The Impact of Social Stereotypes on the Identity Communication of Working Mothers Performing Dual Roles

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ABSTRACT

The increasing participation of mothers in the workforce has become a significant focus across disciplines, including communication studies. Working mothers not only fulfill domestic responsibilities as caregivers and household managers but also contribute actively to economic and social life in the public sphere. This dual role often generates tension, as professional demands intersect with persistent expectations of intensive motherhood. This study examined the extent to which social stereotypes influence identity communication among working mothers in Jakarta. Using a quantitative survey of 305 respondents, the study integrated the Stereotype Content Model and the Communication Theory of Identity. Taken together, social stereotypes operate as communicative expectations rather than passive social perceptions. While factors such as age, type of occupation, and extended family support were associated with identity management, they did not significantly moderate this relationship. These findings contribute to identity communication theory and offer practical insights for developing more inclusive organizational and social policies that support working mothers with dual role demands.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of working mothers in modern society has become an important focus across various disciplines, including communication studies. Working mothers do not only carry out domestic functions as caregivers and household managers but also actively contribute as economic and social actors in the public sphere. They carry a complex dual role: managing households while also working in the formal and informal sectors.

Although there are differences, these multiple roles often create tension, as professional demands frequently clash with societal expectations of intensive motherhood. Globally, data from the International Labor Organization (2023) showed a 5% increase in women's participation in the workforce over the past decade. Countries such as Sweden and Norway have successfully promoted gender equality through equal parental leave policies and comprehensive childcare support systems. However, in many Asian countries, including Indonesia, cultural barriers remain the main challenge for women, especially those who are married. In the Indonesian context, the Badan Pusat Statistik or Central Bureau of Statistics (2023) recorded that the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) reached 55.41% in early 2024, an increase of nearly 1% compared to the previous year. This increase indicates greater involvement of women in the public sphere, particularly in major cities such as Jakarta.

To give context, there is a difference between gender equality and gender equity. Gender equality refers to equal treatment and access to opportunities for all genders, whereas gender equity emphasizes fairness by accounting for structural differences and providing differentiated support where necessary (UN Women, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2020). In the context of working mothers, equity-based approaches are particularly important as they recognize the unequal burden of care work and seek to redistribute support accordingly.

Nevertheless, rise in participation has not been accompanied by significant changes in gender norms within society. Strong patriarchal norms persist, reinforcing social stereotypes against working mothers. Women are often faced with social pressures that demand them to continue prioritizing domestic roles, regardless of their participation in the workforce. Such stereotypes generate significant internal and social tension, leading to feelings of guilt, anxiety, and ongoing role conflict. Mass media and social media further amplify these pressures by idealizing the figure of the "perfect mother" who is always present and fully engaged in her children's lives.

One of the main challenges faced by working mothers is the imbalance of domestic responsibilities. Even when employed full-time, household duties are often still placed on them. North (2025) found that working mothers in Surabaya experience a decline in psychological well-being due to role conflict

between work and family. In urban contexts like Jakarta, this pressure is even greater due to high professional standards, rising living costs, and conservative social expectations. These conditions drive working mothers to develop various identity communication strategies in order to navigate the pressures and stereotypes they encounter.

The pressures experienced by working mothers are not uniformly negative. Contemporary perspectives on stress distinguish between eustress, which can motivate adaptive performance, and distress, which generates psychological strain and role conflict (Le Fevre et al., 2020; Hargrove et al., 2015). In the context of dual-role expectations, working mothers may simultaneously experience both forms, depending on the intensity of social demands and the availability of support systems.

The concept of identity is key to understanding how working mothers respond to such expectations and stereotypes. As stated in the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), identity is continuously co-constructed through communication across personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity frames (Hecht et al., 2003; Hecht & Phillips, 2019). Rather than developing in isolation, identity is negotiated within interpersonal relationships and broader cultural contexts that communicate expectations regarding appropriate roles and behaviors. For working mothers, these external expectations include gender-role norms, ideals of intensive motherhood, organizational expectations of professionalism and productivity, family expectations concerning caregiving responsibilities, and media narratives that define the image of the "good mother."

