

Men in Crisis: Gender Role Shifts in Urban Indonesian Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the shifting construction of masculinity in urban Indonesia amid rapid sociocultural transformation. Changes in economic structures, digital media expansion, gendered labor redistribution, and new moral expectations have collectively destabilized traditional masculine identities, creating psychological tension and social ambiguity for many men. Using a qualitative cultural analysis approach, this research synthesizes empirical literature, media representations, and sociocultural narratives to explore how urban men negotiate, resist, or adapt to evolving gender norms. Findings reveal that men experience significant identity conflict as they reconcile internalized patriarchal expectations with emerging egalitarian demands across family, work, and digital spheres. However, the analysis also identifies adaptive pathways in which men develop hybrid masculine identities that integrate emotional openness, shared caregiving, and collaborative partnership models. These adaptive forms demonstrate that masculinity crisis is not only a narrative of decline but also a catalyst for reconstructing more inclusive and relationally grounded male identities in Indonesia. The study highlights the importance of cultural literacy, emotional well-being, and institutional support in facilitating healthier gender transitions.

INTRODUCTION

Urban Indonesian culture has undergone profound transformation over the past two decades, and one of the most visible areas of change concerns the shifting roles and identities of men. The rapid expansion of urban middle classes, increased female labor participation, digital cultural flows, and accelerated modernization have collectively generated new social expectations for masculinity that challenge long-standing patriarchal norms. Studies indicate that Indonesian men in metropolitan areas now face



growing tension between traditional roles as primary economic providers and emerging expectations to participate in emotional labor, domestic caregiving, and egalitarian partnership structures, which generates identity destabilization for many men who were socialized under more rigid gender role regimes (Nugraha & Susilastuti, 2022). These changes can be observed across various social institutions, including the family, workplace, and digital media environment, where the negotiation of contemporary masculinity becomes increasingly complex amid competing pressures of religiosity, modernity, and globalized lifestyle trends (Saputra & Sulastri, 2024). The phenomenon is further sharpened in urban settings where exposure to global cultural scripts and consumer culture amplifies alternative masculine ideals, thereby heightening the sense of crisis among men who feel that their social positions are becoming ambiguous or diminished (Platt et al., 2018).

In Indonesia, the discourse of masculinity has historically been shaped by cultural norms emphasizing authority, stoicism, and breadwinning responsibility. Yet current demographic shifts reveal that these expectations are increasingly incompatible with the lived experiences of urban men. The rise of dual-income households, fluctuating labor markets, and the growing presence of women in previously male-dominated sectors have disrupted gendered occupational boundaries, compelling men to renegotiate their sense of purpose and identity within the family structure (Gaffar, 2019). Research shows that young men in Indonesian cities often express ambivalence as they try to harmonize traditional honor-based gender codes with the reality of women's increasing educational and economic mobility, resulting in heightened psychological stress and relational conflicts (Utomo, 2016). Moreover, the rapid diffusion of digital media is instrumental in framing new forms of masculinity that diverge from hegemonic norms, such as soft masculinity and domestically engaged fatherhood, which many men perceive as either liberating or threatening depending on their socio-cultural orientation (Fauzi, 2021). Urban Indonesian men thus inhabit a transitional historical moment in which conventional masculine privileges are destabilized while new models of male identity remain contested and unevenly accepted.

At the same time, sociological research indicates that global discussions on masculinity are increasingly characterized by narratives of crisis, vulnerability, and uncertainty. The notion of a masculinity crisis reflects anxiety about eroding male authority, declining economic power, and shifting expectations regarding emotional expression and caregiving, all of which contribute to the perception that men are losing their cultural centrality in society (Wojnicka, 2021). International scholarship highlights that such crises often emerge in contexts of rapid social transformation, where traditional gender hierarchies are destabilized by structural change and expanding gender equality agendas (Oláh et al., 2018). These dynamics resonate strongly in Indonesia, particularly within metropolitan environments where cultural globalization intersects with local values, creating hybrid masculine identities that combine religious devotion, modern aesthetics, and emotional sensitivity. Evidence shows that this hybridization often results in internal contradictions for men attempting to maintain coherence between personal aspirations and societal expectations, producing psychological strain that mirrors global trends in masculine insecurity (Jamil, 2025). Therefore, the Indonesian case forms part of a broader international phenomenon, yet it also retains unique characteristics shaped by national cultural norms, moral discourses, and the socio-religious landscape.

