# *Baby Sitter*:

# The Transformation of

# Domestic Care Work in Indonesia

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# Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Gita Nasution [signature]

October 2018

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# Abstract

The *baby sitter* is a new caring occupation in urban Indonesia, and a transformation of an older form of home-based labour performed by domestic workers. The *baby sitter* is a quasi-professional worker, providing a new and different model of care from that previously provided by kinship-based individuals or unregulated domestic workers. The *baby sitter* is also a live-in child carer in for middle-class and affluent families in Indonesia. The occupation borrows the Western term 'babysitter' to invoke an idea of modern child care methods. The appearance of the *baby sitter* in uniform is a distinctive mark of the current market-based care regime. The new occupation has been developed by private agencies that recruit, train and contract young, educated, rural women who aspire to be a *baby sitter*. The agencies have developed services for training and certifying the *baby sitter* by drawing upon their pre-existing programmes mandated by the government for overseas workers.

This thesis seeks to understand what the *baby sitter* means for Indonesian society, specifically, how social relations are shaped by and actively shape the *baby sitter* role. Based on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in Jakarta, Indonesia, I analyse the perspectives of different groups concerned with the *baby sitter* as an occupation (especially the *baby sitter*, the parent-employer, and the agency) and bring it into the wider social, economic and historical context. I argue that while the *baby sitter* displays a transformation of domestic and care work in Indonesia along with rapid social and economic transformation, gender and class inequalities persist. The *baby sitter,* I suggest, supports rather than challenges the reproduction of these inequalities.

This thesis begins with a discussion of the differences and similarities between the *baby sitter* and another category of domestic worker locally known as an *Mbak* (a Javanese term also used to refer to older sister), to describe current child care practices in urban households. It is followed by a discussion of the social and economic context in which the *baby sitter* as an occupation has emerged. The growing trend for hiring a *baby sitter*, driven by the urban economy, provides increasing opportunities for rural to urban migrants. The trained and certified baby sitter matches busy middle-class parents' desire for good quality care for their children. The agencies make this professionalisation of the *baby sitter* possible while perpetuating the hierarchy of class in the society.

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# Glossary and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *Agen* | Recruiting agency for domestic workers |
| *Akas* | Palembangese (South Sumatran) term for grand father |
| APPSI | Asosiasi Pelatihan dan Penempatan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Seluruh Indonesia<br>(The Association of Indonesian Domestic Workers Supplier Agencies) |
| *Baby Sitter* | A live-in agency-trained child carer working with an urban middle-class family |
| BPS | Badan Pusat Statistik (Indonesian Central Statistic Agency) |
| *Eyang* | Javanese term for grandparents |
| HIPPTAKI | Himpunan Penyelenggara Pelatihan Tata Keluarga Indonesia (Association of Household Management Training Agencies) |
| *Idul Fitri* | Islamic celebration at the fasting month of Ramadhan |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| *Infal* | temporary or substitute worker, normally refers to domestic workers |
| Jala PRT | Jaringan Advokasi Nasional Perlindungan Pekerja Rumah Tangga (National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy) |
| *Kamar Kos* | see *Kos* |
| *Kampung* | hometown |
| *Kejar Paket C* | government's distance learning/home schooling program for high school level |
| *Kos* | dormitory/boarding house |
| *Krismon* | short version of *krisis moneter* (monetary crisis) in 1997 |
| *Kuliah* | undergraduate learning |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Lebaran* | Indonesian term for Islamic celebration day like Idul Fitri or Idul Adha |
| LSK | Lembaga Sertifikasi Keterampilan (Skills Certification Body) |
| *Macet* | traffic jam |
| *Mbak* | A non-trained live-in child carer or Javanese term for older sister |
| *Ojek* | motorbike taxi |
| *Pekerja Lapangan* | field officer |
| *Pembantu* | domestic worker |
| *Permen (Peraturan Menteri)* | Ministerial Regulation |
| *Priyayi* | elite Javanese family normally related to the king's family |
| PRT | Pekerja Rumah Tangga (domestic worker) |
| *Reformasi* | period of political and economic reform in Indonesia that took place after the fall of Soeharto and the New Order regime in 1998 |
| *Sponsor* | middle man, individual broker who recruits domestic and migrant worker for recruiting agencies |
| *Tempat Kos* | see *Kos* |
| *Ujian* | examination, assessment |
| *Warung* | small kiosk (food or daily grocery) |
| *Whatsapp* | messaging application on mobile phone |
| *Yayasan* | foundation |

# Note on Style

This thesis uses vernacular terms deployed by the people I met during fieldwork in Jakarta, Indonesia. Some local terms, such as *baby sitter* and *sponsor*, have been borrowed into the vernacular from English. In this thesis, these terms are treated as Indonesian words. Specifically, the term *baby sitter* is written as two words, following its use in Indonesia, notably in employment agency advertisements and in Ministerial decrees. Italics will be applied to these words, indicating their borrowed status. The terms are treated as irregular nouns: while the singular and plural forms appear the same, the plural form of the word is indicated by the qualifier placed in front of it, such as many, some, several, or numbers (two, three, four, and so on).

The maps and graphs used in this thesis are produced by Carto GIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, unless otherwise stated.

The photographs in this thesis are from my own collection unless otherwise stated.

The individual names used in this thesis are all pseudonyms.

The currency employed in this thesis (rupiah) adopts the mid exchange rate of the Indonesian Central Bank (Bank of Indonesia) valued at 1AUD = Rp. 10,664.75 as per 31 August 2018.

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

Ten years ago I was at the Jakarta international airport planning to go for a work trip to Bangkok, Thailand. I saw two women in uniform walking at a short distance away from a family with a baby or young child. I knew from the media that these two women were probably both employed as a *baby sitter* working with a middle-class family to look after their children. They are common among middle-class and affluent families, especially as child minders. The use of English term 'babysitter' to refer to the occupation implies a Western way of care, which is believed as a modern approach to nurture children among the middle class. When I looked at the *baby sitter* then, wearing a nurse-like uniform, I supposed that their work was related to medical and professional standards of care. They are different from other form of child minder that is also popular in Indonesia, *Mbak*, who do not require a uniform. Yet, at that time I saw the *baby sitter* do more than their 'professional' look. One *baby sitter* pushed a pram, while the other one pushed a trolley with loads of luggage. The family, with whom they worked, were walking in front of them, entering the departure terminal, getting ready to check in. As they waited in line, the family members talked to each other while checking their luggage every now and then. They did not talk much to either *baby sitter*. Once they reached the check-in counter, the family members handed over their documents, while the *baby sitter*, without instruction, lifted the luggage onto the weighing machine.

After few days following my work trip, I entered the airport's arrival terminal and noticed there were some more *baby sitter*. They appeared to have just returned from a trip abroad with the family they worked with. Occasionally they held the baby, but most of the time they stood next to the conveyor belt, waiting for the luggage to arrive. When the luggage approached, they lifted it onto the trolley and set off, following the family who walked in front of them. The children, whom they were tasked to look after, walked ahead with their parents.

I noticed nowadays that this airport scene is increasingly common. Lately, the *baby sitter* is more visible at international airports, not only in Jakarta, but also in neighbouring countries such as Singapore. At Changi Airport, I noticed a group of *baby sitter* wearing

a uniform, like a nurse's uniform, holding children in their arms while strolling the fully carpeted floor of Terminal 2. They made several stops in front of duty-free shops as their parent-employers entered the shops to browse. International airports –the space where the middle classes normally spend time to depart, arrive or transit to and from international trips— are now accessible to the *baby sitter*. Many of them travel abroad, taking international flights. Their international trips should not, however, be confused with Indonesian migrant workers who travel as a group of workers. The *baby sitter* usually travel abroad with a family, but it is apparent that they are not related. Their uniform distinguishes them from the rest of the family who dress casually. They also walk a short distance behind the family members, often carrying a child.

**Figure 1.1 A *baby sitter* at the Arrival Terminal, Jakarta International Airport**

In addition to airports, I have observed similar scenes of uniformed women accompanying a family with children in Jakarta's big shopping malls. On many occasions these women walk a short distance from a couple, again, pushing a pram or feeding the child. The parents walk around the shops trying to find something for the child, or for themselves. On other occasions, I have seen the same group of women with the typical family in a restaurant or at the food court. While the family eats, the *baby sitter* feeds the child; she does not eat until the child has finished. With the growth of the Indonesian middle class and their increasing consumption patterns, such scenes as these — Indonesian families walking with their group of uniformed *baby sitter* — have become taken for granted in public spaces, especially in areas where the middle class visit and pursue recreation: shopping malls, airports and restaurants. The *baby sitter* seems to be a

proxy for locating the middle-class family around them. Their appearance in many 'middle-class spaces' informs something about the changing nature of Indonesian society.

The term '*baby sitter'* is used by local people to refer to a woman who takes care of infants or young child and in Jakarta, they are often recruited from outside the city by a specialist recruiting agency. I occasionally heard the term '*baby sister'* used to refer to *baby sitter*. The word is borrowed from the English word 'babysitter' but pronounced in Indonesian as /*bebi sitər:*/. The word 'baby sitter' in various documents I encountered in Indonesia is written in two words, as shown in some figures in this thesis. Throughout the thesis, I will use the term '*baby sitter*' that is common in Indonesia and write the term the way it is spelt locally. The meaning of the term *baby sitter* in Indonesia is not quite the same as the Western understanding of 'babysitter*'* which refers to a person who works for several hours looking after a child or children in a household and lives separately from the family who pays for their services. The *baby sitter* in Indonesia is like a nanny or *au pair* found in developed countries like Europe and the US, where they work as a child minder within a household, living under the same roof as the family for whom they work and receiving payment for the service they provide by the children's parents. While adoption of the English term seems to imply Western values, this is not, in practice necessarily so in Indonesian.

Nowadays, many middle-class families hire a *baby sitter* to look after their babies and young children. A *baby sitter* can work for a family for a long term, from a baby was born until s/he is in primary school age. Middle-class parents seek a person who knows how to deal with children properly, who is able to play with children in a structured way, and is relatively clean and neat. Many middle-class parents are busy people who have activities outside the house for most of the day and have very limited time to be with their children during the day. In many middle-class families, both parents are working, or at least one of them is, and the other has their own social life. Where both parents are working, the long working hours and the commute in Jakarta separates parents and children for as much as 10 hours or more per day. So inevitably these families need someone to look after children. They need someone who is able to help them nurture a baby or a young child according to their middle-class standards, who can clean and feed the children hygienically, attend and stimulate children based on their development

stage/s. Therefore, hiring a skilled person is important because the *baby sitter* is expected to be a substitute for the parent's role in rearing the baby, especially in the early years.

The *baby sitter* is trained by recruiting agencies with child care skills and the middle class does not mind paying a relatively higher cost for such a 'skilled' carer. Child rearing skills that the *baby sitter* gains from the recruiting agency seem to meet the expectations of the middle-class family. Their uniform seems to display quality, trustworthiness and cleanliness; suggesting a certain professionalism in terms of capacity and skills. The agency training curriculum usually includes how to clean a baby; feeding and preparing food for babies and children; how to play; how to clean equipment used for feeding babies; and use of modern household equipment such as microwave ovens, bottle steamers, and food processors. They are also taught basic English skills and some children's songs in English, allowing the *baby sitter* to interact and play with middle-class children and their aspirational parents. In effect, the training curriculum seeks to specialise and professionalise the work of the *baby sitter* in contrast to the generalist domestic worker. For a middle-class family with mostly both parents working, having a *baby sitter* is still viewed as necessary to minimise stress. This stress is derived from feeling *repot* or overly 'busy' from being preoccupied with child rearing, especially if they have more than one child. For some middle-class parents, having one's children and family in care, while also pursuing one's personal career, increases their status in society and brings comfort of mind (Baird, Ford, and Hill 2017).

Given the training provided, seemingly the role of the *baby sitter* is distinct from those child minding jobs that are described in local and familial terms by words like *mbak* (older sister), *mbok* (mother), *teteh* (older sister) or *bibi* (aunty)[1]. These people are all women, multi tasked to look after children and also doing other chores in the house like cooking, housekeeping, and cleaning. These workers perform a 'traditional' Indonesian childrearing practice without any specific training. Their activities are guided by the instruction of employers or from their personal experience in their own families. They can also have a kinship relation with the family they work with and are often paid in the form of accommodation or education for them or their own children. This historical form

[1] A relatively formal Indonesian term that is also commonly used is *pengasuh* (carer), which is gender neutral and captures both *baby sitter* and *mbak*, however it is rarely used compared to both terms. In this thesis I will use the term baby sitter and mbak to reflect how the local people differentiate the two.

of child minding practice is flexible and often arranged *secara kekeluargaan* (in a familial way), which involves providing some affection for the child. Since nowadays many urban households no longer rely on kinship connections to fulfil domestic work needs –because there are fewer relatives available to do the job— commonly they hire a person through someone that they know and task them to do house cleaning simultaneously with child rearing. In Jakarta people tend to address these workers as *'mbak*' which reflects a notional familial relationship that is still used as the basis for employer-worker relations by Indonesian families today. At the same time it also shows the informal and unregulated manner of the work.

Some middle class families prefer to hire *mbak* to mind their children (rather than *baby sitter*) due to these informal and flexible traits and, more importantly, because they are economical to employ. The *mbak* undertake similar tasks to *baby sitter*, but they do not have any agency training. Most of them are recruited through word-of-mouth rather than from an agency. Additionally, they wear everyday casual clothes rather than a uniform. *Mbak* are basically domestic workers with the special task of *momong anak* (child rearing) and any other tasks deemed necessary. *Mbak* are seen more like family members and, according to some of my middle-class informants, it is because they are bonded to the family and can be trusted like relatives that makes them suitable for the role.

While there are different opinions towards the *baby sitter* and *mbak*, some recruiting agencies argue that a *baby sitter* is not a domestic worker but a care provider because of the specific caring skills trained to them. One agency I visited refer to themselves as *yayasan*[2] (foundation) rather than *agen* (agency) due to the training service they provide for the *baby sitter*. It was affiliated with a private Catholic hospital and categorised their trained *baby sitter* as quasi-medical personnel rather than domestic workers, because they are recipients of similar training methods as hospital nurses. Although the link between medical institutions and *yayasan* is not a common pattern, it is implied linguistically

[2] There are two terms that are normally used by Indonesians to refer to recruiting agencies: *yayasan* (foundation) and *agen* (agency). *Yayasan* is linked to educational, charitable or non-profit organisation, while *agen* is connotated with profit taking institutions. Both *yayasan* and *agen* recruit domestic workers, yet *yayasan* has more positive connotation than *agen* as it implies educational/training and non-profit activities for domestic workers.

through use of the term '*suster*'[3] (the local term for nurse) to address a mature and experienced *baby sitter*, thus offering a certain professional legitimacy to the person and the role. These apparent medical attributes impart an enhanced image and higher status to the *baby sitter* compared to the conventional domestic worker. Nonetheless, although presumably most *baby sitter*(s) have undergone some weeks of training at the agency, some of them look very young and new to the job. In public, some young ones appear awkward when holding or feeding a baby due to inadequate experience mothering young infants. Given this situation, one might wonder about the difference between a *baby sitter* and an *mbak*. Does a training itself guarantee a better quality of care?

Since many people categorise babysitting as a form of domestic work, there are questions as to whether the *baby sitter* are different from *mbak*. Like domestic workers, the *baby sitter* are simultaneously welcomed yet kept at a distance by society. The middle-class parents involved in this study complained that it is difficult to find a *baby sitter* who will remain working with you for a number of years, which is a typical problem faced by households seeking a good domestic worker. Many *baby sitter* only last a few months in a household, if not weeks, for many reasons: they cannot get along with the child, they miss their home town, one of their family members becomes sick, and many more reasons. The media also share bad news about *baby sitter*, with stories of stealing the personal belongings of their mistresses or harming the child physically; both of which question the *baby sitter*'s professionalism and maturity. Therefore, among middle-class parents, those who have enjoyed a few years' service from a good *baby sitter* are considered lucky, and those who experience poor service from the *baby sitter* or not being able to hire anyone are more likely to speak disparagingly about the experience. But how does one find a loyal person to work for you? Conversely, if there are so many reported bad experiences from hiring a *baby sitter*, why do people keep hiring them?

In this thesis I unpack the term *baby sitter* as a new category of work in order to understand contemporary Indonesian society. With a uniform resembling that of a nurse, the *baby sitter*'s appearance seems to imply the medicalisation of child rearing, or at least

[3] The word *suster* is borrowed from the Dutch word, *zus or zuster* (which means sister). During the Dutch colonial time in Indonesia, the hospitals were initially built and run by Christian missionaries and the female carers were initially female Christian nuns who were also known as zuster. Since more carers were needed during the Second World War, domestic workers were trained for minimum medical treatment such as measuring temperature and writing them down in a book (See Sciortino 2007)

a form of nurturing professional care. This invites further questions to understand their work: are they classed as medical auxiliaries rather than domestic workers? Do they work based on contract rather than informal kinship-based relations? Is childrearing in urban families today professionalised and more generally standardised than the historically personal and unique care provided by parents? Does their arrival in a household change the dynamics of the hiring family?

### Research Questions

This thesis is triggered by two research questions:

How does the emergence of the *baby sitter* occupation shape and is shaped by the changing social and economic in Indonesia?

How does the *baby sitter* category of work help us understand social class, family and gender hierarchy in Indonesia today?

### The *Baby Sitter* in Multi Perspective

In this thesis, I explore the meaning of babysitting in contemporary Indonesian economic and social contexts. I am interested to unpack the work of the *baby sitter* in Jakarta, given their growing popularity in urban areas and among middle-class families. I propose that having a *baby sitter* has become an ordinary aspiration among middle-class Indonesians. I will also research the occupation of babysitting from the different perspectives of the key participants: the *baby sitter*, parent-employers, and recruiting agencies. This approach is inspired by Adams and Dickey (2000) who discuss domestic work from the perspectives of both employers and employees and the relationship between the two. Since *baby sitter(s)* are recruited and trained by agencies, I also include their viewpoints in my discussion to enrich the perspectives of *baby sitter* and parent-employers. The three perspectives position the *baby sitter* in a complex interrelationship beyond the household and highlight the extension of the *baby sitter* role into broader public spaces. The multi viewpoints used in this thesis are inspired by Weber's ideal type of methodological discussion where '…historical and social uniqueness results from specific combinations of general factors…' and a researcher use certain elements of reality as a construction to analyse and understand social phenomena (Gerth and Mills 1991).

Finally, I am interested in understanding the emergence of *baby sitter* occupation in Indonesian social and economic contexts today. I look at *baby sitter* occupation beyond

a job inside a household, nor as a relationship between merely the employer-employee. As such, I hope to be able to explore how other players and forces in the society shape the *baby sitter* as an occupation. As argued by Chin (1998) many scholars have focused their research on employer-employee dynamics in the household, and a few have considered how state and global forces change that relationship. By putting the *baby sitter* in a larger context, I explore how the *baby sitter* occupation starts to emerge in Indonesia. What factors have driven its expansion as a work category in today's society? To what extent does its existence coincide with rural-urban linkages and the era of *reformasi* (the period of economic and regulatory reform after the fall of the New Order regime and the state's monetary crisis)?

Through this thesis I hope to understand *baby sitter* both as an occupation and as a modern social relationship where work, class, status, gender and family intersect. I argue that the *baby sitter* is a new social phenomenon in urban Indonesian society that shows relational status among and between people. It reflects the continuing practice of vertical work relations between middle-class bosses and their workers that has persisted since the pre-colonial era and is now facilitated by the modern enterprise of the recruiting agency. The relationship involves complicated class, status and work arrangements due to the clash of emotional and professional forms of babysitting tasks. The *baby sitter* can also be seen as a twist in gender equality relations that provides services to children and allows middle-class parents to cultivate themselves (working or enjoying time in fitness classes or going out with friends). At the same time, the emergence of the *baby sitter* may create a moral panic among certain groups of people who believe that mothers should be the main caretakers of children and the family.

### Indonesian Social and Economic Context

The impact of *reformasi* has changed Indonesia's economy and labour market significantly. The decline of rural jobs, the collapse of industry, and the growing service sector have changed economic opportunities for both men and women. As the capital city and centre of economic activities, Jakarta remains a great attractor for many rural men and women seeking livelihood opportunities. With the greater contribution of service sector to the Indonesian economy (Damuri 2016), the consumption of services has grown, marked by the increased number of restaurants, hotels, shops and shopping malls, office buildings, and many other service centres in Jakarta. These public spaces display

contemporary middle-class consumption and, at the same time, reflect an increasingly wealthy middle class. Demand for services to fulfil middle-class aspirations has been increasing, marked by the opening of various businesses catering to middle-class leisure: restaurants, cafes, fitness centres, beauty salons and also agencies supplying domestic services. Demand for domestic services in middle-class households has grown as work-life pressures grow, houses get bigger, and each family member has their own needs and demands. The average number of domestic workers in middle-class households has increased from just one general domestic worker to several staff with specialised functions. A well-to-do household for example might employ a *baby sitter*, gardener, security guard and family driver. Dual income households now purchase more facilities and goods in the form of larger houses or multiple cars. These require regular operators and careful maintenance, which cannot be done by a single retainer. Thus, to be a dual income middle-class family in Jakarta means having several domestic workers to help manage the household.

### Rural-Urban Linkages

In the last decade, new job opportunities have opened following the growth of the service economy, which is the main contributor to the Indonesian GDP. This kind of employment has typically expanded in urban areas, following various facilities that are open for public sector services such as transportation, health and education among others. However, despite the growing economy, a rapid increase in the middle class, and new jobs created, poverty and employment remain issues of concern in rural areas. The creation of urban jobs has not been followed by growth in rural jobs (Suryadarma and Jones 2013). Arguably, in rural areas, reduced land size and decline in farming sector jobs combined with relatively low wages compared with urban jobs have inspired many of the younger generation to migrate to the cities as a strategy to improve their lives (Rigg 2003). In addition, the cultural barriers for women to work off the farm have diffused due to the penetration of manufacturing jobs in and beyond the villages, allowing women to seek better opportunities outside their rural homes. The majority of Indonesians, particularly women, are involved in the casual and more informal employment sectors (Manning 2010), and in the cities, due to their limited educational backgrounds (i.e., junior high school graduates/SMP) they mostly find work either in public or personal services such as shops, and retail, restaurants, and domestic services.

The demand for domestic workers is matched by the aspirations of rural people's aspiration to improve their lives and experience a cosmopolitan urban lifestyle. Young people with an educational background to junior high school aspire to find jobs in the city. They migrate to Jakarta or other urban areas in Indonesia to work in various sectors, but their limited education restricts their work mainly to the informal sector such as shops or as domestic workers. They use this work opportunity as an entry point to an urban work life while adapting to a city-based way of living.

By becoming a domestic worker as a way of living in the city, particularly a *baby sitter*, these rural young women were transported and transformed through a range of social and economic processes. Their rural and urban connections, private loans for transportation to the city, training fees and costs are all similar to migrant domestic workers travelling to work abroad, which according to Killias (2018) informs the making of the working class.

## Beginning the Research

From the beginning of my fieldwork, I found the situation of child minders in Indonesia to be complicated. When I registered my son at a private school in South Jakarta, I was asked to complete a registration form that sought details of the family's *pengasuh* (literally meaning carer) or nanny and *sopir* or driver (see Figure 1.2). While the form's intent was to ensure each child/student was safe during drop-off and pick-up, I was surprised by the school's assumption that it would be the role of a nanny or driver to do this. The school registration presumed that families hire nannies and drivers to take children to schools. However, what about mothers or fathers – like myself — who often take on these tasks? What about grandparents, uncles and relatives? Would the school consider extended family members or relatives as carers too? What about families who did not have domestic staff. Would the school consider the children of these families for enrolment? The registration form reflected a new structure in today's urban family, where nuclear families have expanded, especially wealthy families who employ multiple domestic workers. Among these families, members comprise parents, children, and several domestic workers paid to cater for the needs and wellbeing of the household and the children. For example, a set of basic domestic workers — a *baby sitter* and a driver — is essential to take children to and from school, to attend to children's needs at home

and beyond, while another set of workers might be employed to look after the house. In this family type, men and women have equal opportunities to work or pursue their own activities outside the house, enabled by the (paid) support provided by others. Men benefit most from this arrangement, however, because women still primarily supervise and manage the staff and are responsible for the children.


**Figure 1.2 School Pick-Up and Drop Off Data Registration Form**

The literature that informs discussions about the role of the *baby sitter* throughout this thesis relates closely to discussions of domestic work and caring tasks. However, during fieldwork I experienced various other intersecting elements that influence the role. Differentiating professionalism in the context of 'intimate labour' is complex as it overlaps with other elements such as power, gender, class and status. These tasks are also performed in the employer's house, the intersection of power and class and status are reproduced on a daily basis, intensifying the issue. This thesis will discuss such complexities by consulting literatures related to patron client and kinship relationships in domestic work as well as the professionalisation of domestic work that has been discussed by broader scholarships on migrant domestic workers.

Much academic research on domestic work is situated in a global context where international migration links workers from a (poorer) sending country to employers in relatively more developed receiving countries (Parreñas 2001). Within this global context, migration is used as the framework for analysis, along with citizenship, race and

ethnicities that intersect with power, and class (Anderson 2000, Gamburd 2000b). In addition, since domestic work and care (especially of children and the elderly) are socially constructed as women's responsibility, feminist perspectives are used by many of these scholars. Significant research on Indonesian domestic workers has also been undertaken in this domain, both academic and action research activities, by focusing mostly on Indonesian female migrant workers who travel abroad as domestic workers. This work discusses Indonesian domestic workers from various perspectives including the intersection between international migration, transnationalism, gender and development (Chin 1998, Silvey 2006, Constable 2016, Killias 2018, Austin 2016), the history of Indonesian labour migration (Palmer 2016) and the brokering activities of migrant workers (Lindquist 2015, 2010). Some Indonesian scholars have conducted research on Indonesian migrant domestic workers abroad, by focusing on their subjectivities and identities during migration journey (Williams 2007) and when enduring difficult times (Anggraeni 2006), the effort for self-empowerment among themselves (Pusparani and Soetjipto 2017) or the training process and the making of (professional) domestic workers (Killias 2018, Chang 2018, Rudnyckyj 2004). On the question of Indonesian domestic workers employed in Indonesia, some limited academic research and discussion have been undertaken (Robinson 1991, 2000a, Elmhirst 1999, Gastaldi, Jordhust-Lier, and Prabawati 2017, Ruwaida 2017, Austin 2017). Within this national setting, where labour migration takes place from rural to urban areas and both employers and workers share nationality, domestic work exhibits little overlap with international migration, citizenship and ethnicity, yet it clearly displays similar relations of power, gender, class, and kinship. Much action research on domestic workers in Indonesia and abroad has been performed by many organisations too, particularly in relation to worker's rights and protection, such as those by the International Labour Organisation (see ILO 2018d), Solidaritas Perempuan or the Women's Solidarity and Jurnal Perempuan (the Women's Journal). Among the few academic studies on domestic work within Indonesia, there are even fewer sources that focus on the specific tasks of domestic work such as studies relating to the *baby sitter*. This thesis addresses this specific area within the discourse of domestic work because each task within domestic work is unique and has its own complexities. For example, the *baby sitter* might face different challenges to conventional housekeepers, or some cooks deal with different problems from those of elderly carers. Because contemporary domestic work has become more specialised, it is important to treat each

individual type of occupation separately in order to understand and realise the changing nature of domestic work in a contemporary setting. This thesis contributes to the global as well as the Indonesian discourse on domestic work.

The study highlights the relatively new category of work, known as the *baby sitter*, as an academic topic of interest and significance. The thesis is located in the debate around the emotional work of child-rearing that is performed by the *baby sitter.* While the household-based caring role of domestic workers requires love and intimacy, these elements are usually not written into formal work agreements between employee and employer. Indeed, most of the parent informants in this study who employed a *baby sitter* told me they cared more for the *baby sitter*'s capacity to demonstrate love for their children than any certificate of professionalism. The everyday experiences of the *baby sitter* are very different from those who perform house-cleaning tasks even though they live and share the same space as their employers. The *baby sitter* role should be seen as a distinct type of domestic work and perhaps also, given the unique roles and task involved, care work. Moreover, babysitting is not simply a job in contemporary Indonesian society but is subject to multiple complexities including power relations and household dynamics, changing family relations and gender dynamics, as well as the desire for social status.

In order to locate the *baby sitter* as a form of work, I consult literature on domestic work in both global and local settings. Specifically, I consider literature on patron client relations in domestic work to understand the dynamics within the household and the drivers outside the household. The power relation and patron client within the household unfolds the class differentiation between women as discussed by many scholars (Rudnyckyj 2004, Gamburd 2000b). Beyond the household, I focus on literature related to the nature of the caring task within domestic work and the ambiguity of this activity within domestic work definitions. It includes discussion on professionalising domestic work, discussed by scholars such as Rudnyckyj (2004) and Killias (2018). I also consult literature that discusses the intersection of gender with domestic work, and the existing literature on the Indonesian middle class to understand the complex meanings of contemporary babysitting in Indonesia.

Chin (1995) for example has developed a highly scaled perspective on domestic work as an interrelationship at the household, state and global level, particularly in the way reproductive labour is shaped and affected by the state's economic, gender and racial

values. Chin's work on Indonesian and Filipina domestic workers in Malaysia shows how a state's policy – that is influenced by global economic change — has penetrated intra-household relationships by determining which domestic workers work in which household (Indonesian workers for Moslem Malaysian households, Filipinas workers for Chinese and Indian Malaysian household). Although within Indonesia domestic workers tend to come from within the country, I found Chin's work relevant in understanding the emergence of the *baby sitter* as a new category of domestic work that has emerged in the context of changing society. These changing household relationships and caring practices are both influenced by, and influence, economic growth, gender and class relationship within the country. Moreover, the discussion on training and professionalisation of migrant domestic workers (Killias 2018, Chang 2018) inspired many aspects of *baby sitter*'s training in this thesis, where the infrastructure of transnational migration of Indonesian female workers is duplicated for similar practice in domestic settings.

The occupation of *baby sitter* in Indonesia requires negotiation of complex relationships not only within the household (between the parent-employers and the child in their care) but also outside the home. The training from agencies have multiplied the complex relationship between employers and domestic workers. The *baby sitter* must conform to the demands and standards of more than one 'employer' as they have been recruited twice: first by the agency and second by the parent-employers. These two recruitment processes makes employer-employee relationship more complicated than those where recruitment is made informally by the household. A *baby sitter* must deal with two 'employers' who have particular demands and requirements for child rearing: the parent-employer and the agency. Even so, at the end of the day, the *baby sitter* must deal with the child directly as the 'beneficiary' of their service. They have to build an emotional bond with the child for whom they care and ensure that s/he feels comfortable and fulfilled. Thus, one *baby sitter* does not just have a double-relationship with the employer, but triple or even multiple obligations when they have to look after more than one child. In this case the children can also be 'employers' whose demands must also be met. This complex relationship within a household reflects how *baby sitter* occupation intersects with various elements from within the household and beyond, and often power relation lies in favour of the employer or agency as the patrons of the *baby sitter*.

When discussing the complexities in the household, there has been a discussion on the blurry separation of public and private space among domestic work scholars. Similar to other domestic service providers, the work of a *baby sitter* mostly takes place within the homes of their parent-employers, with specific task to care for children, which is notably part of their employer's family private life. The work blends both public and private matters, which often creates adverse dynamics between employer and the worker. Adams and Dickey (2000) have questioned the presumed dichotomy of the private and public sphere of homes and reveal the blurred demarcation between the two. They argue that a domestic worker must endure doing work in the public sphere (for her) yet private domain (for the householder). Many activities undertaken by domestic workers are located outside the house too, such as, grocery shopping and taking a child to school, which extends their role from the domestic into the public space. In relation to the Indonesian *baby sitter*, in particular, their presence in public informs people that the task of caring for children is not limited to domestic space. It can take place in many contexts outside the home. Their caring task is public for them because it is part of their occupation, yet the work is carried out in their parent-employer's private homes, and more importantly, their particular chore is closely related to nurturing child, which often is considered as a subjective and private task for urban parents nowadays. This thesis, through *baby sitter*, discusses and signifies the blurred dichotomy of public and private space.

This private-public dichotomy is expanded by Anderson (2000) to incorporate other contradictions that are socially constructed, arguing that domestic workers might be trapped in multiple social dichotomies of 'private and public' determined by a different power that created it. A domestic worker's job in the private sphere of a householder might be understood as traditional and primitive due to the personal relationships established, compared to other jobs that are performed in public spaces, which renders them modern and professional. In the case of the *baby sitter*, the agency's recruitment, training and written work agreement, and standard wages reflect a relationship that is both modern and bureaucratic. The character of this relationship differs from that of Indonesian domestic workers whose work arrangements were previously based on customary or familial relations. However, although their work arrangement is set out in a written, signed and bureaucratic manner by the agency, the *baby sitter* works in the private domain of their parent-employers and the caring tasks for the child in their care builds up personal and emotional bonds. I discuss this matters in more detail in Chapter Two.

### Domestic Work and Caring Tasks

Anderson (2000) in her study on domestic workers in Europe argues that a clear division of work among categories of domestic workers ought to exist in order to protect them from exploitation. While her study is based on the various forms of exploitation experienced by migrant domestic workers in continental Europe, she argues that in many societies where (national/international) migrant workers are employed to perform domestic work, one important component of their work is the task of providing care for children or the elderly. However, the ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) does not include caring tasks as part of the standard classification for domestic workers. Instead, these tasks are listed as part of the role of professional personal care workers such as nannies and personal nursing assistants. This reality has created an ambiguity for scholars of domestic work, particularly those examining care work for individuals (children and the elderly) performed in a household. In Indonesia, however, the government classifies babysitting, child minding, and care for the elderly as the tasks of domestic work. While this clarifies the position of the *baby sitter* in national domestic work practice, it reveals how national authorities perceive the occupation differently from international organisations such as the ILO. While Indonesian regulations have sought to accommodate caring tasks performed by domestic workers, which are relevant to Anderson's argument, many agencies and *baby sitter* do not consider babysitting as part of domestic work. Instead, they believe it is part of caring work, akin to the task of nannies or personal nursing assistant as stipulated by the ILO's international standards.[4] Moreover, nowadays the *baby sitter* is given uniforms provided with training and certification, which, from the outside, makes them look different from other categories of domestic work from the outside.

Gamburd (2000b) in her research on Sri Lankan migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, argues similarly that caring for children is the task that proves hardest to classify as 'work' within the domestic sphere. This is because the worker's nurturing duties require intimacy with

[4] According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the role of nanny and governess are categorised as 'Child Care Workers' (see ISCO 08 No. 5311). These tasks are similar to those carried out by Indonesian *baby sitter* including assisting a child to bathe, cleaning the bedroom and the like. The organisation categorises domestic worker tasks (i.e. house cleaning, washing, looking after pets) under domestic helper and domestic housekeeper units of work, without reference to any caring tasks (see ISCO 08 No. 5152 and 9111). See ILO ISCO at https://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/

the child under her charge, and the intimacy blurs the boundary between work and affection. Further, she also argues that the first thing that a worker does once she enters an employer's household is to try to blend in with the family and child/ren to be cared for. In understanding caring work, I refer to Hochschild (2003) who argues that commodification of feelings takes place when 'deep gestures' enter the market and are traded as an aspect of labour. The labour of power that is exchanged for a wage is a performance or in Hochschild's word is 'acting'. She defines emotional work as the act of trying, and one may or may not be successful in performing this act. Indeed, she proposes that managing emotion at work means engaging in deep acting, something common to the work of nannies, elderly care workers, servants and sex workers.

Similarly, in the context of the caring tasks performed by domestic workers, Anderson (2000) argues that employers not only attempt to purchase the worker's service and labour power but also their 'personhood', resulting in an unequal exchange. This means the worker is also effectively paid for their loyalty, respect and obedience towards their employer. Anderson's work focuses on migrant workers from (poorer) sending countries who work as domestic workers in the UK. In this context, she emphasizes that employment contracts prepared for both worker and employer comprise a way to prevent abuses or exploitation at work. She also draws attention to the difficulty of applying such contracts in a private home because, for example, the inability of the contract to tackle the complexities of citizenship. Thus, rather than protecting workers, contracts have acted to regulate labour power as a commodity where personhood can be purchased and sold.

Thus, Anderson's argument is a starting point for discussing the complexities of professionalising the job of the *baby sitter*. In the case of Indonesian *baby sitter(s)*, when agencies set up a written work agreement between the parent-employers and the *baby sitter*, they sometimes fail to protect each party legally. This failure might be caused by the complexity of capturing emotional tasks such as caring in a bureaucratic written job description. I discuss this further in Chapter 5 in respect of *baby sitter* recruiting agencies in the broader sense.

Many feminist academics argue that patriarchy persists within households, even in middle-class families where men and women seemingly have equal rights. Taking the American middle-class household as an example, Hochschild (2003) uses the concept from Mauss (1967) of the gift to analyse patterns of exchange in a patriarchal setting. She

argues that some changes in society have influenced the economic base of patriarchy in the family and many women agreed to work 'double shifts' (domestic chores and work outside the house) to help their husbands bring in extra income. In other households, working women share household chores with their (non-working) husbands as they feel guilty about their absence at home. She argues that American families aimed to have a 'good life', and people have to earn much money in order to achieve it. Women and men are involved in this race of earning money chasing the good life which, in turn, made them spend more time working instead of time together with the family. She argues that working extra time to earn income has become a new way to express love for the family, which in turn, affects how families arrange care for their children.

Hochschild's argument resonates with the situation of urban families in Indonesia today, especially among dual-income families where both the man and woman work to earn a living that is perceived as the good life. The good life seems to be their life aspiration. Among middle class families, having a good education for children, bigger houses, and newer cars are among aspirations for a good life that drive them to work long hours to earn money. The realisation of the 'good life' can be accomplished only by earning money, and it is indeed a reflection of love for the family. By looking at Indonesian middle-class parents' aspirations, referring to Fischer, I hope to understand the bigger context of social structure and market system wherein the *baby sitter* occupation emerges as a mechanism support the middle class wellbeing.

### Patron Clients and Fictive Kinship in Domestic Work

Many scholars argued that domestic work is a job where power and class relationship is displayed everyday in a domestic space. Others also argue that households with domestic workers exhibit patron client relationships and such practices have existed since the pre-colonial age in Asia. Scott (1972, pp.2) for example, argued that patron client as 'an exchange relationships between roles may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (the patron) uses his/her own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, for a person of lower status (the client) who, for their part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron'. In patron-client relationship, reciprocity is a key element along with inter-dependency, where service from each individual is highly valued. Scott also argued that

there is affective bond involved in a patron-client relationship. On the one hand patron-client bonds might develop to affective links given both common ties (common hometown, common school, and so on), or simply an almost neutral exchange of goods and services where there are less affective bonds. Since unequal power relation characterise a patron-client relationship, patrons seek to retain their clients by providing supplies, often on credit, as needed by the client(s) in return for their loyalty. If the patron can provide vital needs (such as property ownership, position, education, and many more), the reciprocity will continue and grow greatly over time. Moreover, the bond will be even more solid and become a more personal tie when the patron supplies multiple needs to the client(s).

In Indonesia, the cultural practice of retaining domestic workers has existed since the pre-colonial era. One may even argue that the Dutch colonial residents simply copied the aristocratic patron-client practice whereby the King or Sultan's family accommodated their workers (previously slaves) in the palace. In the 18$^{th}$ century, the colonial, native and mestizo (mixed race) households across the Indonesian archipelago were characterised by the number of slaves they maintained (Reid 1983). Slaves symbolised class distinction between the privileged higher classes and the lower orders. However, Reid (1983) also argued that the meaning of slaves among Indonesians needs to be understood differently from global New World Slavery understandings because they were treated more decently, tending to co-reside with their employers and share 'intimate daily life' with the family.

In many parts of the world, the middle-class women can use their capital to hire women from lower economic backgrounds to do domestic chores within the house. In European households, the 'new' phenomenon of hiring migrant workers to perform domestic work and care in the household has been increasing (see, for example, Lutz, 2002). When dealing with domestic workers, employers apply gift exchange to secure the tenure of service. In Indonesia, familial relations and fictive kinship dominate domestic work relationships (Robinson 1991, Weix 2000). Robinson (1991) has observed that in some Indonesian communities, a family would recruit a young woman to do unpaid domestic work in return for fictive adoption or kin ties or, in some cases, as a form of limited education. In her work, Robinson noted that in urban areas, the relationship between a servant and family-employer was contractual and services were provided in return for

wages. This familial model of relationship between servant and family has persisted into the present. Weix (2000) argues that gift exchange comprises an employer strategy to make domestic workers (she uses the term 'servants') feel closer to them — like a family member — which in turn generates a feeling of dependency and moral obligation in the worker. Further, Weix's research on the north coast of Java revealed that fictive kinship and familial relationship predominate among employers who tend to use the metaphor of adoption or 'taken up child' (*anak angkat*) to describe labour relations within the household, and utilise the familial way to settle disputes with their workers. On the other hand, workers could utilise continuous 'familial support' to gain resources and networks, until they felt independent enough to resign from their position.

Patron-client relationship in domestic service also exist in relation to the recruitment and training of foreign migrant domestic workers. In her research on Indonesian migrant workers who work abroad, Rudnyckyj (2004) argued that the traditional moral economies based on patron-client network facilitates contemporary transnational labor migration. The recruitment through local middlemen that offers advanced financial support for potential migrant's transportation is an example of facilitation for transnational labour migration. Further, the local training for professionalising migrant workers using the standards of the potential employers overseas is argued to be a way to facilitate transnational demand for domestic workers. The training agency made rational calculation to meet the required standard and create methodologies to transform migrant workers. They also make sure such training and the migrant worker's transport overseas workplace are efficient. Rudnyckyj argued that the whole procedure of professionalising and transporting migrant workers as 'technologies of servitude' which is aimed to create a 'proper' domestic worker who are skillful and well-mannered, which are desirable abroad.

### Women and Work in Indonesia

Many feminist academics argue that any discussion on women and work should not only consider the work of production but also the work of domesticity, social reproduction and care. In understanding the realities of women's work, many previous ethnographic studies found that resources are not equal for different groups of community, household and families. The different allocation of resources mean that women have different obligations and responsibilities according to whether the decision making is made at the

individual, familial or communal level. In comprehending women's work in Indonesia, one ought to consider their position not only as single individuals, but also as mothers, wives, daughters, and so on. Thus, work for women is not an individual economic decision, but also linked to the cultural expectations that require them to be a good mother, loyal and supportive wife, and dutiful and respectable daughter. Women's work is inseparable from social ideology, the material demands for living and their own everyday roles (Ford and Parker 2008).

Indonesian women are evidently not homogenous and, therefore, in discussing women's work, it is simplistic to only position them in opposition to men. They are socially differentiated in the society by their class, status, and race/ethnicity, which determines different experiences. As argued by Gamburd (2000a) that gender 'marks and creates segmentation in the labour force'. Gender ideology defines work by gender and further produce jobs like maids and nanny (Wright cited by Gamburd 2000, 77). In addition, Pocock (2005) suggests that, according to a feminist approach, a wide spectrum of gender orders in work and care regimes are differentiated on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, and local settings. The system of regulation over care provisions, the labour market, human capacity, workplace arrangements, education and family structure resonates, accepts and reproduces the gender order that determines how men and women work. Understanding women and work in Indonesia also implies taking account the blurred binaries of paid and unpaid, formal and informal, or public and private work. For example, Grijns, Smyth and van Velden (1994) in her research regarding women's work in rural West Java, found that women at a young age (between 10 and14 years) engaged in unpaid labour work for the family. They tended to be engaged in jobs out of financial need and in sectors that were related to family work, like domestic tasks. Thus, they experience this type of work before they have their own families. By way of contrast, Utomo et al (2013), based on research with female university students, found that young middle-class women aspired to work in their dream job when single, and when married wanted to continue working as a secondary earner. They would seek jobs that allowed them to consistently perform their duty as wives and mothers. This result seemingly reflects the Soeharto's New Order's ideology of the role of women in development where women were seen to have double roles (*peran ganda*) in society: as housewives in the family and as development agents who have the same rights, responsibility and opportunities as men outside the family. The state, nonetheless, urged women to prioritise their family ahead

of the ideal of 'fostering a happy family in general and guiding the younger generation in particular, in the development of Indonesian people in all aspects of life' (Murdiati et al., 1987, as cited in Wright 1987, 8). *Peran ganda* has resulted in the exclusive separation of women's public and private roles, according them a double burden.

Women's role in the family has also been differentiated socially by the ideology of *kodrat* (biological/natural trait) that was introduced during the New Order regime. In this ideology, the state positions women as nurturing child bearers who are responsible for the family and children (Robinson 2009). Adopting Islamic religious views, the state positions men to take the leadership of the family and women to be their loyal supporters. The concept of *kodrat* was also designed to position women as submissive, docile, vulnerable and in need of protection (Suryakusuma 2011). This concept was, in fact, used by the New Order to limit or constrain women's previous political participation under the regime of President Soekarno, which saw women actively participate in the state formation and regulation and, particularly, speak out on issues around marriage (polygamy and child marriage) and worker's rights.

During the period of industrial development between the 1970s and1990s, women's work as industrial labourers was perceived to challenge the social notion of *kodrat*. Dichotomies emerged between work and leisure, and between reproductive and productive tasks, but they were challenged by the reality that many women were working formally in the manufacturing sector. During this time a convergence occurred between the Western industrial concept of work and a complex of state, culture and religious ideas in Indonesia, affecting how the society — including the state — viewed working women. While the Western concept of work has sought to clarify the blurry division of productive versus non-productive activities and private-public spheres, this narrow definition of work continues to dominate discussions of Indonesian labour. For example, the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics or Biro Pusat Statistik (BPS) continues to differentiate work according to different sectors (agriculture, trade and services), and the Ministry of Manpower calculates employment rate based on BPS categories. Those who are not involved in officially designated work categories are considered to be '*mengurus rumah tangga'* (keeping the household). This categorisation means that a large number of women are under-represented in the statistics because their status as workers is subordinated within their designation as 'housewives'. In Indonesian statistics, domestic

workers are not counted because there is no paid work under this employment category. They are statistically registered under the category of 'household members for the day' instead. This situation extends to several other female roles which also remain undocumented by the state. The notion of *kodrat*, imposed by the state through religious and cultural influences, is widely accepted in Indonesian society where women's high status is largely determined by their role in the family. 'Working women' (as industrial labourers, domestic workers and traders) were seen as having low status (Ford and Parker 2008) and implicitly irresponsible by carrying out duties outside family responsibilities.

### The Middle Class and Domestic Work

Since domestic work is closely linked to middle-class expectations and practice, I reflect on Weber's (1968) analysis of the importance of class in a market economy. Weber argued that class is not merely about producing, but also about consuming. He emphasised that people are interested in non-economic matters like status, in addition to money. Status entails 'an effective social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges' and a hierarchy of status in society is distinguished based on privilege or honour (Allan 2013).

The domestic arena is argued to be the place where 'middleclass-ness' is produced (Stivens 1998). In contemporary Asia, the private arena is shifting due to economic and political forces. Domestic and household affairs are no longer exclusive to the biological family members. Indeed, domestic work links gender, modernity and globalisation and has resulted in the reworking of public-private spheres, especially in relation to 'family and domesticity' and 'working outside the home'. In Indonesia, the wealth generated by industry was followed by an increase in spending, and new social groups started to emerge culturally categorised by their consumption practices – the middle classes (Robinson 2000b, Robison and Goodman 1996). Pressure was applied to middle-class women to conform to this new middle-class ideology, while at the same time economic growth further distanced middle-class women from their counterparts of lower economic background due to this economic differentiation.

Earlier studies defined the middle class using economic categories to refer to their consumption patterns. Some discussions on the middle class have focused on political aspects; for example, Robison (1996) viewed the middle class in Indonesia as those who might be categorised as 'professional and technical' and 'managers and administrators'. The non-political/economic argument in relation to defining the middle class was strongly

introduced by Geertz (1961) who argued for a metropolitan super-culture (education, mobility and the use of foreign language) as the marker of status and middle class. Economic historian Howard Dick (1985) clearly described that lifestyle and attitudes are the most striking markers or middle class in urban areas, including in Jakarta. Similarly, McVey (1994) considers the middle class as a cultural category where self-consciousness increases the perception of distinction between groups in the society. Many others believed that education and mobility functioned as symbols of status and class in both urban and rural areas (Newberry 2014). In her research on middle-class reproduction in an urban kampong of Yogyakarta, Newberry has argued that the role of family practices, childrearing and family reproduction are seen as class markers for local people, although they are not discussed in these terms in discourses on class.

Newberry argues that child caring practices like *anak angkat*[5] or adoption, in Javanese villages, represent a strategy to elevate the status of children from poor families. Poor families send their children to live or work with another family to obtain a better education and living standard; after school time they perform domestic chores or child care. The *anak angkat* are not paid but instead enjoy living in the house and gain access to free education. Working in domestic service in this sense is not a strategy to help poor family by sending money home but, instead, helps to elevate the status of the poor family by raising an educated child. Similarly, Robinson (1991) has argued that many households in rural areas utilise domestic workers, who are kin, whose children subsequently join their parents to live and work for varying periods of time. These relatives are not paid in the form of wages but in the form of shelter and education provided for their children.

Pinches (1999) drew on Veblen's ([1899] 2005) concept of conspicuous consumption to understand the acquisition of prestige through the simple display of material wealth. The leisured class, which has acquired prestige through the consumption of goods and services, are exempted from manual work in their household and in the work place. Bourdieu's (2010) concept of distinction also contributes to the discussion on the middle class, particularly his argument that the aesthetic taste of the individual demonstrates cultural capital which can be used to secure social status. Veblen's theory of consumption and prestige not only defines the leisured class but also contributes to the creation of powerful

[5] Literally means 'lifted-child' as used by Newberry (2014) which means a child 'raised' by other parents different from his/her biological parents.

derogatory stereotypes such as the *nouveaux riche.* Pinches argued that this category is applicable to the new rich in Asia who show off their consumption to win status and differentiate themselves from those less privileged. However, nowadays the less privileged also have become middle class on the basis of their consumption patterns as a result of easy access to credit that has accompanied the economic boom in Asia. Their aesthetic taste might differ from that of the leisured class, however.

