

# **‘Urf, Gender, and Customary Law: Negotiating Women’s Participation in Boar Hunting in Minangkabau, Indonesia**

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This research examines the involvement of Minangkabau women in wild boar hunting, a practice that challenges the philosophical foundation of Minangkabau society, “*Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*” (Custom is based on Islamic law, and Islamic law is based on the Qur’an). Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through direct observation at hunting sites and in-depth interviews with female hunters, administrators of the Indonesian Boar Hunting Sports Association (Persatuan Olahraga Buru Babi Indonesia [PORBBI]) in Indonesia, traditional leaders, and members of Bundo Kanduang, who serve as guardians of customary values. The study reveals that women’s participation in hunting contradicts Minangkabau customary law and Islamic legal principles, as hunting is traditionally regarded as a male domain and its prohibition reflects the harmonisation between *adat* and Islamic law. This is illustrated by the application of *‘urf shabih* (valid custom), which deems practices that deviate from established norms as inappropriate, and *sadd al-dhara’i* (blocking harmful means), which views women’s involvement as generating more harm than benefit. Despite these limitations, women negotiate their roles in activities previously exclusive to men, transforming hunting into a space where they challenge gender binaries, engage in socially meaningful actions, and construct more flexible identities. The study confirms that customary law and Islamic principles, while regulating norms, adapt to evolving social dynamics through women’s strategies to renegotiate. This research contributes to global discussions on legal pluralism, cultural change, and gendered agency in Muslim societies, providing insights into the shifting gender roles within a matrilineal system.

Penelitian ini mengkaji keterlibatan perempuan Minangkabau dalam perburuan babi hutan, sebuah praktik yang menantang landasan filosofis Minangkabau. Masyarakat, Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (Adat berdasarkan hukum Islam, dan hukum Islam berdasarkan Al-Qur’an). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografis kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi langsung di lokasi perburuan dan wawancara mendalam dengan pemburu perempuan, pengurus PORBBI di Indonesia, tokoh adat, dan anggota Bundo Kanduang sebagai penjaga nilai-nilai adat. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa partisipasi perempuan dalam perburuan bertentangan dengan hukum adat Minangkabau dan prinsip-prinsip hukum Islam, karena perburuan secara tradisional dianggap sebagai ranah laki-laki dan larangannya mencerminkan harmonisasi antara adat dan hukum Islam. Hal ini terlihat dalam penerapan *‘urf shabih* (adat yang sah), yang menganggap praktik-praktik yang menyimpang dari norma-norma yang berlaku sebagai tidak pantas, dan *sadd al-dhara’i* (mencegah hal-hal yang merugikan), yang memandang keterlibatan perempuan lebih banyak mendatangkan mudharat daripada manfaat. Terlepas dari batasan-batasan ini, perempuan menegosiasikan peran mereka dalam kegiatan-kegiatan yang sebelumnya eksklusif untuk laki-laki, mengubah perburuan menjadi tempat di mana mereka menantang biner gender, terlibat dalam tindakan-tindakan yang bermakna secara sosial, dan membangun identitas yang lebih fleksibel. Studi ini menegaskan Hukum adat dan prinsip-prinsip Islam, meskipun mengatur norma-norma, menghadapi dinamika sosial yang terus berkembang yang memungkinkan ruang publik tradisional dinegosiasikan ulang melalui strategi adaptasi perempuan. Penelitian ini memperkaya diskusi global tentang pluralisme hukum, perubahan budaya, dan agensi gender dalam masyarakat Muslim, menawarkan wawasan tentang pergeseran peran gender dalam sistem adat matrilineal.

