



## **The Role of Javanese Women in Domestic and Public Spheres: Challenges, Trade Motives, and Parenting Practices**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This study aims to explore the dual role of Javanese women who engage in trade at traditional markets and their role as mothers in parenting practices.

**Design/methods/approach** – Employing qualitative research with an ethnographic approach, this study gathered primary data from interviews with Javanese women traders at the Karangawen traditional market, who have children aged 0–8 years. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. This was followed by a descriptive analysis of the findings.

**Findings** – The study identifies three main motives for Javanese women trading in traditional markets: self-actualization, economic needs, and the pursuit of independence. Additionally, the study reveals various aspects of parenting practices among Javanese women. These include practices such as *bancaan weton lair*, *weton lair* fasting, and infant massage.

**Research implications/limitations** – The research is constrained to a descriptive analysis, focusing on a limited data set regarding the roles of Javanese women as traders in the public sphere and as mothers in the domestic sphere.

**Practical implications** – The study highlights the dual role of rural women, who are active in both the public sphere (through trading) and the domestic sphere (through parenting). This dual engagement reflects the multifaceted nature of their daily lives.

**Originality/value** – The study underscores how culture, economy, and social environment shape parenting practices among Javanese women.

**Keywords:** Javanese women; Trade motives; Parenting practices

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

Women have a role in economic growth, especially in developing countries. There are at least 252 million women entrepreneurs worldwide (Badger Newman & Alvarez, 2022). The contribution of women in trade often has many barriers, especially for support in advancing entrepreneurship. In Africa, for example, the main barriers to women in entrepreneurship are patriarchal societal structures, a lack of relevant entrepreneurship to manage businesses, a lack of access to funding, limited time, and difficulty balancing family and business pressures (Mashapure et al., 2022). Despite access to entrepreneurship as a career, there are unfair expectations imposed on women. These expectations create pressures that affect women's ability to carry out their professional duties. There needs to be family support that can facilitate women's empowerment in entrepreneurship without feeling guilty about their commitment to the family (Dewitt et al., 2023).

Women's labor force participation in several countries, such as Indonesia, has increased, especially in urban areas. However, research by Lisa Cameron, Diana Contreras Suarez, and William Rowell (2019) shows that women's participation in work still has obstacles. For example, when a woman is married and has small children, it has a huge negative impact on women's labor force participation. In addition, the barrier for women in Indonesia is the low level of women's education in rural areas; this has an impact on the lack of women's access to jobs in non-traditional industrial sectors. If policies and laws encourage employers to do part-time work with women, participation in the labor market will increase. This will certainly provide potential for women in Indonesia, especially on the island of Java. Moreover, the majority of Indonesian people are concentrated on the island of Java.

In historical records, Javanese women had a large role in the agricultural sector, especially in the Dutch Colonial era. This is despite the ritual and mythological values attached to rice cultivation, which in Javanese culture is strongly associated with female fertility and childbearing. Therefore, young rice seedlings are associated with reproduction and birth, so it is considered that this should be handled with feminine care (Van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2019). Cultural factors in the Dutch Colonial era made it difficult for Javanese women to wield political power, especially since all natives were regendered "women" in the lesser Western sens (Weiss, 2006). Not only in the Dutch colonial era, the Suharto regime (1966–1998) also limited the role of women in public life. The regime made use of Javanese cultural traditions and used state programs to instill ideas about women's leading roles as mothers and wives (Rinaldo, 2019).

Traditionally, Javanese women have a certain character in their social lives. The word for woman in Javanese is "*wanita*". The word woman comes from the words *wani* (brave) and *tapa/topo* (suffering), meaning that a woman is someone who dares to suffer to bring success to others. Women are not only biological but also include the structure of life. The Javanese socio-cultural system is based on cultural values and norms inherent in the soul and forms the basis of Javanese women's identity (Handayani & Novianto, 2004; Muhmad Pirus & Nurahmawati, 2020). The role of Javanese women is very important in the family, for example in the affective realm, which includes responsibility for the emotional well-being of household members, especially husbands and children. Likewise, working Javanese women are still expected to be responsible for household and parenting practices (Smith-Hefner, 2009).

Although Javanese women are often associated with the domestic sector, for example, patriarchal culture is still strong, namely the way of life and code of ethics. Javanese women not only experience patriarchal cultural pressure but also experience structural pressure. Most of them come from poor families. Gender equality is difficult to achieve, especially for women who come from low socioeconomic status (Sudarso et al., 2019). However, in the public sector, Javanese women are also very prominent in trading. In traditional markets in Java, many Javanese women are found doing buying and selling affairs. Javanese women are considered to have a high work ethic to work in the fields or in the market as small traders (Alexander & Alexander, 2001). Javanese women who trade in the market have an equal or even greater role in family economic decision-making than their husbands. In this case, women have control over economic resources in the household (Mulyanto, 2006).

