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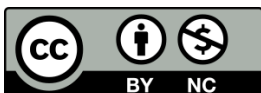
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Empowerment from Within: A Grounded Theory of the Minangkabau Community-Based Empowerment Model Through the *Kaum* System

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This study examines the *Kaum* system as an indigenous model of community empowerment within Minangkabau society, focusing on Nagari Tabek Patah, West Sumatra. Addressing the limitations of dominant Western-centric empowerment frameworks, this research employs a grounded theory approach to explore how locally rooted social structures and cultural values foster sustainable empowerment mechanisms. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with key customary leaders (Ninik Mamak), and document analysis. The findings reveal a cyclical four-stage empowerment model embedded within Minangkabau local wisdom: tahu di nan ampek (awareness), sauak aie mandikan diri (internalization), karajo ba pokok (actualization), and ingek jo jago (social control). These stages demonstrate how empowerment organically emerges through the integration of reason, religion, nature, and custom; is internalized within communal social spaces; is actualized through participatory practices such as deliberation and mutual cooperation; and is sustained by community-based social control mechanisms grounded in customary law. The study demonstrates that empowerment within the *Kaum* system is not merely economic or externally driven but is deeply rooted in cultural identity, social capital, and collective agency. By situating local Minangkabau perspectives in dialogue with global theories such as Freire's critical consciousness, Bourdieu's habitus, and Sen's capability approach, this research contributes to the broader discourse on community empowerment. It underscores the importance of culturally grounded, participatory, and sustainable development models, offering an alternative framework for understanding empowerment in non-Western and indigenous contexts.

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Introduction

Community empowerment has long been positioned as a central strategy in development discourse, particularly in addressing inequality and enhancing local resilience. Moreover,

community empowerment is a complex, multidimensional process that extends beyond increasing economic access. It encompasses strengthening critical awareness, building equitable social structures, and developing community-based regulations that sustain long-term development (Currie et al., 2023; Stoeffler, 2018). Awareness plays a fundamental role in this process, enabling individuals and groups to recognize and analyze structural barriers that limit participation and hinder welfare improvement (Turner & Maschi, 2015). Without sustainable empowerment mechanisms, marginalization persists, as vulnerable groups remain constrained in their access to power and resources, ultimately impeding both social and economic progress.

Unequal power distribution frequently underlies such marginalization. Rowlands identifies three forms of power relevant to empowerment: *power over* (zero-sum hierarchical power), *power with* (collective power), and *power to* (the intrinsic capacity of individuals or groups) (Rowlands, 1997). Transformative empowerment requires a deliberate shift toward cultivating *power with* and *power to*, which together offer an inclusive paradigm that treats power as a collective instrument for social change and welfare improvement (Cornwall & Edwards, 2016). Accordingly, understanding power dynamics within a community is essential to designing participatory and sustainable empowerment strategies.

These challenges of powerlessness and structural oppression are not isolated phenomena; they are common experiences of local communities worldwide (del Mar Fariña & O'Neill, 2024). This reality underscores the urgency of identifying the sources of agency and resilience at the local level, particularly those embedded in indigenous wisdom or shaped by post-colonial contexts. Despite growing interest in the field, empowerment literature remains largely dominated by Western frameworks or externally driven interventions, leaving a significant gap in research that examines endogenously developed empowerment models rooted in distinctive social and cultural systems (Pease, 2015; S. Thomas, 2017).

The Minangkabau people of West Sumatra, Indonesia, present a compelling case in this regard. Their social organization centers on the *Kaum* kinship system, a fundamental social unit grounded in a matrilineal structure in which ancestral property and customary leadership are transmitted through the maternal line (Saraswati et al., 2025; Widiastuti & Vedamuthu, 2009). The *Kaum* functions as an active social entity engaged in collective decision-making, shared resource management, and the maintenance of agency and resilience in the face of social and economic pressures (Yunarti et al., 2025). More than a structural arrangement, the *Kaum* system serves as a key instrument for preserving cultural values, solidarity, and the collective economy, while simultaneously functioning as an internal empowerment mechanism that sustains both individual and group independence (Jamil, 2020a). This makes it a highly relevant subject for exploring community empowerment within the scope of Muslim community development, given that Minangkabau society is deeply shaped by Islamic values integrated within its customary (*adat*) system.

From a theoretical standpoint, authentic empowerment ideally emerges from the community's own deep reflection on the meaning of its culture (Ife, 2009). This perspective aligns with Amartya Sen's capability approach, which highlights individual freedom to choose and develop one's potential as central to the empowerment process (Sen, 1999). Community empowerment, therefore, must go beyond addressing structural inequality to creating sustainable systems that enable individuals to flourish on their own terms (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). The selection of *Kaum* in Minangkabau as the unit of analysis in this study carries dual significance: it represents a matrilineal indigenous community that has maintained a coherent social system and internal empowerment mechanisms amid modernization and globalization, while also demonstrating how empowerment can be deeply rooted in local values and structures rather than dependent on external intervention.

This study aims to explore the community empowerment model embedded in the *Kaum* system in Nagari Tabek Patah, Minangkabau, through a comprehensive analysis of its role in customary governance and social dynamics. By uncovering the endogenous empowerment mechanisms operating within this community, this study bridges local Minangkabau perspectives with global empowerment theories, including those advanced by Chambers and Sen (Chambers, 1983; Sen, 1999). In doing so, it contributes to the literature on sustainable development and community empowerment by demonstrating how locally grounded agency can operate effectively in the face of broader structural challenges — an insight with implications for both academic scholarship and development policy.