Another significant driver of masculinity transformation in Indonesia involves the redistribution of gendered labor within households. Economic shifts and rising living costs have increased the prevalence of families relying on dual incomes, and recent studies reveal that women's participation as primary or co-breadwinners is challenging deeply rooted norms of male economic dominance (Afdholul, 2025). As women increasingly occupy spaces of public leadership and economic independence, men are pushed to assume greater involvement in domestic tasks and emotional caregiving, a shift that disrupts traditional hierarchies of gender authority. Research has documented cases where Indonesian men adopt caregiving roles previously coded as feminine, such as in the experiences of male migrants who assume domestic responsibilities that transform their perception of masculinities (Utari, 2018). Such role reassignments often provoke ambivalence or resistance, particularly among men who remain committed to patriarchal ideals embedded in religious or customary beliefs, thereby intensifying the cultural disorientation associated with masculine identity reconstruction (Huda & Dodi, 2020). The shifting landscape of household responsibilities thus plays a critical role in shaping the contemporary crisis narratives surrounding Indonesian men.

Urban cultural spaces, particularly digital media platforms, have emerged as critical arenas where masculinity is reconstructed, performed, and negotiated. Indonesian media representations increasingly portray alternative male identities that embrace emotional expressiveness, aesthetic grooming, domestic engagement, and relational empathy, challenging the hegemony of traditional masculine models (Santoso, 2018). The proliferation of soft masculinity imagery in online spaces, influenced by East Asian pop culture and global youth aesthetics, has generated new masculine scripts that valorize vulnerability and gentleness rather than aggression or dominance (Fauzi, 2021). Such shifts often inspire adaptive identity formation among younger men but may also elicit insecurity, backlash, or confusion among those who perceive these portrayals as undermining traditional gender order. Furthermore, digital feminist and gender justice movements have amplified critiques of toxic masculinity, heightening social scrutiny of male behavior and pressuring men to align with progressive gender norms or risk being labeled as socially regressive (Salsabila et al., 2025). These developments illustrate the increasingly contested cultural terrain in which Indonesian men must navigate their identities.

Family dynamics have also become a significant site for observing masculinity in transition. Studies on gender-responsive family resilience demonstrate that households increasingly require cooperative partnership models where emotional support and shared responsibility are prioritized over hierarchical authority (Rinaldy, 2024). These expectations reshape men's roles within marriage, parenting, and kinship networks, pushing them to cultivate interpersonal competencies that were previously undervalued in patriarchal frameworks. Yet empirical findings suggest that many men struggle to adapt due to persistent cultural ideals that associate masculinity with strength, independence, and dominance, creating cognitive dissonance when they are expected to display softness, patience, and emotional vulnerability in familial contexts (Kartono et al., 2023). This tension highlights how shifts in family institutions intensify identity crises as men attempt to balance traditional expectations with new relational demands shaped by urban modernity.

Despite a growing body of research on gender transformation in Indonesia, significant gaps remain. Nugraha and Susilastuti's study titled "Peran Gender

Kontemporer di Indonesia” primarily maps broad changes in gender roles but does not specifically interrogate how urban men experience psychological crisis within these transitions. Utomo’s work “Gender in the Midst of Reforms” analyzes shifting attitudes among university students but does not examine adult male identity negotiation within urban family and work structures. Meanwhile, Maulana’s “House Husband: Evolution of Masculinity in the Modern Era” explores alternative caregiving masculinities but does not address how these forms intersect with digital media influences or urban cultural pressures. These gaps indicate that existing studies tend to isolate specific dimensions of masculinity without offering an integrated cultural analysis of how economic, digital, familial, and moral transformations collectively generate crisis narratives among urban Indonesian men.

