

The Dynamics of Gender Power Relationships and the Potential for Domestic Violence: A Case Study of Women in the Kepanjen Region

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzes how gender power relations shape domestic violence against women in Kepanjen. It uses a qualitative explanatory case study approach with four victims or survivors of domestic violence. The results show that unequal power relations emerge through four forms of power: structural, relational, institutional, and symbolic. This inequality is evident in the domestic burden borne entirely by wives, the minimal involvement of husbands, and cultural and religious legitimacy that positions women as the submissive party. The power relation patterns found include direct domination, passive domination, and domination based on cultural and religious values, all of which increase the likelihood of physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence. Victims understand that domestic violence is a form of injustice, but social pressure, responsibilities as mothers, and fear of stigma make it difficult for them to leave the relationship. Victims' responses vary, ranging from silence and submission as a coping strategy to verbal or physical resistance when the violence crosses the line. Overall, this study demonstrates that domestic violence is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures that influence how women experience, interpret, and respond to violence. These findings underscore the importance of gender-based interventions and social support for survivors.

KEYWORDS: Gender Power Relations; Domestic Violence; Women; Patriarchy; Kepanjen.

I. INTRODUCTION (SIZE 10 & BOLD)

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Domestic violence is one of the social issues that remains a serious concern in Indonesia, especially because of its complex impact on women as the most vulnerable group. Domestic violence does not only involve physical violence, but also includes psychological, sexual, and economic violence. In many cases, the root of this violence cannot be separated from the unequal power relations between men and women within the family. Gender power relations are key to understanding how social and cultural norms, values, and practices create conditions that enable DV. According to a report by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2023), more than 75% of cases of violence against women occur in the personal sphere, particularly within the household. This situation shows that the home, which should be the safest place of refuge, can instead become a space where violence is reproduced, especially for women.

In the context of Indonesian society, power relations within the household are strongly influenced by traditional and religious norms that are deeply rooted in the culture. Men are often positioned as the head of the family and the main decision-maker, creating a clear gender hierarchy. Women, on the other hand, are often burdened with dual roles that include responsibilities as caregivers, domestic servants, and economic supporters, yet they do not have the same authority in decision-making. The issue of violence against women in the household is closely related to gender power relations. In societies that still adhere to patriarchal systems, the relationship between men and women is often unequal. Connell (2021) states that the gender system is shaped by three main structures, namely power relations, division of labor, and symbolic affective structures. These three structures systematically place women in a subordinate position, both in the domestic and public spheres.

Gender power relations refer to social constructs that regulate the roles, positions, and responsibilities of men and women in various spheres of life, including the family, society, and the state. These relations are not formed naturally, but are produced and reproduced through social, cultural, religion norms, and the prevailing legal system. In a patriarchal system, this structure benefits men by placing them as the dominant authority in decision-making, control over resources, and legitimacy over moral and social authority. The inequality in this relationship is evident not only in the distribution of economic and political power, but also in women's ability to voice their opinions, fight for their rights, and find a safe space in relationships, especially within the household.

Within Foucault's framework, power is not merely understood as repressive domination of one party over another, but as a

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network of relationships that spreads and operates through discourse, practices, and social institutions. Power works by disciplining bodies, shaping subjects, and determining what is considered truth (Foucault, 2021). In the context of the household, these forms of power are manifested in unwritten rules about female modesty, wife devotion, and silencing the voices of victims. Therefore, it is important to analyze how power is produced, exercised, and resisted by women in domestic relationships, especially in communities that are still strongly influenced by traditional gender norms.

This imbalance of power is the root cause of domestic violence. Violence occurs not only in physical form, but also psychologically, economically, and sexually. Galtung (2018) refers to this form as structural violence, which is a condition in which social and cultural systems create barriers for individuals to achieve welfare or justice. Violence experienced by women in the domestic sphere is often not recognized as a violation because it has been legitimized by cultural and religious norms. In local contexts such as Kepanjen, Malang Regency, patriarchal, customary, and religious values often intermingle, making women vulnerable to violence and limiting their ability to fight back or leave unhealthy relationships. Research by Dhawan & Bhasin (2024) shows that traditional gender norms in West Bengal, India, are an obstacle to the implementation of the PWDVA law, even though it is quite progressive in regulatory terms, due to the strong cultural resistance that places domestic affairs in the private sphere. A similar finding was reported by Soumah & Diop (2020) in Dakar, Senegal, where domestic power relations are reinforced by customary values that uphold male dominance, compounded by weak legal literacy and social stigma against women who report violence. Meanwhile, Mshweshwe (2020) emphasizes that domestic violence in South Africa is rooted in a culture of hegemonic masculinity, where violence is seen as a legitimate means for men to enforce household discipline.

From these three studies, it can be concluded that domestic violence is a global phenomenon rooted in patriarchal social and cultural structures. Although the contexts and approaches used vary, they all emphasize that gender power relations play an important role in creating and perpetuating violence against women. However, a research gap exists because most of these studies focus on areas outside Indonesia and have yet to address specific local contexts, such as semi-urban areas like Kepanjen, which have their own cultural, social, and economic characteristics. In addition, the approach used in previous studies generally highlights legal aspects or general perceptions, without specifically exploring how gender power relations are constructed in everyday household practices and how this increases the potential for violence against women. This fails to capture the forms of power that operate symbolically, covertly, and are even considered normal in household relationships.

