

# 'WOMEN'S WORK' IN INDONESIA'S SOCIAL MEDIA-BASED ONLINE STORE BUSINESSES: *Social Reproduction and the Feminization of Work*<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze 'women's work' in Indonesia's social media-based online shop businesses by looking at the forms of work that emerge in those businesses. This paper employs qualitative research methods by using transcribed in-depth interviews with 20 informants from six cities in Indonesia. By looking at flexibility as the defining characteristic of exploitation under platform capitalism, home as the central working space in the social media-based online store, and the ongoing process of feminization of work in the online business sector, this study advances two claims. First, the intersection between platform capitalism and logistics revolution in the online shop businesses has created new forms of work. Second, the social media-based online store, which is mostly operated by women, shows that flexibility and feminization of work under platform capitalism have impacted on the lives of the women business operators and their work. A closer look at the emergence of social media-based online stores also reveals how social reproduction work shapes 'women's work' in online store businesses.

**Keywords:** Online store, flexibility, platform capitalism, 'women's work', Indonesia.

## Abstrak

Makalah ini berupaya menganalisis 'pekerjaan perempuan' di bisnis toko daring berbasis media sosial di Indonesia dengan melihat bentuk-bentuk pekerjaan yang muncul dalam bisnis tersebut. Penelitian dalam tulisan ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam yang ditranskrip terhadap 20 informan dari enam kota di Indonesia. Dengan melihat fleksibilitas sebagai karakteristik yang menentukan eksploitasi di bawah platform capitalism, rumah sebagai ruang kerja pusat di toko online berbasis media sosial, dan proses feminisasi kerja yang berlangsung di sektor bisnis daring, penelitian ini mengajukan dua klaim. Pertama, interseksi antara kapitalisme platform dan revolusi logistik dalam bisnis toko daring telah menciptakan bentuk kerja baru. Kedua, toko daring berbasis media sosial, yang sebagian besar dioperasikan oleh perempuan, menunjukkan bahwa fleksibilitas dan feminisasi kerja di bawah platform capitalism menghasilkan dampak langsung pada kehidupan kerja dan kehidupan para perempuan yang mengoperasikan bisnis toko daring ini. Penelusuran lebih

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*jauh pada kemunculan toko-toko daring di media sosial juga mengungkapkan bagaimana kerja reproduksi sosial membentuk 'kerja perempuan' dalam bisnis toko daring.*

**Kata kunci:** Toko daring, fleksibilitas, kapitalisme, 'kerja perempuan', Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

After the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, capitalism increasingly synergizes with technological improvements, marking the beginning of a new phase in capitalist development called 'platform capitalism' (Srnicek, 2017, p. 39). In platform capitalism, the capitalist class owns the online platform, that is, the 'digital infrastructures' by utilizing new digital technologies and tools including data and network to run their businesses (Ibid., p. 43). Technological advancements in the platform capitalism often conflated with the logistics revolution has resulted in innovations in distribution processes (Schwab, 2016 p. 1; Srnicek, 2017). One of such innovations is the rise of e-commerce that allows distribution process to become increasingly faster by utilizing digital technology. In order to increase capital accumulation, the capitalist class not only expands the accumulation zone but also intensifies the 'time-space compression' process which necessitates the acceleration of the distribution process (Harvey, 2005, p. 4). The manifestation of it can be seen in the rise of e-commerce where the distribution has become increasingly faster, a vital feature in the contemporary capitalist accumulation (Cowen, 2014).

One of the most distinctive features in the e-commerce trend is the growth of online shop businesses. Through these online shop businesses, people engage in online transactions anytime and anywhere. It is the main characteristic of the logistics revolution, namely, the reduction of barriers in the distribution process, including regulatory or state barriers (Bonacich & Wilson, 2008). Overall, the rise of online shop businesses, especially in countries with significant market potential, highlights how platform capitalism can transform trading activities.

In the last couple of years, Indonesia has seen one of the most promising developments

in the online shop business. The market for online shopping has grown tremendously. According to the governor of Bank of Indonesia, in 2017 alone, the 24.7 million Indonesian internet users who shopped online spent around IDR 75 trillion (Tempo.co, 2017). Another data shows that the number of digital buyers in Indonesia has increased from 24.9 million in 2016 to 28.1 million in 2017 (Statista.com). On average, Indonesian online consumers spend about IDR 481.000 for internet transactions (Trentech.id, 2018). Moreover, the number of internet users in Indonesia—around 104.96 million by 2017 (Statista.com) – is a vast market potential.