**Keywords:** *customary law (Adat); female agency; gender negotiation; matrilineal society; ‘Urf.*

## Introduction

Boar hunting (*kondiak*) has been a longstanding tradition in Minangkabau society in Indonesia (Zainuddin, 2019). While it serves as a recreational activity for some, its primary purpose is to eliminate wild boars that threaten agricultural crops (Sarwar, 2019). Historically, this practice predates the arrival of Islam in the region (pre-Padri period) and has been passed down through generations (Syam, 2021). Embedded in customary practices, hunting is a regular activity across various Minangkabau territories and has traditionally been the domain of adult men, given the physical skills it demands (Tasya et al., 2023). In recent years, however, a new phenomenon has emerged: women are increasingly participating in boar hunting, either independently or alongside male family members. This trend has sparked controversy within the community, as it signals a shift in cultural values that conflict with traditional gender norms. According to these norms, Minangkabau women are expected to occupy domestic roles (Fakhyadi et al., 2025). Ismed, a representative of PORBBI (*Persatuan Olabraga Berburn Babi* or Indonesian Boar Hunting Sports Association) in Pasaman, West Sumatera, has voiced opposition to female participation in hunting, arguing that it violates ancestral traditions that assign women the role of caretakers of the *Rumah Gadang* (Minangkabau traditional matrilineal house) (AK, 2021). This development raises critical questions regarding cultural transformation and its implications in the contexts of both customary law and Islamic teachings.

Previous studies have examined boar hunting in Minangkabau society from various perspectives. Salim et al. (2021) explored the hunting process from preparation to execution. Wahyudi et al. (2020) highlighted the transformation of hunting from pest control into a social spectacle. Syam (2021) also analysed the evolving nature of the practice. Other scholars, such as Pratama (2015) investigated the influence of hunting on visual art. While Aditya and Soedarsono (2022) focused on communication patterns among hunting groups. Research by Rahmah et. al. (2017) emphasised the role of hunting dogs, and Zainuddin et al. (2019) explored the practice in relation to Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, Purnama et. al. (2023) studied the connection between hunting and household harmony. Studies on Minangkabau women have also been extensive, with Schrijvers and Postel-Coster (1977), Fatimah (2023), and Erianjoni (2011) examining the evolution of women's roles in society.

Additional works by Nurman (2019), Qur'ani (2018), Azwar (2018), Hakam (2021), Dilova et al. (2022), and Nuroniyah et al. (2022) have explored gender in the Minangkabau context. Nevertheless, there has been limited attention to the specific issue of women's involvement in boar hunting and how this phenomenon reflects broader cultural changes in relation to *adat* (customary law) and Islam.

The participation of Minangkabau women in boar hunting reflects a form of cultural transformation that challenges the long-established gender division within Minangkabau society (Jamilah et al., 2024). The philosophical doctrine of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) (customs based on Islamic law, Islamic law based on the Quran) emphasises the harmonization of customary norms with Islamic legal principles (Halimatussa'diyah et al., 2024; Jafar et al., 2024; Warman, et al., 2023), positioning hunting as a domain historically reserved for men. On the other hand, the growing involvement of women in this practice challenges traditional gender roles and raises critical questions about its legitimacy in both customary and Islamic frameworks. This tension brings forth a set of scientific problems; how do women participate in and negotiate their roles within this traditionally male activity? What factors motivate their involvement? How there is presence accepted or rejected by customary and religious authorities? Additionally, what broader social consequences emerge when women enter a space long defined as masculine? By framing the issue in this way, the study aims to explore not only the legal and cultural debates surrounding women's participation in hunting but also the shifting dynamics of gender and identity in a matrilineal society confronted with contemporary changes (Abdurahman et al., 2024).

This research is urgent due to changing values observed in Minangkabau society. Boar hunting, associated with masculine identity, serves as a source of pride among *ninik mamak* (traditional leader) and provide a space for men to assert their presence in a matrilineal system dominated by women (Elimartati et al., 2025; Warman, et al., 2023). Minangkabau women are traditionally revered for their modesty and grace, as encapsulated in the proverb "*muluik manih kucindam murah*" (gentle words and generosity). The current shift becomes even more complex when viewed through the lens of Minangkabau philosophy, *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (Wimra et al., 2025). Therefore, this study is

essential for understanding the cultural changes occurring and assessing whether women's involvement in boar hunting aligns with or contradicts the values of *adat* and Islamic teachings.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilising a case study strategy to explore the participation of Minangkabau women in wild boar hunting, an activity traditionally dominated by men. The data was conducted in five districts in West Sumatra (Tanah Datar, Padang Panjang, Lima Puluh Kota, Pesisir Selatan, and Pasaman) between March and September 2023. Data were collected through field observations (both participant and non-participant) and semi-structured interviews, which lasted 60–90 minutes, using a purposive sampling approach. Informants consisted of ten active female hunters (referred to as R, N, ES, H, RM, Z, A, AZ, RA, DN) and two husbands of hunters (AB, MN), Second, the administrators of the Minangkabau Pig Hunting Sports Association (PORBBI) from the provincial to the district level, and traditional and cultural leaders, including representatives from the Traditional Council (LKAAM), the Nagari Traditional Council Communication Forum (KAN), and Bundo Kanduang as the guardian of tradition. Data credibility was upheld by utilising source triangulation, member checking, and peer discussion. Data analysis follows a descriptive-interpretive approach, utilising the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The theoretical framework used integrates gender studies, customary law, and Islamic law principles to understand the social and legal dimensions of women's participation in hunting.