In the Kepanjen area of Malang Regency, the phenomenon of domestic violence is often unidentified or even hidden because it is considered a private family matter. Many women who experience violence choose to remain silent due to social pressure, economic dependence, and low literacy in legal and gender issues. Traditional values that are still deeply rooted today also make it difficult for women to speak up, even when they are in situations that are physically and mentally dangerous. This is exacerbated by limited access to protection services and a lack of context-based studies that can be used as a reference in formulating policies or social interventions. The phenomenon of domestic violence in the Kepanjen area of Malang Regency shows a complexity that is unique compared to other regions. The annual report of the Malang Regency Integrated Service Center for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A) noted that during 2023, there were 87 cases of violence against women, with more than 60% being cases of domestic violence, particularly physical and psychological violence (P2TP2A, 2023). Many of these cases originated in the Kepanjen District, but most were not officially reported because the victims felt ashamed, afraid, or believed that reporting would not change the situation.

A study by Azizah & Yulianti (2022) found that patriarchal values in the southern Malang region, including Kepanjen, encourage women to remain silent in the face of domestic violence. This is reinforced by social norms that view women as guardians of household harmony, so that victims are blamed when they reveal the violence they have experienced. This condition shows that in the local context of Kepanjen, violence against women is not only an individual problem, but is also closely related to social and cultural structures and power imbalances in the household, which have not been studied in depth and directly from the victims' perspective. Therefore, this research is very important and urgent. Academically, this research contributes to filling the gap in local studies that link power relations theory with the real experiences of women in the household. Practically, the findings from this research can be used as a basis for developing policies and programs for the protection of women that are more responsive to local needs. This research is also expected to empower women victims of domestic violence so that they are able to understand their position in the power relations structure, as well as to increase collective awareness in society about the importance of gender equality and the elimination of domestic violence as part of social justice.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with an explanatory case study design. This design was chosen based on the research objective, which is to explore in depth the dynamics of gender power relations and their potential for domestic violence, particularly against women in the Kepanjen area. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to capture the subjective meanings of participants' experiences and understand the social and cultural contexts surrounding their lives. This is in line with Yin (2016), who states that case studies are a research method used to investigate social phenomena in

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depth in the context of real life, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly visible. Case studies are considered appropriate if researchers want to understand complex and contextual phenomena, involving various data sources such as interviews, observations, and documentation.

Yin (2016) emphasizes that case studies can be descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory, depending on the research objectives. This study uses explanatory case studies, which Yin (2016) describes as a type of case study used to answer research questions that begin with "why" and "how." This type of study not only describes a phenomenon but also attempts to find the underlying cause-and-effect relationship behind that phenomenon.

Creswell (2018:186) defines research participants as individuals who are involved in the research and provide information through their personal experiences directly related to the phenomenon being studied. There were four participants in this study, all of whom were victims or survivors of domestic violence, namely TR, RT, SC, and MW. The author has used initials to protect the participants' identities. The following is the participant profile:

Table 1. Research Participant Profiles

Initials	Participant Category	Age	Address	Marital Status
TR	Victim of Domestic Violence	48	Penarukan	Married
RT	Survivor of Domestic Violence	31	Curungrejo	Living Separation
SC	Victim of Domestic Violence	32	Kedung pedaringan	Married
MW	Victim of Domestic Violence	26	Curungrejo	Married

The four participants in the table above have different family backgrounds that influence the dynamics of their lives. Tina, 48, who has two daughters, plays a dual role as a mother and protector for her children in the face of domestic violence. Rosita, 31, who is un d and has no children, faces domestic violence with personal burdens and no children to care for. Meanwhile, Mrs. Zalfa, aged 32, who has three sons, demonstrates resilience in fulfilling her role as a mother amidst highly stressful conditions. Mrs. Melati, 26 years old with one daughter, strives to ensure the safety and well-being of her young child. These differing family circumstances illustrate the variety of experiences, coping strategies, and forms of responsibility faced by each participant in the context of domestic violence in Kepanjen District, Malang.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Form Gender Power Relations Experienced by Women in Households in the Kepanjen Area

Concept form relation power refers to the form concrete gender inequality that emerges through action real, practice everyday, as well as distribution role in family. Oakley (2024) explains that form relation power looks in the gender division of labor or distribution Work gender-based which places women in the realm domestic and male in the realm public. Relations unequal power This can analyzed through four indicator main according to framework Connell's theory is power structural, power relational, power institutional, and power symbolic. Following description details findings research on forms relation Gender power experienced by women in Kepanjen:

a. Structural Power

Structural power refers to distribution source power and position social that is not evenly between men and women (Connell, 2021). Structural power appear through inequality distribution work and taking decision in House stairs.