This article offers novelty by synthesizing multiple sociocultural domains that shape masculinity transformation in contemporary urban Indonesia, producing a holistic cultural analysis that bridges psychological, familial, and digital media dimensions of male identity shifts. The study provides original insight into how competing normative frameworks generate internal conflicts and cultural disorientation among men facing evolving gender expectations. The purpose of this research is to analyze the cultural, social, and psychological forces that contribute to masculinity crises in urban Indonesian contexts while identifying how men negotiate, resist, or adapt to shifting gender roles within these rapidly transforming environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative cultural analysis approach to examine how masculinity is negotiated, contested, and reconstructed within urban Indonesian society. Qualitative cultural analysis allows researchers to interpret meaning-making processes embedded in social practices, media texts, and everyday interactions, making it suitable for understanding identity transformation within complex sociocultural environments. The method emphasizes contextual interpretation and symbolic analysis, enabling an in-depth exploration of how men articulate and internalize shifting gender expectations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach also aligns with contemporary masculinity studies that foreground discourse, practice, and cultural representation as central elements of identity construction in rapidly changing societies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data for this research were derived from an interpretive review of scholarly literature, empirical studies, media narratives, and documented sociocultural phenomena relevant to urban Indonesian masculinity. The analysis followed thematic procedures that involve iterative coding, pattern identification, and interpretive synthesis of cultural symbols and gender practices (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Through this process, key themes such as breadwinner disruption, soft masculinity, digital identity performance, and shifting family dynamics were identified and contextualized. The interpretive orientation of this method ensures that the analysis captures both structural forces and subjective meanings that shape masculine identity crises within urban Indonesian contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Drivers of Masculinity Crisis in Urban Indonesia

The transformation of masculinity in urban Indonesian contexts is deeply intertwined with structural changes that have altered the social, economic, and cultural foundations of gender relations. Urbanization has intensified exposure to new value systems and social patterns, challenging longstanding patriarchal structures that historically positioned men as primary breadwinners and household authorities. As cities become hubs of economic volatility and shifting employment landscapes, many men experience a growing sense of instability regarding their expected social roles. Research highlights that contemporary Indonesian gender roles are increasingly fluid, with both men and women navigating complex sets of expectations within the public and private spheres (Nugraha & Susilastuti, 2022). This fluidity destabilizes traditional masculine identities that were once reinforced by stable occupational hierarchies and gendered divisions of labor. The movement toward a more egalitarian gender order has been further pushed by women's rising educational attainment and labor force participation, pressuring men to modify their role orientations in ways that often lead to internal conflict or perceived loss of status (Gaffar, 2019). As a result, masculine identity becomes a site of tension where structural transitions collide with deeply embedded cultural scripts.

Urban economic conditions play a significant role in shaping men's responses to shifting gender expectations. The transition from industrial labor to service-oriented economies in major Indonesian cities diminishes the availability of traditionally masculine jobs while elevating competencies such as communication, empathy, and collaboration, which are not always aligned with conventional masculine norms. Studies indicate that young urban men increasingly face underemployment and job precarity, conditions that undermine their ability to fulfill culturally prescribed breadwinning responsibilities (Utomo, 2016). Failure to meet these economic expectations can generate shame, frustration, and anxiety, reinforcing the narrative that masculinity is in crisis. This crisis is further compounded by women's growing economic independence, which reshapes power dynamics within families and challenges men's historical monopoly over financial authority (Afdholul, 2025). While for some men this shift creates opportunities for more collaborative household roles, for others it generates a sense of emasculation that fuels resistance or emotional withdrawal.

Migration patterns also contribute to changes in masculine identity. Internal migration toward urban centers brings men into contact with highly diverse cultural environments where traditional norms coexist with progressive gender ideologies. Research shows that male migrants who adopt caregiving responsibilities, such as those documented in studies of men engaged in domestic roles, often experience significant shifts in self-perception and identity frameworks (Utari, 2018). These experiences highlight how mobility exposes men to alternative models of masculinity that can be either empowering or destabilizing depending on individual socialization histories. Some men adapt by incorporating nurturing qualities into their identities, while others struggle to reconcile these qualities with traditional expectations of authority and stoicism. This dynamic underscores how mobility and urbanization collectively reshape the cultural terrain on which masculinity is constructed.

