





## Review Article

# Women in Economic Activities: Minangkabau Cultural Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is the role of women in economic activities based on Minangkabau cultural perspective, the role of Minangkabau women in economic activities, and the shifting roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities. Literature explains that Minangkabau women do control economic resources, however the husband is the breadwinner, and the wife manages the family finances from the husband's income. In fact, many Minangkabau women are currently involved in economic activities as the primary breadwinner and support their husbands in earning a livelihood. The role of Minangkabau women in economic activities has shifted along with the social changes of society. This research aims to describe the perspective of Minangkabau's matrilineal culture regarding women's involvement in economic activities. This research was conducted in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The study employs an ethnographic research design, with data analysis techniques using domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis. The findings indicate that (1) women's involvement in economic activities, specifically as culinary entrepreneurs of Minangkabau's distinctive cuisine, is permitted according to the perspective of Minangkabau's matrilineal culture; (2) Women entrepreneurs in Minangkabau's culinary industry play a significant role in the family's economy and the business activities. In the family economy, they act as the primary breadwinners and support their husbands in earning a livelihood. In business activities, they participate in the production and distribution process; and (3) Ownership and inheritance of high inheritance assets and low inheritance assets remain unchanged, with high inheritance assets governed by customary law and low inheritance assets governed by Islamic law. However, the role of Minangkabau women in economic activities has shifted. According to Minangkabau's culture, the primary breadwinner in the family is the husband, and the wife is allowed to assist in the household's economic activities. Nowadays, Minangkabau women are found to be the primary breadwinners, and their husbands help them manage their culinary business, which is the primary source of family income. These research findings are recommended can be used as a guide to increase women's engagement in economic activities.

**Keywords:** women in economic activities, Minangkabau's matrilineal culture, women entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, cultural

One of the problems faced by women is the gender issue, which is a perspective on women and men from a non-biological perspective. In traditional perspective women are considered unable to fulfill their desires while men can (Freddy and Putra, 2024; Gouws, 2021); women are perceived as weak, dependent, emotional and subordinate while men strong, dominant, competitive, rational and able to lead (Amalia, 2016). In other words,

society's perception is that women's position is unequal with men, indicating that social perspective on women are still very low (Afifah, 2024; Brown et al., 2022).

Proponents of the nurture theory believe that these differences are influenced by the environment, which is a process of design human life through culture. This perspective has placed women under many limitations and hindered them in their activities (Wardizal and Santosa, 2018). This culture does not accommodate equality, and the imbalance leads to women being considered unimportant; as a result, there are stereotypes about women, such as the belief in society that men are breadwinners, and work outside the home done by women is seen only as supplementary (Valentina and Putera, 2007). This perspective is generally found in societies that adhere to a patrilineal culture (father's lineage).

Besides patrilineal culture, another culture that has develop in the world is matrilineal culture (mother's lineage). One of the adherents of this matrilineal culture is the Minangkabau ethnic group. The Minangkabau ethnic group is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia, originating from the province of West Sumatra and the largest adherent of matrilineal culture in the world (Hanani and Wahyuni, 2013; Mutolib et al., 2016; Malik, 2016; Hadrianto, 2017; Yanti, 2017; Stark and Yahaya, 2021; Azzahra et al., 2021; Nasir et al., 2021; Dilova et al., 2022). In Minangkabau matrilineal culture, lineage is based on the mother's line, not the father's. Women are the inheritors of family heirlooms and bearers of the family name. The kinship system is complemented by economic support derived from the management of heirlooms. Heirlooms have a social function that falls under the control of women (Freddy and Putra, 2024). In Minangkabau society, there are high and low heirloom. The high heirloom is ancestral heirloom passed down through generations through the mother's lineage, inherited collectively by heirs from one generation to the next, according to Minangkabau custom. The inheritance of high heirloom to daughters in Minangkabau from the perspective of protection for women means that the inheritance rights of daughters in Minangkabau have received better protection, because in addition to having the right to receive inheritance from their parents (low heirloom), they also have the right to high heirloom. The right to high heirloom is due to the fact that women in Minangkabau are highly revered figures, and descent follows the mother's lineage. Low heirloom, namely the inheritance of parents whose inheritance distribution is carried out according to the provisions of Islamic religious law (Husni et al., 2016; Jamal et al., 2024). This is due to women being considered incapable of earning money, working, or earning a living, while men are considered capable of being required to be the backbone of the family by working and earning a living (Yusuf, 2023).

In contrast to the patrilineal system where the male line inherits and controls heirloom, in the Minangkabau matrilineal system, male power in the extended family is held by the *mamak* (maternal uncle), not by the husband. In terms of inheritance, men in Minangkabau only have the authority to manage heirloom, but they do not directly own or inherit it. The high heirloom in Minangkabau is regulated through the mother's lineage, according to matrilineal principles. Thus, although men have a significant role in the power structure, this role is limited to administration and control, not to direct ownership or inheritance of high heirloom (Azwar, 2017).

Minangkabau women in the household play a role in household activities, children born become part of the maternal family. Thus, the father's role in taking responsibility for his children's lives is taken over by the *mamak* (uncle) from his clan. On the other hand, the husband is responsible for financing his children's needs. The husband acts as the head of the family who provides for and provides protection to his family members, while guidance and direction are mostly provided by the *mamak* (Nurman, 2019; Dewi Cantika and Rafiqah, 2024). Nurman (2019) explains that Minangkabau women are still under the influence of patriarchy, which is manifested in the role of *mamak*. They are often viewed merely as objects, social accessories, and decorations in society.

The figures of Minangkabau women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the same as other regions in the Dutch East Indies. Their role is limited to being a mother, a wife, prepared to serve the household and take care of children, not having the freedom to represent themselves, but they are limited by customary norms that regulate what may and may not be done (Yanti et al., 2017). Even though there are women who work, this work is not considered a primary role, but rather only as an effort to help reduce the husband's workload. This reflects the view that men are the primary and dominant economic asset in families and communities. In other words, although women contribute economically, their role is seen as complementary to supporting men's primary role in the family economy (Azwar, 2017).

The period 1912–1921 was an era of modernization for Minangkabau society, particularly women, who participated in the economic system, both within the family and community. This was pioneered by female figures such as Rohana Kuddus. Minangkabau women experienced significant changes in the early 20th century, including in their economic activities. Minangkabau society successfully capitalized on opportunities created by colonialism. Women's involvement in economic activities to improve their well-being was complex. Minangkabau women were involved in livelihood efforts to generate income for family sustainability (Mulyani and Shahriani, 2024).

Gender ideology in Minangkabau culture is quite distinct from other cultures. Minangkabau culture adheres to a matrilineal system as its gender ideology (Azmi et al., 2019); women's position in Minangkabau is not limited to domestic roles but also has opportunities for public roles, such as economics (Amalia, 2016). The gender role of

women in Minangkabau has a special position and status because of mother's lineage (Amalia, 2016); those who receive a large inheritance are women (Lius Zen and Hasnawati, 2021a) while the gender role of men in Minangkabau is as father, *sumando* (son-in-law is a husband who lives temporarily in his wife's house) and *mamak* for their nephews (Munir, 2015). The determination of gender roles for Minangkabau women is a privilege for women in various aspects, especially in terms of becoming a women entrepreneur, thus having an impact on increasing the number of women entrepreneurs (Cipta, 2019).

