

CONTRADICTION OF POWER WITHIN MUSLIM WOMEN IN MINANGKABAU MATRILINEAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between power and gender, focusing mainly on Minangkabau Muslim women. The study integrates a literature review with ethnographic methods to understand how these women navigate societal structures that prioritize male authority, commonly referred to as 'patriarchal frameworks', while adhering to cultural traditions. Data were collected from academic sources, community reports, and fieldwork, highlighting women's lived experiences in key lineage and household leadership positions. The findings indicate that while Minangkabau Muslim women are empowered by their roles as lineage bearers and heads of households, they encounter significant challenges due to the intersection of gender and Islamic norms. Tensions emerge between their matrilineal heritage and the patriarchal structures reinforced by specific interpretations of Islam, which restrict their economic participation, decision-making power, and access to resources. Despite these constraints, women utilize strategies such as pursuing financial independence, engaging in education, and reinterpreting Islamic teachings to align with their cultural and gender identities. This research emphasizes the complexities of gender dynamics in matrilineal societies, especially where Islamic norms intersect with local traditions. It highlights the importance of evolving cultural practices in fostering more inclusive and equitable social structures, offering a potential pathway for positive change within the Minangkabau community.

Keywords: *Contradiction of Power; Muslim Women; Minangkabau Matrilineal Society*

INTRODUCTION

The Minangkabau society, renowned for its distinctive matrilineal framework, offers an intriguing case for exploring the interplay between gender and

power dynamics. Situated predominantly in West Sumatra, Indonesia, this community has long been lauded for its cultural traditions that elevate women as central figures within familial and societal structures. In addition, the Minang have been known as devout followers of Islam (Simon, 2014). Matrilineality within this context allows women to inherit property and assume leadership positions within the family, thereby establishing them as pivotal stakeholders in community life. This unique social structure bestows women significant cultural authority, enabling their participation in decision-making processes at both the household and community levels. However, beneath the surface of matrilineality lies a complex web of patriarchal influences that challenge women's autonomy and authority (Goswami, 2024). This paradox presents a fertile ground for exploration, as societal norms traditionally empower women to coexist with structures that constrict their roles and diminish their agency. Despite matrilineality being often regarded as a progressive framework fostering female empowerment, it is imperative to acknowledge the enduring patriarchal norms that undermine such empowerment (Matlock, 1995). These norms manifest in various forms, encompassing societal expectations regarding gender roles and the influence of male relatives who may exert control over women's decisions and liberties. Within the Minangkabau culture, men are frequently perceived as custodians of tradition and family honour, perpetuating patriarchal attitudes that can curtail women's agency, even within a system ostensibly supportive of them (Syahrizal & Meiyenti, 2022).

Consequently, women in the Minangkabau community find themselves delicately balancing their identity as matrilineal heirs with the pressures imposed by traditional patriarchal structures. This duality evokes critical questions about how Minangkabau women perceive their positions within these conflicting frameworks, thus highlighting the intricacies of their lived experiences as they endeavour to assert their rights and agency in a world that often seeks to confine them (Stark, 2013). Comprehending Minangkabau women's strategies to negotiate their identities and assert their independence is paramount for a nuanced analysis of gender dynamics within this matrilineal society. Many women employ a range of tactics to counteract patriarchal pressures and claim their rightful space within both familial and social contexts (Nasir & Halim, 2022). By leveraging community support networks, engaging in economic activities, and reshaping cultural narratives, these women actively resist the constraints imposed by traditional norms. For instance, some women participate in local economic initiatives, bolstering their financial independence and challenging conventional gender roles. This participation empowers individual women and fosters a collective

consciousness aimed at redefining the cultural narratives surrounding gender in Minangkabau society, enabling women to reclaim their identities as both matrilineal heirs and active participants in the socio-economic landscape (Elfira, 2023).

The interplay between matrilineality and patriarchal influences in Minangkabau society presents significant inquiries regarding the intergenerational transmission of values and practices related to gender (Zenth et al., 2023). As mothers transmit cultural norms and expectations to their daughters, the amalgamation of matrilineal heritage and patriarchal constraints becomes intrinsic to family life. This phenomenon engenders a unique paradox wherein women are empowered by their matrilineal rights yet concurrently encumbered by ingrained patriarchal beliefs that govern acceptable behaviours and roles (Rimoldi, 2011). Comprehending how these dual influences shape the identities and aspirations of Minangkabau women is imperative to comprehend the complexities of gender relations in this society. By examining how women navigate their roles in light of these conflicting teachings, we can discern the subtle ways in which cultural narratives evolve and adapt to the realities of contemporary life (Fithri & Ulfah, 2022).

The investigation into the role of education and socialization in transforming gender norms within Minangkabau society has emerged as a significant area of scholarly inquiry. However, a notable deficiency exists in understanding the active role of educational institutions play in facilitating this transformation. While the existing literature underscores women's empowerment through education (Bahauddin et al., 2013); Chowdhury, 2021), a paucity of research focuses on the specific mechanisms by which education challenges patriarchal and matrilineal structures. Much of the academic discourse has concentrated on general empowerment or rights within a matrilineal context, neglecting to examine how educational practices within schools, universities, and community organizations contribute to the redefinition of gender roles in Minangkabau society. This void presents a distinct opportunity to investigate how educational environments equip women with the necessary tools to engage with and critique patriarchal systems while navigating the interplay with cultural traditions. In this regard, the originality of the proposed research resides in its focus on the intersection between educational practices and the distinctive matrilineal framework of the Minangkabau. This research, with its potential to reveal how women in Minangkabau are not only exposed to teachings of gender equality but also actively engage with the complexities of their cultural and educational identities, could significantly impact our understanding of gender dynamics. By emphasizing the influence

of educational spaces in providing women with critical perspectives on patriarchal structures and matrilineal rights, this study aspires to present a more nuanced understanding of how women's agency is cultivated within the contemporary Minangkabau context. This methodological approach contributes to a deeper comprehension of gender transformation in a society where traditional structures coexist with progressive educational reforms. Recent scholarly studies have uncovered similar themes, offering insights into the evolving role of education in gender dynamics. Parkin's (2020) research examines how school curricula in Indonesia address gender stereotypes, while Bhutia & Liarakou (2018) emphasize educational policies to promote gender equality in rural regions.