The link between class and gender has been examined through research that focuses on women's situation in households, and forms of marriage. An insightful study by Sen (1998) showed that in middle-class households, the separation of kitchen spaces in terms of *dapur bersih* (clean kitchen) and *dapur kotor* (dirty kitchen) also represents a differentiation of class. The two types of kitchens reflect affluent women's freedom from manual labour as they use the *dapur bersih* for simple snacks or fruit preparation that can be done by either men or women. By contrast, it is domestic workers who use the so-called, *dapur kotor*, unseen and located at the back of the house, to cook and prepare the main food for all family members. The two kitchens shed light on women's equality with men in the family while also differentiating class (female householders use the clean kitchen, female domestic staff the dirty one). I discuss the reproduction of class differentiation and *baby sitter* in Chapter 5 and 6.

Further, Young (1999) has argued that the new rich in Asia try to differentiate themselves from the majority of people in their country through the purchase of consumer goods enabled by their discretionary income. Today, it is not only goods but also services that are desired for use by individuals and families. They like to purchase these services from outside, including domestic needs such as cleaning the house and looking after children. This preference reflects the new household consumption pattern. In many Asian countries currently, household consumption of child care services is partly a consequence of the state's lack of welfare policies due to ideological or economic reasons (Chua 2000). Child minding has always been considered a family's responsibility. In some households in rural areas, traditionally family members and relatives helped to look after children in return for education or material support. It is an unpaid job done as part of family/kinship obligations and exchange. Nowadays these child minding arrangements have almost vanished in urban areas, replaced by paid domestic workers or a *baby sitter* as a result of economic changes and emerging opportunities. In Indonesia, the state has never been

involved in the provision of care services for the family. In a situation where the state does not provide care for the family, women face a heavier burden particularly in dealing with the demands of the household and the work place.

A similar situation exists in Vietnam. After the decline of socialist influence and the rise of an open market system (*doi moi)*, the country's economy became more open and liberated and, consequently, social welfare became privatised, and the provision of services was no longer the responsibility of the state. This neoliberal turn has extended to school, health, and family welfare, including child care (Nguyen 2014). Particularly in relation to care for the elderly and children, families must find their own way and usually rely on domestic workers who are informally regulated. Domestic workers are mostly women who migrate from rural areas to work in urban homes or institutional settings such as hospitals or catering. Their migration to the city is a direct response to the growing demand for domestic services. Since women in Vietnam are known as the active carers and care providers within the family, their increasing participation in the labour market has complicated their position. This is due to the persistent gendered expectation from Vietnamese society of women as carers in their role as wife or mother. Thus women are compelled to rely on market solutions for care services (Nguyen 2014).

The trend of employing domestic workers for care in the household reflects the increasing role of the informal sector in social reproduction. Much research in Asia has documented the privatisation of reproductive labour and its transfer to the family. Research on domestic workers in Vietnam (Nguyen 2014) and Taiwan indicate a shift in the management of social reproduction from public (the state or institution) to private (family) responsibility. Consequently, social reproduction is not taken care of by the formal sector, rather it is informally arranged and largely unregulated. In the case of Indonesia, since the state has never been involved in the provision of care for family, social reproduction has always been highly dependent on the informal sector.[6]

In Indonesia the state's absence in household care has also been the cause of growing household consumption of services. While many cultural studies focus on middle-class consumption and lifestyle, Leeuwen (2011) found that little attention has been accorded

[6] An exception is made for special circumstances, as stipulated by Constitutional Law No. 34 clause 1, which determines the state responsible for the protection and welfare of poor and abandoned children.

the everyday practices and consciousness of class and the reproduction of such practices among kinship and family. For example, she discusses the increase in family and social activities in public spaces such as shopping malls in Jakarta as an element of middle-class identity and family reproduction. My research builds on the insights of Leeuwen, particularly in understanding *baby sitter* and domestic worker as a symbol of status and class reproduction among Indonesian families.

### Professional Training and Aspirational Infrastructure

Finally by way of introduction, I consult literature on aspiration in the context of transnational domestic migration for understanding the multi perspectives of *baby sitter*, the middle class and the agency. The aspiration of the middle class for the care and hygiene for their household and family members is facilitated by recruiting and training agencies through the provision of domestic workers. According to Shrestha (2018), the agencies facilitate the aspiration of rural women who are inspired to work in the city or abroad. In her research on aspirational architecture of domestic workers in Nepal, she found that in the context of transnational migrant workers, aspirations from both foreign employers and rural women are facilitated by the brokering activities of the agencies, despite their negative image in Nepal. The training and migration procedure that the agency set is to meet the aspiration of employers, which she called as 'aspirational infrastructure' which is the lived experience and practices that navigate and shape the aspiration of those involved in the migration process. For Shrestha, the recruiting agencies not only shape imagination of the trainees about working abroad and improved livelihood, but the imagination of themselves. The recruitment tried to balance the worker's prior and renewed understanding of 'promise of livelihood' and the agency's institutional norms that is being reconfigurated regularly, particularly in order to conform the state's transnational policy and development status. Shrestha focuses on the migrant's aspirations as part of the migration infrastructure that is displayed by the everyday experience of brokerage activities at the agency and related it to the state's effort in encouraging development. Shrestha argued that the recruiting agency is a physical space that shapes social imaginaries and aspiration of the migrants and recruiters. In this thesis I expand this argument by also considering the middle class employer's aspiration for their class and family status.

Killias (2018) argued most training for migrant workers include physical well being and limited soft skills, where they are disciplined to be the 'ideal workers' that conform the employers. By the end of the training, the prospective employers abroad select their desired workers via telephone and a photograph because they are located in different locations. With such training and selection processes, Killias questions how the recruiting agency can ensure that the worker will meet the employer's expectations. In fact, what is taught in the agency is the reproduction of hierarchy in the household, which is claimed to be the simulation of the worker's life at the workplace. Chang (2018) in his research on training for Indonesian migrant workers found that hierarchy in the household is imitated during the training by the trainers themselves by disciplining them with work schedule and harsh words. The female workers are thus trained to be receptive towards the employer, because some foreign employers are difficult to deal with and they have to endure that. According to Killias, the training can only offer docility of workers instead of professional skill, a feature I will explore in this thesis.

## Fieldwork in South Jakarta

I conducted intensive anthropological fieldwork in South Jakarta, Indonesia over a 12-month period in 2015. The capital city of Indonesia consists of five municipalities spread out in the North, South, East, West and Central parts of the city. The Jakarta Governor's office in 2016 recorded the population in the city at 11.3 million during the day, and 10.2 million at night. This difference reflects people who commute daily from their residential areas in neighbouring cities to work in Jakarta. The surrounding cities forming parts of greater Jakarta are those of Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi and together the area is known by the acronym, 'Jabodetabek'. As the central hub for economy and business, Jakarta functions as the place of work opportunities and attracts a large number of migrants from other parts of Java island and Indonesia. BPS recorded around 5.31 million people comprise the Jakartan workforce in 2015.

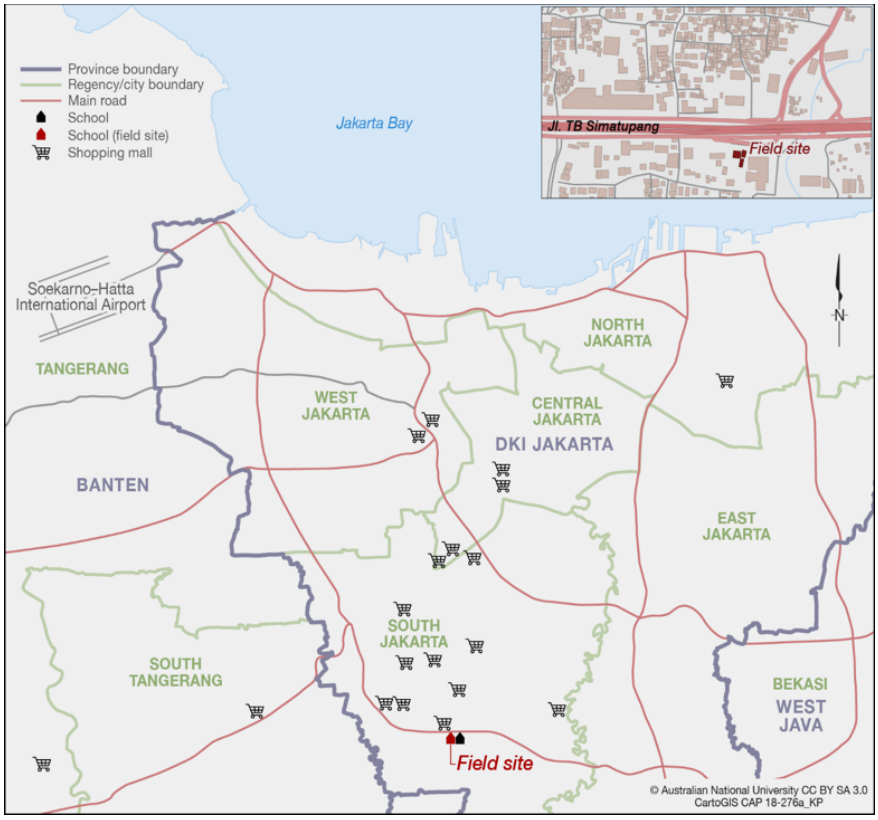


**Figure 1.3 Fieldwork location map**
Souce: CartoGIS, College of Asia and Pacific, Australian National University (2018)

South Jakarta, the site of my fieldwork, is a relatively leafy residential area that, over the last two decades, has transformed into the second major business district in Jakarta due to its direct access to highways that connect Jakarta airport to the city and to the two neighbouring provinces of Banten and West Java. South Jakarta shares borders with West Jakarta, Central Jakarta, East Jakarta, Depok (West Java) and South Tangerang (Banten province). The inner part of South Jakarta is bordered by Central Jakarta, which has less residential area than the South, due to the widening area of the central business district CBD. Around the inner part of South Jakarta, there are mostly office buildings, apartments and shopping malls, with limited elite residential areas for wealthier Indonesians and expatriates. The outskirts of South Jakarta, especially the areas passed by the Jakarta Outer Ring Road (JORR) highway, have changed from residential to business areas, pushing people further into the neighbouring residential areas outside Jakarta such as Depok, Bogor, and South Tangerang. The development of the outskirts of South Jakarta and flooding during the wet season combines to cause severe traffic congestion. Moreover, the infrastructure development urged by the current government of President Joko Widodo has resulted in many new roads under construction in Jakarta,

including in South Jakarta, causing road closures that exacerbate traffic congestion and frustration for commuters.

Changes in South Jakarta residential areas have affected people's lives too as they must now leave home earlier for work. People try to avoid traffic jams by leaving for work at dawn or change their mode of transportation from private cars or public buses to private motorbikes, *ojek* (motorbike taxi) or public trains that are relatively faster but less comfortable. Development of the city has changed the way people of all ages commute. Both adults and children leave home early for work or school, competing against others to reach their respective destinations on time. Some children accompany their parents to school, others go with their carers in separate vehicles due to the commuting time involved. The daily activity of commuting influences household arrangements in many parts of Jakarta.

I brought my son along during my fieldwork. He was five years old at that time which I found very helpful. A child can 'break the ice' with informants and be an effective 'entry point' for starting a conversation with new informants. In the field, I chatted easily with parents in many public spaces such as playgrounds, shopping malls, and most of the time at the school more than the other places mentioned, because we were there for the same reason: accompanying our children. We would often start by talking about our children's situation at that time, for example, their funny behaviour, the food they ate, the toys, books, or anything related to them. After that, I could raise subjects closer to my research interests.

As a fellow South Jakartan, I benefitted from understanding the language and culture of some South Jakarta people. However, I reflected to Narayan (1993) on the fluid meaning of native anthropologist in the field because there is always an insider/outsider view between me and the informants given my social background. For example, the social changes occurring during that time positioned me as a 'new' member in the society. My identity in the field as a middle-class woman, as a graduate student undertaking higher education in a foreign country, and as a single parent (while in the field) helped me build relationship quite easily with middle-class parents. I shared with them the challenges of raising a child; this was almost an everyday topic in our conversation. However, as a fieldworker who also had to attend to the needs of a child in the field, I sympathised with the *baby sitter* whose main work was to look after children. I shared with them the endless

work involved in caring for children for almost 24 hours a day: from waking the child in the morning, preparing breakfast, lunch and dinner, cleaning the house, grocery shopping, taking them to school on weekdays and to the shopping mall or play dates on the weekend. There was almost no time left to tend to our own needs. This daily activity of child minding is the story that I shared with the *baby sitter*.

Through the fieldwork I learned to appreciate how hard life can be for a working parent with a child. Many times I fell sick due to exhaustion from fitting in my work and interview schedule with my son's activities. Moreover, the traffic jams and long distances between places in Jakarta made me realise that one cannot be in two places at one time, something felt acutely by parents with dependent children. I was lucky that my family in Jakarta allowed me to leave my son with them whenever I needed to conduct interviews in the evening. Through this support, I came to understand that it is crucial for a family in Jakarta to have someone to help them attend to children because the government does not provide any child care support for families. Without the extended family or domestic workers, working parents would be unable to manage a household, care for children and engage in paid work.

As part of my fieldwork, I conducted multisited research in the field where I move around school, *baby sitter* agencies, shopping malls and many other places where I observed the middle class and *baby sitter* in the society. I carried out daily observations of middle-class mothers and *baby sitter* at my son's school, in addition to regular observation of family groups in public spaces such as shopping malls or restaurants on weekends. Attending children's birthday parties to which my son was invited allowed me to interact and observe how middle-class women live, interact and build identities for themselves as well as for their children. In these public spaces I could also observe how the middle class positions the *baby sitter* in a social context. I also visited some recruiting agency offices and conducted interviews with proprietors, staff, as well as prospective *baby sitter* and domestic workers. I treat the interview as an interpretive data rather than the fact, because I realize the information provided by my informants can be different than the real situation. I asked for my informant's consent prior to interview and observation, and I seldom use a voice recorder to document the process as most of my informants asked me to do so. I mostly take notes of the interview and observation, although not all situations were able to note (for example during eating with some *baby sitter* in a warung or kiosk). In such

situation, I normally memorise the events and transfer them to my notebook as soon as I can.

I observed the everyday life of some of my informants at the school (for *baby sitter*) and social activities (for both the middle class employer and *baby sitter*) to gain deeper information and data. I also observed some recruiting agencies' activities, including training and assessment conducted for *baby sitter*. I made visits to non-government organisations (NGO)s working to protect the rights of domestic workers and attended some of their training activities, discussions and meetings. I made friends with some of the domestic workers who participated in the NGO activities, visiting their houses and home villages. In total, I conducted more than seventy interviews and hundreds of casual discussions with informants (*baby sitter*, *mbak*, employers of *baby sitter* and *mbak*, NGO activists, school guards, teachers, and so on). Most of these interactions comprised women reflecting on the gendered nature of babysitting and domestic work. I interviewed comparatively fewer men during this period including school teachers, agency owners, middle-class fathers who employed a *baby sitter*, and a local neighbourhood head (*Pak RT*) situated in a modern housing complex. Some interviews were recorded and transcribed in Indonesian in order to document local context and expression. However, mostly I took notes during interviews. When a casual discussion took place while I was eating or having coffee with informants, to avoid concern or disruption I did not take notes but would rush to write notes after those meetings. Since many of my informants were busy, many meetings were done during their breaks. For example, I normally conducted meetings with middle-class working women during their lunch breaks or after working hours. In the case of meetings held after work, I did not want to delay their return so some interviews were made in the car *en route* to their homes. Likewise, I also talked to the *baby sitter* and *mbak* mostly at school — the only time available due to their child rearing tasks. Some extra discussions were undertaken with *baby sitter* using *whatsapp* phone chat in the evening, after they had finished work. It was during this time that both of us (the *baby sitter* and myself) had sent children to sleep and were able to have time for ourselves. I empathised with the *baby sitter* and *mbak* during these shared moments at the end of a long day spent caring for children.

### Multiple Terms Referring to Domestic Workers in Indonesia

In discussing domestic work, many studies point to various contradictions in domestic services that shape and are shaped by social factors. For example, Article 1 of the Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (No. 189) initiated by the ILO defines 'domestic work' and 'domestic worker' as follows:

> 'the term ***domestic work*** means work performed in or for a household or households;
>
> the term ***domestic worker*** means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship;
>
> a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker.' (ILO 2011 [emphasis in original])

To illustrate the complexity of the role of the *baby sitter* and domestic work in Indonesia, throughout the thesis I use terms that are locally known and used, as explained below.

*Baby sitter* is the local term used by many Indonesians to refer to 'professional' child minders who have undergone baby and child care training provided by an agency. They receive this pre-job placement training prior to the agency placing them in middle-class households with babies or children. The agencies develop work agreements between employer, worker and agency that document the tasks of the job, wages and allowances, or other terms and conditions. When working, a *baby sitter* normally wears a uniform provided by the agency, which is replaced every three months, as regulated in the work agreement. Because of the formal arrangement of the *baby sitter*'s work, many employers consider their work as rigid and inflexible – unlike other domestic workers.

*Mbak* is a popular term used, of late, by local people to refer to a relatively young domestic worker. The term *mbak* is often used to soften the term *'pembantu*' (helper or domestic worker) which was previously widely used in Indonesia. Because many *mbak* comprise young female domestic workers, many parents like to hire them as their relatively young age is considered ideal to accompany and play with children. With the *mbak*'s flexibility in relation to their agreed duties, many households also require them to 'help' clean the house, sweep floors, iron clothes, or put laundry into the washing machine. In many households today, however, many *mbak* are tasked by parent-employers to solely provide child care services. They do not undergo training from an agency, and most are recruited via social networks, so they have a relatively more flexible work arrangement. Given the above, the role of the *mbak* can be seen as an alternative to the *baby sitter*; the

former is considered less skilled (which is acceptable for many employers) and comes at a lower cost. The word '*mbak*' is a Javanese term which means 'older sister' but has been used, mainly in Java, to refer to an older single woman with whom one is not familiar. In some quotes that I include in the thesis, I use the term *mbak* in this sense. However, in most part of the thesis I will use the term *mbak* to refer to a category of domestic work, that is a child minder recruited by 'word-of-mouth' who has not been trained by an agency. The term *mbak* reflects a familial or fictive kinship relationship inferred between her and the child/ren for whom she cares, which has, historically, been the basis of domestic work relations in rural areas Indonesia.

*Pembantu* (literally, 'helper') is the widely known Indonesian term used to refer to maids, servants, or domestic workers who work in other people's houses for payment. In contrast, domestic work has traditionally been carried out by relatives who are not paid but provided with a place to live, food and access to limited education (see Chapter Four in this thesis). Nowadays, fewer relatives are available to help with domestic work and many households must pay a worker to help with domestic chores; these individuals are therefore referred to as *pembantu* (helpers). *Pembantu Rumah Tangga* (PRT) is the formal form of *pembantu.* The term *pembantu* or *Pembantu Rumah Tangga* is believed to imply a hierarchical relationship between the householder and the helper. However, since helping is traditionally related to unpaid or voluntary activity, the *pembantu* in a contemporary setting has an associated connotation of unequal relations between the worker and the employer whereby the employer imposes their interests without acknowledging the rights of the *pembantu*. According to my interview with the Coordinator of the National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (Sekretariat Jaringan Nasional Perlindungan Pekerja Rumah Tangga) or Jala PRT for short, the term *pembantu* and worker are contradictory; the latter having equal rights with their employers, particularly the right to a proper wage. Employers tend to oversee the rights of *pembantu* due to their role as helpers and even exploit them by paying very low wages, giving them less time to rest, and so on.

*Asisten Rumah Tangga* (household assistant) or ART is a euphemism for *Pembantu Rumah Tangga*. Some urban households in Jakarta use this term to refer to their domestic workers.

*Pekerja Rumah Tangga* or also PRT for short is the current term proposed and used by NGOs and the government to refer to domestic workers who do general housekeeping work such as cooking, laundry and cleaning. The work *pekerja* (literally, 'worker') was recently introduced to substitute *pembantu* in an attempt to give credibility to domestic work as an occupation. The change also aims to synchronise the new term with the international term used by ILO. They still use the same abbreviation, PRT, to refer to *Pekerja Rumah Tangga*. However, few people in Indonesia are aware of this; many still use the term *pembantu*, including the media. In this thesis I will use the term PRT as a short version of *Pekerja Rumah Tangga* to refer to domestic workers who conduct general domestic chores other than child caring. I use the term PRT and domestic worker interchangeably to refer to a category of domestic work that is not specialised for a certain task.

*Agen* (agency) is used to refer to a recruiting company that supplies domestic workers to middle-class households throughout Indonesia. An *agen* does not necessarily provide training for domestic workers.

*Sponsor* is used to refer to the middle man or *pekerja lapangan* (field officer) who recruits workers in the village and brings them to an agency office in the city. The word borrows English term '*sponsor*' but have a different meaning in this context.

*Yayasan* (foundation) is used to refer to a domestic worker or a recruiting company that recruits, trains and channels potential *baby sitter* in Indonesia. The term *yayasan* is also refers to non-profit work, mostly for charitable or educational purposes. '*Yayasan Baby Sitter*' in Indonesian is used mainly to refer to training institutions for potential *baby sitter*. The term *yayasan* is often used interchangeably with *agen* in Indonesia due to the similar services offered. I discuss this term further in Chapter 6.

*Parent-employer* is the term I use to refer to those who hire a *baby sitter* or *mbak* to look after children in their household. I use the term 'employer' to refer generally to people who employ a domestic worker. In Indonesia, the gender-neutral term *majikan* is also commonly used to refer to employers of domestic workers. However, in the case of my own fieldwork, most informants did not use the term, rather, they used the familial term *Ibu* (literally means mother) or *Bapak* (literally means father) to refer to their parent-employers. In some cases, they also use the English term 'boss' to refer to their employers.

*Ibu* (mother) is the most common term used by domestic workers in Indonesia, including *baby sitter,* to refer to their female parent-employer.

*Bapak* (father) is the term used by domestic workers to refer to their male parent-employer. The vernacular terms, *Ibu* and *Bapak*, clearly show the fictive familial relationship between employers and *baby sitter*. These terms also function as titles akin to Mr and Mrs.

## Thesis Structure

I will start the discussion in the thesis from a discussion around the *baby sitter*'s perspective as a worker in a household, and continue to go beyond the household to look at the social and economic contexts that have shaped and are shaped by the household, and finally return to the household again to focus on th employer's perspective. By doing so I present a complexity of working as a *baby sitter*, which operates in a fluid demarcation of private and public space.

In Chapter Two I present the story of Mira, a *baby sitter* who was trapped in a babysitting job but managed to achieve her aspiration of enrolling in university while working as a *baby sitter*. I compare Mira's story with that of Ika, an *mbak* from a family comprising domestic workers. I argue that a *baby sitter*'s aspiration for upward mobility is no guarantee that they will escape their low-status position which is constantly reinforced in their employer's private domain, as well as in the public sphere. Ironically, the role of *baby sitter* is accorded relatively high status by other domestic workers on account of the personal mobility enabled by the role. In this chapter I also present the differences and similarities of *baby sitter* and *mbak*, which if often blurred.

In Chapter Three I discuss how the occupation of *baby sitter* was established in Indonesia, particularly in Jakarta. Notwithstanding Jakarta's economic growth and social dynamics notwithstanding, I would also like to make sense of the emergence of *baby sitter* in Indonesia more broadly. The 1997 economic crisis and the fall of the Soeharto's government followed by *reformasi* provided the momentum for economic growth in Indonesia. Women have been afforded greater work opportunities, which has changed the social dynamics in the country as well as in the family. In this context, I discuss the social and economic drivers of the emergence of the *baby sitter* in Indonesia, such as the growth of middle class, women's work and rural-urban connections.

In Chapter Four I will discuss the lineage of the *baby sitter* in Indonesia, particularly the nature of the relationship between employer and employee based on kinship exchange. I will reflect on the history of domestic work in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras to present-day Indonesia. By touching on the old practices of domestic work and childrearing in Indonesia, I explore the historical transformation of the role of *baby sitter* that has taken place. How does child care work become transformed over time? In this chapter I will also discuss the regulation and management of *baby sitter* in Indonesia given the issuance of the Ministerial regulation on standard work competence of domestic workers, including *baby sitter*. This chapter seeks to understand the process whereby the role of the *baby sitter* has become formalised as an occupation through various attributes including training, examination, and the uniform.

Chapter Five discusses the business of domestic care work undertaken by recruiting agencies. Examining the agency, in addition to the relationship of employer-employee, adds greater complexity to the domestic work discourse. Training and outfitting *baby sitter* — distinguishing them from *mbak* and PRT — was initiated by agencies. Agencies for domestic workers made visible the occupation of the *baby sitter,* modernising the image of domestic work. Agencies can simultaneously protect and exploit *baby sitter* (and PRT). The training offered by agencies to the *baby sitter* also marks their quick response to regional and global opportunities, transforming the character and meaning of domestic work.

In Chapter Six I discuss the parent-employers' perspectives on the *baby sitter* including their experience in hiring them. The professionalisation of the *baby sitter* does not accord status marking for their employers, rather it has a utilitarian purpose. This chapter discusses middle-class women's aspiration (or desire) for being a good mother which is often challenged by: individual aspiration to pursue a career and the need for a dual income to support the urban household. This chapter reveals stories of middle-class women who decide to hire a *baby sitter* to ensure their children's wellbeing and how they deal with household dynamics accordingly. This aspiration is a middle-class dream to transmit their middle-class status to their children and that of future generations, as well as some consequences that arise because of that.

Chapter Seven addresses the issues raised about the *baby sitter* in Jakarta at the outset of this thesis. Attention is drawn to the *baby sitter* being a mark of both continuity and

discontinuity in Indonesian society. Also, the way in which the *baby sitter* topic has spanned the intersection between class, gender and work in the country is discussed. Finally, an examination of how this study of the *baby sitter* and its methodology could provide the foundation of further research beyond this particular topic.

# Chapter 2

# The Every Day Life of the *Baby Sitter* and *Mbak* in Jakarta

It was an ordinary day for me. I had just dropped my son at his classroom when I met Mira. She was a bit late that morning and was complaining about the traffic jam on the way to school. Mira and I walked out of the school complex and strolled around the neighbourhood while she shared her experience of beginning work as a *baby sitter*.

> It was when I was still in *SMP* [junior high school], someone distributed a brochure that offered work immediately after graduating. The academy provided education for people who wanted to work in health and nursing environments. I was very interested because I wanted to work as quickly as possible. So I went to register in the academy in Purwokerto. I learnt how to attach an *infus* [intravenous drip], and apply dressings and bandages. When I completed my year-long training, I went with my friends on a bus to Jakarta hoping to work in a medical clinic. But we arrived at the location of a private foundation, which I later knew as *Yayasan Permata Indah*. We had additional training there, but I did not understand at that time why the training focussed so much on babies: how to carry, bathe, comfort a baby and so on. But at the time I didn't question it because after two weeks of this training someone selected me to work. Her name was Lola – my current boss. The *yayasan* told me that the salary I would receive was Rp. 650,000 per month.

I could see sadness and disappointment on Mira's face while she told me her story. Mira said that right after she graduated from junior high school in Kebumen, Central Java, she moved from Kebumen to another city for further education because her parents could not send her to senior high school as none of her siblings had been supported that far. However, knowing her strong intention to study and the opportunity to obtain a job directly after training, Mira's parents had paid around Rp. 5,000,000 for registration to attend the nursing school in Purwokerto. Mira and her friends from the same training cohort had travelled together on a chartered bus to Jakarta organised by the *yayasan* that had recruited them. Her family took her to the departure point designated by the *yayasan* (recruiting agency). However, upon her arrival in Depok, Mira found herself assigned to work in a person's house rather than a health clinic. This was really upsetting for her. She and her friends from Purwokerto were shocked to discover that they had been lured, under false pretences, by the *yayasan*. I asked Mira whether she felt disappointed with the

nursing school in Purwokerto, but she said ‘no’. She was, however, disappointed with the *yayasan* in Jakarta, telling me several times that the *yayasan* was not a responsible institution and had been dishonest towards Mira and her friends.

In this chapter I present an everyday life of a *baby sitter*, Mira, and draws on her life expectation in life and her daily activities in and out of the household. I also compare Mira’s story as a *baby sitter* with Ika, an *mbak*, whose work is very similar to Mira but has no formal training on childcaring prior to starting the job. The two stories allow us to understand the *baby sitter* as an occupation from their own perspectives, which reveals varying aspirations and feelings towards their own jobs. This chapter is mostly developed through a daily observation at school, particularly when the *baby sitter* and *mbak* are waiting for the children under their care to finish class. It is one of the common experiences of child minders, because, based on my observation in the field, it is the activity that preoccupies them most each day. Both *baby sitter* and *mbak* have to spend time to wait for the children they care at their school, from early morning until afternoon. After school, they wait for the children to do their next range of activities such as going to sport activities or music classes. While waiting, the *baby sitter* and *mbak* shared their stories about their work, life expectations, and feelings with each other. Through waiting, their class identity was revealed as working-class young women who have access to middle-class lifestyle and experience. In one day, the *baby sitter* and *mbak* are travelling between classes: starting a day from a luxurious house and nice ride on a family car (owned by their parent-employers), to a small *warung* behind the expensive school or a bus ride to the nearest market or shopping centre, where they do different activities while waiting for the children the care.

Through waiting I also discovered stories of *baby sitter* and *mbak*, as we shared the same activities at school. I befriended Mira and Ika after several occasions when I dropped my son at school during fieldwork in South Jakarta. This daily routine helped me understand the activities of the *baby sitter* and *mbak.* From my observations and interactions with them, I discovered much about their life aspirations and perspectives on their jobs. During this period, I came to understand how the role of *baby sitter* is different and also similar to that of *mbak*. The difference between the two is visible in the *baby sitter*’s uniform, while the similarities could be found when they shared stories with me, particularly about their life experiences and instances of dealing with their employers given their job takes

place in the household. I argue that in everyday practice both *baby sitter* and *mbak* share similar everyday life experiences of class differentiation, but may be distinguished from each other through their respective occupational statuses. This 'similar but different' status suggests complexities in differentiating care work within the household, despite the skills developed in the job and written agreement between parent-employer, the *baby sitter* and the agency. In the case of Mira and Ika, these differences have become blurred over time.

Both *baby sitter* and *mbak* are aspirational and aim for a better life. At the time that I engaged these two young women as interlocutors, they divulged that they were in a state of waiting and aspired to realise their aspirations. Both shared their work experiences and how they deal with power relations in the household and social class differentiation in public. They share the common experience of being domestic workers and performing work in other people's private houses. The difference between the two is their access to specialist training, facilitated by the *yayasan* (recruiting agency). The skills acquired by the *baby sitter* position her in a relatively higher position than the *mbak*. However, over time, both of them gain significant experience and the initial difference, as a result of training, is no longer of consequence. What does persist, however, is the class differentiation between the *baby sitter* and her parent employers.

## Mira's Story

Mira was twenty-two years old when I met her. We met at the school which my son and the child under she cared attended. The youngest in her family, she had always been ambitious to achieve certain dreams. Her older sister had married a few years earlier, not long after finishing SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama* or junior high school). Mira did not want to be like her sister: busy with children and family at such a young age. She wished to go to university and work afterwards; she aspired to earn money for herself before getting married. However, Mira considered that her family did not have sufficient funds to invest in her education so, for her, going to a nursing school was the best possible alternative. She was excited at the prospect of becoming a nurse, moreover after completing an education in a nursing academy for a year. However, Mira's aspiration to work as a nurse in a clinic setting was dashed once she entered Lola's household. In her work with Lola, Mira was initially responsible for looking after her one-year-old daughter,

Kyki. Mira lived in a household comprising Kyki's parents, Kyki's grandparents on her father's side, and Kyki's uncle. Mira was responsible for minding Kyki and performing tasks related to her care such as cooking, cleaning her bedroom, washing her clothes and dishes. The household employed another person to clean the house. Mira's direct employer was Lola, Kyki's mother, who recruited her from a *yayasan*. Mira described Lola as a smart career woman who had married Kyki's father, Dodi, a private banker. The house belonged to Dodi's parents who lived on the ground floor, while Mira and her employer's family lived upstairs on the second floor. Dodi's brother (Kyki's uncle) occupied the third floor. While most of Mira's activities were centred on Kyki, she also interacted with Eyang[7] (Kyki's grandmother) and Akas[8] (Kyki's grandfather). Her cooking and laundry tasks were undertaken on the ground floor.

Two years after Mira was recruited, Lola had another baby, Didi. Mira was tasked to look after Didi when he was born, as Kyki had become more independent. Besides, as Kyki's parents viewed it, Eyang and Akas were always at home and could attend to Kyki. Although Mira was primarily engaged with Didi at that point, in reality her responsibilities almost doubled. She still needed to clean the children's room, her parent-employers' room (since Didi slept there), cook for both Kyki and Didi, wash both children's clothes and so on. To compensate, Lola raised Mira's salary.

Mira had always regretted not becoming a nurse. She had mixed feelings about the *yayasan*. On the one hand she was grateful that the *yayasan* educated the *baby sitter* they recruited, but on the other hand she disliked the way the *yayasan* had duped her and her friends. She explained,

> When I was still registered there [with the *yayasan*], they reduced my salary by Rp200,000 per month to pay for the schooling. They knew some of us [the trainees] wanted to continue to senior high school so they provided *Kejar Paket C* [distant learning for high school level education, or also known as *Paket C* for short] for those who were interested. But for that service the *yayasan* cut my monthly salary for two years. I knew from Ibu [Lola] that she paid my salary of Rp. 900,000 per month to the *yayasan*. That means they [the *yayasan*] took some of my salary away because what they transferred to my bank was less than that. Plus they still cut our salary every month to pay the school [*Paket C*] fee. Their deduction was too high because I heard from Ibu [Lola] that the official *Paket C* charges are not that high.

[7] This term literally means 'grandparents' in the Javanese language, however, Mira used the term to refer to the grandmother of the children she cared for, implying a fictive kinship relation between her and her employer's family.

[8] A Palembang (South Sumatera) term for 'grandfather'. Mira also use the term to call the grandfather of the children she cared for.

Under the *yayasan*'s regulations, Mira was entitled to two day's leave every month, during which she would return to the *yayasan* to attend classes. Mira enjoyed those days because she could have a break and meet her friends who also studied there. After two years, the *Kejar Paket C* program finished, and the *yayasan* offered her the chance to continue studying (*kuliah*) at university level. The *yayasan* offered undergraduate study at a private college on the basis that they would deduct the tuition fee from her salary for another four years. Mira did not want to accept such conditions. She discussed the option of *kuliah* with Lola, who supported her and helped her to find a program that she liked. Since Mira had been working in child care, she had developed an interest in child development and tried to find a program that offered part-time study. After some time spent searching, Mira found a university that offered weekend classes in a psychology program. She discussed the course with Lola and saved her salary for the program fees. Fortunately, the program provided an instalment system for paying tuition, which was helpful for Mira. With some financial support from Lola, Mira commenced her university degree. Soon after this, Mira broke off her ties with the *yayasan* after two years registered as a *baby sitter* there. She continued working for Lola, with no further involvement or salary deductions from the *yayasan*. In quitting, Mira's salary was transferred directly to her. This action did not incur sanction by the *yayasan* as she had fully paid for her training, however they did withhold Mira's *Kejar Paket C* certificate (equal to senior high school certificate). Mira was quite worried about this because it comprised the sole evidence of her high school education. I tried to reassure her that, as she was already mid-way through her university studies, she would be issued with a degree certificate in only a few years.

Mira and I continued talking while eating lunch in a *warung* (small food kiosk) behind the school. I admired Mira for being able to manage studying while working; she was in her third semester at that time. She told me her study had been so hard that she had decided to move out of Lola's house after *Idul Fitri*[9] the previous year. She rented a room (*ngekos*) with a friend in a *tempat kos* (dormitory), walking distance from Lola's house. Mira would arrive as early as 6 AM and leave after Lola returned home, around 7-8 PM. Mira admitted that, while most of her salary was spent on rent and university tuition fees, she felt better for living outside.

[9] *Idul Fitri* is an Islamic festive day celebrated among Muslims as the completion of the month of fasting during Ramadhan.

> I cannot concentrate on my assignments if I stay there [at Lola's place]. Although they said they would not disturb me after 8 PM, in reality they still call out to me, especially the kids. Sometimes the kids are fighting, or one of them is sick. So I cannot just stay quietly in my room. It is much better now. I can concentrate on studying although it means I have to stay up late. In the morning sometimes I am rushing to get there [to Lola's], but it is okay.

As Mira and I chatted, the *warung* owner was listening to our conversation. Having known Mira for some time, she commented on Mira's story by asking if she was going to university. She expressed her admiration for Mira and me (as she thought we were both *baby sitter* who were waiting for our 'children') by saying '*bagus deh kalau pada kuliah*' (it is good if you guys go for university study), approving of Mira (or any *baby sitter*'s) aspiration for higher education. The attainment of higher education is one of the symbols of an 'Indonesian metropolitan super culture' (Geertz 1961) that now characterises Indonesia's middle class. While Geertz's statement was made prior to the former New Order era, it remains pertinent — especially among the urban middle class who aspire to attain graduate degrees from the best universities around the world. Mira's aspiration for pursuing higher education imply her aspiration to be a middle class, especially middle class in the city. Robinson (2015), in her research in the small mining town of Sorowako, Sulawesi, found that parents and children aspire and appreciate good quality of education. Having several private schools built by the mining company, parents and children see it as the result of modernity and an effect of living surrounding the company. The high school students appear to conform to the middle-class norms of the city rather than in a small town, particularly in terms of their pride of being a student of good schools, as well as the use of phones or internet among them. Mira also has a presentation of self that conforms to the middle-class graduate student. Every time I meet her, I observed she dressed in a pair of casual denim pants and shirt, a head scarf (*hijab*) and a backpack and an iPhone 4, similar to most young university students in Jakarta.

Mira's aspiration to study at university resonates with rural youth aspirations to become part of the educated urban middle class. This desire increased even after she was not offered work in a clinic by the *yayasan*. The experience of exclusion from middle-class occupations pushed her to view her circumstances creatively. When she discovered that the *yayasan* offered *Kejar Paket C*, she decided to enrol and remain contracted to them until she had finished her high school studies. In pursuing the *Kejar Paket C* study, she was happy that she could meet her friends every weekend; this time allowed her to forget about her work and helped form her identity as a student. This process of studying

restored Mira's pride in herself and her capabilities. She told me how she enjoyed attending group study with her friends and going out to interview people — like, she noted, what I was doing — for her own assignments. As we talked, I realised that Mira was, in fact, on her way to realising her aspiration to be a psychologist, although the difficulties of life as a *baby sitter* still had to be faced in the short term.

In a later meeting on a Saturday night, I went out with Mira after she had finished her class. Since she had started studying, Mira's employer allowed her two days off to attend classes on Saturday and Sunday at the university. She told me that her friends were going out together that night, but she had refused their invitation. Many of them worked in offices as administrative staff and Mira felt embarrassed about her work. She told me, 'I am not the same as them. I am doing housework ['Saya *kerja rumahan*'[10]] and people's opinion about it is different. I do not want them to know. Every time they ask about my job, I tell them "You don't have to know". But one day, if I am already like them, I will tell them'. Mira did not elaborate on what exactly she meant in saying people's opinions about her work being 'different', but I assumed that she meant people thought it was low status work to provide domestic services in a private home. Office jobs are considered much more attractive and Mira had long aspired to have that kind of professional occupation. She wanted to do something else to earn a living, something that did not have the same intensity or carry the same association as the work of *baby sitter*. During the last few months, while working at Lola's, Mira had also worked as a casual online marketing agent for a foreign bank, offering credit card access to bank customers. The extra income paid her university tuition and *tempat kos* fee. She admitted that one of the benefits of living outside her employer's house was that it allowed her to do something else besides babysitting. Living in the *tempat kos* allowed her to study and work at her new job at night. She did not have to worry about the children or Lola calling her name when she entered her room. She was free to find an additional job, and this pleased her.

Mira's decision to move out of her employer's home was a strategy to free herself. Mira's job as a *baby sitter* is, in fact, a public role that she performs at Lola's house and in the local area. In her new roles as university student and telemarketer, she needed a private space for herself. She needed to focus on herself in order to complete university

[10] This term literally means 'home-working' or 'home-based work' but is often used as a soft version of *pekerjaan rumah tangga* (domestic work).

assignments and be successful at the bank. Staying in her employer's house did not allow separation of her public and private roles. Mira's experience clearly resonates with Anderson's (2000) proposition that, in domestic work, the division between public and private space 'is a fiction'. The only way she could ensure private space was to move out from her work place and live separately from her employer's household.

Talking to Mira on a Saturday night, when she had finished work and had just returned from classes, she disclosed to me her desire to stop working as a *baby sitter* as soon as possible. She shared with me some of the conflicts that she faced in Lola's household. While initially she had struggled to find her position in the family, now her work situation was complicated by the fact that her parent-employers lived with their parents. Mira told me sometimes she became the scapegoat when Lola and Eyang fought. Each of them would tell Mira about the other's faults.

> After a fight, Eyang normally complains about Ibu [Lola] to me. Sometimes Ibu [Lola] also does the same thing. I just listen and don't comment when they do it... Eyang sometimes gets angry. She is very fussy, but she is like that because she's old. At the same time sometimes Ibu [Lola] just doesn't want to understand Eyang. Ibu [Lola] is Eyang's daughter-in-law and lives with her… so she should try to understand Eyang.

Mira felt her position — looking after the children of a couple who live in their parent's house — was becoming untenable. She had to deal with interventions from Eyang, especially since Lola was working outside the house. Sometimes what Eyang told her was at odds with Lola's instructions. Mira told me,

> In the beginning Eyang used to tell me to "just listen to what I say, because my education is way above yours". But now she never speaks to me in that way because I am studying at university.

Many times Mira told Lola that she would have preferred to stay at home rather than dropping the kids at school so that she could have more time to do housework, but Eyang required her to accompany the grandfather (Akas[11]*)* in driving the children to school, and Lola could not say anything to help her:

> Akas never wants to take the children to school without me. The kids like to jump about in the car, which distracts *him* when he is driving. He once hit someone in his car when Kyki was jumping around. Akas tried to control Kyki so neglected to concentrate on driving. After that he did not want to drive [them] to school on his own. It is so hard if I don't work with them [the grandparents]. If I tell them I want to work at home and not take the children to school,

[11] This literally means grandfather in the language of Palembang, South Sumatra

> they will comment, “who will accompany the children?” Well [pause] it’s because those kids can’t remain still in the car.

Working as a *baby sitter* involves complicated work responsibilities. As Gamburd (2000b) noted that once a (domestic) worker enters a household, she must develop emotional bonds with the child and the child’s mother at the same time, but the child is bound most closely. My fieldwork supports Gamburd’s argument as it is central to the work of the *baby sitter*. Moreover, in their role as child carers, the *baby sitter* are advised to follow their parent-employers suggestions, particularly the mothers, about parenting. They must conform to both the child's and the parents' requirements. A *baby sitter* must manage this triangular emotional relationship. Hence their job is much more complicated than that of domestic workers who do not have child-minding tasks and only have to meet their employer’s demands. Mira’s situation was more complex still because her parent-employers shared their parents’ house. The person who pays Mira’s salary, the female parent-employer, is also the daughter-in-law of the house owner. This complex intersection of emotions and work is further complicated by relations with several figures of authority within the household, which I argue as multi-stranded relationship. Mira learned that she must manage her own behaviour very carefully in order not to create more conflicts. The gap between Eyang and Mira is significant, not only in terms of age, but also in terms of the power between them. While Eyang is the owner of the house, Mira did not work directly for her. Mira is only allowed access to the second floor of the house. This limited access in the house is often reported in many domestic work discourses, discussing class differentiation and power relation inside the house. Interestingly, however, Mira is in a position to negotiate the power relationship with Eyang as she has full access to the children whereas Eyang does not. In addition, as a result of her new status as a university student, she has the courage to defend herself or her actions when challenged by Eyang.

Mira's close emotional bond with the children pushed her to protect them not only when their parents are absent, but also in the instance of conflict between their parents. Mira recalled,

> Once, when we were all in the car — myself, Ibu [Lola], Bapak [Dodi], Kyki and Didi. Ibu [Lola] and Bapak [Dodi] had a big fight and started yelling at each other. I was holding Didi, the younger one. Kyki then came closer to me whispering “Mbak Mira… I am afraid… afraid, Mbak” and I responded “Come, here come with me. ” while putting my arms around her. Ibu Lola and Bapak [Dodi] apparently heard Kyki so they stopped yelling and stayed quiet… But they are always like that when fighting.

As the sole carer for both of Lola's children, Mira would instinctively provide protection and shelter for the children when they felt afraid and, more importantly, when the parents were not in a position to do so. The emotional bond is a significant factor that develops over time in *baby sitter* work. It is an important feature for any domestic worker who performs child caring at work, but is also fraught with potential tension with the parents of the child. In fact, over various interviews, I found many employers preferred their *baby sitter* to demonstrate the attribute of *sayang anak* (loving children) more than professional child-minding skills. In the view of parent-employers, formal skills are secondary to the emotional bond, underscoring fictive familial relations as significant in domestic work in today's urban households (Robinson 1991). Although regulated by formal written agreements, in practice, the *baby sitter* is still regarded as a de facto member of the employer's family. Mira's involvement in the family conflict above illustrates how these emotional bonds lead a *baby sitter* to protect the children under their care.

However, it is this very requirement for the *baby sitter* to love the child/ren under their care that can create sharp tensions between employer and *baby sitter*, particularly if the child is perceived to be bonding more closely to the *baby sitter* than the parents. On numerous occasions I heard from the *baby sitter* that their 'children' (in this instance means the children under they care) had asked for them by name whenever they were sick or in trouble, even though the mothers were around. The *baby sitter* would feel so bad about it and pretend not to hear. One *baby sitter* explained, 'I felt bad if she [the child] is sick and looks for me instead of her mother. I would tell her that I will be around, but mum will carry her. Sometimes it works, but sometimes it doesn't. I felt so bad about it, I felt like my boss would kill me'.

The affection between *baby sitter* and child emerges naturally because of their intensive interaction during the day when the parents are not at home. However, that affection should be limited to a degree that is tolerable to the parents. It is difficult for the *baby sitter* to know where the limits lie because their parent-employers do not tell them explicitly if they are jealous or unhappy. To avoid the tension, *baby sitter* must know their position in the family, including the nature of the power relations that exist between them and their employers. In her research among Sri Lankan domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, Gamburd (2000b) found that caring was the hardest task of domestic work because it entailed forging emotional bonds that could not be measured. However, as domestic

workers, they are paid to bond with the children in their care, and the power relation between them and their employers makes a domestic worker economically dependent on the latter for their wages. Inspired by Gamburd, I argue that there is a constant contradiction inherent in the expression of love and affection in the domestic care tasks of the *baby sitter*. Demands by employers that *baby sitter* express affection towards children may be retracted if they perceive the bond to be too familiar. The *baby sitter* is required to fulfil two contradictory demands at the same time: establish a warm and loving relationship with the child/children in her care while maintaining a professional distance from the child to avoid overfamiliarity.

A few weeks after that Saturday night meeting with Mira, while waiting for my son at school, Mira asked me if I wanted to join her at a *warung* behind the school. She called it the 'Mbak Lina's *warung*, referring to the name of the owner, and pointed out that I could meet other *baby sitter* and *mbak* there. From the outside, I could see that the *warung*, which sold *Indomie* (famous Indonesian instant noodle brand) and drinks, was packed with schoolteachers on their break. But I could not see any *baby sitter* there. Then Mira invited me to enter the house connected to the *warung.* There I saw many *baby sitter* sitting on the floor, lying on a carpet and even sleeping. Like the schoolteachers, they had ordered *Indomie* from the *warung* or brought food from elsewhere to eat together. One *baby sitter* who had brought snacks had just returned from a vacation with her employer-family. They ate together while the *baby sitter* complained how tiring it had been. She had packed and unpacked the luggage, fed the two children, bathed them, and even washed their clothes after they swam. Luckily, she had not needed to cook for them. Then, she had repacked the luggage to return to Jakarta. She shared stories about how such travel was far from being leisure; in fact, it was work, work, and more work. 'It was *jalan-jalan* [travelling] for them, not for me!', she said. And then others followed up complaining about their visits to shopping malls and the discrimination that they suffered from the shopkeepers and the *satpam* (security guards) of the malls. One *baby sitter* said,

> They stopped me because I wasn't wearing socks in the playground because they don't want the floor to be wet and sticky. In most paid playgrounds they are like that to us, but not so to rich people. That time, next to me were two wealthy looking women, sitting in the playground without socks. So I told him "Hey, look at them, they're not wearing socks. Why don't you tell them to leave too?", and then he stayed silent.

Then another *baby sitter* shouted,

> Yeah, it is always like that. They [the parent-employers] even borrow my money. When they go to the mall they always asked for cash from me, especially when the child wants to buy snacks. They always have the excuse "*Suster*, I don't have cash, can I borrow from you, please? I will return your money as soon as I go to the ATM". But they never go to the ATM. They always forget. And we? We always feel bad to ask for our money back from them, right?' Other *baby sitter* and *mbak* agreed and said they always need a minimum of Rp. 500,000 cash in their wallet when they go out, in case the child wants to buy something. I don't understand why those rich people borrow money from us. They buy everything with cards. Credit cards. It is credit, right? They pay everything in instalments, maybe. Look at us; we don't have credit cards. We pay everything in cash. *Lunas* [full payment]".

Similar stories were often shared by many groups of *baby sitter* I met. When their employer borrowed money, the *baby sitter* did not have the courage to ask for their money to be returned as they felt uncomfortable (*nggak enak*) due to the power relation. However, they were usually optimistic that their employer would remember their debt and return their money. Sometimes the employer returned the money right away, or transferred it with the monthly salary of the *baby sitter*. However, this form of delayed payment was inconvenient as the *baby sitter* needed cash for personal expenses like phone credit, and buying snacks, or breakfast and lunch while waiting at school. Many times, their parent-employers forgot to return the money, so they just forget about having the money returned.