Beyond its structural dimensions, identity is also shaped by positionality, autonomy, and agency. Positionality refers to the social and cultural locations individuals occupy, which influences how their identities are interpreted within systems of power and inequality (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Autonomy reflects the extent to which individuals can make independent choices regarding their roles, while agency highlights their capacity to actively negotiate and reconstruct identity in response to social expectations (Brown, 2019). For working mothers, these dimensions are particularly salient as identity is not only constructed through interaction but also strategically managed within structural and cultural constraints.

Today's social media dynamics reinforce pressures on working mothers through unrealistic narratives of "intensive mothering." The idealization of mothers who are constantly present in every aspect of their children's development often creates cognitive dissonance and feelings of failure among working mothers. Ghozali (2018) further showed that exposure to such social media narratives leads to anxiety and identity crises, especially among urban women who are expected to be professionally successful while also perfect in their domestic roles. These mediated representations often contribute to media misrepresentation, in which simplified and idealized portrayals of motherhood

obscure the complex realities faced by working mothers. Such representations reinforce unrealistic standards of intensive caregiving, thereby amplifying identity-related pressures and shaping how mothers perceive and communicate their roles (Gill, 2017).

This situation underscores the importance of support from family and workplaces. Setiawan and Rahayu (2024) indicated that work flexibility and work-life balance policies can help working mothers reduce stress. Hybrid work systems, which have developed alongside digitalization, provide opportunities for working mothers to better adjust their roles. However, such flexibility is still insufficient to eliminate deep-rooted social stereotypes. Nugroho and Santoso (2024) also found that support from spouses and extended families is a key factor in improving the well-being of working mothers.

On the other hand, prevailing social stereotypes can significantly influence the identity communication of working mothers. They are often caught in a dilemma between demonstrating professionalism at work and fulfilling the ideal domestic role at home. Negative stereotypes—such as the belief that working mothers neglect their children—create communication barriers both in the workplace and within the family (Nugroho & Santoso, 2024). This highlights the importance of exploring identity communication strategies employed by working mothers to navigate such conflicts, as well as understanding how individual and contextual variables influence this process. Previous studies have examined the well-being and role conflicts of working mothers, but research remains limited in analyzing how social stereotypes interact with identity communication processes. Moreover, most studies have been conducted in Western countries with different social structures from Indonesia. In Indonesia's patriarchal cultural context, stereotypes about working mothers are often stronger and carry moral undertones, making localized studies crucial. Therefore, this research sought to fill that gap by exploring how social stereotypes affected the identity communication of working mothers in Jakarta.

The reasoning for choosing Jakarta, despite its cosmopolitan character and urban setting, was that Jakarta often retains patriarchal orientations due to the persistence of cultural norms, institutional structures, and gendered expectations that evolve more slowly than economic modernization. Connell (2021) stated that rapid urbanization may expand women's participation in the workforce; however, it does not automatically transform deeply embedded gender ideologies, resulting in a coexistence of modern economic roles and traditional domestic expectations.

This study also considered three moderating variables: age, type of employment, and extended family support. These variables were believed to influence the extent to which stereotypes affected identity communication. For example, older mothers tend to have more mature identity strategies, while the type of work (formal vs. informal) shapes the level of professional expectations and social pressures. Extended family support, which is common in Indonesian

culture, can act as a buffer against the effects of stereotypes. By accounting for these variables, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding of the dual-role dynamics faced by working mothers in urban environments.

Academically, this study contributes to the development of identity communication theory by adding cultural and social stereotype dimensions. Practically, the findings of this research can serve as the basis for designing policies that are more responsive to the needs of working mothers, including the development of inclusive work environments and gender-based flexible policies. Thus, this study is not only theoretical but also socially relevant in encouraging cultural change toward greater gender equality.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Interpersonal communication plays a vital role in the formation and negotiation of individual identity. The process of message exchange between two or more people is not only a medium for transmitting information but also reflects how a person understands themselves and how they want to be perceived by others. In this context, interpersonal interaction becomes a primary mechanism shaping both social and personal perceptions of identity.

Hecht and Phillips (2019) stated that interpersonal communication is a dynamic process in which identity is not only communicated but also negotiated. When individuals, such as working mothers, interact with spouses, colleagues, or their social environment, they actively adjust verbal and nonverbal expressions to reinforce the identity roles they wish to present. Interpersonal communication thus becomes a social arena where identity conflicts, adjustments, and reinforcements occur in response to societal expectations.

Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity views identity as a dynamic process formed through communication within four frames: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. Personal identity refers to how individuals view themselves; enacted identity refers to how identity is expressed in actions and communication; relational identity is formed through interaction with others; and communal identity stems from the values and social norms of a group (Hecht et al., 2003). In the context of working mothers, these four frames emerge simultaneously. A mother may have a self-concept as strong and independent (personal identity) yet still experience tension when professional and domestic demands clash (relational and communal identity). When identity expression does not align with social expectations, identity gaps occur, potentially triggering psychological stress and communication conflict (Hecht et al., 2003). The theory has also evolved with changing times, particularly within digital communication contexts. Identity today is formed not only through direct communication but also through self-representation on social media. Based on the concept of Miller-Day and Hecht (2011), working mothers actively negotiate their identities across multiple social platforms, including workplace

interactions, family communication, and digital media spaces. Each platform imposes distinct norms and expectations, requiring mothers to strategically adjust how they present themselves, for instance, emphasizing professionalism in organizational contexts while reinforcing caregiving narratives in family and social media environments.

Stereotypes are simplified and often biased social perceptions of particular groups (Fiske, 2018). The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) classifies stereotypes along two main dimensions: warmth and competence. Working mothers are often perceived as professionally competent but lacking warmth in domestic roles. This dichotomy creates paradoxical expectations of their roles as both mothers and workers. Odenweller et al. (2020) identified various stereotypical labels for working mothers, such as supermom, overworked, family-oriented, and nontraditional parent. These stereotypes generate complex social dynamics in which working mothers may be praised for their resilience but simultaneously criticized for supposedly neglecting family. In Indonesian society, which remains deeply influenced by patriarchal values, stereotypes of working mothers tend to be more burdensome. They are expected to meet the standards of ideal motherhood while also excelling in the workforce. Failure to meet these expectations can lead to guilt, anxiety, and negative social judgment from their surroundings.

Working mothers juggle complex dual roles—they must fulfill professional demands while also remaining actively involved in childcare and household management. In cultures that idealize the concept of intensive mothering, pressures on working mothers are multiplied. They are expected to always be present, responsive, and self-sacrificing for their children, even as they fulfill work responsibilities.

Prikhidko and Shumate (2020) highlighted that the idealization of motherhood increases guilt and burnout among working mothers. Ongoing role conflicts between home and workplace create significant psychological pressure. The inability to be both the "ideal mother" and a competent professional negatively affects mental well-being, social relationships, and job satisfaction. Dayatri and Mustika (2021) found that many working mothers face emotional and social burdens from the expectation to flawlessly perform dual roles. These pressures are exacerbated by limited time, physical fatigue, and the absence of adequate social support systems.

Therefore, it is also important to distinguish between gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, and gender-transformative policies. Gender-sensitive policies acknowledge gender differences, while gender-responsive policies actively address these differences through targeted interventions (UNICEF, 2017; UN Women, 2020). In contrast, gender-transformative policies seek to challenge and change structural inequalities and patriarchal norms (UN Women, 2020). This study suggests that supporting working mothers requires movement beyond gender sensitivity toward transformative approaches that reshape institutional and cultural expectations.

This study identified three key moderating variables in the relationship between stereotypes and the identity communication of working mothers: age, type of employment, and extended family support.

1. **Age:** Older mothers tend to have more stable communication and identity strategies as well as stronger social experience to handle stereotypical pressures. In contrast, younger mothers are more vulnerable to identity conflict as they are still in the process of self-discovery (Manzi et al., 2021).

2. **Type of employment:** Formal employees generally face fixed working hours, professional pressure, and high-performance expectations. This differs from informal or freelance workers, who enjoy more flexibility but face challenges with income stability. These differences affect how they manage identity and adjust to dual roles (Craig & Churchill, 2019).

3. **Family support:** In collectivist cultures such as Indonesia, support systems from spouses and extended families play an important role in maintaining identity balance. Emotional and instrumental support from family can help working mothers manage stereotypical pressures and navigate their identity communication (Hecht & Phillips, 2019).