Reports from *JNE*—one of logistics distribution/shipping company in Indonesia—also shows that there was a significant increase in its revenue in 2016. Interestingly, 60% of their revenue came from e-commerce; half of this e-commerce revenue came from the online-based warehouse marketplace companies, namely Lazada and Blibli (Lawi, 2016). Moreover, some of the logistics distribution companies provide specialized services for online shop businesses. It can be seen in the case of the *Indah Cargo* company, which was formed in 2007. The company created a particular delivery service for online shop businesses called 'Yes Online Shops' in 2016 (Indah Group, 2016). Another company, *Wahana Prestasi Logistik*, introduced a franchise model of the distribution company which allows people to open their own delivery services in 2013 (Wahana Prestasi Logistik, 2018).

In regard to that, there are at least two forms of online shop businesses. The first type is online based-warehouse marketplace companies such as Amazon and eBay (Amazon.co.uk, 2018; Ebay.co.uk, 2018; Rouse, 2018). The second type is Social Media-Based Online Stores (SMBOSs) in which people run their online stores using their social media accounts—one of the platform types in platform capitalism—such as Instagram and Facebook (Srnicek, 2017). This

research focuses on SMBOSs in Indonesia, where there have been promising developments, particularly in online shops which mostly operated by women.

By analyzing the case of online shop businesses, this paper argues that intersection between platform capitalism and logistics revolution in the e-commerce trend has resulted in the deepening of Labor Market Flexibility (LMF) which then shapes ‘women’s work’ in it (Standing, 1999). The flexibility dimension—one of the main features in platform capitalism—which allows everyone, including women, to run or work at the online shop businesses from anywhere including their own home, has led women to get involved in this type of business. In capitalism, women are by social construction ‘designated’ as the ones who are responsible for social reproduction work, such as maintaining the household and taking care of the children (Fraser, 2017). Hence, the perceived ‘flexibility’ of women’s working time and space attracts many women to get involved in various types of work in online shop businesses, especially the SMBOSs.

As an illustration, a 2017 survey reported that women constitute 48.57% of the total number of internet users in Indonesia (APJII & Teknopreneur, 2017). The massive involvement of women—particularly housewives—in the SMBOSs both as the owners and workers of the online stores, also strengthens the notion of ‘mompreneurs’. In Indonesia, the notion of ‘mompreneurs’ highlighted that mothers, who are also self-employed entrepreneurs, can balance their work at home and their entrepreneurial activities at the same time (Amal, 2012; Nurmayanti, 2016; Uqim, 2018).

Despite the increasing importance of these phenomena, there is still a dearth of research on these issues. Existing studies on these phenomena tend to focus more on digital marketing strategies and customer behaviors (Pei, 2018; Katawetawaraks et al., 2011; Petersen et al., 2014; Shanthi et al., 2015). Hence, there are two focuses of analysis in this article. First is on the forms of work and the flexibility in SMBOSs

and second is on ‘women’s work’ in SMBOSs, particularly in the urban context.

This paper will be organized into three sections. Firstly, this paper will explain the new forms of work in Indonesia’s SMBOSs. Secondly, this article will elaborate on relations between flexibility and precarious working conditions in Indonesia’s SMBOS. The last section of this paper will explain how social reproduction and feminization of work shapes ‘women’s work’ in Indonesia’s SMBOS.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This research employed a qualitative research design because of its advantages in providing an in-depth explanation of social phenomena (Bryman, 2008). It uses in-depth interviews (Kvale cited by Mason, 2002, p. 226) as the primary data collection technique and desk research to triangulate the interviews by using official data from various reliable sources (Bryman, 2008). Triangulation of the interview data was also conducted by observing the research subjects (*ibid.*). In this case, observation is a common methodological strategy in qualitative research (Delamont, 2013).

All interviews for this project were transcribed by the author and each was conducted for 50 minutes (on average) between 22 May and 28 June 2018 in six cities in Indonesia: five big cities in the Java island namely Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bandung and one provincial town in Bangka Belitung Island, Pangkalpinang. Eighteen informants were interviewed directly during fieldwork. Meanwhile, the other two informants from Bandung and Pangkalpinang were interviewed through recorded phone calls. Confidentiality is maintained to protect informants’ personal data.

