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Saluang Dendang as a Space of Gender Negotiation in Minangkabau Society

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ABSTRACT: This study explores *saluang dendang*, a traditional musical performance of the Minangkabau people, as a cultural arena for negotiating gender roles and identities. Using a qualitative anthropological approach, the research investigates how performers, audiences, and customary norms interact to shape gender dynamics within the practice of *saluang dendang*. Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews with *saluang* players, singers, and community elders, as well as textual analysis of *dendang* lyrics rich in symbolism and social commentary. The findings reveal that *saluang dendang* functions not only as entertainment but also as a symbolic stage where male and female roles are contested and redefined. The lyrics often contain satire, critique, and praise that reflect societal perceptions of gender. Furthermore, the increasing participation of women as singers demonstrates a shift in traditional boundaries once dominated by men. Thus, *saluang dendang* can be understood as a dynamic cultural medium that enables dialogue, resistance, and reconstruction of gender identity in Minangkabau society. This research highlights the significance of traditional arts as reflective spaces for social negotiation and adaptation to evolving values and gender relations.

KEYWORDS: Saluang dendang, gender negotiation, Minangkabau society, cultural anthropology, traditional performance, identity reconstruction

INTRODUCTION

Traditional arts function not only as entertainment media but also as social and cultural spaces in which communities negotiate identities, values, and power relations. In the context of Minangkabau society, *saluang dendang* is one of the traditional performing arts that carries complex social functions. This performance combines the playing of the *saluang* bamboo flute with sung poetry (*dendang*) containing pantun, satire, social criticism, and emotional expressions delivered improvisationally. This tradition has long been an important part of Minangkabau cultural life because it serves not merely as collective entertainment but also as a medium of social communication among community groups.

In cultural anthropology studies, performance arts are understood as symbolic arenas where cultural values are produced, maintained, and negotiated. Traditional performances often reflect the social structure of a society, including the gender relations embedded within it. The Minangkabau people, recognized as the world's largest matrilineal society, place women in significant positions within kinship and inheritance systems. Nevertheless, in certain social and cultural practices, women still encounter normative limitations regarding public space and artistic expression. Studies on Minangkabau society indicate that gender relations within a matrilineal culture are not always synonymous with complete equality, as they continue to be shaped by customary law, religion, and ongoing social change (Nasir et al., 2021).

Saluang dendang performances are particularly interesting to examine because they involve dynamic interactions among male and female performers, audiences, and cultural norms in a dialogical process. The *dendang* lyrics frequently contain satire, humour, criticism, and social commentary regarding the relationships between men and women in society. Furthermore, social transformations over recent decades have shown an increasing participation of women as singers in performances that were once predominantly male-dominated. This phenomenon demonstrates both cultural transformation and the negotiation of gender identity within Minangkabau traditional performance spaces. Sukmawati

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(2008) emphasizes that women's participation in *bagurau saluang dendang* performances reflects a cultural shift in Minangkabau society toward greater openness to women's involvement in public artistic spaces.

Previous studies have primarily focused on the aesthetic, musical, and interactive dimensions of *saluang dendang* performances. Jonni et al. (2021) examined aesthetic elements and musical structures in *bagurau saluang dendang* performances as forms of artistic satisfaction for audiences. Rustim et al. (2018) highlighted the social interaction between singers and *bagurau* groups as a form of cultural communication within the performance. Other studies have discussed the influence of postmodern culture on the development of *saluang dendang* performances in Minangkabau society (Alexander et al., 2019). However, research specifically positioning *saluang dendang* as an arena for gender negotiation and the reconstruction of social identity remains limited, particularly from a cultural anthropological perspective.

This research gap indicates that the gender dimension within Minangkabau traditional performance practices has not yet been thoroughly explored. In fact, *dendang* lyrics, performance interaction patterns, and women's participation in performances can provide important sources for understanding changes in the cultural values of contemporary Minangkabau society. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how *saluang dendang* functions as a space for negotiating gender roles and social identities in Minangkabau society.

