# The Ideal Mother in Media : A Critical Discourse Analysis of Maternal Roles in National News Articles

**Addawiatur Rofi'ah[1], Luxy Nabela Farez[2]**

[1]Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

[2]Master of Management in Non-Profit Organization, Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Contributor email : addawiatur.23091@mhs.unesa.ac.id

## Abstract

The media play a pivotal role in shaping public understandings of motherhood, particularly in defining what counts as the "ideal mother." This study explores how Indonesian national media construct maternal discourse, employing Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary analytic tool. Three online news/feature articles from Kompas.id, Whiteboard Journal, and Konde.co are examined because they explicitly project distinct images of motherhood. The study also analyses audience reception through comments on the Instagram post @kalis.mardiasih titled "10 ribu di tangan istri yang tepat" ("Ten thousand rupiah in the hands of the right wife") to observe how the meaning of the "ideal mother" is negotiated in digital spaces. Findings indicate that media portray mothers through inspirational and empathetic narratives, yet subtly normalise sacrifice, moral steadfastness, and domestic responsibility as key metrics of motherhood. Such representations reinforce patriarchal values by personalising women's structural burdens. In contrast, public comments on social media reveal resistance to perfectionist narratives and call for fairer sharing of family responsibilities. The study concludes that the "ideal mother" discourse is dynamic: it is both reproduced and negotiated in digital arenas and should be shifted toward a paradigm of "good-enough," equitable, and collectively supported motherhood.

**Keywords** : ideal mother; critical discourse analysis; gender roles; Global South

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the media are no longer mere channels of information but cultural institutions that actively construct meanings, set standards, and reinforce norms including defining what an "ideal mother" should be like. This image is built through recurrent framing strategies across news, advertising, and social media content: a mother is imagined as ever-present, patient, meticulous, capable of managing household and career, consistently neat, and expected to appear happy. Such performative standards may seem motivating, yet in everyday life they often make it difficult for many women to define what authentic motherhood means for themselves (Utomo 2023).

In Indonesia, the paradox between the ideal image and lived realities is stark. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2023 reported female labour force participation at 54.25% (up from 53.34%), yet only 36.32% are in the formal sector, while 15.4% of households are headed by women. These figures suggest that many women shoulder primary economic responsibilities while still being burdened with social expectations to serve as primary caregivers. Women still have dual roles, especially those in the informal workers sector (Afifah et.al 2025). Moreover, in many places there is still a dichotomy and construction of women that is gender biased (Ridwan 2024). The mismatch between structures and symbols triggers psychosocial pressures (guilt, anxiety, exhaustion) and drives "intensive parenting," particularly among urban middle-class families, when media-promoted ideals collide with limited time, resources, and policy support.

Theoretically, this issue can be examined through Teun A. van Dijk's CDA, which positions discourse as a social practice inseparable from power relations and ideology. At the macrostructural level, media themes frequently revolve around mothers' sacrifice and total presence. At the superstructural level, numerous texts are organised as inspirational narratives problem, perseverance, then success that reinforce the moral that a "good mother" is always strong and available to everyone; this is precisely where class context, workload, and weak care policies are often ignored. At the microstructural level, affirmative lexis such as "tireless," "selfless," and "always there" build a value horizon that normalises excessive expectations of women (van Dijk 1998). This framework intersects with Stuart Hall's theory of representation: media do not merely reflect reality; they create it through symbols, narratives, and institutionalised production practices. Feminist lenses (cultural and liberal) remind us that

idealising motherhood can become a mechanism that locks women into the domestic sphere while still demanding public performance, amid uneven access, autonomy, and policy support.

A body of international research reinforces this diagnosis. Systematic reviews identify two dominant ideologies in media: intensive mothering demanding total emotional, temporal, and attentional investment, and the economic carer that highlights mothers' financial contributions without reducing domestic demands. The result is a double standard that further burdens women. In global sports coverage (Mary et al. 2025), reporting tends to depict athlete-mothers as "domestic heroes" who must still meet perfect care standards while competing at elite levels; peak performance in public does not exempt them from domestic judgement in Western digital spaces (Patatt et al. 2025). The "good mother" myth produces perfectionist standards intertwined with guilt and fatigue, especially for young mothers (Baxter 2021). The social media paradox is that it opens space for expressing maternal identities (e.g., via identity hashtags), yet platform algorithms tend to amplify the aesthetics of the "perfect mother" and drown out narratives that are ambiguous, tired, or vulnerable. Across television and popular culture in diverse countries, maternal figures often appear empowered yet remain constrained by traditional frameworks—contradictions recycled for commercial narrative ends (Pezzoli 2024).