Literature Review

The Minangkabau local community-based empowerment model in this study was developed using the Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The selection of this approach allows the theory to emerge organically from field data, rather than testing existing concepts. Through in-depth analysis of data obtained from participant observation and interviews, four key stages in the Minangkabau community empowerment system were identified: *tahu di nan ampek*, *sauak aie mandikan diri*, *karajo ba pokok*, and *ingek jo jago*. These four stages not only reflect a solid social and cultural system, but also show significant alignment and theoretical implications with various academic concepts in the discourse of local or global community empowerment. This section will review relevant literature that explains the theoretical basis of each stage, placing the Minangkabau local community empowerment model in dialogue with global theories.

Awareness

The first stage of tofu planting serves as the foundation of empowerment in Minangkabau. This concept refers to the process of forming political awareness that originates from four fundamental pillars: reason (reason or intellect), nature (environment), religion (syarak/Islam), and custom (system of values and cultural norms). This comprehensive

awareness is essential because it equips individuals and communities with the ability to understand the social reality that is held and identify the mechanisms causing powerlessness. In the empowerment perspective promoted by Freire, awareness goes beyond simply knowing social conditions: it demands the ability to think effectively to respond to injustice (Freire, 2005). Through critical awareness, individuals can develop a deep understanding of the roots of powerlessness and formulate ways to overcome it, often through collective action. Freire classifies consciousness into three categories: magical or passive acceptance, naive or seeing personal problems and critical understanding powerlessness as a result of social systems that can be changed. Critical consciousness, as the highest stage facilitates the understanding that structural change is possible through collective action (Freire, 2005). The formation of this consciousness is dynamic, manifested through social dialogue and active reflection on reality.

In the context of *tahu di nan ampek*, the four pillars synergistically build critical awareness. Reason provides analytical thinking capacity; the philosophy of “nature develops into a teacher” teaches the principle of balance and adaptation to the environment; religion (Islam) summarized in “*adat ba sandi syarak, syarak ba sandi kitabullah*” provides moral and ethical guidelines; while custom functions as a framework for identity and social regulation (Navis, 1984). The integration of these four sources of wisdom forms a strong collective consciousness that enables the Minangkabau people to build a deep understanding of themselves and their environment as an initial step towards empowerment.

Interestingly, unlike Freire who focused on formal structural oppression, *Tahu di nan ampek* shows that critical consciousness can also come from local wisdom and spirituality. This enriches the application of the concept of critical consciousness to indigenous communities, highlighting the potential of local knowledge and cultural values as triggers for local awareness and agency in facing challenges, similar to discussions of post-chronic empowerment. However, what distinguishes it is that the intact Minangkabau community maintains their customs untouched by colonial culture, although in Minangkabau history they have not escaped colonization. Recent studies linking Freire's critical consciousness to the contemporary context are enriched by these findings with the cultural and spiritual dimensions of *Tahu di nan ampek*. This awareness is not only a constructivist eye, but a catalyst for real change in the social system that encourages collective freedom and creativity in facing the challenges of the times (Magee & Pherali, 2019).

Internalization

After awareness is formed through the process of *tahu di nan ampek*, society enters the second stage, *Sauak aie mandikan diri* (literally meaning using water to clean oneself). This stage symbolizes a deep internalization process in which values that have been realized, absorbed, and integrated into everyday life and the mindset of individuals and communities. Internalization is a fundamental mechanism by which individuals absorb, understand, and integrate social reality and its values, influencing mindsets, and

personalities (Fauzi, 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2018). This process is very much in line with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where he explains how individuals internalize the social structure of a community, forming a disposition to think and act, which tends to repeat itself in response to reality. A solid 'habitus' resulting from the internalization of long-term values acts as a guide to social interaction and an informal control mechanism that maintains the sustainability of community values (Bourdieu, 1977).

In Minangkabau, the internalization of these values is greatly influenced by social interactions in traditional communal community spaces such as; *Surau* (place of worship and informal learning), *lapau* (social discussion space), and *dangau* (such as a small hut and a space for contemplation). *Surau*, for example, functions as a center for religious education and customary socialization, a place for the younger generation to learn new things and spiritual values (Navis, 1984). These spaces are key arenas for the formation of the "generalized other" according to Mead, where community norms and expectations are internalized (Herbert Mead, 1932). *Lapau* offers an informal social learning space through daily discussions that strengthen community awareness and understanding of social norms such as *Sumbang Duo Baleh* and others, demonstrating internalization that lives in practice. Meanwhile, *dangau* becomes a space for contemplation and the transfer of local wisdom through direct experience, forming characters such as perseverance and patience.

Through constant interaction in these spaces and within the framework of the Kaum social structure, the values of *tahu di nan ampek* are internalized until they become an inseparable part of self-identity. This process is in line with the "changing" stage in Lewin's model of social change, where adjustment to a new social system occurs through learning and deep internalization (Williams et al., 1948). Furthermore, this deep internalization contributes to the psychological empowerment advocated by Zimmermann. According to him, connecting personal experiences with the wider social system encourages individuals to actively contribute to the community (Chambers, 1983). Thus, strong internalization in Minangkabau builds a strong social identity and strengthens collective solidarity (Bourdieu, 1977).

Internalization in Minangkabau which is deeply embedded in religious customs and traditional social spaces offers a unique perspective that emphasizes the role of non-formal learning and collective experience in shaping the empowering habitus. It highlights how social identity and solidarity (understood through social capital) are strengthened through the organic absorption of values within community structures. In contrast to the sometimes more individualistic focus in some internalization theories, *sauak aie mandikan diri* emphasizes the communal and cultural aspects of this process. Ensuring that empowering values are lived and maintained collectively within the community.