The informants, especially those who engage in the online shop businesses, were selected based on inductive criteria formulated from the fieldwork. There are three categories of the social media-based online store businesses practitioners—first, an owner-producer, those who make their products and distribute them

through their SMBOSs. Second, a reseller, who are also the owners of SMBOSs but only selling products from other producers or companies. Third, the SMBOS owners who hire their workers and partner up with other parties such as the home-based *konveksi* [home-based garment workshop].

In this research, there are six informants in the first and third categories, five informants in the second category, one informant from a digital workers' union, namely SINDIKASI, and two informants from an online based-warehouse marketplace company in Jakarta. In total, there are 20 informants in this study; 16 of them are women, and four informants are men.

## THE NEW FORMS OF WORK IN INDONESIA'S SMBOSS

The primary research found that many new forms of work have emerged in Indonesia's SMBOSs. Relatedly, this paper argues that 'women's work' in Indonesia's online shop businesses are shaped by the new forms of work in those businesses, which hides the workers' precarious working conditions under the guise of flexible working arrangements. In this regard, it will be explained in the next section of the paper.

**Table I.** List of Research Informants

NO.	CODE	CATEGORY	GENDER	LOCATION	DATE
1.	1	1	W	Jakarta	22 May 2018
2.	2	2	W	Jakarta	22 May 2018
3.	3	3	W	South Tangerang	24 May 2018
4.	4	1	W	Jakarta	28 May 2018
5.	5	3	W	South Tangerang	29 May 2018
6.	6	2	M	Jakarta	29 May 2018
7.	7	2	W	Jakarta	31 May 2018
8.	8	3	W	Jakarta	31 May 2018
9.	9	1	W	Depok	3 June 2018
10.	10	3	M	Jakarta	4 June 2018
11.	11	2	W	Jakarta	6 June 2018
12.	12	1	W	Pangkalpinang	11 June 2018
13.	13	2	W	Bandung	22 June 2018
14.	14	1	W	Bogor	22 June 2018
15.	15	1	W	Jakarta	22 June 2018
16.	16	3	W	Jakarta	25 June 2018
17.	17	Union representative	W	Jakarta	27 June 2018
18.	18	3	W	South Tangerang	28 June 2018
19.	19	Employee of an online based-warehouse marketplace	M	Jakarta	28 June 2018
20.	20	Employee of an online based-warehouse marketplace	M	Jakarta	28 June 2018

The specificity of work is the essential characteristics of platform capitalism (Gillespie, 2010). As mentioned previously, there are at least three categories of economic actors in Indonesia's SMBOSs. First, those who act both as the owner and the worker of the SMBOS. It means that they produce the products by themselves and distribute those products through their SMBOSs. Second, those who work at the SMBOSs as workers, such as product resellers, online store administrators, and those who work on the SMBOS factory-like assembly lines. Third, SMBOS owners who hire their workers and partnering up with other parties such as *konveksi* [home-based garment workshop]. The workers hired by these SMBOSs owners are usually work in a factory-like assembly line setting. They are in charge of sorting, packaging, and sending them to the customers through shipping companies delivery services.

In the case of homemade cooking and handicraft SMBOSs, the owners typically produce their products by themselves. In these businesses, the owners are also the workers; they cook the foods themselves at home before selling them through their SMBOSs. However, unlike traditional food sellers, they do not open 'real' food stalls. Thus, the average price of food products in this kind of online stores is higher than foods sold in traditional stalls or street vendors because of the extra cost for handling processes such as packaging and delivery (Interviews 1, 5, 8, 16). This model is also applicable to online handicraft stores (Interviews 9, 12, 15).

Another new type of work in the SMBOS is reselling. The resellers – mostly women – of food, cosmetic, and fashion products are selling the products through their SMBOS. Typically, they work from home and get the products directly from the factories or companies which produce them. Some resellers choose to be drop-shippers because drop-shipping require neither storage room nor warehouse to start their businesses (Interviews 2, 6, 7, 11, 13). In this case, the drop-shipper resellers do not need to stock the products at their houses. The houses do not function as warehouses, a different arrangement compared to resellers who primarily

use their residence as a warehouse (Interviews 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 18).