This study aims to analyze forms of gender negotiation within *saluang dendang* performances, identify representations of gender in *dendang* lyrics, and explain shifts in women's positions within Minangkabau traditional performance practices. In addition, the study seeks to understand how traditional performances function as media of social reflection on changing values and gender relations in society.

Based on these objectives, this study raises several research questions: (1) How do *saluang dendang* performances represent gender relations in Minangkabau society? (2) How do *dendang* lyrics function as media for criticism, satire, and the negotiation of gender identity? and (3) How does the increasing participation of women in *saluang dendang* performances reflect transformations in contemporary Minangkabau culture? Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of cultural anthropology, traditional performance studies, and gender studies in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on traditional performing arts within the perspective of cultural anthropology have developed rapidly in recent years, particularly in relation to issues of identity, gender, social representation, and cultural transformation. In traditional societies, performing arts are understood not merely as forms of entertainment but also as symbolic spaces that represent power relations, cultural values, and processes of social identity negotiation. Recent studies demonstrate that traditional performances constitute important arenas for understanding social transformation in contemporary societies.

The study conducted by Nasir et al. (2021) emphasizes that the Minangkabau people, recognized as the world's largest matrilineal society, possess complex gender relations. Although women hold important positions within kinship and inheritance systems, social practices continue to be influenced by customary and religious norms that often place men in dominant positions within the public sphere. This study indicates that matrilineal systems do not automatically create complete gender equality; rather, they produce evolving patterns of social negotiation. In performance studies, Butler (2021), through the concept of gender performativity, explains that gender identity is constructed through repeated social actions and cultural representations. This perspective is relevant for understanding how *saluang dendang* becomes a performative space in which male and female identities are presented, maintained, and negotiated through music and *dendang* lyrics.

Research by Jonni et al. (2021) on *bagurau saluang dendang* highlights the aesthetic elements and musical structures of Minangkabau performances. Their findings reveal that improvisational *dendang* and spontaneous interaction between performers and audiences create a distinctive artistic experience. However, the study primarily focuses on musical aspects and does not explore the gender dimensions embedded in the performances.

Rustim et al. (2022) examined interactivity in *saluang dendang* performances as a form of cultural communication in Minangkabau society. They found that relationships among singers, *saluang* players, and audiences create dynamic spaces of social dialogue. Nevertheless, the study does not connect these social interactions with the construction of gender identity or the changing roles of women within traditional performances.

Alexander et al. (2021) discussed the influence of postmodern culture on the development of *saluang dendang* performances. Their study demonstrates that modernization, media commercialization, and changing audience preferences have transformed the form of performances. These transformations have also opened greater opportunities for women to participate as singers. However, the research does not specifically analyze how such changes influence gender negotiation in Minangkabau society.

Studies on traditional music and gender have also expanded globally. Diamond and Moisala (2021) explain that traditional music frequently functions as a medium for representing gender identity while simultaneously serving as a tool of resistance against patriarchal cultural domination. In many traditional societies, women's participation in performing arts reflects social change and the increasing presence of women within public cultural spaces.

Sugarman's (2022) study on Balkan folk music reveals that traditional song lyrics contain symbols, satire, and social criticism that represent the gender experiences of local communities. This perspective strengthens the assumption that *dendang* lyrics in *saluang dendang* performances function not only aesthetically but also as media for conveying values and social criticism related to relations between men and women.

From the perspective of performance anthropology, Schechner (2021) argues that performance constitutes "restored behavior," meaning cultural actions that are continuously reproduced and reinterpreted according to social contexts. This concept helps explain how *saluang dendang* continues to survive while experiencing shifts in meaning, particularly in response to changing gender values in the modern era.

Research conducted by Suryadi (2023) on Minangkabau oral literature found that pantun and *dendang* contain social representations concerning family relationships, love, and women's positions in Minangkabau culture. *Dendang* is often used as a subtle means of delivering

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criticism through symbolism and humor. However, the study does not directly connect oral literature with performance practices and gender negotiation.