After waiting in the *warung* until the end of school classes, the *baby sitter* and *mbak* then would walk as a group back to the school entrance. In this group, uniforms do not differentiate them. Many *baby sitter*, including Mira, do not wear a uniform. She stopped wearing her uniform when she started wearing a *hijab* (at the previous Idul Fitri), and besides, most *baby sitter* are not required by their parent-employer to routinely wear a uniform. Some wear uniform tops paired with denim pants. On the other hand, some *mbak* wear uniforms even though they have not received formal training through an agency. However, despite the diversity of clothing styles, this group child minders are immediately recognisable within the school environment.

Once they have collected the children from the pickup point inside the school, many of them line up at the exit gate to wait for the family's driver. Some others go to the playground where they let their 'charge' play while eating. They needed to feed the child/ren at school because these children have after school activities such as swimming, soccer, maths, reading, English club, and so on. The *baby sitter* also supervises children's club homework while eating lunch and might ask the child to hurry up and finish eating or doing homework in order to make the next class on time. While some after school classes were held at the school, many were held outside and traffic jams usually delayed

their rush to the next activity. Once the child was in the next class, the *baby sitter* would wait for another hour.

One day during the fasting month of Ramadhan, while we were waiting at the school, Mira and her friends asked me if I wanted to join them to visit the ITC Fatmawati, a local trade centre comprising different shops under the one roof, where items are sold at bargain prices. I told them it was too far from the school and I had another meeting in two hours. Instead, I suggested we go to Cilandak town square, a mall located in front of the school. But they replied that mall was not for them; they preferred ITC because Cilandak sold costly branded items at fixed prices — most of which were too expensive for them. During Ramadhan, many *baby sitter* and *mbak* did not wait at school because many were fasting and fewer *warung* remained open for those who were not fasting. During that time they would go to trade centres or local markets to buy items for the *lebaran* (Idul Fitri) holiday rather than wait at school. They would travel by bus or get lifts with other *baby sitter* friends returning to their employer's house in the family car. They would spend time in the trade centre buying clothes for *lebaran* or *oleh-oleh* (souvenir gifts) for their families back home. As the time approached for the end of the school day they would return by bus. I observed that a *baby sitter* could have private time and express their own sense of identity and economic status. Their decision to go to the *warung* and trade centre reflected their awareness of class and perception of their own position in society. Waiting at the school allowed them to experience and negotiate working class and middle-class lifestyles on a daily basis. They depart from a luxurious house, ride in a modern family car, make friends at an international school, and then wait in a simple *warung*, shop in downmarket places, and ride on the public bus.

One night sometime later, Mira sent a text message informing me that she had told Lola she would not return after *lebaran*. Lola had reluctantly accepted Mira's decision. Three months after *lebaran* I sent a text message to Mira inquiring where she was working. I was stunned to hear that she had returned to Lola's house to resume her babysitting work. So I set up another weekend night out to hear her account. She recounted,

> It's a long story. I fell sick during Idul Fitri and was hospitalised. Not long after that I contacted the new office and told them that I could not start immediately because I was ill. The office said they could not wait for me, so I withdrew my registration. And then Ibu [Lola], contacted

> me and I told her I was still in the *kampung*[12] and had been hospitalised. She was sympathetic and asked me how I would pay for the hospitalisation. She transferred some money to me and Eyang transferred more. After recovering, I was feeling bad towards Ibu [Lola], besides I did not have a job. So I contacted her again and asked if Ibu [Lola] had already employed someone... She said, "not yet", and if I wanted to come back, they would accept me. So then I went back to work with them.

When Mira was sick in her hometown, her mother was worried about her studies, especially how she would pay her tuition fees given that she was no longer working. Mira assured her mother that her situation would improve. She believed this strongly and, as it turned out, her previous employer came to her rescue.

It is apparent that Mira's decision to go back was influenced in part by her understanding that she would be accepted back by her former employer. Returning to the household of her employers was like returning home for Mira since she had an emotional bond and familial-type relationship with her employers. Mira's decision to return to her former employer resonates with research done by Weix (2000) in Java that revealed the way that employees utilise their employer as a resource to enable their independence. Mira's return can be viewed as an effort to pay back her employer's support when she was sick and a strategy to rebuild her savings for her education. As argued by Scott (1972), in a patron-client relationship that is common in Asia, a form of imbalance of exchange exists between the two, particularly when the patron provides significant goods/service for the client's survival, such as protection, education, and food during bad times. Such service creates a sense of obligation for the client to reciprocate, in the form of service that is most needed by the patron. Mira's situation resonates with this argument.

In Indonesia, it is common for a family to have a domestic worker or *baby sitter* come back and forth in their household for several years. This practice requires familiarity and a trusting relationship between worker and employer. The returning worker is usually welcomed back with open arms because the whole family loves them and has missed their presence (although probably they miss the service more than the person). The household-based work relationships in which the *baby sitter* and other domestic workers are enmeshed are emotionally bonded relationships which accommodate leaving and returning. Even though the term '*baby sitter*' signifies a formal kind of work regulated by contract, the daily work arrangements within a household cannot be readily listed on

[12] *Kampung* is also used to refer to 'home town'.

paper and, thus, a verbal or implicit agreement usually still applies. In fact, an informal arrangement can work to the *baby sitter*'s advantage in a case such as Mira's where she was able to obtain her employer's support to pay her medical costs and take up her former position. This kind of unstated agreement arises out of long-standing social prescriptions and inferred obligations pertaining to relations between family-employers and domestic workers. This flexibility is a universal characteristic of domestic work relationships in Indonesia where employers help and support their workers as part of their responsibility as the more 'powerful' in the household. The employee exchanges her labour for this kind of support.

Mira's desire for higher education is a striking case of a *baby sitter* who aspires for class mobility and remains working as a *baby sitter* in order to fund her university study and achieve this dream. Most of the *baby sitter* informants in this study did not aspire to continue their education, rather, they sought to find a regular job to earn a living or help improve their family's economic condition. Like other *baby sitter* and domestic workers, Mira has also experienced inequality and ill treatment on account of her role being categorised as low status. However, Mira's university studies have enabled her to negotiate her position as the primary carer for the employer's children with new confidence.

## Ika's Story

I met Ika for the first time while waiting for my son at the school swimming club. She was waiting for Aldi, the child under her care, who was also in the swimming club. Ika looked different from other *mbak* — who normally wear a casual outfit of shirt and long pants. When I first met Ika, she was wearing a stylish long turquoise *hijab* combined with a green long-sleeved top, and long green skirt; she looked more like the mother of a pupil than an *mbak*. She admitted that people often thought she was the mother of Aldi. That day Ika had just come from Aldi's house, having finished her cooking and cleaning tasks there. She never waited at school because her parent-employer's house was only 30 minutes away, preferring instead to return to her parent-employer's house and continue working. Ika normally finished working before *maghrib* (sunset) when her husband would pick her up and they would go together to their small rented house located nearby. Ika is married and, at the time of our first meeting, was four months pregnant. She told

me that she was still suffering nausea and morning sickness, and therefore her movement was much slower than before. Luckily, she did not live with her employer-family. Since marrying six months ago, she had established her own household with her husband. Ika's husband worked in a non-profit organisation near her employer's house—which was where they had met. She was responsible for looking after a six-year-old boy whom she had cared for since he was one year old. The boy's eight-year-old sister was looked after by another carer. The head of the household, Ika's parent-employer, was a private businessman who worked for a famous tycoon in Indonesia. His wife was a professional dancer who travelled frequently to perform. This meant that Ika and the other carer had full responsibility for the care of the children — from arranging the daily menu to taking them to school.

Ika joined the family when she was fifteen years old. Initially she had followed her aunt to work with a Middle Eastern family for one year. It was her aunt who informed her that one of their employer's friends needed a child minder. She said the job was easy: accompany the child, feed him and play with him. There would be no cleaning involved. As argued in earlier studies, women of younger ages in rural families have been usually involved in unpaid jobs because they have been socialised with domestic tasks and minding their younger siblings for their mothers (Elson and Pearson 1982). Ika's first involvement in the job reflects this situation as she was experienced in looking after her young brother and cleaning the house. She immediately accepted the job and agreed at once immediately to move in with the family. At first she thought the job was easy, but soon realised it was quite complicated. The boy had delayed speech and needed regular treatment in a speech therapy centre. 'Ibu' — the term used by Ika to refer to her employer — asked Ika to join her at the centre and listen to the therapist's instructions. With limited education, Ika had paid careful attention because, apparently, she was required to help Aldi do the same exercises at home. Ika did that for years, including other therapy that involved physical exercise as well as music. Sometimes the therapist came to Ika's parent-employer's house, but often Ika and Aldi needed to go to the clinic. Ibu seldom took Aldi to therapy because she travelled a lot, while Bapak was even more rarely at home. As a result of the intensive therapy that Ika and Aldi did together, their emotional bond grew very tight. When I met Ika, Aldi's speech was perfect so I did not realise he had previously undergone a long process of therapy. 'He [Aldi] needs to do sport: swimming or gymnastics. Every day there is always an activity after school. That is why I have to go

home after dropping him off in the morning. There are a lot of things to do at home. Moreover, I still feel *pusing* [headache] from the early pregnancy'. Ika explained to me how busy she was with her work. Although Aldi was already independent, his activities outside the house required an adult's company and supervision. Once I met her with Aldi in Gandaria shopping mall during a holiday break; they were on their way to Aldi's gymnastics class. Ika was elegantly dressed on that occasion, and I could understand why people often thought she was Aldi's mother.

Because Ika was very close to Aldi, her parent-employer trusted her very much. She was also close to other employees who had been working for a long time there, including the *satpam* (security guard) and several *sopir* (drivers). However, she was not very close to Imah, the other *mbak* in the house who looked after Siska, Aldi's older sister. Imah seemed jealous of Ika because she went out a lot with Aldi. In fact, Ika's trips with Aldi were mostly for therapy, not for *jalan-jalan* (go out for leisure). Imah went out less often because Siska, was much older and preferred to go out with her friends without Imah's company. On many family holiday trips, Ika accompanied them – but not Imah – because Aldi needed her. Ika realised that Imah was jealous, so she told Ibu to take Imah on a holiday trip instead of her. One day when the family was planning to have a holiday in Bali, it was decided that Imah would come along because Ika was married and expecting a baby. Ika said,

> Ibu asked Imah if she had a costume for swimming with Aldi, and she said she didn't have one. But I was sure she had [pause], she just wanted Ibu to buy her a new one. Then Ibu asked her to borrow my swimming suit, but she refused that. She said my swimming suit was too big for her. Finally, Ibu bought her a new one. This was just an example [pause] many times she just left dirty dishes from dinner until the next day. I knew she left the dirty dishes for me, because I came home after *maghrib* and she was responsible for helping Aldi and Siska afterwards. So she forced me do the dishes in the morning rather than cleaning them up straight away.

While Ika seemed to have a problem with Imah, she did not have any problem with her parent-employer. The power relation that she faced was different to Mira's. In fact, Ika was in a powerful position in the family because of her full access to the youngest boy in the family who needed considerable attention.

When Idul Fitri was approaching, Ika told me that she would not be returning to work at Aldi's parent's house. She would wait in her home village until she had delivered the baby and then decide whether she would return to work or not. Ika invited me to come to her *kamar kos* where she lived with her husband to bid her farewell. I took a motorcycle

taxi (*ojek*) to her place – a small room on the second level – with a single mattress on the floor facing a fan and a small wardrobe. The bathroom was outside, shared by tenants in other rooms. Ika looked happy that day. She did not wear a long and elegant *hijab*, just a simple *one* with a long sleeved top and cotton pants. Apparently, the long *hijab* was her 'work attire'. I saw a large red Samsonite suitcase leaning against one wall, signalling that the owner was ready to *pulang kampung* (return to her hometown). Next to the suitcase were two large shopping bags filled with old clothes from her employer for Ika's family. She told me each year before Idul Fitri, Aldi's parents gave her many unused clothes, shoes, toys, and other household items for Ika's family. The Samsonite case that I saw that day was probably one of those items. The Idul Fitri gifts that Ika's parent-employer gave her and her family signalled a fictive kinship relation between Ika and her parent-employer's family. Uniquely, the gifts are not only for Ika herself, but also for Ika's family and relatives, which showed extended fictive kinship relation established through domestic work. Such extended fictive kinship relation often exists in many households in Indonesia. In relation to her departure, I asked Ika how she felt to leave Aldi. She told me,

> It is sad. I have been with him for more than five years. Ibu was very sad, wondering how Aldi will be without me. I have prepared everything for Ibu. I made some lists: Aldi's therapy schedule, his favourite food, his daily menu, and even the recipes. Ibu knows nothing about Aldi. Imah will take over my role now. She will be very happy.

Ika looked excited because this time she was going home with her husband. She was even more excited to welcome her baby, due in two months. Then I asked Ika if I could visit her in her village and she happily agreed. She gave me her address, including directions for a *travel* bus (public minibus) from Jakarta directly to her village.

One weekend I visited Ika's home in the village of Brebes, located in Central Java, around 16 hours by bus to the east of Jakarta. I took an intercity bus to Brebes town and then a small public vehicle to the town nearest the village where I alighted and waited for Ika's mother to collect me. I had told Ika that there was no need for anyone to collect me as I could make my way independently to her village. But Ika insisted that the ride from town to her village was very far and confusing for a new visitor. Besides, if I took an *ojek* from the village town to Ika's her house, an uphill journey, it would cost around Rp.100,000. It was costly to make the trip using an *ojek*. So I waited for Ika's mother in the nearest town, and ate a bowl of meatball soup from a street vendor by a small paddy field. The

town was tiny but bustling. Street vendors surrounded a market, shops and a small tall guesthouse that faced a paddy field.

Ika's mother arrived soon after: she smiled at me and gave me a helmet to wear. 'Come, *Mbak*[13]. Let's go home, but now that I am in town, let me fill up with gasoline first. It will be a long journey', she said. I followed her instruction and hopped on the bike. Ika's mother was in her late 40s, and very friendly. Along the way, she talked about her family and her feelings for her children. She was grateful that Ika and her other daughter, Indri, had good employers in Jakarta. From this I gathered that Indri was also working as an *mbak* in a household in Jakarta. I was enjoying her stories so much that I did not notice the distance we had covered. It was a long journey, indeed, and I could see why the *ojek* ride was so expensive. We passed three villages, many bridges that crossed rivers, many paddy fields, and still we had not arrived. Finally, we reached a busy village with some small *warung*, well-appointed small houses, and a mosque. 'We live not too far from that mosque', Ika's mother explained. When I finally reached their house, Ika was lying down in front of a television with another young girl, Dede, her sister's five-year-old niece. Dede's older brother, Yusuf, was playing outside with his friends. That weekend, Ika's sister (Dede's and Yusuf's mother) had come from Jakarta to see her children. She normally visited them once a month.

The three bedrooms house was pleasant, with green tiles and a wooden front door. We sat down in the small living room and chatted. The three women – Ika, her mother, and Indri – shared stories of their family. Almost all women in their family had worked as domestic workers in Jakarta, except for Indri who had been married with two young children and could not leave the village for work. Her husband worked as a casual builder in the village and sometimes in other villages. In the previous year, Indri's husband had not returned home. Apparently, he had been having an affair (*selingkuh)* with a woman from the neighbouring village; in fact, some said he had married that woman. Ika's mother recounted this as though Indri was not present to tell her own story. I stayed quiet, listening to Ika's mother talking,

> I asked Indri to leave her husband and bring her two kids here. I asked her to file for divorce because who wants to get involved with polygamy? After Indri and her children moved here she helped me sell food in front of the house. That way she could have some money for her

[13] Ika's family called me *'mbak*' as a term of respect for a young woman normally used by Indonesians, especially in Jakarta and Java.

children. But she was such a kind daughter, she told me she would work in Jakarta because selling food was too tiring for me. She did not want me to be exhausted finding money for her and her children. So she decided to go to Jakarta and work with a family. She got the job through Ika.

While women's decision to migrate as domestic workers in the city is common in Indonesia, in Indri's case the decision was pushed by men's behaviour in the family. Although often seen as subordinate in the family, rural women in many parts of Indonesia show their power through their ability to work outside the house or look after their family's finance because in many cases men cannot do so. Anggraeni (2006) in her study on Indonesian female migrant workers showed that some married female migrant workers decide to work as domestic workers abroad because men were unable to work or had persisting bad behaviour such as gambling, violent, or being unfaithful in the marriage.

People in Ika's village, particularly women, were connected to Jakarta through a network of domestic workers that existed there. This is typical with many other sending villages of domestic workers in various parts of the world (mostly the third world country) where village people are connected to globalisation through domestic work. Ika told me that there were two women in the village who had connections with Jakarta, and anyone who needed a job (such as an *mbak*) would come to them. Imah also came from Ika's village and, it seemed, had also received assistance from the same person. However, in Indri's case, it was Ika who informed her sister about a job opportunity in Jakarta because one of Ika's friends, who worked as a PRT (*Pekerja Rumah Tangga* – household worker with general house cleaning and cooking), had resigned from her job. Indri agreed to take on the role and left the children with her mother. Ika and Indri's mother was thus rearing her grandchildren while her daughters working to look after other people's children in the city. Initially, Indri had worked as a PRT, cleaning the house, cooking and doing the laundry. The family had already contracted a *baby sitter* to look after their child. After working with this family for one year, the *baby sitter* had resigned, and the parent-employer had asked Indri if she wanted to look after the six-year-old child. She agreed to do the job and the family found another *mbak* to take on her domestic work tasks. Indri told me that she had '*naik kelas*' (gone up in class): from looking after the house to looking after a child. Indri's employer raised her salary from Rp.900,000 to Rp.1,200,000 per month on account of her new role. The improved new salary and role as an *mbak* have marked her upward mobility in domestic work hierarchy that she used the term '*naik*

*kelas*'. It seemed to me that Indri felt she had climbed up one step higher at work, from being a PRT to an *mbak*, replacing a *baby sitter*.

When I spoke to Indri about her job, she told me that she enjoyed her work very much because it was something familiar to her as she had children of her own. But on many occasions she felt very sad too because she was accompanying someone else's child and not her own. She looked ready to cry at that point, but then she stopped herself, saying 'Well, this is what people mean by "struggle". Right, Mbak?' She tried to confirm her situation as a mother to me, knowing that I am a mother myself. In fact, Indri's experience resonates with other *baby sitter* I met in Jakarta who told me they had to ignore their feelings towards they own children in the village. However, some *baby sitter* who had worked for many years in the city even told me they felt closer to the child under they care rather than their own children in the village. This feeling is shared by many Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong who look after foreigner's children, as documented by Anggraeni (2006) through her study on the experience of Indonesian female migrant workers abroad.

After talking to Indri that night, I slept at Ika's house overnight and played with Dede and Ali before they went to bed. Everyone in the family knew Indri would leave the next day, except for Indri's young daughter Dede. Everyone seemed to be trying to make her happy. I observed that Indri held her two children almost all the time as we played together. They were laughing while taking selfies on my phone. The next day, around 11 AM, Indri was ready to catch the *travel*[14] in front of the mosque. Ali was there, holding her mother, but Dede had gone out with Ika's mother to buy an ice cream. Apparently, that was the way they concealed Indri's sorrow from Dede. I said goodbye to Indri as I would leave the next morning and promised to keep in touch. The *travel* bus then left with several other domestic workers heading to Jakarta.

Ika and Indri's village is connected directly to the capitalised domestic work market. The *travel* is a mode of transport that transfers a steady supply of workers directly from the village to the city at least twice weekly. As I had travelled to the village using the intercity bus followed by a motorbike trip with Ika's mother, I could understand the crucial function of the *travel* for domestic worker supply business. For workers, the *travel* made

[14] Local term for intercity minibus

their trip to work convenient as they did not need to change to a different bus or mode of transportation until reaching Jakarta. For these workers, most probably, the working trip to Jakarta was much easier, and probably cheaper, than a working trip to the local town. It was clear why young women in this village preferred to work in Jakarta. Similar *travel* routes exist in many different villages in Java, connecting the villages to the urban labour market.

We returned to Ika's mother's home and then Dede arrived with an ice cream in her hand. She called out her mother's name over and over, but no answer came. She ran all around the house to find Indri. I could not say a word; nor did the others in the house. Only Ika's mother said that Indri had left already. Dede was so angry that she screamed many times, calling out that Indri was a liar. Through her tears, Dede kept saying that Indri always lied to her; that it was like this every month. Dede asked for her grandmother's phone to call Indri. But no one complied. Ika's mother held Dede in her arms, trying to calm her down. She told me later that she had asked Indri not to return home too often as it was distressing for Dede. As a mother myself, I could understand how Indri felt when leaving her children behind. While it was a very difficult decision to make, she had no choice but to work in Jakarta because her children needed financial support for their living costs and education. I asked Ika about her feelings and she said it made her anxious about her own situation after having a child. She would like to work and earn money for herself and her family, but she could not leave her children with her mother. It would be too difficult for her, and also her mother. Ika had not decided what to do.

**Figure 2.1 A *travel* bus that directly connects a village in Brebes to Jakarta**

## Same but Different: *Baby Sitter* and *Mbak*

Among domestic workers I met in the field, there is a clear distinction between *baby sitters* and Mbak or PRT [Household worker] child care tasks. Many in the *baby sitter* group argued that they are responsible for children's wellbeing and the PRT is responsible for the household cleanliness and the rest of household member's wellbeing (i.e. food). Nonetheless, among *mbak* who are PRT with specific tasks to look after children, there is no clear difference between the *baby sitter* role and themselves because their tasks are exactly the same. The only difference they could tell me was the *baby sitter* training from agency. They did not consider the *baby sitter* uniform as a distinguishing feature between them, because many *mbak* are in fact wearing uniforms that their parent-employers purchase from public shops. Mira and Ika are two examples of how similar the task of *baby sitter* and *mbak* is, although one of them did not go through any professional training. In what follows I discuss similarities and differences in the roles of the *baby sitter* and *mbak* which shows how the two categories of occupation become blurred in everyday practice. This discussion contributes to the debate about care tasks within domestic work, specifically, the natural and emotional nature of the tasks being performed in a household. Interestingly, both types of domestic work are visible in public, bringing power relation within a household into a public setting.

### Patron-Client Relationship as an Entry to the Occupation

From the above stories, the entry to domestic work require a social network to link rural supply of workers with urban demand. Either working as a *baby sitter*, mbak or PRT, the mode of recruitment in the village is similar: using brokers that operate in the local setting. While Mira's experience was recruited by a sponsor that worked in a formal agency (with brochures), Ika and Indri used an individual and informal network – relatives – to find a job. Mira, Ika and Indri are examples of how brokers worked in both formal and informal ways to link workers and employers. Both brokers provide a range of livelihood aspiration to potential recruits. In Mira's case, the recruitment was arranged in a formal way through her school and using brochures to attract rural young women. Interestingly, this relatively formal process did not guarantee someone to have a dream job in the city, but trapped Mira in a domestic work that she hid from her family and friends. The formal sponsor used a professional image of working in an urban clinic to recruit potential *baby sitter*(s) but it is the language and context that is unfamiliar to rural young women, which might

end in a lucrative recruitment. On the other hand, Ika and Indri were linked by a close relative who is experienced in the job and can be trusted. The relatives provide a certainty and sense of protection that is typical to rural patron-client relationship during the recruitment of workers. Thus, rural young women, either *baby sitter* or *mbak*, are linked with urban jobs through both formal and informal recruitment process that operate in a patron-client relationship and offer livelihood aspiration.

### Waiting and Aspiring for a Better Life

During my fieldwork, it was while waiting at school that the comparative experiences of *baby sitter* and *mbak* were revealed through daily conversations with Mira and Ika. They both shed light on the lives of young women who endured difficult moments as carers while waiting to achieve their aspirations. As young women from rural parts of Indonesia, their aspiration to improve their lives drove them to attain work immediately after finishing school. Their dedication to their work reveals endurance and hopefulness. There are other elements in the *baby sitter* story, which are familiar to that of the *mbak*, but there are also differences. Being a *baby sitter* is not the ultimate aspiration for many *baby sitters* I met. They have another wish in life, such as higher education that could lead to an 'office' job, higher income for themselves or to support the family (children, parents or siblings). This situation resonates with what Mills (2006) has argued in her research on female rural migrant labourers in urban Thailand where young women found new meanings and values for themselves and their family as their local homes were connected with global capitalisation and mass-market commodification conveyed through technology and communication. In the case of *baby sitters* and *mbak*, because there were only limited jobs available at home –and payment are relatively low in any case– working in the city is a way to get a better paid-job than in the village. In addition, being a *baby sitter* in the city provides much better income than an *mbak*. For young women, doing a caring task in a household – like a *baby sitter* or *mbak* – comes easily, as they already have experience in family work as well as the networks to get the job. Being an *mbak* or a *baby sitter* opens pathways to experience a middle-class lifestyle by accompanying the child wherever they go, in the city and beyond. Caring work is in a higher valued work category than cleaning house, and consequently the *baby sitter* is positioned one step higher than the *mbak*, and even higher than a PRT.

During my fieldwork, I observed that waiting is one most prominent aspects of the daily work of *baby sitter* and *mbak*. Waiting can be very boring, as I experienced myself when I piking up my son at school. One of my informants from the ILO in Jakarta told me that being a *baby sitter* is a type of 'standby' job, similar to shopkeepers or security guards. For them, work is mainly to stand by, and they seem not to do anything but wait, until people come and ask for their help. However, for a *baby sitter* or *mbak*, I noticed that they perform long hours of both actual care work and standby time. For example, in my mini survey that I distributed among Mira's friends, I gathered that both the *baby sitter* and *mbak* worked for almost seventeen hours a day, seven days a week. The work includes activities around cleaning, cooking, taking children to school, attend to children's meal and play time, bathing, and sending them to bed, tidying the room, washing and ironing, and prepare the child's needs for the next day. They are generally at work from 5 am to 9 pm. Most of the time when I tried to call or send a message to one of them, they would reply in the evening when they had finished their work. Only when waiting at school, can the *baby sitter* rest, relax or enjoy time with their friends, while they plan for their future. During the waiting period at school, the *baby sitters* exchange information about job opportunities in different households because some parents ask the *baby sitter* if they have any friends who would like to work.

Waiting at school is not only a 'time pass', as Jeffrey (2010) noted in his research on youth in India. During this 'time pass' period he describes how youth build solidarities and class boundaries with one another. A similar process occurs with the *baby sitter* and *mbak*. For a *baby sitter* or *mbak*, waiting at the school is one major activity. Once they send the child to his/her classroom, their time is their own. It is the only time in the day they have for themselves, be themselves and do what they wish. At this time, they can express their own identity as a working-class group and build boundaries with the 'rich people' whom they talked about while chatting. They use the waiting period to visit certain places that they believe fits their income and lifestyle. They chose places to hang out like *warung* Lisa and ITC Fatmawati instead of coffee shops, restaurants or shopping malls. They use the bus instead of taxis when returning to the school after a short trip to ITC. While waiting they also share stories about their experiences at work, share food, and information about better opportunities. Once school time finishes, and their wait is over for the day, their time of relative freedom end and they become workers again.

The *baby sitter*'s and *mbak*'s daily routine of waiting is different from those of the mothers'. I spent some time with mothers of the students from the same school and the way they spend their time to pass is very different. We went to coffee shops to have breakfast, having the *arisan* meeting in a restaurant owned by one of the mothers, grocery shopping at a supermarket, window shopping in a mall or even going for a yoga or aerobic class. The travel to these places was convenient as there was always a family driver who took us to different places and waited until we finished. We would then return to the school before the school bell rang.

In this chapter I found waiting at school as the opportunity to express one's class identity. There are a lot of things that *baby sitters*, *mbak* and mothers do while waiting for school hours to pass. For them to wait means to socialise, to rest, to find ways to express their own self. They reveal their common experiences of being a working class, being differentiated by their employer in and by the public. However, they also build boundaries of class while waiting as they access different spaces that are believed to belong to their own class: e.g *warung* vs coffee shops, a bus vs private car driven by a driver. Even in the warung, the space they owned was different – which is at the back of the warung – creating some distances with the schoolteachers. Although some mothers also spend their time in *warung*, none of them access the internal spaces like the *baby sitters* and *mbak* do. Likewise, although some *baby sitter* and *mbak* had a lift in a car to ITC Fatmawati, they could not ask the driver to wait for them there until they finished window shopping. Waiting for the school hours to pass is experienced differently by women depending on their class position in the society.

In addition, a *baby sitter* and an *mbak*, waiting at school is a metaphor for waiting to move on to a better life. The exchange of information between *baby sitter* and *mbak* were undertaken intensively while waiting, and this information is their ticket to new opportunities and better work options. For Indri for example, her opportunity to work in Jakarta came from Ika who received a news about a PRT job from her friend that she met when dropping Aldi at school. On the other hand, for Mira, her daily routine to take the children to school is a way for her to support her own education. Day-by-day and year-by-year Mira works as a *baby sitter,* during which she spent time waiting at the children's school, to finish her *Kejar Paket C* diploma and enter university. She is waiting and working on her dream to be a psychologist.

**Figure 2.2 A *baby sitter* sleeping in a bench while waiting at school**

**Figure 2.3 After school view: several *mbak* waiting for their employer's car at the school gate**

### A Triangular Relationship in the Household

While waiting together at school, many stories about household dynamics and employer-worker relations were revealed to me. I learned from the stories of Ika and Mira that child minding is emotionally challenging because it requires unconditional affection for the 'child' in their care. The task of child minding can become problematic when labour is exchanged for money. Hochschild (2003) has argued that care work involves many elements in the exchange because the care is not paid directly by the one who receives the service (the child), but by another agent (the parents). I argue that this situation is a triangular relationship of carer–child-parent–employer. Both Ika and Mira deal with a

triangular relationship in their households because they are responsible for the child they care for and to the parent-employers. In many cases, this triangle becomes more problematic, also known as multi-stranded relationship, due to other household members such as grandparents (in Mira's case) or other workers (in Ika's case).

The complex dynamics that exist in a household with an extended family makes the *baby sitter* reluctant to work in this household type. In a visit to a *baby sitter* agency, I observed an 'interview' between a potential parent employer and a *baby sitter*. The parent-employers mentioned that they lived with the child's grandmother and all of a sudden the *baby sitter* looked unhappy. She sought to clarify whether the grandmother lived temporarily or permanently in the house. The young woman even disclosed to her potential employer that she may feel uncomfortable performing her role with the grandmother in the house. In many domestic work relations, the existence of additional family members is viewed as disruptive for the employer-employee relationship. Some of the *baby sitter* that I met also shared their experiences of conflict with grandmothers. To the contrary, in Mira's case, her university education seems to have encouraged a certain confidence to defend her rights as a *baby sitter* when challenged by her employer's intimidating mother-in-law.

### *Baby Sitter* Training, Uniform and Connection with Agencies

There are two factors that differentiate the work categories of *baby sitter* and *mbak*. These differences are maintained (and possibly even initially constructed) by recruiting agencies in order to provide clients different types of service. These differences, however, have become blurred in everyday practice, especially when both *baby sitter* and *mbak* have gained significant child rearing experience.

Firstly, the *baby sitter* training is one fundamental difference between a *baby sitter* and *mbak.* As a trained and skilled occupation, the *baby sitter* as an occupation offers a higher salary than the untrained *mbak*. It is also believed to be less tiring work with greater mobility compared to the role of domestic house cleaner or PRT. This aspiration for better pay and more life opportunities is facilitated and regulated by an agency, known as a *yayasan* or *agen*. They have some *sponsor* who identifies young women in rural villages and brings them to the city for training. In the agency, the women are provided with shelter and food while attending *baby sitter* training for about one month. Sometimes the agency also provides necessary medication, and even lends some money to trainees from

the point of initial registration right through until placement in a household. When a *baby sitter* has finished training and recruited by a parent-employer, the agency will set up a work agreement that regulate the *baby sitter* monthly wage and entitlements, such as monthly allowance (phone credit, toiletries), monthly leave, and bonuses. In some cases, agencies try to keep their *baby sitter* bonded with them even when the *baby sitter* has started working in a household. They offer some opportunities to continue study through distance learning for the *baby sitter*. Such an offer is an irresistible opportunity for many young women who have barely graduated from junior high school, in spite of the arrangement extending and prolonging their debt to the agency. However, while agencies do assist many young rural women to achieve their aspirations, some of them conceal their intent when recruiting trainees. Mira's experience is a case in point. Furthermore, despite the supposedly non-profit training nature, the '*yayasan*' is also a profit-making enterprise: deducting up to 15 per cent from the monthly salary of a *baby sitter*, allegedly for costs relating to the *baby sitter*'s travel, training, and accommodation costs prior to their work placement.

Training from and registration with an agency is in fact no longer necessary once a *baby sitter* has gained experience; at this point they may resign and continue informal work with a parent-employer. They also could move from one place to another through word-of-mouth recruitment. Both of these options avoid salary deduction as a result of the agency facilitating the contract. However, by independently brokering their own work arrangement they have no protection when dealing with a 'bad' employer, and cannot resign from a household before securing new employment. Where a *baby sitter* chooses to act independently and is no longer represented by an agency, her movement is similar to that of the *mbak* who is usually recruited through an informal network of people. In Ika's case earlier, as an *mbak*, she has never gone through any agency training like a *baby sitter*, yet she was able to gain child therapy skills through her work. As a result, her skill level was far more advanced than the usual *baby sitter*'s due to her ongoing intensive involvement in therapy activities.

Secondly, another blurry difference is the *baby sitter* uniform. Among domestic workers, a uniform can position the wearer higher in the hierarchy because it implies skills and professionalism. But in the wider public sphere, wearing a *baby sitter* uniform can directly identify the wearer as working class—a domestic worker. For Mira, wearing a uniform

was the proper clothing to wear before she started wearing a *hijab*. It functioned as a marker, allowing her to identify and be identified by other *baby sitter*(s), and make friends in public places. In her *baby sitter* uniform, Mira could readily find her position at the rear of the hall in a reception venue, allowing her to mingle with other *baby sitter*(s) who also waited there. Since Mira started to wear a *hijab*, she no longer wore a *baby sitter* uniform because she found it too complicated. Few uniforms were long-sleeved, and Mira did not want to buy a new uniform. Instead, she wore inner sleeves to cover her arms, but that became too complicated. Finally, she decided to wear her 'normal' or everyday street clothes and her *hijab*, which she found much more straightforward. On the other hand, Ika never wore a uniform in her role as *mbak*. While she did not wear a uniform, her stylish way of dressing in public, particularly her long hijab, did not cause others to treat her as low status. Quite the opposite, people assumed she was the mother of the child in her care. By not wearing a uniform, the *mbak* are less readily categorised as domestic workers in public places.

A uniform is a marker of occupational identity. It differentiates the formally trained *baby sitter* from the untrained *mbak*. Although in practice the uniform is not definitive in differentiating the two roles because uniforms can be readily purchased, the agency created the uniform style to brand and categorise domestic workers. The uniforms sold by agencies are predominantly white, resembling that of a medical officer and symbolising cleanliness, hygiene and purity. The uniform would appear to function as an element in the formation of a hierarchy of types of domestic work (*baby sitter*, *mbak* and housekeeper or PRT). As some of my informants told me, wearing a uniform is a matter of '*gengsi*' (pride), similar to the pride of wearing the uniform of the Indonesian civil service which reflects the status of permanent, secure and white collar employment (see Idrus 2008).

**Figure 2.4 A trainer instructs uniformed *baby sitter* trainees**

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined various similarities and differences in the aspirational work categories of *baby sitter* and *mbak*. Wolf (1992, 135) in her research on young female factory workers in Java, shows that despite their misgivings about the difficult nature of the work, they see a progressive change in their lives. Similarly, I argue, that as a caring occupation, both *baby sitter* and *mbak* are occupations undertaken while waiting for better opportunities and progress towards life. Both endure difficult times and class differentiation in the household as well as in public.

The *baby sitter* and *mbak* perform similar everyday tasks and share middle class experiences, as well as class differentiation in public. They also shared similar aspirations to build better lives and work-related grievances. While working, both *baby sitter* and *mbak* experience the middle-class life: the pursuit of higher education, airplane travel, commuting in luxury cars, and living in large, modern houses. Within one day, *baby sitter* and *mbak* travel between two classes and experience two different lifestyles: middle to working class. However, this privilege is coupled with the difficult experience of being stigmatised as member of a working-class group in the public sphere and being cast in a subordinate position within their employer's household. Some workers are able to negotiate this stigma through education (in Mira's case) or skills and close emotional bonds (in Ika's case), but the overall shared experiences suggest common complexities of home-based care work and multiple – instead of dual – employer-worker relationships.

The work of the *baby sitter* and *mbak* involve complicated relationships with their employers as women in these roles are required to express unconditional affection towards the children in their care while performing their duties with professional zeal. The emotional bond that develops over time creates a fictive familial relationship between the *baby sitter* and the child, and the child's mother. This relationship, I argue, is a triangular relationship that complicates the task of child carers like *baby sitter* and *mbak*, more than other domestic workers who deal with dual relationship of a worker and employer. Once such a relationship has developed, the *baby sitter* might terminate her arrangement with the agency – rendering the formal rule-based arrangement no longer valid. Their new work arrangement is made directly with the parent-employer, reflecting a similar contractual process as the *mbak,* who are recruited through personal networks.

From the perspective of everyday practice, the routine child minding duties performed by both *baby sitter* and *mbak* blur any initial differences between these workers. The shared aspirations and similar experiences of women working in these roles closes the gap even further. In the act of minding a child/ren, the *baby sitter* and *mbak* are both required to wait – literally and metaphorically. The waiting process can be tough, as the worker is required to deal with power relations and internalise social class distinctions.

In addition, being a *baby sitter* and an *mbak* enable someone to travel between class spaces: experiencing both the middle-class lifestyle of their employers and the humble lifestyle of their rental room in a *kamar kos* or worker's room in a household. This semi-private personal space enables them to plan for and work towards achieving their own and their family's upward class mobility.

The differences and similarities between *baby sitter* and *mbak* do not only display the blurry lines of difference between of the two occupations. In fact, they shed light on the hierarchies among workers, by positioning the *baby sitter* in an elevated social status (through salary, training and their uniform). Nonetheless, this hierarchy among workers prevails when workers have entered their workplace and the patron-client relationship between employer and worker persists.

# Chapter 3

# The Emergence of the Occupational Category of *Baby Sitter*

Over the last few decades the role of the *baby sitter* has become common among urban middle-class families in Indonesia. Their role seems to substitute the child caring role previously performed by parents, grandparents or relatives and PRT. The formal training offered by the recruiting agency has provided them with a skill to look after a child, which follows certain standards established by the agency, differentiating them from PRT, *mbak*, or even the parents themselves for whom parenting skills are passed down from one generation to another. The trained, uniformed *baby sitter* represents modern child rearing in contemporary Indonesia.

The *baby sitter* has now become more visible in Indonesia. While accurate data on the number of *baby sitter*(s) is difficult to obtain given the absence of formal records relating to domestic work employment, their increasing number is evident by their visibility in many public spaces. For example, during my fieldwork in Jakarta in 2015, many times when I visited a shopping mall on the weekend, I would often see a group of family with *baby sitter*.

The *baby sitter* as an occupation first appeared among wealthy Indonesian families in the 1980s. At that time their services were engaged by only a few elite families. Nowadays, twenty years after the crisis, the role of the *baby sitter* has become more popular among wider groups in society. The middle class, whose numbers have been increasing alongside Indonesia's economic improvement, are the main users of *baby sitter* services. More recently, many middle-class families may be seen in public walking with a *baby sitter*, thereby indicating a close connection between this social group and the occupation. However, although the existence of the *baby sitter* is well recognised in Indonesia, we know little about their origins and emergence. In what social context did the *baby sitter* emerge? They seem to be popular and in demand by the middle and upper class families, but what are the drivers for this development? This chapter takes the discussion of *baby sitter* beyond the household, enabling us to see in more detail the blurred distinction

between of public and private roles in domestic work discussions. Obviously, to understand the *baby sitter* as an emerging element in society, we need to go beyond the household and look at the larger socio-economic context.

In this chapter I seek answers to these questions by situating the *baby sitter* in the larger context of Indonesian society. I take into account the economic and social changes that have taken place in Indonesia, including during the period of New Order, *reformasi* (year 1998), and beyond. The economic and political systems underwent extensive reform following the 1997 economic crisis and the fall of Suharto along with the New Order government. *Reformasi* was designed to bring improvements in economic opportunity, democratic government and the role of civil society in Indonesia following a long period of authoritarian rule. The momentum generated by *reformasi* inspired people to demand their civic rights and participate more actively in politics, particularly after the long and restrictive period of New Order regime.

In discussing the context of the emergence of the *baby sitter*, I draw attention to three key and interrelated developments in Indonesia. They comprise middle-class consumption, increased access to employment for women, and increases in inequality with interconnections between rural and urban areas. The chapter contributes to a discussion of the middle class, gender politics and the family in contemporary Indonesia as well as to academic discourses on the economics of domestic work and care. I argue that the *baby sitter* as a new occupation emerges in Indonesia at the same time as the social and economic situation is undergoing transformation. The economy is growing relatively quickly, yet inequality is also widening between rich and the poor, and between urban and rural space. This transformation is taking place in a context where women have more opportunity to participate in the work place yet there are high expectations for their role within the family.

In discussing the middle class as a cultural category, I draw on McVey (1994) who argued that the term ‘middle class’ is often used by social scientists to refer to the bourgeoisie in general, or some segments of the bourgeoisie that are in ‘middling’ positions in relation to the socio-economic elite. According to McVey (1994, 12), the ‘middle class’ is a cultural term that ‘depends on a self-consciousness that can imply the perception of a distinction between civil society and the state’. Since it is a cultural category, there is no straightforward definition of middle class rather, it is relative to the social context.

## Indonesian Middle Class and Consumption

In 2018, Indonesia is listed as a lower-Middle Income Country (MIC) by the World Bank with the rise of income per capita from $857 in 2000 to $3,847 in 2017 (The World Bank 2018a). The definition of middle class by The World Bank is made in monetary terms, where the people have an individual minimum consumption of US$2 per day, or US$3,000-US$12,000 per annum (The World Bank 2018b). By referring to this economic definition, income is the key determinant in being able to afford a *baby sitter*.

The growth of the new middle class in Indonesia emerged during the New Order period (1966-1998) of economic growth and development. It was the policy settings of the state, not the middle class *per se*, that triggered the subsequent growth over the following two decades of the New Order regime (1965-1980) (Mackie 1990). This growth was also the product of a wider phenomenon occurring in Southeast Asia following the oil boom in the early 1970s and as a result of global industrialisation of which Southeast Asia was a major beneficiary.

As a cultural category, the urban middle class in the 1980s was defined with reference to occupations, such as professionals or managers (Lev 1990), that determined a certain lifestyle, such as ownership of a car, motorcycle, or television (Crouch 1984). While the middle class grew steadily during the two decades of the New Order (Young 1990), its political role was insignificant (Crouch 1984, Lev 1990). This growing category of middle class was referred by Robison (1996) as the 'new rich' – those who had started to invest in the economy in addition to the 'bourgeoisie' who owned the capital. Further, the middle class close connection to the state has acted as a marker of status for the new rich, because it can be seen as a proxy for their access to power.

Symbolic consumption was also said to define membership of the new middle class in Indonesia (Gerke 2000) and the new rich often use it to display their connections to the globalised modern world. For example, Kentucky Fried Chicken, one of the famous American fast food restaurants, was established in Jakarta in the 1980s, followed by McDonalds in the 1990s. During this period in the context of the growing economy and consumption, middle class families enjoyed 'getting lost in the mall' as part of their affirmation of status and class (Leeuwen 2011). This excitement for consumption has

been accompanied by marked increases in disposable income among the middle class, fuelled by easy access to credit and credit cards (see Pinches 1999).

After the fall of Suharto and the autocratic New Order regime (1998), the middle class which had been critical to the emergence of the elites, was then seen as crucial for democracy (Leeuwen 2011), particularly given their participation in civil society and student movements for reform. The economic crisis (see next section) hit the country badly, with unemployment increasing dramatically as a result of the downturn in the manufacturing sector. Following the crisis, economic reform was initiated alongside efforts to curb corruption in the bureaucracy. Since the economic policy reforms introduced in early 2000, economic growth in Indonesia has gradually increased. From the 1990s up to the present, the basis of the Indonesian economy has shifted from the industrial sector to the service sector, as shown in Figure 3.1 below. Until around ten years after *reformasi*, the industrial sector was the biggest contributor to GDP but in 2016 the World Bank recorded the service sector as the leading contributor to GDP.

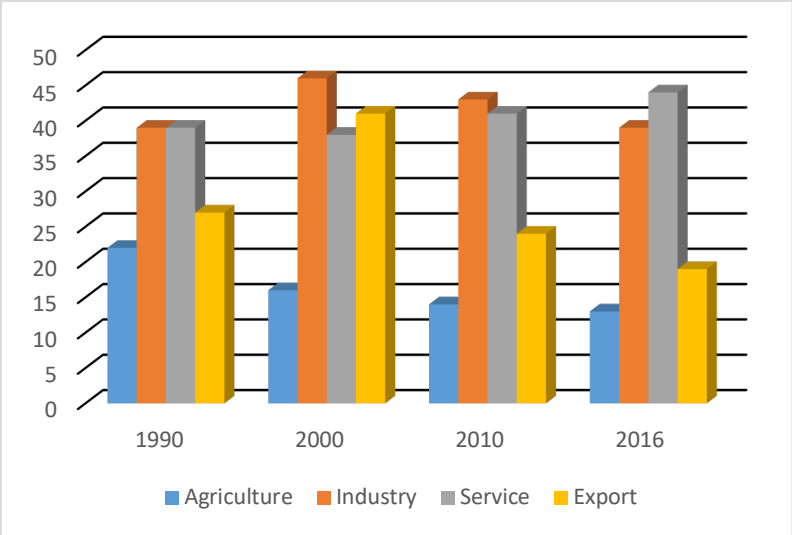


**Figure 3.1 Sectoral contribution to GDP in Indonesia (%)**
Source: The World Bank, 2017. Data is adapted by Author into these graphs. Access date 18 November 2017

Unemployment levels were significantly reduced through the informal sector which was able to absorb the unemployed through self-employment opportunities, work remunerated in the form of accommodation or food, such as domestic work, or as day labourers, while the formal sector had negative capacity to retain employees (Cameron 2002, Hugo 2006). At the same time, domestic public consumption helped sustain the Indonesian economy.

By 2016, the Indonesian economy had improved significantly, as reflected by a GDP increase of 5 per cent. While it signals a rebound after the severe hit of economic turmoil, it has still yet to reach the pre-crises levels of 6.5 per cent GDP growth/ per annum. Along with this economic improvement and people's income increases in general, over two decades of *reformasi* the Indonesian middle class formed almost a quarter of the population in 2017 (The World Bank 2017b). Their consumption contributes significantly to the Indonesian economy, with almost half (around 43 per cent) spent on the household. As the capital city and centre of economic activities in the country, Jakarta has experienced rapid economic growth through the provision of various services and infrastructure development. Massive construction of apartment buildings, offices, hotels, supermarkets and shopping malls throughout Jakarta signalled the increase in people's consumption (and incomes). In some urban areas in Indonesia, the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recorded that over the decade 2007 to 2017, household consumption of non-food items to have been consistently higher than food purchases (see Figure 3.2). This is probably due to household expenditure on transport, children's education, health and other items such as electricity and domestic services. Non-food consumption was highest in Jakarta compared to other cities.

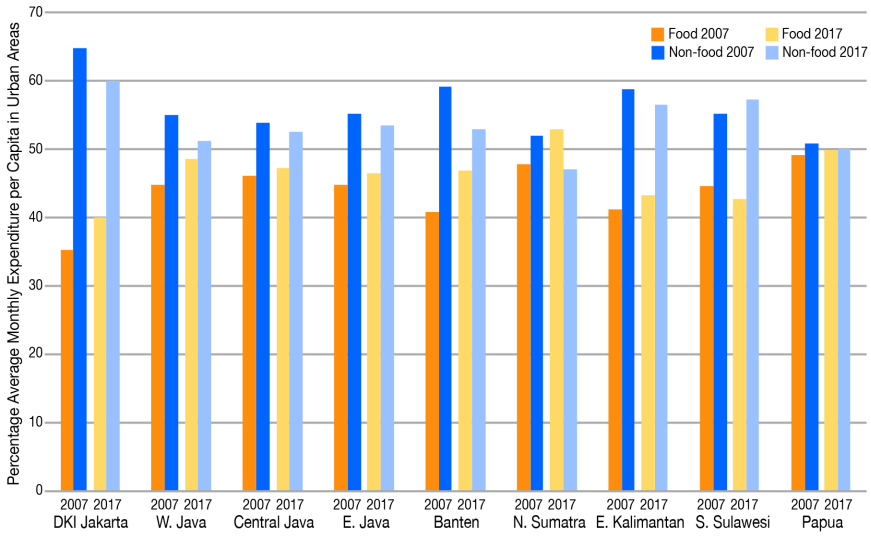


**Figure 3.2 Household food and non-food expenses in Indonesia, by Province (Year 2007 and 2017 Comparison)**
Source: BPS, 2018. Data is adapted by Author into these graphs. Access date 17 April 2018.

In Jakarta, people's consumption habits are visible in the markets and shopping centres. They visit shopping malls individually or in groups of friends or family. A large shopping

mall is a popular destination for families because it functions as an 'all-in-one' place. It has supermarkets, department stores, bookstores, home appliance outlets, cinemas, restaurants, fitness centres and hair salons, barbershops, skin and nail care centres, music schools, preschool/kindergartens, and even swimming pools and slides. All of these activities require payment of one sort or another, reflecting an urban middle-class lifestyle; and in order to afford this lifestyle, many families need a dual income. Within this lifestyle, demand for domestic workers and child carers emerge.