Based on the results of interviews with Mrs. RT as victims of violence, who stated that:

During marriage stairs, all work House ladder fully I'm the one who does it. Starting from sweeping until prepare food, while ex-husband after returning home Work direct playing with cellphone and not Once help work House stairs. (RT: 2025)

This statement demonstrates an unfair division of labor within the household. All domestic work falls to the wife as part of traditional gender roles, while husbands tend to be passive and uninvolved. This places women in the position of having to handle

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all household chores, even though they also have other responsibilities. This pattern reflects a patriarchal culture that still considers domestic work to be women's responsibility.

Similar findings emerged for Mrs. SC, Mrs. TR, and Mrs. MW. All four victims performed all household chores without their husbands' assistance. This similarity suggests that this inequality is not just an individual issue, but part of the prevailing social patterns in their communities.

b. Relational Power

Relational power describes the power dynamics that occur in daily interactions between husband and wife, both in terms of decision-making, role distribution, and emotional communication within the household. In the communication patterns of wives and husbands in resolving household problems in the Kepanjen area, they are not equal, this statement is proven by the following interview results:

At the beginning of my marriage, I always communicated if there were family problems, but my husband's response was not to want to know and instead got emotional (angry). So from then until now, if there are problems in the household, I do not communicate with my husband, and I always decide for myself if there are problems. (TR: 2025)

The statement above indicates that the husband does not provide a safe and equal communication space. The husband's anger functions as an emotional control mechanism that indirectly silences the wife. From a relational perspective, this action not only hinders the dialogue process but also creates conditions in which the wife learns to avoid communication to prevent conflict. Thus, the husband's relational power is evident through the communication climate that leaves the wife with no room to express her opinion or negotiate within the household.

Overall, the interactions between husbands and female victims of domestic violence in Kepanjen do not demonstrate an equal relationship. The husband tends to display a dominant attitude by refusing to actively participate in household matters, but still retains control over certain decisions. Furthermore, when the victim expresses an opinion, the husband ignores and disrespects it. When the victim expresses a differing view, the husband chooses silence, indifference, anger, and leaves the house, thus preventing the problem from being resolved properly. This power operates subtly through the dynamics of daily interactions, but has a significant impact in limiting the wife's role in communication and problem-solving.

c. Institutional Power

Institutional power describes the forms of power inherent in social, cultural, and religious systems that influence patterns of relationships within the household. Social institutions play a role in maintaining patriarchal power structures through moral messages and unwritten rules that direct women's behavior. This is evident in Mrs. MW's statement, which states:

There is pressure from my family that I must obey my husband, obey him, and not disobey him. From a religious perspective, a wife is obligated to obey her husband (MW: 2025).

This statement illustrates that the legitimacy of a husband's power is often reinforced by values derived from family and religious teachings. In this context, the family serves as an institution that instills the value of women's obedience to their husbands, while religion serves as a moral basis to reinforce the wife's obligation to submit to the head of the family. These institutional values reinforce the structure of obedience that wives must uphold, so that submissive behavior is not merely a personal demand but is considered a moral and religious obligation. Within the framework of institutional power, these rules serve as a means of legitimizing the husband's dominance.

Based on the overall interview results above, it can be concluded that institutional power operates through social, cultural, and religious legitimacy, which positions men as household leaders and holders of ultimate authority. These institutions reinforce patriarchal structures by setting standards of obedience for women. As a result, victims often maintain unhealthy relationships because they feel a moral and social obligation to remain obedient, patient, and submissive. Institutional power is thus a crucial factor in maintaining gender inequality in the household and minimizing victims' opportunities to escape violent situations.

d. Symbolic Power

Symbolic power reflects a form of power that operates through language, symbols, and cultural values that subtly place women in a subordinate position (Connell, 2021). One form of symbolic power is evident in the experience of Mrs. SC, who said:

I am often positioned as inferior by being called certain things, for example, what often happens is that when we have an argument, my husband often says I am stupid and can't keep my mouth shut (SC: 2025).

Comments like these contain symbolic judgments that target women's intellectual abilities, as if their opinions and thoughts are irrational or unworthy of consideration. Furthermore, the phrase "can't keep my mouth shut" reflects an attempt to control a wife's behavior and communication through standards set by her husband. These messages aim to make the victim hesitate to speak or express her opinion, thus

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limiting dialogue not structurally, but through symbolic pressure that impacts the victim's self-confidence. This pattern demonstrates how symbolic power flows through seemingly simple forms of communication that serve to silence women's voices.

A consistent pattern was observed among all domestic violence victims in Kepanjen: husbands used derogatory terms such as "spoiled child," "stupid," "uneducated," "unable to raise children," and even physical insults such as "fat." These labels serve to define women as less competent, irrational, or unworthy of respect. Beyond demeaning, these verbal symbols place women in a lower social position and limit their freedom of expression.