Although Minangkabau women have a privileged position, gender inequality is also evident in Minangkabau matrilineal culture, for example male dominance in household decision-making, the traditional division of labor that places domestic burdens solely on women, and limited access to employment opportunities outside the home. This often results in Minangkabau women being trapped in male domination and experiencing exploitation in various aspects of family life (Afifah, 2024); this custom is also used to restrain women in the social perspective of the Minangkabau community (Lius Zen and Hasnawati, 2021). In household activities, the relationship between husband and wife in Minangkabau society is actually not much different from the relationship between husband and wife in societies with other cultures, placing the husband as the head of the family and the wife as the housewife (Handayani, 2020; Lius Zen and Hasnawati, 2021). In social relations, Minangkabau women do not have a formal position, they are only considered as a manifestation of potential social rights (public life) played by men, this is the contradiction in the figure of Minangkabau women, namely between their rights and high position and the freedom of self-actualization in social relations (Azwar, 2017). In Minangkabau society, women are often trapped in a dual role, where they must submit to the rules and control of the *mamak* in the extended family and the husband in the nuclear family. This demonstrates that despite progress, women still struggle against cultural structures and norms that limit their freedom and equality (Azwar, 2017).

This research focuses on Minangkabau women in economic activities. The involvement of Minangkabau women in these economic activities is influenced by various cultural factors, for example, 1) the Minangkabau ethnic group has a strong entrepreneurial spirit; The Minangkabau are also known for their high entrepreneurial spirit and tendency to become entrepreneurs (Sismudjito et al., 2015), almost 60% of Minangkabau people work as entrepreneurs, with a focus on culinary business (Welsa et al., 2017); 2) the culture of migration (*marantau*) which is also carried out by women has changed their perspective on the role of women; 3) the reduction in the number of high heirlooms that will be inherited by Minangkabau women, and 4) the shift in the role of *mamak* in the Minangkabau family where the relationship between *mamak* and nephews is becoming looser, the tendency to live in a nuclear family is increasing. Gradually, changes occurred in Minangkabau families, moving toward a nuclear family due to social changes in society, which, on the one hand, gave fathers and mothers an increasingly important role as parents. On the other hand, the relationship between *mamak* and their nephews was loosened, as *mamak* also had to pay attention to their own families (Valentina and Putera, 2007).

Studies on the involvement of Minangkabau women in economic activities, for example, the active involvement of women in the rural economic sector which is dominated by agriculture by participating in the rice fields and fields together with men, trading in local markets, being active in the craft industry such as weaving, woven, making pottery, and other household-related industries (Yanti et al., 2017); the role of Minangkabau women as heads of families in creating household food security in Padang Timur District (Sasmita, 2011); the model of entrepreneurship development in empowering household economy in Minangkabau (Zusmelia et al., 2012); the entrepreneurial nature of Minangkabau women traders (Buang et al., 2014) female farm laborers on call and their existence according to Minangkabau customs (Helfi, 2015); from *amai setia* crafts to soenting melayoe Rohana Kuddus' strategy in fighting against women's oppression in Minangkabau (Ratna Sari, 2016); the strategic role of women in developing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) based on local knowledge (Fadli, 2016); female workers in the land of women: a case study of the shifting role of Minangkabau women (Kurnia, 2017); Ruhana Kuddus, a pioneer of the women's entrepreneur movement in Minangkabau (Hanani and Khairat, 2020); double burden of women: strengthening women's economy through sharia financial inclusion in Minangkabau (Nengsih, 2020); the role of women in improving the family economy in Minangkabau; a study of migrant workers in Malaysia (Najmi, 2023); the role of Minangkabau women in supporting the family economy in 1912-1921 in the Soenting Melajoe newspaper (Mulyani and Shahrani, 2024).

Research about Minangkabau women in culinary businesses, for example, entrepreneurial thinking and behavior of traditional Minangkabau food entrepreneurs in West Sumatra, Indonesia (Murni et al., 2016); factors that influence the business performance of women entrepreneurs in the snack food industry in West Sumatra Province (Syahardi et al., 2017); Minangkabau culture and its implementation in Padang restaurant management in Yogyakarta (Welsa, 2017); women entrepreneurs: success factors and obstacles in culinary businesses (Yuhendri, 2023). Although there has been a lot of research about Minangkabau women in economic activities in various types of work, there has been no research that discusses the actual role of women in economic activities from the perspective of Minangkabau matrilineal culture.

The economic activities in this study focused on the economic activities carried out by Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs in their role as producers of Minangkabau culinary. The women entrepreneurs in this study are Minangkabau women who initiate, organize, and operate Minangkabau culinary businesses to meet their personal needs, become economically independent, and support the environment in their communities. The culinary specialties produced are traditional Minangkabau cakes, namely *dakak-dakak* from Luhak Tanah Datar, *sanjai* from Luhak Agam, and *galamai* from Luhak Lima Puluh Kota, not Padang restaurants. These Minangkabau cakes are produced in a production facility close to the women entrepreneurs' homes, with a sales point (shop) also close to their homes, selling wholesale and retail, and marketed online.

In addition, previous research was conducted in various regions of West Sumatra Province, outside West Sumatra Province, and abroad; this research was conducted in three Minangkabau customary region where Minangkabau culture originated, known as *luhak nan tigo*, namely Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Lima Puluh Kota, which are still strongly entrenched in Minangkabau matrilineal customs and culture. Historically, the ancestral region, which also served as the center of cultural development for the Minangkabau ethnic group, is called *luhak*, which consists of three areas: Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Lima Puluh Kota (Nadia et al., 2022).

The women entrepreneurs who were the subjects of the research were women entrepreneurs who produced typical Minangkabau culinary delights in the form of snacks (typical Minangkabau cakes) which are famous in each traditional region, namely *dakak-dakak* in Tanah Datar, *sanjai* in Agam, and *galamai* in Lima Puluh Kota. These businesses are included in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that have survived the dynamics of the Indonesian economy, including the 1997 monetary crisis; as evidenced by the 1997–1998 crisis, MSMEs were able to become an important icon in stimulating the Indonesian economy, including in West Sumatra Province (Widia et al., 2022).

