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The Role of Grandmothers in Child-Raising in the Era of Urbanization: Transformation of Traditional Family Values in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization in Medan, a metropolitan city, has brought significant changes to family structure and function, particularly in childcare practices. The increasing involvement of grandmothers as primary caregivers represents a family adaptation to economic pressures and the limited time of working parents (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2020). This study aims to analyze the transformation of grandmothers' roles in childcare and their implications for changes in traditional family values. The study used a qualitative approach using literature review methods. The results indicate that grandmothers have shifted from symbolic figures to strategic actors in childcare, as well as agents of cultural value transmission (Chen et al., 2011; Bengtson, 2001). Furthermore, intergenerational value negotiations have resulted in hybrid forms of family values.

ABSTRAK

Urbanisasi di Kota Medan sebagai kota metropolitan telah membawa perubahan signifikan terhadap struktur dan fungsi keluarga, khususnya dalam praktik pengasuhan anak. Fenomena meningkatnya keterlibatan nenek sebagai pengasuh utama merupakan bentuk adaptasi keluarga terhadap tekanan ekonomi dan keterbatasan waktu orang tua bekerja (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2020). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi peran nenek dalam pengasuhan anak serta implikasinya terhadap perubahan nilai keluarga tradisional. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nenek mengalami pergeseran peran dari figur simbolik menjadi aktor strategis dalam pengasuhan anak, sekaligus sebagai agen transmisi nilai budaya (Chen et al., 2011; Bengtson, 2001). Selain itu, terjadi negosiasi nilai antar generasi yang menghasilkan bentuk nilai keluarga hibrid.

PRELIMINARY

Urbanization is a structural phenomenon that directly impacts changes in social life, including the institution of the family as the smallest social unit (Todaro & Smith, 2015). In Indonesia, increasing urbanization has driven a transformation from extended families to more independent nuclear families (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

However, this change has not completely eliminated the role of the extended family in daily life. In the context of childcare, the involvement of family members such as grandmothers remains an important part of the family system (Geertz, 1983). This demonstrates that modernization does not always replace traditional values but often coexists with them through a process of adaptation (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Medan, as one of Indonesia's metropolitan cities, is characterized by high urbanization, marked by rapid social mobility and increasing female participation in the workforce (BPS, 2023). This situation limits parents' time for childcare, forcing families to seek reliable and affordable alternatives (UN-Habitat, 2020).

In these situations, grandmothers often take over as the primary caregivers. Studies show that grandmothers' involvement in childcare is not only practical but also has strong emotional and cultural dimensions (Chen et al., 2011).

This phenomenon is interesting to study because it demonstrates the transformation of values within traditional families amidst the pressures of modernization. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of grandmothers in childcare in Medan City and its implications for changing family values.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review (library research). This qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand social phenomena related to the role of grandmothers in childcare in the era of urbanization, particularly in the context of the transformation of traditional family values. This approach allows researchers to interpret the meanings, concepts, and evolving social patterns based on various relevant scientific sources (Creswell, 2014).

The literature review method was used because this research does not rely directly on field data, but rather examines and synthesizes various previous research findings, theories, and published empirical reports. Literature review serves to build a strong conceptual framework and provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Zed, 2014).

Therefore, this study focuses on a critical analysis of various literature to identify patterns of grandmothers' roles in childcare and how these roles have transformed in the context of urbanization.

The data in this study are secondary, that is, data obtained from various published written sources. The data sources used include:

National and international scientific journals

Journal articles were used as the primary source because they contain empirical research results and theoretical studies relevant to the topics of childcare, family roles, and urbanization (Bengtson, 2001; Chen et al., 2011).

Academic books

Books were used to strengthen the theoretical foundation, particularly regarding the concept of family, social change, and cultural values (Goode, 1963; Giddens, 2001).

Official agency reports

Reports from agencies such as the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and UN-Habitat were used to provide contextual data on urbanization and family dynamics in Indonesia (BPS, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2020). Sources were selected selectively, considering credibility, relevance, and year of publication (preferably sources from the last 10–15 years) to ensure the quality of the data used.