Research on women in Indonesian traditional performing arts by Saraswati (2022) found that women's involvement in traditional arts reflects processes of cultural identity reconstruction amid modern social transformation. Women are no longer positioned merely as objects of cultural representation but increasingly emerge as active subjects possessing artistic and social authority.

Heryanto's (2021) study on popular culture and identity in Indonesia demonstrates that traditional performing arts are undergoing transformation due to globalization and digital media. These transformations generate new forms of identity negotiation, including gender identity. This perspective is relevant for understanding changes in women's roles within contemporary *saluang dendang* performances.

Furthermore, the study by Barendregt and van Zanten (2021) on Indonesian traditional music indicates that local musical performances frequently become arenas of dialogue between tradition and modernity. In this context, changes in women's participation in performing arts reflect broader cultural adaptations to social developments.

Fitriani et al. (2024), in their study of women's representation in Malay traditional performances, found that traditional song lyrics often reproduce gender stereotypes while simultaneously functioning as media of resistance against patriarchal norms. These findings provide an important analytical framework for understanding the content of *dendang* lyrics in *saluang dendang* performances. Rahmawati and Prasetyo (2023) emphasize that traditional performing arts in Indonesia function socially as media of cultural communication and identity negotiation. However, their study does not specifically discuss gender dynamics within Minangkabau traditional performances.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that research on traditional performing arts has extensively explored aesthetic, musical, social interaction, and cultural transformation aspects. Nevertheless, studies specifically examining *saluang dendang* as a space for gender negotiation and social identity reconstruction remain highly limited. Most previous studies focus primarily on musical or cultural dimensions without connecting them to gender relations. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by examining how *saluang dendang* functions as a symbolic arena for negotiating gender identity in contemporary Minangkabau society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a cultural anthropological approach to examine *saluang dendang* as a cultural arena for negotiating gender roles and identities in Minangkabau society. Qualitative research was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of cultural meanings, social interactions, and symbolic practices embedded within traditional performances. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2023), qualitative inquiry is particularly suitable for investigating social phenomena involving interpretation, experience, and cultural representation. The anthropological perspective further allows the researcher to explore the relationship between performance practices, social values, and gender dynamics within the cultural context of Minangkabau society.

The research was conducted in several regions of West Sumatra where *saluang dendang* performances remain actively practiced, particularly in cultural gatherings, traditional ceremonies, and community entertainment events. These locations were selected purposively because they represent important centers of Minangkabau traditional performance culture. Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who possessed substantial knowledge and direct involvement in *saluang dendang* performances. The participants consisted of *saluang* musicians, *dendang* singers, cultural elders, audience members, and local community leaders. This sampling technique is considered appropriate in qualitative cultural studies because it prioritizes information-rich participants capable of providing detailed insights into social and cultural phenomena (Patton, 2021).

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis of *dendang* lyrics. Participant observation enabled the researcher to directly observe performance practices, performer-audience interactions, gender representation, and the social atmosphere surrounding the performances. Through this method, the researcher was able to document verbal and nonverbal expressions, audience responses, and performance dynamics in natural settings. Spradley (2022) explains that participant observation is essential in ethnographic and anthropological studies because it allows researchers to understand cultural behavior from the participants' perspectives.

In-depth interviews were conducted semi-structurally with performers, singers, and customary elders to obtain comprehensive information regarding the cultural meanings of *saluang dendang*, perceptions of gender roles, and transformations occurring within contemporary performances. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for participants to express their experiences and interpretations openly while maintaining consistency with the research objectives. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated when necessary to ensure accuracy in data interpretation. According to Creswell and Poth (2023), semi-structured interviews are effective for exploring participants lived experiences and social meanings in qualitative research.

