

# Agency Dilemma and the Existence of Women Coffee Workers in Jember

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the agency and existence of women coffee workers in Jember through café and coffee shop practices, using Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, namely habitus, and forms of capital. A qualitative approach was used to explore the gender dimensions, legitimacy, and cultural dynamics that distinguish café and coffee shop practices that allow women to thrive. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, and analyzed using a thematic approach. The results showed that women in cafés tend to have high cultural capital through mastery of modern coffee-serving techniques and service aesthetics, thereby creating bourgeois legitimacy. In contrast, women in coffee shops rely on community-based social capital to build interpersonal relationships that create popular legitimacy. Masculine and feminine dimensions also influence coffee consumption practices, with male customers demonstrating cultural dominance by expecting female service. Although women in cafés are often seen as an aesthetic element that enhances the place's attractiveness, their habitus remains a decisive factor in the business's success. In coffee shops, more informal relationships reflect local traditions that strengthen customer loyalty. This research concludes that women's agency in the coffee sector is strongly influenced by the habitus played in the doxa of coffee aena. As such, café and coffee shop practices reflect differences in bourgeois and popular legitimacy relevant to social and cultural dynamics in Jember.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to understand the agency and existence of women coffee activists in Jember by examining diverse practices observed across cafés and coffee shops. Culturally, making coffee and serving it has long been the domain of women for men. The preparation of coffee, which traditionally occurs within the confines of the private domestic sphere, has historically been regarded as a domain that is typically challenging to disrupt. The transition of this practice into public spaces necessitates strategic adaptation to align with prevailing economic logic. Frequently, such establishments are characterized by their female service staff and predominantly patronized by male consumers. The industry's commodification of coffee and its attendant service models offer insights into the intertwined dynamics of gender and coffee. Examining this phenomenon reveals the significance of women and coffee as critical variables that cannot be disaggregated from natural and cultural influences. The following points are salient. Firstly, a general trend of increasing numbers of women working as baristas is observable and concomitant with the growing awareness of gender equality in the coffee industry. This phenomenon also feeds into the second factor, in which stereotypical female baristas are often placed in customer service roles rather than technical coffee-making positions. Secondly, customers may subconsciously prefer female baristas, which may influence hiring practices (Asekar, 2025). Thirdly, female baristas compete in latte art competitions

despite the challenges they face. They demonstrate their skills and expertise through their wins in these competitions (Inge, 2022). Fourthly, coffee shops increased from 35 in 2022 to 106 in 2019. In 2019, the Summersari sub-district in Jember had the highest number of coffee shops, around 106, compared to other sub-districts (Martiana, 2020). The fifth component pertains to individual competence. Numerous articles have been published that feature female baristas from the Jember region, showcasing their prowess. However, it is noteworthy that "beautiful" remains the predominant keyword (Radar Digital, 2024).

This phenomenon exemplifies an intriguing interplay between habitus, social, economic, and cultural capital within a sociological theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 2018). Within this paradigm, women frequently occupy pivotal roles in the operation of cafés and coffee shops, both as employees and as activists. This role prompts the question: is women's dominance in this sector driven more by professional competence or gender visualization?

Pierre Bourdieu (1985) explains that habitus influences the way individuals and groups act based on their structures and capital. Different social, economic, and cultural capital between cafés and coffee shops in Jember is a determining factor in the legitimacy achieved by women coffee activists. Cafés tend to provide bourgeois legitimacy through aesthetics and menu innovations that involve high cultural capital, while coffee shops provide popular legitimacy through affordable prices and interactions based on social capital. Pierre Bourdieu explains that habitus is the result of the internalisation of social structures that are reflected in individual actions and choices (Warner et al., 1985). Habitus includes not only daily habits but also cultural preferences, including in the context of coffee consumption culture in cafés and coffee shops in Jember. Hence, an individual's preference for something, such as the choice of where to consume coffee, is often rooted in social structures and capital. Cafés, for example, represent a more "bourgeois" taste, emphasising aesthetics, menu innovation, and an atmosphere that supports a certain social class.

In the context of social capital, as described in *Reproduction in Education, Culture and Society* (Erben et al., 1979) social capital also applies for women in cafés to utilise their social networks to expand their market and create a more personalised customer experience. This capital is instrumental in maintaining customer loyalty. In contrast, women in coffee shops rely more on strong community relationships, which reflect local habitus and popular legitimacy.