The social phenomena prevailing in Minangkabau society are highly dynamic, as reflected in the changes occurring within the community. Sociocultural values continue to develop and change according to the conditions of the society in which they are implemented. Therefore, their actualization is highly dependent on the surrounding environment (Valentina and Putera, 2007). This change also occurs in the socio-cultural value system of the Minangkabau ethnic group. This article discusses the perspective of Minangkabau matrilineal culture on women's involvement in economic activities, the role of Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs in the family economy and business activities, and the shifting role of Minangkabau women in economic activities that have not been discussed comprehensively in previous studies. This research is important to describe the changing role of Minangkabau women in economic activities. Although there is a shift in the role of Minangkabau women in economic activities, Minangkabau culture does not hinder women's role in economic activities, so it can increase women's contributions to economic activities as women entrepreneurs, especially in the culinary business.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Minangkabau's Matrilineal Culture

The Minangkabau ethnic group is a society with a matrilineal kinship system. Etymologically, matrilineal means a descent line traced from the mother's side (Yazid, 2014). Munir (2015) explains that in the matrilineal kinship system, the descent line is from the mother; her children only know their mother and her siblings; the father and his family do not belong to the child's clan because the father belongs to the mother's clan as well. This kinship system is difficult to dispute because it is a living, growing, and evolving proof in Minangkabau (Munir, 2015).

Respect for women can be seen in the matrilineal line where lineage is traced from the mother's side; the house is designated for women's residence; agricultural land is also allocated for women, and so on (Munir, 2015). For the Minangkabau people, the lineage does not only determine the lineage of their children but is closely related to their customs (Munir, 2015; Yazid, 2014). In Minangkabau households, a wife is primarily responsible for managing the household. The husband provides the money while the wife manages it. The status of women in Minangkabau society is also determined by their power in the economic sector, in which Minangkabau women have a high status (Hendrawati and Ermayanti, 2016).

### Women in Economic Activities as Women Entrepreneurs

Women play an important role in the family, not only as wives and mothers, but also as providers for the family's economic needs (Aswiyati, 2016). Their participation in economic activities, has been increasing over time. Nowadays, women are not only seen as housewives who depend on their husbands, but they also play an active role in various aspects of life, including social and economic (Rizal et al., 2016).

Women's entrepreneurs is someone who takes on challenging roles to meet personal needs and become economically independent (Miftakhuljanah et al., 2016). In this study, women entrepreneurs refer to women who

take the initiative to organize and operate Minangkabau culinary businesses to meet their personal needs, become economically self-sufficient, and support the community.

Tlaiss (2013) revealed a relationship between cultural values and entrepreneurial motivation, indicating that women's involvement in economic activities is influenced by culture. Women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to economic growth (Ascher, 2012). Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in the local economy, and most micro-enterprises in developing countries are run by women (Sharma et al., 2012). Women contribute to household income (Aswiyati, 2016; Rizal et al., 2016) and job creation (Tlaiss, 2013).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilized a qualitative approach with the Spradley model of ethnographic research. Ethnography looks at the daily lives of people and groups, how they act, understand and give meaning to their actions and their cultural, social and material environments. The behavior or actions of a group of people are unique, related to the social and cultural history that underlies their every action (Fatchan, 2015). The study was centered in the culinary business of Minangkabau cuisine in each customary region of West Sumatra Province. This research was conducted in three Minangkabau customary region which are the origins of Minangkabau culture, namely Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Lima Puluh Kota, which are still thick with Minangkabau matrilineal customs and culture (Nadia et al., 2022).

The research instruments included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Noor et al., 2023; Widen et al., 2024). The research informants were women entrepreneurs in the Minangkabau culinary business, traditional leaders in the Minangkabau community, family members of women entrepreneurs in the Minangkabau culinary business, and female employees of the Minangkabau culinary business. In-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide. Interview transcripts were recorded. Participant observation was conducted by observing women Minangkabau culinary entrepreneurs during their economic activities. Observation results were recorded on an observation sheet. Furthermore, documents owned by the women Minangkabau culinary entrepreneurs were used as additional data to complement the data obtained from the in-depth interviews and participant observation.

The ethnographic data analysis used Spradley's model, consisting of three stages: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis (Shaleh et al., 2022; Indra et al., 2024). This data analysis helped researchers discover semantic relationships between cultural themes explicitly found at the research site. Researchers identified and defined cultural themes based on qualitative research conducted at the research site. Domain themes were transformed into taxonomic details to gain more specific and contextual knowledge. The final stage was component analysis related to reflections on Minangkabau women's economic activities. The research process consisted of three stages: 1) Stage I: Initial stage, which determined the research location, focus, and informants, 2) Stage II: Field research stage, and 3) Stage III: Discussion and writing of the final research report.

## DISCUSSION

### The Perspective of Minangkabau Matrilineal Culture on Women's Involvement in Economic Activities

The research findings on the perspective of matrilineal Minangkabau culture regarding women's involvement in economic activities are presented in [Figure 1](#). The matrilineal culture of the Minangkabau has its own perspective on women's involvement in economic activities. The study revealed that the primary breadwinners in the core family of Minangkabau society are husbands. Hendrawati and Ermayanti (2016) explain that in modern society, especially in Minangkabau culture, there is a clear division of labour based on gender. In Minangkabau households, a wife's primary obligation is to manage the household, while the husband provides the household expenses and the wife manages the money.

In Minangkabau, customs and Islam religion reinforce each other and cannot be separated (Hadrianto, 2017; Tono et al., 2019; Aziz, 2020; Wulandari et al., 2021). The Minangkabau people hold firmly to their customs and traditions based on Islamic law as described in the proverb "*Adat Basandi Syara', syara' basandi kitabullah*" (Cipta, 2019). It is stated in their customs that "*syara' mengato, adat mamakai*" which means that what is regulated by syara' (Islam) is used in their customs. The husband has the obligation to provide for his wife based on the teachings of the Quran, Sunnah, and Ijma. The father is also obliged to provide for his children's needs.

Although the main breadwinner in Minangkabau culture is the husband, wives are allowed to participate in economic activities to assist their husbands in providing for the needs of the family as long as it is in line with Minangkabau customs and culture. The increasing needs and inadequate income of the husband have driven wives to participate in the workforce to help their husbands.