According to Irwan Abdullah (2001), Javanese women in the village in the trade sector are very prominent, so it appears that the trade sector in the village is dominated by women. Small traders in Java called "*bakul*" who sell in traditional markets, including someone shopping (*kulakan*) in the market to be resold in small shops at home, are referred to as "*bakul*". Javanese women in rural areas have a dual role; they take care of the household (domestic sphere) and participate in the trade sector (public sphere), even helping the agricultural sector. When they return home, their children wait for their arrival to ask for souvenirs from the market. In addition, the traders of "*bakul*" still help the husband's work after leaving the market. This shows the high work ethic of Javanese women in social life, both in the domestic and public sector.

The participation of Javanese women in the public sector certainly affects her role as a wife, especially in parenting practices. When a mother divides the responsibility of earning a living by working in addition to taking care of household affairs, the availability of time and attention to childcare are reduced. The condition of mothers who have children under five and also work can be a problem for the growth, development, and nutritional status of children (Laksono et al., 2022). Although studies of parenting tend to focus exclusively on women and motherhood, this risks replicating the essentialist idea that childcare is the responsibility of women and obscuring the fact that many men also play a role in child care (Berridge, 2022). But in reality, in the Indonesian context, the role of women is more dominant in domestic work such as childcare. In fact, not a few women help the family economy by working either as a trader or farming.

Therefore, the author is interested in studying Javanese women's parenting practices, especially for women who trade in traditional markets. In this case, the author elaborates on the role of Javanese women in dividing time between the domestic sector (parenting practices) and the public sector (trading). So far, the study of Javanese women has been seen in three ways: first, in the study of gender equality and feminism (Adamson, 2007; Huda, 2016; Prawira & Putri Hk, 2023; Triratnawati, 2005). Second, Javanese women in the formation of religious identity (S. Brenner, 1996; Dewi, 2012; Smith-Hefner, 2007; Van Wichelen, 2012). Third, Javanese women in education, politics, and culture (Creese, 2015; Jones, 2010; Priyatna, 2013). Previous research has seen little attention to the role of Javanese women in parenting practices. Based on observations, the author shows that despite social changes, Javanese women still maintain traditional parenting practices. In addition, previous studies have discussed Javanese women having a high ethos in the economic sector but did not explain the motives of Javanese women in working in the economic sector. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the motives of Javanese women trading in traditional markets and parenting practices carried out traditionally based on Javanese culture. This paper is expected to provide views related to Javanese women in the contemporary era of dividing time between the domestic sector (parenting) and the public sector (trading). This study is limited to a descriptive analysis of limited data sets on the role of Javanese women as traders (public sphere) and parents (domestic sphere). Thus, further studies are needed to examine the role of women more broadly, especially in parenting, because there are still many practices and traditions that have not been revealed in this study.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Unit Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is Javanese women who trade in the traditional market of Karangawen, Demak Regency, Central Java Province. The fundamental reason the author examines Javanese women in this study is because Javanese women who trade "*bakul*", are able to position their roles both in domestic and public sphere. For Javanese women in the market, trading (public sphere) does not interfere with their role or abandon their obligations as wives or mothers (domestic sphere). In the domestic sphere, this study analyzes the parenting practices of Javanese women when they are faced with a situation between work and parenting. The parenting practices analyzed relate to Javanese women's habits of nurturing and caring for their children in their context as traders.

## 2.2. Research Design

This research uses qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. Qualitative research is used to map and understand more deeply how Javanese women view children and parenting practices. Primary data were obtained from interviews with Javanese women who trade in the traditional market of Karangawen and have an early childhood (0–8 years). This research was conducted from July to August 2023. In search of data, the author followed the activities of Java, who traded in traditional markets. This study also used secondary data sourced from journals, books, and research reports.

The steps of ethnographic research that the author carried out using six research cycles are as follows: 1) The author chose a research project based on the place, actors, and activities of Javanese women in Karangawen, Demak; 2) the author asks ethnographic questions discussing culture in Javanese society, especially in trading and parenting practices; 3) collect data through interviews with Javanese women; Observation, namely the author follows the daily activities of Javanese women in the market and home; 4) make field notes, namely by recording and documenting the daily activities of Javanese women in Karangawen, Demak; 5) analyze data; 6) write a research manuscript (Hadi et al., 2021).

## 2.3. Resources

This study was compiled based on the results of interviews related to Javanese women in the Karangawen traditional market. Source of information by elaborating on the results of interviews with a number of informants obtained from Javanese women. In conducting the interview, the author uses Javanese, which is then translated into English. The source of information for the authors in this study amounted to six people. The informants selected in this study are based on the experience, perception, thinking, and background of informants who trade in gender-based markets, namely, women. The research informants are as table 1.