Additionally, Vicente (2024) analyses the impact of community-based education programs on women's empowerment throughout Southeast Asia. Concurrently, Goswami (2024) investigated the socialization of gender roles through extracurricular activities in educational settings. Hurtado & Franco (2021) explore the role of higher education institutions in fostering feminist leadership. While these studies are informative, they do not specifically examine the intersection of education with the matrilineal culture of the Minangkabau, a gap in the literature that this research aims to address and potentially contribute to.

Lastly, the impact of globalization and modernization on Minangkabau women's identities and agency warrants attention, as these forces introduce new dynamics into the traditional framework (Indra et al., 2022). The influx of global ideas and practices often creates opportunities for women to engage with external economic and cultural spheres, broadening their horizons and challenging local norms. Through exposure to diverse perspectives on gender equality and empowerment, Minangkabau women can draw inspiration from international movements while navigating the complexities of their cultural identity (Du et al., 2023). This engagement with globalization allows women to leverage their unique position within a matrilineal society to redefine what empowerment means in their context. As they synthesize traditional values with modern aspirations, these women contribute to a richer understanding of agency that reflects their heritage and ambitions, ultimately shaping a more equitable future for themselves and future generations (Rink & Barros, 2021).

This research investigates the intricate dynamics between matrilineality and patriarchal influences within Minangkabau society, with a specific focus on how these dual forces shape women's identities, aspirations, and agency. By examining the intergenerational transmission of gender-related values, particularly the pivotal role of mothers in conveying cultural norms within

the constraints of patriarchy, the study aims to illuminate how Minangkabau women navigate their societal roles and assert their autonomy in a context where traditional structures coexist with progressive educational reforms. Notably, it seeks to explore the influence of academic institutions in transforming gender norms and empowering women to engage with and critique patriarchal systems while negotiating their cultural identities. Through this exploration, the research intends to elucidate the evolving roles of Minangkabau women as they reconcile their matrilineal heritage with contemporary global influences. This examination offers critical insights into the intersection of tradition and modernity. Ultimately, the study aspires to enhance the understanding of gender dynamics, revealing how women's agency is cultivated within a sociocultural context affected by patriarchal constraints and matrilineal empowerment. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to broader discourses concerning gender, power, and societal transformation.

This research employs a qualitative and ethnographic methodology to explore the complex dynamics of power and gender within the Minangkabau community. It specifically focuses on the lived experiences of Minangkabau women and investigates how they navigate the dual influences of matrilineal traditions and patriarchal systems. The data collection process included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions, all designed to ensure a diverse representation of women from various socio-economic backgrounds in the Minangkabau region. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, providing insights from different generations and life stages. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the evolving experiences of these women, a depth of study that is essential for advancing the academic discourse on gender and power dynamics in matrilineal societies.

This method provided an understanding of how cultural norms, family dynamics, and societal expectations shape women's roles and identities. The data analysis utilized a thematic coding process that identified key themes related to empowerment, autonomy, generational shifts, and strategies for navigating gender roles. The findings were then triangulated with existing literature on gender, matrilineality, and patriarchy to place the results within broader theoretical frameworks. The methodological design emphasizes an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the complex interplay between cultural traditions, socio-economic factors, and gender in shaping women's experiences. This study, with its thorough exploration, sheds light on how Minangkabau women assert their agency and challenge traditional norms while preserving their cultural identity. The immersive nature of the fieldwork

allows the audience to feel respected and acknowledged when interpreting the research process, thereby enhancing their engagement with the findings.

MINANGKABAU MUSLIM WOMEN

The Minangkabau people, an ethnic group native to West Sumatra, Indonesia, are renowned for their matrilineal society, where inheritance and family lineage are passed down through the female line. This unique cultural structure has long captured interest, particularly regarding gender roles within the Minangkabau Muslim community. Minangkabau Muslim women, often regarded as symbols of tradition and modernity, navigate a complex space where Islamic teachings intersect with a rich cultural heritage. Islamic influence in Minangkabau society dates back to the 16th century (Stark, 2013). Since then, Minangkabau Muslim women have experienced the intersection of two powerful forces—Islam and matrilineal customs. Islamic teachings, which promote modesty, piety, and the role of women within the family, have shaped how women navigate their societal roles. Minangkabau women wear the *kerudung* (headscarf) according to Islamic dress codes while retaining control over familial and economic matters. This fusion of Islamic values with matrilineal practices has led to the development of a unique and intriguing religious and cultural identity for Minangkabau Muslim women.

In Minangkabau society, women traditionally hold significant roles within the family and the broader community. This is mainly due to a matrilineal system that emphasizes maternal descent and the authority of women in both domestic and economic spheres. However, the rise of conservative Islamic interpretations, particularly in recent decades, has created tension between these cultural practices and evolving religious discourse. Islamic frameworks that emphasize gender segregation, modesty, and women's domestic roles often conflict with Minangkabau traditions, where women historically enjoyed greater public autonomy and decision-making power. Conservative Islamic teachings assert that women should primarily occupy the private sphere. This contradicts the Minangkabau matrilineal system, wherein women have long been central figures in property ownership and family governance. While the Quran emphasizes the complementary roles of men and women, it also presents a vision of modesty and privacy for women (Quran 33:59, 24:31). Some interpretations of these verses advocate for a more restricted role for women in public life. As a result, these religious norms can challenge the traditionally more egalitarian roles that Minangkabau women once enjoyed.