Besides, following the global trend, some direct-selling beauty companies, such as JAFRA, have embraced the online market and adjusted their selling strategies (JAFRA, 2018). It has opened up opportunities for many people, especially women, to sell cosmetics products through their SMBOSs (Interview 13). In this online realm, the resellers of the cosmetics product use the same method as the distributors, commonly known as the 'beauty consultants,' at the direct-selling beauty companies (Cahn, 2006, p. 128). However, in the online shop business, the direct sellers also rely on the platform ability to sell and advertise their products.

Although these resellers have their SMBOSs, they mostly are workers since they work for other business owners. Fashion product resellers, for instance, get the products from *konveksi* and sell them to the customers through their SMBOSs. In this scenario, they usually only sell the *konveksi* made products since factory-made products are usually sold at the retail stores (Interviews 2, 11, 13).

Nevertheless, the notion of entrepreneurship under platform capitalism, including 'mom-preneurship', has made many resellers in the online shop businesses think of themselves as 'employers' rather than workers or self-employed workers (Cockayne, 2016; Interviews 6, 7, 11, 13). In the Indonesian context, this notion also reverberates with the government campaign on digital entrepreneurship. Ironically, at the same time, the government has intensified its crackdown on and eviction of 'traditional entrepreneurs' such as roadside street vendors and food sellers (Gromico, 2018; Tempo.co, 2015). Moreover, the Indonesian government perpetuates the narrative of 'if you are poor, then you are not creative' (Interviews 3, 10, 13).

The next type of work is social media administrators and workers on the SMBOS factory-like assembly line. The social media administrator interacts with the customers and uploads sale materials such as pictures of the products, the content of the advertisement,

and the like, to the SMBOSs accounts, usually in Instagram or Facebook (Interviews 5, 6, 10, 13, 18). Meanwhile, the workers on the SMBOS factory-like assembly line, are in charge of sorting, packaging, and conducting the quality check of the products and sending them to the shipping companies such as *JNE*, *J&T*, *Pos Indonesia*, to name the few (Interviews 2, 5, 10, 18).

Given this development, it is undeniable that new jobs in this online sector can temporarily solve the problem of job scarcity in urban areas (Rizzo, 2017). Nevertheless, the online shop businesses, particularly the SMBOS, are located in the informal economy since most of them are still not officially registered. Thus, it can be categorized as small-scale, informal enterprises, a status which allows them to minimally register 'below size thresholds for taxation or labor regulation' (Harriss-White, 2010, p. 171). Hence, it also brings negative consequences to the workers' conditions which will be elaborated upon below.

### FLEXIBILITY AND PRECARIOUS WORKING CONDITIONS IN INDONESIA'S SMBOS

Under the notion of flexibility and informality, the workers in the fashion-SMBOSs who work as quality checkers, product packagers, social media administrators, as well as resellers, receive low wages. This paper found that most workers in those jobs of the SMBOSs are working without any adequate signed contract in advance. Furthermore, they also work without any employment protection, such as health insurance. Additionally, under the veneer of flexibility, they end up working long hours (Interviews 6, 10, 13, 15, 18). In other words, they work under casual working arrangements.

Flexibility and informality also shape the recruitment process of workers under platform capitalism. Srnicek (2017) points out that workers are increasingly recruited via smartphone. However, in the case of online shop businesses, the workers are not always recruited via smartphones. This research found that most owners of SMBOSs, especially in the

fashion and food sectors, recruit their workers via informal labor agency or other workers' network (Interviews 5, 6, 8, 10, 16, 18). In this case, the SMBOS owners recruit the workers based on the information from workers at their SMBOSs or other SMBOSs.

As explained earlier, besides logistics and online based-warehouse marketplace companies, *konveksi* reap the benefit from the rise of online shop businesses. In the fashion business, the owners of the SMBOSs choose to outsource the production process in order to create, as noted by Bonacich, et. all (2008, p. 15), 'the flow from sale to ordering to production to shipping and to the next sale should occur in one smooth motion', as well as to minimize their business risk. In this case, most of the owners of the SMBOS in the fashion sector have working relationships with *konveksi* (Interviews 2, 10, 18). Accordingly, some online stores owners sell their products through the online based-warehouse marketplace companies such as *Tokopedia* or *Shopee*, among others (Interviews 1, 14, 18, 19, 20).