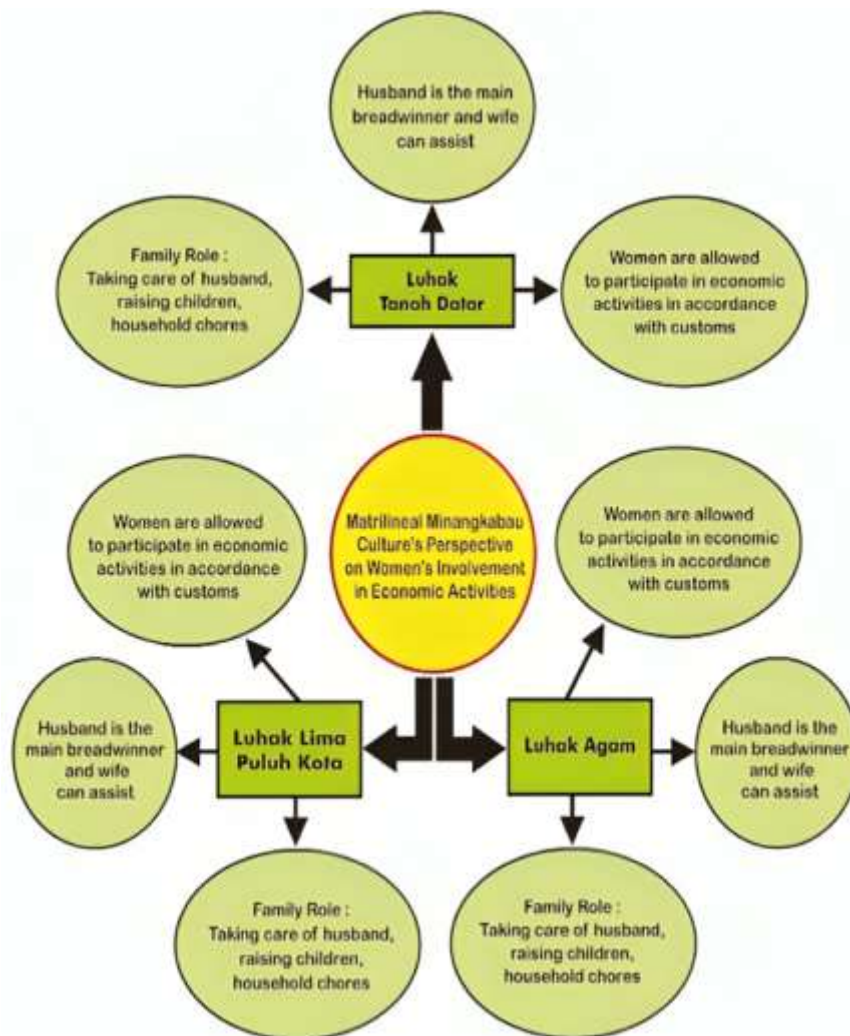
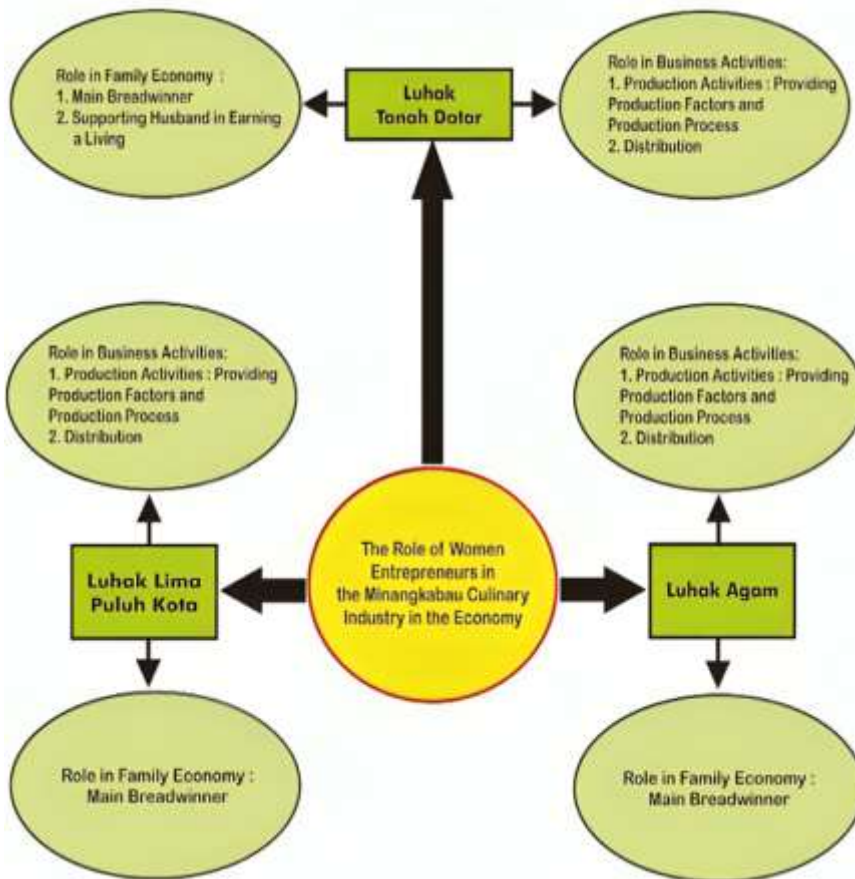


Figure 1. Matrilineal Minangkabau culture's perspective on women's involvement in economic activities.

Minangkabau culture provides space for women to engage in economic activities, albeit within the limits of Minangkabau customs. Women in Minangkabau work with their husband's permission while still maintaining the dignity and honor of Minangkabau women. Not all types of work are suitable for Minangkabau women, especially those that are physically demanding and those that have negative connotations. However, the Minangkabau culture allows women to work as culinary entrepreneurs because it is considered suitable for women. In Minangkabau society, women are usually responsible for cooking for the family and for traditional events. Moreover, the unique Minangkabau culinary business run by women is a home industry where the business location of all research informants is in close proximity to their residences and is generally integrated with their homes.

Women entrepreneurs in the culinary industry of Minangkabau do not encounter cultural barriers in carrying out economic activities as producers of traditional Minangkabau cuisine. They are able to play their roles as both entrepreneurs and Minangkabau women in a balanced way. Those who can balance their career and family roles and achieve success in both can be considered successful individuals. In Minangkabau culture, women's primary role is as a homemaker, participating in cultural customs and serving as a *"bundo kanduang"* in the community. By operating a business from home, they can oversee their children and household while generating income from their venture. They possess business management and family management skills, and they receive support from their family, who also participate in the business activities. Hendrawati and Ermayanti (2016) explain that in Minangkabau, women have different roles in certain groups. In households, women use their inheritance for livelihood, maintain balance and good relationships with all men in their extended family, carry out all traditional customs in the community, and even have roles similar to those of men in their families. The women's task orientation is to maintain the Minangkabau cultural cycle, while men carry out the cycle according to their roles.

Indeed, Minangkabau women inherit high inheritance assets that can be utilized to meet the economic needs of their families. With a strong determination to improve their standard of living and contribute to their community, they are motivated to engage in economic activities. Their entrepreneurial spirit supports their success in operating Minangkabau culinary businesses.



**Figure 2.** The role of women entrepreneurs in the Minangkabau culinary industry in the economy.

### **The Role of Women Entrepreneurs in the Minangkabau Culinary Industry in the Family Economy and Business Activities**

Based on research findings, the role of Minangkabau women entrepreneurs in the culinary industry can be seen in their contribution to the family's economy and their participation in business activities is highlighted in [Figure 2](#).

#### ***Role in family economy***

This study finds that women entrepreneurs in Minangkabau culinary play a role in their family economy. Their roles include as the primary breadwinners and assisting their husbands earn a living. Women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities strengthens their economic power (Ristovska and Blazheska, 2020). The importance of women's entrepreneurship for economic development is widely recognized (Ślusarczyk et al., 2023). In this era, women are considered as the backbone not only of their families but also of the nation's economy (Gopinath and Chitra, 2020). Women entrepreneurs contribute to the economy (Ahmetaj et al., 2023).

#### ***Primary breadwinner***

Women entrepreneurs in Minangkabau culinary as primary breadwinners are found in all three main Minangkabau customary regions. They play the role of primary breadwinner due to 1) the death of the husband; 2) cases of divorce; and 3) the type of work of the husband which impacts his income as the head of the family, where the wife's income is higher than the husband's income, it means that the income of the wife, as a Minangkabau culinary entrepreneur, is higher than the husband's income from his main job. This demonstrates that women can also support their families just as men do. Today's women take the same roles or even more than men (Srividhya and Paramasivam, 2021).