Gender power relations within households in the Kepanjen community demonstrate inequalities built through long-standing social and cultural structures. Women in Kepanjen demonstrate strong patterns of inequality. This inequality is evident through four forms of power relations: structural, relational, institutional, and symbolic, which collectively form a relationship pattern that positions women as subordinate within the household. Structural power is most readily apparent in the unequal division of domestic labor. Women perform all household chores, from childcare and cooking to laundry and cleaning, to ensuring all family needs are met. Meanwhile, husbands play no role in domestic work and tend to be passive. This situation demonstrates that gender roles have been strongly institutionalized, making it normal for women to shoulder the entire domestic burden even though they also have activities outside the home or contribute economically to the family. In this context, the social structure places women in a subordinate position because they work double duty, in both the domestic and public spheres, without a fair division of labor.

Furthermore, unequal power relations also manifest themselves in the form of relational power. Women face situations in which they must regulate their responses and behavior to avoid conflict or violence. The decision to remain silent, give in, or suppress emotions is not an acceptance of their husband's behavior, but rather a coping strategy in a stressful relationship. In many situations, women choose to adjust their attitudes and words to avoid angering their husbands. This leaves women trapped in an emotional control mechanism, where they constantly monitor their husbands' behavior to determine how to act to maintain a safe situation. When self-control is exercised continuously, women lose the space to express their own views, feelings, and desires. Thus, relational power demonstrates a condition in which women are not only oppressed structurally through an unequal division of labor, but also emotionally through demands that they maintain household stability at the expense of personal comfort and freedom.

Institutional power also reinforces inequality through prevailing norms, religious values, and culture in Kepanjen. Norms such as "wives must obey," "women should not contradict their husbands," or "household affairs are a disgrace" serve as tools of social control that keep women in a subordinate position. Connell (2021) calls this structure a gender regime, a system of values produced by social institutions such as religion, custom, the extended family, and the community. These values provide moral and spiritual justification for men to regulate their partners' lives, including emotional, economic, and sexual matters. When women feel they lack the social legitimacy to reject or resist for fear of being perceived as wrong, sinful, or disobedient, social institutions have succeeded in deeply regulating their behavior. Thus, institutional power forces women to accept injustice as normal and inevitable.

Symbolic power further reinforces men's position as heads of households, even though women actually make daily decisions, manage finances, and bear domestic responsibilities. Connell (2021) calls this condition part of symbolic relations of gender, namely power relations legitimized through symbols, language, and social meanings that place men in a superior position. In households in Kepanjen, the husband remains considered the highest authority even though he is not involved in domestic duties or decision-making within the household. When a wife's decision does not align with her husband's wishes, the husband remains the one who determines whether the decision is right or wrong. This situation demonstrates how women bear the greatest responsibility yet lack legitimacy as holders of power within the household. Thus, symbolic power creates the paradox that women work more but remain subordinate.

The gender power relations experienced by women in households in Kepanjen reflect patriarchal patterns that operate through four dimensions: structural, relational, institutional, and symbolic. Structural power forces women to bear an unequal workload, relational power forces them to continually adjust their attitudes to maintain security, institutional power binds them through social values and pressures, and symbolic power ensures that authority remains with the husband even when he is not performing his role in practice. These four forms of power reinforce each other and create inequalities that place women in subordinate positions and are vulnerable to various forms of violence. Thus, gender power relations in the victims' households in Kepanjen do not exist in isolation but are the result of social and cultural structures that are continuously reproduced in everyday life. This aligns with Connell's (2021) gender order theory, which explains that gender inequality is formed through repeated social practices and legitimized by cultural norms, institutions, and symbols, thus placing men as dominant and women as structured in subordinate positions.

Gender Power Relations Patterns Experienced by Women in Households in the Kepanjen Area

Gender power relations patterns refer to the mechanisms, recurring structures, and ways in which these inequalities are maintained systemically. Hochschild & Machung explain the second shift pattern, a recurring mechanism that keeps women bearing the domestic burden even though they also work (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). An interview with Mrs. MW revealed a pattern of direct domination, in which the husband maintains power through anger and leaving the house to deny his wife's opinions space. She stated:

If I give a suggestion, my husband gets angry and leaves the house (MW: 2025).

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This statement illustrates a relationship pattern in which the husband consciously uses emotional expression as a tool to maintain control. Leaving the house represents a rejection of communication, leaving the wife with no space to express her views or resolve issues. This places the wife in a position of constantly waiting and adapting to her husband's decisions, creating an unequal power relationship. In such situations, women are forced to withhold their opinions because any form of expression has the potential to trigger anger. Thus, direct domination not only impacts the communication process but also limits women's ability to make household decisions.

In Mrs. SC's case, the pattern of passive power relations is very apparent. Her husband rarely exerts explicit control, instead choosing to remain silent or ignore issues to avoid discussing them. Mrs. SC stated that:

I mostly solve problems, while my husband just follows along, because he's not very good at household matters. Furthermore, communication between me and him is also lacking, resulting in an unequal communication pattern (SC: 2025).

Meanwhile, an interview with Mrs. RT also revealed that a pattern of passive dominance persisted in her household. She stated that:

My husband never offered solutions and remained silent, as if he didn't care (RT: 2025).