In Indonesia, recent studies show similar patterns. Mary et al. (2025) analyse #Ibutunggalmelawan as an alternative discourse that rejects dominant stigma: single mothers produce narratives of empowerment and autonomy, demanding social recognition of caregiving realities deemed non-ideal by mainstream standards. However, the attention economy and algorithmic logic mean alternative narratives do not always gain adequate reach. Utomo (2023) shows that Mother's Day posts on @jokowi depict empowered mothers but still within domestic frames; such empowered representations do not automatically transcend the assumption that caregiving is women's destiny. Putri and Kamilah (2023), in analyses of celebrity parenting accounts, identify the construction of the "multi-competent millennial mother": digitally savvy, attractive, and domestically perfect three requirements that are difficult to meet simultaneously yet continue to be normalised (Freitas et al. 2024). On the commercial side, advertising for children's products on social media affixes to mothers the label of primary carer and moral guardian of family consumption, aligning the "good mother" myth with marketing strategies and forming an operational myth that is difficult to challenge (Chung et al. 2024).

Four implications arise from this landscape. First, there is tension between structures and symbols: women's economic burdens and household leadership collide with media symbols that obscure maternal diversity (mothers in the informal sector, mothers from marginalised communities, mothers with disabilities, and so forth). Second, visible psychosocial effects: perfectionist standards (Baxter) combined with intensive mothering ideology (Mary et al. 2025) fuel guilt, anxiety, and fatigue; for children, overparenting erodes autonomy. Third, platform politics: algorithms tend to elevate "safe" aesthetics neat, cheerful, productive while ambiguous narratives are less likely to go viral. Fourth, policy blind spots: when media normalise care as a mother's responsibility, the state risks "following" the narrative of maternal sacrifice rather than expanding public responsibility (paternity leave, affordable childcare, family-friendly work arrangements).

Here, van Dijk's CDA becomes a precise tool to reveal how media texts construct and disseminate the image of the "ideal mother." At the macro level, topics of sacrifice and total presence are selected so that structural supports (childcare, flexible work, social security) are pushed to the margins. At the superstructural level, text organisation often steers readers toward an inspirational resolution "the strong mother" as the story's moral that simultaneously normalises excessive burdens. At the micro level, lexical choices and value oppositions "career mother vs. ideal mother," "present mother vs. neglectful mother" build symbolic fences that are difficult to renegotiate. When this discursive machinery operates in alignment with the content economy and audience preferences, what Foucault calls a "regime of truth" emerges: standards that appear natural but are actually the product of curation and repetition.

Nevertheless, spaces of resistance persist. Alternative narratives such as #Ibutunggalmelawan show that experiences neglected by mainstream media can gain force when integrated into digital solidarity. To become stronger, alternative narratives require support from public media literacy (capacity to critique representation), journalistic ethics (diverse sourcing, vigilance against stereotypes, refusal to glorify maternal burden), and policies that change incentive structures (standards for inclusive representation, recognition for coverage highlighting maternal diversity, advertising rules that do not exploit the ideal-mother myth). At the level of family policy, strengthening paternity leave, providing quality and affordable childcare, and implementing flexible work arrangements are material prerequisites for shifting the narrative of motherhood from a myth of sacrifice toward an ethic of shared responsibility.

Academically, this study proposes two contributions. The theoretical contribution integrates van Dijk's CDA with Hall's representation theory and feminist perspectives to explain how language, imagery, and narrative arcs construct the "ideal mother" as an evaluative standard, while proposing analytical categories attentive to the Global South (class, religion, customary norms, platform markets). The practical contribution formulates ethical guidelines for representation and operational narrative alternatives for newsrooms and content creators for instance, foregrounding "a good-enough mother, not a perfect one," "families share the work," and "fathers present, not assistants" alongside concrete policy recommendations.

Based on the foregoing, the study asks: how do Indonesian online media construct and disseminate the discourse of the "ideal mother," and how does this discourse shape public perceptions of mothers' roles in the family? The accompanying aims are: (1) to critically analyse ideal-mother narratives in news/feature/opinion pieces; (2) to uncover the discursive strategies used (dominant themes, text organisation, lexical/rhetorical choices); (3) to identify the power relations and ideologies behind production (patriarchy, consumer capitalism, family politics); and (4) to evaluate their effects on perceptions of care, the division of domestic labour, and the legitimacy of paternal involvement. The urgency of this research lies in the fact that representation is never neutral; it is politics about who is seen, how they are seen, and who is forgotten. When the "ideal mother" becomes a universal standard, the diverse experiences of mothers in the informal sector, single mothers, and mothers with minimal support recede from view even though policy should be grounded in those realities.