In the course of a research on the middle class in Jakarta in 1998, Leeuwen (2011) observed that visiting shopping malls had become a popular activity for the middle class. They did so not only for shopping, but also for 'non-commercial activities' like meeting family activities, meeting friends and relatives, celebrating birthdays, participating in social activities like *arisan* (revolving savings group) and even for donating blood. On weekends, visiting shopping malls had become the routine outing for middle-class families in Jakarta. At the time of my own fieldwork in Jakarta in 2015, the weekend visit to the mall or 'shopping town' was still common among families for spending time together. Together with these families, the *baby sitter*(s) or *mbak*(s)are often seen to walk along with them, seemingly to confirm a certain urban middle class lifestyle.

Many middle-class families argued that they take their *baby sitter* with them on weekend outings to the mall so that she too may enjoy the city lifestyle. Wulan, a middle-class mother with a three-year-old daughter, often takes her *baby sitter* with her family on the weekend as part of entertaining and treating the *baby sitter*. She explained,

> I take her to eat out so she does not get bored in the house. We would like to entertain her by treating her for meals in a restaurant. She can order anything she likes, even expensive food, more expensive than what I eat.

The middle class assume that their lifestyle is desired by others including their hired workers such as the *baby sitter*. They 'entertain' their *baby sitter* while enjoying their leisure time at the shopping mall, claiming that they give the *baby sitter* some time off from work. Nonetheless, this trip to the shopping mall is still a work trip for the *baby sitter*, as she is still doing her job. Some other middle-class mothers told me that sometimes they do not want to take the *baby sitter* along, because they are seeking 'quality time' with their husband and children. However, one mother disclosed that, as her husband resented the costs of *baby sitter*, she always brought along both *baby sitter*

to look after her two children, enabling both her husband and herself to enjoy their leisure time together.

Middle-class consumption, including the engagement of a *baby sitter*, is partly shaped by the dynamics of the city. Infamous for its traffic jams, Jakarta's roads have influenced many people's lives over the years, including their mode of commuting. The intense development of road infrastructure in Jakarta since the election of President Joko Widodo in 2014, has contributed to bad traffic jams in ever more extensive parts of Jakarta. For example, I travelled the same road, Jl. TB Simatupang, on a daily basis during field work to take my son to school. The road was always packed with cars and motorcycles. The intensity of the traffic jam (*macet*) was such that often even motorcycles could not pass through the narrow gaps between cars (see Figure 3.3). While taking this road by *ojek* (motorbike taxi) each morning, like all motorcycle commuters my son and I breathed polluted air and were directly exposed to the dust on the street. Our experience contrasted that of car commuters who would sit comfortably in an air-conditioned car, protected from the polluted air, while listening to music. We were probably in a slightly better position than people who commuted by public bus or train, however, as these modes of transport were full of people.

In Jakarta, commuting is also experienced by children who go to school each morning. Together with adults, they embrace the traffic jams every day. Many middle-class families in Jakarta have more than one vehicle because the traffic jams and long commute make it difficult for parents and children to take the same vehicle in the morning. Some middle-class families have different vehicles for different purposes: a car for parents to use to go to work, and a family car to be used for the activities of the children and whole family. As Newberry (2014) argued, *mobil* (car) and being mobile is a marker of middle-class identity and, in the context of traffic jams in Jakarta, many people seek to make their *mobil* and mobility as comfortable as possible. Many cars in Jakarta today have a small television to entertain passengers during their commute. Some even have a small fridge stocked with snacks and drinks. The family car, which children normally use, is commonly a seven-seater vehicle with sliding doors on both sides, and small television screens installed on the head rests of the seats. With this large car, the whole family can travel in the one car when necessary, with sufficient space and entertainment facilities. My son once protested to me about commuting by *ojek* every day instead of private car,

because he saw that most of his friends were able to sit comfortably in the car and watch movies on the way to and from school. He complained about having to sit still on a boring *ojek* ride without being able to move, or to watch movies while commuting. Every now and then we got a lift from other parents after school, and we could also experience commuting in luxurious cars. Such cars were quite spacious, where children can move from one seat to another, watch movies, and sleep comfortably. Many times I can see children in the car are being cared by their parents or *baby sitter*. For example, one day I was riding a friend's car whose children went to school that was located in Jakarta Suburb, Bumi Serpong Damai (BSD), about one hour drive from the school in early morning traffic. The car has many equipment of her children such as eating utensils, pillows, milk bottles, toys, and sporting equipment. She told me that she needed to take all that equipment because her two children had a lot of activities after school, and since they left home very early in the morning – at 5:30 am – they must bring and prepare the children on the car. Breakfast and after school rest were mostly done on the car, even doing homework. On another occasion, I also saw one *baby sitter* fed a child after school, which was quite rare. She told me that the child's house was quite far from the school and it will be too late if the child had lunch at home. Therefore, she rather fed her at school, before going home, so she could sleep on the ride home. These observations informed me that urban transformation has changed the way caring activities is performed, particularly among the middle class families. It is now done in mobility, due to traffic jam, and it can be provided by parents or their substitutes like *baby sitter*.


**Figure 3.3 Morning *macet* (traffic jam) in Jakarta**

On the other hand, for urban workers, the commute homewards in the evening is similarly delayed by traffic jams. Many people are stuck in traffic for around two hours on their homewards journey. Some spend extra time in their offices or in shopping malls until the peak hour traffic jams had lessened. During fieldwork, most of my interviews with middle-class career women were held after office hours, as they too were waiting for the roads of Jakarta to empty. As it turned out most of our discussions were held over dinner whereas I had thought they would prefer to rush home and eat with their families. However, avoiding the peak hour traffic jams necessitated eating dinner outside the house almost on a daily basis. They argued that it was less tiring and less stressful to avoid the traffic jam rather than going home directly after work and getting stuck in the middle of it. Given this commuting issue, middle-class parents have less time to interact with their children and must find other people to look after their children at home, including at mealtimes, and these tend to be paid domestic workers.

Urban lifestyles affect household consumption and many city-based families maintain dual income households. With both men and women working, the middle class hire domestic workers to manage their households and care for their children. Hiring workers becomes part of household consumption too. According to Chua (2000), domestic labour is among the most common forms of consumption for middle-class families in Asia.

Nowadays parents are aware of the quality of services provided by domestic workers. They require workers who can deliver high-quality domestic services and provide better care for their children. Middle-class parents view their children as precious and therefore, 'they do not want children to be looked after by a household servant while they are also doing another task', according to Ibu Setio, a *yayasan* owner who I met during fieldwork (and whose story I will share in Chapter 5). Along with the parental demand for increased quality of education for their children, parents also increasingly demand quality care for their children at home. One of my respondents, Debby, a communications director for a multinational company, told me that she was very busy with her work but did not want to compromise the quality of care for her children. So she hired a *baby sitter* who was experienced in dealing with children, trustworthy and most importantly, someone capable of assisting her children with their school work at home. She even involved the *baby sitter* in consultation with doctors and psychologists to discuss her children's development.

> I am very busy, but I am also a tiger mom who prioritises my children's education. I hire a *baby sitter* to make sure the quality of care for my children is good. I will check my children's homework when I get home. Normally they have done their homework with the help of the *baby sitter*. I will then read them books and send them to bed. In the morning I will leave before my children leave, so the *baby sitter* will prepare everything for my children. They are my trusted personnel. Every year, when my children have birthdays, we always see a psychologist to consult their respective progress. The *baby sitter*, as the primary carer for my children, will also sit in the meeting.

A busy career woman, Debby was used to planning her schedule, her life and her family's life. She could not balance her work and family life without a strategy. Her plans and aspirations for her children and family are assisted by her *baby sitter*, who she fully trusts to deal with her children. According to Debby, her *baby sitter* was able to understand her 'standard' of child care, which she discussed annually with her family psychologist.

Within the social economy of Jakarta, the *baby sitter* has been integrated into the everyday life of the urban family. They have become a routine part of the middle-class lifestyle and desires. Their presence is expected to ensure the transmission and maintenance of the parents' middle-class lifestyle to their children. The existence of the *baby sitter* is an important element for middle-class families becoming substitute parents in attending to children's needs. For some parents, the role of *baby sitter* not only relates to physical care but also cognitive and psychological care. In this case, the parents seek for their values in raising children to be applied consistently by a *baby sitter*.

Discussions about the middle class have mainly centred on issues related to work or education and using men's perspectives rather than women's. In fact, according to Abeyasekere (1990), middle-class women are the ones who have a good material life and the way they manage and consume for their household can situate their family as middle class. They are also the ones who make class boundaries in everyday life. In my discussions with middle-class mothers about caring for children, I obtained a gendered view on raising children as women rarely involve their husbands in these discussions. When I tried to arrange to meet these women with their husbands, many told me that their husbands were at work most of the time and, besides, they were not knowledgeable to talk about children, and even less about *baby sitter*. This view made me realise that Indonesian women are still subject to the social values associated with *kodrat* (inherent nature), even when they have a successful career. In the following, I will elaborate further on women's *kodrat* and career to give some insights into how middle-class women deal with their everyday life.

## Women's Work in Indonesia

While Indonesian women's employment rate has been growing since the fall of the New Order (see Figure 3.4), their participation has always been lower than men over the same period. This is due in part to persistence of the New Order's gender order that differentiated women and men.

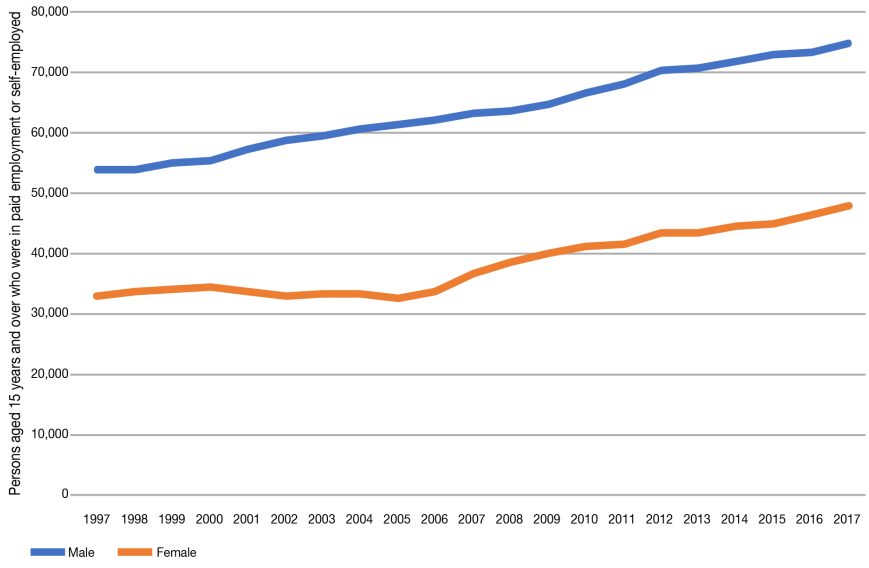


**Figure 3.4 Indonesian employment rate by sex and age (1997-2017)**
Source: ILO, 2018. Data is adapted from ILOSTAT by Author. Access date 25 March 2018

From the development era of the New Order until the present, Indonesia's economy has displayed certain gendered features. Since the beginning of the regime, Suharto's government focused the economy on development (known by the local term as *pembangunan*) that was highly linked to global capital investment. Following the oil boom in the 1970s, Indonesia became attractive for foreign investors, similar to other countries in Southeast Asia, and simple manufacturing such as garments, textile and electronics were established during the two decades of the New Order. Against a backdrop of feminisation of industrialisation globally (where women were largely associated with employment in factories that produced clothing, textile, footwear, and electronics for global markets), Indonesian women were also engaged in the industrial workforce during the period 1970s to 1990s (Robinson 2009). Women's basic educational background was sufficient qualification for engagement in factory work and enabled them to earn an income. Based on research in rural Java, Wolf (1992) found that some young single women viewed factory work (in contrast to housework) as providing agency through earning and managing one's own income, and allowed relative independence from parental pressure for marriage. As rural areas became exposed to globalisation and modernity (through electricity, radio and television) along with the start of rural industries, many young people aspired to move to the city in order to obtain higher wages in the larger manufacturing sector. However, factory wages were low and did not cover the high cost of living in the city. Young female factory workers continued to rely on some material support from their parents in the village which, according to Jelinek, means rural economies supplying the urban capitalist economy (Jellinek 1991).

Indonesian women have generally been active in economic activities, particularly those from rural and low-income households. Prior to rural industrialisation, women were active on farms and following the entry of factories into villages, women worked as factory labourers, petty traders or were sub-contracted by manufacturers to do 'piecework' at home such as packaging. In contrast, during the same period middle class women were involved in social activities through the organisation, Dharma Wanita, which comprised on the wives of Indonesian civil servants and PKK (*Program Pemberdayaan Keluarga* or Women's Empowerment Program), the women's program run by Dharma Wanita for all women from national to the village levels to manage and develop the family. It is

argued that these programs are part of the New Order's gender ideology to position women as the main caretaker of the family. Men, on the other hand, have their superior role in the family and actively earn income outside the house.

Women's work in Indonesia was developed in the context of the New Order's gender order (Robinson 2009). The notion of *kodrat* (inherent nature) when applied to women positioned them similarly throughout the country as the main caretaker of the family. The 1993 state document GBHN (State's Guidelines issued by the New Order government) refers to women workers as a quality human resource for Indonesian development (Sen 1998). While this marked the state's acknowledgement of women's role beyond their own families, this role was still correlated with women's nurturing role. Women's role in Indonesia is still viewed along these lines, and many women themselves subscribed to this view. For example, among married Bugis female migrants in Malaysia, work in informal jobs such as domestic work for other Bugis-Malaysian households, or operating a small shop in their house is not considered 'work'. Rather, these women perceived these activities as 'helping their husbands' to get additional income (Idrus 2008). Similarly, in my fieldwork I also found the same views of women where they thought they work is to help their husbands earn income for the family, even if they were the main breadwinner in the family.

In 1997, the Asian economic crisis hit many industries badly and unemployment rose immensely both in rural and urban areas. In the case of Java, urban male unemployment grew from 7.6 per cent in 1997 to 11.45 per cent in 1999, while female unemployment increased from 9.5 to 10.9 per cent in the same period. On the other hand, in rural areas the male unemployment rate rose from 2.9 per cent in 1996 to 4.5 per cent in 1999 while that of females rose from 3.8 per cent to 4.4 per cent during the same period. Total unemployment in the country during the two-year period after the crisis was 1.3 per cent for women and 2.1 per cent for men (Cameron 2002). The percentage for female unemployment during the crisis was lower compared to men, presumably because the rural agricultural sector, in which women predominated, was not negatively impacted. Women's casual work and family-based work protected them from the impact of the 1997 economic crisis which saw many formal sector economies (finance, construction and formal manufacturing) reduce their labour force and close down businesses.

The immediate trend after the 1997 economic crisis revealed women increasingly engaged in self-employment or unpaid work by returning to household businesses rather than working outside their homes (Cameron 2002). This was not a new trend because during the New Order period many rural women performed piecework at home while caring for children, parents and/or sick family members. Women's role as primary carer thus persisted alongside their new economic one.

Work opportunities for women are found in both public and private spheres (Stivens 1998). In 2011, more than a decade after *reformasi*, around 30 per cent of women worked in wage labour, showing gradual improvement from 22 per cent in 1990. In 2017 the ILO recorded Indonesian female labour force participation at almost 50 percent of the total workforce in the country (almost 45 million people). Compared to the total population in Indonesia, this number is still relatively low and the male labour force remains the majority (ILO 2018a).

A relation exists between economic growth, the increase of wealth, and gender relations. The speed in the growth of women's employment is increasing at a faster rate compared to men's; however, women are more concentrated in casual and informal jobs, compared to men (ILO 2017). The ADB study on women's labour participation during the 10-year period after *reformasi* showed that these women were mostly involved in unpaid jobs in the family (Schaner and Das 2016). The latest data showed that during the period 2015-2017 less than 40 per cent of women worked in the formal sector (BPS 2018a). Indonesia's improved economy has been dominated by the service sector in the last few years, replacing the industrial sector as the largest contributor to Indonesian GDP in 2016. The major contribution of the service sector to GDP indicates the extent to which this sector has absorbed labourers. The ILO noted that the number of Indonesian workers above 15 years of age had reached more than 120 million people or 63 per cent of the total population in 2017 (ILO 2018a). The low commencement age for workers (15 years old) reflects the practice among young people in Indonesia to work after finishing primary or junior high school. The story of Mira in the previous chapter provides an example of the early engagement of Indonesian young women in the labour market.

While rural women with lower educational backgrounds have been always active in the economy through the informal sector, educated women became economically active through their work as civil servants. Particularly in the New Order's development period,

women civil servants were active in the education and health sectors. The ILO recorded (in 2017) around 5 million women working as professionals and managers, while 15 million worked in services and sales (ILO 2018b).

### Women's Education

Increased employment rates for women was partly a result of women's access to education. During the New Order regime, the President instructed the building of public primary schools in all *kelurahan/desa* (sub subdistricts/villages). This school construction program was introduced as *Sekolah Inpres* (Inpres School) and has enabled people to access primary education in rural and remote areas. The enrolment rate of primary school students since the 1980s has been very high following this expansion. The education system in Indonesia changed to a broader learning experience when six years of compulsory basic education (introduced in 1984) was extended to nine years in 1994, following very significant increases in the primary school completion rate. The extension of compulsory education from six to nine years aimed to improve the education of the future generation and Indonesia's competitiveness in the global market. Under the Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY) presidency (2004-2014) the budget allocation for education in general totalled 20 per cent of the national budget, and covered funds for basic to higher education, including vocational skills and training. SBY also pledged support to subsidise school operational programs through *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS) which exempts students from paying school tuition fees, mainly at primary and junior secondary school levels. This program had escalated access to junior secondary schools and is expected to extend participation rates for the senior secondary school too.

Female school enrolment rates consistently decrease as the level of education increases, with high enrolment rates at primary school level not significantly flowing on to high school. At this level, the enrolment rate of girls was lower than for boys, primarily due to parents' privileging boy's education ahead of girls mainly in rural areas (Thomas et al. 2004). Girls have traditionally been perceived as the future main carers of the family, and not requiring a high level of education, while boys are considered to be future leaders and the breadwinner for their families and, therefore, require further education to obtain good jobs. Even in this early stage of life, it is apparent that gender values applied to children lead to gendered work opportunities and roles in society. In 2010, only slightly more than half of primary school students in Indonesia continued their studies, explaining

why women continue to be mostly engaged in low-skilled jobs. With this percentage, it could be understood that only slightly more than half of primary school students in Indonesia continued their studies in the 20th century and it explains why women mostly engaged in low-skilled jobs.

Disparity in access to education caused by poverty resulted in a narrowing of the type of work available to women.

White and Margiyatin (2015) in their research on Javanese rural youth, found that many rural junior high school (SMP) graduates faced a dilemma of whether to continue their studies to senior high school (SMA) or not. Continuing their education was subject to their parent's financial situation and their grades. Many SMP graduates from lower income families decided to work directly after completing school, while those whose parents were relatively affluent chose to continue their education. White and Margiyatin's research resonates with the background of many *mbak* and *baby sitter* whom I met during fieldwork; most were SMP graduates who had chosen to work rather than continue their education. They chose to become domestic workers because they had already obtained the required skills (household cleaning and caring for siblings) as part of their socialisation in the family (Elson and Pearson 1982).

The limited access to high education for girls caused them to enter low-skilled and low-waged employment, while those with high school certificate had greater opportunities to obtain better jobs. This inequality in education has divided people – including women – into different groups of workers which has affected the broader field of care work. For example, within domestic work, the occupation of *baby sitter* is also graded according to the task: an SMA graduate is more likely to be offered a higher wage than their SMP counterpart, on the basis that she will be expected to be capable of carrying out different functions related to child care, such as assisting with homework. Access to education differentiates women's jobs and career paths which, in turn, determine their social class. While women with low education are likely be engaged in casual and low-skilled jobs, women with higher education obtain work in formal and professional jobs.

### *Peran Ganda Wanita* (women's dual role) and *Dilema Ibu Bekerja* (working mother's dilemma)

Social class has defined women's work in Indonesia (Hull 1976, Stivens 1998). Women from the working class have been actively engaged in economic activities mainly through

manual work, while middle-class women have generally had little involvement with manual work. This class-based work classification reflects the former New Order ideology that defined women based on their *kodrat* (natural being) discussed in Chapter 1. Until refined in the 1975 Marriage Law, women's *kodrat* was perceived to be at home, as the caregiver of the family and children, and their social role was as the supporter of men as household heads. As an affirmation of women's participation in manufacturing jobs during the industrialisation age of *pembangunan*, the New Order introduced the ideology of *peran ganda wanita* (women's dual role) which promoted women's active role in economic development while maintaining their domestic role in the family. Interestingly, there is apparently no impact on men's role by women taking on this double role. This New Order ideology persists in present-day Indonesia and is consolidated by the Islamic view of the role of men and women (men as the *imam* or leader, and women as the *makmum* or follower). The middle-class women who work outside the house are required to juggle work and family, while expected to prioritise their family. As we know, however, from the experiences of Indri, an *mbak* who is also a mother profiled in Chapter 2, poor women do not have a choice in this matter: other people's families take priority over their own.

In reality, *peran ganda wanita* can create a double burden for women who perform a double shift (the office and at home), as argued by Hochschild (2003). The younger generation of women aspire to become career women, no doubt influenced by the media's continuous depiction of women as modern and career oriented. Research by Nilan and Utari (2008) among urban, tertiary-educated, middle-class young people, revealed that female university students who studied communication, aspired to take up careers in journalism. However, the working conditions of journalists—long hours and reporting at night—have hindered women from choosing this path. Significantly, some female journalists revealed that working late at night had caused them to be stigmatised as irresponsible mothers and wives. Children and family are women's first priority, and their absence from the family causes social disapproval. On the other hand, men's absence from family life is never questioned, particularly in relation to attending to children on a daily basis. Men's role in the family is defined by the Marriage Law to provide income (*nafkah*) and welfare for his wife and children.

Given the gendering of child rearing in society, during fieldwork in Jakarta in 2015, I found that many middle-class women had decided to give up their careers once they had a baby. They wanted to focus on nurturing their children and attending to their children's growth and education. Although they had aspired to become careerwomen upon completing their tertiary studies, once married they prioritised their children over their career. Their decision to quit their job was independently made, although some women were encouraged by their husband. This situation probably explains why the percentage of Indonesian women who work in senior and middle management is relatively low.

Many middle-class women who work outside their homes are trapped in a constant dilemma between working and pursuing their careers or quitting their jobs and focusing on their children's wellbeing. Such dilemma is not shared by poor women working in informal and manual labour as some of them must work and earn money in order to make a family's living. For middle class women, working outside the home was not only an individual aspiration but also a way to secure a dual income for the family. The high cost of children's education was one of the main reasons given by women for working, as they claimed that their husband's single income would not be sufficient to cover those costs. Other costs associated with child rearing were given: extra-curricular classes for children, health insurance, transportation, meals and pocket money, as well as carers. The cost of domestic carers like *baby sitters* are a significant impost on family expenditure, and its significant value has pushed women to work too, rather than substituting women's caring role in the family. One of my informants even told me that most of her income was spent on paying domestic workers, while their husband's was to pay most family bills and expenses. Thus, in my opinion domestic care workers like the *baby sitter* has shaped and is shaped by the middle class women's aspiration to work. Conversely, nowadays middle-class women are challenged by the stigma that, by working outside the home they are neglecting their primary role as a 'good mother', whereas they are working to pay for their children's education and securing a good future for the family.

Among urban women today, looking after children by themselves, without the help of relatives or *baby sitter*, accords them social status. Many people in my fieldwork location believed that a good mother was someone who is responsible for their children's wellbeing, who cares for and spends time with their children with their full attention, using their own hands. This view was supported by an Indonesian education expert whom

I met in the field and who shared her view with me that 'quantity time', rather than 'quality time', between mother and child would result in building stronger emotional bonds. She urged parents to stay close to children as often as possible. Many female public figures display their direct involvement in child caring by posting photos of themselves with their children and family, mentioning that they 'self-manage' their children (*urus anak sendiri*) without any help from domestic workers or *baby sitter*. This practice would seem to confirm the view that good mothers raise their children without paid help, overlooking the complex role of domestic carers like *baby sitter*. Fortunately, the view of '*urus anak sendiri*' was not considered favourably by many middle-class, working women who struggled to meet the costs of their children's education. Many of these women were impacted by such arguments, agreeing that spending less time with their children risked ignoring or giving lower priority to their children's needs. In fact, based on my conversations with these working women, many felt torn between staying close to their children at all times and preparing for the costs of their children's education. This sensibility reflects the so-called working mother's dilemma (*dilema ibu bekerja*[15]) which, I argue, has resulted from *peran ganda wanita* which supports women to work outside the home and manage their children at the same time.

Among middle-class working mothers, the *dilema ibu bekerja* is commonly experienced by those who are required to prioritise both work and children at the same time. While work (outside the home) is considered by society to involve a woman's self-interest, caring for children is viewed as their true priority, reflecting their *kodrat*. However, for middle-class working mothers, employment could not simply be explained as individual desire, rather it reflected a family strategy to ensure the future of children. Therefore, both are priorities for them and they feel responsible for both. For example, Sisi, a mother of two boys aged six and three years old, decided to hire a *baby sitter* to look after her children because she needed to work to support her family's living costs. Working as a Public Relations Manager in a hotel in Jakarta enabled her to become a significant contributor to her family's economy. Her husband, a middle-level journalist, earned less income than her. Sisi needed to work in order to send her children to school. She told me

[15] This term is commonly used by media and the women themselves in their social media accounts to describe working women's complex situation when faced with simultaneous family and work responsibilities and commitments.

> Children's education is expensive nowadays. Moreover, I have two children who need to go to school. I have to work in order to save money for their education and it is a long-term commitment. I have to save money until they go to university, and it is a lot of money. It is okay if they have to be attended by a *baby sitter*. They know I have to work. I told them if I do not work I cannot pay for their school fees, I cannot buy them toys, we cannot go anywhere [for holidays].

Given their aspirations for their children's education, middle-class women negotiate their *dilema ibu bekerja* by having other people substitute the role of mother in the household. Although this arrangement does not satisfy society's ideal image of the good mother, it is enacted to maintain alternative good quality care for children. While some seek help from parents or relatives to look after children, many grandparents are still actively working or involved in various social activities. Further, the urban middle class do not necessarily have relatives living in proximity who are able to help. The most common solution is to engage multiple domestic workers to manage everyday housekeeping and care of the children. As these women are concerned about the quality of child care and do not want to risk their children's well-being, they reach out to a specialised recruitment agency for trained *baby sitter*. In doing this, they can ensure their children are well attended by a 'professional' carer and do not need to sacrifice their jobs. A domestic service 'set' (comprising a PRT and a *baby sitter*) is commonly found in middle-class households in Jakarta, and with increased wealth and worsening traffic jams, many middle-class families hire a driver for their family too, which adds to the 'set' as previously mentioned.

Given the dilemma discussed above, I would argue that the lives of many middle-class women exhibit some of the features of their 'working class' counterparts: they engage in paid work to enable a dual income for their household to meet their own aspirations and those of their family, and perform as middle class. Their participation at work, however, is unlikely to happen without the influx of domestic workers from rural areas, a development I will discuss next.

## Rural – Urban Connections

The middle class in urban areas enjoy the service of domestic workers in their households. These workers are mostly from rural areas, migrating to the city in order to follow their aspirations for a better life. With the economy centred in cities, and development infrastructures and facilities concentrated in urban areas, disparity between rural and urban areas has grown. Rural-urban migration in Indonesia is a significant and growing

feature which is driven by the attraction of better employment opportunities and is lightly regulated which results in many youthful aspirants abandoning high school to look for work in the city. This is very much in contrast to internal urban migration in China for example which is strictly regulated and controlled (Manning et al 2010)

As the national capital, Jakarta is widely seen as the hub of opportunity and fortune and draws people from across the archipelago, the capital has attracted an increasing flow of migrants, especially from villages where there are few job opportunities. The economic development occurring in Jakarta has also stimulated growth in the surrounding areas. There were around 85 per cent of single female migrants in Indonesia working in the informal sector such as domestic servants (Sunaryanto 1992 in Hugo 2000, 290). Among them, there were women who migrated abroad to work as housemaids (Hugo et al. 1987). This census reveals that high rates of rural-urban migration in Indonesia has occurred for more than three decades and, for women particularly, one of the reasons for migration was to seek work as domestic workers. Thus, along with the education divide explained earlier, the rural-urban divide has facilitated a regular supply of domestic workers for many households in the cities

Following the collapse of industry during the economic crisis in 1997, female migration increased due to international domestic work opportunities. The National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy (popularly known as Jala PRT) recorded more than 11 million Indonesians engaged in domestic work abroad in 2016. More than half were engaged as migrant workers abroad and the remaining (approximately) 4.5 million worked as domestic workers within Indonesia. Undoubtedly, the figure for domestic workers is higher as migration for domestic work within Indonesia is not officially recorded.

Some of my informants who decided to work as a *baby sitter* in Jakarta told me there were no jobs available to them in their home villages, and those jobs that were available were poorly paid. For example, the income of a *warung makan* (food stall) helper in a rural town might amount to only Rp.750,000 per month, which does not cover the cost of living. Based on my personal experience travelling by *ojek* from a town centre to a village in Brebes at a cost of Rp.50,000 (see Chapter 2), a food stall helper's salary would not even cover the cost of daily transportation. The minimum wage for urban areas is significantly higher than for rural areas. For example, in 2016 the minimum wage for

Jakarta was Rp.3,200,000 – the highest in Indonesia (BPS 2018c). Overall, the highest urban incomes are found in the sectors of communication, finance, trade, and insurance services, while the agricultural sector pays the lowest incomes. Reflecting this trend, work in the agricultural sector is no longer popular among young people. Since the entrance of rural factories in 1980s, villages in Indonesia have become urbanised (Young 1994), and with access to electricity and television in rural areas, young people were exposed to and excited by images of modernity in the city (Antlov 1999). Nowadays young people aspire to work in cities or in factories in order to save more money for themselves as well as for their families. By migrating for work and/or earning an income, young people can avoid such things as strict parental rules or arranged marriages and spend more independent time with friends. In terms of economic independence, rural youth are likely to participate in an *arisan* (revolving savings group) by contributing a percentage of their salary to the group and withdrawing it when their turn comes (White and Margiyatin, 2015). The provision of nine years of basic education and required textbooks have exposed young people to idealised images of development, and modern Indonesia as a nation. Combined with young people's independent travel to school, these factors have created in young people a sense of mobility and independence (Warouw 2016). More importantly, with the recent spread of the internet and social media, modernity has reached rural areas more rapidly than before. Rural youth have become users of these new media platforms, which further intensifies their desire to experience urban life.

In addition to being linked through books, television and social media, Indonesian rural and urban areas are interlinked through migration for work, including domestic work. In some rural areas, women migrate to the cities or abroad to work as domestic workers. Domestic workers may be sourced from particular villages and regions due to local social networks or individual recruiters known as *sponsor* (see Chapter 5 for further explanation of *sponsor*).

Finally, as argued by Rigg (2003) rural and urban areas are much more connected than separated nowadays. This is reflected through the penetration of manufacturing industries, education, and information into rural areas, connected by improved transportation. Many young rural women in Southeast Asia are persuaded to leave farming and work in off-farming jobs in rural, urban or peri-urban areas. The discussion in Chapter 2 about the *travel* bus that connects a village and capital city of Jakarta represents rural-urban

connections through transportation and domestic work. There, I discussed Ika and Indri who obtained domestic work in Jakarta through their family and local networks in the village. In their village, migrating to Jakarta was relatively easy due to the local facilities built by local people. The trip from their village in upper hill Brebes to Jakarta was very convenient as the *travel* minibuses made direct return trips to the capital twice weekly. With this familiar and stress-free means of transportation, migration to Jakarta was quite easy and convenient, causing young people in Ika's village to choose working in the capital city ahead of their local town Brebes. Migrating to the city as domestic workers has attracted rural young women due to the relatively high wages paid compared to the village. Further, completion of junior high school (SMP) is viewed as the right time to migrate for work, and socialisation of domestic work within the family equips these SMP graduates to obtain work in the city as domestic workers or *baby sitter.*

Many young women thought they had made a positive choice to leave rural areas rather than being displaced from their homeland. This decision is made not only to improve their lives but is also influenced by cultural factors such as the desire to experience independent and enjoyable life with friends in the city. Tempered of course, their work by reality of long hours at work, strict regulations and work discipline, and even discrimination like that experienced by Ika and Mira in Chapter 2.

## Conclusion

The *baby sitter* as an occupation emerged in a growing economy, changing social context and persisting gender order in Indonesian society. The education divide and rural-urban divide have fuelled possible supply and demand of domestic workers, including for *baby sitters*. Economic development, increasing numbers of middle class and their family lifestyle/consumption are amongst the factors that created the relatively new occupation in the 1980s, while gender order and rural-urban inequality was fuelling the demand for *baby sitter* services. Following the Asian economic crises and the democratisation of governance through *reformasi*, the Indonesian economy changed gradually from an industrial-based economy to one based on the service sector. This has enabled women to work in both formal and informal jobs. Increased prices and high living costs for families, particularly in the city, necessitate dual income households where both women and men

must work. This situation has profound consequences for family and child care arrangements.

Statistics reveal that urban middle-class women pursue their own individual development and careers, yet they also have to deal with the wider social belief in women's *kodrat*. Women's dual role (*peran ganda wanita*), a legacy of the New Order government, inspired women to balance career and family life which, in turn, has placed them in a dilemma. For middle-class women, balancing their dual role as workers, mothers and wives is difficult. In reality, some working conditions (outdoor jobs, late night jobs) clash with gender values in Indonesia and discourage women from taking on a dual role. Working middle-class women are faced with the *dilema ibu bekerja*. They argue that they work only to maintain the household's dual income, in order to pay the costs of their children's education. They are only able to make this choice with the help of domestic workers who help maintain the house and the *baby sitter* who will look after children. These *baby sitter* and domestic workers enable middle-class women to maintain their family lifestyle.

The desire among the urban middle class for quality child care is well met by rural young women's aspiration to work and live in the city. Limited jobs in rural areas create incentives for urban migration, including among young rural women. Working in the village does not offer sufficient income for themselves or their families. Besides, working outside the family and household offers the exciting prospect of more individual freedom. This desire to migrate is facilitated by the increased connections between rural and urban areas either through transportation or social network. The rural young women are ideal candidates for *baby sitter* work as their junior high school education ensures that they understand the training materials provided by the agency. Many are experienced in care work within their families, albeit unpaid.

Despite various economic opportunities that are open for women from both rural and urban areas, the social values of *kodrat*, *peran ganda*, and *dilema ibu bekerja* marks the persistence of the domesticated role of women in Indonesia. The *baby sitter* as occupation emerges in such a context.

# Chapter 4

# Transforming Child Caring Occupations

*Baby sitter* as a category of work is relatively new compared to other forms of domestic work. In this chapter I explore the transformation of paid domestic work in Indonesia, from the pre-colonial period to the present. What does this transformation tell us? What has changed and what remains the same? I argue that the emergence of the category of *baby sitter* reflects the formalisation of paid domestic work, a practice rooted in the hierarchical/vertical relationships of the society. The *baby sitter* task of child caring shares with domestic work, the characteristic of an unequal relationship within the household (between the parent-employer and the *baby sitter*), which has existed since the pre-colonial age (between for example royal families and their slaves) and has been subject to transformation over time. This hierarchy is somewhat mutual, with employers providing protection and workers giving their service and loyalty. Such relationships persist in contemporary Indonesian domestic work arrangements, yet the existence of recruiting agencies between them modifies the relationship in particular ways. They make the relationship between workers and employers more complicated with new regulations, albeit with a greater degree of freedom on the worker's side.

The unequal relationship between the parent-employer and *baby sitter* is not unique. It shares attributes with many occupations that have moved from non-market to market conditions. Despite formal management and quasi-professional work standards introduced by some elites, the contemporary *baby sitter* shares much the same experience as servants who performed the task of child caring during the pre-colonial era. All live(d) in the master/employer's household and were thus engaged in different forms of hierarchical relationships. The roles exhibit different characteristics, namely the *baby sitter* performs the primary child rearing role in urban households nowadays. Parents are absent from the household for long periods of time at work and commuting, and the tasks associated with raising children are no longer pivotal in urban households. As a result, the *baby sitter* is vital for many Indonesian families and resembles the role of the live-in nanny or *au pair* (rather than casual babysitter) in Western countries. In addition, the *baby sitter* pursues a type of work that is underscored by certain emotional and interpersonal

relations. It requires intensive interactions with the children in their care given the long daily absences of working and commuting parent-employers. This primary care role generates a unique hierarchical relationship between the *baby sitter* and the parent-employers.

From my fieldwork I also found that there is a vacuum of regulatory arrangement for domestic workers, particularly in protecting equal rights of workers and employers. The *baby sitter* occupation emerged during this vacuum and therefore the job is mainly organised by recruitment agencies. Although the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration has issued a Regulation (Peraturan Menteri Ketenagakerjaan or Permenaker) No. 2/2015 on the Protection of Domestic Workers, and the Ministerial Decision (Keputusan Menteri Ketenagakerjaan or Kepmenaker) No. 313/2015 on the Standard Competence of Domestic Workers, neither regulate detailed matters such uniforms, written contracts, minimum wages, leave arrangements or compensation for *baby sitter* occupations. These matters are mainly overseen by agencies, and many NGO activists claim that they are vulnerable to being manipulated for the agency's benefit.

The agency provides training for the *baby sitter* and set wages (at a level higher than domestic workers). These processes imply a professionalism that is not offered to other domestic workers. Moreover, with encouragement from international organisations like the ILO, on such issues as the protection of domestic workers, many Indonesian agencies have issued written work arrangements between employers and workers prior to placement, signed by workers, employers, and agency representatives. These contractual work arrangements reflect the formalisation of contemporary domestic work, especially in relation to the tasks of the *baby sitter*.

I begin the discussion from an historical perspective of domestic work in Indonesia, looking especially at the social relations of domestic work. The nature of caring work in Indonesia is similar to many other Asian societies and very hierarchical since the pre-colonial days reflecting the relationship between the king and his people, including his family and their slaves. Then I move the discussion to the arrangement of domestic service during the colonial era, followed by the transformation of domestic work in the post-colonial era, in particular on the persistence of the family or fictive kinship relationship as the basis for employer-worker relations (see Robinson 1991). Next, I discuss the limited contemporary regulation of domestic work in Indonesia, the various

categories of domestic work that exist recently, and the complexities around them. The discussion sheds light on patron client relationships which remain important in the process of transformation of domestic worker occupation.

## The Origins of Domestic Work in Indonesia

In understanding the *baby sitter* as part of the domestic workforce, it is important to return to the basis of social relations in Indonesia, particularly the labour relationships in contemporary domestic work employment. The current system of working outside one's own household for another family can be traced to the broad political and economic setting of the pre-colonial period when an obligation to work for a creditor, master or lord, in the form of debt bondage existed as a norm for much of the population (Reid 1983). Social relations in the region, including Indonesia are based on vertical relations between the powerful and the weak where the strong provide protection for those who are weaker. In return, the weak dedicates their loyalty and service to their masters. During pre-colonial times in Indonesia, this hierarchy was reflected in the relationship between the king and the people, and between wealthy landowners/patrons and peasant farmers. It is a vertical relationship that is both intimate and based on mutual responsibility (Reid 1983). Reflecting on this vertical system of labour relations — including the relations of domestic labour — across Southeast Asia, there is strong resonance with what Scott (1976) calls the moral economy with its defining qualities of patron client based mutual obligation and indebtedness.

Debt bondage and slavery originated as a cultural acceptance of mutual obligations between low and high-status persons. While rich and powerful people provide protection, the poor and those freed from war and persecution gave their loyalty and material support to their benefactors, which is argued by Scott (1972) as patron-client relationship. In Southeast Asia, vertical bonding and hierarchical relations were celebrated in a cooperative and intimate manner. Reid (1983) argued that the 'slave' in Southeast Asia has a dual meaning: as a commodity to be exploited and a human being trusted to be loyal. They were positioned as both inferior and intimate with their masters. In Javanese society especially, the master-slave relationship was expressed through the concept *manunggaling kawula gusti* or the unifying of slaves/servants (*kawula*) and masters (*gusti*). The masters provided housing, land, and even wedding ceremonies for their

slaves and, in return, slaves offered continuing loyalty to their masters. The wealth and the power of the rich and strong depended on the poor and weak who gained security and opportunity from being bonded. Thus, people worked for someone else not in return for wages, but on the basis of an accepted obligation albeit unequal between both parties. Scott (1972) described the colonial time as one where the minimum income and patron-client relationship existed alongside with social security, and an element that is taken away under capitalism.

In some respects, the patron-client relationship during the pre-colonial and colonial times can be compared to the current arrangements of domestic workers in Indonesia by private agencies. Both require a degree of respect and protection to the workers. The agencies require employers of domestic workers to respect the rights of workers by providing proper food, space and time to rest, medication and work leave. Unfortunately, today there are no clear and strict sanctions for any violations that takes place, because a regulation to protect domestic workers does not yet exist. Most initiatives to mitigate problems that occur in domestic work environments are carried out by the NGOs that bring cases of violation or abuse to the police for further action. According to those activists advocating domestic worker's rights, the sanctions for violations against domestic workers are mostly decided by laws relating to domestic violence, rather than problems in the work place.

Historically, Java hosted a resident population of slaves greater than any other area in Indonesia. In the mid-seventeenth century, large numbers of people from eastern Indonesia (non Muslims) were enslaved and brought to Batavia, replacing the majority of Indian slaves.

Female slaves were highly valued, and there were fewer of them in Batavia. They were used for child care and for this purpose the Europeans created a special class of domestic slave. These were groups of slaves who have received training from their colonial masters who tutored their domestic slaves in the techniques of child rearing, such as cleaning and clothing the baby, to make sure that Western ways of nurturing were applied. The colonials believed that Indonesians had a poor understanding of health and hygiene, so they tried to improve the 'mothering' skills and sensibilities of their servants to meet the standards of a bourgeois European family.

In the nineteenth century, slavery was formally banned on a global scale, including in Indonesia in 1855 (Reid 1983). The banning of slavery in Indonesia was given effect in the gradual disappearance of advertisements for slaves at that time (Taylor 1983). Yet it is not clear whether the banning of slavery was then followed by converting former slaves into waged domestics and thus marking a new form of labour service based on wages (Robinson 1991) who were often considered servants.

Elmhirst (1999) in her analysis of domestic workers in Java, proposes that the tradition of domestic service in Indonesia originated among the 'high born' Javanese *priyayi*. The employment of servants by *priyayi* households was then linked to the patronage system between *priyayi* family and poor rural families. Elmhirst describes how the *priyayi* family gave protection and access to land for rice production to the poor in return for loyalty and service. The poor worked as servants for the *priyayi* household and the vertical relation between them was marked by complex status-reinforcing practices such as speech and manners. For example, Elmhirst describes how servants would enter a room on their knees, head and eyes down, and did not turn their back to their masters while walking away, instead facing them as they retreated. This system of elite and non-elite relations was no different from many places, reflecting the vertical relations of the age of slavery mentioned earlier.

In her research, Elmhirst revealed the perception held by domestic workers that working for a *priyayi* family constituted a privilege because one could learn the way they lived and this seemingly promised upward mobility – although it was never actually realised. Conversely, similar to slave ownership, the servility of those who worked for *priyayi* made visible the social status and hierarchy the *priyayi* wished to be maintained. The relationship between the *priyayi* and their servants was based on kinship, although in some cases it could be fictive kinship. Normally, the well-off *priyayi* family would ask for a child from among their relatives and raise them as a daughter and unpaid domestic helper. This practice has persisted in many villages in other parts of Indonesia, for example in Sulawesi (see Robinson 1991). In later decades and certainly following Indonesian independence in 1945, many village households around the country recruited young women into unpaid domestic work. These women were tied to their host families in fictive adoption, requiring the householder to provide 'their sustenance and at least limited education' (Robinson 1991, 38).

In Indonesia, recruiting a domestic worker from among one's relatives, albeit distant, is a common practice. Suryadi (1981) in his monumental book titled *Pengakuan Pariyem* (Pariyem's Confession), depicts a *priyayi* family that is distantly related to their female *babu* (servant), Pariyem. In the story, Pariyem's responsibilities include cleaning the house, mopping the floor, washing the clothes, cooking, and many other domestic chores required by the family. Her familial relationship is reflected in the way the family's daughter addresses her '*Yuk* [older sister] Pariyem', which is a soft term of address for a Javanese older sister. When Pariyem develops a romantic relationship with the master's son and falls pregnant, the family deals with the issue in a familial way, by holding a family meeting to decide the marriage of the two. Pariyem is then sent to her hometown to deliver her baby, and in an intimate ceremony the families of Pariyem and her master celebrate the milestone of seven months of pregnancy in Pariyem's hometown. Soon after the baby is born, Pariyem returns to her master's family—which has become her family-in-law—who still address her as '*babu*'.

In *Pengakuan Pariyem*, a vertical relationship which takes the form of a master-servant relationship, is depicted within a household in Java. The term used to refer to Pariyem as older sister and the familial settlement of the affair resonate with a (fictive) kinship relation between the master and the servant. Presumably, the familial way is used to avoid legal processes that risk public gossip. Although the master-servant relationship changes once Pariyem marries the family's son, she remains the family's *babu*. Reflecting Elmhirst's (1999) argument, domestic service for Javanese *priyayi* families was viewed by workers as a form of social mobility – a chance to learn the elite's way of living. However, the aspiration for upward mobility was rarely achieved, when the *priyayi* family did not share access to the house and its facilities.

Domestic work in Indonesia has always involved child rearing. The term *anak angkat* or 'lifted child' (Newberry 2014) or 'taken up child' (Weix 2000) to refer to the distantly related girl or young woman taken in as domestic help reflects the kind of fictive kinship that emerges in domestic work. While Newberry argues that the term *anak angkat* can be used to elevate the status of lower-class children, Weix sees it as a way for domestic workers to be positioned as part of middle-class families, particularly since they are given schooling opportunities in return for their domestic services. As school-aged workers, these *anak angkat* usually attended school in the afternoons while accompanying children

in their care to study or play in the evenings. Although both *anak angkat* and the employer's child played together and were both schooled, the status differentiation was perpetuated by their attendance at different schools offering dissimilar quality of education and a contrasting fee scale.

Robinson (1991, 38) has argued that domestic service in the modern city is 'an excellent example of the contradictions of social relations in a society developing along capitalist lines on the periphery of the world system'. These labour relations are formed in a domestic sphere. The assumptions embedded in the household familial relationship, which are normally based on emotional bonds in rural areas or were generally so in Indonesia's past, have become contractual. Thus, the relationship between worker and employer offers an example in this regard. Robinson argues that such relations takes place more readily in the village, where real kin relations are involved in the master-servant relationship. For example, in her research in Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi province, Indonesia, Robinson found that domestic service in the city still upheld 'fictive kinship' similar to relationships in the village in some respects. In addition to a monthly wage, the master provided housing, clothing and food to the domestic worker. In addition, since in Makassar (South Sulawesi) cultural norms dictate that young unmarried women must be protected, the servant's mobility outside the house was restricted in order to maintain the honour of the servant as well as the master and their household. The master-servant relationship in this context is intimate and personal with the master providing protection to the servants like parents to their children. Thus, kinship can be used in domestic (work) relations not just through familial terms of address, but also as an exercise of familial power. Employers exhibit parental roles towards their servants even though differential class status is highly marked. However, Robinson (1991) also argued that in contradiction to the familial relationship above, in the cities, intimacy between masters and servants seemed to be declining as evidenced by media reports of criminal acts by domestic workers (stealing, abuse of and even kidnapping children) or, conversely, by employers punishing workers (unpaid wages, work exploitation and harassment). The recruitment of servants through word-of-mouth or social network of friends and relatives is less robust in the city where agencies have emerged as one of the dominant sources or suppliers of domestic workers. The agency has reduced the personal connections that formerly characterised relations between masters and servants or employers and workers.

In contemporary Indonesia, particularly in Jakarta, while domestic service has taken on new forms, several contradictions persist. The recruitment agencies are transforming the relationship of 'master-servant' into one of 'employer-worker' through formal work arrangements in a written document. A matching process begins when the client-employer engages them to recruit a domestic worker. One of the interview questions posed by agencies to client-employers pertains to the characteristics of the household: number of household members, size of the house (storeys/bedrooms). This data will help determine how many domestic workers are required. However, while performing formal arrangement and seemingly equal employer-employee relation towards their clients, agencies maintain informal relationships with their *petugas lapangan* or *sponsor* who recruits workers in the villages of origin. They do not apply a formal contract with *sponsors* but provide a commission for each worker that they bring into the office. Because contracts are not used, a *sponsor* can supply workers to different agencies simultaneously. They can also supply workers directly to households who know them personally. This combination of both formal and informal recruitment/placement of workers marks the transition of domestic work business in Indonesia.

The origin of domestic worker in Indonesia shed light the persisting patron-client relationship over time since the pre-colonial era to today's contemporary formal arrangement of recruitment and placement of workers. Despite the negotiation for worker's equal rights with the employer through formalisation of contract and training, the patron client relation and fictive kinship remains important

## From Domestic Worker to *Baby Sitter*

A fine-grained story about the emergence of the *baby sitter* as an occupation came from Ibu Maya, the owner of Bina Abadi agency, who worked as a *baby sitter* during the 1980s. At that time, she was a clinic assistant in a private maternity clinic owned by a famous local gynaecologist. She cleaned the patient's rooms, washed the linen, and sterilised the medical equipment used in the clinic. In addition to cleaning the clinic rooms, she periodically assisted the nurse to help new mothers bathe their newly born baby. When these mothers went home with their babies, the clinic offered home visits to assist mothers. Ibu Maya was assigned by the clinic as one of the home-visit personnel, especially when there was no nurse available to do the job. She was trained by the doctors in the clinic

how to change a baby's nappy, how to hold a baby when breastfeeding, and so on. While similar training was provided to new mothers by the hospital, Ibu Maya extended the baby care practices and standards of the clinic into clients' homes. After a few years, Ibu Maya started her own business in response to demands through the networks of her former clients. She recruited people from her home village to be sent to Jakarta for training and subsequently placed in households as *baby sitter*. Ibu Maya had learned from her clients that they sought long-term, live-in support from a *baby sitter*, so she assigned her recruits to live in the parent-employer house, instead of doing home-visits.