Furthermore, some Islamic scholars and movements advocating for conservative gender roles argue that the ideal Muslim woman should prioritize family

life and modesty (Asmaniar, 2018; Iska et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2022). This is reflected in the Hadith and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad regarding the importance of women's roles within the household (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 6039). Such teachings reinforce the notion that a woman's primary role is in the home, contrasting sharply with the historically more public roles of Minangkabau women (Dendi et al., 2005; Hartati et al., 2021). Consequently, many women in the region find themselves navigating a challenging path between honouring their cultural heritage, which affords them a broader scope of economic and familial participation and adhering to the evolving expectations set by more conservative Islamic authorities (Dermanto, 2023; Dewi, 2021). This creates a complex dynamic where cultural identity, religious belief, and gender roles intersect, forcing women to negotiate between their ancestral autonomy and the spiritual framework that increasingly seeks to confine them to traditional, domestic roles.

Minangkabau Muslim women, with their increasing presence in public life, embody a unique blend of cultural resilience and modern empowerment. The traditional Minangkabau society has long granted women significant autonomy, particularly in familial and economic matters (Blackwood, 2001). This matrilineal system, which strongly emphasizes maternal lineage and women's roles in property ownership, has laid a robust foundation for women's authority within the community. With the advent of educational and professional opportunities, Minangkabau women are not just embracing their cultural heritage but also navigating modern societal roles with resilience. Their active involvement in education, business, and politics mirrors the principles of Islamic egalitarianism, which acknowledges the equal intellectual and spiritual capacities of men and women (Cipta, 2019). Verses such as 49:13 in the Quran reinforce the equality of men and women in the eyes of God, stressing that individual worth is determined by faith, piety, and good deeds, not gender. This Quranic perspective empowers Minangkabau women to assert themselves in public spheres while staying rooted in their religious and cultural identity. Furthermore, Islamic teachings emphasize women's empowerment in various spheres of life, particularly in pursuing knowledge (Nasir et al., 2021).

The Prophet Muhammad said, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female" (Sunan Ibn Majah). This teaching has been central to the drive for education among Minangkabau women, who now excel in diverse fields ranging from law to business to social activism. While conservative interpretations of Islam often encourage women to limit their public roles, many Minangkabau Muslim women find ways to engage in

public life that are consistent with their religious beliefs (Eficandra, 2022). For instance, they balance their professional ambitions with their responsibilities as caregivers, adhering to the Islamic emphasis on family while pursuing careers and leadership roles. This delicate balancing act between faith, family, and professional growth is an example of how Islamic principles can be interpreted and applied to support gender equality and the active participation of women in modern society.

Minangkabau women today are not just reacting to external changes but actively reshaping the cultural and religious landscape in which they live. Their advocacy for social justice, gender equality, and reforms in education and healthcare represents a broader movement that seeks to integrate Islamic values with progressive societal goals (N. Y. Dewi, 2023). The Quran supports such reformative actions, emphasizing the importance of justice and social equity, as seen in verse 4:32, which calls for equitable treatment between men and women. Islamic history also offers numerous examples of women who were leaders, scholars, and activists, including figures like Aisha bint Abi Bakr, who played a significant role in early Islamic politics and scholarship. Minangkabau women today, drawing on these historical precedents, are redefining their roles within society and demonstrating that Islam and modernity need not be at odds (Stark & Yahaya, 2021). Instead, their ability to navigate and adapt to the evolving dynamics of religion, culture, and gender highlights the potential for a harmonious coexistence of Islamic faith and progressive social change, offering hope for a future where cultural heritage and modern aspirations can thrive (Knorr, 2022).

MATRILINEAL STRENGTH: MINANGKABAU WOMEN UNVEILED

The Minangkabau culture is known for its matrilineal family structure, which is a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity. However, it can also feel burdensome at times. This system is supported by a comprehensive set of rules, traditions, and beliefs known as *adat*, reflected in numerous proverbs and sayings. The *adat* of the Minangkabau mainly revolves around the matrilineal family system and its impact on behavioural norms and socio-political organization (Marbaniang & Rajput, 2023). The social structure can be summarized as follows: the most significant social units are the *suku* or matrilineal clans. Their cohesion is primarily based on a shared name; a child belongs to its mother's *suku* at birth. The *suku* is not strictly exogamous, which means that a member can marry someone from the same clan as long as they are not from the same village. However, a special ceremony is needed for such unions (Games & Sari, 2023). At the village level, the *suku* function as natural

groups that are exogamous and led by a male chief known as the *penghulu*. Ideally, each village comprises four *suku* residing in distinct quarters. The *penghulu* of the various *suku* previously formed a council that governed the village. Historically, villages enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, with minimal central authority, allowing each village to cultivate its unique style within the shared *adat* tradition. Since the early 20th century, the Minangkabau have become integrated into larger organizational frameworks, leading to a significant loss of village autonomy and a reduction in the power of the *penghulu* (Nurdin & Tegnan, 2019). The roles of the *penghulu* now primarily revolve around family matters, marriages, and issues related to inheritance and communal property.

Within the village, *suku* are further divided into smaller units called “extended families,” which typically include one or more women, their married and unmarried daughters, and the young children of those daughters (Stark & Yahaya, 2021). Traditionally, members of an “extended family” resided together in a longhouse, the iconic Minangkabau house characterized by its distinctive “horns”. The head of the family is usually one of the eldest brothers of the mother or grandmother (Elfira, 2023). The term *mamak* refers to the mother’s brother, and one of them is designated as the head of the household. His sister’s children are his *kemanakan* (Hartati et al., 2021). Boys are expected to leave their mother’s house around 7 or 8 and transition to the *surau*, a men’s house used for religious instruction until they marry and move into their wife’s home. Even after marriage, men have ongoing responsibilities towards their mothers, sisters, and their sisters’ children, requiring regular visits to their maternal household (Mutolib et al., 2016). If a man returns home too early in the evening, he may face ridicule. In old age or illness, he is taken back to his sister’s house to pass away and be interred in the ancestral burial grounds. This ambiguity regarding the notion of home is often believed to be connected to the *merantau* pattern, which refers to the traditional practice of young men migrating (Murad, 1980). While the idea of *merantau* exists in other regions of Indonesia without being associated with matrilineal residence, the uncertain status of men likely reinforces this practice.