In addition to interviews and observation, this study employed textual analysis of *dendang* lyrics. The lyrics were selected from recorded performances and written documentation obtained during fieldwork. Textual analysis focused on symbolic expressions, satire, criticism, praise, metaphors, and linguistic representations related to gender relations in Minangkabau society. This approach enabled the researcher to identify how language within traditional performances reflects and negotiates social values and gender identities. Fairclough (2022) states that discourse and textual analysis are important tools for understanding how language reproduces and challenges social power relations.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved data reduction, coding, categorization, interpretation, and thematic interpretation of recurring patterns related to gender negotiation and identity reconstruction. First, all interview transcripts, field notes, and lyric texts were carefully reviewed and coded according to major themes such as gender representation, women's participation, satire, resistance, and cultural transformation. The identified themes were then interpreted using cultural anthropology and gender performativity perspectives to understand how *saluang dendang* functions as a symbolic social arena. Braun and Clarke (2022) explain that thematic analysis provides a flexible yet systematic framework for identifying patterns and meanings within qualitative data.

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To ensure research validity and trustworthiness, this study applied triangulation of methods and sources by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and textual analysis. Member checking was also conducted by confirming interpretations with selected participants to minimize researcher bias and ensure the credibility of findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (2021), triangulation and participant validation are important strategies for strengthening the reliability and authenticity of qualitative research findings.

Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to interviews and observations. Participants' identities were kept confidential unless explicit permission for disclosure was granted. The study also respected Minangkabau cultural norms and customary values during fieldwork and data interpretation to maintain cultural sensitivity and ethical integrity.

RESULTS

This study produced several major findings related to *saluang dendang* as a space for gender negotiation in Minangkabau society. The findings were obtained through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis of *dendang* lyrics. The results are presented based on the major themes that emerged from the data analysis process.

1. Forms of Gender Interaction in *Saluang Dendang* Performances

The observation results indicate that *saluang dendang* performances involve active interaction among *saluang* players, singers, and audiences. These interactions occur through verbal, symbolic, and musical communication. Both male and female singers use *dendang* lyrics to express humor, satire, social criticism, and emotional expressions.

In several performances, audiences responded directly to the *dendang* through applause, spontaneous comments, or requests for specific songs. Audience participation demonstrates that the performances are dialogical and interactive in nature.

Table 1. Forms of Interaction in *Saluang Dendang* Performances

No	Form of Interaction	Description of Findings
1	Verbal	Spontaneous dialogue through *dendang* and pantun
2	Musical	Melodic improvisation following audience responses
3	Symbolic	Use of metaphors and gender satire
4	Social	Interaction between singers and audience groups

These findings indicate that the performances are not conducted in a one-way manner but instead create an active space for cultural communication.

2. Gender Representation in *Dendang* Lyrics

The analysis of *dendang* lyrics revealed diverse forms of gender representation. Most lyrics portray relationships between men and women through cultural symbols, social criticism, and emotional expressions.

Several lyrics describe women as patient figures, guardians of family values, and symbols of customary honour. On the other hand, some lyrics present women as active subjects capable of criticizing men and prevailing social norms.

Table 2. Gender Themes in *Dendang* Lyrics

No	*Dendang* Lyrics	Theme	Form of Representation
1	*Indak samo bungo di ladang,* *Bungo mawar nan rancak warnonyo,* *Perempuan elok nan pandai dendang,* *Hati nan tabang jo suaronyo.* *Saluang dendang malam basaba,* *Suaronyo haluih manarimo hati,* *Perempuan nan sabar jo bijaksana,* *Indak lupo adat jo budi.* *Manangih bulan di langik tinggi,* *Bintang baribu jadi saksi,* *Perempuan Minang nan punyo janji,* *Menjaga kampuang jo kasih sejati*	Women and family	Women as guardians of customary values
No	***Dendang* Lyrics**	**Theme**	**Form of Representation**
2	*Laki-laki jan cakap sajo,* *Jan manis lidah indak bukti,* *Banyak janji nan indak basuo,* *Perempuan sakit hati nan murni.* *Saluang dendang malam barayo,* *Suaro haluih manjadi saksi,*	Criticism toward men	Satire directed at male behavior