The surplus-value extraction in this partnership system is the same as what is happening in the retail business in general in which 'they are in the position of telling manufacturers what consumers are actually buying and therefore what the manufacturers should produce when they should produce it, and sometimes, at what price' (Bonacich & Wilson, 2008, p. 6). The only difference is the production site: in online stores, production usually occurs at the *konveksi*, whereas in traditional retail businesses, it occurs at traditional factories.

Accordingly, the *konveksi* workers receive an output-based or '*borongan*' wage; that is, they receive financial compensation based on the amount of targeted output which they can deliver. It means that their actual wage does not include insurance or other social protections (Interviews 2, 10, 18). Many SMBOSs also deliver their products to their customers using ride-hailing applications such as *Grab* or *Go-Jek*. Again, informality is at play and visible in this business, in the intersection between the distribution logistics sector and the gig

economy. This informality becomes a primary feature of the SMBOSs, especially in terms of their product delivery methods.

In this case, it can be said that the emergence of precarious jobs in online shop businesses is the nature of the business itself (Stanford, 2017). Thus, workers of online shop businesses have the same working condition as their counterparts in the gig economy (Srnicsek, 2017). In this light, there are differences within the workers in the online shop businesses—first, the workers who own the SMBOS and work as products reseller in their SMBOS. Secondly, the workers hired by SMBOS owners such as social media administrators or factory-like assembly line workers. The workers in the *konveksi* cannot be categorized as workers in the online shop businesses since they are also usually working for retail companies who divert the production process from factories and outsource *konveksi* for running the production process.

Given the lack of government regulation and the newness of the online business sector, technically these SMBOSs and jobs provided by them are still categorized as part of the informal economy. However, more recently, the Indonesian government has started to regulate them (Arieza, 2018; Bosnia, 2018; Kontan.co.id, 2018; Kusuma, 2018). Nevertheless, the Indonesian government is still at the stage of collecting data of these new online business shops (kumparanBISNIS, 2017), meaning that a proper regulation on this matter is still in the making. This regulatory move is interesting since the government is also simultaneously promoting digital entrepreneurship through a campaign called ‘the National Movement of 1,000 Digital Start-Up’ (trans.) (1000 Start Up Digital.id, 2018), indicating the state’s awareness of the sector’s economic potentials. However, the newest development shows that the government tend to neglect workers’ rights aspect in the employment regulation as it can be seen in the Omnibus Bill plan (Adrian Wail Akhlah, 2020). In this case, the Omnibus bill will regulate all workers in all employment sectors, including online businesses (Rachman, 2019).

Moreover, just like workers in the gig economy, such as those working for the ride-hailing companies or *cognitariat* in the creative industry, it is challenging to organize workers at the online shop businesses precisely because of their flexible working arrangements. With such conditions, it is hard to organize the workers since there is no exact workplace nor exact working time. That, in turn, creates a severe condition to organize the workers for a big meeting, let alone forming a union. Some efforts to unionize these non-traditional workers have been taken. For example, an Indonesian union called SINDIKASI has started to organize workers, including freelancers in the so-called creative industry (C2oLibrary.net, 2018; Interview 17). However, until now, in general, there is no significant attempt from Indonesian unions to organize workers in online shop businesses, especially in the SMBOSs.

### **SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND FEMINIZATION OF WORK IN INDONESIA’S SMBOS**

As explained in the previous sections, flexibility, as one of the main features of the platform capitalism, allows everyone to run or work at the online shop businesses from anywhere, including their residence. Hence, the ‘flexibility’ of working space and time motivates many women to join the online shop businesses. In this part, this article points out that this flexibility has a significant impact on the ‘women’s work’, especially concerning the characteristics of their work in the social reproduction realm. In this case, as the home becomes the first working place in the SMBOS, social reproduction work becomes crucial in shaping ‘women’s work’ in the online shop businesses. Moreover, this paper highlights that there is an ongoing process of feminization of work in the businesses, which further shapes the ‘women’s work’ in Indonesia’s SMBOS.