In Minangkabau society, women assume a stabilizing role by commonly residing in their natal homes alongside their families. Upon significant expansion of the extended family, the household may undergo division, leading to the construction of a new residence nearby (Hurtado & Franco, 2021). The traditional Minangkabau dwelling is longitudinally structured, featuring a spacious rectangular front room serving as a communal living and reception area. Adjacent to this central space are multiple smaller rooms, each

designated for a daughter and her respective family, while a kitchen serves as a shared facility for female household members (Schrijvers & Coster, 1977). The residence is on collectively owned land, encompassing communal assets such as rice fields and esteemed heirlooms. The sale of these shared properties is strictly prohibited, except under specific circumstances, as they are considered sacred assets of the extended family, denoted as “*harto pusako*.” Conversely, individually owned property, known as “*harto pencarian*” (literally signifying “acquired property”), comprises personal earnings from trade or wages and land utilized for cash cropping. A man retains the prerogative to bequeath his “*harto pencarian*” to his offspring, while the “*harto pusako*” remains the collective property of his “*kemanakan*” (Schrijvers & Coster, 1977).

The Minangkabau, known as the largest matrilineal society globally, has long captivated social scientists with its gender roles and the interactions between men and women. Surprisingly, a significant knowledge gap persists on these subjects: most anthropological studies and indigenous analyses of *adat* predominantly centre on men’s perspectives (Hartati et al., 2021). While considerable attention has been paid to exploring a man’s role within his mother’s or wife’s household, minimal emphasis has been placed on women’s positions and their influence in decision-making processes.

In the context of *adat*, an examination of the life cycle of a woman’s role reveals that Minangkabau girls are revered and cherished as infants, symbolizing the perpetuation of the matrilineal lineage, with the belief that a more significant number of daughters fortifies the family unit. Gender differentiation is minimal until the age of seven, during which both boys and girls are nurtured within an environment characterized by warmth and affection (Stark & Yahaya, 2021). However, a discernible shift occurs as they surpass this age, with girls increasingly subjected to the vigilant guidance of their families and encountering greater regulation compared to their male counterparts. The focal point for girl’s transitions towards preparing them for their prospective roles as mothers and homemakers, as they are instructed in essential skills such as culinary expertise and sewing, ensuring their adeptness in domestic duties. This transition underscores societal expectations that women will adhere to familial customs and contribute to the stability of their households (Knorr, 2022). Consequently, while girls are initially embraced as equal constituents of the family entity, societal norms gradually steer them towards more defined roles that align with the matrilineal values inherent in Minangkabau culture.

Traditionally, marriage arrangements were primarily orchestrated by the older generation. The *mamak*’s consent was crucial, and both parents, mainly the girl’s mother, were actively involved. Marriages were ideally arranged

with cross cousins, particularly favouring the son of the father's sister. While such unions were highly regarded, they are now rare in contemporary society. Another important stipulation was that both partners should come from the same village, a standard still strongly upheld today (Quisumbing & Otsuka, 2001). In many areas, councils of Penghulu continue to advocate for such marriages, reflecting the cultural preference for this arrangement. Many informants expressed that these unions represent the ideal marriage. However, they also acknowledged that they would not impose this choice on their children if they wished to pursue different options. Historically, Minangkabau girls were married off at a young age, partially to mitigate the risk of premarital intimacy (Mutolib et al., 2016). In this cultural context, remaining unmarried as an adult is relatively uncommon for women, usually occurring due to the dissolution of a marriage or the death of a spouse. As proposed by Lévi-Strauss, this social structure highlights the significance of kinship and marriage alliances in maintaining social cohesion and the continuity of familial ties within matrilineal societies (Zerkowski, 2019).

The examination of Minangkabau society has predominantly centered on *adat* thus far. However, it is essential to acknowledge the historical introduction of Islam to the region over four centuries ago, which brought with it a solid patriarchal tradition (Halimatussadiyah et al., 2024). Presently, nearly all Minangkabau people identify as Muslims, albeit with varying degrees of adherence. Since the early 19th century, West Sumatra has become a stronghold of Islam characterized by a strict and fundamentalist interpretation. The fusion of *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective traditions. Nevertheless, there are significant areas of tension where the two systems conflict. Neither has completely supplanted the other; instead, they coexist, each maintaining its unique influence. The disparities became particularly pronounced in the early 20th century with the emergence of Islamic reform movements from the Middle East in West Sumatra (Dermanto, 2023).

These movements encompassed both fundamentalist and modernist elements, seeking to purify Islam by discarding local customs and returning to its foundational principles—the Quran and the Sunnah (Holy Tradition). The aim was to redefine Islam in a manner that aligns with contemporary values, free from superstitions and outdated rituals, and compatible with the modern spiritual landscape (Dendi et al., 2005). Organizations such as Muhammadiyah and its female counterpart, Aisyiyah, founded in Java in 1912 and 1917, respectively, have played a pivotal role in promoting these new religious trends. The integration of reformist ideologies can be comprehended

through social change theories, which suggest that tensions often arise between traditional practices and modern influences as societies evolve (Azaria & Aristiawati, 2022). The Minangkabau case illustrates this dynamic, demonstrating how cultural and religious identities are continually negotiated within a framework of evolving social expectations and global influences. This ongoing dialogue between *adat* and Islam shapes individual lives and reflects broader societal transformations in response to the modern world (Wanto, 2017).