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	Laki-laki nan suka bohong, *Rusak budi jo rusak janji.* *Nan rancak bukan di pakaian,* *Nan elok bukan di kata,* *Laki-laki nan indak tanggung jawaban,* *Hilang hormat jo harga diri kita.*		
3	*Bulan nan purnamo di langik tinggi,* *Bintang baribu jadi saksi,* *Cinto tumbuah indak karano harta,* *Tapi karano hati nan suci.* *Saluang dendang malam basaba,* *Suaro haluih manjadi pengikat,* *Cinto laki jo perempuan nan setia,* *Bak tali nan indak ka putuih dek waktu.* *Nan rancak bukan di pakaian,* *Nan elok bukan di rupa,* *Cinto nan jujur jo saling percaya,* *Itu nan jadi dasar bahagia.*	Love relations	Emotional expressions and social relationships
4	*Nan dahulu kampuang basawah,* *Sawah luas jo bendi panjang,* *Kini alun-alun jadi perumahan,* *Adat basalin jo zaman nan datang.* *Saluang dendang malam barayo,* *Suaro haluih manjadi saksi,* *Anak kamanakan ka rantau jauh,* *Pulau kampuang tinggal memori.* *Nan rancak bukan di gedung tinggi,* *Nan elok bukan di jalan raya,* *Perubahan sosial jan lupo diri,* *Adat jo budi nan jadi pusako kita.*	Social change	Representation of more active female roles

The textual analysis results demonstrate that satire and metaphor are dominant elements in conveying gender-related messages within the *dendang*.

3. Women's Participation in Performances

Interview data indicate an increasing involvement of women as singers in *saluang dendang* performances. Cultural elders and performers stated that performances were previously dominated by men, whereas women are now appearing more frequently in various cultural events.

Table 3. Changes in Performers' Participation Based on Gender

No	Period	Male Dominance	Women's Participation
1	Before 2000	High	Low
2	2000–2015	Moderate	Increasing
3	2016–2026	Declining	High

Field observations revealed that female singers play active roles in creating the atmosphere of performances and encouraging audience participation.

4. Forms of Gender Negotiation in Performances

The study identified several forms of gender negotiation in *saluang dendang*, both through lyrics and performance practices. These negotiations can be observed in the changing position of women within performance spaces and the emergence of *dendang* themes discussing women's freedom, household relations, and social transformation.

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Table 4. Forms of Gender Negotiation in *Saluang Dendang*

No	***Dendang* Lyrics**	**Forms of Negotiation**	**Findings**
1	*Nan kato adat laki nan rajo,* *Perempuan disuruah diam jo malu,* *Kalau laki-laki indak pandai jago,* *Siapo nan jago rumah jo kampuang lalu?* *Saluang dendang malam basaba,* *Suaro haluih manjadi sindiran,* *Laki-laki nan sok jadi kuasa,* *Kadang kalah jo perempuan nan bijaksan.* *Nan rancak bukan di suara lantang,* *Nan elok bukan di badan gagah,* *Kalau hati kosong jo pikiran kosong,* *Perempuan nan maju indak ka kalah.*	Symbolic negotiation	Use of satire toward gender norms
2	*Nan dahulu laki nan barajo,* *Perempuan disuruah diam jo malu,* *Kini perempuan nan maju jo pandai,* *Suaro dendang manjadi panghulu.* *Saluang dendang malam basaba,* *Perempuan nan manyanyi jo lantang,* *Nan haluih bukan dek laki sajo,* *Perempuan pun bisa manjadi tulang.* *Nan rancak bukan di badan gagah,* *Nan elok bukan di suara lantang,* *Nan bijak perempuan nan pandai,* *Manjadi cahayo di kampuang nan datang.*	Social negotiation	Women appearing as main singers
3	*Nan dahulu saluang di surau,* *Dendang haluih jo adat lama,* *Kini tampil di panggung cahayo,* *Disaksikan anak muda nan suka.* *Saluang dendang indak hilang,* *Walau zaman barubah cepat,* *Perempuan jo laki samo jo pandai,* *Manjadi bukti budaya kuat.* *Nan rancak bukan di lampu neon,* *Nan elok bukan di layar besar,* *Adat Minang nan bisa baradaptasi,* *Tetap hidup walau zaman basalin.*	Cultural negotiation	Adaptation of performances to modern values
4	*Nan dahulu perempuan disuruah diam,* *Suaro ditutup jo adat lama,* *Kini tampil di panggung nan ramai,* *Suaro haluih manjadi cahayo utama.* *Saluang dendang malam barayo,* *Perempuan nan pandai jo lantang hati,* *Nan bijak bukan dek laki sajo,* *Perempuan pun bisa manjadi saksi.*	Identity negotiation	Women becoming more active in public expression