Table 1. Sources of Information in research

| No | Name and Gender | Information  |
|----|-----------------|--|
| 1. | Ek/ Female      | Trader (bakul)   |
| 2. | IN/Female       | Trader (bakul)   |
| 3. | SR/ Female      | Trader (bakul)   |
| 4. | ME/Female       | Trader (bakul)   |
| 5. | LAS/Female      | traditional birth attendant "dukun bayi"                             |
| 6. | MR/Male         | Head of Brambang Village (location of Karangawen traditional market) |

## 2.4. Techniques and Data Analysis

In this study, data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews as a data collection method because, for semi-structured interview writers, it is needed to answer research questions (Rabionet, 2016). The author conducted a semi-structured interview by going to the informant's house and asking the informant for permission to conduct an interview related to parenting practices. At the beginning of her arrival at the informant's house, the author discussed the working conditions of Javanese women in the market, which led to a discussion aimed at obtaining an overview of parenting practices. To strengthen the interview data, the author also conducted observations and documentation in the Karangawen traditional market.

In the data analysis of this study, the author conducted a discussion related to the data that had been obtained from female traders "*bakul*". In particular, we discussed their role in the domestic space and its relevance to aspects of early childhood development. The interpretation of the code is discussed by the author with the knowledge of Javanese women traders, "*bakul*" while the author was at the research location, namely in the Demak area of Central Java. In addition, the results of interviews, observations, and documentation are adapted to Javanese literature. The authors classified the data based on their roles as traders and parents in parenting practices. From here, the author identifies three motives for women trading in the market and three forms of parenting practices. In this data analysis, the author uses data condensation, which is to adjust all data without having to reduce it, because the author considers all informant data important, both

about public sphere (traders) and domestic sphere (parenting). Data condensation is done by summarizing observational data, interviews, and documentation. Second, presenting data with narrative text by using tables to present data from informants. Finally, we verify the data that has been summarized and presented in this article with interpretation based on the results of the discussions that the author conducted (Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2016).

### 3. Result

#### 3.1. Reflective Notes at the Research Site in Karangawen, Demak

Historically, 500 years ago at this study site, many residents planted *brambang* (shallots) as the main commodity crop. Because this village is synonymous with producing shallots (*brambang*), it is referred to as Brambang Village. At first, the village of Brambang was only inhabited by a few families as a stopover for vegetable traders who came from the mountainous area to the market capital of the Kingdom of Demak in 1518. The arrival of the mountain community made the population increase, and the majority of their work was as onion farmers (*brambang*). Currently, Brambang Village is one of the villages in Karangawen District, Demak Regency, Central Java Province, and has an area of about 5,05 km<sup>2</sup>, or 504.50 hectares. In terms of topography and soil contours, Brambang Village is in the form of rice fields, with 80 hectares of rice fields and 424 hectares of dry land.

Geographically, Brambang Village is bordered by Pundenarum Village to the north, East Sidorejo Village, South Rejosari Village, and Bumirejo Village to the west. Demographically, Brambang Village has a population of 10,633 people, consisting of 5,236 men and 5,397 women in 2,884 households. Meanwhile, according to age, most of the population of Brambang Village is dominated by people of productive age. The age group of the people in Brambang Village can be seen in the following figure 1.

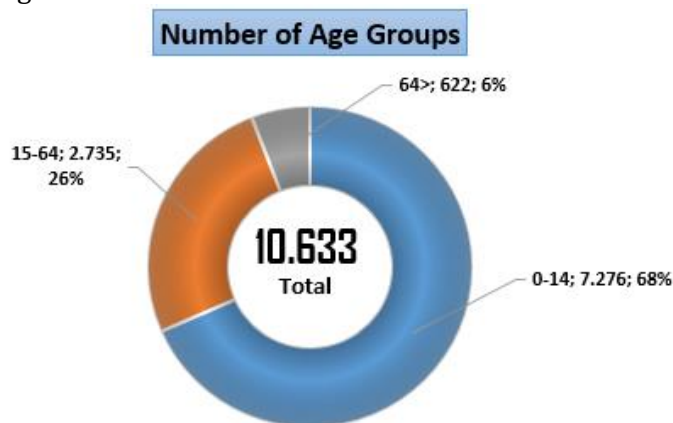


Figure 1. Data processed from the Brambang Village Office source

The data shows that the people of Brambang Village are included in the productive age (15–64) as many as 2,735 people, or 26%, and for those under the age of 15 years, as many as 7,276 people, or 68%, while those aged 65 years and over, as many as 622 people, or 6%. As for the type of work, it can be seen in the following figure 2.

Based on these data, it shows that the types of work in the Brambang community are very diverse; there are at least 841 people who work as traders, or about 9% of the total types of work. Although the majority of people who work in the Karangawen market are not all from the Brambang community, the majority of traders in the Karangawen traditional market are residents of Brambang Village. Since 05.00 in the morning, activities in the Karangawen market have been crowded with “*bakul*” traders and “*kulakan*” buyers. The majority of traders in the Karangawen traditional market are mostly middle-aged women, but not a few young women also sell in the market. Based on the author’s ethnographic notes, the Karangawen traditional market is not only the process of buying and selling transactions; there are also many cultural values in the market.