This underscores that motherhood is a spectrum of experiences, not a monolithic figure. There are triumphant days and difficult ones; there are full-time working mothers, mothers in formal/informal sectors, single mothers; some are surrounded by familial support, others walk alone. All such experiences are valid and deserve recognition. If the media are to be partners in emancipation, they must shift from the myth of the "ideal mother" toward narratives that acknowledge ambiguity, limits, and everyday courage. Using van Dijk's CDA as the analytic instrument, this study offers a map to dismantle the construction of the "ideal mother," showing how it operates as a taken-for-granted standard, and proposes a new horizon: care as collective social labour; women's right to identity freedom; and fair representation as part of family wellbeing. Thus, the "ideal mother" ceases to be a fence that confines and becomes an invitation for media, policy, and society to grow toward justice for mothers, children, fathers, and all who sustain the family as a shared learning space.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis method. The approach is appropriate for understanding how the media construct the ideal-mother discourse and how that discourse affects caregiving patterns in families. Teun A. van Dijk's CDA is used to analyse media texts, especially to identify discourse structures, social contexts, and power relations that arise in coverage of the ideal mother. The study aims to obtain a deeper understanding of how national media build the ideal-mother discourse and how that discourse influences caregiving practices in families. By exploring how the ideal mother is represented in the media, the study also seeks to reveal how such narratives can reinforce or challenge entrenched gender stereotypes (Eriyanto 2022). The findings are expected to contribute to efforts to promote fairer and more equitable representations of women in the media.

Data comprise primary and secondary sources. Primary data include online news articles from national media that explicitly discuss the ideal-mother discourse. Accordingly, the study refers to Whiteboardjournal.com, Kompas.id, and Konde.co, selected based on popularity and readership. Secondary data derive from prior studies, scholarly journals, and official institutional reports.

Data collection employed documentation, i.e., compiling online news articles containing the ideal-mother discourse. Articles were purposively selected using keywords such as "ibu ideal" (ideal mother), "peran ibu" (maternal role), and "stereotip ibu" (mother stereotype). Each eligible article was then classified by topical context, narrative style, and the message constructed. In addition, relevant scholarly journals were reviewed to enrich the theoretical analysis and support interpretation of findings.

Data analysis followed van Dijk's CDA stages: macrostructure analysis to identify main themes of news articles on the ideal mother and to situate the issue within media coverage; superstructure analysis to examine how the articles are organised and how the ideal-mother narrative is constructed by the media; microstructure analysis focusing on word choice, sentence construction, and linguistic strategies used to depict maternal roles, especially in relation to specific stereotypes; and social context analysis to explore the influence of social norms and power relations in shaping the ideal-mother discourse in society. This design enables understanding of how public perceptions of mothers' roles are built and reproduced through media discourse.

The study also employs Stuart Hall's representation theory as a supporting conceptual frame in interpreting results. While van Dijk's CDA unpacks discourse structures across macro, superstructural, and micro levels that reflect ideology and power relations, Hall's representation theory is used to interpret how the meaning of the "ideal mother" is constructed, circulated, and negotiated within broader social and cultural contexts. This approach ensures the analysis does not stop at text structures but also examines how readers and audiences participate in affirming or rejecting meanings offered by the media. Thus, the combination of van Dijk and Hall enables the study to link linguistic structure and media discourse with processes of representation and public reception, yielding a more holistic understanding of how the "ideal mother" discourse operates in Indonesian media and digital spaces.

The study also analyses public reception via online comments. Beyond news texts, it examines comments on the Instagram post @kalis.mardiasih titled "10 ribu di tangan istri yang tepat" (5 October 2025). Comments were purposively collected from the same week's thread. User identities were anonymised as IG R1, IG R2, IG R3. Analysis followed van Dijk's macro–super–micro apparatus to assess how audiences affirm, negotiate, or reject the "ideal mother" discourse. Ethical considerations included account anonymisation, removal of sensitive data, and use of quotations only as necessary for scholarly purposes. This reception analysis provides an additional layer that shows how media discourses on the "ideal mother" are received and re-signified by the public on social media (Markham and Buchanan 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results draw on data collected from Whiteboardjournal.com, Kompas.id, and Konde.co. Analysis applies Teun A. van Dijk's CDA to identify macrostructural, superstructural, and microstructural elements shaping representations of the "ideal mother" in media texts, followed by interpretation via Stuart Hall's representation framework to understand how the meaning of the "ideal mother" is produced, disseminated, and negotiated in social and digital spheres. Combining the two approaches highlights not only language structures and media discursive strategies but also how readers and audiences help strengthen or challenge meanings attached to maternal figures in Indonesia.

An online article published by Whiteboardjournal.com on 27 February 2020, titled "Biaya Tinggi Menjadi Ibu Ideal" ("The High Cost of Becoming an Ideal Mother") by Lela Latifa, discusses the social burdens experienced by new mothers striving to conform to current

"ideal mother" standards often associated with practices such as gentle birth, exclusive breastfeeding, and nature-based parenting approaches. The author emphasises that these trends not only generate psychological pressure but also create financial strain, as access to services such as gentle birth often entails additional costs. Consequently, social gaps emerge: mothers from higher-income groups are better able to meet these expectations, while middle- and lower-income mothers feel pressured by demands lacking adequate support.