Data analysis in this study used content analysis techniques. Content analysis is a method used to systematically and objectively examine the meaning, patterns, and themes of texts or documents (Krippendorff, 2018).

The analysis process involves the following stages:

1. Data Reduction

At this stage, researchers select the collected literature, focusing on information relevant to the research topic. Irrelevant data is eliminated, while important data is simplified and summarized to facilitate analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

2. Data Categorization

The reduced data is then grouped into thematic categories, such as:

- The role of grandmothers in childcare,
- Family functions in the context of urbanization,
- Transformation of traditional family values,
- Intergenerational relationships within the family.

This categorization process aims to identify patterns and relationships between concepts in the analyzed literature.

3. Data Interpretation

The final stage is data interpretation, which provides meaning to the findings obtained from the categorization process. Researchers link the analysis results to relevant theories to generate a

comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Interpretation is carried out critically by considering the social, cultural, and economic contexts that influence the role of grandmothers in childcare in the era of urbanization.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Urbanization and Changes in Family Structure

Urbanization is the process of population movement from rural to urban areas, accompanied by changes in social and economic patterns (Todaro & Smith, 2015). This process impacts family structure, from the extended family to the nuclear family (Goode, 1963).

However, in the context of a developing society like Indonesia, this change does not completely eliminate the involvement of the extended family. Bengtson (2001) states that intergenerational relationships persist through new forms of adaptation in modern families.

Grandmothers play a crucial role in childcare, both as primary and secondary caregivers. Research by Chen et al. (2011) shows that grandmothers' involvement in childcare has a positive impact on children's emotional development. Furthermore, grandmothers also serve as a source of social support for families, especially in economic conditions that require both parents to work (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997).

Modernization does not eliminate traditional values, but rather transforms them to become more flexible. Inglehart and Baker (2000) stated that cultural values tend to adapt to social change without losing their core essence. In the family context, this transformation is evident in changes in parenting patterns that combine traditional and modern values.

Characteristics of Urban Families in Medan

Families in Medan exhibit characteristics typical of urban communities, such as increased job mobility and the dominance of the nuclear family. This situation leads to reduced interaction time between parents and children. As a result, the need for alternative care increases, and families tend to rely on other family members, especially grandparents (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Table 1. Demographic and Household Statistics of Medan City

No	Variables	Statistical Value	Satuan	Source
1	Population	±2.500.000	Soul	BPS (2024)
2	Percentage of Working Age	66,86	%	BPS (2024)
3	Number of Households	507.205 – 515.649	Household	BPS (2019–2020)
4	Average Household Size	4,36	Person	BPS (2020)
5	Population Density	9.186	Soul/km ²	BPS (2023)

Table 2. Urban Family Economic Statisticsn

No	Variables	Statistical Value	Source
1	Economic growth	5,07%	BPS (2024)
2	Household Consumption Contribution	44,12%	BPS (2024)
3	Dominant Sector	Trade, Services, Construction	BPS (2024)

Data shows that the average household size in Medan City is 4.36 people, indicating the dominance of nuclear families in the urban social structure (BPS, 2020). Furthermore, 66.86% of the population is of productive age, reflecting the high potential workforce and family economic activity (BPS, 2024). A population density of 9,186 people per km² demonstrates dense and competitive urban characteristics (BPS, 2023).

Economically, household consumption contributes 44.12% to Medan City's GRDP, confirming the central role of families as drivers of the local economy (BPS, 2024).

Grandmothers as Primary Caregivers

The role of grandmothers as primary caregivers is increasing in urban families. This is due to factors of trust, emotional closeness, and cost efficiency compared to formal care (Sari, 2018). Research

shows that children raised by grandmothers tend to have greater emotional stability due to strong affective bonds (Chen et al., 2011).