The Karangawen traditional market is open every day, in contrast to several other traditional markets around Demak that the author visited that were only open on certain days on the Javanese calendar (*pasar*). However, for a crowded buyer visit (*pasar*) at the Karangawen market on the day of *Legi* and *Wage* (Javanese calendar).

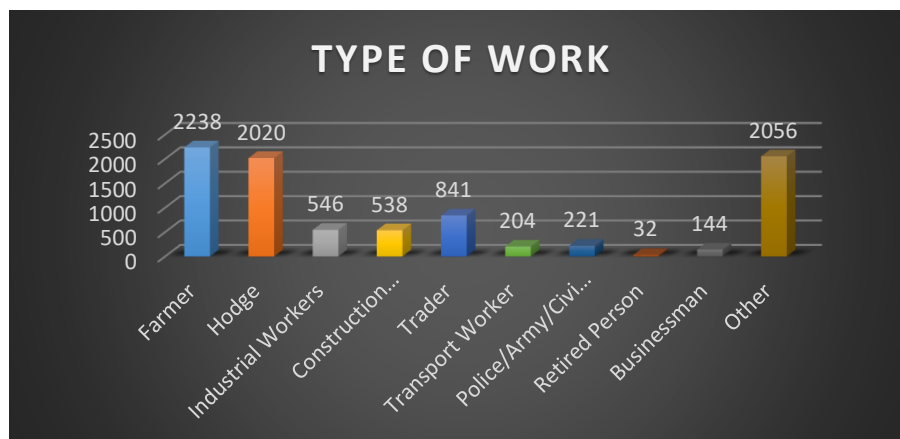


Figure 2. Data processed from the Brambang Village Office source

### 3.2. Javanese Women's Motives to Become Traders (*Bakul*) in the Market

Javanese women were directly involved and played an important role in trading. Although women in traditional societies are often positioned as the number two group in society, weak, and always in need of men's protection and help. The social fact is that in Karangawen, women are free to work and take an important role in helping the family economy by trading. This shows that Islamic principles that respect women's rights are practiced in the daily lives of Javanese people in Karangawen, Demak. Therefore, when women work, there is a motive or goal to be achieved. The motives or goals of Javanese women in the traditional market of Karangawen, Demak Regency, as "*bakul*" traders are as table 2.

Based on table 2, there are three important things concerning the motives of Javanese women working as traders (*bakul*) in the traditional market of Karangawen, Demak. First, self-actualization: Javanese women who choose to trade tend to mostly want to achieve the desired goals in life. Some cases of Javanese women who choose to trade and do not want to depend on their husbands, for example, in terms of shopping for personal needs, financing children's needs, independence, and hard work, are part of self-actualization for women who choose to trade in the market. In addition, the bustling activities in the market allow women to have social interaction with other women. In this social interaction, there is a negative assumption about Javanese women who trade (*bakul*) in the market, namely "*ngrasani*", or commonly called gossiping. However, "*Ngrasani*" can be both positive and negative because the principle is that *ngrasani* is talking about other people, both good and bad, others who are not present in the conversation. *Ngrasani*, related to the overall ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and habits of Javanese people in talking about others oriented to Javanese ideality (P. M. Lestari et al., 2019).

Second, economics is the most common motive found when a woman works in a public sphere. Javanese women trade (*bakul*) in the traditional market of Karangawen, Demak, because it helps the family economy. In this case, when husband and wife work with each other, either fellow traders or husbands work in other sectors such as factory workers, farming, teachers, and so on. Income from trading earned by a wife, in addition to being used for daily needs, is also used for savings and children's education. Likewise, the income of husbands who work in other sectors will be combined with the income of wives as traders in traditional markets. In this case, trading in traditional markets is a job that can meet the primary and secondary needs of women in rural areas, especially among the lower middle class. In the midst of global capitalism, traditional markets do not shift the essence of the meaning of the market but rather the public sphere of rural communities (Mokodenseho & Puspitaningrum, 2022).