Cultural capital acquired through education and training becomes an important marker in cafés, where women workers must understand modern coffee serving techniques and international menus. This is relevant to Bourdieu's view in *Homo Academicus* (1990) where he mentions that one's social position is not only determined by economic capital but also by cultural symbols, such as professional skills.

Bourdieu explains that social practice reflects the internal structure of the individual that is aligned with the external structure of society (Bourdieu, 1992). In this context, women who work in cafés tend to represent a more complex social structure because they operate in an environment that demands professionalism and aesthetics. Meanwhile, in coffee shops, the simpler external structure allows women to utilise the closeness of the community as the main social capital.

Bourdieu also emphasises the importance of symbolic power (Buchanan et al., 1993). In cafés, this symbolic power is seen through the image of women who not only act as waitresses but also as "brand ambassadors" who strengthen the appeal of the business to customers. However, in coffee shops, symbolic power is more visible in direct, egalitarian interactions with customers.

Bourdieu emphasises that habitus, capital, and arena are interrelated in producing certain social structures (Bourdieu, 2013). In the context of women coffee activists, the café arena is more complex because it involves various capitals (cultural, social, and economic) to create bourgeois legitimacy.

In contrast, the coffee shop arena reflects more popular legitimacy based on familiarity and local traditions.

Understanding the agency and existence of women coffee activists in Jember cannot be separated from the interaction between habitus, capital, and arena, as described by Pierre Bourdieu. Women who work in cafés tend to have higher cultural capital and are involved in more complex social arenas, while women in coffee shops rely more on community-based social capital. The resulting legitimacy is also different: cafés tend to gain bourgeois legitimacy, while coffee shops gain popular legitimacy.

From a gender perspective, there are masculine and feminine dimensions that influence both café and coffee shop practices. Culturally, men are often perceived as wanting to be served in enjoying coffee, both in cafés and in *warung*, which adds to the masculine impression of male customers. Masculinity is often defined through activities that reinforce men's dominant position, including through the consumption of services that involve women (Connell & Wood, 2005).

On the other hand, women who serve often do not realize that they are in the role of servants, both professionally and culturally. Although some female workers are attractive, this does not necessarily guarantee business success if service competencies are not met. The cultural capital possessed by women, such as communication skills and knowledge of coffee, is crucial in maintaining the business. Therefore, women's existence in this sector depends not only on gender visualisation, but also on their effectiveness in providing good services.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand the agency and existence of women coffee activists in Jember through the exploration of habitus, social, economic, and cultural capital in café and coffee shop practices. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is relevant to the research objectives that focus on exploring subjective experiences and complex social interactions. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meaning behind social actions and structures through holistic and interpretative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017)

This research uses a case study design to deeply explore the practices of cafés and coffee shops in Jember. Case studies are suitable for understanding phenomena in specific contexts, especially when those phenomena have many interrelated social and cultural dimensions (Creswell & Poth, 2024). This research focuses on two main arenas: cafés and coffee shops, each of which reflects different dynamics of capital and legitimacy.

The semi-structured interviews with women workers in cafés and coffee shops are to understand their experiences of habitus, social, economic and cultural capital. Some of the employees used as references are Aulia Norma from Fox Coffee who now works at Strada Coffee, Fitria from Warung Kopi Cakwang, Trisna from Warung ta Café and the perspective of the owner of the coffee shop in question. The interviews were designed to explore their subjective experiences in dealing with social expectations, including the masculine and feminine dimensions that influence their work. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in exploring important themes that emerge during the interview process (Denzin, 2011)

Researchers also conducted participatory observations in several cafés and coffee shops to observe the interactions between female workers and customers, as well as how their habitus is reflected in their daily practices. This technique was used to gain a direct understanding of the social context in which they work, as recommended by Saukko (2003) in cultural research.

Additional data was collected through analysing documents such as café menus, social media, and customer reviews to understand how cultural and symbolic capital is represented in each arena. This document analysis helped to enrich the qualitative data with broader context.