An article by Silmi Nurul Utami published by Kompas.id on 22 December 2024, "Hati-hati, 'Mom-Shaming' Meningkatkan Risiko Depresi Maternal Hingga Delapan Kali Lipat," shows that around 72% of mothers in Indonesia are targets of mom-shaming judgemental or negative comments about their parenting choices. Mom-shaming often comes from those closest family, neighbours, or friends—and most frequently appears on social media. This phenomenon affects maternal mental health, triggering excessive stress, anxiety, and even depression, which in turn influences how mothers educate and care for their children. The article underscores the importance of social support for diverse parenting approaches chosen by different mothers.

Furthermore, Konde.co's 5 February 2025 article "Cool Moms and the Standard of the Ideal Mother: Trendy or Class Bias?" by Ika Ariyani highlights critiques of the "cool mom" image often associated with stylish, relaxed mothers who are always present for their children. This representation is widespread on social media, especially through public figures or mothers from upper economic strata. The author notes that such portrayals tend to reinforce class bias, as not all mothers have the time and resources to meet these expectations. As a result, many mothers feel inadequate or unworthy, even when they have made optimal efforts in their roles as mothers and primary carers.

**Table 1. Application of van Dijk's Macrostructure, Superstructure, and Microstructure to Three Media Articles**

| No. | Article | Macrostructure | Superstructure | Microstructure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Whiteboard journal.com | Highlights the financial and psychological pressures on new mothers in the modern era. | Begins with a mother's personal experience, followed by a critique of | Mothers are portrayed as active consumers responsible for family wellbeing. The text adopts a reflective, intimate tone that invites readers to grasp mothers' |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | prevailing social standards. | inner struggles amid social demands. Vocabulary is emotive and symbolic, especially regarding modern parenting infused with economic values. Representation is built not only through narrative but also via visual symbols and expressions depicting dynamic maternal activities and emotions. |
| 2. | Kompas.id | Raises the theme of mom-shaming and social pressures on mothers. | Opens with a real-life story, proceeds to social burdens, and closes with a call to reflect. | Emphasises sacrifice and social pressure accompanying maternal roles. Narratives often start from direct maternal experiences, creating an emotional bridge with readers. Words such as "strong," "tired yet happy," and "struggling" not only describe but also elicit empathy and assign moral weight to motherhood, positioning mothers as bearers of high social expectations. |
| 3. | Konde.co | Elevates a narrative of the "strong yet | Opens with experience, explicates the "cool | Portrays mothers as strong and self-assured individuals. Sentences are relatively |

| | | stylish" cool mother. | mother" concept, and ends with a motivational close. | succinct and emphatic, creating an impression of firmness wrapped in warmth. Phrases like "smiling despite fatigue" symbolise the ideal of the modern mother able to juggle dual social roles calmly and competently, reinforced through visual descriptions of a gentle yet resolute maternal figure. |

**Table 2. Expanded CDA Readings**

| No. | Article | Macro Analysis | Superstructure Analysis | Microstructure Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Whiteboard journal.com | Economic and mental pressures dominate, indicating that childcare becomes a personal burden under neoliberal social systems. | The reflective narrative structure reinforces the internalisation of care as a mother's moral and emotional obligation. | Reflective, symbolic language creates internal pressure, as though "perfect" caregiving is a personal duty rather than a social responsibility. |
| 2. | Kompas.id | The theme of mom-shaming functions to maintain social control over mothers; the media present social critique as a response to | A persuasive narrative pattern softens social critique and steers readers to sympathise with mothers without unsettling dominant norms. | Words such as "strong" and "struggling" strengthen the heroic image of mothers and position them as moral rather than political subjects, thereby obscuring structural demands. |

293

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | deviations from maternal norms. | | |
| **3.** | Konde.co | The "cool mother" depicts women as traditional ideals in modern packaging, reinforcing motherhood hegemony in new form. | The textual schema affirms the ideal of a strong, beautiful, warm mother without questioning the system that demands all of this. | The trope "smiling despite fatigue" carries the ideological message that maternal suffering should be wrapped in gentleness and not appear as a social burden. |

**Mom-Shaming as a Representation of Social Control over Mothers**

The Kompas article presents a real story of a mother targeted by negative comments for her parenting choices. The narrative subtly directs readers to sympathise with her yet simultaneously reinforces social control over women by inserting normative maternal standards. Instead of challenging patriarchal structures, the media invite women to endure within those values. Konde.co constructs a mother as strong yet still feminine and attractive. Expressions like "smiling despite fatigue" imply that pressure and suffering must be wrapped in a positive image. This creates a paradox: women may work and be independent, yet must still display gentleness, beauty, and empathy. The discourse internalises patriarchal values in modern guise.