Actualization

The third stage, *karajo ba pokok* (literally meaning working according to the provisions), is the actualization phase where awareness (*tahu di nan ampek*) and internalization (*Sauak aie mandikan diri*) are manifested in real actions that contribute to community independence.

The main elements in this stage include; cooperation, mutual assistance, deliberation, and dignity and self-esteem. This actualization is not just a passive application of values, but active participation in building and maintaining sustainable social mechanisms.

Musyawah reflects a participatory mechanism to reach consensus (*bulek aie ka pembuluh, bulek kato ka mufakat*). This process involves open dialogue (negotiation) and is achieved through consensus, not voting. Along with that, *gotong royong* embodies the principle of collective cooperation and mutual assistance (weight is carried together, light is carried together), in various communal activities, ranging from building houses for Kaum members, to managing agricultural resources. This practice of cooperation significantly strengthens social solidarity and builds social capital in the community (Putnam, 2002).

This actualization stage is in line with the concept of participatory development developed by Chambers, where he emphasized the importance of communities taking a leading role in identifying problems, making decisions and implementing their own development programs (Chambers, 1983). Deliberation and mutual cooperation in Minangkabau are real examples of this active participation, showing how communities become the main actors who actively create and manage the empowerment process. In addition, *karajo ba pokok* is relevant to Amartya Sen's capability theory. Sen argues that empowerment focuses on expanding the capabilities, freedoms and opportunities for individuals to achieve what they value (Sen, 1999). Other elements inherent in the *karajo ba pokok* process are the values of dignity and self-esteem. Both function as internal drivers (similar to Maslow's self-actualization), but in a communal framework that motivates individuals to contribute to the community and maintain independence. This confirms the design idea that empowerment is not only about access to resources, but also the ability of individuals to utilize their internal capacities and values to achieve Social Welfare. Furthermore, self-esteem also plays a role as a social regulation, motivating individuals to act according to norms and maintain their reputation and community.

Furthermore, this actualization stage is parallel to the Asset-Based Community Development (*ABCD*) model developed by Kretzmann and McKnight. The *ABCD model* emphasizes development rooted in the internal assets and strengths of the community (Green & Haines, 2017; Kretzmann et al., 1993). Explicitly utilizing social assets (cooperation and deliberation) and culture (values of dignity and self-esteem) that the Minangkabau community already has. Compared to the “refreezing” stage in Lewin's social change model, because *karajo ba pokok* not only confirms positive change, but actively produces and strengthens it through sustainable social practices. In short, this stage shows how communities actualize their collective potential, ensuring empowerment is rooted in the internal strength of active participation and lived cultural values.

Social Control

The fourth stage, *Ingek jo Jago* (literally meaning remember and guard), describes the social control mechanism that functions to ensure that the values of empowerment and social order are implemented and maintained sustainably. This social control develops naturally

and collectively rooted in social and cultural interactions within the Kaum system, reinforced by a political system based on custom that emphasizes freedom, equality, and control over power. Each individual in the Kaum system has an active role in maintaining the norms and values that are inherited.

The social control mechanism in Minangkabau is strengthened by the customary law system (UU adat) which is inherited and becomes a reference for regulating life. Examples include; *cupak nan duo*, *UU nan ampek*, and *kato nan ampek* (customary rules for maintaining social balance), and *Sumbang duo baleh* (behavior that does not conform to norms). For more serious offences, there are *laws nan 20* (customary justice system). Supervision and enforcement of customary rules are mainly carried out by *the Niniek Mamak* through deliberation and guidance. This control system is effective in maintaining social stability, preventing conflict and maintaining community order.

Ingek jo jago stage is very relevant to community-based social regulation in Zimmermann's concept of psychological empowerment. The importance of internal regulatory systems supports sustainable empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995). Minangkabau social control shows the manifestation of the regulatory stage at the community level, where community members autonomously practice empowerment values and integrate them into their daily lives. Supervision through customary norms such as *Sumbang Dua Baleh* and *laws nan 20* ensure that deviations or social imbalances can be addressed and corrected by the community itself.

In the framework of *Asset-Based Community Development*, this *ingek jo jago* is an example of how the cultural assets and customary law of the community are used as internal resources to maintain the stability and sustainability of empowerment (Kretzmann et al., 1993). In addition, this stage supports Chambers' principle of participatory empowerment, which emphasizes the importance of the community maintaining active involvement in managing change and maintaining development outcomes. Each member of the Kaum plays an active role, not a passive one, in monitoring and enforcing customary rules. The value of self-esteem motivates individuals to act responsibly and participate in maintaining norms and the sustainability of customary values. This community-based social control is deeply rooted in culture and formal social capital often proves to be more flexible and effective in adapting to change than formal regulations alone.

As a theoretical summary, this literature review shows that the four-stage empowerment model in Minangkabau (*Tahu di nan ampek*, *sauak aie mandikan diri*, *karajo ba pkok*, and *ingek jo jago*), is not only deeply rooted in local wisdom, but also has significant theoretical resonance and implications with global empowerment concepts such as those proposed by; Freire, Bourdieu, Chambers, Zimmermann, Kretzmann and Mc Knight, and Amartya Sen. This model enriches theoretical understanding by showing how empowerment processes can develop organically and sustainably from within a community, driven by distinctive social structures, cultural values, and internal regulatory mechanisms. Thus, this condition emphasizes that an important contribution to the

literature on community-based empowerment, especially in non-western or indigenous contexts, highlights the strength of local systems in responding to global challenges.

