



A Phenomenological Study of Women's Expectations: Intrapersonal Communication in Living Dual Roles

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Intrapersonal communication; Dual roles; Self-reflection; Working mothers; Life goals

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of intrapersonal communication in increasing awareness among mothers who hold dual roles as both housewives and workers. The study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The subjects of the study are working mothers who also perform household roles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, then analyzed using thematic techniques. The results of the study indicate that intrapersonal communication plays a crucial role in enhancing mothers' awareness of their aspirations. Family support also plays a role as an external factor that strengthens the internalization of these aspirations. The conclusion of this study demonstrates that intrapersonal communication is a proven important pillar in helping mothers achieve their life goals within the context of dual roles. This research contributes to the study of personal communication and provides practical recommendations for empowering women within families and society.

Kata Kunci

Komunikasi intrapersonal; Peran ganda; Refleksi diri; Ibu pekerja; Tujuan hidup

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran komunikasi intrapersonal dalam membangun kesadaran cita-cita ibu yang menjalani peran ganda sebagai ibu rumah tangga dan pekerja. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Subjek penelitian adalah ibu bekerja yang juga menjalankan peran rumah tangga. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif, lalu dianalisis menggunakan teknik tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran komunikasi intrapersonal memainkan peran penting dalam memperkuat kesadaran cita-cita ibu. Dukungan keluarga juga berperan sebagai faktor eksternal yang memperkuat internalisasi cita-cita tersebut. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi intrapersonal terbukti menjadi pilar penting dalam membantu ibu mencapai tujuan hidupnya dalam konteks peran ganda. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian komunikasi pribadi dan menawarkan rekomendasi praktis untuk pemberdayaan wanita dalam keluarga dan masyarakat.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of women, especially as mothers, has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades (Andriana, 2024). In the past, mothers were primarily seen as caregivers and homemakers; however, their roles have evolved into multifaceted ones today. Mothers are not only managing domestic affairs but are also individuals with personal aspirations, dreams, and professional roles they wish to achieve. This shift marks a more complex role for mothers, where they are actively involved in both the domestic sphere and public, social, and professional realms (Silitonga et al., 2025).

One indicator of this change is the increasing participation of women in the workforce and the growing financial capabilities of mothers (Rofi, 2023). A Snapcart survey conducted in July 2025 showed that 63% of mothers in Indonesia can independently meet their children's needs. This fact underscores that the role of mothers is no longer solely dependent on their partners but involves active participation in fulfilling family needs. This situation impacts the shifting orientations, expectations, and personal ambitions of mothers. In this context, mothers face the challenge of balancing domestic responsibilities with professional roles while maintaining their individual identities and personal aspirations.

The phenomenon of mothers' dual roles has been the focus of numerous studies. Sari (2022) found that working mothers with families need to actualize themselves according to their personal desires, in addition to fulfilling their domestic duties and child-rearing responsibilities. This shows that mothers do not see themselves solely as executors of family duties but also as individuals who have the right to grow and develop. Another study by Simanjuntak and Ginting (2023) confirms that homemakers in Medan must manage dual roles within the family and society, which impacts their daily activities and routines.

However, most studies on the dual role of mothers still focus on external dimensions. Topics such as workload, social functions, and the contributions of mothers to family welfare are often the primary focus (Ramadhani, 2016; Afrizal & Lelah, 2021; Yare, 2021; Jalil & Tanjung, 2020; Zuhdi, 2019). In contrast, internal aspects such as mothers' awareness of their personal ambitions, self-reflection processes, and how they communicate with themselves have not been extensively explored. However, this internal understanding is crucial for understanding how a mother navigates her life amidst the complexities of dual roles. This is the research gap that needs to be addressed in this study.

In communication studies, intrapersonal communication is understood as an internal process in which individuals engage in self-talk, reflection, or dialogue (Jermias et al., 2024). Through this process, individuals assign meaning to their personal experiences while also processing their identity and self-concept. The self-concept theory explains that a person's identity is shaped by their perceptions of who they are, the values they hold, and the social roles they play. Thus, intrapersonal communication is not just a thinking process, but also a means of reflection that helps build deeper self-awareness.