In Indonesia, most of the women who run and work at their SMBOSs are housewives and young women who work for themselves and their family. Some of them have full-time jobs at home as housewives; some of them have

day jobs while taking care of their families and work at the online stores as resellers; and others are young women who have regular jobs without the burden of social reproduction task (Interviews 1-20).

This research shows that women's responsibility for social reproduction work determines the 'women's work' at the SMBOSs. It can be seen in the fact that the housewives who own online stores in their social media accounts are generally still seen as housewives and not as workers. To give some illustration, one informant sees herself as a housewife rather than a worker even though she spends up to eight hours a day in operating her SMBOS as a reseller (Interview 13).

Their works at the SMBOSs, which are mostly reproductive tasks, are often seen as 'nurturing' instead of real jobs. It is because 'women's work' including social reproduction work at home is often not acknowledged as work (Hopkins, 2017). It overlooks the fact that staying at home doing social reproduction work, is also a job (Folbre, cited by Graeber, 2018). In any case, despite their de facto contribution as breadwinners, women are never considered as such; instead, they are still seen as the second earners in their households.

Additionally, most of the informants in this research said that they decided to get involved in online shop businesses because of their husbands' refusal to help them with various kinds of social reproduction tasks at home. In other words, they want to escape the patriarchal oppression at home, at their own family. In other cases, they want to lessen their financial dependence on their husbands (Interviews 1, 2, 7, 10, 11, 13). Moreover, some of the informants said that they need a job outside their domestic chores. They point out that they need that job to keep their sanity and fight their feeling of isolation. As pointed out by one informant, 'it is hard to finish domestic work without doing other things' (Interview 2).

Some informants who work at and run their own SMBOSs including those who work as resellers said that the online shop business is the only way through which they can divert their

burden in the unpaid domestic work at home (Interviews 2, 11, 13). Through the SMBOSs, women can interact with other people who supply the products, chat with their customers, and have other social interactions outside the home. It allows them to have lives outside of their chores.

Moreover, since not every customer has trust in an online transaction, many transactions are also conducted through the so-called COD or 'cash on delivery' system (Interviews 6, 7, 12, 13). In this mode of transaction, the seller or reseller and the customer finish their online transaction in an offline mode. In this case, their interaction with customers has helped the housewives to cope with isolation at home.

Another exciting development in the online shop business is the fact that some women decided to resign from their regular jobs so they can fully concentrate on their work at the SMBOSs and taking care of their families at the same time (Interviews 2, 4, 5, 18). Relatedly, the 'mompreneur' concept also strengthens the idea that housewives should focus on their household chores while running their businesses (Interviews 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18).

It is especially true for women who had office jobs previously but could not afford to hire nannies or pay for daycare facilities. This 'crisis of care' under capitalist society has externalized social reproduction work, a critical process in capital accumulation, to the family institution (Fraser, 2017, p. 21). More often than not, the responsibility for social reproduction work falls on women (Federici, 2014; Fraser, 2017; Mohandesi et al., 2017). The new job opportunities provided by the emergence of the online shop businesses allow them to work at the SMBOSs—especially as resellers and drop-shippers—while taking care of their families simultaneously.

The time and space flexibility in the online shop businesses has made many women think that they can earn money by working at the SMBOSs while completing their domestic tasks at home. However, with the flexibility dimension at the SMBOS, there are no exact working hours for each day, since they have to compete in the business to attract more customers. In this



case, their income and revenue are determined by the transaction they make. Furthermore, determined by extension, the intensity of their interaction with the customers, it also can be time-consuming (Interviews 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 18).

Hence, their involvement in the business has made it even more difficult for them to balance their work. In this case, both at the SMBOSs and their social reproduction work or domestic tasks at home (Interviews 2, 11, 13). Some informants highlight that the online store business, just like any other business, needs serious attention. As one of the interlocutors points out, 'it is hard to balance my work as a reseller and a drop-shipper at the online shop business and my work at home for my children and husband. It is difficult. I think we need to sacrifice either the family or the online store if we want to succeed' (Interview 2).

A particular exception is the upper-class women, who can hire household workers and other workers to work for their SMBOSs. It is not so surprising that they can balance their SMBOS and social reproduction work at home at the same time. Moreover, in some cases, the SMBOS owners utilize their nannies or household assistants to be workers in their SMBOSs (Interviews 5, 7, 18). They are usually employed as the cooks in the homemade cooking businesses. In other cases, the SMBOS owners employ their family members to work at their SMBOSs (Interviews 1, 4, 8, 12, 16). These workers are overworked, and yet they are underpaid. It shows the many different layers of experience behind the notion of flexibility in 'women's work' at SMBOSs and platform capitalism more generally.