Methods

This study was conducted in Nagari Tabek Patah, Salimpaung District, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia, from 2018 to 2019. The selection of this site was based on the fact that the local community continues to embrace and actively implement the traditional Minangkabau system in their social practices and decision-making processes, making it a rich setting for an in-depth case study.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the empowerment phenomenon within its local context, this study adopted a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This approach allowed the theory regarding the Minangkabau community empowerment model to emerge inductively from field data, based on patterns arising from local social interactions, rather than departing from pre-existing theoretical frameworks. To explore how these empowerment mechanisms operate within the specific context of the nagari, the case study method was simultaneously employed (Yin, 2018). The combination of both approaches was essential for generating an empowerment theory that not only holds academic validity but also accurately reflects the complexity of long-established social and cultural realities.

Participant selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique. The primary selection criterion was based on the depth of each informant's knowledge of the Minangkabau customary and social systems relevant to the topic of empowerment. The selection process was conducted in stages, beginning with the identification of individuals who actively practice customary values. These individuals were then classified into two groups: those who fully preserve tradition, and those who have undergone cultural shifts. From the first group, five key informants were selected, namely Dt. Simarajo Lelo, Dt. Badangiang, Dt. Tan Pahlawan, Dt. Mantiko Bali Nan Putih, and Dt. Sinaro Nan Batembang. The selection of these five figures was based on their central positions as customary leaders (*Ninik Mamak*) who play a significant role in maintaining, interpreting, and applying the customary system and traditions in Nagari Tabek Patah. Their capacity provided authentic and in-depth insights into the customary-based empowerment mechanisms that constitute the focus of this study.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Throughout the research period, the researcher actively participated in various customary activities, including Kaum deliberations, reciprocal cooperation, and the application of customary law. This participant observation enabled a direct understanding of how the empowerment system operates within the community's daily life. In-depth interviews were subsequently conducted with the five key informants to explore their perspectives on how the community sustains its traditions amid the challenges of contemporary change. Document analysis involved the examination of Nagari Data Council archives, such as the Nagari Monograph, the Articles of Association, and the Household Bylaws, as well as

documents related to customary law, including the Tambo. To ensure the validity and completeness of the data, a triangulation strategy was consistently applied by comparing and confirming findings obtained from all three data collection methods. Throughout the research process, ethical principles — including informed consent and the preservation of informant confidentiality — were strictly upheld.

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using the sequential stages of grounded theory. The first stage, open coding, was conducted to freely identify initial concepts and categorical properties emerging from the data. This was followed by axial coding, which served to connect the established categories while exploring their dimensions, properties, and interrelationships. The final stage, selective coding, aimed to integrate all categories around one or more core categories, ultimately leading to the formulation of a four-stage empowerment model in the Minangkabau context. Throughout the analytical process, a combination of etic (outsider or academic perspective) and emic (the perspective of the Minangkabau community itself) viewpoints was employed (Roggeband & Klandermans, 2017). The etic perspective served to connect local empirical findings with broader empowerment theoretical frameworks, while the emic perspective ensured that the model constructed genuinely reflects the way the Minangkabau community understands and gives meaning to empowerment within their lived context.

As a final step in the analysis, the resulting Minangkabau community-based empowerment model was compared with, and its relevance discussed in relation to, several established empowerment models in the academic literature. These include Lewin's model of social change, Kretzmann and McKnight's Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Chambers' concept of participatory empowerment, and Amartya Sen's capability approach. This comparative process took the form of a systematic evaluation of the similarities and differences, as well as the unique contributions that the Minangkabau model offers to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of community empowerment.

Result

This study reveals that the empowerment of the Kaum community in Minangkabau is a process influenced by cultural values, social structures, and internal mechanisms that are inherited from generation to generation, not merely economic or political conditions. Data analysis reveals a cyclical empowerment process that runs through four fundamental phases based on Minangkabau local wisdom. These phases, which are related and build sustainability, are detailed in table 1:

Empowerment Stages	Empowerment Concept	Meaning of Stages	Forming Elements
<i>Tahu di nan ampek</i>	Awareness	The process of society understanding basic values as a foundation	reason, nature, religion, custom
<i>Sauak Aie Mandikan Diri</i>	Internalization	The process of absorbing values into social structures and thought patterns	Social structure, leadership creativity independence freedom social space in brackets past lake
<i>Karajo ba Pokok</i>	Actualization	Implementation of values in real action to build independence	cooperation, mutual cooperation, deliberation, dignity, self-respect.
<i>Ingek jo Jago</i>	Social Control	Mechanisms to maintain empowerment values so that they continue to run and are maintained	customary legal system <i>cupak nan duo, Kato nan ampek, undang nan ampek,</i>

Table 1. Stages of Empowerment Based on Minangkabau Local Wisdom

These findings confirm that the Minangkabau community empowerment model is a continuous process that is deeply rooted in internal social and cultural mechanisms. The process of ensuring active involvement of community members and maintaining social capital, shows that empowerment based on cultural values can ensure well-being and enable adaptation without losing identity. This process highlights the important role of cultural-based social capital in creating an independent and empowered society.