In the context of mothers, intrapersonal communication plays a crucial role. This process helps them identify life priorities, understand the meaning of the dual roles they play, and navigate the conflict between personal aspirations and domestic responsibilities. When a working mother faces a dilemma between continuing her career and giving her family full attention, intrapersonal communication can help her weigh her decisions, find balance, and maintain emotional stability (Putri et al., 2022). Self-reflection, personal evaluation, and self-talk become internal mechanisms that enable mothers to clarify their life goals.

Although there is a considerable amount of research on the dual roles of mothers, studies on mothers' internal awareness of their own aspirations remain relatively limited, especially in Indonesia. Most studies still emphasize external aspects, such as mothers' involvement in household economic activities, division of labor, and the social implications of these dual roles. However, a crucial question to ask is how mothers consciously formulate their personal aspirations, and how intrapersonal communication plays a role in this process.

In other words, this study focuses on the analysis of intrapersonal communication, including self-reflection, personal evaluation, and self-talk, as a means to facilitate mothers' awareness of their life

goals. Additionally, this study examines the social, economic, cultural, and psychological factors that influence this awareness process. The Indonesian context, rich in cultural values, gender norms, and diverse family dynamics, provides an interesting space to expand the discussion on this issue.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of intrapersonal communication in building awareness of the aspirations of working mothers who juggle dual roles and identify the factors that support and inhibit it. This research is expected to make a significant academic contribution to the development of communication studies, particularly in the area of intrapersonal communication, while also providing practical recommendations to support women's empowerment in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to understand the meaning that individuals (mothers/women) attach to their aspirations, life goals, and the intrapersonal communication processes that accompany them. Qualitative research enables researchers to thoroughly explore the subjective experiences of respondents, providing a holistic understanding of their perspectives. The study was conducted in September 2025 in the Imopuro Subdistrict, Metro Pusat District, Metro City, with a focus on the Paguyuban Sahabat Kader community.

The research subjects are women/mothers who perform dual roles, namely as housewives while also engaging in public activities (working or organizing). Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: aged 25–50 years, married with children, and active in public activities. A total of 10 informants were selected from the members of Paguyuban Sahabat Kader. The objective of this research is to understand women's awareness of their personal aspirations and the intrapersonal communication processes (self-reflection, self-talk, personal evaluation) that influence their understanding of these aspirations.

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher themselves, serving as the key instrument, assisted by a semi-structured interview guide, non-participant observation sheets, and documentation notes. The stages of the research include preparation, which involves preparing the interview guide, observation, and identifying informants; conducting in-depth interviews to explore the experiences, self-reflection, and personal meanings of the informants' aspirations; non-participant observation during the interviews to note verbal and non-verbal expressions; and documentation in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, and personal documents (if any) used to strengthen the data.

Data analysis uses the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, namely the selection, focusing, and simplification of interview and observation data; data presentation, in the form of thematic narratives, tables, or matrices to facilitate interpretation; and drawing conclusions and verification, conducted throughout the research process by relating the field findings to intrapersonal communication theory and the self-concept concept.

The validity of the data is tested using source and method triangulation. Source triangulation is achieved by comparing information from multiple informants, while method triangulation involves combining the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain a consistent and valid understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on in-depth interviews with ten working mothers who hold dual roles, several key findings were obtained regarding their personal aspirations, the forms of intrapersonal communication they use, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in the formulation of their life goals. These findings suggest that women's experiences in managing dual roles are not only influenced by domestic and public demands but are also closely tied to their ability to reflect on and construct personal meaning. In

line with the research by Anjassari and Widodo (2022), which highlights the communication relationship between career women and their families, the formulation of aspirations in working women often negotiates with surrounding social and cultural conditions.

First, the majority of respondents stated that they have personal aspirations, although the clarity and consistency of these aspirations vary. Some aspire to continue their education to a higher level, start an independent business, or provide the best education for their children. However, some mothers admitted to having difficulty articulating their aspirations concretely due to the significant domestic burden. This finding aligns with Damastuti's (2022) research, which suggests that the role of mothers in the family often limits the space for self-actualization, despite the awareness of life goals remaining. Therefore, it can be understood that the personal aspirations of working women are the result of a dialectic between internal motivation and the social structure that limits them.