In 2009 at the time of my own childbirth delivery in a hospital in Jakarta, I recall that one nurse offered me home-visit assistance to bath my baby once I returned home. She told me, 'I can come to your house for the initial two weeks, twice a day, to bath your baby in the morning and the afternoon'. I had previously heard of this practice from my relatives but understood this service to be very expensive. While I declined, the nurse continued, 'Just let me know if you want my help, but please stay quiet, because we are not allowed to do this [offer this additional service assistance] by the hospital'. I asked her why the hospital did not allow nurses to do this and she explained that hospital nurses were no longer permitted to make home visits, although previously they had frequently done so for extra income. Now as I write this chapter, it has become clear to me that my own experience resonates Ibu Maya's story: that nurses had sought extra income through home visits and the hospitals had not prohibited them from doing so. I assume that such services flourished among middle-class women with newborn babies who sought a longer period of home support from nurses (rather than only a few weeks). This demand created opportunities for people like Ibu Maya to start similar businesses. In many regions in Indonesia, many traditional birth attendants have also provided home support for new mothers such as bathing and breast feeding. They visit the new mother's house every day to teach basic principles about baby care. I learned from Ibu Maya that many of her former '*murid*' (trained *baby sitter*) have opened their own agencies after several years spent working as *baby sitter*. This was the process of the creation of *baby sitter* businesses (agencies) in the market, according to Ibu Maya.

Pak and Bu Setio, a couple who run domestic worker agency, confirmed to me that the demand for *baby sitter* came to his office in the 1980s, following the demand of domestic workers or *pembantu* at that time. They told me that the demand for *baby sitter* came from

*orang gedongan* (literally means building-ish people, which means people who live in a big and tall house like buildings). Since 1980 until today, it is not clear how many *baby sitter* are employed in Indonesia. In the middle of 2015, Ibu Setio informed me that she had placed around 200 domestic workers that year; half of these were *baby sitter*. The emergence of the *baby sitter* in the past two decades also coincides with the increased number of middle-class households during the last decade, reflecting improved incomes among people (see Chapter 3).

Given the improvement of technology, the nature of household work nowadays has changed from manual to less physical work, and it affects the development of domestic work, including the *baby sitter* occupation. Domestic work is believed to be much easier and less manual since much housework is performed with labour saving appliances like washing machines and microwave ovens. Child rearing practices are also changing following the development of new parenting practices shared through the media. Consequently, the agencies introduce modern urban parenting education to their newly recruited *baby sitter.* The *baby sitter* work is also becoming less manual and it has become a part of *baby sitter* training. For example, the agency trains the *baby sitter* to cook and prepare baby food using a food processor and slow cooker instead of traditional pan. They also introduce baby laundry liquids, modern feeding utensils and appliances exclusive for babies such as milk bottle warmers and sterilisers (many of these might or might not be new for the *baby sitter* given their own exposure to contemporary media and social media). This new technology influenced the way domestic chores is undertaken in a household, which also affects the way domestic work is performed. Within this context, a new category of domestic work emerges: the *baby sitter*.

There are about more than 250 agencies in Jakarta, according to one of my informant's who owns a *baby sitter* recruiting agency. These agencies recruit, train, examine and channel the workers who are potential to be a *baby sitter*. They normally have an office and a shelter to locate the newly arrived young workers from the village who are waiting to be trained at the same place and channeled to an employer's house. Some *baby sitter* agencies have a formal office building but some simply make do with a modest office in a house and rooms for the workers' dormitory, which I discuss in the next Chapter.

In terms of training, the *baby sitter* agency provides induction to the work of *baby sitter*, the expected character of a *baby sitter*, child caring principles, and middle class parenting

lifestyle using certain technologies (as explained earlier). The training also teaches newly recruited *baby sitter* on how to clean and feed babies, a skill that was never introduced previously to domestic child minders. The agencies prepare modules for such training which is developed upon one of the foreign migrant domestic workers' manuals. Nonetheless, as argued by Killias (2018), the training mostly teaches the wellbeing and practical skills of workers and very few soft skills, which I found also during my fieldwork. Such training in fact does not really influence the employer to hire a *baby sitter*. Among employers, they prefer a young *baby sitter* or *mbak* to accompany their young children to play at home. Some employers even prefer young and newly trained carers so they can be retrained at work and become their children's friend. This reflects the employer's preference for familiar and emotional care from the worker rather than professional skills. Once the worker arrives in their employer's house, the formal arrangement that has been arranged by agencies is transformed to an informal arrangement within the household, reflected in the use of familial terms of address like *Bapak* and *Ibu* for the employers. This reprises a persisting fictive kinship relationship in contemporary and formal domestic work arrangements.

## Current Regulation of Domestic Workers in Indonesia

The domestic worker has been an old occupation in Indonesia, but a national law to protect Indonesian domestic workers in their own country has still not been ratified . The draft law for domestic workers protection or the *Draft Undang-undang Perlindungan Pekerja Rumah Tangga* has been proposed[16] and discussed in Parliament, but the bill remains in draft format and has done so since 2004. Many NGOs and domestic worker's activists have demonstrated in front of the parliament building every year on the occasions related to International Women's Day and Labour Day, to demand ratification of the long-pending law. They argued that protection of domestic work was not a priority for the elite and that a conflict of interest exists in discussing the draft law because it is precisely the elite who represent the main users/employers of domestic workers and will be affected if domestic workers' rights are increased. As an example of this conflict of interest, Jala PRT, an NGO that works to protect domestic workers in Indonesia, recorded some abuses

[16] During my fieldwork the draft law that has been proposed and discussed for 14 times.

towards domestic workers by members of the state apparatus, including a police officer's family and a member of parliament.

Nonetheless progress has been made. On 19 January 2015, the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower issued Regulation[17] No. 2/2015 on Domestic Worker Protection (Permenaker No.2/2015). Following that a further decision was made under regulation, Kepmenaker No.313/2015, which covered standard competencies expected of domestic work. The regulation defined domestic work as;

> …a profession that employs domestic tasks and requires competence in household and health services. The competencies of domestic work occupations include: housekeeping (*tata graha*), cooking (*memasak*), babysitting (*penjagaan bayi*), childcaring (*penjagaan anak balita*), elder care (*penjagaan lansia*), gardening (*tata taman*), family driving (*mengemudi kendaraan keluarga*). (my translation, Kepmenaker No.313/2015)

This regulation formally acknowledges that a baby and child care is an integral part of domestic work and, at the same time, differentiates types of work within that category of domestic work. The regulation shows the change in regulatory perspective towards domestic workers, from general household helpers who deal with a range of domestic tasks to specialised workers with household and caring competencies. The regulation aims to elevate the dignity of Indonesian domestic workers by positioning their work as a skilled profession and also professionalising that work by establishing a national work competence standard for domestic work. However, according to Jala PRT, the two regulations have little impact on the protection of workers because ministerial regulations do not have any legal impact in the law. According to them, the state needs to issue a national law to protect domestic workers so that the ministerial regulations can be more effective. Permenaker No. 2/2015 although titled as the regulation on the protection of domestic workers, in fact only mentions the rights and responsibilities of workers, employers and agencies, but does not reinforce these through the establishment of sanctions. Kepmenaker no. 313/2015 only focuses on the standard competencies required for domestic work, which can be used by agencies in the recruitment, training, and examination of workers.

In terms of increasing the capabilities of workers, the Ministry issued a national standard qualification of domestic workers based on their respective competences: housekeeping,

[17] The Minister's Regulation is a broader legislation that is effective for long term, while Minister's Decision is an ad hoc and individual regulation.

cooking, babysitting, caring and gardening. This standard aims to improve Indonesian domestic workers so they can be competitive in the market, and can be used as a reference for education/training institutions, and by recruitment companies/institutions, or training and certification institutions. Interestingly, while the committee setting standards consisted of high-ranking officials from the Ministry, the formulators of the draft standards mainly comprised the representatives of the associations of training companies/institutions for Indonesian migrant workers. I assume that this is because these companies and institutions are the main actors in domestic worker training, placement and certification. They are, therefore well placed to identify and develop those competencies demanded of domestic workers.

In an interview with Pak Wahyu, the Head of HIPPTAKI (Himpunan Penyelenggara Pelatihan Tata Keluarga Indonesia or the Association of Household Management Training Agencies), I found that the standard competencies were developed by the government to prepare Indonesian domestic workers to compete with foreign workers from ASEAN regions. This practice emerged following the application of ASEAN's free labour movement policy, that will likely result in a large influx of ASEAN labourers to Indonesia. Although the time-frame for implementing the ASEAN regulation is unclear, Pak Wahyu argued that Indonesian domestic workers must be more competent than their ASEAN counterparts. He argued that although Indonesia is well known as one of the main sending countries for international migrant workers, the capacity of Indonesian workers is far below other countries. For example, the skills of migrant labourers from The Philippines are currently far more advanced than their Indonesian counterparts. Filipinas have high competency in accord with standards established by the government, including fluency in the English language. 'Since many Indonesian middle-class families send their children to international schools, it is important for domestic workers, especially *baby sitter(s)* to be able to speak English. When workers from The Philippines enter Indonesia, most can expect to work as nannies[*baby sitter*], because of their English skills, he said.

The issue of standard work competencies for domestic workers in response to ASEAN Economic Community, reflects the involvement of state in shaping reproductive labour in Indonesia. Particularly the standard competency of *baby sitter*(s) resonates the state's acknowledgement of a new and standardised care for children to be applied in the family.

As argued by Chin (1995) in the case of Malaysia, the state's economic and development policy has influenced their national reproductive labour through government regulation of incoming migrant domestic workers. The ASEAN initiative towards the borderless labour movement pushes Indonesia to prepare their national human resources with high competence, particularly in domestic service. In addition, this standard competency is facilitated by the ILO's project in Indonesia to promote decent work for domestic workers (see ILO 2018). In this regard, the state has penetrated domestic arrangement in the household through its policy on domestic workers standards, although the law for protecting them is not yet available.

There are several key tasks (*fungsi kunci*) of domestic service as stipulated in the competency standards, including cleaning (rooms and laundry), caring (for children and the elderly), cooking and driving. These are further broken down into principal tasks (*fungsi utama*) and basic tasks (*fungsi dasar*). The basic task is the unit competency used as an indicator to measure new staff. For example, the basic task 'Bathing a Child under Five years old', which is relevant to the role of the *baby sitter*, has the competency elements: (i) preparing bathing equipment and (ii) conducting the bathing task. These elements are then used to evaluate the work: how to identify and prepare the equipment (towel, soap, etc); how to prepare the water at the right temperature; the sequence for bathing the child (head first and then mouth, body, etc); and dressing the child. These standards are meant to function as a guide for agencies and trainers in their preparation of training modules for new workers, and for examiners of the certification body.

In a close reading of Kepmenaker No. 313/2015, I discerned an emphasis on certifying work by relevant companies/institutions rather than increasing the capacity of workers. As argued by many agency owners and *baby sitter* trainers in interviews for this study, while these standards are guidelines for training and examining the *baby sitter*, the application of the standards may vary. In the work place (employer's household), the *baby sitter* needs to comply with the parent-employer's standards. The agency owners and *baby sitter* trainers are fully aware that the approach and method for caring for children is unique from one family to another and agency training offers only a general standard knowledge for workers who are not familiar with the way urban people look after their babies/children.

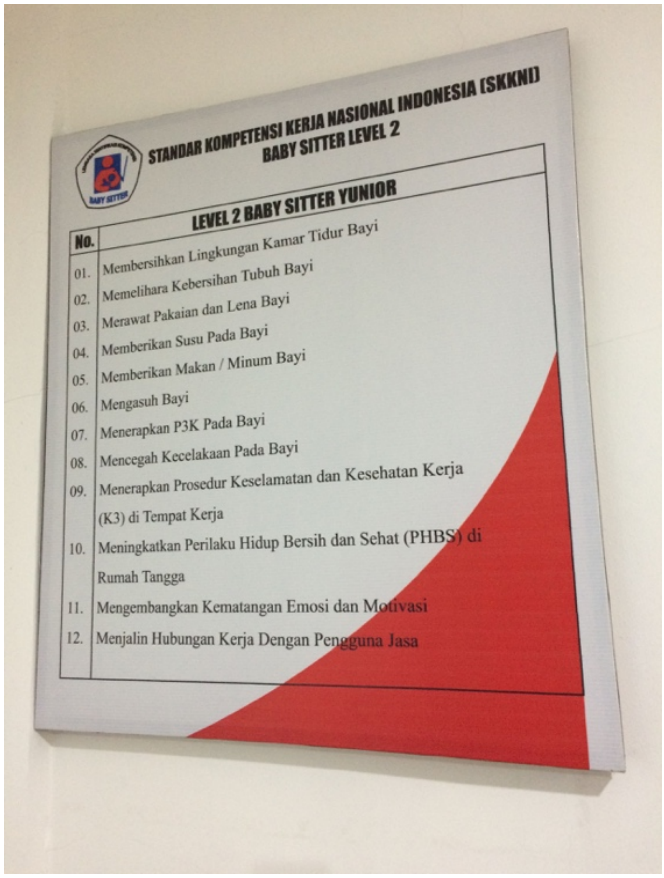


**Figure 4.1 National *Baby Sitter* Standard Competences poster displayed in the office of LSK *Baby Sitter***

The Permenaker No. 2/2015 is reported by the media to be the breakthrough of the newly appointed Minister of Manpower under the then newly elected President, Joko Widodo in 2014. The issuance of the regulation was timely during the long-awaited finalisation of the national law for domestic workers protection. Nonetheless, according to many activists, the regulation does not offer any real protection for domestic workers. The Permenaker No.2/2015 only stipulates that agencies be registered and fulfil reporting and monitoring requirements, without applying any sanctions to those agencies who do not follow these requirements. While this regulation currently comprises the sole 'legal tool' for domestic worker protection, it neither issues nor implements any sanctions. Without sanctions, domestic workers are still prone to exploitation.

In addition, the Permenaker only captures areas within the authority of Ministry of Manpower and does not have a higher degree of enforcement nationally. It also seems to me that, the regulation is driven by elite and private sector interests that deal with domestic worker recruitment and placement. For example, the argument explained by Pak

Wahyu mentioned above, regarding the need to advance Indonesian domestic worker's capacity through certification, also suggested an interest among companies and the private sector that runs domestic worker businesses to increase their profiles in facing the upcoming ASEAN free labour movement.

It is understandable that many activists suspected that there was a conflict of interest in regulating the protection for domestic workers. Elites represented the employer's interest to have affordable workers, but also private sector interests in the provision of market based training programs and certification.


**Figure 4.2 PRT Domestic worker demonstration in front of the DPR (parliament) office in 2015**

## Protecting Domestic Workers

In the absence of state regulation for protection, domestic workers expect protection from the agency or the employers themselves. The agencies provide shelter and food prior to placement. They even cover some limited medical costs such as medication, where required, and offer loans which are repaid through automatic deductions from the debtor-worker monthly salary. This practice reflects a patron-client relationship as argued in the previous section, and contravenes Permenaker No.2/2015 which specifies that the agency must not take fees from workers. In this sense, the effort to protect domestic workers through a regulation is still less effective than the unregulated and direct protection from the parent-employers or agencies. However, such protection can be exploited too and as noted the regulation does not stipulate any sanction for transgression on the part of the

agency. In practice, many agencies deduct the cost of transport from the worker's home town to the agency office from the worker's monthly salary, as well as for costs associated with accommodation (e.g., food) provided to workers waiting to be placed. As for the *baby sitter*, agencies charge substantial training fees to them personally, which is deducted for a period of 3-6 months after the *baby sitter* commences employment. This debt bondage system can trap the *baby sitter* to stay with the agency during which their work rights might be exploited.

From the parent-employer's perspective, it is common practice for the agency to require parent-employers to transfer the *baby sitter*'s salary to the agency's account for the duration. Based on interviews with agency owners, they explained that the salary paid would be deducted as payment for the *baby sitter*'s training. However, the amount charged (in percentage or in nominal terms) was not specified in the contract. Agency owners told me that salary deductions vary from five to ten percent of the agreed *baby sitter*'s salary. On the contrary, some *baby sitter* told me that, in fact, a deduction of up to 20 per cent was applied to their monthly salaries. In these circumstances, many *baby sitter(s)* felt tricked and wanted to leave the agency. Yet, they know that they cannot leave the agency unless and until they repay the training fee in full, which is minimally Rp.3.5million. This condition creates indebtedness, which Jala PRT argued was a trick applied by agencies to entrap domestic workers.

Depending on the closeness of the employer-worker emotional bond, many employers play a parental-type role to protect their workers from the agencies, particularly from over-deduction of the worker's salary. Mira and Ika, whose work stories were elaborated in Chapter 2, maintained a fictive familial relationship with their employers, benefitting in the form of material support (clothes, cash gifts), protection, medical costs and personal/family attention. Employers may also give money and other material items to the domestic worker's family who remain behind in the worker's hometown or village. Such fictive kinship relationships have long persisted as forms of everyday relations between employers and workers and have proven to be effective in many cases. This everyday relationship has endured despite the formal work arrangements between parent-employer and *baby sitter* negotiated by the Agency, as well as the efforts to professionalise the *baby sitter* through standard competencies. In the absence of formal

protection from the state, an informal fictive kinship relationship might, to a certain extent, serve as a protection for domestic workers.

Agencies argue that they try to protect the workers by limiting their working hours and manual work, particularly in response to the campaigns for domestic worker's rights. Along with the development of technology for household appliances, many agency staff and domestic workers I met believe that manual work is inhumane (*tidak manusiawi*) these days. A lot of agencies suggested parent-employers allow *baby sitter* to use modern household appliances to protect the *baby sitter* from being overworked. By using such technologies, the *baby sitter* can have more rest than before. According to one of the agency owners I met, if a *baby sitter* is overworked and has only minimal time to rest, they will be too tired to look after children and it would endanger the children themselves. In addition, some agencies argue that they play roles as negotiators when problems arise between workers and employers. For example, one *baby sitter* agency owner, Ibu Ima, told me that she once received a report from a *baby sitter* who was anxious at work because the child in her care was autistic. The child liked to punch her or bang his head against a wall, causing the *baby sitter* to feel scared. After receiving this report from the *baby sitter*, Ibu Ima complained to the parent-employer for not providing this information; had she known the situation of the child, she would have assigned a *baby sitter* more experienced in caring for autistic children. She then requested the parent-employer return the *baby sitter* to her office, without providing any replacement. While this was an extreme case, stories were shared by other agency owners about employers violating worker's rights, such as not providing an individual room, not allowing enough rest, or burdening a *baby sitter* with extra work like looking after two children instead of one. In the next chapter I will discuss the role of *baby sitter* agencies in more detail.

Conversely, many middle-class women I talked to complained about the agency's position. According to them, many newly hired *baby sitter* are now 'lazy' because they did not want to do manual housework anymore. When they begin the job, the first thing they ask is whether there was any mashing machine, microwave oven, hot water, and electric bottle steamer in the house, implying their reluctance to work manually and in a household that does not have modern appliances. Seemingly, there is a mismatch in expectations between the middle class, the *baby sitter* and the agency. For the middle-class parent-employers, what they needed from a *baby sitter* is the affection towards

children, while on the other hand, the *baby sitter* hopes to apply the knowledge they just obtained from the Agency. The agency, on the other hand, try to protect the *baby sitter* from being overworked while preparing them with knowledge on urban middle-class child care style.

The process of professionalising the occupation of *baby sitter* reflects the ongoing transformation of child caring work in Indonesia. The tasks, mobility and protection accorded to this work has been subject to various changes since the pre-colonial period age, as tabulated below.

**Table 4.1. Characteristic of domestic child carers in Indonesia**

| | **Child Caring Task (Yes/No)** | **General Cleaning (Yes/No)** | **General Cooking (Yes/No)** | **Paid/Unpaid** | **Movement/ Non-movement** | **Protection** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Domestic Slaves | Yes | Yes[a] | Yes[a] | Unpaid | No right to decide to terminate work | Shelter, living and family support provided by the masters |
| *Babu* | Yes | Yes[b] | Yes[b] | Paid in kind[c] | Have low capacity decision to move/quit from work | Provided shelter, living and family support by the masters |
| *Pembantu (helper)* | Yes | Yes | Yes | Paid in wages | Have freedom to move | Similar to familial protection from the householder |
| *Pekerja Rumah Tangga (PRT)* | Yes | Yes | Yes | Paid in wages | Have freedom to move | Similar to familial protection from the householder |
| *Mbak* | Yes | Yes [d] | Yes | Paid in wages | Have freedom to move | Similar to familial protection from the householder |
| *Baby Sitter* | Yes | | | | Have freedom to move | Some familial protection from the householder; protection from agency; written work agreement |

Notes:
a: not in some affluent households with multiple slaves
b: not in some affluent household with multiple servants
c: initially after the ban of slavery
d: sometimes asked to do minor housekeeping help

Over centuries, the specialised task of child caring was performed by domestic slaves/helpers/workers in some wealthy households with multiple slaves/helpers/workers. However, caring for children has become a separate category of domestic work in Indonesia, influenced over the centuries by such factors as: the banning of slavery; increasing recognition to human rights; the shift from non-waged to waged reproductive work; awareness of the rights of workers, and the global marketisation of domestic work. Along with this development, domestic worker and child carers have less fictive kinship relations with the householder yet develop greater access to wages, more freedom to move, and increased protection (beyond merely the familial protection offered by an employer). With increased financial independence, they are in a position to make decisions to resign from a job, whereas previously they had no or little capacity to do so. Nowadays, recruiting (and training) agencies enable extra protection for workers, particularly against exploitation by employers. These agencies negotiate the hierarchy intrinsic to the employer-worker relationship through formal recruiting mechanisms, although in reality the mechanism benefits the agencies more than the workers themselves (as illustrated by Mira's story in Chapter 2).

Nonetheless, in many cases, protection for domestic workers reflect a patron-client relationship between the employer-employee relationship or even between the agency owner and the workers prior to their placement, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Such relationship, along with the use of terms '*Ibu*' and '*Bapak*' by the domestic workers towards their employers and/or agency owners reflect a fictive kinship between them, indicating protection from parents to their children. Seemingly, this situation informs us that the formalisation process of domestic work occupation takes place in parallel with informalisation.

## *Mbak* or *Baby Sitte*r? Towards a Marketised Care Regime

Babysitting work has been transformed from a unique, personal, and kinship-based or familial type of work (as exemplified by the role of *mbak)*, to a more standardised, knowledge-based, and contractually managed type of work (the *baby sitter*). In Chapter 2, I discussed briefly the differences and similarities between *mbak* and *baby sitter* and here I discuss the issue further in relation to the transformation of domestic work in Indonesia. Based on observations and interviews with informants during fieldwork

undertaken in 2015, differences in the background, role and conditions of *mbak* and *baby sitter* are presented in Table 2.

**Table 4.2. Differences in the background, role and conditions of *mbak* and *baby sitter***

| | ***mbak*** | ***baby sitter*** |
|---|---|---|
| Minimum Educational Background | Sekolah Dasar (SD) or Primary School | Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) or Junior Secondary School |
| Recruitment | Word of mouth; Agency | Agency; Word of Mouth[18] |
| Minimum Wage[19] | Rp. 1,500,000 | Rp. 2,000,000 |
| Term of address | '*mbak*' (or other local term for older sister) | '*mbak*' (for young/new *baby sitter*); '*suster*' (for senior *baby sitter*) |
| Uniform | N/A | Provided by the employer every two months; can be purchased from the agency or a retail outlet |
| Training | N/A | Provided by the recruiting agency |
| Certification of Competence | N/A | Optional (although recommended by the agency) |

Source: Author's fieldwork data, 2015

The distinctions between *mbak* and *baby sitter* lie in their respective educational backgrounds, wage levels, uniform, training and certification. These differences have become elaborated and institutionalised by agencies through their processes of recruitment and management of workers. In practice, however, many of these differences have become blurred, because agencies apply some flexibility in upholding their own regulations. For example, while many agencies regulate a uniform allowance for *baby sitter*(s) every few months, and encourage the *baby sitter* to wear a uniform when working,

[18] A *baby sitter* who has resigned from a particular agency might be recruited through their own social network comprising friends and family members.

[19] The wages presented here reflect market rates in 2015 according to my fieldwork data, however actual wages will differ based on the negotiation that takes place.

the decision to wear a uniform while working is subject to the agreement between parent-employer and their *baby sitter*.

Pocock (2005) has argued that the policy and instruments of household-based care work reflect the gender order in a particular country. In contemporary Indonesia, similar to most nations, women are expected to be the primary carers in the family for children, spouses and the elderly. The absence of government-provided care services for families has pushed households to find their own solutions; in most cases it is young women who fill this gap (Minh, 2014). Baird, Ford and Hill (2017) have used a feminist research approach to examine care and work in Asian and Pacific countries, showing that in a highly stratified society like Asia, the demand for non-familial care is very high and supply is generally readily available. This type of care is normally arranged as informal home-based paid care rather than formally organised services by the state or the private sector. They argue that Indonesia has a familial/informal care regime wherein care work is unregulated. In this case, women are engaged as informally employed paid care workers in a household, without any regulations or entitlements to support that care role and few alternatives in the form of state-support services. In fact, the care standards of domestic workers are to some extent regulated by Kepmenaker No. 313/2015. These regulations encourage a higher level of commitment from stakeholders (the national government and the parliament) to improve domestic workers' capacity in various competences, including care for children and the elderly. However, as discussed earlier, the regulation is, non-binding and is not developed in the context of national care or welfare for the family. Rather, Kepmenaker No.313/2015 – administered by the Ministry of Manpower – is issued in the context of 'professionalising' domestic work. The Ministry of Education is also involved in the professionalisation of domestic care workers through the provision of training and certification of *baby sitter*(s) and elderly carers but it is unclear if care for families is connected in this context. Currently, the government's family welfare policy is focused on social support for poor families through the provision of subsidised rice, cash transfers for pregnant mothers and babies, as well as education. In Indonesia, care for children has traditionally been provided by families drawing on kin networks and the state has had little involvement in social reproduction activities leaving the provision of care solely to individual families. This situation is totally different from welfare states where the state provides assistance of care and other welfare-related issue for families.

Indonesia's current care regime is both familial and marketised (Razafi cited by Ford and Nurchayati, 2017). City-based recruiting agencies have changed the way childrearing is performed in contemporary households. The middle-class parent's role in childrearing shifted to domestic workers and, recently, it has shifted once again to a specialised group of domestic workers–*baby sitter*. Agencies active role in setting up standard competences for domestic workers reflect the capitalisation of the care regime in Indonesia. However, in some households, care is still performed by family members or relatives, especially in rural areas or in households where relatives reside close by. Many new families with young children engage senior extended family members as paid child carers similar to the *baby sitter* or *mbak,* reflecting the current complex mix of familial and marketised child care in Indonesia. It also signifies a transition taking place in the country's family and child care regime: from an unregulated and family/kinship-based care to formal/regulated and marketised one.

Further to the marketisation of child rearing, I argue that the trend for hiring a *baby sitter* from training Agencies changes the structure of households as well as the practices of child rearing, especially in urban areas. Agencies aim to strictly regulate one *baby sitter* to look after one child in a household and applies the ratio of 1:1 (one *baby sitter* for each child within a household). While this rule apparently avoids exploitation of the *baby sitter*, it also brings more profit for the agency through increased placement opportunities. However, this would dramatically increase the household size of families with several young children. Thus the 'one child one *baby sitter*' rule could also change the practices of child rearing in a household, as child care-related tasks are performed separately from other domestic tasks and each child is deemed the first priority of its specific carer (*baby sitter*).

## The Meaning of Uniformed Carers

One of the notable markers of modern child carer in Indonesia is the *baby sitter* uniform. The uniform constantly communicates with others by making the wearer visible in public (Warouw 2004). Warouw in his research on Indonesian female factory workers in Tangerang argued that the work outfit/uniform is a project of identity. In the similar vein, I argue that the *baby sitter* uniform is a project of identity for multiple groups in society.

Indeed, this uniform identifies the *baby sitter* and marks her role as a quasi-professional child carer. Yet it is also a status identity for the employer and the agency.

In Chapter 2, for example, Mira only wears a *baby sitter* uniform when she goes out to school or accompanies the family to a reception. Some *baby sitter*(s) told me that whenever they step out of the house, they wear their uniform. The uniform represents an employment status for the *baby sitter*, as they are seen as different and more 'professional' than the *mbak* or PRT. In the shopping mall, the uniform distinguishes the *baby sitter* and the family they work for. As shown in Figure 4.4 below, the uniform clearly identifies the parent-employers and the *baby sitter.* It creates a distance between the two and contrasts with the claim made by many employers that their *baby sitter* is a family member. Besides, why would a family member need to wear a uniform?


**Figure 4.3 A family and their *baby sitter* in a shopping mall**

In fact, when a family is walking in public with more than one uniformed *baby sitter*, their economic status is clearly recognised. People can imagine the expense that the family spends to hire more than one *baby sitter* in their family. The cost of hiring a *baby sitter* is relatively higher than an *mbak*, and the *baby sitter* uniform can be a proxy to measure a parent-employer's wealth as well as the *baby sitter*'s income. For example, it is well known among Indonesian people that a *baby sitter* recruited from an agency is paid at the rate of at least Rp. 2million per month (AUD200). A parent-employer must spend at least the same amount for each *baby sitter* they hire, and this cost will multiply accordingly if they hire more than one *baby sitter*. Although it has been argued in many

previous studies that domestic workers can display the status of the employers, the *baby sitter* uniform provides much clearer status distinction, allowing the public to estimate the actual expenses paid by parent-employers. This situation is different from that of the *mbak*, who does not wear a uniform, and thus does not directly signify her parent-employer's status and wealth.

Agencies require the *baby sitter* to wear a uniform with their logo on it when in public, providing free promotion for their business. Crane (2000) argued that a company logo can be used as a medium for social information. The *baby sitter* uniform, often decorated with the agency's logo, can thus be viewed as the agency's tool to inform the public about their business. However, some *baby sitter* perceived their uniform with logo as making then like an *iklan berjalan* or 'mobile advertisement'. They preferred to wear non-uniform attire when working, or a uniform without logo. Wearing a plain uniform still showed their identity as a professional child carer, distinct from the *mbak*.

### Complex Stage Performances

Goffman (1959) famously argued that an individual's everyday life is a stage where s/he performs constantly a character that s/he wants or wants others to see. The presentation of self is divided into the front stage and backstage. The former relates to an arena where a formal and indirect manner is displayed, while the latter is where a more relaxed and direct behaviour is accepted. Conformity to the workplace is linked to the front stage of people's lives, while the backstage is related to people's presentation as they are, the natural acts of their own self, such as the natural behaviour enacted in one's own home. In the case of the *baby sitter*, the work/front stage is unclear because, similar to other live-in domestic workers, their work place is also their back stage. To add further complication to these blurred boundaries, the work of the *baby sitter* (front stage) is located at other people's back stage (their parent-employer's house), where they work and perform care towards their employers' children.

Since the task of the *babysitter* is to look after a child day and night, especially for those who work with a newborn baby, there is no clear boundary between working (performing on the front stage) or not (standing by at the back stage). They will 'standby' at all times to attend to the baby, even more than the parents. Suster Zulaika, a *baby sitter* of a newborn baby, slept in a small room located right beside the baby's room. The room used to be a study that was turned into a bedroom when she arrived in her parent-employer's

house. It was located on the second floor, while the baby's parents' bedroom was on the third floor. Suster Zulaika told me that she needed to wake up in the middle of the night every time the baby cried, and be the first to calm him, rather than the parents. That was why her bedroom was located next to the baby's room. Many times she chose to sleep in the baby's bedroom and, luckily, her parent-employer allowed her to do so. She told me,

> So each night, every time the baby cries, normally around 2 or 3 PM, I wake up and change his nappy. After that I will take him to Ibu [the baby's mother] to breastfeed him. However, if the baby wakes up before or after the usual time, I will be the one to calm him down, but I must not bring him to Ibu, because it is not breastfeeding time. Besides, their [the baby's parents'] room is upstairs and my room is closer to the baby, so I will always be the main person to attend to the baby at night.

Suster Zulaika's experience offers an example of the blurred stages of work performance. Sleeping at night should be part of being at the back stage, however, as a *baby sitter* it also means standing by if the baby is awake. Warouw (2004) in his study found that the uniform differentiates the back and front stage of factory workers in Tangerang, Indonesia. However, he also noted that since the workers' houses faced the factories, they too seemed to wear their uniform even after work. As a *baby sitter*, Suster Zulaika wears a uniform when working because it gives her a sense of professionalism. However, she has built a boundary of sorts: her daily work in her employer's house, for which she wears her uniform is considered her front stage. At night, when the baby is asleep, she takes her uniform off to rest and sleep. Nonetheless, during this time, she is still required to perform her work, particularly when the baby wakes up in the middle of the night. Here, the demarcation between front and back stage is difficult for the *baby sitter*. By wearing a uniform at work, which is notably inside a house, the *baby sitter* clearly blurs the dichotomy between public and private areas. Marking a clear line between the front and back stage of the work of the *baby sitter* is complex because their work place is also where they live and rest. Moreover, child care requires more than spatial flexibility. The task requires high flexibility of time, because one must stand by 24 hours a day for the child s/he cares for. In this situation, I argue the *baby sitter* – as a child carer – adds to the complication of domestic work, particularly in regard to the demarcation of public and private space of between front and back stage to perform work. They need to be 'professional' at work despite their own 'personal' issues, for example when they feel exhausted or stressed from work. The *baby sitter* is a clear example of the difficulty in separating public and private matter in domestic work.

### Symbols of Discipline

The *baby sitter* uniform means different things to different people. Many *baby sitter*(s) expressed their dislike at wearing a uniform, because it gets dirty easily, and especially during menstruation when they have to be aware of the lower part of the uniform. On the contrary, Ibu Ima told me that the white-coloured uniform means 'Cleanliness. The white uniform does get dirty easily, which reminds the *babysitter* to quickly get changed when dirty. Cleanliness is what it's all about when you work with a child, moreover a baby'. Her argument clearly relates the role of *baby sitter* with hygiene, a topic that is taught during *baby sitter* training. Hygiene is further associated with health and medical issues, which explains why the *baby sitter* uniform is quite similar to the nurse's uniform.

Uniforms can signal servitude to a ruler, for example where soldiers wear a military uniform while serving their country. In the contemporary industrial labour age, uniforms are used by the company to discipline and control the workers (Warouw 2004). The *baby sitter* uniform is also used to discipline the *baby sitter*, especially in relation to servitude to the agency which demands loyalty both to it and to the profession.

As explained by Ibu Ima, by wearing a white, clean uniform, the *baby sitter* needs to be disciplined in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, which is important for her work with children. The *baby sitter* training conducted by Ibu Ima's agency also requires trainees to wear a uniform to give them a sense of pride and discipline towards their job. Similarly, Yayasan Mutiara Darma, an agency linked to a Catholic hospital, delivered a *baby sitter* training in a strict manner, and reportedly adopted the hospital's nursing school standards. The head of the *yayasan*, Ibu Mary, along with her administration staff and contracted *baby sitter*, refused to categorise the *baby sitter* occupation as domestic work. Rather, they used the categorisation of *pengasuh anak* (child carer) or *perawat anak* (child nurse). While attending the *baby sitter* examination day in their office, which I discuss in Chapter 5, I observed the examinees wearing a green uniform and black shoes, with their hair neatly pulled back and tightly twisted like a bun (other agency training was less strict and formal). They all looked like neat and professional nurses at the hospital. At the time of the *baby sitter* examination day, I reflected that all of the efforts to professionalise the *baby sitter* occupation did in fact imply a uniform skill of babysitting. The training and examination for *baby sitter* competence measures *baby sitter* performance against a national general standard, evidencing the transition in child care in Indonesia. I came to

realize that the uniformed *baby sitter* implies and expresses a uniform way of handling babies and children.

**Figure 4.5 A group of *baby sitter* sit in an examination**

### Diversity in Uniform

Despite implying discipline and status, the *baby sitter* uniform also projects a sense of style and fashion while maintaining its medical reference. An internet search conducted on the subject '*seragam baby sitter*' (*baby sitter* uniform) brings up various uniform designs, as shown in Figure 4.5 below. Nowadays, the *baby sitter* uniform is characterised by a variety of colours, patterns and designs. These diverse styles cannot be purchased at the agency, but in supermarkets, baby shops, or through online shops. The new uniform designs project the playful character of children, reflecting the playful (rather than strict) childhood environment preferred by young parents today. This preference also reveals two sides of *baby sitter* characters: the ideal, strict rules and discipline taught by the agency, and the casual relationships that characterise family. The single-coloured uniforms seem to create distance between the wearer and the child, as well as the parent-employer, and recent designs of uniform are shifting to colourful and full-patterned uniforms. They demonstrate informality, warmth and more open relationships between the wearer, the child and his/her parents.

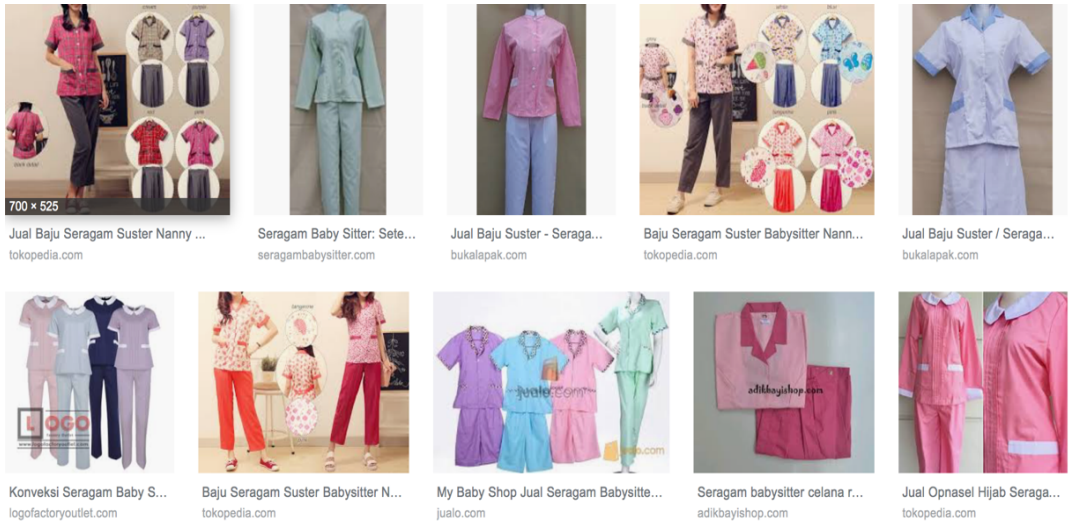


**Figure 4.6 Various designs of *baby sitter* uniforms**

Source: Selected from google image search '*Seragam Baby Sitter*'

Reflecting on the uniform of the *baby sitter* and the way it is worn allows various insights into the occupation. The uniform symbolises the complexity of formalising care work in a household, where the arena of the *baby sitter*'s work is both front and back stage. Wearing a uniform within one's parent-employers' household to symbolise professionalism means no rest and no time to be back stage, ignoring the emotions and natural behaviour of a *baby sitter*. Nonetheless, the discipline and professionalism is also twisted to an informal and casual sense with self-purchasing of colourful and fashionable uniforms, that seem to reaffirm the formalities integrating with informality in everyday practice.

## Conclusion

The *baby sitter* as an occupation represents a transformation of the child rearing tasks of domestic work. It is a departure from the informal, familial and kinship-based relationships of child care to a formal and seemingly professional work relationship. It is also a long-standing practice that is being transformed over time in response to changing political and economic agendas and expectations. The characteristic of unequal relationships in the household persists as a result of the *baby sitter* living and working in the parent-employer's house. The formalisation of the occupation of *baby sitter* acts partly as a mechanism to protect workers and enable their freedom. Nowadays, in an era of

attention to labour rights, the formalisation of the *baby sitter* occupation is enables greater capacity at work, and access to payment and certain freedoms.

The Indonesian domestic care regime consists of familial and marketised care practices. In the course of this research, many informants expressed preference for familial-style childcare, drawing attention to the absence of state law that could regulate the rights and responsibilities of domestic workers, as well as impose sanctions on any violations. Delays in enacting such a law have resulted in the private sector self-regulating domestic workers and *baby sitter*(s) through a range of rules and standards. The Indonesian government has attempted to professionalise domestic work, including the *baby sitter* occupation, by issuing a national standard of competence. This standard was driven by the state, fuelled by international development agenda and regional market competition, which shapes and transform domestic work in many ways. The work competence differentiates competencies of domestic work, separating child rearing from general domestic work based on various measured indicators. However, in everyday practice, the varied of terms used for child carers, their negotiated tasks and even their appearance reflect the difficulty of strictly differentiating care work from domestic work.

The standard competence implies state's and private sector's penetration to household, particularly in terms of reproductive labour. The rules and standard of competence contradict various flexible and informal arrangements of childrearing, particularly because babysitting operates in a local and private setting that is hard to standardise and regulate. Given this ambiguity, many people are anxious about the work category of *baby sitter,* as it represents a confrontation between the social values associated with family and kin-based care and modern and capitalised care.

Nonetheless, the transformation of child caring over time in Indonesia still accommodates a familial and informal relationship between parent-employers and their *baby sitter*. For example, the *baby sitter* uniform shows the modern and quasi-professional status of the wearer. Yet, wearing it inside a house contradicts the flexible and informal nature of homes. Nowadays, a diverse array of uniforms is available to negotiate the formal arrangements of the work. The *baby sitter* occupation is an example of a transforming occupation where the formalisation and informalisation blend together.

# Chapter 5

# Brokering Care: The Role of Agencies

Before conducting fieldwork, I had my own pre-existing knowledge on the *baby sitter* agency from reading those previously mentioned methodological references relating to brokers of migration. From reading Killias (2018) who studied Indonesian migrant workers' migration journey from the village to employer households in Malaysia, I reflected that her identity as a researcher was not fully welcomed by the agencies, as they disliked exposure or publicity, especially from the media. I was aware of this situation, as I had observed in the media that agencies were accused of not being responsible in preparing or sending their workers abroad. Given this knowledge, I was very careful in approaching *baby sitter* agencies in Jakarta. With a view to gaining insights into these agencies, I initially contacted some friends to check whether any of them intended recruiting domestic workers or *baby sitter* from an agency. However, none of my friends were planning to do so. Then I searched for *baby sitter* agencies via the internet, I also saw flyers on the street. Eventually I managed to arrange some interviews. I restricted my focus to agencies located not too far from my son's school, so that I could visit them in the time between drop-off and pick-up. I found several agencies in this area – around Kemang and Cilandak –locations famous for cafes and restaurants as well as residential areas for many wealthy Indonesians and expatriates. Some of these agencies readily accepted an interview, which I later understood to be due to their perception that our meeting would be akin to meeting a journalist who could promote their businesses to the wider public. Other agencies were less open that my phone call was taken by an answering machine which required me to press different keys for different inquiries, until finally I was put through to an agency officer. The agency officer then asked me to send a letter to request an interview because her boss was busy and lived out of town. Eventually I did manage to build connections with some welcoming agency owners; it is the findings resulting from these interactions that I present in this chapter.

As explained in the earlier chapter, there is no unified data about the number of *baby sitter* agencies in Indonesia. Agency registration is done by different Ministries in Indonesia, depending on the institutional purpose of the agency (Ministry of Manpower

and Ministry of Education and Culture), which I will discuss later in this chapter. Beyond the registered agencies, there are many other unregistered agencies (with no registration number from the government) as well as individual agents who channel domestic workers and *baby sitter(s)* too. Formal and registered *baby sitter* agencies recruit potential workers and train them to be 'professional' *baby sitter(s)*. The 'professional and certified' *baby sitter(s)* are the ones who have been through a formal *baby sitter* examination, a process that is set up by the recruitment association and the Ministry. This examination is normally done after the *baby sitter* has completed their training. The training teaches *baby sitter(s)* about the physical wellbeing of the baby and children, while the examination will test them on their knowledge of care around the same topic. The examination itself is completed in writing or as a practical, depending on the methodology used by the examining association. In this chapter I discuss the process of training and examining the *baby sitter* as part of transforming individuals into a professional carer workers. During the process, I could see how issues of hierarchy and class-making emerge between the *baby sitter* and the agency owner/staff, as well as between the *baby sitter* and *mbak*. The training also introduces class differentiation and patron-client relationship between employers and the *baby sitter*.

One such agency owner is Ibu Ima. Her agency works exclusively to recruit *baby sitter,* endeavouring to build a professional image of the *baby sitter* supplied. By avoiding mixing *baby sitter* and PRT business under one management, she seeks to build public trust in the provision of professional *baby sitter* services. She did not want people to think that she was not serious in training the *baby sitter*. She told me,

> I have to develop an image to gain public trust. I don't want people to think that a *baby sitter* from my agency is just an *mbak* equipped with a uniform. You know, nowadays anyone can create a *baby sitter* identity by purchasing and wearing the *baby sitter* uniform from different sources. One can buy it from a shop and put it on any young woman [without any training], and automatically the woman will look like a *baby sitter*.

As mentioned by Ibu Ima, and as discussed earlier, the *baby sitter* training is a defining feature of a *baby sitter*, compared to the symbolic uniform attire. And since this training is provided by an agency, I assume, then, that it is primarily the agency that creates or brings into being the occupation of '*baby sitter*'. As discussed earlier, Permenaker No. 2/2015 specifies babysitting as part of domestic work and Kepmenaker No 313/2015 sets the standard work competence for the occupation (for use as a guide to training and certification of the *baby sitter*). Agencies signify training and certification of the *baby*

*sitter*, differentiating the job from other domestic workers. The role of a *baby sitter* agency is more than recruiting workers as they provide training prior to the *baby sitter*'s job placement. It resonates with Rudnyckyj (2004) who argued that agencies try to professionalise and transport workers to create skilled and well-behaved domestic workers, desired by the prospective employers. In this chapter I focus on the perceptions of agencies towards the *baby sitter* and their role in shaping the *baby sitter* as a new category of domestic work in Indonesia. I mainly look at the ways *baby sitter* agencies recruit, train, sort and create the *baby sitter* as a category of domestic work. They try to establish a formal and professional image for the *baby sitter*, a child carer who lives in the parent-employer's house, which was previously a personal and informal role. I argue that the transformation of brokering domestic work within Indonesia has developed in parallel with the emergence of the *baby sitter* occupation. It displays a transition of brokering activities from an individual and highly informal arrangement to an institutionalised and professional one. Secondly, I argue that the training and certification of the *baby sitter* has transformed domestic work into a completely new paradigm. It has moved from a private and non-professional occupation to a more public and quasi-professional one. *Baby sitter* agencies facilitate the conversion of non-skilled domestic care work into that of the quasi-professional, while upholding their role as an intermediary between worker and parent-employer, and between the young woman's rural and urban livelihoods. Finally, I also argue that agencies do not only make migration possible for domestic workers, but create hierarchies of opportunity for them through the creation of the *baby sitter* occupation.

## From *Sponsor* to *Agen*: Brokers of Domestic Workers

In considering the role of agencies, I refer to discussions in anthropology about cultural brokers. Historically, the 'cultural broker' has been used to refer to mediators between 'community-oriented' and 'state-oriented groups'(Geertz 1960). A cultural broker is a middleman, someone who 'bridges the gap' between diverse groups in different social situations (Jezewski 1990). In their intermediary role, they go between different cultures (from local to national) and may become the agents of social change that facilitate integration between villages and the state (Bailey 1963).

When discussing *baby sitter* agencies, I refer to Lindquist (2015) who studied the role of brokers in relation to Indonesian migrant workers from Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, and argued that the migration of workers is made possible and arranged through brokerage. According to Lindquist, the role of recruitment agencies is crucial in facilitating the transfer of workers from their villages to urban workplaces (physical mobility). These agencies assign individual brokers or middlemen, locally known as *Petugas Lapangan* (PL) or *sponsor*, to recruit potential workers from rural areas and villages to become migrant labourers overseas. Agencies' reliance on *sponsor* to recruit workers at the village level is due to government regulation that allows agencies to open offices at the provincial level only (Anggraeni 2006).

As the frontline personnel of an agency, the *sponsor*'s task is to recruit workers in the field. They act as individual brokers, linking workers with the agency (not directly to the parent-employers). They are usually known by the local people as they tend to come from the same area or from a neighbouring village. They can be friends of the recruit's family, relatives or even a respected figure in the village. A *sponsor*'s task is to build trust with potential workers at the village level, something which is done individually. Since the *sponsor*s are known to the local people, they can gain trust relatively easy. In this regard, I refer to Lindquist (2015) who has argued that brokers have cultural knowledge of the village and can gain the trust of prospective workers and their families. Based on my interviews with some agency staff, an agency's success is measured by the numbers of workers recruited and channelled to clients. The number of workers recruited is very dependent on the capacity of *sponsor*s in the field. A large agency ordinarily has a network of *sponsor*s in different parts of Indonesia, so they can recruit a regular supply of workers.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the *sponsor* works informally for agencies, on a commission basis, to recruit *baby sitter(s)*. The agency pays the sponsor a commission ranging from Rp.250,000 to Rp.500,000 per person brought into their office. Since the *sponsor* works informally with agencies – there is no contract between agency and *sponsor* – they might recruit workers for various agencies at the same time. The *sponsor* does not provide any contract to the worker either. As the mediator between informal individual recruitment and formal bureaucratic recruitment by the agency, the *sponsor* is never formally contracted by agencies. They are informally work for agencies but

expected to recruit workers who will be formally trained and contracted later on. Due to their informal work arrangement with agencies and the high demand of domestic workers from different agencies, the *sponsor* may choose which agency they want to bring the potential workers to, depending on the commission offered. Nowadays, with the huge number of agencies operating in Indonesia, recruiting workers have become much more difficult than before, and *sponsor*s have to be highly mobile to broaden their recruitment activity.