**Consumption as a Burden for New Mothers**

Whiteboard Journal uses a reflective narrative style to spotlight new mothers' experiences under consumerist logic: from the "ideal birth plan," choices of health and birthing services, newborn-care packages, baby monitors, to curated nutrition and early stimulation. These goods and services are presented not only as supports for infant wellbeing but also as indicators of maternal morality the more complete the set, the "better" the mother. In this frame, consumption shifts from a simple economic practice to a ritual of compliance with market-built maternal norms. Mothers are positioned as household managers whose success is measured by capacity to fulfil lifestyle standards natural, hygienic, premium, aesthetic (Triastuti et al. 2024).

The psychological risks restlessness, guilt, fear of being "less than ideal" intermix with financial risks consumer debt, diverting funds from basics especially for middle-class families vulnerable to budget inflation in pursuit of being a "good-enough mother" as defined by media and industry. Discursively, this operates at three levels: macro the grand theme of "optimal parenting" articulated through keywords like gentle, exclusive, organic, sustainable that codify quality while raising cost thresholds; superstructure plots often begin with maternal discomfort, move toward discovering solutions (products/services), and end in relief, depicting consumption as emotional resolution; micro emotional diction (calm, assured, safe, smiling) and neat, aesthetic visuals associate shopping with rational expressions of love. Failure to meet standards is easily read as personal weakness rather than structural constraint (access, prices, social protection). Class becomes key: higher purchasing power mothers are more likely to "meet" standards; those with limited resources bear symbolic burdens of inferiority despite maximum effort. Consumption thus functions as a class marker that seeps into the moral realm: who counts as a "good mother" and who is continually "learning to be enough" (Indranila and Diah 2022).

**The Media as an Agent of Normalising Patriarchal Discourse**

Across the three outlets, language is warm and empathetic and often promotes solidarity. Yet the space to interrogate structural roots unequal domestic divisions of labour, limited state/workplace support, and upper-class bias in parenting standards remains narrow. Rather than deconstructing gender norms, the narratives more often affirm an ethos of resilience and sacrifice. A recurring rhetorical formula is: problem → mother's struggle → personal resolution (more patience, greater strength, better training). This effectively elicits empathy while depoliticising the issue, shifting solutions to individual character rather than structural change (mandatory paternity leave, affordable quality childcare, flexible work, maternal–child health guarantees).

From a CDA perspective, normalisation is evident. Macro: the theme of the "strong mother" dominates, pushing redistribution of care work (to fathers, extended family, state, employers) to the periphery. Superstructure: narrative conclusions tend to inspire and motivate, emphasising maternal resilience over policy advocacy; the effect is to steer readers toward "accept and be stronger" rather than "demand and change." Micro: vocabulary such as "struggle," "resilience," "extraordinary," "smiling despite fatigue" reinforces a sacrificial ethic aligned with patriarchal values; heavy burdens are presented beautifully and not as social

problems (Natasya 2023). Even in the "cool mother" discourse, modernity (style, confidence, digital performance) is wrapped in traditional compliance (Gill 2023). The paradox persists: women may work and be independent yet are still required to display pleasing femininity while suppressing anger, exhaustion, or refusal.

The consequences are layered. Psychosocially, such narrative standards easily trigger maternal guilt, anxiety, and fatigue; for children, overparenting erodes independence (Bora and Jha 2023). In policy terms, when media personalise burdens, demands for structural support weaken; public discourse fails to expand to paternity leave, the care economy, or protections for informal workers (Ratri 2024). By class, costly maternal ideals widen gaps: parenting "achievements" are more accessible to the wealthy, while low- and middle-income mothers bear stigma as "less ideal" (Halrynjo and Mangset 2024). Media representations that foreground urban middle-class mothers with high financial access reinforce visual and symbolic bias against other classes, making the "ideal mother" appear as an identity that can be purchased (Yanti and Ririn 2023).

To prevent media from functioning as an extension of patriarchal normalisation, at least three course corrections are needed. First, shift perspective: move emphasis from moral toughness to justice in roles (who bears care work, and why); foreground fathers, employers, and the state as responsible actors, not background figures (Tronto 2023). Second, revise narrative closures: shift from individual motivation to collective calls for access to childcare, paternity leave, flexible work, and social protection as rights, not bonuses. Third, update the micro level: reduce glorification of self-sacrifice; adopt language that acknowledges ambiguity and human limits (enough, shared, equal, supported). Thus, media can move from personalising empathy toward politicising empathy—drawing attention to the material and institutional conditions required for care to become a shared social endeavour rather than a burden of one gender (Oksala 2022).