Table 2. Javanese Women's Motives for Trading in the Market

| No | Name (Initials) | Interview Excerpts  | Coding             |
|----|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | EK              | "....Sakjane nggeh kulo niku dagang teng peken sampun turun temurun saking tiyang sepah kulo, sakniki kulo ingkang lanjutaken dagang. Mestine kulo nggeh nambah nambah penghasilan damel keluarga kulo, nanging mboten niku mawon, teng peken kulo saget kempal sareng rencang-rencang, benten kalih mriki teng griyo mawon rencange kedik. Menawi mboten kesah teng peken sampun kepikiran peken, Mergi saking alit mpun bantu tiyang sepah kulo dagang, garwo kulo polisi".   | Self-Actualization |
| 2. | IN              | "Sekintene sadean teng peken niku kerjaan ingkang mending kalih santai saking kerjaan sanes kados tani. Nek kulo nggih faktor ekonomi, mergi lare sekawan, rata-rata sekolah, mesti nggeh butuh biaya kathah, garwo kulo nggih teng peken namung beten peken."  | Economics          |
| 3. | SR              | "....,Nek aku dodol kawit enom, alesan dodol ya soale dodol ki lebih bebas, arep tutup sakarepe dewe, bedo kerjo pabrikan wes ono jam mangkat karo jam mulih, durung meneh beban kerjone, nek dodol neng pasar bedo iso sakarepe dewe. Bojoku biyen kerjo dadi guru, tapi saiki mpun sedo."   | Freedom            |
| 4. | ME              | "....,Menawi sadean kulo teng mriki sampun sedoso tahun teng mriki. kulo niki taseh enggal teng mriki, rata-rata tiyang mriki sampun sadean puluhan tahun. Riyin awal awal bantu ekonomi keluarga, soale riyin kulo kalih garwo niku tani, wonten modal kulo terus sewa panggenan damel sadean ulam teng mriki, penghasilan sakin sadean ulam niki lumayan mencukupi kebutuhan harian kulo sekeluarga sampe dinten niki. Garwo kulo teng griyo, soale ndalu sampun tindak Semarang, wangsule enjing, menawi kulo sadean teng mriki, garwo istirahat. Menawi kulo teng mriki gasik wangsule, tutup jam 10-12, ulame telas kulo wangsul." | Economics          |

Third, freedom: the freedom of Javanese women to choose to work as traders in traditional markets because trading does not have burdens like other jobs. In addition, in terms of time, it is more flexible than other jobs. Javanese women who trade are free to leave and return as they wish. This is different if you work as an employee or laborer in a factory where the time to leave and return has been arranged by the manager. Trading is also not bound by work agreements, so when Javanese women carry out activities such as attending family weddings, visiting parents' homes, and other activities without adjusting to a certain schedule. This is what attracts the motive of Javanese women in the traditional market of Karangawen, Demak, to become traders.

### 3.3. Conception of the Child: A Parenting Practice

#### 3.3.1. "Dalem Tresna Anak, Nanging ( I Love My Kids, But)....": Parenting Challenges for Mothers Who Trade "Bakul"

For Javanese women who work as traders in the Karangawen traditional market, they have an awareness of their role in the family, namely as a mother. Of course, his affection is needed by their children to build a positive relationship between parents and children. However, there are parental challenges in parenting practices in early childhood. Since morning, Javanese women have left home to sell in the market when their children are still asleep, especially for those with children aged 4-6 years. Before going to the market, mothers cook first for the breakfast of their children and husbands, while when taking children to school, it is done by the husband before he goes to work.

As for picking up children from school, they are usually picked up by relatives or neighbors who also pick up their children. In parenting practices, when they trade in the traditional market of Karangawen, their children are mostly taken care of by grandparents. In practice, grandparents

intervene and have a role in parenting. The presence of grandparents is very helpful when they are trading in the market. When Javanese women or mothers have returned from trading, they pick up their children from their grandparents' homes. Likewise, for those who have children under 4 years old, their children are cared for by their grandparents.

*".....Anak nomer kaleh, tigo kulo titipaken mbahe, pas anak pertama kulo dereng dagang teng peken. Saking maringi maem kalih ngurus anak niku sedanten kalih ibuke kulo (mbah). Kulo namung nyediake susu kalih maem damel anak-anak kulo. Ibuke kulo remen momong putu soale kegiatane namung teng griyo. Waktu jemput saking pasar niku jam setunggal siang. Ibuke kulo teng griyo namung kalih adik kulo, tapi adike kulo nyambut damel teng pabrik wangsule sore. Adike kulo libur nyambut damel biasane ngrumat anake kulo"* (Interview with Me, Karangawen market trader).

Uniquely, when a mother entrusts her child to grandparents, they are happy when they have to take care of and care for their grandchildren. Grandparents feel more comfortable when they raise their grandchildren than when they let them be taken care of by others. Grandparents worry about their grandchildren when they are cared for by others, fear that their grandchildren will be abused, are not taught manners, and become closer to caregivers than their parents (Fauziningtyas et al., 2019). The role of grandparents in helping to take care of grandchildren and perform household chores is often even a pillar of a multigenerational family economy. Very few grandparents in Java depend on children or grandchildren for their daily survival (Schröder-Butterfill, 2004).

Although parents feel calm when their children are taken care of by grandparents, there is a sense of worry, especially related to the emotional connection between parents and children. Javanese women are well aware that their role as natural and child educators is a mandate from God because not all parents are given the opportunity to have children. At least, there is a concern when the child is an adult because he feels that he does not get affection from his mother. When they return home from the market, the "bakul" traders try to bring their children souvenirs, or so-called "jajanan". Souvenirs brought by parents in the form of food sold at the Karangawen traditional market in the form of bread, snacks, cakes, and so on.