Digital media has amplified the pace of gender transformation by broadcasting new masculine ideals that contrast sharply with older cultural norms. Online platforms increasingly feature representations of men who embrace aesthetic refinement,

emotional sensitivity, and domestic involvement, creating a new symbolic repertoire of masculinity circulating in urban youth culture (Fauzi, 2021). These digital portrayals often resonate with global trends influenced by East Asian pop culture, particularly Korean soft masculinity, which emphasizes emotional expressiveness and sartorial elegance. Such representations can inspire young men to experiment with alternative identity performances, yet they can also provoke backlash among those who perceive them as threats to traditional masculine codes. Research indicates that virtual public spheres serve as crucial arenas where feminine-coded aesthetics and progressive gender discourses intersect, prompting debates on moral legitimacy and cultural authenticity among Indonesian men (Santoso, 2018). These debates intensify feelings of crisis among some groups, as they witness the erosion of hegemonic masculinity within increasingly plural digital spaces.

Gender-related social movements and public discourses have further contributed to the destabilization of conventional masculinity. Online activism has amplified critiques of toxic masculinity, increasing social demands for men to abandon aggressive or emotionally distant behaviors in favor of empathy and accountability. Studies show that this heightened scrutiny compels many men to critically reassess their identity practices, although not all possess the cultural resources or emotional literacy to adapt smoothly to new expectations (Salsabila et al., 2025). As feminist and gender equality movements gain visibility, urban men encounter discursive pressures to adjust their behaviors or face moral censure. This environment contributes to the narrative of masculinity in crisis, as it challenges the privilege and authority historically associated with male identities in Indonesian society.

Furthermore, family structures and relational norms are undergoing profound transformation, particularly in metropolitan settings where dual-income households and egalitarian partnerships are increasingly common. Research on family resilience underscores that contemporary households often require cooperative models of partnership in which responsibilities are shared rather than divided along rigid gender lines (Rinaldy, 2024). This shift places new emotional and relational demands on men, requiring them to develop competencies such as open communication, conflict resolution, and parental involvement. However, many men raised within patriarchal social environments find these expectations disruptive to their cultural understandings of masculinity, creating emotional strain and resistance to adopting relational equality (Kartono et al., 2023). Consequently, family institutions become critical sites where masculinity crises manifest through marital tension, parenting challenges, and intergenerational conflict.

The broader international discourse situates these Indonesian developments within a global trend of masculine insecurity. Scholars highlight that economic instability, shifting gender norms, and the rise of feminist consciousness contribute to widespread perceptions that men's traditional roles are eroding (Wojnicka, 2021). Comparative studies demonstrate that as societies move toward egalitarian models, men often struggle to redefine their identities within more fluid gender systems, particularly when cultural expectations lag behind structural changes (Oláh et al., 2018). This tension is mirrored in Indonesian cities, where the coexistence of Islamic moral frameworks, modern consumer culture, and global youth aesthetics produces hybrid identities that are not always coherent or easily negotiated. Jamil's recent analysis of twenty-first-century masculine identity reveals that many men globally experience heightened psychological vulnerability as their social positions undergo reevaluation

within rapidly shifting gender landscapes (Jamil, 2025). These global patterns reinforce the relevance of examining how masculinity crises unfold within the uniquely dynamic and culturally diverse context of urban Indonesia.

Taken together, structural drivers such as economic precarity, gendered labor redistribution, digital media transformations, and evolving family norms collectively contribute to the complexity of masculine identity reconstruction in urban Indonesia. These forces create overlapping pressures that challenge the stability of traditional masculine roles while offering new yet contested pathways for identity formation. The interplay of these factors demonstrates that masculinity crises are not merely personal psychological experiences but are deeply rooted in broader sociocultural transitions that redefine the meaning and practice of being a man in modern Indonesian society.

Cultural Negotiations, Media Representations, and Identity Reconstruction

Cultural negotiations of masculinity in urban Indonesia are heavily influenced by media representations that frame and circulate symbolic models of male identity. Contemporary Indonesian media increasingly features portrayals of men that diverge from hegemonic norms, emphasizing emotional softness, domestic participation, and aesthetic refinement. These representations align with global soft masculinity trends, which celebrate relational sensitivity and non-aggressive expressions of manhood, creating alternative masculine scripts that influence young urban men's identity aspirations (Fauzi, 2021). While these portrayals offer broader representational diversity, they simultaneously generate ideological tensions. Some men embrace them as expressions of individuality, while others interpret them as signs of moral decline or Western-influenced cultural infiltration. The contestation around these representations is amplified by Indonesia's socio-religious landscape, where Islamic moral frameworks often uphold traditional male authority and prescribe gender-complementary roles. Consequently, urban men navigating media-influenced soft masculinity frequently negotiate conflicting value systems that shape their identity choices and self-understandings (Platt et al., 2018).