Discussion

Tahu di nan Ampek Stage (Awareness)

The first stage of empowerment in Minangkabau is *tahu di nan ampek*, which serves as the foundation of collective consciousness through its four pillars: reason, nature, religion (Islam) and custom. The comprehensive awareness that is built from these four pillars equips individuals and communities to understand social reality, identify challenges, and formulate responsive strategies. The process of forming this awareness is in line with the concept of consciousness promoted by Freire, as explained in the literature review section. This finding shows that in the Minangkabau context, this critical awareness is not only triggered by an understanding of the oppression of formal structures, but also significantly

originates from the internalization of customary values, religious teachings, and learning from nature that collectively encourage local agency.

Reason as a pillar of independence

In Minangkabau, reason is more than just an intellectual capacity; it is the core of consciousness that shapes thought patterns, behaviors, and social mechanisms. The proverb: “live with reason, die with guesswork” emphasizes the importance of living a life full of calculation and mature consideration (Navis, 1984; Sari et al., 2024). The concept of reason includes wisdom (long reason) and intelligence in finding solutions, which determine the role of individuals in the community (Lah et al., 2024; Satria & Sahayu, 2022). Reason functions as a guardian of self-respect, the welfare of the community, and social balance. It guides individuals to act within moral and religious corridors, manage assets wisely and resolve conflicts. From an empowerment perspective, reason enables the development of sustainable life systems. Reason-based awareness is in line with Freire's view that critical thinking is crucial for empowerment, supported by the philosophy of "*alam takambang jadi guru*" which teaches learning from the environment for independence rooted in culture.

Nature as a source of consciousness

The Minangkabau people's ability to understand and adapt grew from their deep connection with the environment, reflected in the philosophy of learning from nature as wise teachers (Lah et al., 2024; Satria & Sahayu, 2022). In teaching the principles of balance and order of ecosystems such as; wind, groundwater, which are translated into the Minangkabau social structure, where the diversity of individual roles is seen as a strength in a mutually supportive system. Awareness of nature encourages critical understanding of positions in social structures and actions for change. Learning from nature forms strong and adaptive characters such as patience and perseverance. In the context of contemporary empowerment, Minangkabau environmental awareness is relevant to the issue of sustainability emphasizing human-nature partnerships, not exploitation. Demonstrating true empowerment includes using awareness of nature to create an inclusive and sustainable harmonious life system.

Syarak: Islam as the guardian of consciousness

Religion, especially Islam, is the central foundation of Minangkabau consciousness, shaping the community's self-understanding, and the environment. The philosophy of "*adat ba sandi syarak, syarak ba sandi kitabullah*" reflects the integration of adat and Islam (Fiddini et al., 2019). Historically, Islam assimilated with adat developing from "*syarak basandi adat*" to "*adat ba sandi syarak*" reaching its culmination in the *Sumpah Sakti Bukit Marapalam*, Islam is Minangkabau and Minangkabau is Islam (Hamka, 2020). Religious-based awareness is seen in the customary legal system (*cupak nan duo, undang nan ampek*) which is based on Islamic principles of justice and togetherness (Jamil, 2020b). Islam

teaches critical awareness that is in line with Freire, not only obedience but active reflection and social participation. Islamic values (justice and cooperation) solidarity remain relevant in facing modern challenges, functioning as moral guidelines and tools for building an inclusive and equitable social system.

Custom: Guardian of social identity

Custom is a Minangkabau value system that shapes the identity and sustainability of the community. The fundamental interweaving of custom and Islamic values, which is contained in the core adage "*adat ba sandi syarak, syarak ba sandi kitabullah*", emphasizes that this Minangkabau value system stands alone. It inherently synergizes with religious teachings in shaping identity and social order (Frasandy et al., 2022). Custom includes ways of thinking, systems of ideas, and socio-economic rules, creating social stability. The four types of customs (*custom nan savannah custom, custom nan taradat, custom term custom, and custom nan diadatkan*) reflect sustainable norms (*indak lapuak dek hujan, indak lakang dek paneh*) adaptive rules (Nagari) cultural practices (*randai, tari piring*), and legal systems (*ninik mamak, customary decisions*). Awareness of customs functions as a tool to maintain independence and social stability. In contrast to the economic or political focus of contemporary models, Minangkabau shows that the sustainability of social systems is also determined by cultural awareness. This awareness encourages active participation in maintaining balance, allowing adaptation without losing identity (Freire, 2005).

The empowerment process often develops organically in a community, such as Minangkabau with the concept of *tahu di nan Ampek*. This is in line with the *freezing stage* in Lewin's social change model which recognizes the need for change. Kretsmann's concept also shows that empowerment begins with individual and environmental awareness that develops into collective participation, strengthened by a system of mutual cooperation and deliberation. Patton's approach and Chambers' development participation support the idea that independence can be achieved through internal social mechanisms. The awareness of *tahu di nan ampek* proves that the initial stage of empowerment can emerge endogenously from the internalization of values to maintain identity and build balance in the face of change.

Sauak Aie mandikan Diri Stage (Internalization)

The second stage in Minangkabau empowerment is *sauak aie mandikan diri*, which metaphorically means the process of internalizing social values and making them part of one's identity. In sociology and psychology, internalization is the acceptance of values, norms, and beliefs from the social environment into the personal system. Mead explains that this occurs through socialization and interaction, where individuals form their identities through understanding social norms (Herbert Mead, 1932).

Surau as a center for internalization of religion and society

Surau (prayer room or small place of worship) in Minangkabau has a dual function; as a center for religious education and youth socialization (Azra, 2003). In addition to worship,

Surau teaches the Quran, customs, and character building and social awareness. This is in line with the concept of *generalized other* by Mead, where individuals internalize the norms of society, and easily learn to negotiate (customary communication or social diplomacy) and spiritual practices such as; Barzanji and Marhaban, deepening Islamic values in everyday life (Herbert Mead, 1932; Navis, 1984).