Based on the results of the author's interviews with a number of informants, namely Javanese women who trade in the market, there is a sense of concern regarding the emotional connection between parents and children because their children are left to work in the market. This finding was obtained from "bakul" traders who had economic motives for trading. Parents do not want their children to follow in their footsteps as traders in the market, hoping that their children will live a better life than their parents. Through trading in the market, Javanese women not only earn income for their daily living needs but also for their children's education costs (Ratna Komalasari et al., 2022).

*".....Mesti wonten perasaan khawatir, soale mriki teng peken mbendinten, anake teng griyo, mriki dados tiyang sepah nggih khawatir menawi anak kirang kasih sayang, bapake kebetulan nggih nyambut damel. Tapi nggih niki kangge ana- anak, nyambut damel kangge anak-anak supados saget sekolah, kersane mengke mboten sadean teng peken kados ibuke"* (Interview with Ek, Karangawen market trader).

### 3.3.2. Forms of Parenting Practices in Javanese Women's Beliefs

Based on the results of interviews with "bakul" women, there are at least three forms of parenting practices carried out in early childhood through local traditions by combining Islamic values. First, *Banca'an Weton Lair*. *Bancaan weton lair* is a belief of women, "bakul" to express gratitude to God for the birth of a child. However, *bancaan weton lair* is carried out on every *weton* of the birth of a child (date of birth in the Javanese calendar), and once a month, parents give *banca'an* (a symbol of gratitude) by giving alms of rice given to other traders. The goal is safety for children, so that children obey parental orders, do not cry easily, are always healthy, and others. The findings of this author have similarities to the views of M. Daud Yahya et al (2022), who explained that *weton banca'an* is a form of gratitude for the birth of a child, which is then followed by implementation every 35 days. According to M. Daud Yahya et al (2022), the goal is that the *banca'an* will bring



benefits to children, such as children's behavior will be better, and they will avoid bad luck or harm that will befall the child.

*"...Tradisi momong anak, Pakulinan kulo ingkang diajaraken kalih tiyang sepah jaman riyen, bancaan weton anak. Wiwit lair kulo ndamel bancaan kagem anak supados sehat, mboten gampang sakit, lan kersane dados anak ingkang sholeh"* (Interview with Ek, Karangawen market trader).

Second, *weton lair* fasting. In addition to children's *weton banca'an*, Javanese women also fast on children's *weton* days. This fasting practice is carried out in conjunction with the implementation of child *banca'an*. The purpose of child *weton* fasting is to pray for children in accordance with the wishes or expectations of parents related to children, such as child safety, blessings of children's lives, children's success, and getting God's pleasure (*ridha Allah*). Child *weton* fasting is a form of parental effort based on religious and cultural beliefs to build children's character. As for the intention of fasting *weton* children, *"niat ingsun Siam weton lare kulo supados dados lare ingkang ... (the desire of parents) lilahi ta'ala* (I intend to fast at the birth of a child so that the child..... *lillahi ta'ala*).

*"...Kados siam weton, biasane nggih kulo laksanaaken, tapi nggih mboten setiap weton anak, paling nggih setahun sepindah nopo kaping kalih, menawi kulo siam weton damel anak jaler kulo, kebetulan anak pertama kulo niku jaler. Menawi anak setri kulo niku bapake ingkang siam"* (Interview with In, Karangawen market trader).

Third, baby massage. To stimulate the child's motor development, parents bring their children for massage with a traditional birth attendant. Javanese women, especially traditional traders of Karangawen, routinely do baby massages at least once or twice a month for traditional birth attendants around the Karangawen traditional market. Parents bring their children to massage when they have a lot of crying, tantrums, insomnia, cough, runny nose, fever, and other symptoms. The practice of treating children with massage is carried out by parents at the age of 0–2 years.

*"...Kawit bayi, umur enem sasi dugi kalih taun riyen kulo rutin ngajak anak kulo pijet. Tujuane nggih kagem anak mboten gampang sakit sakitan, mboten sering rewel, gampang tilem, mpun niku tujuane. Anak anak kulo pijet sedanten rutin dugi umur kalih taun"* (Interview with Ek, Karangawen market trader).

In this case, the author also conducted interviews and observations with traditional birth attendants who perform baby massage. At least every day, there is always a visit by parents to his house to ask him to do a massage for their child. In doing baby massage, he gained knowledge from previous parents who also practiced baby massage. In addition to having expertise in determining the point or area that must be massaged by adjusting the child's illness, traditional birth attendants (*dukun bayi*) also have a mantra for doing baby massage practices. The spells used in performing baby massage are: *"Kakimong nyaimong, seng momong si jabang bayi... (mention the name), bar kui gerak. Bismillah... (read surah al fatihah), otot kawat balung Wesi sluman slumun selamat. Kaken kaken inen inen bsok langgeng umum panjang"* (Interview, LAS, traditional birth attendant "*dukun bayi*").