## **Minangkabau women in Boar hunting: a customary transgression**

The visible and active presence of Minangkabau women in boar hunting grounds handling dogs, wearing practical attire like denim and t-shirts, and engaging with the hunt with focus and shouted encouragement represents an empirical reality that increasingly normalises their participation. This involvement spans age groups and varies from group to lone hunting, indicating growing experience and autonomy. However, this emerging normalcy

stands in sharp contrast to the enduring perspective of Minangkabau customary law (*adat*), which views such activity as a fundamental disruption of traditional gender roles. The practice directly challenges deeply rooted cultural norms, as symbolised by the proverb framing hunting as a masculine domain of pride and recreation for men, and scholarly work defining it as a key medium for male identity within the matrilineal structure. Thus, women's hunting signifies more than a change in activity; it marks a profound symbolic rupture in the traditional values governing women's place in Minangkabau society.

Aresno Dt. Andomo, Chairman of the Minangkabau Traditional Council (LKAAM) in Tanah Datar, emphasised that boar hunting is traditionally a male responsibility. According to him, the presence of women in hunting activities is a recent development, emerging within the past year, and is considered a transgressive act under customary law.

“This phenomenon of women participating in boar hunting has only emerged in the past year. Historically, no Minangkabau women engaged in this activity, as it is a man's job. Hunting is physically demanding and inappropriate for women. From an *adat* perspective, female participation in boar hunting constitutes a transgression.” (Andomo, 2023).

Echoing this view, Sutan Syahril Amga Dt. Majo Indo, a senior traditional leader, stated that in his decades of hunting experience since 1993 across various regions of West Sumatra, he never encountered women involved in hunting. He considers such actions inappropriate for Minangkabau women.

“Hunting has always been an activity for men, not for women. I have hunted extensively since 1993 across West Sumatra, and I have never seen a woman hunt or handle dogs. A Minangkabau woman engaging in boar hunting is acting inappropriately, what we call *sumbang* or, in other terms, *condo*.” (Indo, 2023).

Similarly, Ismed, a PORBBI Pasaman member, affirmed that Minangkabau women have never participated in boar hunting. Even among Minangkabau women, some oppose such involvement. Bundo Raudhah, Chairperson of *Bundo Kanduang* of West Sumatra, stated that this phenomenon is unprecedented and contradicts Minangkabau traditions (Raudhah, 2023).

Although traditional hunting of wild boar is often viewed as a male-dominated activity, there is a growing trend of female participation that is challenging this

norm. Female hunters from the South Coast are expressing their growing interest in hunting, reflecting changing social norms (RM, 2023). However, traditional authorities, such as the Head of KAN West Sumatra, emphasise that roles such as handling hunting dogs remain dominated by men in accordance with longstanding customs (Basa, 2023). However, the Head of Public Relations for PORBBI West Sumatra acknowledges that women's participation is increasingly inevitable because there are no organisational rules prohibiting it and due to the community's indifference (Andes, 2023). All traditional authorities agree that this involvement of women is classified as a form of *sumbang*, which in Minangkabau tradition is equated with wrongdoing. This behaviour refers to a violation of traditional moral and ethical standards, and it is considered a sign of bad manners and social deviance (Diradjo, 2021)

Raudhah (2023) explains that women's participation in boar hunting contradicts Minangkabau customary ethics and aesthetics, particularly the principles of *alua jo patuik* (propriety and decorum) and *raso jo pareso* (emotional and rational discernment). He assesses the act as *Sumbang*, socially improper behaviour with no historical precedent. This clarification is reinforced by Indo (2023), who distinguishes such a violation from *salah*. *Sumbang* refers to a breach of moral norms resulting in social stigma, while *salah* involves violating formal religious, state, or customary laws that carry tangible sanctions. regarding on propriety, Sampono (2023) underscores the customary principle of *mungkin jo patuik* (the possible versus the appropriate). He states that although women can physically participate in hunting, it is culturally considered *patuik* (improper). This reinforces notion that a woman's rightful place is within the *Rumah Gadang*, not in the forest hunting boars.