Lapau as a space for social learning and internalization of norms

Lapau (coffee shop or store) in Minangkabau is more than an economic place, it is a social interaction space for discussion, exchange of information, and strengthening the awareness of the Nagari community. *Lapau* becomes an arena for internalizing social norms, similar to the person's view of society as an agent of norm planting. Here individuals learn norms, speak respectfully of parents, and maintain the honor of the family or Kaum paying attention to it in everyday integration. Social considerations such as avoiding *lapau* if there is a *sumando* or *Mamak Rumah* a particular house show the tactics of internalizing living norms.

Dangau as a space for reflection and learning local wisdom

Dangau (hut in the fields or rice fields) serves as a resting place and reflective space for parents to share wisdom with the younger generation. *Dangau* is also a center for informal learning; customs, martial arts, or traditional medicine. According to Erikson (1950) internalization also includes the formation of identity through life experiences in *the dangau*, individuals gain practical wisdom through direct experience, learn perseverance and patience, in line with the philosophy of nature mines become teachers.

This stage of internalization of social values and norms is crucial in shaping individual and community awareness. *Sauak aie mandikan diri* emphasizes the appreciation of values until they become an identity. This stage ensures that individuals not only know the rules, but also absorb them as a guideline for life. The internalization stage in the Minangkabau model is in line with various theoretical concepts: socialization and interaction in Mead's symbolic theory through social spaces such as *Surau* and *dangau*: the *changing stage* in Lewin's social change model where adjustment occurs through learning (Herbert Mead, 1932; Holt et al., 2009). This deep internalization process in the *sauak aie mandikan diri* also resonates with aspects of psychological empowerment identified by Zimmermann. In particular, this stage facilitates an individual's understanding of the relationship between personal experience and broader social structures, which can then motivate active participation in the community. Chambers' (1997) participatory approach also emphasizes that internalization is an active learning mechanism for community participation and value sustainability. Erikson's (1950) perspective on identity formation through life experiences is also relevant to learning in the *dangau* (Gross, 2020; P. N. Thomas & van de Fliert, 2014; Zimmerman, 1995).

Compared to other models, Minangkabau internalization is more based on experience and culture, non-formal via communal social interaction, and emphasizes the

role of customs and religion as factors that form strong awareness. The Minangkabau model shows that empowerment can develop endogenously from existing social systems, ensuring that awareness is internalized collectively, creating a sustainable social system. Thus, the *sauak aie mandikan diri* stage emphasizes that awareness needs to be internalized and practiced, ensuring individuals live out the inherited values within their communities.

Ingek jo Jago Stage (Actualization)

The third step in empowering the Minangkabau community, *karajo ba pokok* (actualization), is the stage where the awareness and internalization that have been obtained previously are applied in everyday life. At this stage, individuals not only understand and internalize the values inherited from society, but also actualize them through real actions that contribute to their community. In this stage, the concept of cooperation, mutual assistance, deliberation, and self-esteem become the main elements in forming social solidarity and strengthening the community-based empowerment system. actualization is not just the application of social values but also ensures that individuals actively participate in building a never-ending social mechanism.

Deliberation as a decision-making mechanism.

As has been identified as a crucial participatory mechanism in the actualization stage (*karajo ba pokok*), deliberation serves as the foundation for collective decision-making in Minangkabau. Where consensus is achieved through inclusive dialogue, not unilateral decisions. This process is not only a form of negotiation but also a democratic mechanism that ensures that every decision reflects the common interest. When there is a problem that must be resolved, whether it is about customs, the construction of Kaum members' houses, the holding of Alek baik (feasts), or the management of Nagari resources, the first step taken is to identify the problem and determine who should be involved in the discussion. Customary leaders, *Mamak rumah*, and Kaum members are gathered in a meeting which is usually held in *Rumah Gadang*, or in *Surau* which is specifically used as a place for deliberation.

In deliberation, each individual is given the opportunity to express his/her opinion. The principle that is firmly held is that one's opinion must be considered fairly before a collective decision is reached. A new tradition that ensures that discussions take place with openness, where every input is valued and discussed carefully. There is no voting system in decision making, but rather a consensus process that is the reference. Once an agreement is reached, the decision that has been made is not just an agreement on paper, but is actually implemented in the life of the community. In the construction of Kaum members' houses, the results of the deliberation determine the division of tasks and the work schedule through mutual cooperation. Each member of the community plays a role according to their expertise, ensuring that the house can stand firmly within the planned time.

Deliberation is also an important part in organizing *Alek baik* (party). Before the traditional party takes place, traditional leaders and Kaum members gather to discuss the

course of the event, ensuring that all activities remain in accordance with customary and religious principles. In this way, the party is not only an automatic celebration but also a reflection of the collective values held by the community. The structured deliberation mechanism in Minangkabau culture reflects a social system that emphasizes the importance of togetherness, respect for the opinions of others, and active involvement in every aspect of community life. With this system, society can maintain social balance, maintain the honor of the Kaum, and ensure the sustainability of existing values amidst changing times.

Actualization of awareness through cooperation and mutual assistance

The actualization of awareness is also strongly manifested in the intensity of collective cooperation or *gotong royong*, which goes beyond the economic dimension. The philosophy of "weights are shared, lightness is carried together" which is the "spirit" of this practice, underlines the importance of shared responsibility in achieving communal prosperity. *Gotong royong* in community life is seen in various aspects, from building houses for Kaum members, preparing traditional events, to managing agricultural resources.