The digital environment intensifies these cultural negotiations by enabling constant exposure to globalized images of gender. As digital platforms become central spaces for identity performance and community formation, Indonesian men increasingly construct and reconstruct their masculine selves through online interactions. Visual-oriented platforms encourage curated expressions of lifestyle, aesthetics, and relationships, prompting users to align their identities with culturally valued representations circulated within these virtual spaces. Research shows that digital media significantly influences how men conceptualize masculinity, particularly among younger demographics that adopt hybrid identity practices inspired by local moral codes and global youth culture (Santoso, 2018). However, digital spaces also facilitate backlash discourse, where conservative or hypermasculine groups mobilize online to defend traditional gender values against progressive trends. This produces a polarized cultural climate in which men navigate competing pressures to conform to modernized masculinity models while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Family dynamics play an equally significant role in shaping identity negotiation. As urban households increasingly adopt egalitarian partnership models, men are compelled to redefine their contributions to domestic life in ways that depart from historically masculine-coded behaviors. Studies indicate that men who engage in domestic roles often face ambivalence regarding their sense of authority and self-worth,

especially when societal expectations continue to valorize traditional breadwinning masculinity (Utari, 2018). This ambivalence reflects the cultural complexity of masculine identity reconstruction, as caregiving involvement can be interpreted either as progressive adaptation or as a sign of diminished masculinity depending on the sociocultural context. Research on gender-responsive family resilience further highlights that contemporary households expect emotional support, communicative competence, and shared responsibility, all of which require men to cultivate relational skills that challenge patriarchal ideals (Rinaldy, 2024). This tension underscores how family institutions become arenas where identity negotiation is enacted and contested.

Another dimension of cultural negotiation involves shifts in moral discourse. The rise of gender justice movements and increasing awareness of toxic masculinity have pushed men to reflect on behaviors previously normalized under patriarchal authority. Online and offline discussions emphasize issues such as emotional suppression, dominance, and aggression, encouraging men to adopt more reflective and empathetic models of interaction (Salsabila et al., 2025). While such discourses promote healthier relational norms, they also contribute to the perception that traditional masculine behavior is pathologized, thereby intensifying feelings of confusion or defensiveness among some men. This moral scrutiny can be particularly challenging for individuals who were raised within environments that valorized disciplinarian or authoritative male roles, creating emotional strain as they attempt to reconcile internalized norms with evolving social expectations.

Urban cultural institutions, including schools, workplaces, and religious organizations, further shape masculine identity reconstruction by promoting or resisting progressive gender norms. Educational institutions often serve as spaces where youth are exposed to egalitarian perspectives that encourage critical reflection on gender roles, while workplaces increasingly emphasize collaborative competencies that transcend traditional masculine authority. Conversely, some religious communities reinforce gender complementarity and male leadership, contributing to conflicting expectations that urban men must navigate (Huda & Dodi, 2020). These competing institutional influences highlight the complex sociocultural terrain in which contemporary Indonesian masculinity is negotiated.

To illustrate the multidimensional influences shaping masculine identity reconstruction, the following table presents key sociocultural drivers that interact within urban Indonesian contexts. It synthesizes factors from media, family, economic, and moral domains that collectively structure men's identity negotiations.

Table 1. Sociocultural Factors Shaping Masculinity Negotiation in Urban Indonesia

Sociocultural Domain	Key Influences on Masculinity Negotiation
Digital Media	Soft masculinity imagery; online scrutiny; hybrid identity influenced by global culture
Family Structure	Dual-income households; shared caregiving; shifting household authority dynamics
Economic Environment	Job precarity; weakening breadwinner dominance; rising female economic mobility
Moral and Religious Discourse	Debates on gender norms; resistance to progressive expectations; critique of toxic masculinity
Cultural Institutions	Workplace collaboration norms; egalitarian education exposure; traditional reinforcement by religious bodies

The table demonstrates that masculine identity reconstruction in urban Indonesia is embedded within a wide range of sociocultural domains, each exerting distinct yet interrelated pressures. Digital media introduces aesthetic and expressive models of masculinity that challenge hegemonic norms, while family transformation demands emotional engagement and shared responsibility. Economic change destabilizes the breadwinner model, prompting reevaluation of authority and self-worth. Moral discourse amplifies scrutiny of traditional masculine behaviors, and cultural institutions present conflicting role expectations that men must navigate. These factors operate simultaneously, generating layered pressures that shape how Indonesian men perceive themselves and their social roles.