Moreover, this paper found that some of SMBOS owners—who are also women—treat their employees in a very exploitative manner by putting them under long and excessive working hours with insufficient wages and protections. In some cases, many SMBOS employees live at the owner's house. The owner shelters them—mostly not in the best room/accommodation—but, they are not paid a proper wage. It shows how the notion of home legitimizes and

perpetuates poor working and living conditions for the SMBOSs' workers.

Accordingly, this paper found that economic difficulties have become one of the main reasons for women's involvement in online shop businesses (Interviews 1, 2, 11, 13, 15). Under capitalism, the burden of social reproduction work has impoverished women. In the capitalist society women 'had almost no access to wages, thus being forced into a condition of chronic poverty, economic dependence, and invisibility as workers' (Federici, 2014, p. 75). It is because social reproduction work has been reformulated as a hidden work with 'love' and 'virtue' as its primary remuneration (Fraser, 2017, p. 23; Staples, 2007)

At the same time, it is also hard for women to access jobs outside their home because they are seen to be responsible for social reproduction work at home. Thus, online shop businesses, particularly the SMBOSs, become a primary option for them. Most of the housewives work as sellers or resellers using their SMBOSs. Here, we can see an ongoing process of feminization of work where patriarchal norms and material or economic necessities force women to join the labor market—in this case, the SMBOSs (Mezzadri, 2016).

Furthermore, this article found that some of the SMBOS owners who partner up with some *konveksi* tend to recruit women workers at their SMBOSs because of their perceived flexibility in terms of working time and payment rate. In a parallel development, some rural women migrants also ended up working at online shop businesses as workers, especially in the fashion sector. In this case, the feminization of work happens in the sense that most of the recruited workers are women workers who have been subjected to poor working conditions and patriarchal norms since the beginning of their recruitment processes, a condition that continues at their workplaces (Ibid.).

## CONCLUSION

The epoch of platform capitalism began in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. It coincided with the strengthening of the logistics revolution and riding this latest phase of capitalist transformation; the capitalists create a new way to maximize the accumulation process. The intersecting dynamics between these two phenomena can be seen in the emergence of online shop businesses, including the SMBOSs. Indonesia, which has one of the most significant numbers of internet users around the world, is one of the most compelling cases of the growth of the online shop business sector.

Many new forms of work have emerged in the sector and affected the new informalities in this realm. Some new forms of work which emerged in the SMBOSs are product reselling, online store administration, and SMBOS factory-like assembly line production processes. The absence of regulations to protect workers, the guise of flexibility, and the deceiving notion of entrepreneurship shape informality in the online shop businesses. No exact allocation of working hours in this business also means that workers end up working long hours. Hence, workers in this sector tend to be underpaid, unprotected, and unorganized.

Another implication of this flexible arrangement of work at the online shop businesses is the emergence of the home as a central working space. It then shapes women's work in the business. Amidst the "crises of care", many women get involved in the online shop businesses, aspiring to earn income while still taking care of the social reproduction work at home. However, the time-consuming nature of reproductive work at the SMBOS combined with pressure from business competition has made it difficult for the women's workers to balance their work and domestic tasks. Nevertheless, this research has shown that there are multiple business models, and thus it is not possible to make blanket statements across all of the businesses. For example, upper-class women at businesses can hire nannies and household assistants. It explains why they can balance their domestic work and work at the SMBOS.

At the same time, work modes at SMBOSs, which are mostly reproductive labor such as interacting with the customers through online chat, are often seen as 'nurturing' instead of real jobs. It is because 'women's work' including social reproduction work at home is often not acknowledged as work. The feminization of work in this sector occurs, starting from the recruitment process of women as workers for the SMBOSs. Under this feminization of work, the women workers also work under poor working conditions.

The Indonesian government then needs to make a precise regulation in the online shop businesses to protect their workers, mostly women, who are usually under-represented both in policymaking processes and unions. For further research, this paper recommends a thorough investigation of new forms of works in online shop businesses to support union's activities to organize workers in this business.

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