of the individual's actual behavior at the moment that is original spontaneous. The choice of subject to be indifferent to what others say about themselves and the activities carried out is an expression of the subject's self as "I." A moment when people have to ignore others is free self expression. The choice of attitude to not care about what people say about themselves in carrying out their role is more driven by the manifestation of the self-concept "I." The self-concept "I" will tend to emerge and strengthen when more driven by the need that she must exist and be able to fight for her life and family. The strategy of "ignorant" or "indifferent" to people's negative thoughts and prejudices is a way of being "I" in a life full of challenges.

In responding to the glass-ceiling which is seen as an obstacle for the subject in creating and living life, the choice of strategy depends very much on how women think in seeing themselves. When women position themselves as objects (me) who are powerless against the values that apply, then the choice of their actions to face the challenges of their lives (glass-ceiling) tends to be compromising and accommodating, whereas if the means adopted are based more on how to see themselves as subjects ( I) then the method adopted tends to be uncompromising.

This study of glass-ceilings faced by women as single parents reveals how the problems faced by women who act as single parents. These findings also inform how resilience single mothers live their lives and how they are positioned

by the community. Difficulties and burdens of women in living their lives as single mother will be reduced if they have the skills to work and opportunities not to be seen negatively by the surrounding community. For single mother women, family support (children, parents, and siblings) will add strength to continue to struggle to live their lives. As (Pollmann-Schult 2018) found that supportive family policies and high levels of gender equality greatly increase the life satisfaction of single mothers and substantially reduce the life satisfaction gap between single mothers and other women. According to (Rusyda, Lukman, Subh, Chong, Latiff, Hasrul, and Amizah 2011), the society to change their thinking toward single mothers. Society must change the way of thinking about women so that women as a single parent are not burdened to struggle in achieving their lives for the better. Because in the long run the injustice stemming from gender stereotypes based on patriarchal values can open up opportunities for difficulties for both themselves and their children. Negative stigmatization of single women should not continue, but in reality, the community has not yet fully emerged from patriarchal gender domination. Single mothers are still burdened by the public's perspective of them. Life is still dominated by an egalitarian gender ideology.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data obtained can be concluded several things as follows. The form of glass-ceiling faced by single women head of a career household: domestic responsibilities, social control over women; and the assumption that women are not capable. The strategy of a single career woman head of household in facing her life challenges in the public sphere: sharing domestic responsibilities; indifferent to negative responses from the surrounding environment.

The strong influence of patriarchy makes women not easy to get out of the bonds of these values in all their lives. Unconsciously, women are in a position that is always bound and monitored by patriarchal forces. The choice of attitude to not care about what people say about themselves in carrying out their role is more driven by the manifestation of the self-concept "I." The self-concept "I" will tend to emerge and strengthen when more driven by the need that she must exist and be able to fight for her life and family. The strategy of "ignorant" or "indifferent" to people's negative thoughts and prejudices is a way to become an "I" in a life full of challenges.

Bearing all obligations is not always easy for women to do. This is not only because the woman has been socialized with patriarchal gender values, but also because social ties are also still strong enough to live in the discourse of patriarchal gender values. Being a single mother will be even more difficult if women are always preoccupied with thinking about a society dominated by patriarchal values. Therefore, women need to have the courage to change and get out of that bond. Building open relationships with others and acting rationally is an important thing that can free women from the hegemony of patriarchal power. Herein lies the power of a single woman to be able to position herself as an "I" and be herself.

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