This prolonged silence indicates that the husband uses indifference as a control mechanism. The woman is left to face household problems alone, so the entire emotional burden automatically falls on the wife. Within the context of power relations, the husband's silence prevents the woman from accessing emotional support or the opportunity to share responsibilities. This passive dominance is often not considered violence, but it creates significant emotional stress for the wife.

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This statement indicates that her husband's control is not expressed directly, but rather manifests through indifference and avoidance of household responsibilities. Because her husband is not involved in problem-solving, Mrs. SC must make almost all decisions herself, but is still not perceived as having an equal position. The husband remains considered the leader of the family, while the wife simply performs daily tasks without full respect. This unequal communication pattern demonstrates that the husband maintains his dominance passively, by refusing to engage in dialogue and providing neither emotional support nor equal participation. This situation forces women to constantly adapt without the opportunity to negotiate, thus reinforcing the power imbalance and creating an unfair household relationship.

An interview with Mrs. TR revealed a pattern of domination influenced by cultural and religious factors. Mrs. TR stated:

My family always tells me to be patient and understand my husband's situation because he is the head of the family. From my own religion, I am obligated to obey my husband (TR: 2025).

This statement demonstrates how cultural and religious norms are used as a basis for legitimacy for husbands to maintain their dominant positions. The extended family and social environment exert pressure on women to accept their husbands' treatment and not resist, as if obedience is a moral obligation. In this context, the husband's power relations depend not only on daily interactions but also on institutionalized social values. These norms make women feel guilty when they show resistance, thus keeping victims in subordinate positions despite emotional suffering. This social structure reinforces unequal power relations and becomes a barrier for women to leave abusive relationships.

The conclusions from interviews with four victims indicate that gender power relations in households in Kepanjen operate through three main interconnected mechanisms. Direct domination manifests itself through anger, neglect, and leaving the home. Passive domination is evident through the husband's silence, which limits communication and women's access to emotional support and decision-making. Cultural and religious domination is evident through family and community pressures that require women to obey and yield to their husbands. These three mechanisms create unequal power relations, reinforce women's subordination, and create greater opportunities for domestic violence.

Patterns of gender power relations within households in the Kepanjen area appear to be constructed through repeated practices of domination. These power relations manifest themselves in the forms of direct domination, passive domination, and cultural-religious domination. These three forms of domination are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing, creating unequal relationships in which women conform, minimize personal expression, and suppress opinions to avoid domestic tension. These patterns demonstrate that a husband's power is not merely expressed through explicit actions, but operates through seemingly normal daily activities that actually profoundly regulate a wife's behavior.

In patterns of direct domination, emotional control such as anger, a harsh tone of voice, a refusal to dialogue, or withdrawing when the wife's opinion differs appears to be a means of ensuring that the husband's will remains the final decision. These behaviors lead women in Kepanjen to refrain from expressing their views, reduce their courage to express themselves, and place themselves in a cautious position to

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avoid arousing tension. These practices create a hierarchical relationship, where women's voices lack equal weight in household decision-making processes. This direct domination aligns with Foucault's (2020) thinking, which explains that power operates through mechanisms of bodily and behavioral discipline. Expressions of anger, high-pitched intonation, and even threats to leave a situation are forms of disciplinary power that encourage others to regulate their own actions. Through this pattern, women become subjects who "discipline themselves" by avoiding actions deemed likely to provoke their husbands' anger. Thus, direct domination is not merely a momentary act, but an instrument of power that shapes patterns of obedience and control in domestic relationships.

In addition to direct domination, forms of power are also evident through passive domination, manifested in the husband's silence, unresponsiveness, and indifference to household problems. When a husband withdraws from communication and avoids dialogue, the woman must take over solving household problems alone. Prolonged silence creates a stressful psychological situation, as women have no room to negotiate, and every problem-solving initiative seems to have to be undertaken alone. This situation forces women to suppress their emotional needs and learn to accept unequal communication as normal. This aligns with Foucault's (2020) theory of micropower, which emphasizes that power exists not only in explicit actions but also in "inaction." Silence, distance, or unresponsiveness are forms of power that produce uncertainty and place the other party in a waiting position. Foucault asserts that power operates through seemingly small and everyday actions, yet can create a powerful controlling effect. The husband's silence in this context becomes an instrument of power that regulates women's behavior through invisible emotional pressure, making passive domination one of the most effective forms of power in shaping emotional dependence.

Furthermore, cultural-religious dominance reinforces the persistence of the two previous patterns. Family advice, social norms, and societal views position women as the ones responsible for maintaining household harmony, while husbands are positioned as unchallenged family leaders. Women are encouraged to be patient, tolerate their husbands' behavior, and prioritize family integrity, even at the expense of their own emotional well-being. This mindset allows women to persist despite unequal power relations, believing that resistance to their husbands is morally and socially unacceptable. This cultural-religious dominance is reinforced by Walby's (2019) theory of patriarchy, which explains that in a patriarchal family structure, men are placed at the pinnacle of moral, spiritual, and social authority. This forces women to submit to their husbands' behavior not only because of personal relationships but also because of institutional pressures that demand they maintain household harmony, even at the expense of their own well-being. The relationship patterns in Kepanjen demonstrate how religious and customary norms reinforce this patriarchal structure, leading women to perceive obedience as a moral obligation that is difficult to negotiate.