The support provided by the family to Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneur is in the form of informational support (advice, suggestions and discussions regarding how to overcome or solve problems faced in business), assessment support (mentors who provide feedback, guide and organize in solving problems, expressions of positive appreciation involving statements of agreement and positive assessment of ideas, feelings and performance of others that are positively compared between individuals and others), instrumental support (Support provided by families who live in the same house, providing credit or providing money and other forms of assistance in doing daily household chores), and emotional support (empathy, attention, providing

encouragement, warm personality, love, or emotional assistance) (Winbaktianur, 2023). In addition, family members are also involved in business activities, namely production activities, distribution activities, and business management.

In cases where the wife is the primary breadwinner due to higher income from her business compared to the husband's income (business income of 25.000.000 rupiah to 250.000.000 rupiah per month with a profit of 25%–50% while the husband's income from his work is 1.500,000 rupiah to 10.000.000 rupiah), the husband decides to leave his main job (changing professions). Moreover, Minangkabau's culinary business are more promising than his main job, the husband decides to leave his main job and focus on helping his wife to manage and develop the business. The jobs left by her husband were as a construction worker, casual laborer, and factory worker. Women entrepreneurs supported by their families and husbands have a positive impact on their business growth (Ahmetaj et al., 2023). In this case, the family's income is entirely derived from the business's revenue.

In addition to being the primary source of income for the nuclear family, the business also serves as the main source of income for the extended family of Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs. For example, in Tanah Datar, a mother works in her child's business (her husband is still alive). In Tanah Datar and Lima Puluh Kota, siblings (who have their own families) help and work in the business. In Agam and Lima Puluh Kota, children (who are married) help and work with their parents. In Lima Puluh Kota, cousins (who are married) also help and work in the business. Thus, parents, siblings, cousins, and children also derive their primary income from the business. Women have shown an interest in generating income and entrepreneurial activities, resulting in property rights, personal rights, family development, and community development (Srividhya and Paramasivam, 2021).

### ***Helping husband earn a living***

Women entrepreneurs in Minangkabau culinary who assist their husbands in earning a living are found in all three main Minangkabau customary regions. In these cases, the husband's income is not sufficient to meet the family's needs. This indicates that men, as heads of households, are unable to support the family's economic needs, so that women get involved in assisting their husbands. In this context, women perform dual roles as earners and household managers. One reason women engage in business is to obtain additional income. By becoming Minangkabau culinary entrepreneurs, Minangkabau women help their husbands to overcome their family financial issues. Women play a role in supporting the family's economy (Zunaidi and Maghfiroh, 2021).

What is more interesting is the presence of Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs who assist the family's income even though their husband's income is sufficient to meet the family's needs. This is found in Tanah Datar. The husband works as a Civil Servant (civil servant take home pay is 5.000.000 rupiah to 10.000.000 rupiah) and they do not have children. This happens because the woman feels capable and needs to meet her own needs without fully depending on her husband. Women entrepreneurs are business owners who participate in economic activities to empower themselves economically and improve their status in society (Srividhya and Paramasivam, 2021). The primary reason women work outside of household chores is self-actualization to help their husbands (Zunaidi and Maghfiroh, 2021).

### ***Role in business activities***

Research findings show that Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs play an active role in every business activity. They are involved in both production and distribution of products. Women entrepreneurs have opportunities and potential to grow in entrepreneurial activities across various economic sectors (Ristovska and Blazheska, 2020). Women own and control a majority of their businesses (Morshed and Khulshi, 2021).

A significant number of women and housewives succeed as women entrepreneurs. Women have proven to be competent in all business areas, demonstrating their capabilities in entrepreneurship (Gopinath and Chitra, 2020). Women and housewives have equal opportunities as men to achieve the highest career levels in their lives. Although men and women are born with different natures, both have equal opportunities in entrepreneurship. Referring to this statement, Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs are capable of performing their roles in business activities effectively, including both production and distribution of products.

### ***Production activities***

Research findings indicate that Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs are actively involved in the production process of their products. Women contribute significantly to the economy through productive roles (Jabeen et al., 2020). Their involvement ranges from providing production factors, and the production process itself. The production factors they provide include capital, raw materials, labour, and technology.

**Capital:** Research findings reveal that businesses can be classified into two categories: those inherited from ancestors and those initiated by women entrepreneurs. Businesses inherited from ancestors use capital obtained from business profits, with additional capital acquired through loans from financial institutions. Businesses initiated by women entrepreneurs obtain capital through loans and family income. Businesses led by women typically start

with capital contributed by themselves from savings or finances, supported by their families (Gopinath and Chitra, 2020). The capital for Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs comes from their own capital, family, and loans from financial institutions. These loans are in the form of low-interest micro-business loans. The government's role includes legal protection and easy access to permits, training and capacity building, easy access to business capital financing and grants, infrastructure and supporting facilities, and increased collaboration and partnerships.

Research findings indicate that capital is a crucial factor in starting and developing Minangkabau culinary businesses. Financial capital has been a major concern for many women entrepreneurs, especially during the business start-up phase (Kanapathipillai and Ferdous Azam, 2019). The relationship between capital and growth is generally framed within access-oriented or utilization-oriented approaches (Hechavarría et al., 2019); financial resources are important factors affecting business performance and sustainability of women-owned businesses (Adam et al., 2022).

This research differs from other studies that state women have difficulty accessing credit from financial institutions (Kanu and Aca, 2017; Isa and Noor, 2020; Jaim, 2021). Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs have access to financial institutions to obtain credit, such as from banks. This access significantly helps them acquire additional capital to develop their businesses. Research by Fabian and Isyaku Okpanaki (2022) reveals a strong relationship between soft loan financial strategies and business growth among women entrepreneurs. The availability of access to financial institutions enhances Minangkabau women's participation in entrepreneurial activities, especially in SMEs. Research by Morshed and Khulshi (2021) shows that finance has a positive and significant relationship with women's participation in entrepreneurship in SMEs. Kanapathipillai et al. (2021) found that financial capital and the amount of required capital are statistically significant for women entrepreneurs. Women realize that new conditions and the growth of economic independence also affect changes in capital movement and increased money consumption in sectors directly related to women and their needs (Ristovska and Blazheska, 2020).

Although Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs have access to financial institutions, some still face capital constraints. These constraints include situations where large amounts of capital are needed while the loan amounts from financial institutions are limited. Women entrepreneurs consistently acknowledge facing barriers when securing financial capital for investing in their businesses (Kanapathipillai et al., 2021). Many women-owned businesses are small enterprises, and small businesses often face shortages, forcing them to operate under severe financial constraints (Adam et al., 2022). One weakness of SMEs is capital issues (Badriyah et al., 2023).