These three variables are used to explore how contextual factors influence the impact of stereotypes on the identity of working mothers, and to what extent such moderating roles can strengthen or weaken those effects.

Hypotheses

Based on the above conceptual framework, this study formulated two main hypotheses:

- **H1:** Social stereotypes have a significant influence on the identity communication of working mothers in Jakarta.

- **H2:** Age, type of employment, and extended family context moderate the influence of social stereotypes on the identity communication of working mothers.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a positivist paradigm, which posits that social reality can be objectively measured through data-driven quantitative approaches. This paradigm is well suited for testing causal relationships between variables—such as social stereotypes and identity communication of working mothers—since it allows for the application of scientific methods to produce measurable, verifiable, and generalizable results.

The study employed a quantitative approach, using survey as the primary method. This approach was selected because it produced numerical data that could be statistically analyzed to test the formulated hypotheses. The survey utilized a closed-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (1–5), designed based on the indicators from the *Stereotype Content Model (SCM) and the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI).* Data collection was conducted online through Google Forms, distributed via social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram. The online method was chosen for its time efficiency and ability to quickly reach many respondents. The survey instrument consisted of 28 indicators measuring stereotypes, identity communication, and the three moderating variables: age, type of employment, and extended family support.

Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probabilistic technique with specific inclusion criteria: (1) working mothers, (2) with at least one child, (3) residing in Jakarta, and (4) within productive age (15–65 years). A total of 305 respondents were collected, exceeding the minimum sample size recommended for simple regression analysis (Hair et al., 2023). Data were analyzed using regression analysis to evaluate the effect of social stereotypes on the dependent variable, namely the personal and social identity communication of working mothers. This approach enables exploration of the relationship between stereotypes and identity dynamics among working mothers.

While this study adopts a positivistic paradigm to examine measurable relationships between variables, it also acknowledges critical perspectives on representation. Drawing on Mumby's concept of the "discourse of representation," organizational and social realities—including stereotypes—are not merely objective phenomena but are constructed and reproduced through discourse (Mumby, 2019). Thus, stereotypes examined in this study can be understood both as measurable perceptions and as discursive formations that shape and constrain identity communication.

Variables

This research involved three types of variables:

- **Independent variable (X):** Social stereotypes, measured through the dimensions of warmth and competence according to SCM (Fiske, 2018). Indicators included perceptions of sensitivity, maternal involvement, multitasking ability, and social status.
- **Dependent variable (Y):** Identity communication, measured through the four dimensions of CTI (Hecht et al., 2003): personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity.
- **Moderating variables (M):** Age, type of employment, and extended family support.

All indicators used a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised working mothers in Jakarta, employed in both formal and informal sectors. Jakarta was selected due to its high female labor force participation rate and the complexity of urban social dynamics, both of which were relevant to the study of stereotypes and identity communication.

Using purposive sampling, respondents were deliberately chosen based on inclusion criteria to ensure that the collected data reflected the dual-role dynamics experienced by working mothers. Respondents consisted of women who were both employed and mothers, residing in the administrative area of Jakarta.

Data Analysis Techniques

Pre-Test

Prior to the main survey, this research conducted a pre-test involving 32 respondents to examine clarity and accuracy of questionnaire items. Items with item-total correlations below 0.30 were revised. Results confirmed that all items passed validity and reliability tests. The pre-test also served to refine format, sentence structure, and measurement effectiveness, ensuring no bias in responses

Validity and Reliability Testing

- Validity was assessed through item-total correlation analysis, using $r \geq 0.3494$ ($n = 32$) as the benchmark. All 28 questionnaire items met this requirement, such as the item "working mothers are highly competent in multitasking" ($r = 0.801$).

- Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding the following results:
    - Social stereotypes: $\alpha = 0.917$ (highly reliable)
    - Identity communication: $\alpha = 0.840$ (highly reliable)
    - Moderating variables: $\alpha = 0.891$ (highly reliable)

These values indicate strong internal consistency, confirming the instrument's suitability for data collection.

Normality and Regression

Data distribution was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to ensure the appropriateness of parametric regression analysis. Where deviations were detected, data transformation or non-parametric alternatives were considered. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and the distribution of variable scores, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values.