**Public Reception of the "Ideal Mother" Discourse in the Post "10 ribu di tangan istri yang tepat"**

The Instagram post by @kalis.mardiasih (5 October 2025), "10 ribu di tangan istri yang tepat," highlights gender inequality in domestic and household economic realms through visual text and reflective narration. Kalis critiques the moral myth of the "thrifty wife" as a reflection of virtue and toughness. This phenomenon is closely linked to the "ideal mother" concept

because both require women to manage scarcity as a moral calling. The post does not explicitly mention the "ideal mother," but it reveals the same ideological root:

*"women are deemed 'good' and 'worthy' when they can manage lack creatively, patiently, and frugally."*

These values are central to the media/popular-culture construction of the "ideal mother" a resilient, complaint-free woman who can transform economic constraints into moral virtue (Arusandhy and Syaefuddin 2023). The post thus provides a concrete case of how the ideal-mother myth shifts from the domestic realm to the digital economy, while also showing how society evaluates a "good woman" based on efficiency and sacrifice (Duffy and Hund 2023). The post sparked varied public comments that illustrate how people negotiate meanings of the "ideal wife" and "ideal mother" in digital spaces.

**Table 3. Comments as Mirrors of Maternal Ideology**

| Code | Comment | Reception Category | Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| IG-R1 | "Ten thousand rupiah in the right mother's hands, in my version, buys four boiled eggs for one quick meal before the kid's basketball practice 😂." | Ironic–adaptive | Humour underscores the absurdity of the "thrifty wife" narrative. Microstructurally, "four boiled eggs" becomes a sly jab at public claims of efficiency attached to women. Humour also works as a face-saving strategy: the commenter teases without fully rejecting the norm that mothers should be adept money managers. The ideology of the frugal "ideal mother" still adheres, albeit questioned. |
| IG-R2 | "Impossible!!! A portion of nasi kuning with egg is | Resistant–empirical | A direct rejection of the moral economy logic of the "10k in the right wife's |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | already 15k! How can you provide protein on 10k a day come on…" | | hands" discourse. Diction conveys anger at unrealistic standards. At the macro level, the comment exposes economic power relations behind moralising motherhood: the burden of thrift legitimised as women's virtue. It functions as counter-discourse to the "tough and frugal ideal mother". |
| IG-R3 | "10k in the right wife's hands vs. proper income from the right husband 🫠 please don't look for a financial-planning fix this needs public policy solutions…" | Critical–structural | The commenter rejects the idea that poverty/inflation is solvable by individual morality (frugal wives) and instead demands social responsibility and state economic policy. At the macro level, it shifts the locus from the mother-as-saviour myth to structural injustice among men, women, and the state. |

## Negotiating Meaning and Representation

Within Stuart Hall's representation and encoding/decoding model (1980), communication is not one-way. Encoded meanings (here, by Kalis Mardiasih) are accepted, negotiated, or opposed by audiences according to social background, ideology, and lived experience. Instagram comments thus constitute an arena where "thrifty wife" and "ideal mother" messages are reproduced and shifted (Ni 2024).

IG-R1 approximates a dominant reading that tends to affirm the moral message about women's capacity to manage scarcity. Although humorous, it reproduces the ideology that

ideal women are agile, creative, and fully responsible for family continuity. Humour serves as an adaptive mechanism enabling ideological discourse to remain acceptable without seeming oppressive (Fadhilah 2023).

IG-R2 illustrates a negotiated reading, recognising the moral context that wives/mothers should be thrifty while questioning economic realities that render such demands unreasonable. Tension emerges between cultural values about maternal toughness and material conditions that hinder enactment—typical among urban middle classes aware of inequality yet still operating within traditional gender norms (Boot et al. n.d.).

IG-R3 embodies an oppositional reading, rejecting the encoded ideological frame wholesale. It repudiates individualised moral responsibility for household economics and redirects attention to structural dimensions—adequate spousal income and fair public policy thus challenging the "mother-as-family-saviour" myth via gender-justice logic (Hyunanda et al., 2021). This produces emancipatory counter-discourse.

Together, these readings reveal a spectrum of digital audience consciousness regarding the "ideal mother." On one side, many users still uphold moral values of female sacrifice as the measure of good motherhood (dominant reading). On the other, new layers of consciousness question economic realities and structural injustice (oppositional reading). The process shows that the "ideal mother" discourse is not entirely stable but continuously negotiated in the digital public sphere between traditional values, material experience, and emerging feminist awareness. Hall's model demonstrates that audiences are not passive recipients but active social actors who interpret and even contest dominant messages (Li et al. 2023). Thus, comments on @kalis.mardiasih indicate ideological change at the public level from compliance with domestic morality toward new articulations of gender justice and collective social responsibility.