Based on According to Minangkabau customary law, women's participation in wild boar hunting is fundamentally considered a violation or *sumbang* (Diradjo, 2021; Gani, 2020). This is especially classified as *sumbang karajo* (inappropriate work) because it violates the traditional gender role that defines physical and public activities as the domain of men. This contrasts with the role of women as Bundo Kanduang, who are centred on the *Rumah Gadang*. Furthermore, their participation

in this activity is often accompanied by other specific violations, such as *sumbang kato* (using coarse language and masculine greetings like “Ang”); *sumbang pakai* (wearing tight clothing or clothing that reveals the body); and *sumbang duduk* (sitting in a position such as sprawling or kneeling, which is considered impolite). Field observations indicated close interactions with non-mahram men in mixed groups, reinforcing the perception of impropriety. From a traditional perspective, women’s involvement in hunting is not only a symbolic deviation but also a comprehensive practical violation of established gender norms. Hence, it is natural that it provokes rejection in society.

While Minangkabau customary law (*adat*) frames women’s participation in wild boar hunting as a transgressive act (*sumbang*). This growing involvement signifies a substantive shift in societal gender roles, moving beyond the prescribed identity of *Bundo Kanduang*, centred on domestic harmony, into the traditionally male-dominated sphere of the hunt. This shift constitutes a form of resistance and negotiation, in which women actively redefine the boundaries of the public sphere. Theorised through Butler’s (1990) concept of gender performativity, their repeated engagement in hunting constitutes a performative act that challenges and reworks normative, *adat*-based gender constructions. Similarly, from the perspective of R.W. Connell’s (1995) hegemonic masculinity, their presence in this domain actively destabilises the power dynamics and masculine domination inherent in the activity. Hence, the phenomenon initiates critical discussions on the negotiation, contestation, and potential reconstruction of gender identity in contemporary Minangkabau society.

### **Motivations behind women’s participation in Boar hunting**

Boar hunting, traditionally considered a masculine activity within Minangkabau society, is gaining interest among women. Participants cite a range of motivations for their involvement, reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics within the community.

#### **1. Hobby and Personal Enjoyment**

For many Minangkabau women, wild boar hunting has evolved into a meaningful form of serious leisure, offering personal satisfaction, emotional release, and a sense of



adventure. This is exemplified by hunters like R, who has twenty-five years of experience and owns seven trained dogs. Her involvement reflects a deep commitment that transforms hunting into a core component of her lifestyle and a familial cultural inheritance (R, 2023). Similarly, N describes that what began as a casual activity for fun has developed into a genuine passion, highlighting a transition to active engagement and personal meaning-making (N, 2023). ES further underscores the psychological benefits, framing the activity as a vital source of enjoyment and mental respite, aligning with the concept of dedicated recreational pursuit (ES, 2023).

The practice also requires a significant personal investment and serves as a social and familial activity. Z, for instance, demonstrates substantial dedication, spending approximately Rp 350,000 weekly to maintain her seven hunting dogs. Her participation, often shared with her spouse, challenges traditional gender assumptions and shows how hunting can strengthen domestic bonds while affirming women's autonomous choice of recreation (Z, 2023). Beyond personal leisure, women's participation entails negotiating complex social and household dynamics. RA's narrative reveals a persistent engagement driven by personal fulfilment and a sense of civic contribution to pest control, despite facing disapproval from her husband (RA, 2023). This tension illustrates the micro-level contestation of gender roles, positioning women not merely as recreational participants but as social actors asserting agency in reshaping cultural norms and their own place within both the community and the domestic sphere.