As the frontline personnel of the agency, it is the role of *sponsor* to facilitate the migration of rural women, including preparing the worker's migration documents (i.e. permit letter from parents or village head). They also provide loan money for recruits to prepare for their migration and living in the city (for example, purchase of clothes, transportation, meals and accommodation enroute to the city). Sometimes the *sponsor* must use their own money for this purpose in order to convince the recruits and their families. They will ask the recruit to repay this loan once they begin receiving their salary (Anggraeni 2006).

This process reveals a form of dependency between the recruits and the *sponsor* – which some literatures views as a form of debt-bondage – that is commissioned by the agency. Depending on the *sponsor*'s agreement with the agency, the *sponsor*'s money loaned to recruits may be refunded by the agency as part of or in addition to their commission. However, sometimes the agency does not repay the money to the *sponsor* because the recruit may have resigned or moved to other employers without informing the agency. This whole process of funding the recruit's migration highlights the complexity of patron-client relationships between the agency, sponsor and the recruited workers.

According to an agency staff member who I met in the field, the *sponsor* is key to an agency's success. They are the ones who recruit workers for the agency, and their recruitment success will determine the numbers of workers, including *baby sitter*, trained by the agency and subsequently placed in various households in the city. Ideally, *sponsor*s also sort out workers in the field based on their educational background, by checking their school diploma, and directing them to the appropriate occupation type: PRT or *mbak* for primary school graduates, and *baby sitter* for junior high school graduates. However, this is not always the case, as it is in the interests of the *sponsor* to channel as many people as possible to the agency (Anggraeni 2006).

Once a *baby sitter* arrives in the agency office, her name will be registered and her documents checked again by agency officials. At this stage, the role of *sponsor* as the transporter of the *baby sitter* has finished, replaced by the agency personnel who register and train the *baby sitter* in the agency. However, the agency does not pay commission to the *sponsor* until the recruit is placed with a household. Normally the *sponsor* returns to the village or rural area for more recruitments while waiting for the commission. As the informal recruitment process by a *sponsor* has ended, it is now the task of an agency staff to formally sort recruits officially. The agency staff will once again check the documents and interview the recruits to decide whether they are suitable to work as PRT*, mbak* or *baby sitter*, depending on their age, interest, educational background and experiences. This second sorting is conducted to make sure recruits are suitable to work for families in urban households, which referred to by Rudnyckyj (2004) as 'proper' workers. Unlike the PRT or *mbak* who will be placed immediately in an employer's house, the *baby sitter* is not directly channelled to a household by the agency. Instead, they will remain in the agency office until they complete *baby sitter* training (around one week to three months), or until they are selected by agency staff to work in a parent-employer's household. During this period, they will stay in the dormitory provided by the agency, which is nearby the agency's main office.

At the agency, the newly recruited personnel will follow a clearly defined process towards 'becoming' a *baby sitter*. By referring to Lyons (2005) who studied the 'making of domestic workers', I argue that the training process at the agency is a stage of 'making of *baby sitter*' which is started once the rural recruits entered the agency's dormitories. Firstly, they will be sorted based on their health situation. An agency staff member will arrange a medical check-up (comprising a thorax x-ray) for each of the newly recruited *baby sitter*, which is conducted between the training sessions. This medical check-up and thorax x-ray are done to check their general health conditions and to see if they have any lung infection – principally tuberculosis – and prevent them to transmit the disease to other people, more importantly, their employer's family. If the x-ray result is not good, the *baby sitter* is given the choice of continuing the training while undergoing medication or returning to their village-based home. Those whose x-ray results are clear can continue to the training, which is the next step of the sorting, until they are selected to work. I will discuss the *baby sitter* training in more detail later in this chapter.

Based on my fieldwork observations concerning the recruitment process of *baby sitter*, I identified two stages of brokering. The first stage is the recruitment and migration of recruits facilitated by field officers or *petugas lapangan* (PL) – locally known as a *sponsor*; and the second stage concerns the training of the *baby sitter* delivered by the agency in their offices. The training differentiates *baby sitter, mbak* and PRT because the latter are not required to undergo training but, rather, to simply wait for a work placement in a household. The training process for a *baby sitter* resembles that undertaken by Indonesian migrant workers preparing for domestic work overseas. Both *baby sitter* and migrant workers are required to live at the agency's office and follow a series of training that will prepare them for employment and to discipline them as a 'professional' workers.

Agencies for migrant domestic workers have sent workers overseas since the 1970s and, from the 1980s, due to violations experienced by Indonesian domestic workers (see Robinson 2000), the government has required agencies to provide skills and training for workers prior to their departure to prevent exploitation. The compulsory training must involve the skill set and standards and cultural knowledge necessary for home/domestic care in the recipient country. Similar training is provided to *baby sitter;* in fact, many agencies deliver training in care skills to *baby sitter* by adopting modules and training materials from training provided to migrant workers. Some agency owners who have worked with maternal clinics (as in Ibu Maya's case in the previous chapter) also apply some skills obtained from that clinic setting. The *baby sitter* training is much shorter than the migrant worker's because the intensity and scope of training is restricted to babies and children, while the migrant worker's training focuses on the household in general, including child minding, language and culture. Since the *baby sitter*'s work is aimed at serving the national and urban market within the country, their training does not need to cover the language and cultural practices of a destination country. The *baby sitter* training includes basic baby care, cleaning, food preparation, basic first aid, basic childhood education (how to play with baby children, children's songs) and *baby sitter* attitude. In addition, some training also covers basic English language skills to prepare them to interact with children who are educated in international schools and use the English language as medium of instruction. For the *baby sitter*, learning English can be a challenge and a pride too, because for them, foreign language mean modernity. Such skills set is deemed necessary in becoming a proper child carers of an urban middle class family.

The training or second stage of brokering is not offered to the *baby sitter* on a *gratis* (free of charge) basis. As explained earlier, similar to pre-departure training for migrant workers, agencies charge each *baby sitter* a fee for the following services: initial transportation from their villages to the city, training, food and accommodation during training, and the medical check-up. This fee is charged via salary deduction once the *baby sitter* starts working, reflecting an initial debt that the *baby sitter* have had prior to their job placement. This salary deduction can range from 10 to 25 per cent of their salary for the first six months of work, according to my informants.

Once a *baby sitter* has finished training, or at any time during the training when there is a demand for a *baby sitter*, the agency will try to match the profile of the parent-employer with their trained *baby sitter*. Once the *baby sitter* is hired by a parent-employer, the agency charges an 'administration fee' of around Rp.1,000,000 to the employer, supposedly to cover the *baby sitter*'s transportation costs from the rural area. The agency also issues a work agreement to be signed by the parent-employer, the *baby sitter*, and one of the agency officials. This agreement stipulates the agreed duties of the *baby sitter*, the rights and responsibilities of a *baby sitter*, and other terms and conditions, such as guarantee of service. The same document is also prepared by the agency when a PRT or *mbak* is hired.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Permenaker No. 2/2015 can be understood as an identification of different tasks within domestic services as designated occupational categories. The categories also link to the compensation system. The issuance of this regulation is relatively late, compared to the long existence of domestic work in Indonesia. In fact, agencies had been self-regulating and specifying domestic workers' employment conditions based on different levels of tasks, despite the vacuum of formal legislation. Agencies have set the basic salaries for different categories of domestic workers, which implies their greater role beyond brokering the migration of workers.

With the growth of the middle class during the last two decades, people in Indonesia have come to recognise the emerging occupation of the *baby sitter* or nanny, as one with responsibilities to provide care services for children. Permenaker No. 313/2015 is a regulatory instrument to distinguish the already existing category of domestic work. Meanwhile, in the global discourse on domestic work, it is still debatable whether child caring tasks are best considered part of domestic work or as professional care work (see

Anderson, 2000). More interestingly, in today's work/care regime, there is no clear demarcation between paid and unpaid care (Pocock 2003). Similarly, in Indonesia there are also contradictory opinions about the *baby sitter* occupation among many stakeholders. While the government, NGOs, and practitioners mostly consider babysitting to be part of domestic work services, some agencies and *baby sitter* themselves are reluctant to categorise babysitting and caring for the elderly at home as part of domestic work. Rather, they consider the role of *baby sitter* as a distinct category of in-home carer, in recognition of tasks, training and skills obtained.

Although the agency plays an important role in creating babysitting as an occupation, there are different opinions about its role. One parent-employer informant told me that a well-regarded agency is discernible from the way the owner interacts with clients. According to him, a professional and responsible agency is normally quick in responding to the client's requests and, almost predictably, this attitude of responsiveness is transferred to the *baby sitter* through the training. However, he also agreed that the cost of hiring a *baby sitter* from a reputable agency is usually higher than other agencies. In contrast, some other parent-employers had complained to agencies about their *baby sitter*, often on account of early resignation (one to three months after starting work). Further, some suspected these resignations to be part of an agency's business tactic based primarily on obtaining administration fees and not on providing quality recruitment and training services. Additionally, some local NGOs have revealed many cases of violation and exploitation of domestic workers by agency providers, especially while workers are waiting to be placed with prospective employers.

As briefly discussed earlier, during my interview with the Coordinator of Jala PRT, I was told of a case involving an agency accused of trafficking because they locked their recruited domestic workers in a small room without access to food or water while they waited to be placed with an employer. This incident was considered to be a form of trafficking according to the advocacy NGO. This particular agency has previously been reported to the police three times for the same offences but were still permitted to operate at the time of my interview. Jala PRT and its NGO network suspected corruption, and questioned the government about the protection of domestic workers. The network argued that the lucrative agencies continue to operate due to the absence of government regulation to protect domestic workers and to regulate the practices of agencies. In this

case, it ironic that the agency that is supposed to provide domestic workers with skills – which can protect and prevent them from exploitation – is in fact the one who exploits the workers themselves.

The *sponsor*(s) and agencies display the complex relationship of brokering domestic work in Indonesia. The sponsor's role is key in displaying rural-urban linkages and making the transport of rural women to the city possible. The money they lend in advance to the recruits have created independency since the beginning towards the sponsor and later on to the agency. This whole range of process informs us about the patron-client relationships between the recruits, sponsors and agency owners.

The recruit's migration from rural to urban areas and document and health checks upon their arrival at the agency's office have informed us about the blended relationships between individual-institutional brokers and informal-formal recruitment processes of the *baby sitter*. However, given the mixed public opinions, both *sponsor(s)* and agencies try to build a professional image for themselves and their businesses. In the next section I discuss how *baby sitter* agencies organise themselves, including how they start the business and their promotional strategies to generate a professional image and gain public trust.

## Getting Organised as *Baby Sitter* Agencies

In this section I will discuss how agencies organise themselves, from registering the business, starting to recruit workers and promoting their services. This process reflects the evolution of brokers and brokering activities which impacts and is impacted by the evolution of domestic work itself (from a private and unregulated practice to a public and regulated one).

Since 2009, the number of migrant worker agencies has increased dramatically especially following the abolition of the government's monopoly on labour recruitment during the New Order political regime (Lindquist 2015). In 2014, there were around 546 registered recruiting companies operating to recruit and send migrant workers abroad. Some of these agencies additionally have several sister companies that recruit and place domestic workers within Indonesia too. In 2015, according to the Secretary of the *Baby Sitter* Competence Certification Institution or Lembaga Sertifikasi Kompetensi (LSK) *Baby Sitter,* there were more than 250 agencies providing domestic workers (both PRT and

*baby sitter*) for different households/clients in Jakarta. Among these agencies, there are a number specialising in the recruitment of *baby sitter* only. For these agencies, their role has expanded from recruitment to training of *baby sitter*.

As recruiting agencies, they facilitate the recruit's migration in order to fulfil the demands of middle-class parent-employers for in-house care workers. This particular demand creates the second role of the *baby sitter* agency—as training agency, and differentiates them from regular domestic worker recruiting agencies. As training agencies, they provide instruction and caring skills for novice *baby sitter,* preparing them as 'professional' and 'work-ready' carers for urban households. These agencies employ in-house trainers who are certified and able to provide materials on baby and child health, hygiene, cleanliness and the care of infants over a 1-3 month training period.

*Baby sitter* agencies have dual role: as a recruiting and a training institution. Unlike domestic worker agencies that recruit and place PRT or *mbak*, the *baby sitter* agency must recruit, train and place the recruited and trained *baby sitter*. This dual role necessitates different legal registration. Domestic worker agencies in Indonesia are often known as *agen* (agency), while the *baby sitter* agency is often called *yayasan* (foundation). An *agen* is understood to be a third party whose work involves brokering or linking one party to another. The word *agen* is an abbreviated version of the term a*gen penyalur pekerja*, which literally means a 'workers channelling agency'. Because they recruit workers, the main focus of the *agen*'s business is to facilitate work placements rather than providing training or learning services. They do not just channel domestic workers such as maids or *baby sitter*, but also carers for the elderly, cooks, gardeners, security guards, or family drivers. Thus, the term *agen* often has connotations of profit making. On the other hand, the term *yayasan* is widely used by social and educational institutions to provide social services for the community. A *yayasan* is by definition a 'not-for-profit' operation as they normally work for social or charitable purposes. Many *baby sitter* agencies are called *yayasan* due to their training function. Some other agencies use the term 'company' to refer to their entity (known in Indonesian as CV or PT), although very rarely. The term 'PT' is commonly used by agencies who recruit and train migrant workers to work overseas. During my fieldwork in Indonesia, people used the terms *agen* or *yayasan* interchangeably for all types of agencies, without differentiating whether they recruited PRT or *baby sitter*.

The confusion over the Indonesian term for agencies can be traced back to confusion—since their establishment—around categorising the work of these *baby sitter* agencies. On paper, one can differentiate *yayasan* and *agen* from their respective legal statuses. According to the Head of the Association of Indonesia Domestic Workers Suppliers[20] (*Asosiasi Pelatihan dan Penempatan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Seluruh Indonesia* or APPSI), many agencies in Indonesia have registered their business as a recruiting agency (*agen*), training agency (*yayasan*), or both. If an agency is registered as an *agen*, its legal entity is listed under the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration authority, and it is permitted to recruit and place workers throughout Indonesia. If an agency is registered as a *yayasan*, its legal entity is listed under the Ministry of Education and Culture. If the agency is registered as both *agen* and *yayasan*, its legal permits are listed with both the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Such an agency can undertake recruitment and training of domestic workers, meaning they can recruit and place both PRT or *baby sitter*. As a result of the blurring of *agen* and *yayasan,* APPSI changed its name from formerly *Asosiasi Penyalur Pekerja Rumah Tangga Seluruh Indonesia* or Association of Indonesian Domestic Workers Recruiting Agencies to the current *Asosiasi Pelatihan dan Penempatan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Seluruh Indonesia* or the literally translated as Association of Indonesian Domestic Workers Training and Placement Agencies. The new name reflects the dual function of its members, training and placement of domestic workers, indicating that agencies also have aspirations (Shrestha 2018).

However, regardless of how an agency registers its business, knowledge of workers and client-employers is the most important issue in running a *baby sitter* agency. In what follows I explore how individual agencies set up their businesses by presenting stories of agency owners.

### Starting a Business

Ibu Setio, once the wife of a parking attendant at a national bank in South Jakarta, told me that she and her husband, Pak Setio, started their business in recruiting domestic workers in the 1990s. At the time, Pak Setio worked as a parking attendant and Ibu Setio was a housewife. One day, one of the bank officers asked Pak Setio if he knew anyone

[20] This is the formal English translation of APPSI being used in their website (see www.appsi.asia)

from his home village who wanted to work as a domestic worker. Although Pak Setio did not have any experience, he answered the query by confirming that he knew of a potential worker ready to work. Then Pak Setio instructed Ibu Setio to find a worker in their hometown and she succeeded. As time passed and bank staff recognised that Pak Setio could find reliable domestic workers, the demand increased. The couple divided their labour: Pak Setio would find potential employers in Jakarta, while Bu Setio would source potential workers in the villages.

Pak and Bu Setio pursued this work informally for about one year. Initially they had no office and just wrote down the names of clients and workers in a notebook. They operated different types of books: a 'boss book' to document the list of employer-clients, and a 'workers book' to track down their recruited and placed domestic workers. Over time the business grew. They printed promotional brochures and stickers to put on trees in their hometown in order to recruit more workers. The demand for workers by employers and requests for jobs from prospective workers increased. As demand grew, Pak and Bu Setio paid someone to recruit people in the village and transport them to Jakarta. With this arrangement in place, Ibu Setio could focus on the management of her family business. In 1995, requests for workers increased even more and there were new requests for *baby sitter*. Given the demand, Ibu Setio decided to open a space in her office for a training room. Ibu Setio's experience is an example of how an informal recruitment can grow to become a formal one and the patron-client relationship emerges during the time when she initially recruited potential workers from her hometown, but later on managed to recruit other people (*sponsor*) to find potential workers (whom she might not know) for her and her clients.

Unlike Ibu Setio, Ibu Ima decided to start up her own *baby sitter* agency in response to her experience as a *baby sitter* herself. The agency that had registered Ibu Ima had not been transparent with regard to her wages, salary deduction, and other entitlements. Such experience drove her open her own agency that operates better system. Upon starting her own business, Ibu Ima worked closely with two of her friends and divided the agency tasks into management, training, and field recruitment. Ibu Ima and her two friends have different responsibilities: Ibu Ima for managing the administration, her friend Ibu Rani for training *baby sitter*, and Pak Dudi for recruiting potential workers from outside Jakarta. Ibu Ima told me that the recruitment task was suitable for Pak Dudi as a male, because he

was more mobile than Ibu Ima or Ibu Rani. Pak Dudi also has a good network of workers in rural Java, mostly from his own hometown, while Ibu Ima and Ibu Rani can find clients from their former employers and networks of friends in Jakarta. After a few years of running the business together, Pak Dudi decided to start his own business and Ibu Ima continues to manage the agency with Ibu Rani. They have several *sponsor* to help recruit *baby sitter* from various parts of Java now.

From two stories above, it seems that there is a gendered way of recruiting new workers: through mobility or network of friends. Men who are considered more mobile can go between different communities more than women, which seems to be an effective agent to recruit people. But on the other hand, women have different strategies to recruit, using their actual experience as home carers to relate their experiences strongly with new recruits. Ibu Ima's strategy of having a male (Pak Dudi) recruit workers at the villages is different from Ibu Setio's who tried to recruit workers herself. Ibu Ima's agency considered men to be more mobile than women and, therefore, able to go out and recruit more workers in the field. Nonetheless, in the case of Ibu Setio, her dense network of friends and relatives in the village made it easier for her, as a woman, to recruit another woman as they share the experience of arranging household matters. Ibu Setio's strategy is in line with the case of migrant workers in Killias (2018) research, who found that female sponsors – especially those who were formerly migrant workers – can recruit workers readily by speaking of their experiences which allows women recruits to relate to them easily. This argument might be different with Ibu Ima, who was a former *baby sitter* herself but did not take the role of a sponsor, yet the same case is shown by Doni below, who provides important insights and knowledge about the role of former domestic worker to supply of workers.

Doni, a young male agency owner, told me that he had been initially placed as a carer for a sick elderly man when he first became involved in the agency business. He took care of the person for a few months and, when the man recovered, he went back to his *yayasan*[21] that had recruited him. He subsequently learned that the *yayasan* had a vacancy for a front

[21] During interviews, some agency owners used the term *yayasan* to refer to their agency. I use this term to illustrate how the term is used which implies different meanings with agencies (*agen*) in the Indonesian language. In referring to an organisation as a *yayasan* it is implied that it offers a not-for-profit training/educational activity, but in reality it may seek profit from the business.

officer, so he applied for the job. Doni got the position and started to handle many requests related to supply of *baby sitter* and PRT. He built up a network of client-employers by working at the front office. In addition to working as a front officer, Doni also went to the villages in the role of *sponsor* to recruit potential *baby sitter*. From this job, he obtained more in the way of commission from the agency than he received as a front office staffperson (Rp.500,000 per person recruited). According to Doni, he could recruit 100 workers in a month. After a few years working at the agency office that had provided him with a network of client-employers through his front office job and the knowledge of worker supply from his role as a *sponsor*, Doni had established the necessary resources to run his own agency business.

It seems that establishing a *baby sitter* agency is possible with knowledge of the potential market (clients and workers) and understanding of how such a business is arranged. A former *baby sitter* will likely have adequate knowledge of available workers from among their fellow trainees who may wish to change their current employer. They also have built network of friends while working such as when dropping off and picking up children at school. A *baby sitter* or PRT is often asked by their employer's friends or relatives whether they have any friends who would like to work in a household in Jakarta. If the *baby sitter* knows of someone and is able to link that person with the future employer, they will receive a commission. Having information about potential clients who seek workers is as important as knowing people who want to work. In Doni's case, being an agency staff member was a way to establish an agency. Like Doni, many of Ibu Setio's staff left her employ in order to establish their own businesses. Ibu Setio never considered that her former staff would create competition for her business as she already owned three agencies across Jakarta. From my communication with other agency owners, it is considered commonplace to operate more than one agency in Jakarta, or even outside Jakarta. Ibu Ima, for example, owns two agencies in Jakarta and one in Central Java. She told me that her agency in Central Java could provide a transit place for workers while waiting to be deployed to Jakarta. Her past experience as a *baby sitter* provided her with knowledge of how the business works and ways to improve it.

Ibu and Pak Setio, Doni and Ibu Ima showed that there is an unclear difference between *sponsor* and agency in recruiting new workers when starting their business. One can be a *sponsor* and an agency manager at the same time, particularly when their business were

still relatively small. When the business has grown they could become a patron for their previously recruited *baby sitter*(s) who are now running their own agencies. For Ibu Setio, I could observe her strong role among *baby sitter* agency from her conversation with one of her peers over the phone, checking an advertisement of a new agency that she has never heard of previously. She checked and asked her network who was the person behind the new agency and figured out that the person was one of her previous staff in the agency. With many experiences recruiting and channelling workers, Ibu Setio has built her power base in the business, are relayed by a number of her 'previous staff' who run similar businesses in Jakarta. Among middle class people in Jakarta, Ibu Setio is a gold standard of a domestic worker agency, which also resonates with her strong role in the business. On the other hand, Ibu Ima and Doni are examples of successful carers who later on became an agency owners through their friendship with many workers (for supply of recruits) and employers (for demands of new recruits). Friendship seem to be able to convince new recruits in the first place, especially if they have had good experiences and 'cultural knowledge' as domestic workers. As agency owners both Doni and Ibu Ima are now patrons and role models for the recruits and agency staff given their personal experience and courage to improve life from a carer to an owner of care business

### Promoting the Business

In promoting the *baby sitting* business, agencies currently use modern technologies to imply modern and professional services to clients. Different agencies advertise their business in different ways to attract both workers and potential employers. For example, on the street side, I noticed many advertisements for *baby sitter* agencies across Jakarta, promoting different types of workers: PRT, *baby sitter* and aged carer. These advertisements ranged from a small brochure glued on a tree or street walls to a huge banner on the side of Jakarta's main toll road (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2 below). In addition to the brochures and banners, many *baby sitter* agencies advertise their business in parenting magazines. However, such printed advertising is considered old-fashioned by many people today because less people read printed materials. Nowadays agencies tend to promote their business on social media, through Facebook and Instagram. Many also have their own websites for the purpose of advertising and to notify potential clients of their location and contact details. A website may provide profiles of agency staff and/or available workers, including their photograph, expected salary, skills and experience. The

same method is also used by the agency to recruit potential workers. Vacancies for *baby sitter* are announced on the agency's Facebook account, targeting young women as the demographic group best fitting the *baby sitter* profile. Agencies are aware that this group of women are active Facebook users and use it regularly to find employment opportunities.


**Figure 5.1 Agencies' promotional advertisement, Jakarta Outer Ring Road**

In addition to an agency's individual website or Facebook account, a new way of advertising domestic workers has been introduced in Indonesia. For example, a webpage called *pembantu.com* (helper.com), as shown in Figure 5.2 below. It is a web-based marketplace that connects employers and domestic workers including gardener, *baby sitter*, PRT and drivers. Potential employers can search online for workers, and workers can advertise themselves too. Significantly, workers advertised by agencies can remain in their hometown until deployment, thereby avoiding the need for accommodation and reducing agencies' operating costs. This new method for linking domestic workers to employers has developed in response to improvements in technology. This change has implied transformation in brokering practices from individual, traditional, face to face interaction and manual ways of spreading information to an institutionalised, virtual and digital one which link workers and employers quickly and easily. This transformation of service itself marks a 'professionalisation' of domestic work that is (ideally) transparent because online marketplaces reveal efforts at transparency by making publicly available workers' identities, backgrounds, and desired wages. In doing so, agencies seek to promote their business and gain the public's trust.


**Figure 5.2 An online marketplace connecting employer and domestic workers in Indonesia**

Source: www.pembantu.com Accessed on 30 May 2018

### Complexities of the 'Professional' Agency

These new modes used by agencies to advertise *baby sitter* appeal to different sense of trust. They seek to gain trust through their professional image and performance, which is different from the individual *sponsor* who tries to build personal trust. While the government already requires agencies to use a proper office or building for the purposes of running their business, and training and accommodating workers, the agency website provides a direct information to potential employers so they can get some knowledge about the workers to hire. It is a new service that a potential employer can benefit from as they do not have to make a journey to the agency office to see available workers. The website also implies professionalism and transparency to public (both employers and workers) as it mentions *baby sitter*'s profile, including work experience and salary.

Long before the mushrooming online platform, the Ministry of Manpower regulated domestic workers agency to have a proper physical space for the office and workers to stay temporarily prior to their job placement. The government regularly check the situation of their offices through annual monitoring visits, focusing on the number of recruits and placements, worker's wellbeing and their training capacity. Many agencies use this 'shopfront' to fulfil government's requirement, to promote their business entity and build people's trust through professional image of the office building. They rent a

building or house, using it to attract and convince clients (employers). Agency offices provide a neat and clean reception area where potential clients can discuss their labour needs with agency staff. If the desired workers are available, interviews can take place and work arrangements and conditions settled. Thus, the agency office, particularly the front/reception part is important to display professionalism and gain public trust.

'Modern' ways of advertising and managing *baby sitter* has its own complexities, however. The internet has changed the nature of people's interactions, including between the agency and their clients, which may be problematic when difficulties arise. Previously, people who wanted to hire a domestic worker or *baby sitter* came into an agency office or spoke with an agency officer by phone. This personal interaction could lead to the generation of mutual trust. The agency office was also normally known to the employer as they initially collected their PRT or *baby sitter* from that place. Ironically, nowadays, employers do not have to attend an agency office to hire a domestic worker but search on the Internet, call or send messages to the agency. In reply, the agency will send the details of suitable candidates, including their pictures and desired salary, also through phone messages (Blackberry and *whatsapp* messaging systems were popular at the time of my field research). If a potential employer is happy with a proposed profile, the agency will suggest a phone interview between the potential employer and worker to allow them to discuss their respective needs and expectations. Once a decision has been reached between an employer and a worker, an agency driver (using a motorbike) transports the selected worker to the employer's house, collects the administration fee and sign the work agreement/contract on the spot. Some agency owners told me that they like this arrangement because it is quick and simple. However, this practice brings certain risks, particularly when there is a problem later on. One female employer told me that when her *baby sitter* needed to return home for family reasons, she tried to contact the agency to arrange for the *baby sitter* to be taken back to her hometown (because the *baby sitter* did not know the route back to her village). The employer tried to contact the agency but had no luck because the original phone number was no longer available. Nor did she know the address for the agency because the agency did not have a website and an agency staff person had brought the *baby sitter* to her house.

In this case while online technology and modern ways of communication can help agencies built trust, boost their professional look, and speed up the selection of *baby sitter*

to satisfy the busy middle-class clients, in the event of a problem, these modern ways of hiring a *baby sitter* may create problem and distancing the *baby sitter*, employers and the agency themselves because the agency office is difficult to physically locate on the internet -especially when the agency fail to update their new contacts. The online technology can be misinterpreted too, as some employers implied it may have been a tactic on the part of some agencies to create image and hide their original identity.

The establishment of a *baby sitter* agency and the new ways to promote the business have marked the transformation of agency's role in mediating workers and employers. The way *baby sitter* agencies arrange themselves reflect how they arrange the workers, and the online platform and physical office building aims to indicate professional and transparent management although it could also create problem of trust as they might provide false information which can ruin their professional image at the same time. In what follows I will turn to discuss how the agency organise the occupation of *baby sitter* to become a quasi-professional workers through delivering both training and examination for work standard certification. Some complexities emerge during this process which I will discuss later in the chapter.

## The Making of the Quasi-Professional *Baby Sitter*

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned that many agencies' in Indonesia begin by sorting their workers administratively. The first sorting process is done by a *sponsor* when recruiting workers in the field. The job requirement set up by the agency is conveyed and distributed by the *sponsor* in the villages. The agencies have different educational requirements: some require a *baby sitter* to have finished junior high school (or finished the nine-years of compulsory education), others only accept senior high school graduates. Identified as an agency staff from the city, the *sponsor* will then check the recruits' school certificate and inform them the potential job they will be working in the city. Sometimes the *sponsor(s)* help the recruits to provide necessary documents such as a school certificate, making a fake identification card (if the recruits are too young), or obtaining a permit letter from the village head for the young women to migrate to the city. At this stage, a s*ponsor* can be viewed as both a patron and a broker for the recruits.

The *baby sitter* training can be viewed as the next stage of the second sorting process, where the capacity of individual *baby sitter* is observed by agency staff. The training

programme for *baby sitter* is normally delivered by an in-house trainer for a period of one to three months. Agencies argue that skill level and capacity to follow baby care training are more advanced among high school graduates. On the other hand, tasks to be undertaken by a PRT do not require specific skills or training, therefore the job does not require a relatively high educational background. However, according to Ibu Setio, a PRT can '*naik kelas*' (move up to the next level) to be a *baby sitter* after sufficient experience in child minding and with a few weeks of *baby sitter* training. Further, a *baby sitter* can be recommended for work as an aged carer if they are found to be unsuited for baby care. Or in the instance of a person unable to develop skills for elderly care, they may be recommended for the simpler task of PRT work.

Seemingly, the hierarchy of domestic work is created at the agency since the first stage of document sorting to the following stage, training period. Ibu Setio's explanation about the categorisation of domestic workers after *baby sitter* training reveals a certain hierarchical way of looking at workers, especially her use of the term '*naik kelas*'. It apparent that the occupation of *baby sitter* or child carer is positioned higher than aged carer or PRT based on the pre-requisite educational background and training result. Ibu Setio's narrative was consistent to the discussion in Chapter 2 where I discussed how Indri, a former PRT, expressed her excitement of *naik kelas* after being 'promoted' as an *mbak* by her employer, replacing a *baby sitter* who have resigned earlier.

With the hierarchy produced by the agency, here it is useful to refer to Tsing's (2013) study on sorting out and classifying commodities where gift giving activities are interwoven with capitalism. Where a *baby sitter* agency works to supply workers for profit, part of the business is to offer skills training for the worker, which can be classified as a type of non-profit activity of education (transforming an individual from an unskilled worker to a quasi-professional carer). This non-profit activity of training and educating individuals can be viewed as a gift-giving activity although, in reality, it involves a lot of material investment, sacrifice and, also, profit making. The worker's selection process is similar to sorting out commodities, especially when the workers are classified to different groups based on their background and training performance.

In what follows I describe how agencies provide training for *baby sitter* and the means by which their competence is examined. These procedures comprise certain bureaucratic elements necessary to professionalise the occupation of *baby sitter* but, at the same time,

they also provide a basis for sorting out personnel who are qualified for the market. The process of professionalising *baby sitter* through training and examination of competence as Shrestha (2018) argued is to produce proper (migrant) worker for foreign employers. In *baby sitter*'s case, such produce is to create proper workers for urban employers. The training reflects the making of class and hierarchy within domestic work categories as some workers are more competent and proper than others. The process also indicates the pattern of patron-client relationships inside the agency, despite the effort to build *baby sitter*'s professional image.

### *Baby Sitter* Training

According to the SKKNI for *baby sitter(s)*, the occupation is categorised into junior and senior *baby sitter* levels. The standard competence for junior *baby sitter* (known as *baby sitter* competence level 2) involves baby cleaning and food preparation as mentioned earlier, and some other standards such as children development (play with children, help with P3K) and communication (how to communicate with employers in their house). Meanwhile, the standard competence for *baby sitter* senior (level 3) included the level 2's standards with some additional higher qualities such as: helping breastfeeding, helping with post-delivery care and/or caring for children with developmental issues. Through such training and standard competence, the agency and the government are transforming rural women into professional workers with measurable skill competence.

One afternoon I visited an agency office to observe how *baby sitter* training was conducted. Ibu Ima, the owner of Yayasan Kiara Asri, rented a house in front of her office as a space for *baby sitter* accommodation and training. Near this house, other houses accommodated staff members, including the in-house trainer, Ibu Sandra. As I entered the training classroom, I saw six women (five young and one middle-aged) in white uniforms sitting in a row of chairs, listening to Ibu Sandra who was teaching some children's songs in English. She sang some songs and asked the *baby sitter*-trainees to refer to their books to memorise the lyrics. They sang the songs together repeatedly and after one hour, Ibu Sandra left them to learn the songs by themselves. She would return in a while and, by means of a test, request each of the *baby sitter*-trainees to sing in front of the class. When she left, I started to sing with them and explained the meaning of each song, so they could memorise the songs better. I could see that learning songs in English, even children's songs, was not easy for the *baby sitter*. Although most of the trainees

were young, memorising a song in a foreign language was a difficult task for they had not previously learned English. It was even harder for those trainees who were quite senior in age. While learning the songs, we briefly chatted about their expectations and concerns about their future work as *baby sitter*. When Ibu Sandra returned to the classroom, each *baby sitter* was asked to sing in front of the class. Of the six trainees, only one of them – the youngest one – was able to sing the songs quite correctly in terms of English pronunciation and tone. The rest had difficulty with both, especially the oldest trainee.

From several *baby sitter* training sessions that I observed, I found that teaching *baby sitter* English and familiarising them with an urban family lifestyle were difficult tasks. As most *baby sitter* are from rural areas, the agencies have a challenging task to prepare them to conform with the demands of an urban family. Teaching and learning song lyrics in were probably the hardest aspect among other topics, according to Ibu Sandra. She told me that the trainees' ability in this regard was generally very low, but was optimistic that the agency does its best to prepare them. Besides, there are other aspects that are also important, such as cleaning the baby, feeding the baby, and preparing baby food using modern kitchen devices.

**Figure 5.3 Some *baby sitter* in training**

The agency training for *baby sitter* resonates with Lyons'(2005) comment about the training courses run by recruiting agents that teach the Indonesian migrant workers as 'making the maid' where recruiters (*sponsor*) actively recruit workers in the village,

transport them to an agency office who then match the recruits to their employers. Ibu Sandra's opinion on the trainees' low ability seems to confirm what Lyons has argued, namely that the rural women are docile bodies, especially in reference to the trainee's low capability. Coming from rural areas with a basic educational background as high as high school, I appreciated that it was difficult for the newly recruited *baby sitter* to learn foreign language in a matter of days. These young women from rural villages, with a high school educational background, have limited option in choosing the job they wanted. Aspired by higher income in the city and some loan money from sponsor to go to the city, they arrived in the agency under the sponsor's 'protection'. Once they are in training, they are equipped with materials that are presumably new to them, such as how to clean a baby and its belongings, knowledge on nutritious food, how to prepare baby food, store and feed them to a child. These topics are new for the rural young women and I observed this as one of the trainees asked me in one of my visit to a training: 'how do urban babies eat? These (topic) seems to be very different from what we eat at home?'. Such question shed a light on the new *baby sitter*'s feeling of anxiety and uncertainty about what the job will be. The training did not make them prepared and confident as an individual worker, but nervous and anxious. As argued by Killias (2018) the agencies view young rural women as submissive, which they regard as a suitable quality for becoming a domestic worker. The agency reminds the *baby sitter* that their main responsibility is to care for someone else's child; a role which should be undertaken very carefully. It is this aspect of the role that causes some trainees to express anxiety.

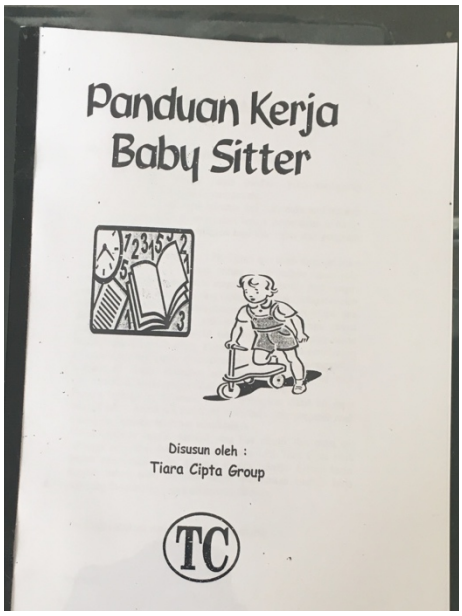

**Figure 5.4 Example of *Baby Sitter* Training Manual issued by an agency**

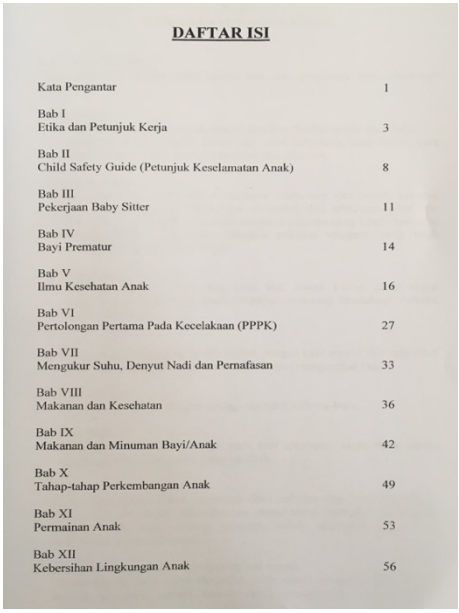

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**Figure 5.5 Table of Contents, *Baby Sitter* Training Manual**

As shown in the Figure 5.5, the training module of one baby sitter agency covered issues of work ethics, child safety, first aid, an introduction to the *baby sitter* work, children's health, premature babies and children development, children and baby's food health care as well as child hygiene. The module reflects what has been discussed in Chapter 4 on the standard qualification of *baby sitter* level 2, and included physical care rather than the psychological one. However, in my interviews with agency owners, trainers and *the baby sitters* themselves, they rarely mentioned training on psychological aspects but mostly on the child's hygiene care (bathing, cleaning) and food preparation. It seemed to me that the practical training is more effective than the module as people refer it to me more and only little they told me about other topics like first aid or children development.

One training session that I also observed bathing children using a baby doll. When I came to the agency, both agency owner and the trainer were there to teach the *baby sitter*. Some of them have worked for another agency before and followed the training quietly while the new ones were listening to the explanation eagerly. Every now and then I saw the trainer explained the baby's body parts and how to clean it using different tools (water, cotton buds, soap, and so on). She then asked each *baby sitter* to gently clean the baby sitter's ears, mouth and other parts with the right utensils. Some *baby sitter(s)* looked

relaxed and enjoyed practicing the tasks, others seemed nervous. I looked at the *baby sitter* nervously too, because they touched the baby doll very slowly and cleaned the nose with cotton bud very carefully. I reflected that situation to my own experience, and I realised I had not even been that gentle when touching my son when he was a baby. I was thinking perhaps being observed by the trainer very closely made them do it very slowly and carefully that day.

Later on I knew that many *baby sitter(s)* were nervous about the fact that in reality their job is taking care of other people's child. The trainer told them so and some *baby sitter* believed it strongly that they would be very gentle when touching and talking to the baby/child, more than the way they do so to their own children (which confirmed my reflection in the way I touched my own baby). Some of the *baby sitter* believed that their work is important for the baby's life and the family since the message was repeated many times by the trainer during and outside the classroom. It seemed to me that the agency tried to remind the trainee about professionalism that holding and talking to other people's child is different than the way you hold your own child. Thus, I realised that separating between work and personal experience is required in this caring job that you have to do things in the right way that the parent-employers could not complain. This aspect is indeed a way to internalise a *baby sitter*'s role, which can grow confidence or anxiety at the same time.

Compared to *mbak* who have never gone through a training, ideally the *baby sitter*'s knowledge and confidence in touching the baby should be better. However, the whole training process, as argued by Killias (2018), situated the *baby sitter* as submissive that implies patron-client relationship is expected since the beginning. The agency's message that the *baby sitter* should follow parent-employer's rule and standard of care could be complicated and contradictory to the ideal purpose of training and standard competence, which is to develop sense of confidence. This mixed message did not apply to the *mbak* who is not expected to be '*professional*' at the first place. They know once they start working they will have to follow the employer's standards. Their skills in handling the baby can develop (or not) naturally over time. Besides, if the parent-employers require love and passion from the carers to their children, the training can be less relevant as the emotional bonding can only grow over time and no training can guarantee this.

While the *baby sitter* training curriculum would appear to teach necessary skills to new recruits, most agency officials told me that they need to be flexible in conducting training as they need to respond to market demand too. During times of high demand for *baby sitter*, agencies may shorten training to one week, focusing only on what are regarded as essential skills. There is no authoritative definition of what skills are considered essential, but according to the Head of APPSI, baby care skills and worker attitude, by which he means character or mentality, are primary. However, based on my observations the physical care for baby and children were the main focus of training.,

### *Baby Sitter* Examinations

As explained earlier, there are two bodies that examine *baby sitter* competence: APPSI through its annual national *baby sitter* examination (locally known as *ujian nasional baby sitter*), and LSK Baby Sitter which can examine *baby sitter* competence at any time by request. The *baby sitter* examination arranged by APPSI is followed by all agencies affiliated with APPSI. Through this annual examination, agencies also compete for APPSI's award for the 'best agency' of the year, measured in terms of the number of trainees that undertake the examination. It is assumed that the number of trainees sent by an agency for examination indicates the success of the agency. Since the APPSI examination is only conducted once a year, a high number of trainees participate in the test. The trainee *baby sitter* can only be examined via a written test due to limitations of time and space, and since the examination is a multiple-choice test, the success rate for most examinee was high. In contrast, the LSK Baby Sitter can conduct an examination at any time of the year by request from an agency with a minimum number of 25 participants. Several agencies have been appointed by LSK Baby Sitter to provide venues for examinations, allowing a more detailed examination process. Followed by fewer participants, this examination offers a more thorough assessment of each *baby sitter*, through oral and written tests. The materials tested were around the training topics that most *baby sitter* have gotten and compared to the APPSI examination, the LSK Baby Sitter one is more difficult to pass and the success rate is lower than APPSI's according to one LPK Baby Sitter officer.

The *baby sitter* examination is an important element in the professionalisation of the *baby sitter* occupation. According to Doni, an agency owner, the *baby sitter* can use their

certificate to negotiate a salary increase with their parent-employer.[22] For the agency, the examination process enables agencies to claim their professional work and that they can produce certified *baby sitter* who are professional, qualified and trusted. The examination day allows agencies to show their squad or workers to each other too. Those who have the most *baby sitter(s)* participate in the examination will receive a trophy from APPSI to acknowledge and reward their success. In my conversation with Doni, he related little about the materials tested in the examination. He was so much focused on his agency's success on the examination day rather than the *baby sitter*'s quality after the examination. This gave me an insight that the *baby sitter* organisation is pursuing the agency's interest and aspiration (Shrestha 2018) rather than that of the *baby sitter*'s themselves.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I had an opportunity to observe a *baby sitter* examination (*ujian*) conducted by Yayasan Mutiara Darma, a *baby sitter* agency affiliated with a well-known Catholic Hospital in Jakarta. This *yayasan* was not affiliated under APPSI, and the examination of its *baby sitter* was conducted under the assessment from LSK *Baby Sitter*. Ibu Mary, the Director of the agency, welcomed me warmly to observe the examination and explained that her agency trained *baby sitter* using the same standard of discipline applicable to (hospital) nurses. The examination began with a formal opening ceremony in which Ibu Mary and Pak Hartono, the Secretary of LSK *Baby Sitter*, gave speeches. They both reminded participants to try to focus without nervousness during the examination process. Pak Hartono explained that the examination would consist of two elements: written (*ujian tertulis*) and practical/oral test (*ujian praktek*). The written test would include multiple choice questions and short essays. Once trainees had finished the written test, the *ujian praktek* would examine participants' practical baby care skills. The assessment began with bathing the baby (using a baby doll), putting on clothes, cooking baby food, feeding the baby, and cleaning the baby's equipment and the baby's room. Each trainee went through every step of the test, while simultaneously explaining their actions to the two examiners. Almost every *baby sitter* candidate appeared nervous, their voices quavering as they explained to the examiners the steps they were taking. According to one of the examiners, nervousness was the biggest factor

[22] At the time of conducting fieldwork in 2015, the minimum standard salary for a newly trained *baby sitter* (*baby sitter pemula* or beginner) was set by APPSI at Rp.2,500,00 per month, compared with a PRT at Rp.1,200,000 per month.

contributing to failure. Pak Hartono argued, however, that only through a detailed examination process could they assess the required competencies for a *baby sitter*. His statement seemed to make his examination distinct from the one of APPSI.

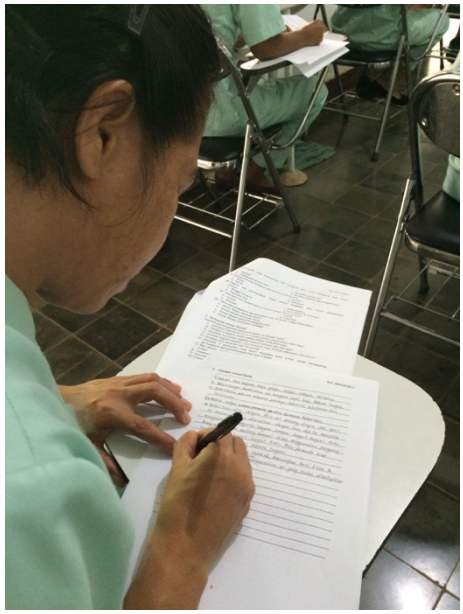


**Figure 5.6 The writing test**

**Figure 5.7 The *ujian praktek***

While the certification is useful for the *baby sitter*, particularly in obtaining her initial placement, it is undeniable that the agencies also benefit substantially. In offering only certified trainees for placement they build a reputation for producing high-quality workers,

and at the same time they benefit financially from each *baby sitter* who sits in the examination (*ujian*). For example, APPSI charges trainees Rp.150,000 to sit in the *baby sitter* examination, to be paid directly by the *baby sitter* to the agency. Reportedly, this payment funds the agency's costs of renting the examination venue, hiring a bus to take *baby sitter* as a group to the venue, and a lunch box. When I asked some working *baby sitter* about their opinion of the *baby sitter* examination, they were not very enthusiastic about it. Many did not hold the certificate or were unaware of the examination. Others claimed they would not have attended the examination on account of the cost and, significantly, because they did not view the certificate as useful. Among those who had been working as *baby sitter* for several years, the *baby sitter* examination sounded meaningless, even a waste of time and money. Some employers whom I met supported this opinion, claiming that it was the depth of a *baby sitter*'s experience and the quality of her work that was important, not a certificate.

Training, examining and certifying *baby sitter*(s) is the agency's approach to creating professional caregivers. It is a different category of domestic work that is specialised and distinct from domestic child carers in the old days, as the *baby sitter*(s) are sorted for several times prior to becoming a *baby sitter*. Nonetheless, the training and examination process positioned agency as patrons of the *baby sitter* as they are the recruiter, educator, work provider and even protector. Once they have become *baby sitter*, they enter a totally new world that is often different from what was taught by the agency. There are problems between the *baby sitter* and their parent-employers, or with the children in their care, and the agency must mediate it in many ways. One of which is to provide a warranty as discussed below.

### '*Masa Garansi*': *Baby Sitter* as Commodities

As explained earlier, being hired and hiring a *baby sitter* requires adjustments from many sides. In recognition of this, agencies allow a three-month period for the employer-family (the child and the parents) and the *baby sitter* to adjust and get to know each other. This period, known as '*masa garansi'* (warranty period), is considered a trial period for both the employer and the *baby sitter*. If the employer is not happy with the *baby sitter* within that *masa garansi*, they can ask for a replacement from the agency. Likewise, a *baby sitter* can request to be transferred to another household if they do not feel comfortable with their new parent-employers. However, the replacement of a worker is not always easy

because the agencies tend to respond by claiming that there are no *baby sitter* available. If a replacement *baby sitter* is not available, the agency will refund up to 50 per cent of the administration fee to the client. If a *baby sitter* resigns after the expiry of the *masa garansi,* there will be no refund provided by the agency.

As argued by Constable (2016) commodification of intimate relations can be understood as the entry of social relationships into the market: 'bought or sold; packaged and advertised; […]; consumed or assigned values and prices'. The term *masa garansi* or warranty implies that the agencies consider *baby sitter* to be commodities that can be purchased, tested out, and returned if the client is not satisfied. In the initial stage during recruitment, the *baby sitter* has been sorted out from the rest of potential workers by the *sponso*r and agencies. And when they are selected to work, the application of administration fee and refund policy imply the commodification of care service provided by the *baby sitter*. However, since the transaction of *baby sitter* services exchanges money for labour, the warranty for this situation is more complicated than in the case of purchased goods. An intimate relationship that is built upon a close personal and caring interaction within a family, cannot be guaranteed by a 'professional' or skilled worker, bound in a work agreement.