Data were analysed using a thematic approach. The researcher identified key themes relating to habitus, capital, legitimacy and gender. This process involved the steps of coding, categorisation and interpretation of data to find significant patterns. The analysis was conducted by considering Pierre Bourdieu's theory as the main analytical framework, so that data interpretation could be explained in the context of social, economic and cultural capital. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, researchers applied data triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the member checking process was carried out by asking respondents to verify the findings that had been produced.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that cafés reflect more bourgeois legitimacy through an emphasis on aesthetics, professionalism, and menu innovation oriented towards the upper-middle-class market. In contrast, coffee shops gain popular legitimacy by emphasizing tradition, familiarity, and affordable prices. Women involved in cafés have a habitus that supports cultural and economic capital, while in coffee shops, their habitus is more influenced by social capital. This research uses Pierre Bourdieu's theory to analyse the agency and existence of women coffee activists in Jember. The focus is to examine the habitus, social, economic, and cultural capital owned by women who work in cafés and coffee shops. Through a qualitative approach, data is collected from in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation to understand the masculine and feminine dimensions of these practices. The analysis also considers the dynamics of legitimacy, both bourgeois and popular, created by coffee culture practices in Jember.

#### 3.1 Habitus and Capital in Café and Coffee Shop Practices

##### 3.1.1. Habitus of Women in Café

Women who work in cafés tend to have habitus orientated towards aesthetics and professionalism. For example, many of them master modern coffee serving techniques and can speak to customers in a more formal language. This reflects the cultural capital acquired through education and training, as described by Bourdieu (1985). This habitus reflects the more complex social structure of the café, where customers expect high quality services and aesthetic experiences that suit bourgeois tastes (P Bourdieu, 1985). Cafés also require female workers to have good interpersonal communication skills. As described in *Reproduction in Education, Culture and Society* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), high cultural capital can create legitimacy in the eyes of customers. Women in cafés often use their self-image as part of the café's "brand image", which reinforces the visual appeal of the venue. However, this pressure to meet aesthetic expectations can lead to gender stereotyping, where female visualization takes precedence over professional competence.

In terms of habitus, women who work in cafés have diverse backgrounds, although many of them come from education that is not directly related to the coffee industry, but on average they are students at several universities in Jember. Some important points regarding the background of the average female barista are education and interpersonal skill. Aulia norma, a barista, was previously a student at the Universitas Jember. Although she did not initially aspire to be a barista, her interest in coffee and the environment around her led her to this profession, especially when gathering with several coffee communities that are specific in coffee brewing. This led Norma to move from several cafés such as Klab, Fox and until now in Jakarta with Strada Coffee. Norma's reasons for choosing to become a barista are often influenced by personal interest in coffee, social interaction, and economic

necessity (A. Norma, 2024)<sup>1</sup>. Living in the tradition of masculine organisations on campus made her flexible in entering the industry and community, which was driven by many male colleagues in her campus environment. This experience resonated with several other women who eventually managed to survive in the coffee world, starting from warung and then expanding to cafés and the centre of the coffee industry, Jakarta. Generally, women are interested in this because they earn a living and find satisfaction in this work despite the challenges and risks that must be faced, such as erratic working hours (Nurdin & Azman, 2022). This of course brings negative framing and certain gender perceptions as well. Surprisingly, the barista profession is increasingly attractive to women, they often face negative stereotypes and discrimination especially in Jember. Many customers still assume that women are less competent than men in this field. This creates a gap in professional recognition and division of labour in the workplace (Aldha M, 2019). Women fight the stigma by creating a forum that presents women coffee activists in Jember to show that women are included in various lines in the coffee industry ranging from café owners, business consultants, coffee roasters to baristas. Unfortunately, in the forum in terms of waitresses, women's voices were not raised even though these positions are also often filled by women. This means that specific and bourgeois legitimacy is very strong in the forum, because it is represented by women who are economically empowered and also have skills that are recognised by other coffee communities (jembercoffeguide, 2023). The specific legitimacy was born because the Women's barista competition also existed in Jember, thus strengthening recognition in terms of skills and showing a clearer career trajectory than a waitress (scaj\_jbr, 2024). Waitresses in fact have a certain class in the coffee industry arena. In terms of their role in marketing, the presence of women as baristas is also often used as a marketing strategy to attract customers, especially men. They are able to create a more welcoming atmosphere in the café (Islam & Utami, 2022). Not to mention that women's skills and tasks are sometimes gendered, with women often being more involved in customer service than in the technical aspects of coffee-making. This shows the ongoing gender division of labour in the industry. Overall, women baristas are bringing a new dynamic to the coffee industry, although they still face challenges related to gender and professional recognition.