For hypothesis testing, simple linear regression was used to determine the extent to which social stereotypes affect the identity communication of working mothers. This technique was chosen because the model directly involves one independent variable and one dependent variable. The regression analysis was complemented with tests of significance (p-values) and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to evaluate the strength of influence.

This study adhered to ethical research standards. Although formal institutional ethical clearance was not required, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Respondent Profile

This study involved 305 respondents, all of whom were women with dual roles as mothers and workers residing in Jakarta. Respondent criteria required having at least one child and being within the productive age range (15–65 years). Purposive sampling was employed to ensure representation of characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. The digital distribution of questionnaires proved effective in reaching hard- to-reach or considered a hidden urban population while being time- and cost-effective. Hard-to-reach populations or hidden populations are underground communities whose members may be reluctant to self-identify and for whom no sampling frame is available or can be constructed (Raifman et al., 2022). Hidden urban population in this case refers to groups that are not easily identifiable through conventional sampling methods, often due to their dispersed, informal, or digitally mediated presence, as in this case working mothers engaged in hybrid or informal employment.

- Number of children: The majority of respondents had one or two children (43% each), while 12.8% had three children and only 1.3% had more than three. This indicates that most working mothers in Jakarta manage childcare responsibilities within small- to medium-sized families.

- Age: The largest group was aged 25–34 years (53.1%), followed by 35–44 years (34.1%). Respondents under 25 or over 55 years were minimal. This reflects that most working mothers navigating dual roles are in early

to mid-adulthood, a period marked by career development and child-rearing responsibilities.

- Education: The majority held a bachelor's degree (62%), followed by diploma holders (21.3%), high school graduates (10.8%), and postgraduates (5.9%). Thus, over 89% had higher education, enabling them to access information and adaptive strategies for managing dual roles.

- Employment type: Respondents were employed in both formal (60.7%) and informal (39.3%) sectors. Formal jobs included civil servants, private employees, state-owned enterprise workers, and teachers. Informal work included influencers, affiliates, micro-business owners, and freelancers. This distribution is significant since employment context shapes time flexibility, access to institutional support, and identity communication strategies.

RESULTS

Validity and Reliability

Using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation method with an r-table value of 0.1123 for 305 respondents resulted validity. All items showed correlation values above this threshold, indicating that each questionnaire item was valid. With strong construct validity, it can be confirmed that the instrument effectively measures the theoretical dimensions in this study, including social stereotypes, identity communication, and moderating variables.

The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha yielded values above 0.70 for all items, ranging between 0.789 and 0.798. This demonstrates that the instrument possesses excellent internal consistency and is suitable for use in social measurement. These values further indicate the stability of the instrument in capturing respondents' perceptions and experiences related to social stereotypes and identity communication.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean values for the social stereotype variable ranged from 4.2 to 4.4, suggesting that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the related statements. Low standard deviations and skewness values between −1.647 and −0.575 indicated a normal distribution and consistent responses.

For the identity communication variable, mean scores ranged from 4.1 to 4.48, with standard deviations between 0.59 and 0.85. This indicates that working mothers demonstrated high awareness of self-identity and actively present their dual roles.

The moderating variables—age, type of employment, and family support—also showed high mean values (4.32–4.45) and normal distribution. This implies that these factors were perceived as contributing to how working mothers managed their dual roles.

Normality Test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on residual data produced a significant value of 0.060 (> 0.05), indicating that the data were normally distributed. Thus, the normality assumption for linear regression was fulfilled, allowing for further inferential analysis.

Simple Regression Analysis

The simple linear regression analysis produced the following equation: $Y = -15.430 + 5.675X + \varepsilon$

The regression coefficient was positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that social stereotypes significantly influenced identity communication. The beta value of 0.751 demonstrated a strong influence of stereotypes on the way working mothers constructed and presented their identities in both social and professional spaces.

Moderation Regression Analysis

The Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) model showed a positive interaction between social stereotypes and the moderating variables (age, type of employment, and family support). However, the statistical test results yielded significance values above 0.05, meaning the moderating effects were not statistically significant.