## 2. Recreation and Leisure

For many women, wild boar hunting serves as a meaningful form of recreation, allowing them to temporarily escape domestic responsibilities and work demands. This activity provides a space for enjoyment, camaraderie, and emotional outlets that are difficult to find in the rhythm of daily life, providing a rare moment to focus on oneself (H, 2023). H's narrative that hunting is a psychologically restorative practice that challenges the assumption that fulfilment must stem from domestic roles. Meanwhile, R emphasises hunting's function as a method of decompression and balance after long work hours, stabilising her in a demanding work environment (R, 2023).

The social dimension of this activity is also prominent, as outlined by ES, who views hunting as a space for building solidarity and sharing humour among women. Beyond mere recreation, their participation gains social legitimacy because it contributes to the management of the community's pig infestation, thus combining collective responsibility with personal enjoyment (ES, 2023). Rural recreational practices can be integrated into broader societal systems, allowing women to participate in male-dominated activities while achieving the dual meaning of having fun and benefiting the environment. However, women's involvement in hunting is not always voluntary or personally meaningful, as demonstrated by the experience of A, a teenage hunter. Her participation was primarily driven by a family obligation to help her uncle in managing hunting dogs, which limited her role to animal handling tasks (A, 2023). This narrative reveals the complexity of women's participation, where age and family expectations can shape involvement through labour roles rather than recreational motivations. This limits the potential for young women to experience hunting as a source of empowerment or autonomous enjoyment.

### 3. Escaping monotony

For women in intensive or routine-based jobs, wild boar hunting serves as a crucial mechanism for emotional renewal. This activity interrupts the often ongoing and undervalued monotony of physical labour and rural household responsibilities, providing a sense of release and renewed energy. N, a farm labourer, described hunting as an escape from the repetition of her daily responsibilities, introducing excitement and novelty to balance the exhaustion of farm work (N, 2023). According to N, hunting is not simply entertainment, but a vital outlet for restoring the enthusiasm and mental clarity rarely provided by their routine work.

Similarly, ES confirms that the monotony of fieldwork makes hunting a welcome source of variety and joy in her life (ES, 2023). Her experience demonstrates that hunting serves as a structured break, injecting excitement and anticipation into otherwise monotonous routines, which helps maintain motivational and emotional balance. This phenomenon underscores how recreational practices serve as vital coping mechanisms in resource-limited communities, bolstering subjective well-being and serving as a form of self-preservation amidst the constant demands of work.

#### 4. Following Trends and Social Influence

Women's participation in wild boar hunting is heavily shaped by social influences, as the increasing visibility of women in the hunting arena has normalised the activity as a shared pursuit, rather than a solely male domain. RM's narrative captures this shift by noting that women are drawn to hunting in part to "keep up with the times", suggesting a link between participation and broader cultural transformations and a desire to stay connected to evolving social trends (RM, 2023). This reflects a renegotiation of gender boundaries around outdoor activities, allowing women to use hunting as a platform for their social presence and reshape cultural expectations of femininity in rural settings.

Intergenerational influences also play a significant role, as illustrated by the experience of AZ from the South Coast. Her involvement was shaped by her parents' customs. Her family exposure fostered familiarity, confidence, and a sense of belonging within the hunting culture. AZ specifically highlighted her responsibility for caring for and raising hunting dogs, tasks traditionally performed by male hunters, demonstrating that women's roles have expanded beyond casual participation to include forms of labour requiring skill and dedication (AZ, 2023). This convergence of family influence, peer visibility, and cultural adaptation indicates that women's involvement is embedded in a broader process of social diffusion, where participation spreads through interpersonal networks and shifting norms.

These findings highlight that the motivations of Minangkabau women participating in boar hunting are multifaceted. For some, hunting is merely a hobby, while for others it serves as recreation, a means to combat boredom, or a way to engage with evolving social norms. Despite the activity being traditionally reserved for men, these women now see hunting as a platform for self-expression, enjoyment, and wider social interaction.

The participation of Minangkabau women in boar hunting reflects a subtle yet significant negotiation of gender roles between custom, religion, and social expectations. Traditionally, hunting is coded as a masculine domain in custom, symbolising courage, strength, and public authority, while women's roles are associated with domestic and agricultural work (Warman, et al., 2023). When women enter this space, they challenge existing norms but are often viewed as disruptive for deviating from what is considered appropriate behaviour. Similarly, in Islamic legal principles, this practice exists in a grey area. Hunting supports

physical and mental health positively, aligning with the principle of *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life and safety). However, this activity can be considered *'urf fasid* if the risks outweigh the benefits, for example, through mixed social contact and potential physical danger. This tension highlights how women negotiate the boundaries between what is religiously permissible and what is socially acceptable.