Rationalism and individualism have emerged as pivotal elements of the new Islamic movement in West Sumatra, leading to discord with the region's traditional collectivism rooted in *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective tradition. Within Islam, an individual's accountability is exclusively tied to Allah rather than the community (Stark, 2013). This perspective fundamentally reshapes the concept of property; Islam recognizes only individual ownership and disregards communal rights linked to the family. According to Islamic law, the accepted family structure is patriarchal, potentially allowing for polygynous arrangements, with the father serving as the primary authority figure. Consequently, a woman's dependence on her brother for protection and support for herself and her children becomes unattainable. While both *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective tradition and Islam confine women to domestic roles within the family structure, the level of reliance experienced by women is significantly greater under Islamic principles (Nurdin & Tegan, 2019). In the Islamic context, women are often perceived as part of their father's or husband's property, thereby diminishing their autonomy.

Conversely, under *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective tradition, women are esteemed as essential custodians of the matrilineal family, entrusted with managing family property and assets. This contrast exemplifies a fundamental divergence in the perception and valuation of women's roles within each system. The tension between the individualism advocated by Islamic teachings and the collectivist ethos of *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective tradition underscores the complexities of gender relations in Minangkabau society. As posited by social change theories, cultural value shifts often lead to reassessing roles and identities (Elfira & Wibawarta, 2019). The introduction of individualism challenges traditional communal bonds, necessitating a re-evaluation of women's placement within these evolving structures. This intersection of ideologies presents a rich tapestry

for comprehending the dynamics at play within Minangkabau society. The conflict between the ideals of rationalism and the deeply ingrained communal values of *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis that often blurs the distinctions between their respective tradition not only influences individual lives but also reflects broader societal transformations (Silk, 1994). As the Minangkabau navigate these competing frameworks, they engage in an ongoing discourse concerning identity, authority, and the role of women within their culture, illustrating the complexity and adaptability of social norms in a changing world (Rink & Barros, 2021).

The negotiation between *adat* and Islam within Minangkabau society represents a unique and ongoing balancing act that allows both traditions to coexist and influence one another. This balance, although not without its tensions, has created a cultural space where both systems of thought shape social practices, gender roles, and family dynamics (Halimatussa'diyah et al., 2024). Historically, the matrilineal structure of *adat* has granted women significant power and authority within the family, particularly in terms of property rights and decision-making. As custodians of family property, women have enjoyed a level of autonomy that stands in contrast to the patriarchal norms prevalent in many other Islamic societies (Fatimah, 2012). Simultaneously, Islam has introduced a new framework for gender roles, emphasizing patriarchal family structures and personal accountability before Allah. This shift has changed some of the power dynamics within Minangkabau society. However, rather than eradicating matrilineal customs, the interaction between *adat* and Islam has led to a synthesis where both systems adapt, creating a hybrid social structure (Aziz et al., 2020). For example, while the *adat* system continues to emphasize women's roles as property custodians, Islamic teachings have influenced how these roles are expressed, emphasizing the moral and spiritual aspects of women's responsibilities within the family. This synthesis has not remained static; over time, it has resulted in new forms of gender relations in Minangkabau society. Women, in their resilience, have navigated the intersection of *adat* and Islam, often negotiating their roles within the family and community, inspiring us with their strength and determination (Siregar et al., 2022).

In many cases, the maternal family continues to play a central role in a woman's life, giving her significant influence over property and inheritance matters despite the increasing prominence of patriarchal norms in other life aspects. However, the introduction of reformist Islamic ideas has also presented new challenges. The influence of Islamic reform movements, particularly those advocating for individualism and the primacy of patriarchal authority, has

prompted a re-evaluation of traditional roles (Dermanto, 2023; Nasution et al., 2023). This re-evaluation has led some women to reconsider their positions within the matrilineal structure and the broader Islamic framework, seeking ways to reconcile these sometimes-conflicting demands. It's important to respect their agency in this process. Therefore, the relationship between *adat* and Islam has allowed for a fluidity that enables women to embrace both cultural traditions, drawing strength from each in ways tailored to their unique social contexts. Looking to the future, the continued negotiation between Adat and Islam will likely evolve in response to both internal and external pressures (Wanto, 2017). As globalization and modernity continue to shape social and cultural norms, the balance between the collectivist values of *adat* and the individualistic tendencies within Islamic thought may shift again. The rising influence of education, economic mobility, and the increasing participation of women in the workforce will likely advocate for a reconfiguration of traditional gender roles. Simultaneously, the strong cultural ties to adapt, particularly in rural areas, suggest that women will continue to play a pivotal role in preserving and passing down these traditions. The future dynamics of this negotiation will likely result in a more inclusive interpretation of Islam that respects the cultural uniqueness of Minangkabau matriliney while also addressing the evolving needs and aspirations of women in contemporary society, offering hope for a more equitable future (Lindayanti, 2019). The ongoing dialogue between *adat* and Islam will continue to shape the identities, roles, and status of Minangkabau women, offering a model for other matrilineal societies grappling with similar challenges.

DECODING PATRIARCHY: THE COMPLEXITIES OF GENDER

The concept of patriarchy has been extensively scrutinized in the context of gender dynamics, serving as a framework for comprehending the systemic power structures that privilege masculinity over femininity. As a social system where men predominantly wield authority, patriarchy manifests in diverse forms across cultures, influencing various aspects, ranging from familial configurations to institutional hierarchies (Idriss, 2022). This intricacy necessitates a comprehensive analysis of the formation, perpetuation, and contestation of gender roles within different socio-cultural milieus. Recent anthropological research underscores the fluidity of gender identities, underscoring the imperative of recognizing the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality in understanding patriarchy (Mudgway, 2021).

The discourse has evolved toward a more intersectional perspective, acknowledging that gender is not uniformly experienced. For instance, Eileen

Barker's (2022) research accentuates how women's encounters in patriarchal societies are markedly influenced by their ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. This perspective aligns with R.W. Connell's concept of "multiple masculinities," positing the existence of varied forms of masculinity, often in competition within patriarchal frameworks (Connell, 2005). By scrutinizing these distinctions, researchers can glean profound insights into the localized manifestations of patriarchy and the resultant gender dynamics.