**Raw materials:** In establishing a business, the availability of raw materials must be considered. The procurement of raw materials is one of the key factors in ensuring smooth production processes (Mukmin, 2022). Research findings show that Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs have established reliable suppliers. Raw material producers determine the quality of raw materials, which affects product quality. Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs purchase raw materials from well-known producers. Access to raw materials is a positive predictor of women entrepreneurs' income (Beriso, 2021). This ensures the affordability of raw materials. Affordability refers to the empowerment and constraints that raw materials provide to someone involved in a business for specific goals (Babri et al., 2022). In this case, the business goal. The affordability of raw materials impacts the sustainability of Minangkabau culinary businesses. Raw materials influence business income (Gani and Daulay, 2021). The quality of raw materials has a positive and significant effect on business success (Priyana et al., 2024).

They place orders via telephone, and suppliers deliver raw materials as ordered. In other words, they receive raw materials without leaving their place of business and residence. Raw materials and supporting materials, as well as required resources, must be sufficiently available, and the supply must match the needs to ensure cost efficiency. Raw material inventory can speed up or slow down the production process (Setiawan and Usman, 2023). Optimizing the procurement of basic raw materials helps reduce raw material costs (Dong, 2022).

**Labour:** Research findings indicate that the labour force in Minangkabau culinary businesses predominantly consists of women. This finding contrasts with previous research that revealed lower participation of women in the workforce compared to men (Obayelu et al., 2020; Zainal Abiddin and Ismail, 2021; Omran and Bilan, 2022; Singh et al., 2020; Syed Salleh and Mansor, 2022; Ramadhan and Nurrohman, 2023). The lower participation of women compared to men in the workforce generally occurs in societies with patrilineal cultures. Studies have identified various cultural issues related to women running businesses in patrilineal cultures, such as by Jaim (2021). Inequality between men and women, including in the economy, social traditions, and customs, is the strongest barrier to women's economic emancipation (Klaa and Buheji, 2020). This research proves that in Minangkabau culinary businesses, which are in a matrilineal culture (descent from the mother's side), women's participation in the workforce is higher than men's.

The women employed are generally housewives. Liu and Marois (2024) found that the labour force participation of married women with children decreases. In contrast to this finding, participation in the labour force among married women with children increases in Minangkabau culinary businesses. Women become workers mainly due

to economic factors. Göttingen et al. (2018) found that most women work due to economic reasons. Empowering housewives as workers increases women's participation in the workforce. Sang (2020) found that empowering women and gender mainstreaming significantly influence women's participation in the labour market. The labour force in Minangkabau culinary businesses acquires skills on the job. Additionally, some workers have obtained skills from previous workplaces, from family, or the community.

Women employed in Minangkabau culinary businesses generally have familial or neighborhood connections. Amato et al. (2022) note an increase in research articles exploring the effects of family involvement in employer roles on job creation. Women entrepreneurs contribute to the economic well-being of relatives and communities, job creation, and women's empowerment to ensure their rights (Morshed and Khulshi, 2021). The employment of women in Minangkabau culinary businesses does not negatively impact their families. Research by Olu-Owolabi et al. (2020) reveals that women's involvement in economic activities does not have negative effects on their families but instead enhances family stability.

In Minangkabau culinary businesses with a matrilineal culture, choosing labour from family members or neighbors facilitates teamwork. On the other hand, the number and qualifications of employees must be adjusted to work hours and job qualifications to complete tasks. Amato et al. (2022) state that the positive or negative impact of family involvement in employment may depend on the context in which the family resides. The female labour force generally lives near the location of the Minangkabau culinary business where they work. Furthermore, they are educated in the same customs and culture, where social norms and rules are the same. The labour force employed in Minangkabau culinary businesses acts as partners for the women entrepreneurs. The workers are relatives and neighbors. In this context, the relationship between women entrepreneurs and employees is based on affection, mutual need, and helping each other within a sense of family and togetherness. A proper personal approach and the establishment of good remuneration practices can motivate employees to work well and loyally.

Some women working in Minangkabau culinary businesses leave their jobs after gaining experience to start their own businesses. They then open new ventures. Successful women entrepreneurs with high social reputations, through their hard work and struggle, serve as important role models that many people wish to follow (Ristovska and Blazheska, 2020). Although new businesses opened by former employees become competitors, they assist these new ventures in developing. This demonstrates their involvement in empowering women to create new women entrepreneurs. It shows that women entrepreneurs make significant contributions to society (Adam et al., 2022). They share the responsibility of community development in various ways (Srividhya and Paramasivam, 2021). Women entrepreneurs are also supported by their family members. Research by Morshed and Khulshi (2021) shows that family support has a positive and significant relationship with women's participation in entrepreneurship in SMEs. By prioritizing women's economic empowerment, societies can unlock their full economic potential, promote sustainable development, and foster greater equality and prosperity for all (Gupta and Gupta, 1987). Access to economic empowerment has resulted in financial independence and improved well-being for women (Okoi et al., 2022).

**Technology:** Research findings indicate that women entrepreneurs in Minangkabau culinary businesses use technology in their business activities. Technology is employed in the production and distribution of products. Morshed and Khulshi (2021) found that technology has a positive and significant relationship with women's participation in entrepreneurial activities in SMEs. Isa et al. (2021) proved that women entrepreneurs use Information and Communication Technology in their business operations.

The technology used by Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs in production activities is still relatively simple. Some businesses still use traditional technology, while others have adopted modern technology in the form of machinery. The use of this technology aligns with the needs of Minangkabau culinary businesses. Machines and equipment must be compatible with current and future technological developments and should be adjusted to production scale to avoid overcapacity.

The selection of technology for businesses should be based on social and economic reasons. Economic considerations involve the availability of labour and efforts to employ them. Traditional technology is chosen by Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs because labour is still available, and one of their goals is to create jobs so that labour from family and neighbors can be absorbed. The economic reason is that the technology used must be more profitable as it improves production quantity and quality while reducing production costs. This economic consideration is why Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs use production machinery. They weigh social and economic aspects in their choice of technology.

The research conducted showed that the product packaging is done with simple technology. But for packaging some of the businesses utilize modern technology. The packaging can influence consumers to purchase the product and packaging can help consumers recall the product. It points to the fact that packaging may assume the image of a business venture.

The use of technology is also required in the distribution of the products, for example is digital marketing. The use of digital platforms has become a common method of introducing products and creating business

opportunities (Kataria and Phukan, 2022). In the current trend of digital marketing practices, women are playing a crucial role in commencing with innovation and changing the traditional practices of the industry (Grimalt-Álvaro, 2025; Suresh Kumar and Shobana, 2023). Of course, Morales (2023) noted that digital marketing is influential in women's entrepreneurship.

### ***Distribution activities***

Research findings indicate that Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs are directly involved in product distribution activities. This is observed in all three research regions. Distribution activities are conducted through direct sales, wholesale, and consignment. Generally, businesses have stores or outlets to sell their products. These are located either integrated with or close to the production site. The store or outlet is also integrated with or near their residence. These stores are managed by employees under the supervision of a family member (child, husband, or close maternal relative). Such distribution activities allow them to perform dual roles as housewives and entrepreneurs. They manage to balance both roles according to Minangkabau customs. This finding differs from Isa and Noor (2020), which found that one of the main barriers for women entrepreneurs is the challenge of balancing dual roles.

Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs conduct wholesale sales to agents (souvenir centers of West Sumatra Province) through telephone orders. Orders are then sent via courier services or delivered by employees using company vehicles. However, some are also delivered directly by women entrepreneurs or family members (children, husbands, or other relatives). In situations where direct distribution to agents is necessary, they are accompanied by a male family member. This is following Minangkabau customs, where Minangkabau women travel with a mahram (a male guardian). This also indicates that their business activities do not contradict Minangkabau customs. This contrasts with (Isa and Noor, 2020), which found that mobility constraints are a major barrier for women entrepreneurs. Minangkabau culinary women entrepreneurs also engage in consignment marketing by placing their products in stores, stalls, or supermarkets with a certain commission. The most preferred distribution channels are selling products directly in stores and online marketing because with these two distribution channels they do not leave their home and place of business.

### ***Shifting roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities***

The results of research on the shifting roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities are presented in **Figure 3**. Ancestral heritage (*Pusako*) serves as a guarantee for the livelihood and equipment of nephews and nieces in Minangkabau. Minangkabau women inherit high and low inheritance assets (Irawaty and Darajat, 2019). High inheritance assets refers to all ancestral property that has been passed down from previous generations of ancestors, and the original recipient is no longer known. The process of transferring ownership of ancestral heritage (from *mamak* to nephews and nieces) is called *pusako bajavek* in customary terms. The characteristics of high inheritance assets are 1) its origins cannot be clearly traced, 2) it is collectively owned by the community and used for common interests, and 3) it cannot be transferred to anyone outside of the community, unless certain conditions agreed upon by all community members are met.

Low inheritance assets, on the other hand, consists of all the property resulting from the parents' occupation during their marriage, along with the gifts given by the *mamak* (uncle) to his nieces from his own occupation. The low inheritance assets is regulated according to Islamic law, where the property is inherited by the children and other heirs. Low inheritance assets is not a hereditary legacy. Research results show that there has been no shift in the ownership of property in Minangkabau, whether high or low inheritance assets.

The economic pressure is starting to shift the role of Minangkabau women in economic activities, especially those who do not have property and receive less attention from their maternal uncle (*niniak mamak nan saparuiik*). They struggle on their own in economic matters, including becoming the backbone of the household economy (Armstrong, 2019; Helfi, 2015). It cannot be denied that one of the causes is the weakening or declining role or involvement of women in managing the inherited property, which has traditionally been "entrusted" to Minangkabau women (Ullah and Shah, 2017; Yuhelna et al., 2021). Gender inequality in Minangkabau's matrilineal society causes women to experience injustice in managing communal forest land (*Ulayat*). This inequality is most evident in situations where men sell communal forest land for their personal interests (Mutolib et al., 2016). Tradition can no longer be a shield for women, as the sale and mortgage of inherited property lead to impoverishing women and forcing them to seek other livelihoods to survive (Kurnia, 2017). The control that Minangkabau women have in managing communal property also makes them actively involved in the economic sector (Yanti, 2017). Inherited property is also one of the means of supporting the economy of the Minangkabau people, which is decreasing over time (Yuhelna et al., 2021).

The changing economic landscape towards industrialization and services has caused the role of Inherited property (*harta pusaka*) as a means of supporting the economic life of the Minangkabau people to decrease over time, but the role of Inherited property as a symbol of togetherness and family pride within the matrilineal kinship

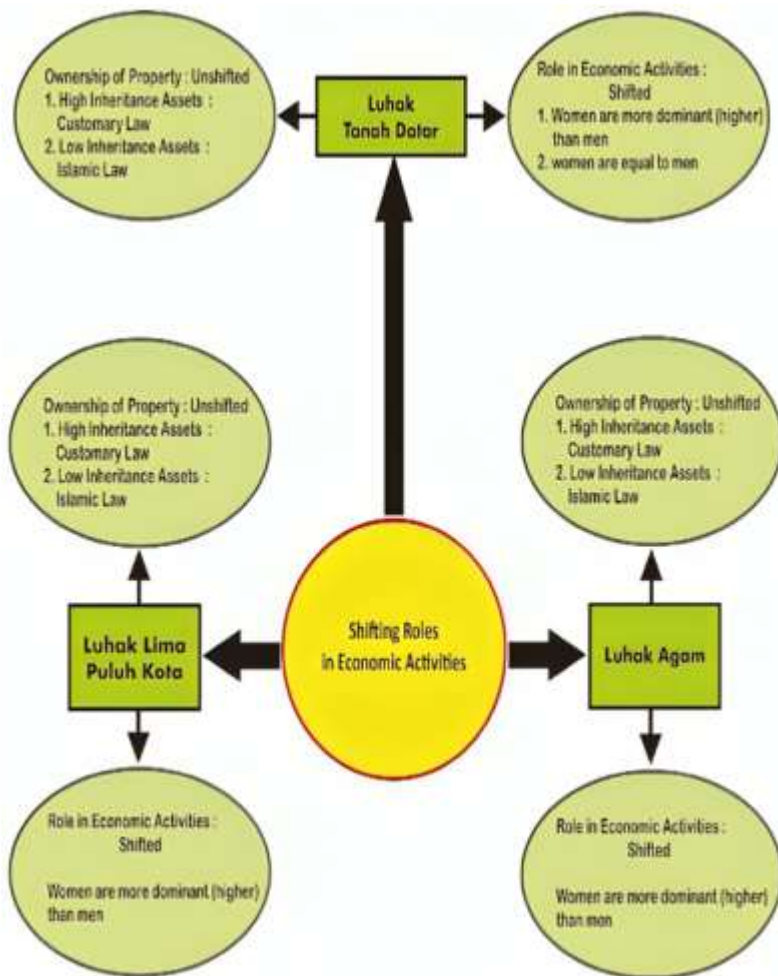
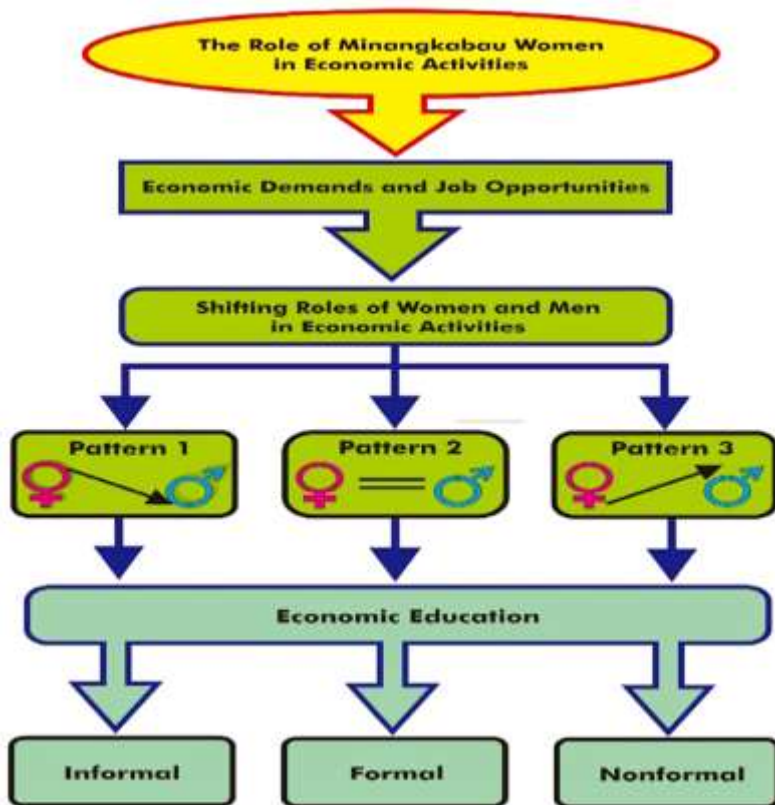