Taken together, cultural negotiations of masculinity involve continuous interaction between structural change and symbolic representation. Urban Indonesian men must reconcile internalized patriarchal scripts with emergent gender norms that encourage vulnerability, domestic involvement, and aesthetic self-expression. Yet because societal expectations remain inconsistent across institutions, identity negotiation often produces ambivalence, tension, and emotional strain. This highlights the complexity of masculine identity reconstruction as a social, psychological, and cultural process deeply influenced by dynamic media environments, shifting family roles, and evolving moral frameworks.

Psychological Tensions, Identity Conflicts, and Adaptive Masculinity Pathways

The psychological dimensions of masculinity crisis in urban Indonesia reflect deep internal struggles that men encounter as they attempt to reconcile traditional gender expectations with rapidly evolving social realities. Masculinity has historically been constructed as a stable identity anchored in authority, control, and economic provision, yet contemporary sociocultural changes increasingly disrupt this stability. Research indicates that as gender roles become more flexible, many men experience heightened emotional conflict stemming from the mismatch between internalized patriarchal norms and external pressures toward egalitarianism (Nugraha & Susilastuti, 2022). This mismatch creates what scholars describe as cognitive dissonance, as men are compelled to adopt new relational practices that contradict long-standing beliefs about masculine identity. The inability to reconcile these opposing forces often results in feelings of inadequacy or diminished self-worth, which contribute to the broader narrative of masculine crisis across urban Indonesia (Jamil, 2025). These psychological responses are not merely individual experiences but are deeply embedded within cultural expectations that continue to privilege traditional masculinity while simultaneously demanding transformation.

Identity conflicts are further intensified by contradictory messages within Indonesian urban culture, where modernity, religiosity, consumerism, and globalized youth aesthetics coexist and compete for normative authority. The coexistence of these value systems creates a fragmented cultural landscape where men must navigate multiple and sometimes incompatible identity demands. Studies on gender contestation in Indonesia show that men frequently encounter conflicting expectations between progressive gender discourses that encourage emotional openness and traditional religious or cultural teachings that emphasize restraint, leadership, and moral responsibility (Platt et al., 2018). This incompatibility generates psychological tension as men attempt to develop coherent identities under conditions of cultural ambivalence. Such conditions mirror global masculinity crises, where men struggle to maintain

personal stability in the face of rapid sociocultural transitions that erode the hegemony of traditional gender structures (Wojnicka, 2021). The Indonesian context is particularly complex due to the strong influence of religious morality and community-based norms, which often shape men's emotional responses to gender role change.

The internal strains experienced by men are closely tied to their roles within the family, particularly as domestic responsibilities become more evenly distributed across gender lines. As dual-income households become more common in urban Indonesia, men increasingly share caregiving responsibilities and household tasks, altering the symbolic meanings historically attached to masculinity. Studies on gender dynamics reveal that while some men frame these shifts as opportunities to cultivate emotional intimacy and stronger family cohesion, others experience them as threats to their authority and social legitimacy (Kartono et al., 2023). The perception of threatened authority can lead to emotional withdrawal or defensive behavior, which reinforces the cycle of relational conflict. However, research also highlights that men who embrace new domestic roles often develop more flexible and adaptive masculine identities that align with emerging societal expectations (Utari, 2018). These findings suggest that men's psychological responses to domestic role change depend significantly on their ability to renegotiate deeply internalized gender beliefs.

Digital media environments intensify psychological pressures by exposing men to curated images of idealized masculinity that are often unattainable or contradictory. Platforms showcasing aestheticized soft masculinity, urban lifestyle performance, and public vulnerability create new standards of male desirability that differ from traditional norms, producing confusion or insecurity among men who do not align with these emergent ideals (Fauzi, 2021). At the same time, online discourses increasingly critique traditional masculine behaviors, framing them as outdated or harmful. This combination of aspirational pressure and moral scrutiny contributes to heightened anxiety among urban men who feel caught between societal demands to modernize and cultural expectations to maintain traditional authority. Studies indicate that such discursive environments play a central role in shaping men's internalized evaluations of self-worth and success within contemporary masculinity frameworks (Santoso, 2018). The psychological consequences of these pressures reveal that masculinity in urban Indonesia is not merely a social identity but an emotional arena where competing cultural narratives collide.