These three patterns demonstrate that gender power relations within households in Kepanjen are shaped by mutually supportive daily habits, emotional dynamics, and cultural values. Each pattern demonstrates a different way of regulating women's behavior, whether through emotional pressure, silence that stifles dialogue, or social norms that restrict freedom of movement. This analysis demonstrates that gender inequality is not simply a matter of individual husbands' actions, but rather part of a relational and cultural system that is closely integrated with everyday life practices. This aligns with Foucault's (2020) thinking, which asserts that power operates through small, repetitive practices in everyday life, forming seemingly natural patterns of obedience.

Understanding Domestic Violence

Women's interpretations of domestic violence among four victims in Kepanjen indicate that the experience of violence is understood as a form of injustice that limits freedom and harms women physically and psychologically. Although some in their communities still consider violence normal, especially psychological, sexual, and economic violence, interviews and observations show that the victims are aware that violence should not be viewed as a normal part of domestic relationships. This interpretation is strongly influenced by personal experiences, social environment, and the victims' understanding of themselves and their position within the family.

Mrs. MW stated that while violence is considered normal by society, she personally considers it unfair and detrimental to her as a wife:

According to her parents and society, it's normal and natural. However, for me, it remains unfair and unnatural, because I feel disadvantaged as a wife (MW: 2025).

The victim's statement demonstrates a clash between the views of her social environment and her personal awareness. On the one hand, the victim grew up in an environment that considered domestic violence a part of domestic life, especially less visible forms of violence such as psychological, sexual, and economic violence. Therefore, the violence was considered something that wives normally experience and should be accepted patiently. However, on the other hand, the victim's experiences made her understand that such treatment is detrimental and should not be normalized. Furthermore, the victim feels that the violence has robbed her of her sense of security and freedom as a woman.

Mrs. MW's interpretation of her experiences demonstrates a growing critical awareness that violence is not part of normal domestic life. The victim began to understand that she has the right to be respected and treated appropriately. This awareness became a form of inner resistance against cultural values that have oppressed women. However, despite recognizing this injustice, Mrs. MW still found it difficult to leave the unhealthy relationship due to strong social norms that blame women for being unable to maintain a household. Apart from that, the

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main factor that causes the victim to stay in this relationship is the child, where the victim explained that his child must continue to receive affection from his father.

Meanwhile, Mrs. SC explained that violence cannot be considered normal because a household should be a safe and harmonious place:

It's not normal, because a household should be harmonious, harmonious, and the safest place. Every household certainly has problems, but not all problems can be resolved through domestic violence (SC: 2025).

Mrs. SC demonstrated a more critical understanding of the meaning of a household. For her, violence cannot be part of the solution. She emphasized that the household should be a safe place for family members. Her statement emphasized that conflict can occur, but violence cannot be the solution. This demonstrates her critical attitude and rejection of a culture that condones domestic violence.

Despite knowing that the violence she experienced was abnormal, Mrs. SC chose to persist. Her primary reason was for her children; she did not want them to lose their father's love, as happened to her first child from a previous marriage. Her experience as a single parent made her not want her children to experience the same thing again. Furthermore, Mrs. SC feared a second divorce due to concerns about societal perceptions and the stigma of being a "twice widow." This social pressure is what makes her feel that staying is easier than facing social judgment if she divorces again.

Interviews with the victims revealed that all victims shared a common understanding that domestic violence is unnatural, unfair, and detrimental to them as women. While each victim interpreted the violence differently based on their personal experiences, all recognized that the violence created emotional distress, restricted freedom, disrupted harmony, and caused profound trauma. They also demonstrated an awareness that violence cannot be considered a "normal" part of marriage, even though society and culture often encourage women to accept and condone their husbands' behavior.

Even though victims recognized the injustice they were experiencing, they still struggled to leave their domestic relationships. They remained because of cultural pressures, responsibilities as mothers, and concerns about public opinion. Their social environment and emotional dependence also reinforced their desire to remain. Interviews revealed that the victims did possess a critical understanding of the violence they experienced. However, their social environment, cultural pressures, emotional dependence, and concerns about their children were significant barriers to leaving these unhealthy relationships. This situation illustrates the dilemma faced by female victims of domestic violence in Kepanjen: they recognize that violence is unjust, but the decision to leave is not easy due to feelings of responsibility and environmental pressures.

Women's understanding of domestic violence in Kepanjen demonstrates a growing critical awareness that acts of violence, whether physical, psychological, sexual, or economic, constitute a form of injustice that limits women's freedom as individuals. Violence is understood not simply as conflict within marriage, but as actions that create insecurity, disrupt family harmony, and cause deep emotional trauma. Women see that violence has removed the safe space that every family member should have, so that the household is no longer a sanctuary but rather a space filled with emotional stress.