### 3.1.2 Habitus of Women in Coffee Shops

In contrast, women in coffee shops or warung in general exhibit a more modest way of life, one that is deeply entrenched in the values of their local communities. They depend on social capital, such as close relationships with customers, to engender loyalty. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a manifestation of popular legitimacy, grounded in egalitarian interactions between waiters and customers. In Jember, the community plays a pivotal role in the coffee industry's growth (Abdul Basid, 2024). For instance, women in coffee shops frequently use the local language and interact with customers in a more informal manner. The boundaries become blur compare to café.

It is not surprising that the women who work in these coffee shops are either native to Jember or share the same regional customs and languages, such as Madurese and Javanese. Language and habit become important. Pratiwi Dwi Librana, a barista from Kawangrejo Village, Mumbulsari District, commenced her professional journey as a barista in 2021. Her interest in coffee first emerged during her online studies during the pandemic. Pratiwi, an accounting graduate from Muhammadiyah University, perceives her role as a barista as an opportunity to delve into her profound affinity for coffee. She intends to pursue professional certification in this domain (Radar Digital, 2024).

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<sup>1</sup>Norma, A. (2024). [Interview by Ghanesya].



Fitria another exemplifies this phenomenon but she performs more unique experience. She is from Situbondo, a graduate of the Visual Communication Design Vocational School, and she has garnered renown for her ingenuity in coffee blending and, most notably, her proficiency in coffee roasting. She initiated her professional journey at Cakwang, a coffee shop located on Jalan Jawa, which also served as the genesis of her coffee career. Her proficiency in madurese and her physical attractiveness, along with small tattoos in her arms attracted clientele, given that warungs are traditionally patronized by men. Despite her commendable roasting abilities, which she has meticulously cultivated, her tenure was not as prolonged as one might expect. This observation is corroborated by her colleagues and superiors. In a period of less than five years, due to a decline in sales, she was compelled to relocate. According to Ahda (2024), the warung model is predicated on a certain degree of familiarity between the customers and the proprietors. The community and its visitors are long-standing, and they demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty to the warung. This loyalty stems from the fact that sellers and buyers are familiar with each other. This dynamic has given rise to divergent perspectives. The informal humor and camaraderie that characterizes warung, a concept integral to Indonesian hospitality, are not universally embraced by those who engage in these practices, particularly those unaccustomed to such interaction patterns. This can be a source of fatigue and even disquiet for some individuals. For Fitria (2024), she perceives this as a purely occupational practice so she avoids any interpersonal interaction, thus it hinders her ability to thrive. Conversely, women who perceive coffee as a domain for seeking employment opportunities are ill-suited to the concept of a warung. The coffee industry's business model is distinct from that of warung or café operations as Dimas, Warung Dolly, suggests. Many female workers perceive this as a means of augmenting their earnings and utilizing their leisure time only, which is regarded as a non-serious endeavor. The sales aspect in warung fosters a strong bond between the worker and the customer so hospitality and familiarizing yourself with customers are significant. According to Ahda, the manager at Cak Wang, the barista positions at their establishment offer a salary range of Rp1 million to Rp2 million per month so regardless the gender anyone should make sales. Consequently, warung is occasionally perceived as a preliminary step and a trajectory for women who are committed to the coffee industry but exhibit a lesser degree of interest in customer interaction (2024). Fitria's professional trajectory, exemplified by her employment at Cakwang, subsequently led her to pursue opportunities at Café Cus Cus. This establishment, a recently inaugurated café in Jember, is a spin-off of a comparable enterprise in Malang. The prevailing perspective of warung as a mere space for mechanical work constitutes a significant misapprehension. Nevertheless, it can be argued that this establishment represents a commendable inaugural step in the endeavor to amass a substantial portfolio. Consequently, the establishment of a coffee shop for women in Jember signifies a noteworthy endeavor, through which women can demonstrate their capacity to cultivate sustainable careers in this domain, notwithstanding the challenges associated with gender in the profession. Dimas elucidated that a prevalent perception among workers, particularly women, is that employment in a coffee shop is not a serious occupation. To address this misperception, he was compelled to provide a comprehensive explanation of the work environment, which he incorporated into his job vacancy announcement (lokerjemberrek, 2025).

Coffee shops also demonstrate that their legitimacy is rooted more in community trust than in aesthetics or professionalism. This phenomenon has been previously theorized by Pierre Bourdieu in his seminal work *The Logic of Practice* (1992). The social practices observed in coffee shops reflect a simpler yet still functional external structure. Consequently, the social structure of women in coffee shops is indicative of a more traditional social order, wherein interpersonal relationships serve as the primary form of social capital.