Public debates on gender fairness and toxic masculinity also shape men's emotional landscapes. As gender justice movements gain visibility, men are increasingly expected to adopt reflexive attitudes toward behaviors associated with dominance or emotional suppression. While these expectations promote healthier relational practices, they also introduce moral anxiety for men who struggle to navigate shifting boundaries of acceptable masculine behavior (Salsabila et al., 2025). For some, these discussions create opportunities for growth and self-reflection, enabling them to cultivate more empathetic and respectful interpersonal relationships. For others, however, they foster defensiveness or feelings of stigmatization, reinforcing the perception that men's traditional roles are under attack. The complexity of these emotional responses demonstrates that masculinity transformation is not a straightforward process but one marked by ongoing negotiation between self, culture, and emerging norms.

Despite these challenges, multiple pathways for adaptive masculinity are emerging within urban Indonesian culture. The evolution of domestic partnership roles,

for example, provides opportunities for men to develop emotional intelligence and relational competence that enhance family well-being. Studies on contemporary marriages reveal that men who embrace collaborative partnership models experience improved communication and relational satisfaction, suggesting that adaptive masculinity supports healthier family dynamics (Rinaldy, 2024). Similarly, the increasing visibility of caregiving men, whether in households or community settings, challenges the stigma associated with non-traditional masculine behaviors and promotes broader cultural acceptance of caregiving masculinities (Maulana, 2023). These developments demonstrate that masculinity crisis narratives coexist with possibilities for positive transformation and identity expansion.

Moreover, younger urban men are increasingly embracing hybrid masculine identities that integrate elements of traditional strength with modern emotional and aesthetic sensibilities. Studies show that such hybrid identities enable men to balance cultural authenticity with contemporary social demands, providing a flexible framework for navigating shifting gender expectations (Saputra & Sulastri, 2024). This ability to synthesize multiple identity elements reflects a broader adaptive process in which men reinterpret masculine norms in ways that align with both personal aspirations and sociocultural realities. The emergence of new social movements that reconstruct masculinity through creative and expressive means also supports these adaptive pathways, offering men alternative identity narratives beyond hegemonic masculinity (Haza et al., 2022). These developments indicate that while men experience significant psychological strain amid gender role transitions, they also actively participate in reshaping masculinity to remain relevant in contemporary urban life.

Taken as a whole, the psychological and identity dimensions of masculinity crisis in urban Indonesia underscore the interplay between personal experience and structural transformation. Masculinity is being renegotiated within a landscape shaped by economic volatility, digital culture, shifting family roles, and evolving moral expectations. These forces produce both internal tensions and opportunities for identity growth, revealing that masculinity crisis is not simply a narrative of decline but also a catalyst for reconstructing male identity within more inclusive, flexible, and relationally grounded frameworks.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that masculinity in urban Indonesia is undergoing significant transformation shaped by intersecting economic, cultural, digital, familial, and moral forces that collectively challenge traditional gender norms. Urban men experience psychological and identity conflicts as they navigate contradictory expectations that demand both adherence to historical masculine roles and adaptation to emerging egalitarian values. These tensions manifest across multiple social domains, including work, family, and digital culture, producing feelings of instability that contribute to broader narratives of masculinity crisis. However, the findings also reveal that men are not merely passive recipients of change but active participants in negotiating and reconstructing their identities within this shifting sociocultural landscape.

The analysis suggests that supporting adaptive masculinity requires strengthening cultural literacy, promoting emotional well-being, and encouraging collaborative gender practices within both family and community settings. Practical interventions such as educational programs on gender roles, workplace policies that

promote shared responsibility, and community initiatives that normalize caregiving masculinities can help men navigate identity transitions more effectively. The development of hybrid masculine identities that integrate traditional strengths with modern relational competencies highlights the potential for positive transformation. By fostering environments that support flexible and inclusive models of male identity, Indonesian society can mitigate the psychological pressures associated with gender role shifts while promoting healthier, more equitable social relations.

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