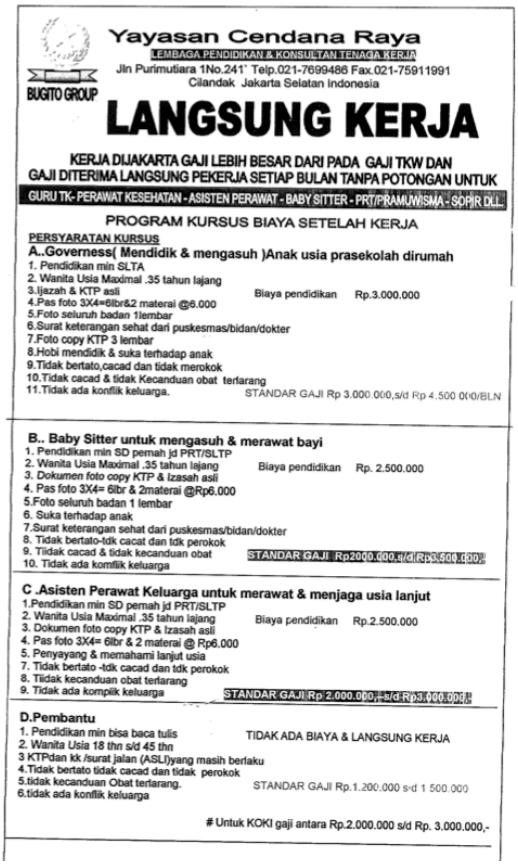
From my conversation with some middle-class employer women in the field, *hoki* or luck is required to find a 'good' (reliable, trustworthy and competent) *baby sitter* from an agency. They knew of many times when an agency had provided a very new and inexperienced worker, such that the parent-employer was required to provide additional training at home. In some cases they questioned whether the agency had, in fact, given any training to the recruited *baby sitter*. In such a circumstance, a parent-employer preferred to hire an *mbak* who they (the employer) could train. They would also rather hire an *mbak* through a friend or acquaintance, as they were flexible when working and willing to take on more tasks when required (unlike the *baby sitter* whose tasks are strictly limited to child rearing). Parent-employers prefers flexible work arrangement than the specialised and fixed task, even more if it is written down on paper.

Interestingly, the agencies also realise the complexity of supplying 'intimate care' in a business setting. From my observations at agency offices, while replacement *baby sitter* were not always available, agencies sought to protect their workers from 'bad' employers who did not provide sufficient rest time or treat their worker respectfully. As explained

by Ibu Setio, when a parent-employer lodges a complaint and requests to exchange or replace their *baby sitter*, an agency will consult the *baby sitter*. If the agency thinks the *baby sitter*'s explanation is more reasonable than the parent-employer's, they prefer not to provide an exchange and will inform the parent-employer that there are no *baby sitter* currently available. Thus the *baby sitter* will be sent back to the agency and if the exchange is still within the *masa garansi*, the parent-employer will have refund up to 90 percent of their payment. As a further strategy to avoid a negative experience, Ibu Setio told me that agencies circulate a blacklist of 'bad' employers and *baby sitter* among themselves. This practice clearly exemplifies the complexity of treating domestic worker like commodities. Agencies anticipated this by making and sharing the blacklist of employers and workers to avoid problems, protect their workers and, more importantly, protect their businesses.

## Ambiguity in 'Professionalising' the *Baby Sitter*

The issuance of Kepmenaker No.313/2015 has made more explicit the differences between domestic house care and child/elderly care. The agencies involved in the formalisation of the role of the *baby sitter* differentiate new workers from experienced ones. Agencies have co-opted various terms to differentiate child minders based on their tasks. The use of the English terms 'babysitter', 'governess' and 'nanny' are popular among agencies, reflecting their adaptation of Western child minding methods. For example, LPK Tiara Cipta (2009) on their website differentiates the *baby sitter* (carers for newborn babies up to two years old/toddler) and *governess* (carer for a child from four years old). Yayasan Cendana Raya (see Figure 5.8 below) also recruits governesses with a minimum high school educational background to look after pre-school aged children. However, some other agencies use 'nanny' to refer to carers who look after children under 3 years old, while 'governess' is used to refer to carers who mind primary school-aged children from six years old and above. The educational background required of these workers varies according to their respective tasks. For example, a governess must be a high school or even university graduate because her role includes helping with a child's homework and school subjects. Her wage is higher than nanny or *baby sitter* on account of her more advanced education. Agencies require their registered child carers to wear a uniform. While the uniform distinguishes the child carer from *mbak* or PRT, it does not distinguish between child carers – *baby sitter*, nanny, or governess.



Yayasan Cendana Raya

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BUGITO GROUP

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KERJA DIJAKARTA GAJI LEBIH BESAR DARI PADA GAJI TKW DAN
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GURU TK- PERAWAT KESEHATAN - ASISTEN PERAWAT - BABY SITTER - PRT/PRAMUWISMA - SOPIR DLL

PROGRAM KURSUS BIAYA SETELAH KERJA

PERSYARATAN KURSUS

**A..Governess( Mendidik & mengasuh )Anak usia prasekolah dirumah**

1. Pendidikan min SLTA
2. Wanita Usia Maximal .35 tahun lajang
3. Ijazah & KTP asli
4. Pas foto 3X4=6lbr&2 materai @6.000
5. Foto seluruh badan 1lembar
6. Surat keterangan sehat dari puskesmas/bidan/dokter
7. Foto copy KTP 3 lembar
8. Hobi mendidik & suka terhadap anak
9. Tidak bertato,cacad dan tidak merokok
10. Tidak cacad & tidak Kecanduan obat terlarang
11. Tidak ada konflik keluarga.

Biaya pendidikan Rp.3.000.000

STANDAR GAJI Rp 3.000.000,s/d Rp 4.500.000/BLN

**B.. Baby Sitter untuk mengasuh & merawat bayi**

1. Pendidikan min SD pernah jd PRT/SLTP
2. Wanita Usia Maximal .35 tahun lajang
3. Dokumen foto copy KTP & Izasah asli
4. Pas foto 3X4= 6lbr & 2materai @Rp6.000
5. Foto seluruh badan 1 lembar
6. Suka terhadap anak
7. Surat keterangan sehat dari puskesmas/bidan/dokter
8. Tidak bertato-tdk cacat dan tdk perokok
9. Tidak cacad & tidak kecanduan obat
10. Tidak ada komflik keluarga

Biaya pendidikan Rp. 2.500.000

STANDAR GAJI Rp2000.000,s/d(Rp3.500.000)

**C .Asisten Perawat Keluarga untuk merawat & menjaga usia lanjut**

1. Pendidikan min SD pernah jd PRT/SLTP
2. Wanita Usia Maximal .35 tahun lajang
3. Dokumen foto copy KTP & Izasah asli
4. Pas foto 3X4= 6lbr & 2 materai @ Rp6.000
5. Penyayang & memahami lanjut usia
7. Tidak bertato -tdk cacad dan tdk perokok
8. Tidak kecanduan obat terlarang
9. Tidak ada kompilk keluarga

Biaya pendidikan Rp.2.500.000

STANDAR GAJI Rp.2.000.000,-s/d Rp3.000.000,-

**D.Pembantu**

1. Pendidikan min bisa baca tulis
2. Wanita Usia 18 thn s/d 45 thn
3 KTPdan kk /surat jalan (ASLI)yang masih berlaku
4. Tidak bertato tidak cacad dan tidak perokok
5. tidak kecanduan Obat terlarang.
6. tidak ada konflik keluarga

TIDAK ADA BIAYA & LANGSUNG KERJA

STANDAR GAJI Rp.1.200.000 s/d 1.500.000

# Untuk KOKI gaji antara Rp.2.000.000 s/d Rp. 3.000.000,-

**Figure 5.8 Agency advertisement to recruit *baby sitter* and domestic workers**
Source: Yayasan Cendana Raya brochure, 2015

Figure 5.8 shows an agency's advertisement to recruit different types of domestic carers from Governess, *baby sitter*, aged carer, and a *pembantu* (domestic helper). From this listing we can see how agencies use different terminologies to categorise domestic workers. They try to differentiate each type of occupation based on the task they perform: caring task (which is sub-categorised further to baby, toddler or the elderly) or non-caring task. They require different educational background for different tasks. The tasks determine the wages respectively too. However, while agencies use various terms to classify child carers, people generally categorise uniformed child minders simply as *baby sitter*, without consideration of the role or conditions shaped by the age of the child in care. Among local people in general, the term *baby sitter* is the most commonly used term for child minder, regardless of the age of the child/ren in care. They can only differentiate *baby sitter* from *mbak* through the uniform worn by the former.

The uniform of the *baby sitter* suggests a linkage with the medical profession which, historically speaking, is not inaccurate given the emergence of the nurses in maternal

clinics. However, *baby sitter* are these days wholly trained by recruiting agencies in relevant child caring skills. Some parent-employers, however, dissatisfied with the professionalism of the *baby sitter,* proposing that the uniform acted as a kind of ruse by suggesting a level of professionalism as a result of training. They considered *baby sitter* to lack skills as a result of inadequate processes of training and certification. Rina, a mother of two girls shared her experience of employing a *baby sitter*:

> I used to have a *baby sitter*, but she could not do anything. During the interview at the agency she claimed that she had some work experience, but I don't believe it, because at home I had to teach her everything. It was as if she had not attended any training. Well, maybe she had not. So I returned her to the agency and asked for my money back. I prefer using *mbak* whom I train myself. It's the same thing – I have to train them [*baby sitter*] again, right?

Given the inadequate training, many prospective employers preferred to recruit domestic workers from among their own social networks rather than from agencies. By doing so, they know personally who to talk to when there are problems, they also can seek information or even check where the workers are from, through such network.

In summary, efforts to professionalise the occupation of *baby sitter* are criticised from various angles. The task of caring is difficult to professionalise because it is an intimate task. As argued by Hochschild (2003), intimate and emotional work requires 'acting' because the labour service is exchanged for a wage. The *baby sitter* acts to care for children in return for a salary, and those in this role have been trained by agencies to enact caring for children. However, since caring for children in a family often requires an emotional bond like a parent-child relationship, the *baby sitter* might fail to perform the acting. The *baby sitter* training cannot produce natural bonding, but rather a mechanical act of care in order to get paid.

On the other hand, there are cases where bonding develops naturally between the *baby sitter* and the child, and also with the parent-employer, given their daily interaction. It is on account of the subjectivity of this emotional connection that the bond may or may not develop (depending on the conditions and the tenure of a *baby sitter* in any household), which is why emotional and intimate care work cannot be determined or guaranteed in advance.

## Hierarchy in Domestic Work

The *baby sitter* marks a new era of domestic work that is specialised and categorised according to different tasks. Further, each category of work attracts different wages and allowances, creating a hierarchy of types of domestic work. Agencies create and perpetuate these categories of work. In fact, it is at the agency office that differentiation is first established between employer and employee takes place. For example, as explained in earlier section, the *baby sitter* standard competence is categorised into level 2 and 3, differentiating them into junior and senior *baby sitter*. This categorisation reflects a hierarchy that is structured and institutionalised by the elites. In the following I will recall my observation of an everyday activity that took place in an agency in Jakarta that I regularly visit during fieldwork. This agency, Yayasan Kencana Darma, is a domestic worker agency that recruits and channels both PRT and *baby sitter*. By presenting a story of an agency that provides different categories of domestic service, it is possible to observe the creation of hierarchy within domestic work.

I spent the month of Ramadhan at Yayasan Kencana Darma, owned by Ibu Setio, observing the demand for temporary domestic worker (locally known as *infal* workers) for the Idul Fitri (end of Ramadhan) holiday period. I told Ibu Setio that the focus of my interest was *baby sitter* clients, especially on their decisions around hiring a temporary *baby sitter* for the duration of the holiday. I asked her permission to sit in the front office area and talk with her clients. She was very open with me and even allowed me to interview her staff and interact with the workers waiting for jobs. Initially, I spent most of my time in the front office, hoping to distribute a questionnaire to visiting parent-clients and interview them when possible. I sat at a long table, next to Ibu Setio's staff who continuously answered incoming calls. During Ramadhan, the demand for domestic workers is very high. It is an annual holiday for most people in Indonesia, including in Jakarta, where employees, including domestic workers and *baby sitter*, take time off work. At this time, house cleaning is an issue for many households. Child rearing, on the other hand, is less pressing because most parents are not working and are therefore available for their children.

In most agency offices, the workspaces of agency owner/staff and workers was usually either partitioned or differentiated in two separate houses. The front part of Ibu Setio's office is the reception area where potential employers meet the agency staff to discuss

their needs. The agency owner mostly operates in this part of the office, if not staying in his/her individual office next to the reception area. Ibu Setio's front office staff, Hesty and Wiwik, were very busy answering calls. When clients entered the office, Hesty or Wiwik would start a conversation by asking the client what type of domestic worker they sought: PRT or *baby sitter*. At the same time, they also 'interviewed' the client about the situation of their household, such as: how many people lived in the house, the age/s of the children, the number of domestic workers in the household, the size of the house. In doing so, they matched the demand with the available supply of workers and, based on the composition of the family and size of the house, recommended to clients the number of workers required. From this interaction, I observed the way that agencies can influence the shape of the contemporary urban family, primarily by advising how many domestic workers they should have. After the type of domestic worker is matched, Hesty and Wiwik would leave the reception area to enter another area where they would identify several prospective workers and instruct them to meet and attend an interview with the client. They advised the workers to dress in either their uniform or neat casual clothes. In this situation I found the front office to be an initial performing stage for the prospective *baby sitter*.

The interview itself was mostly a hierarchical conversation, where the clients dominated. While they asked the candidate many questions, the former tended to answer in short sentences, looking down at the floor, avoiding eye contact. Hesty or Wiwik clarified the client's questions when the worker did not understand. This situation has already shed light on unequal relationship between the potential employer and the worker. Several workers may be invited to attend the interview before both the client and a worker consider one another suitable. At this point they discuss the job description and wages. Once an agreement has been forged, the agency staff write up the details on paper. Once the paper is ready, Hesty or Wiwik would summon the selected worker, explaining the tasks that the client and agency had decided, including the salary level and allowances. Then the worker would be asked if she had any objections to the conditions of work. Upon the worker's agreement, three parties would sign the work agreement document: the client-employer, the worker, and the agency staff. When the worker was about to depart the agency for her new employer's household, Hesty and Wiwik would normally say '*kerja yang rajin ya, yang betah*', meaning 'work diligently will you, stay liking it'. This message is resonant of a parent's message to their children to be a good and obedient

employee (Killias 2018, Anggraeni 2006). Other scholars argued that this gesture implies the perception of agencies who look at workers as docile bodies (Lyons 2005). In addition, Hesty and Wiwik's parting message can be understood as an order to show respect to other people, it also indicates the agency's assumption of a patron-client relationship between employer and domestic worker (including the *baby sitter*).

After observing the clean and neat front area, I found a huge contrast with the back of the agency office. Separated by a wooden door, behind the reception area lay a spacious, but gloomy open area where domestic workers waited for placements in a Jakarta household. The area was used for four purposes: a space for *baby sitter* to sleep, several toilets and bathrooms for *baby sitter* and PRT to use, a bedroom was used by staff to conduct their prayers, and as an open space for training. During Ramadhan, this open space was used as an overflow area to accommodate temporary domestic staff (*infal*). The open space was connected to a two-storey, weatherboard shelter that accommodated PRT. The wooden shelter had a roof and wooden floor, covered by thin carpet, but no walls. I could feel the dampness of the shelter and wondered if it was cold at night. Here, I found the hierarchy among domestic workers is reproduced – this time, spatially. The space for domestic workers is differentiated according to their work category. The *baby sitter* have a relatively more private and protected space than PRT or *mbak*. I particularly discovered it when the space was full of *infal* workers who came to the agency searching for temporary domestic work, as what follows here.

One morning in the month of Ramadhan, Ibu Setio messaged me that more than 75 *infal* workers, both PRT and *baby sitter*, had arrived and were awaiting placement. When I arrived at the agency office, many women were crowded into the agency occupying all the available space at the rear of the building. They sat on the floor and lay down on the carpet – in the hallway, in the *baby sitter* training room, as well as in the weatherboard shelter. There was a small television in the middle of the shelter, but only a few seemed to be watching. These women, around 60 in number, were the PRT *infal*. Another group of women comprising around 20 *baby sitter infal* waited in another 'private' and covered space separated from the PRTs by a wooden wall and door. The *baby sitter*'s space was similarly a two-storied structure comprising a tiled ground floor covered by a thin carpet, the upstairs floor uncovered timber. In both spaces, *baby sitter* and PRT slept on the carpeted floor—no mattresses were made available for sleeping. The two spaces, while

identical in facilities, were segregated by the wall and door. Ibu Setio informed me that the turnover of *baby sitter infal* was normally slower than PRT *infal* so they need a relatively more covered space than PRT while waiting. In their 'room', the *baby sitter* normally interact with fellow *baby sitter*, and only leave the room to use the toilet or when summoned to an interview by Ibu Setio's staff. Ibu Setio's cook prepared food separately for *baby sitter* and PRT, resulting in them eating in their own areas during meal times. I got an impression that the *baby sitter* were more exclusive than the PRT.

During my time at Ibu Setio's office, I observed that there is multiple hierarchy being reproduced by the space in the office as shown in Figure 5.9.

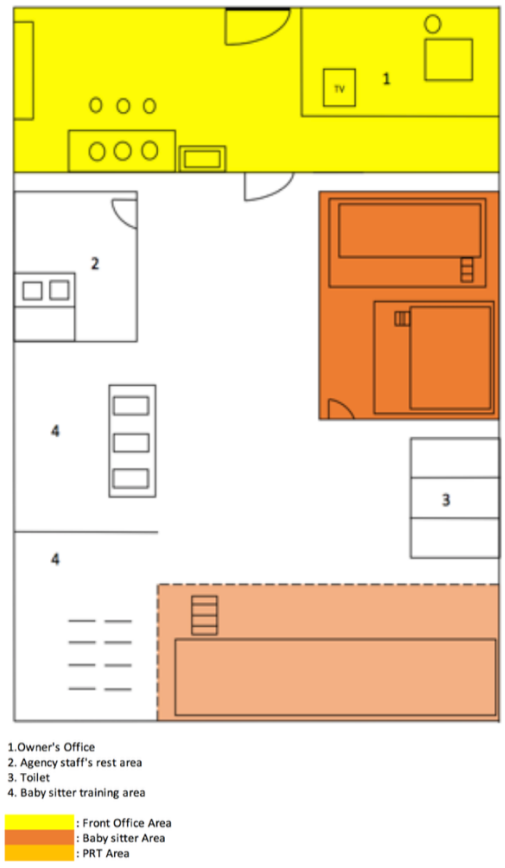


**Figure 5.9 Layout of Ibu Setio's agency office**

Firstly, a wooden door that separates domestic workers from the front office staff seems to differentiate office work (yellow highlighted area) and domestic work (white/non highlighted area). The front office was bright and clean, while the back was gloomy and crowded. The spatial differentiation in the agency office reflects a similar division in

domestic workers' workplace where the employer is located at the front part of the house and domestic workers at the back. In the agency's front office, a hierarchy was discernible between domestic workers and their future employers, and domestic workers and agency officials. The interview mode and the parental message conveyed by Hesti and Wiwik reflect the power relations present in both the agency office and the employer's house. The intent of the agency officials' parting message could be interpreted as accepting one's working conditions or submissive. Secondly, at the rear of the agency, workers were separated spatially. The *baby sitter*'s room was separated from other rooms by a door. The *baby sitter* stayed in a closed area, disconnected from the open space occupied by PRT *infal*. The door provided a degree of privacy for the *baby sitter*, which was not enjoyed by the PRT *infal*. In my brief discussion with some PRT *infal*, they complained that the shelter allocated to them was very uncomfortable. At night, the place was very cold and infested with mosquitos. On rainy days, PRT *infal* had to bear the unpleasant odour from the gutters that ran past the front of their sleeping area. In their separate enclosed room, the *baby sitter* were not subject to cold or odour like their PRT counterparts.

The layout of the back area of Ibu Setio's agency seemed to sort *baby sitter* from PRT, regardless of their permanent or *infal* status. By locating *baby sitter* in the front part of the back office, the agency positioned the *baby sitter* closer to the agency's staff, and the front office than PRT (see Figure 5.9). The positioning implies the greater value accorded to the *baby sitter* by the agency. More importantly, the overall layout of the agency office reflects hierarchy between employer and domestic workers – both the *baby sitter* and PRT – where the agency owner/staff are located at the front and clean part of the house, and the worker is at the back and gloomy area. This spatial division also implies patron-client relationship between the agency and the workers, which may be understood as reshaping the actual patron-client relationship between employer-workers at work.

## Conclusion

The emergence of domestic worker recruiting agencies, including *baby sitter* agencies, has marked a transformation in the brokering of domestic work in Indonesia. An individual brokering role has evolved to an institutional one. Brokers play an intermediary role between workers and employers, supported by the *sponsor* whose informal

recruitment at the village acts as a link to formal contractual work placement. In many situations this transformation informs us about the unclear division of roles between the *sponsor* and agency in recruiting the workers.

Indeed, the *baby sitter* agency plays an influential role in shaping the *baby sitter* occupation. The agency is present in the whole cycle of 'the making of the *baby sitter*': recruitment, training, placing and examining *baby sitter* competence. In other words, without an agency, one cannot be a 'real' *baby sitter*. They have transformed unskilled child minding into a quasi-professional occupation through training and job certification, marking a new era of child care in urban Indonesia. The task of caring for children, once personal and unique to each family, has become standardised through a practice of babysitting taught and examined by the agency. Professionalising an occupation that requires intimate care work is complex, however. *Baby sitter* agencies are at the forefront of this transition of care in Indonesia, from an arrangement characterised by kinship and gift-giving to one that is formalised, standardised and capitalised.

The process of training and examining *baby sitter* resonates with the sorting and assessment of commodities. Through training, agencies prepare the *baby sitter* to enter urban life and fulfil the requirements of the urban household. Agencies apply *masa garansi* to allow the *baby sitter* and parent-employer time for mutual adjustment. If the two cannot get along together, the parent-employer can ask for an exchange or the *baby sitter* can ask to return to the agency. The term *masa garansi* implies the commodification of the *baby sitter* service, following the retail practice of exchange of goods. In reality, the *masa garansi* does not always work in the same way as goods, as care is an intimate task that is difficult to purchase and/or guarantee.

In making and shaping the *baby sitter*, the agency also shapes hierarchy among domestic workers even since the workers first arrive at the office. Agencies differentiate workers by creating different spaces and treatment between workers. The *baby sitter*, with a more comfortable space than PRT, is positioned in a higher category than the PRT since agencies value their services more. This spatial differentiation, together with the agency-issued uniform and higher salary/allowances set by agencies, signals the distinction between the *baby sitter* and the PRT.

The hierarchy of domestic workers exists as a result of the *baby sitter*'s 'professionalism'. *Baby sitter* training reportedly sorts workers based on their capacity to provide care

services, and like commodities categories them into different categories of domestic worker. Through the *baby sitter* examination, agencies claim to certify the *baby sitter*'s work competence. For the agencies, the *baby sitter* seems to be a new domestic service commodity that can enhance their business in the age of capitalised care.

# Chapter 6

# Good Mother, Good Boss: Experiences of Hiring *Baby Sitter* among Middle-Class Women


**Figure 6.1 A 'Happy Family' car sticker popular in Jakarta nowadays**

Today's idealised Indonesian family is portrayed on cars, as revealed in the image above in Figure 6.1. This image depicts the urban nuclear family consisting of parents and two children, a boy and a girl. Sometimes, families are pictured with more children or pets. Other household members who are not portrayed in the image but make a significant contribution to the functioning of urban families, are domestic workers – the *baby sitter*, *mbak*, or PRT. These members of urban households contribute to the formation and function of the family. As they help with household management and child caring, their role is often represented as *seperti keluarga* (like family) but not, however, real family members portrayed in the ideal picture.

Even the *baby sitter*, who is known to be the main child carer in the family, is not exceptional in this case. The 'close-but-distanced' relationship between family and other members of the household resonates with Weix's (2000) argument that domestic workers,

no matter how close they are, remain strangers to the family. Especially in the city, where employer-employee relations are essentially work-based, domestic workers are positioned at a relative distance from kin-based family members. This practice reflects the decrease in kin and familial relationships that previously dominated domestic work in Indonesia.

This chapter discusses *baby sitter* from the perspective of the family-employer. Whereas the previous two chapters discussed *baby sitter* in terms of various aspects outside the household (i.e. social, economy, historical and professional), this chapter returns to the homes of the middle-class parent-employers to reflect on how the *baby sitter* is accepted in their households. Despite the professionalisation of *baby sitter* that is publicly managed through Ministerial regulation, eventually the *baby sitter* work end up in the domestic/private space of their parent-employer. They have to fulfil the child care demands that is privately arranged by parents. They must deal with various dynamics and power relations in the household, particularly they must follow parent-employer instructions and preferences regardless of their standardised caring skills taught by the agency. As Gamburd (2000) argued, when doing caring tasks, a domestic worker must build an emotional bond with the child and his/her parents. Hence the priority of domestic child carers, in including *baby sitter,* is to conform with the demands of their parent-employer.

In this chapter, I investigate why families hire a *baby sitter* and explore their experiences when doing so. As the ones who use the home-based care services of *baby sitter*, how do parent-employers view the quality of care provided by these quasi-professional workers? Are these workers more capable and trustworthy than non-professional child carers like the *mbak*? Focusing on the *baby sitter* in the household helps us to understand the aspirations of the middle class in Jakarta, particularly in relation to the family. Many young, middle-class, working parents in Jakarta employ a set of domestic workers (*baby sitter*, maid, and driver) to help them manage their family life. The larger or wealthier the family-employer, the more domestic workers they employ, for example, cook, house cleaner, *baby sitter*, driver, gardener. This gives rise to the question of how they manage a household with multiple domestic workers? Further, with a *baby sitter* acting as a 'substitute parent', how are mothers positioned in the family, particularly given the dominant social value that views them as the primary carer for children and family?

I argue that parent-employers hire *baby sitter* because they want to ensure the best quality of life and care for their children and seek to cultivate their family's middle-class status. However, achieving their aspiration for quality of care is uncertain because *baby sitter*, while ostensibly equipped with a special skillset, have low educational backgrounds—contradicting the parent's desire to produce a highly-educated and economically successful middle-class generation. Parents recognise this and act to reduce the risk of less than ideal quality care by using technology, family supervision, and gift giving. Additionally, in a household with multiple domestic workers, a dynamic exists among workers that the employer must deal with. Particularly, in a household with *baby sitter*, the dynamic between workers is more complex than one without, because a hierarchy exists among them, as well as the differential status between the employer and worker/s. Because such issues take place within the house, the parent-employer must deal with it and settle tensions between workers in a familial way.

The chapter starts with a discussion of middle-class women's aspirations for their children and families. Next, I will discuss the middle-class preference for *baby sitter* compared to other types of domestic workers like *mbak* or PRT, by presenting some stories from middle-class mothers in Jakarta. I will then move to discuss some of the risks and anxieties of employing *baby sitter*, followed by an account of public attitudes towards the employment of *baby sitter*. Lastly, I will discuss the negotiations undertaken by parent-employers to maintain their role as parents in the face of the *baby sitter*'s role as substitute parent.

## Middle-Class Parent Aspirations

Generally, the young, urban, Indonesian middle class views the 'good life' characterised by personal religiosity and good health, with robust family (or close social) relationships, and a career (Nilan 2015). In her research on both male and female youth transitions to marriage, Nilan found having meaningful family with strong relationships is placed above the desire for a career, although both still form part of the ideal picture of a good life. When youth are in transition into adulthood and marriage, this view persists.

Family becomes the ultimate priority before individual desire, and children are positioned as the most important members, indicating the success of a family. For example, most women interviewed believed that they were responsible for their family, which is the

normative view in Indonesia. They aspired to be good mothers present for the children, or if they were not present all the time for their children, they worked to secure their children's health, education and all aspects of their future—which they perceived as equally important. In addition, a good quality of care has become status nowadays (Baird, Ford and Hill 2017)

In what follows I will focus on two interrelated aspirations that middle-class women have for their children: education and care. I found these aspects to be the most discussed topics among middle-class mothers, especially when talking about issues relating to their children.

### Education and Upward Mobility

According to Doob (2013), the middle class prepares the next generation by developing a system that can turn middle-class children into successful citizens. Education is one system that can ensure middle-class reproduction. Doob characterises middle-class childrearing as having authoritative parenthood (where parents provide warmth, support and control) and provision of capital (particularly social capital). From my field work in Jakarta, I found that the middle-class desire good education for their children in order to prepare them to become competitive individuals in the global market. Many send their children to international or private schools to get exposure to English. These schools adopt international curricula like the Cambridge or *International Baccalaureate* (*IB*) system which apply international educational standards that allow students to continue further education abroad. Because such education is very costly, some middle-class parents send their children to national private schools that combine national curriculum with English as the language of instruction.

Parental desire for academic children is reflected in a study about parenting in Singapore (Göransson 2015). This study found that many *kiasu* (competitive) parents who wanted their children to excel in education required them to take extra study outside school hours to ensure success. A lot of parents spent their time teaching and monitoring their children's progress, leaving the house chores to migrant workers hired under a Singapore government subsidy. Similarly, many middle-class women aspired to stay at home rather than build a career so they can focus on their children's development and education. For them, parents are responsible for all aspects of their children's life, while domestic workers and *baby sitter* act to assist parents when required. Nonetheless, unlike Singapore,

the Indonesian government does not provide a subsidy for parents to hire domestic workers, so families must self-fund the costs of hiring domestic workers and many of them secure dual income to this end. As a result, working women may rely on *baby sitter* or *mbak* to take their children to school and even to communicate with children's teachers.

In Jakarta, many middle-class families send their children to school at an early age to familiarise them with structured activities. Children as young as three years old attend pre-school (before kindergarten) to start their socialisation with other children and adults outside the family. Once these children are kindergarten age (around four or five years old), their parents prepare them for primary school education by teaching reading or sending them to a reading course. Many women whom I met in Jakarta told me that the strategy to learn how to read early is driven by some private schools that require children to be able to read when they enter the first grade at the age of six. In addition, many mothers believe that by exposing their children to early education, they will become familiar with an environment that fosters learning and competition.

As argued by Katz (2008: 5-17) the social construction of children involves multiple dimensions, including their positioning as an investment of accumulation strategy to ensure their parent's upward social mobility. For example, one middle-class mother, during our daily conversation, told me that she also benefits from the English language fluency that her daughter is developing as a result of attending an International school. Further, she considered the cost of her daughter's education as worthwhile because she did not have to provide additional instruction at home, and they also provided religious teaching, including Al-Quran reading lessons. The school provided all educational aspects from academic to religious teachings. She said

> I don't want to be in a situation where I have paid a lot of money but I still have to teach my daughter a lot of things at home. I want her to learn all those at school, because that's what we are paying for. I just want to *terima jadi* [accept or assume that my child's school-based learning will fully equip her].

Among middle-class mothers generally, sending children to the best school is a strategy to ensure that their further generation are equipped with the quality of education desired by their parents. The term, '*terima jadi*' was used by some women I spoke to in the field, reflecting the desired result of children's private school education. They invest significantly in their children's education and, therefore, have high expectations of that investment; not only good academic results, but competence in extracurricular or

enrichment activities like sports, arts and hobbies, as well as religious teaching. They are aware of some international schools' affiliation in a global network of learning and aspire for their children to participate in various international academic competitions. Such international exposure is considered evidence of upward social mobility by Indonesian parents who lacked such opportunity. Education is thus perceived as an investment in children's future which, in turn, can improve their family's social status.

While middle-class parent's investment for children's education is deemed positive by many Indonesian families, it is ironic that these parents are unable to attend to their own children's education and activities due to work commitments required to fund this elite education. In effect, middle-class parent's aspirations for their children's education has the result of removing the same parents from their children's education. This situation resonates the situation in America where according to Hochschild (2003), parents spend more time for work than with their family because they want to realize a good life for family. Instead, the parents in Indonesia try to negotiate their absences through the provision of infrastructure to support their children's education: *baby sitter* or *mbak*, a family car, and a driver.

Knowing that the *baby sitter* is one of the crucial elements for children's education, several private schools I visited in Jakarta provide a '*baby sitter* class'. It is a monthly workshop provided by the school for home carers (*baby sitter* or *mbak*) of students for young children (kindergarten level and below). The school realised children need consistent caring and therefore they need to make sure the development and education taught at school should be repeated at home. The *baby sitter* is then deemed to be an extension of school to repeat various school activities at home. A school psychologist was responsible to deliver materials at the *baby sitter* class, providing some parenting and disciplining method used by the school. To complement the *baby sitter* class and to maintain consistency, the school also provide 'parents workshop' for parents to provide similar materials.

With high quality education at school and at home, ideally children are '*sudah jadi'* (ready or fully equipped), as aspired by parents. Both schools and parents allow smooth reproduction of middle class and transfer of middle-class lifestyle. Parents are able to cultivate themselves, particularly working and pursuing their careers and individual aspirations.

### Demand for Quality of Care

Cleanliness and hygiene are markers of a middle-class lifestyle applied to many aspects of life, including within the house and in raising children. Reflecting this, some parents prefer to hire a *baby sitter* than an *mbak* to look after their children because of their better-developed skills in looking after children. Anita, a mother of two boys, told me that she prefers *baby sitter* on account of their knowledge of techniques for maintaining the health of children and babies. Anita aspired to engage a ready-to-work child minder because she was busy in her job as an architect. Further, she considered *baby sitter* to be more knowledgeable, careful and detailed than an *mbak* who, she claimed, were more likely to be clumsy and ignorant. For example, a *baby sitter* will look after a child closely when walking in a shopping mall. When Anita went to a restroom or shopped for her personal needs, Suster Aan, her *baby sitter*, would play with her son and keep him engaged with her. In contrast, Anita's *mbak*, Ros, would just sit or stand still whenever Anita was busy shopping, allowing Anita's son to run around the shelves without trying to engage with him. With this example, Anita exemplified a different quality of care between a *baby sitter* and *mbak*. Anita was initially advised that because of agency training, a *baby sitter* could engage with a child effectively and emotionally, while an *mbak* could not. She subsequently differentiated the two job descriptions: one responsible for the child, the other for the house. Thus, the two workers cannot swap each other's roles or be required to do additional tasks that are not within their capacity.

In my interview with Novi, the mother of a one-year-old daughter, I found that she considered engaging a *baby sitter* as a way to stimulate her child's initial early development. 'A *baby sitter* can sing and play with my baby, while an *mbak* could not', she explained. Novi hired a *baby sitter* to look after her daughter as she worked in a private bank in Jakarta. She told me she planned to hire a *baby sitter* until her daughter reached three years and then switch to an *mbak*: 'I cannot afford paying a *baby sitter* longer than that'. Novi considered this period sufficient to fulfil her child's early stimulation and nutrition requirements. While expensive, she and her husband believed engaging a *baby sitter* was necessary to provide the quality of care needed in the first three years.

Focusing on quality of care for children is a priority for middle-class mothers, especially for those who work, because they are not present at home for most of the day. In the

absence of parental care, a *baby sitter* provides a quality care alternative desired by middle-class parents. In a society where many parents no longer provide child care, the growth in domestic workers to look after children can be seen as an involution or decrease in the parental role (Katz, 2008). According to Katz, this decreasing role is caused by parent's work and social activities, facilitated by the supply of domestic workers who are available and capable to cover this care role.

While children's education and quality of care comprise common practical reasons why middle-class parents hire a *baby sitter*, among wealthy families in Jakarta where women do not have to work to secure dual income, the expectation of the role of *baby sitter* is quite different. For middle and upper-class mothers who are not in paid work outside the home – or have a home-based office – a *baby sitter* is still considered necessary to help ease their childrearing task. With the assistance of a *baby sitter*, they can focus on their children's education while the *baby sitter* can help prepare children's food, wash clothes and other items, and clean the child's bedroom.

### Leisure Indulgence

In a society where the number of working women is high but support for child care is not provided by the state, domestic workers have become part of the child care network (Ochiai 2008). Families make self-provisioned care arrangement for their own family, including care of children and the elderly (Nguyen 2014). In Indonesia, similar to other Asian developing countries, support for family welfare (including women and children) is not provided by the state. It has, therefore become common to find paid domestic carers like *mbak* or *baby sitter* providing care for families. During my field work observations in Jakarta, it was uncommon to find an urban household without a domestic worker. It was similarly uncommon for families with children not to hire a *baby sitter* or *mbak*.

As explained in the previous chapter, self-provisioned care is facilitated by private recruiting agencies. In Jakarta, parent-employers pay around Rp.1,000,000 to Rp.1,500,000 for an administration fees to obtain domestic worker (for example an *mbak*) or *baby sitter* services. This cost is relatively affordable for the middle class, moreover for wealthy families. In addition, this amount is relatively cheaper than sending children to private day care facilities that charge at least Rp. 4,000,000 per month. Additionally, private day care is a relatively new and uncommon practice among wealthy families. With

the relatively affordable self-provisioning care system, middle-class parent's aspirations for their children are within reach and their desire to be good parents can be realised.

For some working mothers in Jakarta, being away and absent from their children for almost 12 hours each day, complemented by a slow commute home as the result of traffic jams, renders them too weary to attend to a crying baby. Rather, they seek to hold and play with a happy child upon arrival home. Therefore, having a domestic worker to look after their children's wellbeing is important for the parent's peace of mind too. One of my informants told me,

> whenever my husband and I arrive home from work, we feel so relieved to see our baby. It is like a remedy to my tiring day. However, whenever the baby cries, or when it is time to change a nappy, I will just shout: "*Suster*…. Here", and give the baby to her [the *baby sitter*]. My husband and I are too tired to attend to a crying baby. When the baby has calmed down and been cleaned, my *baby sitter* will hand her [the baby] back to me.

Exempted from work perceived as distasteful such as changing nappies is one discretionary benefit available to middle-class parents who hire a *baby sitter*. This applies to any parents whether they are working or stay-at-home mothers, as long as they hire someone to help look after the baby. For example Windy, one of the women I met when dropping off my son at school, told me that she hired a *baby sitter* '*biar kita gak rempong*'[23] or 'so we are not busy'. Windy had resigned from her work in her parent's family business, and her decision was keenly supported by her husband and extended family. She sought help at home to raise her children in order to preserve time for herself and to spend time with friends. Windy did not seem happy when I asked her this question, as she walked away from me, perhaps avoiding other questions from someone curious about her domestic life. Posing questions to middle-class employers about domestic workers was not easy as people tended to be reluctant to share information about their family and private life. Specifically, asking questions relating to the engagement of a *baby sitter* were not always welcomed, which I will discuss later in this chapter. However, as a working/PhD student mother, I was able to relate my position to them and through many children's activities I observed these women's interactions with their *baby sitter*.

As the main paid carer of children, the *baby sitter* often attend children's and family's social activities. During my fieldwork, when my son attended birthday parties, I observed

[23] A popular Indonesian slang for *repot* meaning excessive busyness.

how it was often a *baby sitter* who accompanied the children in their care, along with the children's mothers. On those occasions I often noticed the *baby sitter* gather next to a group of children, while the mothers sat together as a group at a distance from their children. The latter chatted, ate and took group photos without worrying about their children. When the food was served, almost all children ate with or were fed by their *baby sitter*, while their mothers talked among themselves. At one party that included swimming and water play, I observed some *baby sitter* standing by the water to supervise children. One of them entered the swimming pool to hold the child she cared for, as the child was unable to swim. Meanwhile, at the side of the swimming pool, I saw the child's mother sitting with other mothers smoking a cigarette. She had, in fact instructed the *baby sitter* to jump into the water and make sure her child played in the water safely.

Seemingly for some women, hiring a *baby sitter* is done to enable leisure, as in the example of the children's birthday party. Bringing one's *baby sitter* to a birthday party allows mothers to chat without interruption, saving them from supervising and observing children. This scenario resonates with Windy's explanation earlier, and to what Veblen ([1899] 2005) had termed, 'conspicuous leisure'. According to Veblen, during the early industrial economy in Europe, having servants exempted the upper and noble class from manual work. Their statuses were exhibited through the idleness or the non-productive time used, because they are not linked to any (productive) work during the industrial period. More importantly, having multiple and specialised worker allowed them to show their ability to pay for such service and to be in as much leisure time as possible.

Nonetheless, this leisure is not completely free of judgement from the society. I reflected on Windy's gesture when she rushed away from me when answering my question regarding her decision to hire a *baby sitter*. Later on, I discovered that many affluent women who hire a *baby sitter* are often judged as irresponsible mothers. Rudi, a middle-class father of two children and struggling to earn a living for his family, told me that women who do not work but employ a *baby sitter* are just doing it for *hore-hore* (literally, 'hooray! hooray!') or for fun. Thus, I appreciated that Windy's answer and gesture indicated honesty and anxiety. Her short and quick answer informed me about the leisure aspirations of affluent and middle-class women, yet it also revealed anxiety about being judged as bad mothers.

Although inviting criticism, hiring a *baby sitter* is also an aspiration among women of lower economic background whose main daily role is to look after children at home. Some such women in Jakarta told me that if they could afford hiring a *baby sitter*, they obviously would do so as they were tired of looking after the house and the family. They sought leisure time with friends and the opportunity for *jalan-jalan* (going out for sight-seeing) without having to worry about attending to their children. They wanted to have fun and enjoy time for themselves like middle-class women. They did not express any anxiety about social judgement regarding their role as a mother, rather, for them, a leisured lifestyle was simply appealing.

While the discussion of the *baby sitter* enabling leisure might display class differences among women, it also reveals the gender values in Indonesian society. The *baby sitter* has exempted affluent women from the tasks associated with child care, which are often stressful. However, it also affirms middle-class men's distance from such roles in the family.

## Middle-Class Anxiety

Although hiring a *baby sitter* promises a good quality of care, it also invites potential risks for the child as well as for the family. As argued by Nguyen (2014), obtaining domestic service requires employers to open up their domestic space to others in order to enjoy their labour, thereby fulfilling their aspiration for a certain lifestyle and pattern of consumption. Reflecting on Nguyen's argument, I found that hiring a *baby sitter* requires Indonesian parents (as employers) to place abundant trust in a stranger and be prepared for risks. In some conversations observed between the *baby sitter* and agency owners, I heard the phrase: 'hiring a *baby sitter* means parents give their child's fate (*memasrahkan anak*) to the *baby sitter*'. The term *pasrah* (accepting fate) has a passive connotation and is not usually used among Indonesian speakers to express the delegation of caregiving from parents to others. However, although the actual action of accepting fate does not entirely apply to the middle class today because they are in control of the *baby sitter* through wages, but it may attract risk. One of the women I met in the field, Malia, the mother of two young children, experienced this risk with not inconsiderable consequences.

Malia hired a *baby sitter* for the reasons that she did not know how to manage a baby and had no-one able to teach her. Malia's mother had long passed away and her father was

not capable of teaching her how to care for a baby. She had one sister who could teach her, but her way of parenting was differed from Malia's expectation. So Malia learnt a lot from her first *baby sitter*, whom she recruited directly after having her first child (a son). During the first few years, she appreciated her *baby sitter*'s service due to her own inexperience. She had no problem leaving her child with her *baby sitter* to pursue her career further. As the rising star in her office she travelled a lot for work and would never have thought of leaving her job as she trusted her *baby sitter* very much. Her situation changed dramatically, however, when her *baby sitter* resigned and was replaced by a second *baby sitter,* Erni.

Malia felt less confident about leaving her son with Erni as she was still very young and inexperienced compared to the *baby sitter* she had replaced. Besides, Malia had just given birth to a second child (a girl). She started to consider quitting her job, thinking that Erni would need help looking after two children at home. Although Malia employed two PRT for cleaning, her two children needed constant company. Malia then spoke with her boss about resigning, but her office resisted her plan. Instead, they offered Malia a higher position and salary to keep her, and she accepted the new conditions. When her daughter was one year old, Malia again attempted to file a resignation letter, but again her office countered with an offer of an even higher position offering a better salary, and flexible working hours. Malia reluctantly accepted the offer, in spite of the flexible work hours. One day, however, it came to Malia's notice that her first child (the son) seemed anxious and fearful about many things. He cried all night and had sleeping problems for several weeks. Malia took her son to a psychiatrist who suggested that her son, just two-and-a-half years old, might have experienced abuse at home. That night, directly after consulting the psychiatrist, Malia asked the two PRT about Erni's behaviour towards her son. She discovered from the two, that Erni normally snapped at the boy when she thought he was naughty or cried a lot. According to them, Erni also often used harsh words to talk to Malia's son. Malia was initially very angry, but then felt overwhelmed by sadness and guilt. She could not forgive herself for failing to provide better care for her children. She thought, as a mother, she ought to have been the one looking after her children, not Erni.

The next day, Malia called her boss in tears and informed him of her plan to resign. This time she would not consider any counter offers to continue working because she knew she had already sacrificed too much of her time with her first child. She did not want the

same thing to happen to her second child. At home, Malia was so sad with her son's condition that she did not even bother to verify the situation with Erni. Malia just told her to leave the house as soon as possible. When I asked Malia if Erni had queried why she was asked to leave, Malia said the she had not. It seemed to her that Erni had known the reason; perhaps the two PRT had told her.

After the incident, Malia suffered from anxiety too. Both she and her son agreed to undergo a series of therapy and counselling sessions to heal their trauma and anxiety. It was a very sad experience for Malia, but she was still lucky that her younger child was not affected. She considered that her decision to resign from work was correct, as she needed to help her son recover and prevent her daughter from facing a similar situation. Until leaving my field site, Malia and her son were still undergoing a special therapy to cure their trauma.

Based on Malia's story, it seemed that her experience demonstrates the sort of risks involved in hiring a *baby sitter*. Middle-class women who believe in and are dependent on a *baby sitter*'s care expose their children to risk; specifically, a *baby sitter* may negatively impact a child's physical and psychological wellbeing. In Malia's case, the incident did not only affect her son, but also Malia herself as his mother. Her decision to undergo therapy reflected her middle-class awareness about trauma healing. Her feelings of guilt about not providing good care for her children caused her to position herself as a 'bad mother'. This self-judgement reproduces social judgement towards parents – especially mothers – who do not stay at home and leave their children with other people. This judgement is also circulated in social media, causing a dilemma for women, especially working women.

## Mitigating Risks vs Trust

Many employers of domestic workers, particularly parent-employers of *baby sitter*, try to avoid risks that might harm their children. Parents used various methods to reduce presumed risk and anxiety, including the following common ones: CCTV (closed circuit television) inside the house to monitor the *baby sitter* or *mbak* and the children; engage an extended family member to supervise the *baby sitter*; or give gifts to the workers in the hope of generating good service.

Wealthy families have commonly perceived CCTV as an assurance for home security. They install CCTVs outside to monitor thieves, and inside the house to monitor domestic workers' movements as well as their children. With certain applications, the CCTV can be connected to a mobile phone to allow ongoing monitoring by the phone user. Some of my informants did this in order to monitor both their children and the *baby sitter*. Some informed their *baby sitter* of the CCTV in the house but did not tell them where the cameras were located. Eva, one of my informants, explained her reason to install CCTV:

> I do not have anyone to monitor them [the *baby sitter* and PRT]. My husband and I are both working, and my parents are not always around, although they live not too far from us. So the CCTV is our last resort. I told her [the *baby sitter*] that we have CCTV in the house, but I did not tell her I wanted to monitor her. I also didn't tell her where they are. I just told her that I often miss my baby when I am working, so I want to see what she is doing. So I convinced her that it is not for her, but for my baby.

On one occasion, my friend showed me her phone connected to the CCTV at home. She had several CCTVs around the house: in the bedroom, living room, dining room, and garage. I saw her children playing between their bedroom and the living room; I also saw the *baby sitter* sitting not too far from them but trying to avoid the camera. Apparently, the *baby sitter* knew the location of the camera and was sitting outside its range. The CCTV is an assurance for parents that their children are safe, and if anything happens it can provide a source of evidence. However, the CCTV camera is visible and can be avoided by the *baby sitter*. Thus, its usefulness has limitations including the problem of engendering distrust.

Another strategy to mitigate risk is to invite an extended family member to supervise the *baby sitter*, usually the parent-employer's mother. In Chapter 2 I discussed how Mira, a *baby sitter*, must deal with the grandparents of the child when working. Some *baby sitter* do not like to work under this arrangement because they are confused about who to follow – the parent-employer or the grandparents. With this arrangement, they also have very little freedom when working. However, this arrangement is preferred by parent-employers because they have a trusted person to supervise their *baby sitter*. Obviously, the dynamics in the household will change with the presence of the child's grandparents (especially grandmother), and often it results in tensions or even the resignation of the *baby sitter*. One grandmother I met at school during fieldwork, Oma Donna, told me that the *baby sitter* is, after all, 'a stranger' to her daughter's family. Almost every day, Oma Donna would go to school with her three-year-old granddaughter and the *baby sitter*. It

was important for her to supervise the *baby sitter* closely while her daughter was at work. Besides, she also enjoyed her time with her granddaughter. Many times, she told me, she bought her granddaughter treats like sweets or small toys, which made her daughter angry. But she said 'I am giving it [the sweets] to my granddaughter. Besides, I also gave my daughter sweets when she was small, so what's the problem? I am sure the *baby sitter* must have told my daughter about the sweets, but I don't care'. In a household with grandparents, a grandmother may have more power than even the parent-employers. Some parent-employers could monitor their *baby sitter*, but not their children's grandmother/s. They often encountered conflict when they tried to establish rules for the child, for example no sweets or no television at home, because the grandmother ignored the rules, and the *baby sitter* could not do anything about it. B*aby sitter* may not report the grandmother's rule-breaking to their employer out of fear for the grandmother. In this case, the supervision of the *baby sitter* by grandparents is not effective. In addition, the *baby sitter* may be unable to uphold the parent's rules for the child, because the grandparents apply their own rules. This is an example of a triangular relationship in a household that a *baby sitter* must endure at work.

From the two mechanisms applied by the middle class to manage risks and protect children against a *baby sitter*'s potential misconduct, I noted that parents do not automatically trust their *baby sitter* despite their reputed skills and quasi-professionalism. In fact, parent-employers desire a different type of trust from the one built through work professionalism or training. Many parents shared with me that they want to leave their children with someone they can 'trust', particularly someone they know well who shows care and affection towards their children. It is a sense of trust that cannot be produced by professional training. An intimate relationship develops naturally, and trust grows mutually between parents and *baby sitter*. The emotional bond between the family, the child and the *baby sitter* is established through intensive interaction. On the other hand, the semi-formal training offered to *baby sitter*, while convincing and reassuring of their professionalism in care work, cannot guarantee the trustworthiness of the *baby sitter*, as illustrated in Malia's case.