### 3.2 Masculine and Feminine Dimensions in Coffee Practices

Women in Indonesia are trained to do domestic work, including serving coffee, due to social and cultural constructs that have long shaped gender roles. First, women's domestic roles plays in Indonesian society, women are often perceived to have primary responsibility for household chores such as cooking, serving food and drinks. This is reinforced by cultural norms that separate the roles of men and women, where men are more often associated with public or physical labour, while women with domestic duties ("Perempuan dan Industri Kopi Indonesia," 2020). This makes coffee indeed a typical domestic territory of women even though ultimately those who drink it are men. Women's intelligence in planting, harvesting, cooking and serving coffee certainly makes coffee a product produced from feminine intelligence which is then enjoyed by men with a strict masculine image (Kiranantika & Haryuni, 2020). Women's role in serving coffee as a feminine activity but the drink itself being considered masculine is the result of social construction that separates tasks based on gender. Meanwhile, coffee remains a strong symbol of masculinity in Indonesian culture.

#### 3.2.1. Masculinity of Male Customers

The culture of coffee consumption in cafés and coffee shops also reflects men's masculinity, where they are culturally often perceived as wanting to be served. Men who go to cafés or coffee shops reinforce their dominant position through the consumption of women's services. As Connell (2005) explains, masculinity is often demonstrated through activities that reinforce men's social status. In cafés, this is seen in the way male customers enjoy a sophisticated atmosphere, while in coffee shops, masculinity is demonstrated through informal interactions that support community solidarity. Coffee as a masculine drink, especially black coffee is often perceived as a symbol of male strength and masculinity. Ahda said that most male customers does not really care who makes their but if there is a woman who serves it, of course it makes him happier. They feel more appreciated. Most of them come for work and during tough time so they could more enjoy the coffee when the person serving it is a woman (2024). This perception stems from the stereotype that black coffee is the drink of hardworking, family-orientated, or successful men. The confession of Ahda, the manager of *cak wang*, indeed corroborates this, women do make the atmosphere of the shop more crowded unconsciously because there is a nuance of friendlier service when those who serve and make coffee are women. In Indonesian popular culture, coffee is also associated with intellect and masculinity (Anjani, 2023; Anjani & Hasmira, 2022; Hanafi et al., 2018; Sawitri & Yuziani, 2021). This makes coffee important for men not only in its social function but also in the way masculinity is created when coffee is served, especially for the women who serve it.

#### 3.2.2. Femininity in Women's Services

Women working in this sector often do not realise that they are actually in a service role with a cultural dimension. In cafés, women are often perceived as part of the aesthetic appeal of the venue, creating an image of modern femininity. However, as Saukko (2003) explains, this representation can be a form of objectification if their competence is not proportionally recognised.

In contrast, women in coffee shops are more often perceived as part of the community for their friendly and personalized interactions. This suggests that social capital is the dominant factor in creating popular legitimacy for women in coffee shops. Women are more patient when it comes to serving coffee or doing work that requires detail. This is seen in the coffee industry where women are often cast as cup tasters or workers in the processing of coffee beans due to their perceived patience and meticulous nature (Aldha M, 2019; Anjani & Hasmira, 2022; Nurdin & Azman, 2022).

Aulia's confession, regardless of gender, the job of baristas and waiters is to understand the habits of their customers. What coffee is preferred and very likely to ask if the coffee ordered by a regular visitor is not as usual. Hence, baristas and coffee servers should greet with a polite tone and can ask for how they are doing to break the ice. Aulia suggests that women have the sensitivity to see what the customer is experiencing since they walk in. The culture of service is significant for coffee shops but moreover it is also deep-rooted within the tradition, especially for women and coffee (Fauzy, 2022; Yuliandri, 2024). It is not strange why men go to coffee shops because they want to be served, because they can make coffee at home. But making coffee at home they feel unserved, and their masculine desires are not satisfied. The tradition of serving coffee to guests or husbands is also part of the cultural construction that reinforces the role of women as "servants" in the domestic sphere (Fauzy, 2022; Wardhana, 2025).