According to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990), every act of hunting serves a performative repetition that constructs a new identity of femininity. By engaging in activities traditionally considered masculine, women renegotiate the meaning of being a woman while challenging rigid gender binaries (Caniago et al., 2024). In line with this, based on R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (1995), the presence of women in hunting spaces disrupts male dominance, transforms power dynamics, and raises questions about who holds social and cultural legitimacy. Therefore, for women, hunting is not merely a recreational activity; it serves as a form of self-expression and agency (Jamilah et al., 2024). They negotiate the boundaries of custom and Islamic law, slowly normalising women's participation in public spaces that were previously exclusive to men (Mulyo et al., 2025). This practice demonstrates the fluidity of gender norms and how Minangkabau women creatively reshape their social roles within society.

### **Social dynamics and negative impacts of female participation in Boar hunting**

The growing involvement of Minangkabau women in boar hunting, while stemming from genuine enjoyment and a sense of personal freedom, has evolved into a series of domestic and social challenges that deeply impact family life. Firstly, many households experience marital tension as women spend long hours away from home during hunting trips. These absences subtly reshape the emotional landscape of the family. Husbands may feel overlooked, children may sense the distance, and the home, once a shared space of care, can begin to feel imbalanced. AB, the husband of N, described this shift with honest disappointment. He often finds himself managing the chores and caring for the children alone, while neighbours whisper about women who venture into the hunting arena (AB, 2023). This combination of private frustration and public scrutiny creates a burden that strains the warmth and trust within the marriage. N also admits that most of

their arguments emerge from her being away, acknowledging that her passion for hunting sometimes clashes with her roles at home (N, 2023).

Second, the demands of boar hunting have also impacted how some mothers fulfil their daily responsibilities toward their children. Simple, everyday tasks, such as washing school uniforms, helping with homework, and preparing meals, become a race against time when hunting is placed at the forefront. AB shared how he often shoulders these tasks despite his own work in the fields, revealing not only the practical strain but also an emotional one, as he feels the absence of shared responsibility (AB, 2023). For N, the struggle is more personal. She tries to compensate by completing all chores before leaving, yet she cannot fully escape the guilt of knowing that her attention is divided. As a result, her children sometimes suffer from her limited presence (N, 2023).

Third, children's educational and emotional needs can also be affected when mothers spend significant amounts of time hunting. Beyond the logistical gaps, such as unassisted homework or disrupted routines, there is the quieter, more delicate impact on the mother-child bond. MN, the husband of RM, expressed this concern with a tone that reflects both understanding and longing. He does his best to guide the children, but he feels that a mother's presence holds a different emotional weight that cannot be easily replaced. When RM is away for long periods, the household feels her absence not only in tasks undone but also in the warmth and steadiness that children quietly seek from their mothers (MN, 2023).

Fourth, women who participate in boar hunting often encounter social pressure and cultural disapproval, adding emotional complexity to their experiences. In a society where roles are clearly defined and deeply rooted in tradition, women who engage in hunting are sometimes judged as stepping outside the boundaries of what is considered proper or "fitting." ES shared how such judgments can be painful, noting that while she enjoys hunting, the disapproval of *ninik mamak* and the murmurs from the community cast a shadow over her participation. This social stigma not only challenges her identity as a hunter but also affects how she feels seen and valued within her cultural environment (ES, 2023).

These stories reveal the delicate balance between personal enjoyment and social expectations. While boar hunting offers excitement, camaraderie, and a sense of

independence for Minangkabau women, it also brings with it real emotional and relational costs. Marital strains, the pressures of parenting, concerns over children's well-being, and the weight of community judgment all illustrate that the choice to hunt is never simply a personal one; it reverberates through the home and the wider social fabric.