**Discursive and Ideological Implications**

The comments reveal a shift in public consciousness from domestic morality toward structural awareness. While the Whiteboard Journal, Kompas.id, and Konde.co articles reproduce images of the resilient mother in formal journalistic formats, the comments on Kalis's post show macro-level resistance in digital space though not yet dominant. Many users still assess motherhood through a moral lens patience, efficiency, thrift that shifts economic responsibility from state and partner to the individual woman. Social media thus expand rather than erase the ideal-mother myth through emotionally engaged yet moralistic digital participation (Indranila 2022).

Digital space becomes a site of ideological negotiation where two forces interact: (1) reproduction of patriarchal ideology that normalises mothers' moral burdens, and (2) digital emancipation that demands redistribution of economic responsibilities and gender justice. From van Dijk (1998), comment structures reflect the reproduction of ideology through everyday language; from Hall (1997), diverse readings indicate shifts in social consciousness. Together, they show that the "ideal mother" narrative now lives in a hybrid space between moral tradition and critical feminist discourse.

## CONCLUSION

This research analyses how Indonesian online media construct and disseminate the "ideal mother" discourse and how it shapes public perceptions of mothers' roles in the family. Analysis of Whiteboard Journal, Kompas.id, and Konde.co shows that maternal subjectivities are framed through narratives that appear empathetic and inspirational yet simultaneously depoliticise women's experiences. These representations normalise sacrifice, moral steadfastness, and consumer competence as measures of motherhood while masking structural factors such as unequal division of care work, limited state and workplace support, and classed access to "good parenting." Through van Dijk's macro, super, micro framework and Hall's representation theory, we conclude that the "ideal mother" discourse functions as a mechanism of symbolic social control: it personalises systemic burdens, converts market standards into moral yardsticks, and sustains patriarchal common sense even in narratives that seem empathetic.

The study also finds emergent alternative narratives and public resistance, particularly in digital spaces. Analysis of comments on the Instagram post @kalis.mardiasih, "10 ribu di tangan istri yang tepat," shows that the "ideal mother" representation does not stop at news media but is continually negotiated by the public. Audiences reinterpret this discourse in diverse ways from upholding traditional moral values to opposing them through structural critiques of economic and gender injustice. The post serves as counter-discourse highlighting a new awareness that family care responsibilities cannot be continually imposed on women alone but must become a shared social agenda involving the state, men, and public institutions. Digital spaces thus serve both to reproduce the "ideal mother" myth and to critique and reformulate it through public participation.

Conceptually, the study proposes a paradigm shift from perfectionist motherhood toward good-enough, collectively supported motherhood. This approach emphasises that

childcare and family care are social responsibilities that must be underpinned by equitable public policies paternity leave, affordable childcare, and flexible work systems. At the editorial/regulatory level, results point to newsroom policies and regulations that normalise diverse representations of motherhood, foreground fathers and institutions, and avoid glorifying maternal self-sacrifice. The "ideal mother" is not a static entity but a social construction under continual negotiation. Media and digital spaces play dual roles as vehicles for reproducing patriarchal ideology and as potential arenas for transforming maternal discourse toward more equal, inclusive, and humane representations.

## REFERENCES

Afifah, Istiyana, Dhea Arisati, Nanindhita Nur Khasanah, Desti Nadya Amanda, and Rizqan Kariema Mustafa. 2025. "The Women's Dual Roles: Case Study of Informal Sector Working Mothers". *Journal of Southern Sociological Studies* 1 (1):40-56. https://doi.org/10.26740/jsss.v1i1.40860.

Ahmad Ridwan, and Muhammad Faruki. 2024. "Gender Construction at Islamic Poor Community: Study of Critical Ethnography in Sidosermo Dalam Surabaya". *Jurnal Partisipatoris* 6 (2):16-26. https://doi.org/10.22219/jp.v6i2.35888.

Ariyani, Ika. 2025. "Cool mom' dan standar 'ibu ideal': Ini keren atau bias kelas?" Konde.co. Retrieved September 8, 2025 (https://www.konde.co/2025/02/cool-mom-dan-standar-ibu-ideal-ini-keren-atau-bias-kelas/

Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). 2023. Keadaan Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia 2023. Jakarta: BPS. Retrieved September 8, 2025 (https://www.bps.go.id/

Baxter, Katherine, and Barbara Czarnecka. 2025. "Membagikan Gambar Anak-Anak di Media Sosial: Influencer Ibu-Ibu Inggris dan Paradox Privasi." *PLOS ONE* 20(1): e0314472. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314472

Bora, Prerna, and Sushmita Jha. 2023. "Maternal Guilt and Emotional Labour in the Era of Digital Motherhood." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 29(1):75–94.

Boot, A. B., Dijkstra, K., & Zwaan, R. A. (2021). Commentary. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications.

Chung, Alexandra, Kostas Hatzikiriakidis, Florentine Martino, and Helen Skouteris. 2024. "Characterising Parent-Appeal Marketing on Foods for Children: A Scoping Review." *Current Nutrition Reports* 13:393–398.