Women's understandings are also shaped by repeated emotional experiences. Violence creates fear, uncertainty, restraint, and a loss of self-control. Women understand that violence limits their freedom to make decisions and fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. For some women, violence is not only physically painful but also erodes their identity and self-esteem. They recognize that violence robs them of their right to be respected and treated humanely. This awareness develops into an understanding that there is no justification for domestic violence.

However, women's interpretations of violence often clash with prevailing social norms. Within the local cultural context, there is still a widespread understanding that certain forms of violence, particularly emotional, sexual, and economic violence, are a "normal" part of domestic dynamics. This cultural understanding often leads women to delay recognizing their victimhood, as they find themselves in a tug-of-war between their personal awareness of injustice and social pressures urging them to be patient, yield, and maintain family unity. This clash between personal experiences and social norms leads women to rationalize their husbands' behavior or view violence as something to be accepted. This phenomenon aligns with Gramsci's (2020) theory of hegemony, which explains how patriarchal social norms shape the acceptance of domestic violence as normal, while simultaneously fostering women's critical awareness to reject the legitimacy of these norms.

However, critical interpretations of violence do not necessarily enable women to leave unhealthy relationships. These interpretations are often hampered by emotional dependency, considerations for children, and cultural pressures that position women as the guardians of domestic harmony. Women understand violence as injustice, yet they still feel a strong dilemma when faced with the choice between leaving a relationship or maintaining a family. This situation demonstrates that the meaning of violence does not stand alone; it is always intertwined with the social, moral, and emotional context that shapes women's position within the family.

Overall, women's interpretations of domestic violence in Kepanjen demonstrate a critical awareness that violence is unnatural and extremely harmful. However, this awareness must confront the power of social norms, limited support, and unequal power relations. These interpretations demonstrate how women perceive violence as an act of control that diminishes autonomy, diminishes dignity, and closes off the safe space they should have within the household.

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Women's Responses to Domestic Violence

Female victims of domestic violence in Kepanjen exhibit diverse responses to the violence they experience. Women's responses to domestic violence are influenced by the intensity of the violence, the victim's psychological state, previous experiences, and the strength or weakness of social support in their environment. Although some victims attempt to fight back, limited support and oppressive cultural norms keep many women trapped in passive responses as a form of self-protection.

Mrs. MW explained that she fights back when the violence is severe, but chooses to remain silent when it's only verbal:

I resist and fight back when the violence is severe. But if I'm tired and the violence isn't severe (just talk), then I just keep quiet (MW: 2025).

Mrs. MW's response is situational; she often chooses to remain silent and give in when her husband is angry, especially when the violence involves shouting or harsh words. Silence is the safest way to defuse the situation, as resisting only makes her husband more angry. Interviews also revealed that Mrs. MW was not entirely passive. When the violence she experienced exceeded the limits of tolerance, particularly when her husband engaged in physical violence or made baseless accusations, she began to fight back. The victim also admitted to verbally retaliating or rejecting her husband's actions when her emotions reached their peak. This suggests that her response was influenced by the level of threat and pressure she felt.

Meanwhile, Mrs. SC demonstrated a different response, choosing to fight back and boldly seek help when violence occurred:

When I was with my first husband, I was silent and didn't dare fight back. But with my current husband, I fought back to defend myself. I even asked for help from my neighbor, a police officer (SC: 2025).

Based on the interview, Mrs. SC demonstrated an active response to violence perpetrated by her husband. The victim didn't simply remain silent or avoid it, but bravely fought back when she felt her husband's actions had crossed the line. In some situations, Mrs. SC even took concrete steps by seeking help, either from her neighbor, a police officer, or from her husband's superior at his previous workplace. Her courage to report the violence didn't just arise from nowhere, but was shaped by painful experiences in her previous marriage, where she also experienced violence. These experiences made her more sensitive and unwilling to relapse into the same pattern of violence. Thus, Mrs. SC's response reflects a stronger pattern of resistance than other victims, where she not only endured but also tried to stop the violence through open action, seeking protection, and seeking change in the relationship.

Mrs. RT chose to remain silent because she was afraid that fighting back would worsen the situation:

If I stayed silent, it was because I couldn't fight back. Besides, if I fought back, I was afraid my ex-husband would get even more angry and the violence would escalate (RT: 2025).

From the interview, Mrs. RT's response to domestic violence tended to be passive and forced. When arguments broke out or when her husband began to display abusive behavior, Mrs. RT preferred to remain silent or accept the treatment without resistance. Fear made her choose to restrain herself and not retaliate against her husband's abuse, because she believed that if she fought back, the situation would only worsen and spiral out of control.

Despite experiencing frequent violence, Mrs. RT maintained her marriage and never sought help, considering domestic problems a disgrace. Her fear of her husband's reaction led her to sacrifice her own comfort and feelings to avoid further arguments. Thus, Mrs. RT's response was a way of surviving in a state of helplessness and minimal support, which made it difficult for her to break out of the cycle of violence. Unlike other victims, Mrs. TR now shows a shift from a passive to an active response:

At first, I kept quiet, but now I fight back and have even tried to ask for solutions and help from my husband's relatives (TR: 2025).