In practice, this cooperation is very clear in the tradition of building new houses for Kaum members. Informants from several Kaum explained that every time a Kaum member is going to build a house, a discussion always comes first before the work begins. This discussion is attended by the *Mamak Rumah* (maternal uncle), family members, and traditional leaders to discuss various aspects such as; the location of the house, available resources, division of tasks, and the work schedule.

Once an agreement is reached, construction is carried out through mutual cooperation, with community members contributing according to their abilities in the form of labor, building materials, and necessary equipment. Those with carpentry skills will lead the construction, while others help in transporting materials or providing food for the workers. This process not only speeds up the completion of the house, but also strengthens social solidarity within the Kaum.

In the management of agricultural resources, cooperation also plays an important role. Deliberations are held to determine land division, irrigation systems, and harvest strategies so that no party is disadvantaged. Decisions made based on consensus ensure that every member of the community gets fair benefits and contributes to improving shared welfare.

Considering the cooperation and deliberation above when faced with social capital proposed by Putnam (2002), creating a network of trust that strengthens social solidarity, ensures that society is able to act with collective awareness without having to rely on external regulation (Putnam, 2002). In the Minangkabau context, cooperation is not only a way to complete common tasks, but also a primary mechanism in maintaining social relations and ensuring balance within the community.

Thus, cooperation and mutual assistance in Minangkabau society are not just traditions, but are a form of actualization of collective consciousness that ensures that individuals and communities work together to achieve sustainable prosperity.

Self-esteem as a pillar of identity and independence

The actualization stage in empowering the Minangkabau community has similarities with various theories of social change and community empowerment developed by experts. In the approach of Kurt Lewin's social change model, this stage is similar to the *refreshing phase*, where individuals and communities begin to determine the changes they have experienced in their daily lives. After awareness is formed and values have been internalized, actualization ensures that social practices based on; cooperation; deliberation; self-esteem become part of sustainable life (Hussain et al., 2018).

In the concept of Psychological Empowerment as explained in the previous section, the empowerment stage is not only about understanding the values and norms that shape life, but also about how individuals actively participate in the community to strengthen the wider social system (Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment in the Minangkabau community shows that awareness and internalization are not enough to be known and learned, but must be truly implemented in social life.

When compared to the Asset based Community Development model of Kretzmann and McKnight, the actualization stage in Minangkabau empowerment focuses on the use of existing community strengths (Kretzmann et al., 1993). The *ABCD model* emphasizes that effective social change does not come from external intervention alone, but from the capacity and resources that the community itself already has. This is very relevant to the concept of *karajo ba pokok*, where individuals in the Kaum actively apply the values of cooperation and mutual assistance, deliberation and self-esteem without having to rely on external systems.

In Chambers' theory of participatory development, the third stage of empowerment focuses on how communities take a leading role in determining the direction of their own development (Chambers, 1983). This approach increases the importance of community involvement in making decisions and implementing programs that are in accordance with their needs and values. The Minangkabau community, through the mechanism of deliberation and mutual cooperation, shows how individuals in the community not only receive empowerment, but also create it through direct contributions to social life.

Compared to Amartya Sen's *capability approach theory*, the actualization stage in Minangkabau society also shows how empowerment is not only about access to resources, but about how individuals use their capacities to achieve social welfare (Sen, 1999). In the Minangkabau social system, self-esteem functions as a social regulation, ensuring that each individual acts according to norms and maintains the dignity of their community. Thus, the concept of *karajo ba pokok* in the Minangkabau social system is not only in line with various cultural theories that have been developed but also shows how cultural values play a role in strengthening the process of community empowerment. Through mutual

cooperation and self-esteem, not only does it maintain its identity, but it also contributes to building a community that is empowered, independent, and adheres to the principles of culture that have been passed down for centuries (Firdaus et al., 2018; Irawati et al., 2024).

Ingek jo Jago Stage (social control)

In Minangkabau society, social control is a mechanism that has long been rooted in their social structure. The concept of remembering and guarding reflects a social control system that naturally develops in the community, reinforced by a political system based on customs that emphasizes freedom, equality, and control over power. Every individual, whether as a nephew or in other Kaum structures, has a role in maintaining the values and norms that are inherited but respected from the run.

Supervision of individual behavior in Minangkabau society is not repressive, but grows as a form of regulation based on social and cultural interactions. The norms that develop in the community are not just written rules, but also guidelines for maintaining social harmony. Customs, customary law norms, and a set of applicable rules are understood as part of customary law, which in community life is referred to as customary law. This customary law system has been passed down through generations and is a reference for regulating community life.

Various customary laws that are still applied today reflect how the Minangkabau people regulate balance in their community life. For example, it functions as a regulator of the political system of the Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak 50 Kota regions. Meanwhile, *the Rantau law* regulates governance for the Minangkabau people outside *the Luhak nan tigo* region. Meanwhile, *the Nagari Law* implements a government system in each Nagari as an autonomous region that has its own history and assets so that one Nagari cannot be merged with another Nagari without going through a long and complex customary process (Alfikri, 2024; Azwar et al., 2020; Irawati et al., 2024).

In addition to customary law that regulates government and politics, the Minangkabau people also have a more specific legal system to control individual behavior in social life. *The Law in Nagari*, for example, functions as a regulator of social behavior in each Nagari, implementing prohibitions, and recommendations in community life. One important concept in this system is *Sumbang duo baleh*, which refers to 12 forms of behavior or actions that are considered inconsistent with social norms. If someone makes a mistake included in the *Sumbang duo baleh* category and continues to repeat it, then he will be given a warning or sanction according to the community agreement (Frasandy et al., 2022).