The third strategy used by parents to contain risks to their children involves gift giving to *baby sitter*. The gift/s are used to retain the *baby sitter* to work with the household, so the family can run as usual. Through gift giving, parent-employers believe that a *baby sitter*

will feel obliged to give their best, in terms of loyalty and service. The gift strengthen power relations between the employer and the worker (Weix 2000). One such gift that is common among middle-class parents involves taking the *baby sitter* or *mbak* out over the weekend to entertain them, rewarding their hard work during the week. *Baby sitter* eat out, choosing the food they like without having to pay. During family grocery shopping, the *baby sitter* is permitted to choose personal items like soap, shampoo, and toothpaste as part of their monthly allowance set in the original written agreement. This 'weekly trip to the mall' is one of many treats that employers provide to entice a *baby sitter* to remain with them. However, this strategy is also often ineffective, and shows middle-class assumption towards their domestic workers.

## Power Economy and Gift Giving

While middle-class parent-employers assume that material gift-giving for domestic workers (including the *baby sitter*) can generate loyalty and trust in workers, in practice this is not always the case. Many domestic workers, including *baby sitter*, resign from a household regardless of the facilities provided by their employers. I asked several *baby sitter* in the field about their urban lifestyle: going to shopping malls, eating out in restaurants, and travelling out of town/abroad. Most of them, however, argued that such activities represented work for them. The weekend or holiday trips were rest days for their employer's family, but not for them. They must still take care of the children while out, even though the children's parents are present. If they could choose, they told me, they would rather stay at home to rest or sleep in.

The different opinion of parent-employers and *baby sitter* towards gifts reveals the transition of relationships in domestic work over time. Gift-giving has formed the basis of social relationships in Indonesia, including in domestic work before labour was exchanged for wages. The relationship between parent-employer and *baby sitter* is supposed to be equal – as expected by the *baby sitter* who seeks to have a day off – but, in practice this is difficult, because the work takes place in a house, which is the private space of the employer.

In public this mall trip is perceived differently. It is more than a work relationship, but class and power relation. One can discern the distance between parent-employers and

*baby sitter* during weekend trips to the shopping mall. This distance may be displayed in the way they walk, the items they each carry, the clothes they wear, and the food they eat.


**Figure 6.2 An Indonesian public figure's Twitter post showing the alleged Maid Menu at a restaurant in Jakarta**

Source: Anwar, 2016

In October 2016, strong public opinion was garnered against parent-employer behaviour towards *baby sitter* in restaurants or shopping malls. This behaviour was deemed to be discriminating by famous Indonesian film director, Joko Anwar. Via his Twitter account, dated 30 October 2016, he posted: 'Could you imagine the *pembantu*'s or *baby sitter*'s feeling [upon seeing] a menu that is discriminatory like this? Don't be such a heartless person *lah*' (see Figure 6.3). The restaurant, Shabu Hachi, was a popular Japanese buffet restaurant among the middle class at that time. Food and drink prices there were quite high and many people who commented on Joko's Twitter feed accused middle-class employers of being discriminatory in not wanting to pay an equal amount of money for their *baby sitter* or domestic worker's meal. Some others blamed the restaurant for being

discriminatory by naming the menu 'Maid Menu'. They thought the menu was offensive in its use of the label 'Maid' and suggested changing it to something more neutral such as '*Paket Hemat*' or 'Value Meal'. Meanwhile others defended the parent-employer's position, saying that purchasing the 'Maid Menu' for the *baby sitter* was much better than not buying a meal for them. In response to this debate, the restaurant owner explained that she created the menu in response to observing many *baby sitter* and domestic workers sitting in the waiting area of the restaurant while their parent-employers were eating. She learnt from her customers that the price of the buffet menu was considered too costly by parent-employers and that *baby sitter* were not familiar with Japanese-style food. Out of consideration for her clients and their workers, the restaurant owner had then created the 'Maid Menu'. She had not expected that her good intention would generate such a negative public response.

Through this incident, I found that there is a mismatch expectation between the middle class' and the *baby sitter*'s. The middle class employer has assumed that their acts of 'gift giving' – in this case the shopping mall trip and restaurant treat – can ensure loyalty of service from their domestic workers. In fact, for the *baby sitter*, those activities are part of their work that they cannot enjoy as leisure trip. In the pre-capitalist society this gift giving in a patron-client relationship is an effective tool for patrons to demand reciprocity from the clients, however in a contemporary age of human rights equality it is seen as a way to create distance as in the case of Sabu Hachi's 'Maid's Menu'. The weekend trip to shopping mall and the experience of eating in an expensive restaurant are assumptions made by the middle class that their domestic workers [*baby sitter*] will enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. In fact, this assumption is made out of their own interest to enjoy leisure while affirming employer-employee distance in public. This is shown from Sabu Hachi's response to subsequently change the 'Maid Menu' to 'My Baby's Best Friend's Menu', allowing *baby sitter* to eat as much as they want. Yet, the food selection remains different from the buffet offered to other restaurant goers.

Below I provide an example of a parent-employer couple, focusing on how they view their *baby sitter* and how they use economic power towards their workers. It is in contrast with the public opinion above, although still displays power relations between parent-employer and *baby sitter*.

Mila (36) and Ananta (39), a young couple with two children, Ari (6) and Sena (1), believed that they had a good strategy to gain the loyalty of their household staff. Their *baby sitter*, Suster Lis, had worked for the couple for around six years, since Ari, their first son, was six months old. At the time of interview, Suster Lis was looking after Sena, the baby, while Ari was relatively independent and under minimum supervision by the *mbak*, Anis. In addition to these two domestic workers, Mila and Ananta also employed a driver to take Ari to school. The couple provide facilities for all their domestic staff, offering them many benefits such as free wifi connections at home, phone vouchers, and a personal care allowance every month. Mila and Ananta were very happy with Suster Lis. As the longest serving personnel at home, Suster Lis regularly received birthday presents from Mila such as handbags, jewellery, and other small gifts. The parent-employers trusted Suster Lis more than the other workers and viewed her like a member of their family. Suster Lis was also delegated by Mila to supervise Anis, especially in monitoring the general cleanliness of the house. Suster Lis then reported to Mila about any areas or items that had not been cleaned properly by Anis. Anis naturally resented this oversight by Suster Lis, but Mila paid close attention to information from Suster Lis about Anis' work.

The couple told me that being a good parent-employer required a high level of patience, including forgiving their workers' mistakes. Mila told me that Suster Lis was not 'without fault'. In this case, gift-giving might not always produce the desired result of loyalty and good service. Once, both Suster Lis and Anis tried on Mila's clothes when she was not at home. They took photos of themselves in her clothes, uploading the photos to their Facebook accounts. Mila found out from a friend whose *baby sitter* was Suster Lis' friend on Facebook. Mila spoke firmly to Suster Lis and Anis, expressing that she was upset and that it was unacceptable to her. While Mila expressed forgiveness, she did not forget the incident. Suster Lis and Anis had never dared to try on anything belonging to Mila again. Although Mila felt that her kindness had been abused, her children's wellbeing was more important. She needed Suster Lis and Anis. I found that Mila and Ananta tolerated their workers' behaviour because they prioritised their children and they did not want their 'normal' family routine interrupted by a worker resigning from the household. In my conversation with Mila and Ananta, I found that they considered providing facilities at home, including allowances and loans, was necessary to keep their workers loyal to them. Ananta believed that if they treated their workers well, they would repay the generosity

with allegiance and commitment towards them and their children. He went on to explain how Suster Lis has been single when she started working with the family. After five years, Suster Lis married a local man who lived close to Mila and Ananta's house. Ananta and Mila continued to employ Suster Lis although it meant they had to adjust some working arrangements such as letting her live outside the household and allowing her to have a one-and-a-half days-off every weekend to spend with her husband. Ananta believed that this flexibility would retain the support system for his family.

During the conversation, I observed Ananta's confidence about his household management. As the household head, he explained, he managed the domestic workers the same as he managed his office staff. Ananta believed that his gift-giving arrangement would achieve the desired results, but he did not anticipate the individual aspirations of his domestic workers. When I asked the couple what would they do if Suster Lis resigned, both of them appeared shocked. They apparently had never thought about it. They assumed that their gifts could purchase someone's loyalty. It took both of them a while to answer my question until Ananta replied, 'I will ask Mila to resign from work if that happens'. But Mila did not say anything in response and looked surprised by her husband's answer. Ananta, completely confident about his household management just a minute before, now positioned himself as decision maker in relation to any problem that arose. Reflecting patriarchal relations within a family, he positioned himself as the one to lead the family supported by his wife. Mila, on the other hand, seemed to had not noticed the gender relations in her household because she had not been responsible for the manual work of domestic chores and child care. That is, until Ananta mentioned that he would ask her to quit her job and look after their children (in the event of Suster Lis resigning).

In Ananta's explanation to me about dealing with domestic workers' wages, leave arrangements, and other issues related to workers, he positioned Mila as being responsible for these matters (in doing so positioning himself as leader of the household). He said

> 'I am making Mila the 'Queen of the House'. She will decide everything related to the workers, including approving their monthly leave, giving loans, or raising their salary'.

Ananta's statement reflects the persisting gender ideology in Indonesia, particularly the gendered role in the household, that positions women as the main caretakers of family and domestic affairs (see Robinson 2009, Blackburn 2008) and exempts men from the daily management of domestic affairs.

In addition to persisting gender relation, Mila and Ananta also represents parental role towards their *baby sitter.* They do so in the form of protection and security, similar to a parent's protection for their children (Robinson 1991). For example, Mila and Ananta, provided significant support to Suster Lis when the *baby sitter* experienced serious marriage problems. Just a few days after I had met Mila and Ananta, I received a message from Mila that she faced a *musibah* (disaster). She told me that Suster Lis, indeed, wanted to resign. Her husband was involved with another woman and she wanted to return to her hometown in Bandung; she did not want to stay with him any longer. Mila invited her to live with her family again, but Suster Lis' had been encouraged by her family to return home so that she could process her divorce. Mila told me that Ananta had offered to find Suster Lis a lawyer, which she later accepted. At that time Mila just told Suster Lis to take a few months' leave to settle her family problems. She expected Suster Lis to return to work with the family after her divorce was settled, especially since Sena was still very young and Mila was employed outside the home. Mila and Ananta approached Suster Lis' problem in a middle-class way, using a lawyer to file for divorce on her behalf. It should be said that, although their help for Suster Lis was valuable, there was some self-interest at play as they wanted her to resume working for their household as soon as possible. After a few months, I contacted Mila again to ask about her situation and Suster Lis. Mila replied by telling me that Suster Lis had divorced and come back to take care of Sena. She had resumed living in the house again. Mila was very relieved and, it seems, Suster Lis was also; she told Mila she loved Sena so much that she had missed the baby a lot during her leave.

It is widely expressed among the middle class in Jakarta that having no domestic carers, including a *baby sitter*, is a 'nightmare'. Because of their critical role in the family, many parent-employers reward their domestic workers and *baby sitter* by giving gifts to them and their families left behind in their hometown. Parent-employers must also be flexible and thoughtful when setting out tasks for their *baby sitter*. These facilities and flexibility are meant to generate loyalty in return. The middle class assume that they can use their financial power to purchase goods and consume necessary services. While they exercise their economic power to control others, this result may not be achieved because what they 'purchase' is not an object to be owned. Rather, it is a service of care provided by an employee who has his/her own feelings, and aspirations. The story from Mila and Ananta reflects a negotiated emotion when dealing with domestic workers, particularly when they

make mistakes like accessing a private area or using private belongings. Mila forgave Suster Lis and Anis for their acts and in doing so, deepened their loyalty to the family.

While gift giving and trust do not always work effectively to keep workers, the emotional bond between Ananta and Mila's family and Suster Lis could be a factor in retaining workers, especially after a long period of employment. I found Suster Lis' commitment to work with Mila and Ananta to be bound by the long-term intimate relationship between them, particularly between Suster Lis and the children. Ananta and Mila's assistance to Suster Lis in her divorce process was also based on their close ties developed over a six-year period. I argue that gift giving cannot always retain workers in a household, since they have their own life aspirations. However, emotional bonds and fictive familial relations may connect workers more closely to employers.

In what follows I will move to the discussion of how *baby sitter* is seen in the household. Within the household, I will present my observation on the dynamics of a family with *baby sitter* and PRT, and the hierarchy that exists between them. I will also explore how employers interact with *baby sitter* in public, to illustrate how they position *baby sitter* in a socially controlled arena like restaurants or shopping malls.

## *Baby Sitter* at Home: Household Dynamics

I was sitting in a café having coffee with Ayu, while waiting for her son, Sabi (6) to finish his futsal (indoor soccer) training. Ayu (36), a human resource consultant with a psychology degree and a mother of two children, had just finished a meeting with clients. She went straight from her last meeting to collect her eldest son from futsal training. Her youngest son, Kenan, five months old, was at home in the care of a *baby sitter*. As we sipped our coffee, Ayu told me how impressed she was with her *baby sitter*. Us Wati (Ayu's family's shortened version of Suster Wati) had been working with Ayu's family for about 6 months. An experienced *baby sitter*, she had previously worked in Singapore as a migrant worker. Us Wati had worked as a kindergarten teacher in her village until divorcing her husband and deciding to work abroad to earn a living. Because Us Wati was well educated – having graduated from senior high school and obtained a qualification as a kindergarten teacher in her hometown – she could understand the needs of Ayu and Kenan quickly. Ayu had no problem explaining to Us Wati her expectations around caring for Kenan and, conversely, sometimes Us Wati told Ayu what needed to

be done for the baby. Being a psychologist herself, Ayu is knowledgeable of her children's wellbeing, and wanted a *baby sitter* who shared similar views about raising children.

Ayu and Us Wati spent quite a lot of time together, especially during Ayu's maternity leave, in the first three months after Kenan's birth. Ayu and Us Wati had cared for Kenan together and, therefore, had interacted constantly over the common interest of Kenan's wellbeing. In the day, Ayu usually played with or breastfed Kenan while Us Wati changed his nappy and cleaned the baby's room. During this interaction, Ayu and Us Wati talked not only about Kenan, but about other things, such as Us Wati's family. Ayu could see that Us Wati was a strong woman who wanted to develop herself. Us Wati had one daughter whom she had left behind in her hometown to be raised by her mother. Because Us Wati had gone through a lot of life experiences, including being a mother herself, Ayu felt secure enough to leave Kenan under her care. Ayu told me that she had experienced hiring a *baby sitter* with her first child. For her eldest son, Sabi, she had used the services of a *baby sitter* because at that time she had worked full time. When Sabi was around three, Ayu stopped hiring a *baby sitter* because he was sufficiently independent in eating and playing. Instead, she relied on a live-in PRT, Mbak Warni, and was temporarily assisted by her mother in looking after Sabi. When Ayu had her second baby, she had planned to hire a *baby sitter* again. Therefore she hired Us Wati, who was expected to remain with the family until Kenan reached the age or two or three years.

Hiring a *baby sitter* from the time a baby is very young is deemed necessary because they are perceived to be more knowledgeable about children's health and growth than an *mbak*. As a psychologist, Ayu said she could discern the difference between a *baby sitter* and an *mbak* or PRT who had not received any training in child care. In addition to Us Wati, Ayu had employed Mbak Warni as a PRT for more than five years. Ayu told me that Mbak Warni had showed an interest in looking after the baby while Ayu was still pregnant. However, Ayu and her husband, Ray, wanted someone more 'professional' or trained to look after the baby, following their previous good experience with Sabi's *baby sitter*. In addition, both Ayu and Ray knew that Mbak Warni already had a lot of tasks to complete, such as cleaning the house, cooking, and attending to Sabi when needed. They did not want to add further burden to her heavy workload. But, Mbak Warni seemed to misunderstand their intentions and appeared jealous of Us Wati. Ayu told me,

> Sometimes she just did not get it, Gita. Mbak Warni just could not get what I meant. I told her many times to arrange the dining table the way I wanted or I taught her how to cook. But the result was always different from what I meant. How could she take care of the baby? When I was out with her doing grocery shopping, Mbak Warni sometimes told me that she actually could do the job that Us Wati did. She even told me bad things about Us Wati. On the other hand, Us Wati never did the same. I know Mbak Warni must be tired after working for a whole day; sometimes she frowns at home if she feels too tired. We knew that, therefore sometimes Ray offered to cook dinner himself to allow Mbak Warni to have more rest.

Ayu seemed to act carefully when dealing with her workers. She knew that Us Wati was exhausted because she needed to wake up in the middle of the night to attend to Kenan, and therefore she understood if Us Wati wanted to rest at any time during the day or just wanted to sit and play with Sabi while holding Kenan. Ayu often took Us Wati out with her, especially when taking Kenan to the doctor or just for window shopping at the mall. Ayu also regularly took Mbak Warni with her to the supermarket to do grocery shopping. Mbak Warni was also responsible for helping Sabi in many ways, as she had helped Ayu and Ray look after Sabi during the past years. Ayu still needed Mbak Warni's help to attend to Sabi in her absence. From Ayu's point of view, Sabi needed an adult to discipline him, wake him in the morning and prepare his school bag and meals, and even accompany him to his futsal training.

However, it is difficult to manage the emotions of workers. Ayu knew that Mbak Warni was not happy that Us Wati had been hired. Ayu also knew that Mbak Warni thought she preferred Us Wati to her. But Ayu told me she tried to be fair to both and showed that Mbak Warni's assumption was not true. Ayu had known Mbak Warni long before Us Wati had arrived. Ayu had even given Mbak Warni a room to live in with her husband, although her husband did not work for the family. Ayu thought by allowing Mbak Warni and her husband rent-free accommodation, she could retain her services for a long time (Ayu's family also benefitted from Mbak Warni's husband's presence in the house, as he provided additional help with fixing various problems in the house, from water to electricity issues). On the other hand, Us Wati, in her capacity as *baby sitter*, did not receive these benefits. According to Ayu, she tried to be fair to both of her domestic workers, although each of them received different entitlements.

From Ayu's story I found that managing several domestic workers in a household is challenging. Many of my informants told me that managing domestic workers in a household is much more difficult than dealing with fighting children. Although Ayu's

domestic workers were not confrontational towards each other, she felt disturbed by the conflict, especially when Mbak Warni told her negative things about Us Wati.

Although Ayu perceived herself as fair in dealing with her workers, the dynamics of workers' relationships is also produced by the hierarchy of domestic work. As discussed in Chapter 5, *baby sitter* agencies and employers positioned *baby sitter* higher than PRT, and Ayu's house was no exeption. For example, Us Wati spent most of her time inside the house and interacted with Ayu's family members, although she had only worked there for few months. In addition, Us Wati's bedroom was located inside the house – together with the family – while Mbak Warni's was at the front of the house, near the kitchen. I assumed that Us Wati's close interaction with Ayu's family had caused Mbak Warni to feel jealous of her. In one of my visits to Ayu's house during Ramadhan, I was talking with Ayu in her living room while Sabi and my son played chess a short distance away. Us Wati was in Kenan's bedroom, while Mbak Warni was cooking in the kitchen. The work environments of the two domestic workers were very different: the *baby sitter* was with her charge in an airconditioned room while the PRT was cooking in a hot kitchen. In a fasting month, followed by most adults, being in an air-conditioned room is very refreshing. Us Wati had access to this room quite often, while Mbak Warni did not. In this situation I can understand *Mbak* Warni being jealous of Us Wati because her work looked less tiring. While Ayu and I chatted, Us Wati joined us in the living room and played with Sabi while holding Kenan in her arms. When it was Ayu's turn to breastfeed Kenan in the baby's room, Us Wati took a short break by taking a turn in the chess game. At the same time I saw Mbak Warni come back and forth from the kitchen, putting the evening meal dishes on the dining table. Mbak Warni was frowning as she placed the meal dishes on the dining table. Us Wati, also an employee in the house, did not work in the kitchen because her task was to look after Kenan, and her role required her to remain close to him. When Ayu returned to the living room, she gave Kenan back to Us Wati and we all watched the boys playing chess. When it was time for *ifthar*, Ayu, myself and the children had our tea in the dining room. Us Wati then went to the kitchen to have her tea with Mbak Warni as she felt it was not proper to eat in the dining room with Ayu.

At that time I could understand how Mbak Warni felt, being alone preparing food while the others appeared to be playing chess and relaxing as a group. However, while not helping in the kitchen, Us Wati was also doing her job by being with the children in the

living room. While a sense of hierarchy is discernible between the two workers in the vignette above, distance is also maintained between employer and employee at mealtime when, being not part of the family, Us Wati the *baby sitter,* joins *Mbak* Warni the PRT in the kitchen to eat dinner. This action indicates Us Wati's awareness of her role in the household as worker, not family member, requiring that she should eat at the back part of the house with fellow domestic workers. The *baby sitter*, regardless of their position within the domestic worker hierarchy, is an outsider in the family member, and her participation is restricted to certain areas of the house. A *baby sitter* is, similar to other domestic workers, close yet also distanced with her employer's family.

The employer-employee relation in a household with several domestic workers is complex, as exemplified by Ayu's household. Having more than one domestic worker in a household creates problem for employers, as conflicts that occur between workers must be resolved by employers. While many scholars have written about employer-worker power relations (see Gamburd 2000), little has been published about worker-worker relations, especially between those who have different tasks in the household.

As demonstrated by the case above, the arrival of a *baby sitter* complicates both employer-worker and worker-worker relationships because the nature of their work is different, and creates different levels of intimacy with the employer. In addition, the salary of the *baby sitter* is higher than PRT or *mbak*, which can trigger jealousy. In most households, the salary of the *baby sitter* wage is significantly higher than that of the *mbak* due to the considerable responsibility and long working hours entailed in the work of the former. A *baby sitter* is often required to wake and attend to a baby whenever it cries during the night, whereas an *mbak* is not 'on-call' during the night. Furthermore, a *baby sitter* is allowed only intermittent breaks as they must accompany children whenever needed, whereas the PRT's work is finished when the house has been cleaned. Employers are sensitive to tensions between workers, and often use familial ways to resolve problems. Fictive kinship relationships between employers and their domestic workers are still necessary these days, including in urban areas, to negotiate jealousy among workers. This too resembles the parental role in negotiating sibling rivalry.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the experiences of middle-class women in hiring a *baby sitter.* The strategy of hiring a *baby sitter* is deemed to be able to help ensure good child care quality, which reflects their aspiration for status and middle-class reproduction. It also allows them to cultivate their individual aspirations relating to career and leisured lifestyles. Women from lower economic brackets may also aspire to engage a *baby sitter*. Hiring a *baby sitter* may elevate a woman's status as a good mother by enabling her to look after her children and family despite her career.

The aspiration of middle class mothers to obtain status through quality of care for children and personal leisure, which can be realised through a *baby sitter*. This aspiration is matched with the rural young women's aspiration to find jobs in the city as well as the one of recruiting agency's to build images of professional service providers.

Parent's aspiration for a good quality of care is not always fulfilled by the trained carers like *baby sitter* which makes them rely on patron-client relationship in the interaction. In some cases, while a *baby sitter* is considered skilled in caring for children, but hiring one might bring certain risks. The most common risks are intermittent care when a *baby sitter* tenders her resignation and a household must undergo a process of adjustment to a replacement and, as elaborated in this chapter, when a *baby sitter*'s treatment can out them at physical and/or emotional risk. Parent-employers use several strategies to retain and supervise their *baby sitter*, from using technology such as CCTV, having family members supervise the *baby sitter*, and giving gifts. Although these strategies can be ineffective, but the fact that these practices are popular among parent-employers indicate that they do not completely trust their quasi-professional *baby sitter.*

Hiring a *baby sitter* reflects gender relations in the society. As discussed earlier, among the middle class, while a *baby sitter* allows women to indulge in leisure activities, her role further exempts men from child care and household management. My interviews about *baby sitter* and children involved more women than men too. On some occasions when male informants were present to discuss *baby sitter*, I found they situated themselves as leader and decision maker for the family.

In the domestic work occupation of *baby sitter* hierarchy is reflected both in terms of the household and the wider society. In the household, the entry of the *baby sitter* has created

a new dynamic that reflects a hierarchy of domestic workers. This hierarchy is apparent through the different levels of intimacy between family members and *baby sitter* or PRT, as well as their differential salary levels. These differences place the *baby sitter* in a higher position than the PRT. Those parent-employers who understand such dynamics apply familial ways to control tensions that occur within the household. In the public arena, *baby sitter* are hierarchically positioned lower than their parent-employers, but at the same level as the other domestic workers of their middle-class employers. This is in spite of the fact that within the household, the status of the *baby sitter* is positioned higher than other domestic workers.

# Chapter 7

# Conclusion: *Baby Sitter* and Beyond

This thesis has investigated the social and economic contexts in which the idea of the *baby sitter* has emerged in contemporary Indonesia. It has analysed the Indonesian concept of the *baby sitter* – as a new phenomenon among the middle class – to explore issues relating to domestic work in Jakarta, Indonesia. By focusing on Indonesian domestic workers, the thesis has departed from previous studies of domestic work in Indonesia mostly concerned with migrant workers from foreign countries. Indeed, the study has used the idea of the *baby sitter* to comprehend the transformation of work and life style changes as a result of the country's economic expansion and changing social dynamics. It has considered this topic from an array of different perspectives and protagonists in the field of domestic work including, the *baby sitter*, middle-class parent-employers, and the recruiting agencies who operate as an intermediaries between the two.

*Baby sitter(s)* are used as a lens through which to understand contemporary Indonesian society. The *baby sitter* is a signifier of broader transformation of Indonesian society, particularly in regards to the nature of work, gender and class identity. In the process, I explore complexities in society by showing that the role of *baby sitter* is not just a matter of domestic work, but charts a path through both private and public arenas in which the role of babysitting is a performative occupation, highlighting the blurred area of separation between the domains of child care and domestic work. The *baby sitter* is a potent symbol displaying the ambiguous practice of modern child rearing in urban Indonesia today, embedded in a private sphere of family life but at the same time embodying the professionalisation of domestic work. This transformation is facilitated by recruiting agencies with their patronising brokering role that enables the *baby sitter* as an occupation to come into play in contemporary urban Indonesia. Studying the role of the *baby sitter* as a category of work is important because it provides a rich terrain to explore the transformation of work/employment, dynamics of power, status and class, patron-client relationships, as well as changing gender relations in the society.

Despite its widespread popularity, little research has been undertaken on domestic work within Indonesia. Research on the role of the *baby sitter* as a separate category of

domestic work has been even scarcer. Hence, this research has sought to fill this gap and to better understand the dynamics of the *baby sitter* as a work category and as a new phenomenon that is transforming society, changing people's behaviour and domestic ways of life in dramatic ways. Moreover, the child-caring task performed by the *baby sitter* is a peculiar type of domestic work and its distinction needs to be acknowledged both academically and policy makers. As demonstrated in this study, work – including domestic work – has become increasingly more specialised, and the challenges faced by the *baby sitter* are very different from those faced by cleaners, cooks or even carers of the aged. This study contributes to the discourse on domestic work by focusing on one specific category of domestic/intimate work, the *baby sitter*, analysing it as a unique type of domestic work in order to understand the differences and similarities with the general/mainstream and non-specialised domestic work. The differences are shaped by, among other factors, the recruiting agencies through the formalisation and professionalisation of *baby sitter* as an occupation, which is developed in a patron-client societal setting and has reproduced layers of hierarchy among domestic worker and between domestic workers and their patrons (employers, agency owners, sponsors). The analysis of this thesis seeks to make sense of the dynamics in the household and beyond and comprehend changes to the social relations brought about by the presence of the *baby sitter* in the domestic sphere.

I began the thesis with a discussion from the *baby sitter* perspective, particularly on their aspirations and experience at work in an employer's house; followed by other issues beyond the household that shape the occupation: the social and economic context, transformation of domestic care work, and the story of the agency perspective that recruits, trains and channels *baby sitter(s)* into suitable domestic employment. I also highlight the parent employer's perspective to capture the dynamics in the household from another perspective. Indeed, the thesis demonstrates that the *baby sitter* is a new social phenomenon in urban Indonesia that reflects changes and continuity in the society. I argue that to understand a *baby sitter* occupation requires an understanding of multiple perspectives within the household and beyond. The aspirations of workers and employers is fuelled by changes in contemporary work and employment that have changed in response to globalisation, changing economic relations, the exchange of information and improved workers' rights. Within family dynamics changes are also evident, specifically, in the ways that care in the family is arranged as a direct result of changes in a woman's

role in the family and the economy. In addition, these changes also highlight the penetration of the state and private sector into households in the process of managing their reproductive labour, particularly by way of standardising the competence of domestic workers, including *baby sitter*. The role of an agency is also crucial during this process as it contributes to the shaping of the occupation.

Of course, there are groups in society who are challenged by this transformation and some may try to retain their position, particularly those with power and status. One of the persisting social relationship that continue to emerge is the patron-client relationship in the society and inside the household. Below I present some reflections from the discussion in this thesis that further examines the meaning of the *baby sitter* as a contemporary urban phenomenon in Indonesia. It offers a reflection of matching urban-rural aspirations and a marker of change and continuity of social relationships in the society. The *baby sitter* is a transforming domestic work that offers a different mode of caring occupation within urban households. The transformation caries some changes and continuity of various aspects in the society as well as intersections of social status, class and gender.

## Matching the Urban Middle-Class Demand and Rural Aspiration

The live-in *baby sitter* has been highlighted in this thesis as a new social phenomenon occurring in urban Indonesia. It reflects a transformation of work that has emerged in response to urban middle-class demand and young rural women's aspirational, mediated by a marketised care and domestic work regime. The occupation reflects the country's changing society and its emergence has accommodated the aspirations of many Indonesians. Being a *baby sitter* or hiring one has been a means for many people to reach their goals and seek a better life. In particular, the *baby sitter* has become a distinguishing mark of the middle-class desire for a higher quality of life. Parents' aspirations for their children to have a better life in the future has been expressed through consumption of both education and child care services as both reflect class status. Hiring a *baby sitter* has been a way for many urban women and families to nurture their families: build a career, improve family income, maintain a caring status and enjoy leisure. Of course, many have also sought to transfer this new lifestyle to their children, and have subscribed to the view that a *baby sitter* will bring this about even in the midst of the parents busy lifestyles. In this sense, middle–class women's role in the family and society has been radically altered from 'caretaker of the family' to the employed worker or career women. As a result of

the changing urban lifestyle and modernisation in society, gender roles have become increasingly fluid.

If having a *baby sitter* means to realise both an urban lifestyle and maintain the best quality of care of children, a corresponding demand is matched by the aspirations of rural women to improve their lives through migrating to the city and finding a job. For young rural women especially, working in the city allows them to earn more income, while offering a liberating individual freedom from the confines of the village. Being a *baby sitter* has become a stepping-stone to experience city life and enter the job market with greater opportunities than other types of domestic workers. Some have sought this work to support their family or continue their education to improve their own life chances. For these young women, being a *baby sitter* has supplied an opportunity to experience a modern urban lifestyle while planning and making progress towards their own aspirations for an improved lifestyle. Despite being more onerous than general cooking and cleaning for a household, working as a *baby sitter* is considered by many to be a much better option due to the higher wages and less physically demanding work. The occupation of *baby sitter* also signals that the worker has been trained at an accredited institution and secured a formal written work agreement. These arrangements provide the *baby sitter* with a more professional image than an *mbak*, a child minder, whose appointment has typically been arranged casually without any formal contractual agreement or training.

This matching of demand and aspiration is facilitated by the agency's and broker's efforts moving back and forth between the city and villages. They can easily move these days because of the good transportation infrastructure and social connections between rural and urban areas. They are also the ones who supply information about job opportunities in urban households, promising life improvements and better opportunities for rural women. The *baby sitter* occupation emerges in such interlinking rural-urban connections.

Matching demand and supply of *baby sitter* services are the recruitment agencies that formalise and market *baby sitter*'s work. Agencies assign an individual *sponsor* to recruit workers in the country. The existence of the agency has changed the relationship between employer and employee, particularly in protecting and providing a stronger bargaining position for the *baby sitter* in relation to their parent-employers. With the existence of the agency, the employer is contractually bound to comply with the work agreement and provide a range of agreed allowances. This relationship is different from a conventional

employer-employee relationship, one that is not facilitated by a third party or agency. In the former case the employer has complete control over the employee commonly has little or no room to negotiate. In addition, the agencies not only recruit and train potential *baby sitter(s)*, they also match them with prospective employer families. They sort both sides and mediate demands with available supply. Their sorting activities reflects the creation of new hierarchies in the society: between employers and their workers and within the circle of domestic workers themselves between *baby sitter*, *mbak* and PRT. Agencies also apply new ways to recruit workers and promote their business, such as through social media and the internet, reflecting a new way of brokering domestic work.

## *Baby* Sitter as a Marker of Change and Continuity

The *baby sitter* as a new phenomenon has signalled a number of changes in domestic work, along with some continuity of practices and social views, as explained below.

### Formalisation of Domestic Work

As discussed in the thesis, the formalisation of domestic work is a new phenomenon along with the protection of worker's rights, imposed by the government through the recruiting agencies. Improving skills is believed to increase worker's confidence and capacity which enables them to negotiate their working conditions in the workplace. This regulatory approach by Indonesian governments has been prompted in the context of sending migrant workers abroad, but is now also applied for domestic workers and *baby sitter* occupations within the country. The process of training and examining *baby sitter(s)* has radically changed the former practice of informal and often kin-based relationships of domestic care work.

The formalisation of the *baby sitter* occupation is also a response to the changing behaviour and interests of parent-employers, workers and the agencies. The parent-employers have changed their requirements for child carers as they now adapt to the formalities of recruiting a domestic worker through contractual arrangements set by the agencies. The *baby sitter*(s) themselves are transformed from young rural women into trained quasi-professional child minders. At the same time the agencies, have adapted the way they operate and market their services: from earlier face-to-face consultations to a phone-based or online information and engagement through websites.

### Changes in Kinship Relations

In contemporary households that employ a *baby sitter*, the unequal relationship between parent-employers and the *baby sitter* is ideally mediated by an agency via formal work agreements. The agreements stipulate the duties and responsibilities of the *baby sitter* and the parent-employers and in the process moderating the power relationship that exists within the household. This feature of contracting work has provided the *baby sitter(s)* with a certain degree of freedom and entitlement. In this way the quasi-professional appearance of the uniformed *baby sitter* combined with the existence of a formal work agreements signal a new regime of domestic work in Indonesia based on commercialised service and consumption. It also marks the demise of the older or customary practice of drawing on kinship relations and familial solidarity in Indonesian households to secure domestic child minding services. Nowadays in urban households with several or more domestic workers household employers must manage their domestic workers via formal work arrangements. Many contemporary urban middle-class households are now more like a corporation that requires a set of (domestic) staff to function than an old style extended family. The employer is a manager in the household who controls the relationships with and between workers, pay their salaries, manages their respective annual leave and bonuses, acts as a counsellor in times of personal troubles and monitors their performance on a daily basis.

### Persisting Unequal and Patron-Client Relationship

In Indonesia, the term *baby sitter* does not have quite the same meaning as that used in Western countries given that they usually live under the same roof as the children in their care. They share the house with parent-employers and, potentially, other members of the family. In this intimate context of emotional work tensions between them and their employers frequently arise. The inevitable growth of emotional bonds between the *baby sitter* and the child in her care, increases the complexity of the relationship between her and the parent-employers. The boundary between work and family in other words, becomes blurred for the *baby sitter* whose work responsibilities are more intimate than other domestic workers' tasks in a household. Many parent-employers require this emotional bond because they want to ensure that their children's safety and security is assured under a *baby sitter*'s care. But once an emotional bond between *baby sitter* and child is built, it can give rise to anxiety among parents, especially mothers who feel

jealous of the tight bonding between the *baby sitter* and the child and some guilt that others are doing the care work expected of them.

This thesis has demonstrated the complex dynamics between the *baby sitter* and their parent-employers, ranging from cooperation to conflict as a result of blurred boundaries between perfunctory domestic work and the emotional demands of care within a family. In a household with a *baby sitter*, the unequal relationship between employer and employee is displayed more evidently than those with an *mbak*. For example, the requirement for a *baby sitter* to wear a uniform when working may signal 'othering' within the household, and the public may also view them as an 'outsider' in the family.

The occupation of *baby sitter* is similar to other domestic workers in terms of continuous unequal, hierarchical, and patron-client relations with employers. The unequal relationship experienced by a *baby sitter* at work reflects the continuity of the patron-client relationship and power relations in a household containing domestic workers. In Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, vertical social relations are rooted in historical forms of relations (Reid, 1983) and modern domestic service continues to display inequality in households. Power relations have existed in Indonesian households historically and are manifested in relations between the householders and their domestic workers into contemporary settings. Inside the house, the employers are the ones who have control of the house and the *baby sitter* is financially dependent on them. Once a *baby sitter* starts to work in an urban household, she will engage in a constant negotiation as it is not always easy when both the employer and worker live under the same roof. The *baby sitter* is not only dependent on the salary paid by their employers, but are also subject to the employer's approval and permissions to utilise free time. Such dependency reflects a patron-client relationship in the household, where the employer does not only pay the salary of a *baby sitter*, but is responsible for their well-being when they are sick or have personal problems. At the same time, the *baby sitter* can seek support from their employer when they have personal difficulties. In these ways the informal nature of the patron-client relationship continues to exist in regulated, standardised and contractual work like *baby sitt*(ing). The fictive kinship at work is also experienced by the *baby sitter* as the agency staff, prior to the *baby sitter*'s departure to their new work places, repeatedly remind the *baby* sitter*(s)* to always listen to the parent-employer and be patient and

compliant, affirming the patron-client relationship in a household that the *baby sitter* must adapt.

In terms of relationship between the *baby sitter* and the agency, the patron-client relationship is evident in the recruitment process, particularly when the agency or *sponsor* lends money to the recruits to pay for their transport, accommodation and training fees. The journey to an agency followed by a training for weeks at the agency office – all paid in advance by the agency – creates dependencies among *baby sitter*(s).

### Changing Mothering Practice versus a Persisting Gender Order

One of the unintended effects of the rise of the professional *babysitter,* however, is the emergence of a discourse of resentment and conservative criticism around the appropriate role of women and particularly mothers in the domestic sphere. The resentment is a response to women who no longer staying at home, and subcontract their child care to *baby sitter*(s) or other paid workers. This leaves many working women feeling guilty about leaving their children in the care of others, expressed in Indonesian popular media as the *dilema ibu bekerja,* the working mother's dilemma. But, as demonstrated in this study, most women have little choice in this matter, because they have embraced the modern desire to pursue a career and generate additional income for the household to afford a better standard of living for their families. They try their best to provide the best care for their children by transferring their 'domestic responsibility' of child care to a skilled *baby sitter*. This *dilema* is an expression of inherent patriarchal views of a still male-dominated society that persists in positioning women as subordinate or obedient to their husbands. The *baby sitter*, whose role substitutes for the mother, is seen to endanger the gender order by enabling the modern/urban women to delegate their job as the main care takers of the children and the family as defined under the New Order ideology.

In fact, however, the *baby sitter* occupation enables the realisation of other aspirations: parents are able to continue working or cultivate themselves as middle class, children receive enough attention and are able to do their activities, and *baby sitter*(s) themselves are able to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. In addition, by hiring a *baby sitter*, women are trying to be better mothers by ensuring uninterrupted quality of care for their children. Men, on the other hand, enjoy an even greater distance from child-caring tasks. Both middle-class men and women can realise their family lifestyle without being preoccupied with caring for children, which is fulfilled at the cost of rural, less-privileged women and

their families. In this case, the *baby sitter* has allowed the middle-class family to reach their intergenerational aspirations. They also have provided yet another example of how poor rural families have helped—if not subsidised—wealthy urban families.

### Towards a Specialised Caring Occupation

In today's society, work tends to be specialised. People aspire to have specific skills and occupational specialisations rather than general knowledge or capacity. The middle class is more appreciative of exclusive and specific services provided by experts. It is expected that the quality of service delivered by experts will be the best. Domestic work is one of the services that has become more specialised. In previous decades domestic work was less differentiated and less specialised. In response to changing expectations, agencies have provided different categories of domestic worker such as: the *baby sitter*, cook, cleaner, gardener, family driver, and so on. The Kepmenaker No. 313/2015, as discussed in Chapter 5, has specified a series of standard competence for these categories of domestic work in Indonesia, including the *baby sitter*. The government and NGOs argued that through specification of work, domestic workers would no longer be exploited in their work places. Tasks could be delimited and distributed to several workers based on the type of services delivered. This position resonates with Anderson's (2000) research that proposes a separation between domestic and care work in order to protect workers.

The *baby sitter* is a type of domestic worker that has been specialised for a few decades. Their tasks focus exclusively on looking after one child in a family, ranging from health, cleanliness, diet, education, and socialisation with other people. The *baby sitter* has been trained, examined, and 'certified' by an accredited body endorsed by the Indonesian government. However, the *baby sitter* work standard has only recently been established by the Ministry of Manpower in order to produce qualified child carers in Indonesia, and in response to the regional plan to remove the barriers of labour movement within the region. It also provides for standardisation to ensure Indonesian domestic workers can compete with incoming foreign domestic workers. Thus the standardisation of domestic work in Indonesia would appear to be the result of the state's response to globalisation and more open borders among ASEAN members.

The emergence of the *baby sitter* as a new type of work marks a new regime of child rearing in Indonesia. Caring for the child, or care work in general, is now more formalised as it can be standardised and examined. The way a person bathes and cleans a child, talks,

cooks or plays is now more structured and measurable based on a certain approach. Child rearing is no longer determined by a personal approach but has become notionally uniform. People who perform care tasks are expected to meet these standards and those who do not fail to achieve the designation or role of carer. This new regime brings private life such as child caring in the family to public, by making a regulated child caring standard within the family. It cannot quantify the emotional aspects of care, however, for these are personal and, therefore, hard to measure and standardise.

Hiring a *baby sitter* seems to be a parent-employer's resolution for child care today, yet it is not entirely satisfactory. The formal standardisation of the *baby sitter*'s role and tasks is not widely known by the general public. Even if they do know the formal standards, people still question the quality of *baby sitter* services because, in practice, parent-employers find they are less skilled than the agency promised. Although the agency tries to make the occupation 'quasi-professional', many parent-employers complain about the *baby sitter*'s lack of experience or inability to care for their child. Their theoretical training is not a guarantee of good quality care, which relates to work experience and, in practice, one does not have to be a 'licensed' or trained *baby sitter* to provide infant care. An *mbak* with many years of child care experience could probably perform the job better. What is occurring within the occupation of *baby sitter* now is that this form of home-based work specialisation and professionalism is being challenged by the rigidities of standardisation. There is a mismatch between what parents expect and the care issues that matter to them with the government's concerns for standards of child care.

In contemporary Indonesia, the *baby sitter* occupation sheds light on the specialisation of domestic work, compared to the previously general practice. They do not perform other domestic tasks such as cleaning or cooking, except where it has involved the child under their supervision. The *baby sitter* is a formalised and specialised domestic care work which is represented most prominently by their uniform. Akin to the uniforms of hospital nurses, the *baby sitter*'s uniform symbolises the wearer's skills, reflecting that they have completed formal accredited training in care skills. This skill set has provided the *baby sitter* with a higher status than the *mbak,* for whom training has not been considered necessary to perform their duties. The training has been followed up with a subsequent on-the-job assessment that has tested and certified the *baby sitter*'s current skill level.

Thus, *baby sitter* are entitled to higher wages for these acquired skills. In this sense, the emergence of the *baby sitter* has signalled a new hierarchy within domestic work.

## *Baby Sitter*: An Intersection of Class Hierarchy and Gender

In contemporary urban Jakarta, as discussed in the thesis, the occupation of *baby sitter* is a social development that reflects the intersection of class aspiration, gender (in)equality, and contemporary transformations of family, domestic work and care. This thesis captures the transformation of work which involves the blending together of various elements – men and women, parents and children, the rich and the poor, urban and rural areas, formal and informal relations – in a market transaction. In a modern society where domestic work is based on contractual work relationships, the employer-employee represents what Wolf (1966) has argued as a single strand relationship in the society. However, as households are now mostly multi-stranded entities, marked by varying views and interests of its members (Rigg 2003), the arrival of a *baby sitter* in a household marks the mixture of single and multi-stranded relationship established within it.

Middle-class men and women have tried to reaffirm their middle-class identity by cultivating themselves and the future generation by hiring the *baby sitter*. In turn, the *baby sitter* has been upgrading her own status through acquiring skills, an education and greater access to urban middle-class lifestyles and consumption. Other organisations in society such as recruiting agencies and the state have set the middle-class care standards for Indonesian households through their worker's training. They have been shaping the configuration of urban households by determining the number of *baby sitter* and PRT in accordance with the number of children and family members and size of the house. In other words, the agency has indirectly produced the urban family's new identity: parents, children and a set of domestic workers such as the *baby sitter* and PRT.

For many mother-employers, the *baby sitter* is a new step towards the liberation of women from gendered family values, despite engendering some risks towards the children and family itself, in terms of security, family bonding, and kin relations. However, parent-employers can monitor and control their *baby sitter* and domestic workers in many ways, indicating the persistence of the unequal relationship between employer and employee. For the *baby sitter*, although they continue to experience subordination in the household like other domestic workers, they have more respect and options than domestic workers

previously. The skills training and formal working arrangement provided by agencies position them in a relatively more respectable position than the informally arranged domestic work in the past. Job descriptions that clearly list the tasks relating to their role protect them from exploitation and confusion. At the same time, they also have more flexibility and mobility compared to other contract-based workers such as factory workers, because their working hours change every day and their work requires them to be mobile following the child's activities. The role of agencies too has undergone a transformation; where previously they linked workers and parent-employers, now their work involves preparing workers as 'quasi-professional'. While these changes might cause some shock and discomfort among people, they reflect the sorts of social changes taking place in contemporary Indonesian society.

The *baby sitter* as an occupation sheds light on social and class hierarchies in Indonesian society. From the recruitment stage, the agency and their sponsors sort the new recruits based on their educational background and work experience before they decide if someone can become a *baby sitter*. While waiting at the agency office, the agency also positions the *baby sitter*'s room at the front area, with better facilities and views, rather than the PRT. This has signalled the hierarchy among domestic workers that favours the *baby sitter*. At the employer's house, the *baby sitter* sometimes gain a better position than PRT because their task to look after a baby requires them to be in a close proximity with the employer. In terms of wages, the *baby sitter* also gets more than of the PRT's. In the public arena, the *baby sitter* – especially in uniform – is recognised as a working class employee who works for a middle or upper class family. This reaffirms the patron-client relationship between the parent-employers and the *baby sitter* that still exists in the society, regardless the 'professional' work arrangements that the occupation entails.

## Thesis Contribution and Future Research

While many studies have discussed the country's migrant workers in overseas countries, the challenging complexities of domestic work within Indonesia has largely been ignored. The migration occurring within the country (from rural to urban areas) is less regulated and monitored compared to migration abroad. Contemporary work and employment practices see job information disseminated quickly through the internet and recruitment of workers done virtually. Moreover, there are no migration controls within the country,

which results in the non-recognition of some practices such as child trafficking. This thesis contributes to the discourse on contemporary domestic work in Indonesia, particularly current employment situations in urban areas that involve the dynamics of in-country migration, gender and economic inequality.

The contemporary demand for specific and higher quality services performed by domestic workers points to a rupture with past domestic work practices. This research contributes to the discourse on contemporary domestic work, particularly the specialisation and marketisation of domestic work. It provides new insights to analyse domestic work in contemporary changing society: single general type of domestic work occupation, different categories of specialised work within domestic work become the point of focus. By focusing on the care task within domestic work, this thesis has used the *baby sitter* to show some of the complexities that emerge in formalising and commodifying intimate work like child caring, which also contributes to the discourse on intimate work.

In addition, while other research on domestic work has focused on the hierarchy between employer and employee in a household, this thesis reveals a hierarchy within domestic work itself, particularly between the trained and formally recruited worker and the untrained and informally recruited one. Such layers might be observed where domestic work is conceived as a single and homogenous type of work. This thesis is also inspired by Anderson's (2000) called for the separation of tasks within domestic work in order to protect workers. Finally, this thesis provides insights for stakeholders in the drafting of policy that effectively protects domestic workers based on their unique problems and characteristics.

In conducting this research, I have discovered many aspects that could be explored further in terms of substance and methodology. As a highly gendered occupation, babysitting is performed predominantly by women. Consequently, the great majority of the respondents in this research are women. Similarly, the contributors to the discourse on domestic work are also primarily female academics, except for some male academics who focus on migration and brokering. In fact, during fieldwork I found that many men have been involved in establishing this occupation, through their work as a *sponsor*, agency owner or certifying officer and as aged carers. Related to this, future research might explore how male carers deal with their work as aged carers, including the household dynamics. More specifically, is the employer-employee relationship as intensive as that experienced in

child care work? Will the aged person's family intervene in the same way that parents and grandparents do? Ideally, such a research project would be framed to involve a male academic as co-researcher.

The methodology used in this study, utilising the researcher's child to make initial contact with *baby sitter* and parent-employers was effective and highlights the possibilities of participant observation in ethnographic research. However, a new set of insights and data might be offered by working in an agency, being a *baby sitter*, or hiring a baby *sitter*. Each role offers rich and varying perspectives on the field of social relations generated by the *baby sitter*.

The huge daily *macet* (traffic jam) in Jakarta provides part of the backdrop against which the *baby sitter* occupation has emerged. Indeed, the *macet* has changed the lifestyle of many families, including the relationship between parent and child, as offspring are trapped in traffic jams before and after school. Many activities are being undertaken in the car such as eating breakfast, sleeping, and doing homework. The *baby sitter* is mostly involved in supervising these activities. Exploring these everyday activities would contribute further to understanding the blurry demarcation of public and private by offering a new and nuanced view into the way care is being performed, as well as to the discourse on intimate work. Indeed, future ethnographic research on this topic experiencing *macet* first-hand may be used as a methodology to understand how intimate work – like child care – is performed while being mobile.

Lastly, the findings of this study on the *baby sitter* offer fruitful comparisons with other types of occupation that require intimacy and emotional attachment, such as nurses or pre-school teachers. Conducting similar research on domestic workers in different Asian countries could offer an important comparative perspective. For example, India's highly divided society based on class and caste would provide a fruitful research opportunity. Alternatively, similar research could be undertaken in countries that have used foreign migrant workers as *au pairs*, such as Sweden, where the vertical relationship in society is not as pronounced as Indonesia but is being challenged by different citizenship and nationalities.

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