## 4. Discussion

### 4.4.1 Why Economy, Freedom, and Self-Actualization Are Motives in Trading in Karangawen Traditional Market

According to Irwan Abdullah (2020), women's reality is a reality that is arranged through various long processes involving various things. Aspects of the involvement of social agents and the values that underlie women's reality are the basis of the issue of women's representation. Javanese women live in high gender-based subordination in the marriage relationship, which is maintained

and strengthened through physical and sexual violence. The risk of physical and sexual violence against women is inseparable from traditional gender norms (Hayati et al., 2011).

Based on ethnographic studies during this research and living together with Javanese people, it shows that in Javanese families, the roles of father and mother also have their main duties and functions in the family, which are still rooted in Javanese cultural values. The division of roles between a father and mother is done without any covenants or rules but flows naturally. If housework such as washing dishes, drying clothes, sweeping, and making food and drinks is done by a husband, then a wife will be considered *saru* (not good) by the views of Javanese society. Although there are more roles in the domestic sphere, Javanese women also participate in the public sphere, namely becoming traders (*bakul*) in the Karangawen traditional market. In this case, Javanese women take responsibility for the economic well-being of their families and work alongside their husbands (Koning, 2000).

Javanese women in Karangawen are also able to divide their time between domestic roles and the extradomestic sphere, namely trading. Suzanne April Brenner (1998) revealed that Javanese women in trading still maintain traditional values in the midst of modernity because traditional market areas create a distinctive form of modern social life, but under certain circumstances, modernity can give way to traditionalism. In addition, Suzanne April Brenner revealed there is a relationship between so-called “domestic” values and practices, such as those related to family and household, and the extradomestic sphere, namely, society, the market, and the state.

The traditional market becomes a cultural identity because, in life, this is in terms of the culture of time utilization (Firmando, 2022). Javanese women interact with others and establish norms of behavior in the market. They helped each other overcome the difficulties their fellow traders experienced, visited other merchants who happened to be sick, and kept in touch after they were home. For example, a trader can also borrow money from his friends in the market if he has capital difficulties. In the market, traders meet other traders, both from the same area and from other regions. Therefore, they must maintain social ethics. If any other merchant will buy his merchandise, then a merchant will give a low price. They feel they have to support each other. If one person gains, then others also enjoy (Abdullah, 2001).

In addition, in the tradition of traders in Java, there is the term “*nyumbang*,” which refers to the solidarity of moral feelings in the society that trades in the market. If there is a certain ceremony, each villager should donate something to the family who held the ceremony. If there are ceremonies in an individual’s life cycle, such as childbirth, circumcision, marriage, and death, each member of the community donates food or money (Abdullah, 2001). Another social institution for Javanese women in traditional markets is *arisan* (rotating credit associations). In theory, *arisan* is held to pay periodically in an amount equal to the amount paid through a series of smaller regular payments (Alcano, 2016). Finally, the traditional merchant social institution (*bakul*) is the *Rewang* tradition. According to Amanah Nurish (2019), *Rewang* means helping neighbors or relatives who carry out *Slametan* traditional events by helping process and serve food and drinks en masse. The presence of Javanese women in the *Slametan* tradition is not only a symbol of performers of art and tradition ceremonies but also as a driver of tradition as well as culture that maintains harmonization in *Slametan* rituals. Javanese women who work as traders (*bakul*) will help each other if other traders carry out *Slametan* traditions such as weddings and the birth of children, and some die either in the form of energy (*rewang*) or money (*nyumbang*).

In rural areas, women who own their own businesses mostly work as small-time traders operating in traditional market centers. In industry, they are mainly found in small handicrafts, food and beverage, and clothing industries (Tambunan, 2017). According to Bagong Suyanto in Joko Sutarso & Ahmad Muhibbin (2012) there are several reasons why many women choose to pursue work in the trade sector. Economic factors are the reason women “*bakul*” trade in traditional markets; they feel that so far the income earned by their husbands is relatively unreliable to meet their household needs. Being a *bakul*, or trading small, is one way to survive in the midst of poverty. Trading also minimizes the level of risk for women to experience stress, work pressure, and, at a more extreme level, burnout, that is, psychological disorders (both physical

and mental) and fatigue. The advantage of being a traditional trader is that there is no pressure to work. Women who become traders at any time can leave work according to their wishes without being bound by time or targets to be achieved. Some studies show that a woman will easily experience stress and burnout when under work pressure, especially for those who work as employees (Jolly et al., 2022; Solomonidou & Katsounari, 2022; Zanhour & Sumpter, 2022).

Javanese women who trade in the Karangawen market are influenced by the desire to have a job and additional income with work that is not bound, be it related to flexible working hours, businesses that can be done not too far from home, and so on. The higher the desire to have freedom at work, the greater the motivation of women to trade. Thus, women can more easily manage their dual roles, both as business actors in the public sphere and as housewives in the domestic sphere (Primadhita et al., 2019). Meanwhile, self-actualization is also a motive for Javanese women to work as traditional traders in the Karangawen market. Women who work and have their own income will not only have autonomy in managing the cost of their personal needs but also for family expenses. In this case, Javanese women who trade in the Karangawen market want to have authority over family decisions (Sabariman, 2019).