Second, the most common forms of intrapersonal communication are self-reflection and self-talk. Self-reflection often arises when mothers face dilemmas between work and family, while self-talk serves as a means of self-reinforcement when dealing with the pressures of dual roles. Additionally, prayer or spiritual reflection also becomes a significant part of intrapersonal communication. This finding aligns with Nursida's (2025) research, which revealed that intrapersonal communication practices based on reflection and religiosity serve as coping mechanisms to reduce stress in women's domestic and public roles. Thus, intrapersonal communication is not merely an individual mental process but also serves as a form of social adaptation strategy.

Third, supporting factors for awareness of aspirations include partner support, financial independence, and access to education and training. On the other hand, inhibiting factors include time limitations, high domestic workload, and social norms that still place mothers as the primary caregivers. This phenomenon confirms Hapsari's (2025) study on mom shaming in Indonesia, which shows how social pressure places women in a subordinate position when they do not meet the expectations of the ideal mother role. Another study by Octavina (2024) emphasizes that symbolic interactionism can explain how social constructions of women's roles shape how mothers define their personal aspirations and life goals. Therefore, these supporting and inhibiting factors cannot be detached from the broader socio-cultural framework.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the awareness of aspirations, intrapersonal communication practices, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the formulation of working mothers' life goals is a complex dynamic. Working mothers continuously negotiate their identities, both with themselves and with their environment, to achieve the desired form of self-actualization. These findings reinforce the research by Pratama, Setiawan, and Nurjanah (2024), which emphasizes the importance of symbolic interaction in developing personal communication strategies, particularly for women who face the dual burden of roles. Thus, intrapersonal communication is a crucial pillar in building psychological resilience, while also serving as a medium for women's empowerment. The table below summarizes the main findings of the research.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

Main Theme	Example Informant Quote	Researcher Interpretation
Awareness of Personal Aspirations	"I want to continue my Master's degree, but it's often delayed because of household matters." (I3)	The mother is aware of her aspirations, but faces the obstacle of dual roles.
Positive Self-Talk	"When I'm tired, I always tell myself: I can do it for my children." (I4)	Intrapersonal communication serves as motivation.
Role Conflict	"Sometimes I'm confused, should I prioritize work or my children?" (I5)	Dual roles create a dilemma in prioritization.

Main Theme	Example Informant Quote	Researcher Interpretation
Family Support	"My husband fully supports me, so I dare to dream of having my own business." (I9)	External support strengthens awareness of personal aspirations.

The research findings indicate that most mothers are aware of their personal aspirations, although not all of them can articulate them clearly. This awareness reflects ongoing self-reflection about life direction, long-term goals, and hopes they want to achieve amidst the limitations of domestic and public roles.

In communication theory, this condition aligns with the concept of self-concept, which states that identity and individual goals are formed through self-reflection and social interaction experiences. Awareness of personal aspirations can also be explained through symbolic interactionism theory, which emphasizes that self-identity is shaped by the meanings constructed in daily interactions. In the context of mothers, these meanings emerge from the experience of being both a worker and a family caregiver.

The findings also reveal that intrapersonal communication plays a crucial role as a source of motivation. Informants who actively engage in positive self-talk and spiritual reflection tend to be more consistent in nurturing their aspirations. This supports DeVito's (2016) view that intrapersonal communication is the foundation for forming personal meaning, which directs behavior.

A clear example is shown by one of the informants, who stated that when feeling tired, she always reminds herself that the struggle is for the children. This phenomenon aligns with expectancy-value theory, which explains that an individual's behavior is determined by the expectations and value placed on a particular outcome. Thus, self-talk is not merely internal communication but also a mechanism for reinforcing values that drive concrete actions.

Furthermore, the religious dimension proves to be significant. Prayer becomes a form of intrapersonal communication that provides both peace and confidence in achieving aspirations. This supports Handayani's (2020) research, which found that prayer serves as a private space for women to build resilience in managing dual roles.

Role conflict emerges as a significant obstacle. Informants often face dilemmas when they must choose between their work responsibilities and the needs of their children. This is consistent with role theory, which asserts that individuals often experience tension when performing multiple social roles simultaneously.

Previous research also confirms this. Sari (2022) found that working mothers often need self-actualization, which can conflict with their domestic obligations. Simanjuntak and Ginting (2023) added that the complexity of dual roles can weaken women's capacity to focus on personal goals. This study enriches previous findings by highlighting that intrapersonal communication can serve as a third space, enabling mothers to navigate these role dilemmas.