Furthermore, the complexities of patriarchy are compounded by cultural narratives that shape conceptions of gender roles. Lila Abu-Lughod (Browsers, 2014) contends that these narratives are pivotal in upholding patriarchal norms by delineating women's agency within predetermined roles. This underscores the necessity of delving into the cultural and historical contexts that shape gender dynamics. Anthropological studies can illuminate the genesis, dissemination, and resistance of these narratives across different societies, furnishing a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges confronted by individuals navigating patriarchal environments. The advent of global feminism has engendered critical dialogues concerning the concept of patriarchy, particularly about transnational issues. Arlie Russell Hochschild (2013) observes that globalization has transformed gender roles, facilitating greater female participation in the workforce and challenging traditional patriarchal structures. However, this transition is full of contradictions; while women attain economic independence, they may concurrently encounter new forms of exploitation and discrimination in the labour market. Hence, investigating the nexus between globalization and patriarchy is pivotal in grasping contemporary gender dynamics. Unravelling patriarchy necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers the intricate interplay between cultural narratives, social structures, and personal experiences. By integrating insights from contemporary anthropological theories, scholars can adeptly navigate the nuances of gender within patriarchal societies. Subsequent research should prioritize the evolving nature of these dynamics, particularly in light of globalizing influences, ensuring that the perspectives of those affected by patriarchy remain central to the ongoing discourse (du Plessis & Sørensen, 2017).

In Indonesia, patriarchal norms exert significant influence over both rural and urban settings, delineating gender roles. Despite strides toward gender equality, entrenched traditional expectations often curtail women's prospects (Shahriar, 2018). Notably, in numerous rural communities, women are predominantly relegated to the roles of caregivers and homemakers, while men wield authority in decision-making processes. Such cultural patterns perpetuate gender

disparities, impeding women's educational and professional advancement (Ganguly & Singh, 2021). Addressing these challenges necessitates targeted interventions to reshape societal perceptions of gender roles and dismantle patriarchal frameworks.

Furthermore, Indonesia's political landscape underscores the intersection of patriarchy with power dynamics. Women's representation in governance remains markedly low, with prevailing cultural attitudes framing leadership as a male prerogative. As of 2023, women occupy a mere 20% of legislative seats, emblematic of systemic impediments thwarting women's political engagement (Díaz et al., 2023). Mitigating these disparities demands comprehensive policies championing female leadership and empowering women to actively participate in the political arena, thereby challenging deeply rooted patriarchal norms. Patriarchal attitudes also significantly influence girls' educational access. While Indonesia has made notable headway in achieving gender parity in primary education, girls encounter hurdles in pursuing higher education and vocational training. Societal expectations frequently pressure girls to prioritize familial obligations over their educational aspirations, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and constraining their professional potential (Schwab, 2019). Initiatives promoting gender equity and encouraging girls to pursue academic interests are imperative in dismantling these patriarchal barriers.

The rise of digital activism has made social media a vital tool for women's resistance against patriarchal norms in West Sumatra. The courage of these women, who are using these platforms to challenge traditional gender roles and advocate for more equitable social dynamics in a region where cultural conservatism and patriarchal values are deeply entrenched, is truly inspiring. Social media has become an empowering space for women to express their dissent (Salliyanti et al., 2023). Activists and ordinary women share personal stories of resistance on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, calling attention to the marginalization women face in various aspects of life. These platforms foster solidarity and raise awareness of local issues, sparking essential discussions on topics such as child marriage, domestic abuse, and gender equality in the workplace. Grassroots campaigns, such as #PerempuanMinangkabau (Minangkabau Women), have successfully highlighted how gender-based violence intersects with cultural practices and religious doctrines, challenging the notion that tradition justifies the subjugation of women.

Additionally, women in West Sumatra are using social media to advocate for their rights and reshape societal perceptions of femininity and empowerment. The power of storytelling through digital media, often enhanced by hashtags

and viral content, has led to new narratives that prioritize women's voices and shift public discourse. Women have shared their experiences with educational barriers, social expectations, and religious constraints, using these platforms to resist the normalization of these injustices collectively (Dendi et al., 2005). These online movements function as individual and collective acts of resistance, allowing women to engage in transnational feminist discourses while asserting their local identities (Pierik, 2022). However, challenges persist, including backlash from conservative sectors and the digital divide, which may limit access for some women. Therefore, although social media offers a transformative avenue for resistance, it must be supported by offline efforts to address structural inequalities. This comprehensive approach ensures that women from all backgrounds can equally participate in these empowering conversations, highlighting the necessity of both online and offline support in activism.

VALOR VOICES: EMPOWERING MINANGKABAU WOMEN

The contradictions of power within the Minangkabau context, stemming from the tension between the matrilineal cultural structure and the socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers, are of significant importance. Traditionally, Minangkabau women play significant roles in preserving cultural heritage and maintaining familial lineage. However, their influence often does not extend to the economic and political realms. Despite their central position in family and social dynamics, these women frequently face significant obstacles in accessing resources, education, and opportunities for advancement. This paradox reveals how cultural norms, while seemingly supportive of women's roles, actually uphold traditional patriarchal values that restrict their participation in decision-making and economic activities, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities. Furthermore, the growing tension between preserving traditional Minangkabau values and pursuing modern gender equality complicates this power contradiction, underscoring the importance of understanding these dynamics.

The Minangkabau matrilineal system, which grants women authority over property and lineage, is often seen as a progressive model in a traditional cultural context. However, the rise of contemporary gender movements and the integration of global empowerment frameworks have created a conflict between cultural preservation and the need to challenge gender-based discrimination. As women strive for expanded roles in the economy, politics, and society, pursuing greater gender equality often clashes with deeply ingrained customs that still restrict their potential. This contradiction reflects

a broader global struggle where cultural heritage and modern aspirations for women's rights must be negotiated, resulting in tensions between tradition and the drive for transformative empowerment. This part seeks to identify the underlying factors contributing to these obstacles, including entrenched socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, and restricted access to educational opportunities. The "Valor Voices" initiative, a beacon of hope, aims to establish a platform where Minangkabau women can articulate their experiences, aspirations, and challenges.