Table 3. Characteristics of Grandmotherly Care

No	Variables	Category/Indicator	Information
1	Caregiver Status	Grandmother as primary caregiver	Working parents
2	Grandmother's Age	50–70 years	Advanced productive age
3	Family Economic Status	Lower-middle class	Dual-income family
4	Number of Children in Care	1–3 children	Usually nuclear grandchildren
5	Intensity of Care	Full-time	Replacing parents
6	Parenting Style	Traditional–protective	Experience-based
7	Grandmother's Education	Elementary–High School	Variety
8	Reasons for Caregiving	Economics, trust, emotional closeness	Dominant family factors

Table 4. Statistics on the Phenomenon of Grandmothers as Primary Caregivers (Based on Studies & Supporting Data)

No	Indicators	Estimates/Findings (%)	Source
1	Children raised by extended family	30–45%	BPS (2023)
2	Women working in urban areas	±50%	BPS (2023)
3	Care by grandmothers (extended care)	20–30%	BPS (2023); Sear & Mace (2008)
4	Economic reasons (parents working)	>60%	BPS (2023)
5	High emotional closeness	±70%	Goodman & Silverstein (2002)

The phenomenon of grandmothers as primary caregivers in urban families in Medan City is part of the transformation of family structures due to urbanization and economic demands. In the context of urban communities, the increasing participation of women in the workforce has led to a shift in childcare patterns from parents to other family members, particularly grandmothers (BPS, 2023).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the female workforce participation rate in urban areas reaches around 50%, resulting in limited time for direct caregiving by parents (BPS, 2023). This situation encourages families to rely on an extended family-based care system, in which grandmothers play the primary role in caring for their grandchildren.

Sociologically, grandmother-led care has distinct characteristics. Grandmothers tend to employ traditional, protective parenting styles based on life experiences. This contrasts with modern parenting styles, which are more democratic and based on a child's psychological approach. Nevertheless, the presence of grandmothers in care provides benefits in the form of emotional stability and a strong affective closeness between child and caregiver (Suharto, 2020).

Beyond economic factors, trust is also a primary reason parents choose grandmothers as caregivers. Compared to professional caregivers (babysitters), grandmothers are considered more trustworthy and have a stronger emotional bond with their children. This aligns with research findings that approximately 60% of urban families choose family-based care due to trust and emotional closeness (Hidayati, 2019).

However, this parenting style faces several challenges, such as generational differences in parenting styles, the physical limitations of grandmothers, and potential value conflicts between parents and grandmothers. Therefore, effective communication within the family is necessary to maintain a balance between parenting styles and child development.

Thus, the phenomenon of grandmothers as primary caregivers in Medan reflects the adaptation of urban families to economic pressures and social change, while also demonstrating the important role of the extended family in the childcare system in urban communities.

Grandmothers as Agents of Value Transmission

Grandmothers play a crucial role in transmitting cultural values to children, such as good manners and family solidarity (Geertz, 1983). In urban contexts, these values have adapted to fit modern realities, resulting in more flexible forms of values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Traditionally, grandmothers served as guardians of cultural values and symbols of the family. However, in the context of urbanization, this role has transformed into a more practical and strategic one (Bengtson, 2001). This change demonstrates that families are not static, but continually adapt to social change (Giddens, 2001).

Differences in values between parents and grandmothers often lead to conflict in childrearing. For example, differences in discipline patterns and the use of technology (Giddens, 2001). However, this conflict also opens up space for value negotiation, resulting in more adaptive parenting patterns (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Impact on Child Development

Grandmothers' involvement in childcare has positive impacts, such as emotional stability and strengthening cultural identity (Chen et al., 2011). However, there are also potential negative impacts, such as inconsistencies in parenting styles between parents and grandmothers (Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2005).

Grandmothers' involvement in childcare in Medan is an increasingly common phenomenon in urban family contexts. This is influenced not only by increased parental work participation but also by the strong family values in Indonesian society. In practice, grandmothers' involvement not only serves as temporary substitutes for parents but also makes a significant contribution to child development.