The study also highlights that family support is a crucial factor that enables mothers to remain committed to their aspirations. Support from partners, children, and parents acts as validation of the mother's personal goals. This finding is consistent with developmental ecology theory, which posits that the family is the most influential microsystem in an individual's development.

One informant stated that she dared to dream of starting a business because she received full support from her husband. Such support is not only instrumental but also emotional, which strengthens the mother's belief in her abilities. Suwandi and Ratnasari's (2021) study also emphasizes that family support enhances the achievement of women's personal goals because it provides social legitimacy for the aspirations they hold.

The research findings can be summarized in the following conceptual model:

Dual Role of Mother → Intrapersonal Communication → Awareness of Aspirations → Articulation & Self-Actualization, with family support as a reinforcing factor.

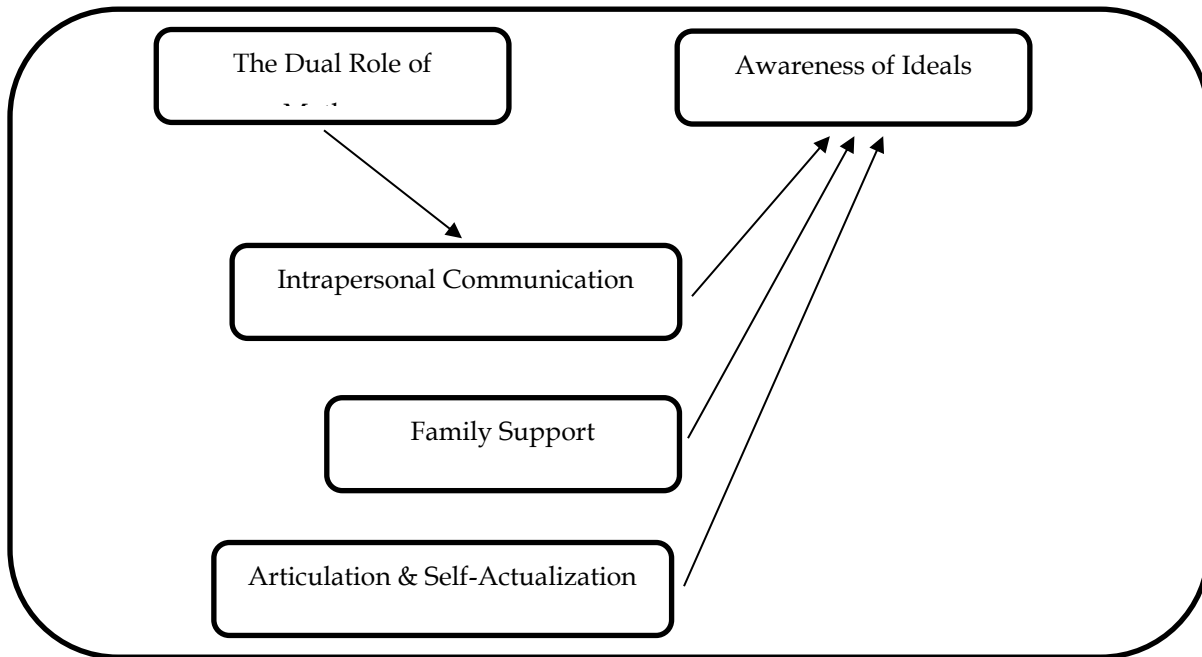


Figure 1. Conceptual Model Diagram

This model shows that the dual role encourages mothers to engage in intrapersonal communication, which then strengthens their awareness of aspirations. Family support acts as a moderating variable that enhances the reflection process, ultimately allowing these aspirations to be realized in real life.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of the role of mothers in modern society has created a stronger need for self-actualization. This role shift not only brings about a dual burden but also opens opportunities to expand self-awareness and formulate more diverse life goals. As a result of this change, mothers face new challenges in seeking a balance between domestic and public roles, but also have the chance to explore personal potentials that were previously underexplored. Intrapersonal communication, including reflection, self-talk, and prayer, has been proven to play a central role in this process. Mothers can affirm their life priorities and manage emerging role conflicts (Putri et al., 2022). This process allows mothers to continually update and align their life goals, despite the diverse demands in their daily lives.