Thus, the relationship between social stereotypes and identity communication was direct and not significantly moderated by these variables. This suggested that age, type of employment, and family support neither strengthened nor weakened the influence of stereotypes on identity communication among working mothers.

t-Test

The t-test was employed to identify the significance of the independent variable (social stereotypes) on the dependent variable (identity communication) in the context of working mothers. Regression analysis results indicated a t-value of 19.790 with a significance level of 0.000. Since the value fell below the 0.05 threshold, it confirmed that social stereotypes significantly impacted identity communication at the 95% confidence level. The regression coefficient of 5.675 further reinforced the conclusion.

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures how well the independent variable explains the variance in the dependent variable. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.564 indicated that 56.4% of the variance in identity communication was explained by social stereotypes, while the remaining 43.6% was influenced by other factors not included in the model. Collectively, the findings indicate that although social stereotypes play an important role in shaping identity communication, approximately 43.6% of the variance remains attributable to other influential factors not included in the present model. These may include organizational culture, workplace communication practices, spousal support, individual coping strategies, media exposure, and broader sociocultural influences. These factors warrant further investigation in future research.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between the moderating variables and social stereotypes ($r = 0.472$), as well as between the moderating variables and identity communication ($r = 0.547$). This indicated that although these variables did not act as significant moderators, age, type of employment, and family support remained relevant to the two main variables. Correlation values between 0.3 and 0.7 were generally considered moderate. This finding implied that increases in moderating variables were likely accompanied by increases in social stereotypes and identity communication, forming a meaningful—not coincidental—relationship.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that social stereotypes function not merely as passive societal perceptions but as active forces shaping how working mothers construct and communicate their identities. In navigating dual-role expectations, working mothers develop strategies to maintain a relatively stable and coherent self-narrative across different social contexts. As depicted in McAdams (2018)), stable self-narrative refers to a coherent and internally consistent understanding of the self that individuals maintain across different contexts, enabling continuity in identity despite shifting social expectations. The findings also align with Nugroho and Santoso (2024) but differ from Setyonaluri and Utomo (2023), who identified age as the most dominant factor. In Jakarta, job flexibility and family support systems play a more significant role.

Stereotypes influence identity communication not only as societal views but as active forces shaping self-narratives. The most dominant communication dimensions are personal identity and enacted identity: working mothers acknowledge and embrace their dual roles and actively express them in social interactions. From a communication perspective, the finding suggest that working mothers actively negotiate these identity frames while responding to competing expectations originating from family, workplaces, media, and

broader cultural norms. Identity communication appears to function as an ongoing communicative process through which working mothers reconcile competing expectation across family, workplace, and societal contexts. Rather than passively accepting externally imposed identities, participants appear to actively construct coherent self-understandings that allow them to maintain legitimacy functions not merely as self-expression but also as a mechanism for maintaining legitimacy across personal, relational, enacted, and communal identity frames. This interpretation is consistent with the Communication Theory of Identity, which conceptualizes identity as a communicative accomplishment continuously negotiated across personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity frames (Hecht et al., 2003; Hecht & Phillips, 2019).

At the same time, the results point to a form of hidden victimization, in which subtle and persistent social pressures influence identity communication without being explicitly recognized as discrimination (Pyke, 2016). These pressures are often internalized, shaping how individuals present themselves and respond to social expectations.

The internalization of these pressures suggests that societal expectations gradually become incorporated into individuals' self-evaluations. Rather than experiencing stereotypes solely as external judgments, working mothers begin to evaluate their own performance according to socially constructed standards of ideal motherhood and professional success. Consequently, identity communication becomes a process of continuously managing these internalized expectations while attempting to maintain psychological coherence across different social settings.

In response, some participants exhibit defensive communication strategies, such as justification, selective self-presentation, or avoidance. Although defensive communication was not directly measured, the relationship observed between stereotype perceptions and identity communication suggests that some participants may employ defensive communication strategies aimed at protecting their identities from anticipated social judgment. These strategies may include selective self-presentation, emphasizing professional competence, or carefully managing disclosures about work-family experiences. as they attempt to protect their self-concept from perceived evaluation and identity threat (Ting-Toomey, 2017; Brown, 2019).