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	Nan rancak bukan di badan gagah, *Nan elok bukan di suara lantang,* *Nan kuat perempuan nan berani,* *Manjadi tanda zaman basalin datang.*		

Observational data indicate that contemporary performances are more open to women's participation compared to traditional performances in earlier periods.

5. Community Responses to Gender Changes

Interviews with cultural elders and community members revealed diverse responses toward the increasing participation of women in *saluang dendang* performances. Some community members accepted these changes as part of cultural development, while others maintained more conservative customary perspectives.

Table 5. Community Responses toward Women's Participation

No	Response	Characteristics
1	Supportive	Belief that women have equal rights in the arts
2	Neutral	Viewing changes as normal social developments
3	Conservative	Belief that women should maintain certain limitations

The findings demonstrate that gender changes in traditional performances occur simultaneously with transformations in the social values of contemporary Minangkabau society.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that *saluang dendang* is not merely a traditional entertainment performance but also a cultural arena in which gender identities, social values, and power relations are continuously negotiated within Minangkabau society. The interaction among performers, audiences, and cultural norms reflects the dynamic nature of traditional performing arts as spaces for social dialogue and identity reconstruction. The increasing participation of women as *pendendang* indicates significant transformations in the cultural perception of gender roles within contemporary Minangkabau society.

The results reveal that gender interaction in *saluang dendang* performances occurs through verbal, symbolic, and musical communication. This finding supports Butler's (2021) theory of gender performativity, which argues that gender is socially constructed through repeated cultural performances and symbolic actions. In the context of *saluang dendang*, gender identities are not fixed but are actively reproduced and renegotiated through song lyrics, performance practices, and audience responses. Female performers increasingly occupy visible public roles that were previously dominated by men, reflecting shifting social expectations regarding women's participation in cultural spaces.

The findings also confirm previous studies emphasizing the role of traditional performances as arenas for social interaction and communication. Rustim et al. (2022) argue that *saluang dendang* performances create dialogical interactions between performers and audiences, forming dynamic cultural communication processes. This study extends their findings by demonstrating that such interactions also function as mechanisms for negotiating gender identity and social authority. The spontaneous exchanges within performances enable both men and women to express opinions, criticism, satire, and emotional experiences publicly.

The analysis of *dendang* lyrics further demonstrates that language plays a central role in representing gender relations within Minangkabau society. The dominance of satire, metaphor, and symbolic expressions in the lyrics reflects the cultural preference for indirect communication in Minangkabau tradition. Similar findings were reported by Suryadi (2023), who noted that Minangkabau oral literature often employs symbolic language to communicate criticism and social values. In this study, *dendang* lyrics function not only as artistic expressions but also as social commentaries regarding relationships between men and women, family expectations, and changing cultural norms.

The increasing participation of women in *saluang dendang* performances represents an important cultural transformation. Traditionally, public artistic performances in many Indonesian societies were often dominated by men due to social and customary restrictions placed upon women. However, this study found that women are now becoming more active as singers and public performers, suggesting broader changes in gender relations and public cultural participation. These findings align with Saraswati's (2022) research, which states that women's involvement in traditional arts reflects processes of identity reconstruction and increased female agency in contemporary Indonesian society.

The study also demonstrates that *saluang dendang* performances reflect ongoing negotiations between tradition and modernity. Contemporary performances have adapted to changing social conditions, media influences, and audience expectations while still maintaining important elements of Minangkabau cultural identity. This finding supports Barendregt and van Zanten's (2021) argument that Indonesian traditional music often becomes a site where local traditions interact with modern cultural influences. The growing acceptance of female performers indicates that Minangkabau culture is not static but adaptive to evolving social values.