The results of this study support the view that intrapersonal communication helps individuals give meaning to personal experiences and form their self-identity. In this case, mothers who perform dual roles, both in the domestic and public realms, use internal communication as an adaptive mechanism to nurture their aspirations amidst the complexity of these roles (Pujiati & Hayati, 2021). In other words, intrapersonal communication serves not only to resolve role conflicts but also as a means of reinforcing confidence and spirit in achieving broader life goals. In this context, mothers are not only struggling to meet the needs of their families but also striving to fulfill their personal needs and pursue self-actualization, which is often delayed.

Furthermore, the dual role of mothers not only presents a burden but also opens up opportunities for them to develop a broader sense of self-identity. Mothers' involvement in both the domestic and public spheres enables the formation of a more holistic identity, where the roles of mother, wife, and professional complement and enrich each other (Rumbekwan & Tanamal, 2022). This aligns with the self-concept theory, which states that self-identity is formed from self-perception, the values one

embraces, and the social roles one undertakes. The dual experience of mothers, who are involved in various life dimensions, enriches their self-understanding while strengthening their internal motivation to achieve a life balance.

When compared to previous research, this study offers a new perspective on the study of mothers' dual roles. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Simanjuntak and Ginting (2023), have primarily focused on managing dual roles within the family and society. This study, however, adds an internal dimension of personal awareness and intrapersonal communication, thereby contributing a new perspective to intrapersonal communication studies from a gender perspective. Thus, this research not only enriches our understanding of the dual role but also opens up space for further studies on how intrapersonal communication can support role balance in a gender context.

Theoretically, this research expands the understanding of intrapersonal communication, which has been underexplored in gender studies. It also introduces the integration of various theories, such as self-concept theory, symbolic interactionism, role theory, expectancy-value theory, and ecology, showing that mothers' awareness of their aspirations is shaped through a complex interaction between internal and external factors (Afni & Jumahir, 2020). These theories provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of mothers' dual roles in the context of social and cultural change.

Practically, this study emphasizes the importance of providing reflective spaces for mothers, enabling them to continue recognizing, nurturing, and realizing their aspirations. Family support, gender-friendly work policies, and inclusive social communities are key factors in maintaining balance between dual roles while enhancing the quality of women's lives. Therefore, policies and programs that support the dual role of mothers in both professional and domestic life should be prioritized, so that mothers can continue to grow and achieve more meaningful life goals without sacrificing their well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that intrapersonal communication plays a crucial role in shaping the awareness of personal aspirations among working mothers who perform dual roles. Through self-reflection, self-talk, and prayer, mothers can manage role pressures and affirm their life direction and personal goals. Awareness of aspirations does not emerge instantly but is formed through a continuous reflective process between internal motivation and the influence of the surrounding social environment. The findings show that the dual role is not only a source of burden but also a space for identity formation and self-actualization. Working mothers actively negotiate their identity through intrapersonal communication, which strengthens their self-concept and personal meaning in the roles they undertake. Family support serves as a reinforcing factor, enabling mothers to sustain and achieve their aspirations in real life.

Theoretically, this study confirms the connection between self-concept theory, symbolic interactionism, role theory, expectancy-value theory, and ecological theory. The integration of these theories shows that mothers' awareness of their aspirations is shaped through a complex interaction between psychological and social factors. This study is important as it provides new insight that self-reflection and internal communication are not just personal activities but adaptive strategies that help women survive and thrive amidst social demands and oppressive cultural structures. Thus, intrapersonal communication should be viewed as a pillar of psychological resilience as well as a means of empowering women to navigate their dual roles in a balanced and meaningful way.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that future research expand its scope by involving more participants from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and utilize a quantitative approach to measure the relationship between intrapersonal communication, awareness of aspirations, and self-actualization. For institutions and policymakers, it is essential to develop training and psychosocial support programs that encourage self-reflection and role balance for working mothers, thereby optimizing intrapersonal communication as a source of strength and mental well-being. Meanwhile, for

society and families, it is essential to provide consistent emotional and social support to women in dual roles, as this support has been proven to strengthen their confidence, motivation, and awareness of personal goals. Thus, this research not only contributes theoretically to the development of communication science, especially in the study of intrapersonal communication and gender, but also offers practical implications for empowering women through enhanced self-reflection and ongoing social support.

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