The descriptive findings indicate that respondents generally perceived themselves as competent in managing multiple responsibilities while simultaneously reporting awareness of persistent societal expectations surrounding maternal caregiving. This pattern reflects the two dimensions of the Stereotype Content Model, whereby perceptions of competence coexist with continued expectations regarding warmth and caregiving. This imbalance creates identity gaps, arising when self-perceptions diverge from societal expectations. These expectations include beliefs that mothers should remain the primary caregivers, be emotionally available to their children at all times, prioritize

family over career advancement, and demonstrate continuous involvement in children's daily development regardless of employment demands. To address this, working mothers engage in identity negotiation strategies—through self-assertion, emphasizing achievements, leveraging support communities, and presenting positive images, often via social media. The employment of these identity negotiation strategies suggests that identity communication functions not merely as self-expression but also as a mechanism for maintaining social legitimacy. While these strategies may help working mothers navigate conflicting expectations, they may simultaneously reinforce prevailing social norms by encouraging continual self-monitoring and impression management rather than challenging the stereotypes themselves.

Age and employment status influence the stability of identity communication. Mothers aged 35 and older show greater resilience under pressure, while those in informal sectors adapt more flexibly due to non-rigid schedules. From the perspective of the Communication Theory of Identity, these findings suggest that identity negotiation may become increasingly stable through accumulated communicative experience. Older working mothers may have developed more coherent identity frameworks that enable them to reconcile competing relational and communal expectations more effectively than younger mothers who are still negotiating emerging professional and parental identities.

Stronger family support also fosters healthier identity communication, whereas limited support often leads to defensive responses and greater stress. Within Indonesia's collectivist social context, extended family functions not merely as practical support but also as a communicative resource that reinforces identity affirmation. Emotional validation and shared caregiving responsibilities provided by grandparents, siblings, and other relatives may reduce identity conflict by legitimizing women's simultaneous identities as mothers and professionals. These pattern reflects that kinship networks contribute to healthier identity communication by creating relational environments in which dual-role identities are socially recognized and supported. According to Brown (2022), these defensive responses refer to communication strategies employed to protect one’s identity from perceived judgment or criticism, such as justification, withdrawal from discussion, or overemphasis on certain roles to counter negative stereotypes.

The dynamic is further reinforced by media misrepresentation, which continues to privilege idealized narratives of motherhood while marginalizing diverse lived experiences. As a result, working mothers are often compelled to align their identity communication with socially desirable images, even when these do not reflect their everyday realities (Gill, 2017).

Overall, the findings highlight the urgency of creating inclusive social environments, both at home and in the workplace, that allow women to fulfill dual roles as mothers and professionals without sacrificing either. Flexible workplace policies and supportive families are key to strengthening healthy and empowered identity communication.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This study demonstrates that social stereotypes exert a significant and direct influence on the identity communication of working mothers in Jakarta. While demographic and contextual factors are associated with identity management, they do not significantly moderate this relationship. These findings underscore the importance of addressing social stereotypes in both policy and practice. Developing inclusive organizational communication policies and supportive social environments is essential to enabling working mothers to navigate dual roles without compromising their identity or well-being.

Future research should include additional variables such as spousal support, workload, or perceptions of workplace policies to enrich the analytical model, expand geographically to include other major cities such as Bandung or Surabaya, and further explore the role of digital media in shaping social stereotypes, given the increasing importance of social media as a space for identity expression among working mothers today. The use of qualitative or mixed-method approaches is recommended to capture deeper personal narratives of working mothers negotiating their identities. On a practical level, governments and women's empowerment institutions should initiate public education campaigns to reduce negative stereotypes about working mothers, for example creating digital literacy programs to counter harmful motherhood narratives and reframing "good motherhood". Workplaces are encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible working hours, equitable family leave, and internal campaigns supporting women's dual roles. Employer branding that normalizes dual-role identities by implementing internal communication strategies that normalize dual-role identities, reducing stigma by reshaping workplace narratives around productivity and caregiving. But first, conduct organizational communication audits to identify bias in internal narratives.

This study had several limitations. First, its quantitative approach did not capture the respondents' subjective experiences in depth. Second, the moderating variables were limited to age, type of employment, and extended family support, leaving out other potential factors. Third, the study focused only on Jakarta, limiting the generalizability of its findings at the national level.

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