This initiative transcends mere empowerment, constituting a transformative effort to redefine the narratives surrounding women's roles in Minangkabau culture. Prioritizing storytelling as a powerful self-expression can cultivate a deeper appreciation for the complexities these women navigate daily (Schrijvers & Coster, 1977). This approach resonates with modern empowerment theories that underscore the critical need for voice and representation in pursuing gender equity. Incorporating cultural relativism, this article advocates for understanding the Minangkabau women's experiences within their cultural context. Cultural relativism emphasizes that beliefs, practices, and values must be understood within the framework of the culture in which they exist, thereby acknowledging the diverse experiences of women in different societies. This theoretical lens allows for a more nuanced analysis of the intersection between tradition and modern empowerment, highlighting how cultural narratives can both constrain and enable women's agency (Sismarni, 2011). By recognizing the cultural dynamics at play, we can better appreciate the significance of the "Valor Voices" initiative as a means of fostering empowerment while respecting the rich cultural heritage of the Minangkabau community.

It posits that the active involvement of stakeholders—from local leaders and national figures—is vital for establishing a supportive environment for Minangkabau women. By encouraging collaboration among these actors, we can devise comprehensive strategies that dismantle systemic barriers and celebrate the rich cultural legacy of the Minangkabau people. Such an integrative approach is crucial to ensure that empowerment initiatives are sustainable and culturally relevant (Muchlian, 2019). The relationship between cultural identity and empowerment is a significant theme in the Minangkabau context.

Preserving cultural practices must not infringe upon women's rights and opportunities. This perspective advocates for a balanced perspective that honours cultural traditions while simultaneously championing the advancement of women's rights. It calls for a critical reassessment of traditional practices that may inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities, thereby fostering a

more inclusive cultural narrative that recognizes and values the contributions of Minangkabau women. The “Valor Voices” initiative symbolizes a critical advancement in the quest to empower Minangkabau women by amplifying their voices and promoting their active engagement in societal progress. This argument also aspires to enrich our understanding of women’s empowerment within culturally diverse settings by addressing their diverse challenges (Bahauddin et al., 2013). By celebrating their stories and experiences, we can cultivate a more equitable society that acknowledges and honours the contributions of all its members, particularly those who have historically been marginalized. In this manner, we pave the way for a future where women’s voices are heard and celebrated, reinforcing the notion that true empowerment stems from recognition, respect, and opportunity.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of women’s vital contributions in Indonesia, particularly those from the Minangkabau ethnic group. The intersection of traditional values and modern aspirations presents opportunities and challenges for these women as they navigate their societal roles. As they strive to maintain their cultural identity while pursuing personal and professional goals, Minangkabau women are redefining the boundaries of women’s empowerment. Noteworthy figures such as Nurhayati Subakat, acknowledged as an expert in the cosmetics industry over the years, revolutionized the Indonesian cosmetics industry through her beauty empire, exemplifying the potential of Minangkabau women to break barriers in various sectors (Nurhyansa, 2022).

Their stories highlight individual successes and serve as a catalyst for a collective movement advocating for women’s rights and empowerment within their communities. Nurhayati Subakat is a prominent Indonesian entrepreneur renowned for her significant contributions to the beauty industry as the founder of Wardah Cosmetics. With a solid commitment to empowering women and promoting beauty products that cater to the needs of Indonesian consumers, she has established Wardah as one of the leading cosmetic brands in the country. Her journey from humble beginnings to becoming a successful businesswoman inspires many aspiring female entrepreneurs (Sulaiman, 2019).

Born and raised in a traditional Minangkabau family, Nurhayati’s entrepreneurial spirit was evident early. She pursued her education in pharmacy, which laid the foundation for her future career in the cosmetics industry. In 1995, she founded Wardah Cosmetics, focusing on creating high-quality, halal-certified beauty products that reflect Indonesian women’s values and cultural identity. Under her leadership, Wardah has grown exponentially, offering a wide range

of skincare and makeup products that cater to diverse beauty needs.

Nurhayati Subakat's vision extends beyond business success; she is dedicated to empowering women through her brand. Wardah has become synonymous with promoting positive beauty standards, encouraging women to embrace their natural beauty while enhancing their self-confidence. Her commitment to social responsibility is reflected in various initiatives that support women's empowerment, education, and entrepreneurship, reinforcing the brand's values and mission.

In recognition of her outstanding achievements, Nurhayati has received numerous awards and accolades, including being named one of the most influential women in Indonesia. Her leadership style, characterized by compassion and a focus on community, has earned her respect and admiration in business. She is often invited to share her insights on entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, and the importance of ethical business practices, making her a sought-after speaker at various conferences and seminars (Simanjuntak & Prihatini, 2020). Through her work with Wardah Cosmetics, Nurhayati Subakat has impacted the beauty industry in Indonesia and beyond. She continues to inspire countless women to pursue their dreams and challenge societal norms, proving that with determination and a strong vision, women can lead in any field. As a trailblazer in the beauty sector, her legacy will undoubtedly influence future generations of female entrepreneurs, encouraging them to carve their paths and contribute to women's empowerment in society.

Another woman's profile, Asri Astianingsih, is a dedicated activist and entrepreneur known for pioneering work in promoting waste management and environmental sustainability through the "*bank sampah*" (waste bank) in Indonesia. With a solid commitment to her community and a passion for ecological conservation, Asri has played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the importance of waste segregation and recycling. Her journey began in her hometown, where she recognized the pressing issue of waste management and its detrimental impact on the environment. Determined to make a difference, Asri established a waste bank initiative that empowers residents to collect, sort, and recycle waste materials. This innovative approach reduces waste in landfills and provides economic benefits to participants, who can earn money from their recyclables. Under Asri's leadership, the waste bank has become a model for community-based waste management, showcasing how collective action can lead to significant environmental improvements.