One of the main positive impacts is the development of a strong emotional bond between children and caregivers. Grandmothers, as family members, have deeper biological and emotional bonds than non-family caregivers. This creates a sense of security and psychological stability for children, which are crucial for growth and development (Goodman & Silverstein, 2002). This closeness also helps children develop self-confidence and social skills from an early age.

Furthermore, grandmothers' involvement also contributes to the instilling of cultural and moral values. Grandmothers generally bring life experiences and traditional values that are passed on to their grandchildren, such as good manners, respect for elders, and social norms. In the multicultural context of Medan, this role is crucial in maintaining the family's cultural identity amidst the tide of modernization.

From an economic perspective, grandmothers' care provides cost-effectiveness for urban families. Parents avoid the need for additional costs for professional caregivers or childcare, freeing up financial resources for other needs. This is particularly relevant given the high cost of living in urban areas (Central Statistics Agency, 2023).

Grandmothers' involvement also supports the sustainability of parents' work activities, particularly mothers. With grandmothers' caregiving support, parents can remain productive in the workforce without neglecting childcare needs. This aligns with the increasing participation of women in the workforce in urban areas (BPS, 2023).

Furthermore, grandmothers often have more flexible hours than parents, allowing them to provide more intensive attention and supervision to their children. This supervision is crucial in shaping children's behavior and preventing social risks in complex urban environments. However, it's important to note that effective grandmothers' involvement still requires coordination with parents to avoid significant differences in parenting styles. With good communication, grandmothers can be an integral part of a harmonious family care system.

Transformation of Family Values in Medan

Urbanization is driving a shift in family values from collectivism to flexibility. However, core values such as togetherness and solidarity remain (Bengtson, 2001). This indicates that families in Medan are experiencing an adaptive, rather than an eliminationist, transformation in values.

In Medan, as one of Indonesia's metropolitan cities, urbanization has driven a transformation in family values from collectivism to a more flexible and adaptive model to the demands of urban life.

Traditionally, families in Indonesia, including those in North Sumatra, are known for their strong collectivist values. This value is characterized by closeness among family members, involvement of the

extended family in decision-making, and shared responsibility for the care and well-being of family members. However, with increasing urbanization and modernization, these values have shifted.

One key change is the emergence of flexibility in family structure and roles. Urban families in Medan tend to be more adaptive in dividing roles, such as the increased participation of women in the workforce and changes in childcare patterns that involve other parties, including grandmothers or nannies. This aligns with data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which shows an increase in workforce participation in urban areas (BPS, 2023).

Furthermore, urbanization also drives a shift in social interaction patterns, where relationships between family members become more functional and needs-based. High job mobility and economic pressures limit family interaction time compared to rural communities. In this context, families no longer rely entirely on traditional collective systems, but prioritize efficiency and flexibility in carrying out their functions.

However, despite this shift toward flexibility, core values such as togetherness and family solidarity persist in urban family life in Medan. This is evident in daily practices, such as support among family members during difficult economic times, extended family involvement in childcare, and the tradition of gathering during special occasions such as religious holidays.

The persistence of these values demonstrates that urbanization does not completely eliminate collectivism but rather transforms it into a more contextual form. In this regard, urban families in Medan adopt a pattern of "flexible collectivism," a combination of traditional values of togetherness with the need to adapt to modern life.

Thus, urbanization in Medan has not only resulted in changes in family values but also given rise to new, more dynamic forms of family relationships. Families maintain solidarity as their primary foundation while developing flexibility as a strategy for surviving in a complex urban environment.

CONCLUSION

The role of grandmothers in childcare in Medan has undergone significant transformation due to urbanization. Grandmothers serve not only as alternative caregivers but also as strategic actors in maintaining family values. This transformation has resulted in a hybrid family pattern that combines traditional and modern values, enabling families to adapt to social change without losing their cultural identity.

The role of grandmothers in childcare in Medan represents a form of family adaptation to the dynamics of urbanization and the demands of the modern economy. Urbanization has driven changes in family structure and function, moving from a collectivistic model to a more flexible one. In this context, grandmothers play a crucial role as bridges.

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