Figure 3. Shifting roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities.

system of the Minangkabau still remains. Along with the development of time, there has been a shift in the roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities. Economic demands and the availability of job opportunities have caused a shift in the roles of women and men in economic activities within Minangkabau society. The results of this study reveal three patterns of the roles of women and men in economic activities within Minangkabau society, shown in Figure 4. Figure 4 illustrates that the existence of three patterns of roles for women and men in economic activities within Minangkabau society, as follows:

1. Pattern 1: Women have a lower role compared to men. This was found in all three research sites and occurred during the initial establishment of a business. In this pattern, the husband is more dominant in economic activities and plays the primary role as the breadwinner of the family. Women entrepreneurs initially intended to start a business to help their husbands meet the family's needs. As time passes and the business grows, this condition changes to pattern 3.
2. Pattern 2: Women are equal or on par with men. This was found in two research sites, Luhak Tanah Datar and Luhak Lima Puluh Kota. In this context, women entrepreneurs focus on their business while their husbands also focus on their work. In this pattern, the husband plays the primary role as the breadwinner of the family, while the wife assists the husband in meeting the family's needs. In this case, the income from the business is often greater than the husband's income.
3. Pattern 3: Women have a higher (dominant) role compared to men. This is the most common pattern found in all three research sites. In this pattern, women play the primary role as the breadwinner of the family and are the main actors in managing Minangkabau's typical culinary business. In this context, husbands only assist their wives in economic activities. Husbands often leave their previous professions because the income from the business is greater than their income from their profession. The husbands then focus on supporting their wives in managing and developing the business. Consequently, the family's income comes entirely from the business. As time passes and the business grows, pattern 1 changes to pattern 3. Women entrepreneurs in the Minangkabau culinary business, who were the research informants, no longer follow pattern 1. This change occurs due to several factors, such as the income from the business being greater



**Figure 4.** The roles of Minangkabau women in economic activities (♂: Men; ♀: Women; ↘: Women have a lower role compared to men; ↗: Women have a higher (dominant) role compared to men; =: Women are equal or on par with men).

than the husband's income from their profession, the husband passing away, divorce, or the husband being a foreign citizen with only a residence permit in Indonesia.

In the social structure of Minangkabau society, behavior and way of life are guided by custom (*adat*) (Mutolib et al., 2016). Minangkabau custom, which is structured and systematic, can adapt to the times as long as its structure and system do not change. This is expressed in the words of *sakali aia gadang* (once the flood), *sakali tapian baraliab* (once the shore turns), *sakali tahun baraliab* (once the year goes by), *sakali musim bakisa* (once the season changes), *usang-usang diperbarui* (when old things are renewed), *lapuak-lapuak dikajangi* (when old things are mended), *adat dipakai baru* (new customs are used). This provides an opportunity for us to understand that *adat* can be renewed and continuously used to become new.

Similarly, the shift in the role of Minangkabau women in economic activities does not change the essence of the husband's role as the primary breadwinner in the family. What shifts is only the dominance of the role. Husbands still strive to meet the needs of their families according to their abilities. Cultural understanding of women's issues, status, and roles in social life varies according to the development of situations and time (Azwar, 2017).

The goal of the Minangkabau people is to leave a legacy of good deeds (*biduik bajaso, mati bapusako*). In their traditional saying, when an elephant dies, it leaves its ivory, when a tiger dies, it leaves its stripes, and when a human dies, they leave their good deeds. Therefore, the Minangkabau people work hard to leave something valuable for their descendants and society. This motivates Minangkabau women to become entrepreneurs of traditional Minangkabau cuisine. They not only manage the family finances but also participate in economic activities as breadwinners. Their role can be more dominant than their husbands in economic activities. As they grow up and get married, their power expands into the economic and social realms (Hakam, 2021; Zhang, 2025). In Minangkabau's matrilineal tradition, women have a problematic status and role. On the one hand, they are respected as leaders within their families, with the heavy responsibility of managing the social and economic well-being of their family members, maintaining security, and preserving tradition (Yunarti et al., 2021). In addition to cultural factors, women in Minangkabau have the same rights to participate in public life to alleviate economic pressures based on numerical harmony (Soyer et al., 2023; Zulfa et al., 2016). Minangkabau women in carrying out economic activities also face various obstacles. These obstacles include 1) feminine factors: duties as housewives, pregnancy and childcare; 2) emotional factors: difficulty in making decisions due to too many considerations,

emotional conditions and relationships between men and women in a business disrupt concentration in business; 3) Access to financial resources to obtain capital; 4) education factors; and 5) security factors (Rahmidani, 2014; Saputri and Himam, 2015; Midawati, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The involvement of women in economic activities as Minangkabau's signature culinary female entrepreneurs is allowed according to the perspective of matrilineal Minangkabau culture. The primary role of women according to Minangkabau culture is as a homemaker with tasks of managing household affairs, accompanying their husbands, educating their children, and managing the family's finances. Meanwhile, in the family, the main breadwinner is the husband. However, wives are allowed to work to assist their husbands in meeting the family's needs as long as it is in accordance with Minangkabau tradition. Minangkabau's female culinary entrepreneurs play a role in the family's economy as breadwinners and in business activities.

The role of Minangkabau women in economic activities has undergone a shift. According to Minangkabau culture, the main breadwinner in the family is the husband, and the wife is allowed to assist in earning a living. However, there are now Minangkabau women who serve as the primary breadwinner, while their husbands assist them in managing their Minangkabau culinary business, which is the main source of family income. In other words, Minangkabau women are not only managing the family finances but also taking on a more dominant role in economic activities as culinary entrepreneurs. In this regard, wives have a more dominant role in economic activities. This study has identified three patterns of the role of Minangkabau women as culinary entrepreneurs in economic activities: pattern 1, where women are subordinate to men; pattern 2, where women are equal to men; and pattern 3, where women are superior to men. This study focuses on the involvement of Minangkabau women in economic activities as culinary entrepreneurs, but there is much room for further research on the involvement of Minangkabau women in other professions. These research findings are recommended can be used as a guide to increase women's engagement in economic activities.

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