### 3.3 Cultural, Social, and Economic Capital in Coffee Practices

#### 3.3.1. Cultural Capital

Cultural capital plays an important role in differentiating practices in cafés and coffee shops. In cafés, high cultural capital is seen in women's ability to serve coffee with modern techniques and understand more diverse customer preferences. This capital gives the café bourgeois legitimacy, as described in *Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996). In coffee shops, cultural capital is simpler and rooted in local traditions. Women working in coffee shops often do not require specialised training, but they have knowledge of the local coffee consumption culture, such as the serving of kopi tubruk, coffee simple brewing. This creates popular legitimacy based on familiarity and affordability. From Aulia's confession, she feels that she benefits because she is well aware of how to communicate well in the Jember area. Her Javanese language with a distinctive mix of Madurese makes her easy to get along with the mostly male coffee communities. Being educated in the nuances of strong coffee activists and the rise of industrial coffee made Aulia more proficient in studying coffee. Not to mention that Jember is home to Indonesia's coffee and cocoa research centre (Purnomo, 2018) so knowledge about good quality coffee is widely circulated. Not only from the typical community chatter, Aulia can also verify the types of good coffee in Jember because there are labs provided, and several types of training opened up to certification.

#### 3.3.2. Social Capital

Social capital is a major factor in coffee shops, where interpersonal relationships with customers are key to success. Women in coffee shops often know their customers personally, which creates closer relationships and higher loyalty. In contrast, in cafés, social capital is used to create a wider network and expand the market through a professional and aesthetic image. So socially, the number of coffee drinkers, especially students from outside the region, makes *wakrung* and cafés more and more in Jember (Junaidi, 2023). Coffee communities to academies as well as specialised coffee study programmes are becoming important grounds for more networking (Kemdikbud, 2024). For coffee activists, this is certainly a promising thing. Fitri saw this as a first step where she learnt a lot initially with the coffee roastery community, then started her career at *cakwang* coffee shop to well-known coffee café brands such as *Cus Cus*. Social capital is important because each community and industry worker knows each other so it is easy to give recommendations to work in the place where they set up their business. Social capital glues together the strengths and weaknesses of individuals in the Jember coffee arena, making it relatively easy to distribute the right people in coffee work areas. Women become visible qualities where they have strengths that are judged by the way they work. This seems to be universal in any coffee arena for every worker regardless of gender (Fauzy, 2022). Social capital is a key factor in the development of a society, especially women, to put



their position in the arena and its struggles. Social capital is key for their existence within the coffee arena.

### 3.3.3. Economic Capital

Economic capital is more dominant in cafés, where women have to work within a more organised and profit-oriented structure. Cafés often utilise economic capital to increase the attractiveness of the venue through décor, innovative menus, and worker training. In coffee shops, economic capital is more limited, but the familiarity of the community is often a compensating factor in favour of business sustainability. With a relatively adequate income for student prices and flexible working hours, they can work with an income of 1 million to 2 million rupiah. Dhimas as the owner of the coffee shop even provides incentives that are enough to encourage both female and male workers (Dhimas, 2024)<sup>2</sup>. Women in this case have a good economic benefit for the shop because even in the cashier area they can attract many customers. It is proven that with 8 hours of work, a female employee can sell more than 100 cups of coffee and is entitled to more incentives for meeting more than the expected target. Good communication techniques, as well as knowing the habits of each customer are the main keys. Although it does not rule out the possibility of a beautiful and calm face being a persona that makes customers comfortable to return.

## 3.4 Bourgeois and popular legitimacy

### 3.4.1 Bourgeois Legitimacy in Café

Cafés create bourgeois legitimacy through aesthetics, professionalism, and menu innovation. Women working in cafés contribute to this bourgeois image through their ability to provide high-quality service and an exclusive customer experience. Aulia Norma proves that the bourgeois impression is indeed inherent in Strada Coffee where she works now where President Jokowi came in 2019 to the coffee academy class. As explained by Bourdieu (Warner et al., 1985), the preference for cafés often reflects higher social status. The stall certainly does not make the concept of aesthetics and knick-knacks important. Dimas, the owner of Dolly Coffee Shop, still sees that the minimalist function of the shop also needs to be considered because visitors, especially women, like to take pictures in the shop. Mirror is a priority for female visitors to take selfies and upload on their social media. This promotion is important, because woman sponsors the location of her café. Of course, cafés provide a better impression of legitimacy because there is a connotation that cafés are better and show higher social status. Warungs, on the other hand, still have a negative connotation. According to Trisna (2024), warungs are required to have a more elegant attitude than cafés. In terms of clothing and manner of speaking, it is recommended to put forward a small barrier between customers and employees<sup>3</sup>. Unlike the café, the conversation that is built contains more specific discourse about the coffee you want to order. Dimas saw this as something that needed to be addressed, so he changed the concept of his warung to have more comfort value like a café, but the warung-style presentation remains a strong signature. The interior elements chosen can also accommodate the two desired segments. Warung ta Café, Trisna's workplace has the same strategy, as she offers a concept that seeks to accommodate both segments, the youngsters and other specific community (Cafe, 2025). This is also why Trisna likes working at Warung ta Café, because the negative stigma is not strongly attached to her. This proves that the coffee class taxonomy is directly proportional to how women are positioned in the industry they work in, as Veblen said the lower