If the violation reaches a higher level, the community uses *the UU Nan Duo Puluh*, which functions as the Minangkabau customary justice system. This law not only regulates the status of suspects, witnesses, evidence, and judicial procedures, but also establishes a flexible system of sanctions, depending on the results of *the Ninik Mamak deliberations* in the nagari. This system ensures that control remains relevant to changing times and the needs of the ever-evolving community.

The existence of this social control mechanism has a major impact on stability and harmony in Minangkabau society. The mutually agreed customary regulations enable the community to maintain social balance, avoid conflict, and overcome various problems such as intolerance and crime. In everyday life, individuals are not only subject to the rules that are applied, but are also directly involved in maintaining norms through social interaction. A member of the Kaum who does not participate in social activities or does not carry out his obligations will be considered to have little respect for values that have been rooted for generations. In certain situations, individuals who show an attitude of not caring about the community will be summoned by *the Nĕnik Mamak* to be given guidance and advice.

This approach shows that control in Minangkabau society is not just a formal legal system, but also a community-based mechanism that is carried out through collective supervision. With this system, society not only maintains tradition, but also maintains social balance and ensures that each individual continues to contribute to the life of their community. This is in line with Fukuyama's opinion which states that control, especially community-based control, is often more flexible and effective compared to formal regulations that tend to be rigid and less adaptive to social change (Fukuyama, 1997).

With this deep-rooted system, the Minangkabau people can maintain traditional values, ensure the active involvement of each individual in the community, and maintain social harmony through social control mechanisms that continue to develop in accordance with changing times. This is also the final step in the empowerment process, where awareness, internalization, and actualization of social values are not only applied but also maintained with social mechanisms that prioritize balance and sustainability in community life.

The fourth step in empowering the Minangkabau community, *Ingek jo jago* emphasized the importance of community-based regulation to ensure that values are continuously implemented and inherited. This social control is not repressive, but develops as a regulatory mechanism that involves every individual in the community. With a sustainable customary law system, the Minangkabau community has developed a social control system based on collective agreements, not just instructions from formal authorities.

This stage has similarities with the last stage in various empowerment models that focus on *sustainability*, where individuals and communities begin to stabilize the changes they have experienced so that empowerment values continue to run without having to rely on external intervention. In the change model, socio-culture functions to strengthen changed behavior through a supportive social environment, in line with how the Minangkabau community maintains social order through customary legal systems such as; *the Luhak Law, the Rantau Law, the Nagari Law, and the Within Nagari Law*.

When compared to the concept of psychological empowerment, social control in Minangkabau society has characteristics that are in line with the *self-regulation stage*, namely when individuals in the community begin to practice empowerment values autonomously and integrate them into their social system (Zimmerman, 1995). In the Minangkabau

context, this is reflected in how Kaum members inherit and monitor the behavior of others through the concept of *Sumbang duo baleh* and *undang nan 20*, ensuring that social imbalances can be immediately corrected through community mechanisms.

This final stage is in line with the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach (Kretzmann et al., 1993). Where the community is expected to be able to recognize their assets and social capital to maintain the social changes they have achieved. This principle is reflected in the Minangkabau customary system, which utilizes cultural assets, data norms, and social values as the main pillars in maintaining the stability and sustainability of the empowerment process.

In addition, the concept of participatory empowerment also highlights that communities that have experienced empowerment must maintain their involvement in managing change, not just becoming beneficiaries (Chambers, 1983). In Minangkabau society, every member of the Kaum is not only subject to customary law, but also plays an active role in monitoring and implementing these rules, ensuring that the social changes that have occurred are maintained by the next generation.

Stage of *ingek jo jago* or social control can also be compared to Amartya Sen's *Capability Approach*, which emphasizes that the sustainability of empowerment depends on how individuals utilize their abilities in building a better social life in the Minangkabau social system. Self-esteem plays an important role in ensuring that each individual feels responsible for participating in community life, so that they do not just follow the rules but also experience the meaning of the sustainability of customary values.

Overall, the steps in the process of empowering communities based on Minangkabau local wisdom not only emphasize supervision and regulation, but also strengthen the empowerment system based on the community, where social control is carried out by all members of the community. This approach not only ensures that existing values are respected, but also reflects how empowerment can take place sustainably without having to rely on external actors. With customary law mechanisms, mutual cooperation, and community-based social control, the Minangkabau people prove that the identity in their social system remains relevant amidst changing times, and is in line with various empowerment theories that have been developed by experts.

Conclusion

The community empowerment model based on Minangkabau local wisdom proves that each community has its own mechanism in building social and economic independence, which is rooted in cultural values and social structures that have been maintained from generation to generation. The findings in this study prove the opportunity for further exploration of cultural-based empowerment models from other communities, each community has a unique system that adapts to their social context.

The approach consisting of awareness, internalization of actualization, and social control is not just a local phenomenon but offers the idea that empowerment must be rooted in the social identity of a community, not just relying on external intervention.

This concept emphasizes that each community can explore and develop their own tradition-based advocacy model to create a system that is sustainable, inclusive, and relevant to their social needs. This conclusion reinforces the view that there is no universal purchasing model; culture has its own way of building the welfare of its community. Re-elevating local wisdom as the foundation of empowerment opens up opportunities for a more adaptive and contextual approach, which is in line with the social dynamics that continue to develop in various communities.

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