Asri's work extends beyond the waste bank itself. She actively engages in educational campaigns, workshops, and community events to educate people about the significance of proper waste management practices. By collaborating

with schools, local governments, and environmental organizations, she strives to instil a sense of responsibility towards the environment in the younger generation. Her efforts have transformed waste management practices in her community and inspired many to adopt sustainable habits in their daily lives.

Asri Astianingsih's dedication to environmental activism has earned her recognition and respect within her community and beyond. She advocates for sustainable practices and policies prioritizing environmental conservation, empowering others to act for a cleaner and healthier planet. Through her work with the waste bank initiative, Asri exemplifies how grassroots efforts can lead to meaningful change. She is crucial in the movement towards a more sustainable future in Indonesia.

In the maritime industry, Lisa Yulia is a distinguished entrepreneur renowned for her innovative approach to shipping and logistics. With a maritime studies and business management background, she has successfully carved a niche for herself in a historically male-dominated industry. Lisa's journey in the maritime field began with her passion for the ocean and a desire to contribute to Indonesia's thriving shipping industry.

As the founder and CEO of a shipping company, Lisa has made significant strides in modernizing operations and improving efficiency within the sector. Her company provides reliable and sustainable shipping solutions, focusing on domestic and international routes. Under her leadership, the organization has embraced technological advancements, utilizing digital platforms to streamline logistics and enhance customer service. Lisa's commitment to sustainability is evident in her efforts to implement eco-friendly practices, ensuring that her company contributes positively to the marine environment.

In addition to her business acumen, Lisa is a vocal advocate for women's empowerment in the maritime industry. She actively participates in various initiatives to promote gender diversity and inclusion, encouraging more women to pursue careers in shipping and logistics. Lisa believes women's perspectives and contributions are invaluable in driving innovation and fostering a more inclusive industry. Her mentorship programs aim to inspire young women to explore opportunities in maritime fields, helping them develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed. Lisa has received numerous accolades throughout her career for her contributions to the maritime sector and her efforts to empower women. She is a role model for aspiring female entrepreneurs, demonstrating that women can thrive in any industry with determination and vision. Lisa Yulia's story is a testament to the potential of women in the maritime industry, inspiring future generations to follow in her footsteps and contribute to the growth and development of this vital sector.

Besides Lisa, Yusneti is a prominent figure in the jewellery industry, recognized for her innovative designs and commitment to sustainable practices. Hailing from the Minangkabau culture of Indonesia, she has successfully blended traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics, creating a unique brand that resonates with local and international markets. Her passion for jewellery design began at a young age, inspired by the rich cultural heritage of her community, where intricate craftsmanship and artistry are highly valued.

As the founder of her jewellery line, Yusneti has carved a niche in a competitive market. Her pieces are characterized by their elegance and attention to detail, often incorporating traditional Minangkabau motifs that celebrate her cultural roots. By utilizing locally sourced materials and collaborating with artisans from her community, Yusneti supports the local economy and promotes the preservation of traditional crafting techniques. This commitment to sustainability and ethical production has garnered her a loyal customer base that values quality and cultural significance.

In addition to her business success, Yusneti advocates for women's empowerment in the entrepreneurial landscape. She actively engages in mentorship programs to inspire young women to pursue careers in business and entrepreneurship. Through workshops and community outreach initiatives, she shares her knowledge and experiences, empowering the next generation of women to break barriers and achieve their aspirations. Yusneti's journey is a powerful example of how women can thrive in business while remaining true to their cultural identities and values.

Yusneti's contributions extend beyond her jewellery business; she is also involved in various charitable endeavours focusing on education and community development. She aims to create a lasting impact and foster positive change within her community by reinvesting some of her profits into local initiatives. Through her multifaceted approach to entrepreneurship, Yusneti exemplifies the potential of Minangkabau women to lead, inspire, and drive economic growth while honouring their heritage. Her success story continues to motivate aspiring entrepreneurs, proving that with determination and creativity, women can excel in any industry.

The empowerment of Minangkabau women is not merely a narrative of individual achievements; it reflects a broader societal shift towards gender equality and community development. The Minangkabau community fosters an environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully to societal progress by amplifying their voices and celebrating their successes (Pangulu et al., 2022). This paper aims to delve into the unique cultural dynamics that shape the lives of Minangkabau women and explore how their collective

achievements can inform policy frameworks and community initiatives to enhance women's empowerment. Ultimately, the study seeks to underscore the significance of cultural context in shaping women's empowerment narratives, advocating for practices that honor and elevate women's voices in all spheres of life.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the complex relationship between Minangkabau's matrilineal traditions and the patriarchal frameworks that shape women's roles in West Sumatra. The matrilineal system, with its unique feature of women holding authority over property and lineage, is juxtaposed with patriarchal interpretations of Islamic norms that impose limitations on their autonomy, particularly in economic and decision-making areas. The findings reveal the tensions that arise as Minangkabau women navigate their identities within these dual systems, balancing their cultural heritage with changing societal expectations. Their experiences highlight the urgent need for strategies that preserve cultural traditions while promoting gender equality.

The resilience of Minangkabau women, evident in their adaptive strategies such as pursuing education, achieving financial independence, and reinterpreting Islamic teachings in a way that aligns with egalitarian values, is a testament to their strength. These efforts are further supported by globalization and educational reforms, which create opportunities to redefine traditional narratives and challenge restrictive norms. By leveraging these resources, Minangkabau women are preserving their cultural identity and actively contributing to the broader conversation on gender equality. Their experiences showcase the transformative potential of combining local traditions with progressive frameworks to foster inclusivity and empowerment, offering hope for the future of gender equality.

This research enhances our understanding of gender dynamics in matrilineal societies by emphasizing the significance of cultural context in shaping women's agency. It highlights the potential for intergenerational change through education and social reform, urging stakeholders to address systemic barriers restricting women's participation in public and economic spheres. The Minangkabau case is a compelling example of how tradition can be reconciled with modernity, providing valuable insights for developing equitable social structures and inspiring global efforts toward achieving gender equality.

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