### **Minangkabau women's participation in Boar hunting from the 'Urf perspective**

When examined through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence, the prohibition against Minangkabau women hunting wild boar can be justified under the concept of '*urf*' (customary practice) (Jayusman et al., 2023; Zulkifli et al., 2024), specifically as '*urf ṣaḥīḥ*' (valid custom). For a custom to be legally recognised in Islam, it must be widely accepted by the community, must not contradict scriptural texts, and neither permit the forbidden nor nullify an obligation (Yanti et al., 2025). The idea that women's hunting is considered as *sumbang* (transgressive) meets these criteria since it is supported by a broad consensus (*ijmā'*) of Minangkabau society, including traditional and religious leaders. This view aligns with Islamic principles of modesty and propriety, thereby constituting a legitimate basis for legal judgment.

In adat terminology, the act is considered *tidak patuik*, meaning inappropriate and improper. Although it is physically possible ( *mungkin*) for women to hunt, it is culturally unfitting (*tidak patuik*) for Minangkabau women to engage in this activity. Bundo Raudhah, a prominent cultural and religious figure, explained that the impropriety of such actions is evident across several customary principles, including *alua jo patuik* (propriety and decency), *barih jo balabeh* (customary law and regulation), and *raso jo pareso* (sound reasoning and emotional intelligence).

Furthermore, the customary prohibition against *sumbang* acts does not conflict with Islamic law; rather, it reinforces Islamic ethics by upholding principles that prohibit morally dubious or socially harmful behaviour. For example, *sumbang karajo*, which prohibits women from engaging in inappropriate labour, aligns with Islamic prohibitions against *ikhtilāṭ* (the free mixing of unrelated men and women) that could lead to fitnah (moral corruption) (Al-Musaimiri & Al-Hubdan, 2010; Al-Qahtani, 2003). Islamic jurisprudence exempts women from Friday congregational prayers to minimise gender intermixing (Al-Syirazi,

1994; An-Nawawi, 2009). In contexts such as boar hunting, women are often observed travelling with and mingling among large groups of unrelated men, including sitting nearby in vehicles. These conditions constitute *ikhtilāf* as proscribed in Islamic teachings (Afrizal, 2021; Karamullah, 2021; Lizamah, 2023).

Additionally, the custom of *sumbang pakai* (improper attire) prohibits women from wearing clothing that exposes the body or accentuates the female form. This teaching aligns with Islamic mandates on *awrah* (modesty and covering), which obligate both men and women to dress modestly (Al-Qurthubi, 1982). There is some disagreement among scholars regarding the exact boundaries of *awrah*, but many agree that its boundaries can be interpreted through local customs, especially in non-Arab societies (Auda, 2019; Masri, 2019). Hence, when Minangkabau *adat* requires women to wear loose, non-revealing clothing that covers the head and body, such prescriptions are not only culturally valid but also religiously supported. Consequently, Minangkabau customary law requires women to cover their bodies, including the head and to avoid wearing thin, transparent, or tight-fitting clothing. These provisions are recognised as consistent with Islamic teachings. Therefore, a woman going boar hunting without wearing a headscarf or donning tight clothing is acting against both *adat* and Islamic teachings regarding the obligation to maintain proper *awrah* (modesty).

The participation of Minangkabau women in boar hunting practices constitutes a manifestation of cultural transformation that challenges traditional social structures and disrupts legal boundaries that have historically defined women's roles within customary and religious systems (Yuhendri et al., 2025). In the matrilineal social structure of the Minangkabau, women occupy a significant position as *Bundo Kanduang*, symbolic figures of morality, guardians of communal dignity, and ethical reference points within their society (Elimartati et al., 2023; Zumrotun & Muna, 2025). This role is institutionalised through a codified system of customary laws that regulate women's spheres of action (Fakhyadi et al., 2025), including prohibitions on participation in public and masculine activities such as boar hunting.

These customary rules gain legal legitimacy through the Islamic legal principle of *'urf ṣaḥīḥ*, which states that local customs consistent with Islamic norms can be

considered as a valid source of law (Fakhyadi & Samsudin, 2024). In this context, the customary prohibition on women's participation in boar hunting may be viewed as an expression of the principle of *hifz al-'ird* (the protection of dignity) within the *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) (Nofiardi & Samiran, 2023). This prohibition is intended to safeguard modesty, prevent *khalwa* (seclusion) and *ikhtilāf* (unrestricted intermingling) between unrelated men and women, and protect the social honour associated with the identity of Minangkabau women (Agustina, 2024).