Dwityas, Nindyta Aisyah, Rustono Farady Marta, and Rizki Briandana. 2024. "Media sosial dan aktivisme digital perempuan: Analisis wacana #Ibutunggalmelawan di Instagram." *Jurnal Komunikasi* 18(2):109–132. https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol18.iss2.art1

Elanda, Yelly. 2021. "Konstruksi ibu ideal di tengah pandemi COVID-19: Ketidakadilan gender yang dialami perempuan karir saat bekerja dari rumah." *Humanisma: Jurnal Studi Gender* 5(1). https://doi.org/10.30983/humanisme.v5i1

Eriyanto. 2022. Analisis Wacana: Pengantar Analisis Teks Media. Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group.

Fadhilah, Nur. 2023. "Ibu Ideal, Humor, dan Media Sosial: Strategi Masking Resistance dalam Budaya Digital Indonesia." *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Gender* 5(2):87–104.

Freitas, Thalita Meyli Lin, Ramon S. Leite, and Marcelo De Rezende Pinto. 2024. "Motherhood and Consumption: A Systematic Review and Directions for Future Research." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 48(4):1–18.

Gill, Rosalind. 2023. "Post-feminism in a Digital Age: New Femininities and Influencer Cultures." *Gender & Society* 37(2):245–263.

Hall, Stuart. 1997. "The Work of Representation." Pp. 1–47 in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, edited by S. Hall. London: Sage/The Open University.

Halrynjo, Marte, and Marte Mangset. 2024. "Motherhood Penalty Beyond Bias? From Stereotypes to Substitutability Structures." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society.*

Hyunanda, V. F., Ram, P., & Gabriel, L. 2021. "State Ibuism and Women's Empowerment in Indonesia: Governmentality and Political Subjectification of Chinese Benteng Women". *Asian Journal of Political Science.*

Indranila, Diah. 2022. "Social Media as a Counter Space for the Motherhood Community in Creating Counter-Hegemony." *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia* 11(2):105–118. https://doi.org/10.7454/jkmi.v11i2.1030.

Latifa, Lela. 2020. "Biaya mahal menjadi ibu baru yang ideal." Whiteboard Journal. Retrieved September 8, 2025 (https://www.whiteboardjournal.com/column/biaya-mahal-jadi-ibu-baru-yang-ideal/

Li, J., Adnan, H. M., & Gong, J. 2023. "Exploring Cultural Meaning Construction in Social Media: An Analysis of Liziqi's YouTube Channel". *Journal of Cultural Communication.*

Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. 2022. Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research. Association of Internet Researchers Guidelines, Version 4.0.

Mary, S. M., R. Duschinsky, L. Davis, S. Dunnett, and B. Coughlan. 2025. "Representasi keibuan dalam media: Tinjauan sistematis literatur." *Information, Communication & Society* 28(1):169–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2348020.

Natasya, Rina Ayu. 2023. "'Ibu Tangguh' dan Politik Ketahanan Emosional di Media Indonesia." *Jurnal Sosiologi Media* 7(2):140–158.

Ni, Y. 2024. Navigating Intercultural Communication in the Media Landscape: Challenging Stereotypes and Cultivating Critical Perspectives—Hall Model as the Framework. Digital Society.

Oksala, Johanna. 2022. "Care, Empathy, and Political Responsibility: Reimagining the Ethics of Care." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 37(1):44–61.

Patatt, Caroline, Micaela Cabral, and Carla Cerqueira. 2025. "Kehidupan Ibu dalam Konteks Olimpiade: Analisis Berita yang Dipublikasikan di Situs Web Olahraga Terpopuler di Brasil dan Spanyol." *Communication & Sport* 0(0):1–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795251345054

Pezzoli, Silvia, and Marina Brancato. 2024. "(Tidak) menjadi ibu: Representasi media tentang keibuan dan identitas perempuan." *Journalism and Media* 5(4):1539–1553. https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5040096

Ratri, Sari Damar. 2024. "Digital Echoes: The Influence of Internet and Social Media on the 'Ideal' Conception of Motherhood in Indonesian Stunting Programs." *MJS – Media, Journalism & Society* 29(1):1–18.

Triastuti, Rachmah Ida, and Elsa Siahaan. 2024. "Revisiting Mothers' Identity in Sharenting in Digital Era: Indonesian Mothers' Neoliberal Performativity and Media Engagement." *Caraka: Journal of Communication* 9(1):33–49.

Tronto, Joan C. 2023. Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice. Updated ed. New York: NYU Press.

van Dijk, Teun A. 1998. Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach. London: Sage.

Yanti, Ririn. 2023. "Representasi Ibu Kelas Menengah dalam Iklan Digital dan Budaya Konsumen di Indonesia." *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Masyarakat* 9(2):190–207.