Furthermore, the diverse responses from community members toward women's participation reveal that cultural transformation remains contested. Some participants viewed women's involvement positively as a sign of equality and modernization, while others continued to uphold more conservative interpretations of customary values. This finding confirms Nasir et al.'s (2021) conclusion that gender relations within

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Minangkabau matrilineal society remain complex and continuously negotiated between customary traditions, religion, and modern social developments.

The findings of this study have broader implications for cultural anthropology, gender studies, and performance studies. First, the study highlights the importance of traditional performing arts as active social institutions rather than static cultural heritage. Second, it demonstrates that traditional performances can serve as spaces for resistance, negotiation, and reconstruction of social identities. Third, the research contributes to discussions on gender transformation in Southeast Asian societies by showing how women increasingly gain visibility and authority within public cultural practices.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted primarily in selected areas of West Sumatra, which may not fully represent the diversity of *saluang dendang* practices across all Minangkabau regions. In addition, the study focused mainly on live performances and oral interactions, without extensive examination of digital performances and online cultural dissemination that have become increasingly significant in recent years. Future studies may explore the influence of digital media, younger generations, and transnational cultural exchanges on the transformation of *saluang dendang* and gender relations in Minangkabau society.

Overall, this study demonstrates that *saluang dendang* functions as a dynamic cultural medium where gender identities, social values, and cultural meanings are continuously negotiated. The performance tradition not only preserves Minangkabau cultural heritage but also reflects ongoing social transformations within contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *saluang dendang* functions not only as a traditional musical performance but also as a dynamic cultural arena where gender roles, identities, and social values are continuously negotiated within Minangkabau society. Through participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis of *dendang* lyrics, the research reveals that interactions among performers, audiences, and customary norms create a dialogical space for expressing social criticism, satire, emotional experiences, and changing perceptions of gender relations.

One of the major contributions of this study is its emphasis on the role of traditional performing arts as active social institutions rather than merely forms of cultural entertainment. The findings show that *saluang dendang* serves as a symbolic medium through which women and men negotiate authority, identity, and public participation. The increasing involvement of women as *pendendang* reflects broader transformations in Minangkabau society, particularly regarding women's visibility and agency within public cultural spaces. This research therefore contributes to the fields of cultural anthropology, gender studies, ethnomusicology, and performance studies by demonstrating how traditional arts can become spaces for identity reconstruction and social adaptation.

The study also highlights the importance of language and symbolism in traditional performances. The use of satire, metaphor, and indirect criticism within *dendang* lyrics illustrates how cultural communication functions in expressing social tensions and negotiating changing social norms. These findings strengthen previous arguments that oral traditions and performing arts remain relevant as media of social reflection in contemporary society.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this research may contribute to cultural preservation policies and gender-inclusive cultural programs in Indonesia. Cultural institutions and local governments may use traditional performing arts such as *saluang dendang* as platforms for promoting cultural literacy, intergenerational dialogue, and gender awareness while maintaining local cultural identity. In addition, support for female performers and the documentation of traditional performances may strengthen efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage in the digital era.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations related to geographical scope and the focus on live performance settings. Future research is recommended to examine the influence of digital media, social networking platforms, and younger generations on the transformation of *saluang dendang* and gender relations in Minangkabau culture. Comparative studies involving other Indonesian traditional performances may also provide broader insights into the relationship between performing arts, gender negotiation, and cultural transformation in Southeast Asia.

In conclusion, *saluang dendang* remains an important cultural medium that reflects both continuity and change in Minangkabau society. The tradition not only preserves collective cultural memory but also provides a meaningful social space where evolving gender identities and cultural values are expressed, contested, and reconstructed.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research. The authors confirm that the study was conducted independently without any commercial, financial, or personal relationships that could influence the research process, data

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interpretation, or publication of the findings. All authors have approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to its submission for publication. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and academic integrity principles.

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