#### *4.4.1 Why “Bakul” Women Do Traditional Parenting*

In parenting practices, according to Niels Mudler, parents in Java do not practice authoritarian parenting when their children are aged 0–6 years; even traditional Javanese parents adopt a more permissive parenting style in early childhood. Javanese parents do not expect children in the early stages of development to be obedient because they believe that children at that age do not understand expectations and rules of behavior (*durung ngerti*) (Riany et al., 2017). In Javanese families, there is a division of roles among married couples, including decision-making, financial management, and child care. Husbands involve wives by asking for opinions and making decisions through mutual agreement. In matters of financial management, the husband entrusts it more to his wife. While parenting, the wife also plays more of a role than the husband (Kusumaning Putri & Lestari, 2015). Therefore, Javanese women who work as traders in traditional markets divide their time between the domestic and public spheres. Of course, a mother who trades in traditional markets has her own concept of parenting practices in early childhood.

The practice of parenting Javanese women who trade in the traditional market of Karangawen is inseparable from the culture of Java. The practice of parenting is a blend of Islam and local traditions. This is inseparable from the religious practices of the Javanese people, which are understood syncretically by combining aspects of local traditions with Islamic teachings. Islamic society in Java modifies religious views with local traditions by accommodating theological values with Javanese culture (Izzuddin et al., 2022). Javanese parents generally make the family the center of life and pay great attention to the education, welfare, and happiness of their children. Parents in Java also tend to adopt a gentle and loving parenting approach. They often use polite communication and emphasize empathy for their children. This is inseparable from Javanese culture that values harmony and balance in the relationship between parents and children (Violin & Basuki, 2023). The character of Javanese parents in parenting practices applies high discipline to children's obedience to parental orders as a top priority in parenting (Kuntoro et al., 2017; Rahimah & Sukiman, 2020).

In the practice of parenting, Javanese parents are inseparable from the collective values that still persist in the Javanese community, which include spiritual principles and values that have an impact on life goals and even lifestyle. In this regard, Javanese women who trade in the traditional market of Karangawen use their cultural practices to foster the spirituality of their children, strengthen moral resilience, and shape brand identity as members of society (Bensaid, 2021). In this case, Javanese women who trade in the Karangawen traditional market practice local beliefs that have been hybridized with Islam in parenting, which is part of maintaining kinship between ancestors, parents, and descendants. Since the basis of the Javanese kinship system is bilateral and generational, respect must be strictly enforced within the social structure. Respect (*urmat/ngajeni*) then becomes conceptually important for building child and parent relationships in family and social interactions that must be maintained throughout life, history, and beyond

(Nasir, 2019). Regarding parents' beliefs, fasting *weton lair* and *banca'an weton lair* are elements of Islamic piety standards in the Javanese tradition code of ethics (Hilmy, 2018).

Related to the belief in parenting practices such as fasting *weton lair*, *banca'an weton lair*, and baby massage in the development niche theory that human development cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context (Ristianti, 2018; Suratman & Arif, 2020). Several research results show there is a significant effect of baby massage on increasing baby weight. (K. P. Lestari et al., 2021). Thus, baby massage can be one of the strategies parents use to prevent stunting in children, especially in Indonesia, where the risk of child stunting is quite high (Jayanti et al., 2021; Laksono et al., 2022; Ricca Handayani & Sri Rahayu, 2023). Baby massage can also improve sleep patterns and overcome baby sleep problems, which are often a problem in children's growth and development (Pebrianty et al., 2023). Baby massage interventions can also improve infant development, reduce stress behavior, have a positive impact on the child's immune system, help relieve colic in infants and stress in the stomach, increase dopamine levels, and reduce stress hormone levels (Khuzaiyah et al., 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that Javanese women who trade "*bakul*" in the traditional markets of Karangawen, Demak, and Central Java are able to position themselves both in the public sphere (traders) and the domestic sphere (parenting). Research findings show that there are three important things that motivate Javanese women to trade in traditional markets. First, self-actualization. Second is the economy. Third, freedom. In the domestic space, there are three forms of parenting practices. First, *Bancaan Weton Lair*. Second, child *weton* fasting. Third, baby massage. The study was limited to a descriptive analysis of limited data sets on Javanese women's roles as traders (public sphere) and parents (domestic sphere). Thus, further studies are needed to examine the role of women more broadly, especially in parenting, because there are still many practices and traditions that have not been revealed in this study.

## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

Saifuddin Herlambang presented idea and data taker. Bayu Suratman developed the theory of parenting and early childhood education. Abdel Kadir Naffatithe analyzes the method. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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### Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.



### Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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