From the perspective of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the legal maxim *dar' al-mafāsīd muqaddamun 'alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ*, which means averting harm takes precedence over procuring benefits, serves a normative foundation for prioritising the prevention of social disorder over the pursuit of potential benefits (Zulfan et al., 2025). Female involvement in boar hunting is regarded as having substantial risks (*mafsadat*), including the erosion of modesty norms, the blurring of gender boundaries, and the diminishing of women's symbolic authority as moral custodians of the community. Accordingly, the prohibition of such practices is legally justified in both Islamic and customary terms, as preserving social order is considered more critical than claims to participation or equality.

Nevertheless, the observable reality of women's involvement in this practice indicates the emergence of dynamic social forces operating beyond the fixed boundaries of formal legal structures. Women are no longer merely passive recipients of normative frameworks; rather, they are actively engaging as agents in negotiating, and at times resisting, established legal and customary structures (Rizal et al., 2024; Sulaeman et al., 2025). Their activities within masculine spaces such as the boar hunting arena reflect broader cultural shifts toward redefining women's roles, identities, and public presence. These actions represent a transgression of symbolic and practical normative boundaries, that are not static entities, but rather socially constructed, maintained and constantly renegotiated within a dynamic cultural context (Busyro et al., 2023). When women cross these boundaries, it is not merely the norms that are challenged, but also the authority that constructs and enforces them (Amaroh et al., 2024; Wan & Mangsor, 2025).



Thus, the phenomenon of Minangkabau women engaging in boar hunting can be interpreted as a concrete expression of the tension between normative structures that seek to preserve traditional values and social practices that reflect shifting values in contemporary society. In this regard, law -whether customary or Islamic- should not be viewed as a fixed entity; rather, it is a social field that is continuously open to interpretation, contestation, and transformation (Wimra et al., 2023). This activity represents how law is not only a regulatory force but also a construct shaped and critiqued by the social actors who live within its domain.

This study shows that when Minangkabau women participate in boar hunting, they are not merely engaging in recreational activities; they are also negotiating their roles in the traditional public sphere. In Minangkabau culture, hunting has long been considered a male domain, symbolising courage, strength, and authority in the public sphere. The presence of women in this arena is slowly reinterpreting this norm, signalling that the public sphere is no longer exclusively for men. From the perspective of Islamic legal principles, women's boar hunting activities are in a grey area because they can be considered '*urf fasid*' if they pose a risk or violate social ethics. Therefore, women creatively negotiate the boundaries of custom and Islamic law, creating new spaces for self-expression and public participation.

Furthermore, this practice challenges the old view that Minangkabau women are only domestic figures. Hunting shows that women are active social agents, capable of making decisions, shaping experiences, and influencing cultural norms. Academically, this research contributes to the study of gender, customary law, and Islamic legal principles by showing how women reinterpret their traditional roles, dismantle stereotypes, and strategically negotiate their rights and obligations in contemporary society (Wibowo & Fathiyaturrahmah, 2025). In other words, through these activities, Minangkabau women are not only present in the public sphere but are also slowly changing the meaning of their existence amid the dynamics of customary law and Islamic law.

## Conclusion

This research ultimately reveals a dynamic negotiation within Minangkabau society, where women's participation in the traditionally male domain of wild boar hunting creates a complex intersection of *adat*, Islamic law, and evolving gender performativity. From the perspectives of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* and *sadd al-dharā'i'*, the practice is deemed to carry greater harm than benefit, aligning with the valid custom (*'urf ṣaḥīḥ*) that prohibits it due to violations of modesty and propriety. Yet, empirically, women's involvement performs a subtle but significant social shift. Through their actions, women hunters engage in a performative contestation of hegemonic masculinity and traditional femininity, challenging rigid gender binaries and negotiating new, more flexible identities within the interstitial spaces of custom. Academically, the study makes a significant contribution to global debates on legal pluralism and gender, demonstrating how gendered agency operates within the overlapping authorities of state, religion, and indigenous *adat*. It illustrates that matrilineal systems facilitate unique forms of negotiation and that customary law is not a static monolith but an arena of continuous adaptation. Practically, these insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers, customary leaders, and scholars in navigating social change while respecting cultural and religious foundations. Future research can build upon this foundation to explore the implications of such negotiations for environmental conservation, political participation, and comparative studies with other Muslim and indigenous communities worldwide.

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