Mrs. TR's response demonstrates a shift from a passive to an active strategy. Early in her marriage, the victim chose to remain silent despite experiencing psychological, sexual, and economic violence. However, over time and through repeated violence, she was no longer able to cope. Now, the victim is more courageous in resisting and trying to find solutions, including seeking help from her husband's family. However, the support she receives is minimal, as she is only advised to be patient and obedient for the sake of the household's integrity. This shift from a passive to an active response indicates that Mrs. TR is not completely resigned, but rather is trying to defend herself as her situation becomes increasingly unstable. Her actions are influenced by increasing psychological pressure and her desire to prevent her family from continuing to be in conflict.

Based on interviews with four victims of domestic violence in Kepanjen, it can be concluded that women respond differently to the violence they experience, depending on their psychological condition, past experiences, and the level of pressure they face. Two victims, Mrs. MW and Mrs. RT, demonstrated a passive response, where they remained silent, gave in, or avoided violence. For these two victims, silence

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was the safest way to prevent the violence from escalating, especially because they felt they lacked the strength to resist or adequate social support.

Meanwhile, the other two victims, Mrs. SC and Mrs. TR, demonstrated an active response. Mrs. SC bravely resisted from the start, rejecting her husband's actions, and even seeking help from outsiders, such as neighbors, when the violence occurred. Traumatic experiences from her previous marriage made her more assertive in limiting her husband's behavior. Mrs. TR, although initially passive and silent, later began to verbally resist and seek help from her husband's family when the violence became intolerable. Mrs. TR's shift from passive to active response suggests that the pressure of repeated violence can push victims to eventually take action to protect themselves.

Women's responses to domestic violence in Kepanjen show significant variation, ranging from passive to active responses, influenced by psychological conditions, past experiences, the intensity of the violence, and available social support. Two victims (Mrs. MW and Mrs. RT) demonstrated passive responses, such as silence, giving in, or avoidance. These responses develop as adaptive coping strategies when women feel they lack the control or power to resist, nor do they have adequate social support. This strategy is not simply an acceptance of violence, but a way to maintain personal safety and prevent further violence. This phenomenon aligns with Walker's (2009) concept of learned helplessness, which explains that victims of repeated violence often internalize feelings of helplessness, leading to passive behavior in response to situations that repeatedly threaten their safety.

In contrast, two victims (Mrs. SC and Mrs. TR) demonstrated active responses, including refusing, fighting back, or seeking outside help. These responses emerged after the victims experienced repeated violence and trauma from previous experiences, leading them to assert control over themselves. This pattern emphasizes that women are not simply passive objects, but actors who play a role in shaping and negotiating their social relationships. This aligns with Giddens' (2013) structuration theory, which emphasizes that individuals, in this case women, have the capacity to act reflectively, utilizing agency to challenge oppressive norms or practices, while simultaneously negotiating the social structures that constrain them.

The shift from a passive to an active response, as experienced by Mrs. TR, demonstrates that the pressure of repeated violence can trigger changes in coping strategies. This shift is not simply a spontaneous reaction, but rather an adaptive and reflective effort that allows victims to maintain their safety while maximizing control over the oppressive social environment. However, active responses remain constrained by patriarchal social and cultural norms that require women to be patient for the sake of the household's integrity.

Overall, the variations in victims' responses reflect a complex interaction between individual experiences, psychological pressure, trauma, and patriarchal social structures. Passive responses represent a form of adaptation to internalized powerlessness (learned helplessness), while active responses signal women's agentic capacity to shape and negotiate strategies of resistance to social domination.

CONCLUSIONS

The unequal gender power relations in the households of domestic violence victims in Kepanjen are analyzed through four forms of power. Structural power is evident in the division of labor, which falls entirely on the wife, including decision-making, as the husband is passive and irresponsible. However, the husband retains symbolic authority. Relational power is reflected in unequal communication patterns, where the husband uses anger or neglect to silence and control his wife. Institutional power is reinforced by social, cultural, and religious norms that require the wife to be obedient, patient, and submissive to her husband as head of the family, thus legitimizing the husband's dominance. Finally, symbolic power operates through the use of negative language and labels, such as "stupid," "spoiled child," or physical abuse, to demean women's identity and social position. This pattern of power relations operates in layers through three mechanisms of domination: direct domination (anger, ignoring opinions), passive domination (silence, disengagement, avoidance of responsibility), and cultural-religious domination (social pressure to obey and submit), which collectively reinforce women's subordination and injustice within the household.

Female victims of domestic violence in Kepanjen have a critical awareness that violence is unnatural, unfair, and detrimental to them. Despite being aware of this injustice, victims face a dilemma in leaving the relationship, primarily due to responsibilities to their children, cultural pressures, and fear of social stigma. Their responses to violence are divided into two categories: passive responses (silence, giving in, avoiding), which are considered the safest coping strategies to prevent the violence from escalating, and active responses (fighting or seeking help), which are often driven by repeated or previous traumatic experiences. Overall, cultural pressures and a lack of social support are major barriers for victims to leave their relationships, even when they have developed a critical understanding of the injustice they have experienced.

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