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<sup>2</sup>Dhimas. (2024). [Interview by Ghanesya].

class always tries to imitate the upper class or bourgeois (Veblen, 2019). Artisan-style work or workmanship in the industrial arts proves that indeed the desire to strengthen the position and the coffee industry is increasingly flexible, especially for the middle class, because it is a very fluid space (Veblen, 2004).

#### 3.4.2 Popular Legitimacy in Coffee Shops

In contrast, coffee shops create popular legitimacy rooted in tradition and affordability. Women in coffee shops play an important role in maintaining interpersonal relationships with customers, which creates trust and loyalty. This reflects the concept of symbolic power described by Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Buchanan et al., 1993) where interpersonal relationships become a source of power in the local context. Coffee shops or warung with a more technical concept provide strong popular legitimacy because the warung concept is inclusive and open to all groups, although there are types of class identities, namely students who are different from high school students, and creative workers, such as designers, event organisers or other allied jobs (warkop\_dolly, 2025). Popular legitimacy is embedded because café workers, especially women, often enter social media and get engagement and exposure, which leads to an increase in their social media followers and it happens. This mutual reciprocity is expected for coffee shops and workers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This analysis shows that the agency and existence of women coffee activists in Jember are strongly influenced by habitus, capital, and the social arena where they work. Women in cafés tend to represent high cultural capital and create bourgeois legitimacy, while women in coffee shops rely more on social capital to create popular legitimacy. The role of women in the coffee industry, especially in Jember, shows a complex dynamic between gender, social capital, and class existence. In this context, women with beauty privileges and adaptability in a masculine culture often have an advantage in surviving and thriving in the coffee industry. For example, Aulia Norma at Strada Coffee Jakarta is one example of a woman who has successfully navigated this challenge well.

In the social and cultural context, in Jember, the coffee industry is still dominated by masculine norms, where coffee shops often create a strict and masculine atmosphere. Meanwhile, modern cafés tend to offer a more feminine and bourgeois atmosphere. Women who want to pursue a career in this sector need to understand these differences and adjust to the dynamics. Those with strong social capital-such as good social networks, knowledge of the industry, and the ability to blend into masculine cultures-tend to be better able to survive and thrive.

The role of social and cultural capital is primary. Social and cultural capital are important factors in determining the trajectory of women's existence in the coffee arena. Women who not only have an attractive appearance but also the ability to interact with customers and understand the intricacies of coffee will be more easily accepted in the work environment. However, for those who rely solely on beauty without the support of strong social capital, their career journey could be hampered. For example, women with good skills but without adequate social networks may only be able to see coffee shops as a first step before moving on to higher-profile cafés.

Finally, gender dilemmas in the Jember coffee industry. The dilemma faced by women in the coffee industry reflects the culmination of social and cultural capital. The female persona is indeed the starting point to attract customers' attention, but if the services provided do not meet expectations or are unable to increase sales-especially in the context of men who consume services to fulfil masculine desires-then their presence will be difficult to accept, especially in the context of warungs. In this situation, class legitimacy becomes very important; women must be able to prove themselves not only as waiters but also as competent professionals.

In a coffee industry still dominated by masculine norms, women need to develop strong social and cultural capital to survive and thrive. Aulia Norma's success at Strada Coffee Jakarta shows that the combination of female privilege and adaptability in a masculine culture can create greater opportunities compare to other women workers who pursue popular legitimacy and not very much aware of the rule of the game in the arena. Agency is somehow could be less appreciated since they even let customer normalize their appearances as factor to survive within the coffee industry. However, it is important for all women to realize that their success depends not only on their physical appearance but also on the skills, knowledge and social networks they build.

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