

THE PRACTICE OF MINANG AND MANDAILING MULTICULTURAL LIFE IN LUBUK LAYANG PERSPECTIVE WILL KYMLICKA



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Abstract

This study is motivated by the coexistence of the Minangkabau and Mandailing communities in Jorong II, Nagari Lubuk Layang, who live together within the same social environment despite having different cultural backgrounds. This condition reflects a multicultural social life that is important to examine through the perspective of multicultural justice proposed by Will Kymlicka. The study aims to analyze the social relations between the Minangkabau and Mandailing communities, identify the forms of justice that emerge within their multicultural life, and examine them based on Will Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism. This research employs a qualitative approach using an ethnographic method. Data were collected through observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that social relations between the Minangkabau and Mandailing communities are characterized by harmonious interactions, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and participation in various social activities. Multicultural justice is reflected in the acceptance of each group's cultural identity, relatively equal opportunities in social life, and the minimal presence of discriminatory practices. However, based on Will Kymlicka's perspective, particularly the concepts of *self-government rights*, *polyethnic rights*, and *special representation rights*, multicultural justice has not been fully institutionalized. Recognition of the Mandailing community remains more dominant in the social and cultural spheres than in structural and political aspects. Therefore, multicultural life in Nagari Lubuk Layang demonstrates inclusive and harmonious social relations, although institutional recognition of minority groups remains limited.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kehidupan masyarakat Minangkabau dan Mandailing di Jorong II Nagari Lubuk Layang yang hidup berdampingan dalam satu lingkungan sosial dengan latar belakang budaya yang berbeda. Kondisi tersebut menunjukkan adanya praktik kehidupan multikultural yang menarik untuk dikaji melalui perspektif keadilan multikultural Will Kymlicka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis relasi sosial masyarakat Minang dan Mandailing, mengidentifikasi bentuk keadilan yang berkembang dalam kehidupan multikultural, serta menganalisisnya berdasarkan teori multikulturalisme Will Kymlicka. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode etnografi. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara tidak terstruktur, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa relasi sosial antara masyarakat Minangkabau dan Mandailing berlangsung secara harmonis melalui interaksi yang terbuka, toleransi, gotong royong, serta partisipasi dalam berbagai kegiatan sosial kemasyarakatan. Keadilan multikultural tercermin dari penerimaan terhadap identitas budaya masing-masing kelompok, kesempatan yang relatif setara dalam kehidupan sosial, dan minimnya praktik diskriminasi. Namun, berdasarkan perspektif Will Kymlicka, khususnya konsep *self-government rights*, *polyethnic rights*, dan *special representation rights*, keadilan multikultural tersebut belum sepenuhnya terwujud dalam bentuk kelembagaan. Pengakuan terhadap



kelompok Mandailing masih lebih dominan pada ranah sosial dan budaya dibandingkan aspek struktural dan politik. Dengan demikian, kehidupan multikultural di Nagari Lubuk Layang menunjukkan hubungan yang inklusif dan harmonis, meskipun pengakuan kelembagaan terhadap kelompok minoritas masih terbatas.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as one of the countries with the greatest cultural diversity in the world. This diversity is reflected in the social, cultural, and geographical conditions that are very broad and complex. This country consists of various ethnic, cultural, religious, and other social groups that are not only diverse but also have different characters. As a pluralistic and heterogeneous country, Indonesia holds extraordinary potential in the form of ethnic, cultural, and religious wealth. All of this is an important capital in building a multicultural nation—state. But behind this potential, this diversity also holds the risk of conflicts and divisions in the community. (Lestari, 2015) The diversity of Indonesian society can be seen from two sides. Horizontally, there are differences based on ethnicity, religion, customs, and region of origin. Cultural diversity can be a social capital that strengthens social unity and cohesion if supported by the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for cultural differences. (Zamzami et al., 2025)

Meanwhile, vertically, there appears to be a gap between the upper and lower groups of society which is quite striking. Even though the society is diverse, Indonesia remains united in one national bond through the principle of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", which means different but still one. This motto is a symbol of strength and harmony in the life of religion, nation, and state that must be maintained together. However, this diversity that is a wealth can also be a source of problems if not managed properly. Differences that are not handled wisely have the potential to cause conflicts and divisions in society. The diversity in religious aspects owned by the Indonesian nation can serve as a foundation for the creation of social harmony, but it also has the potential to become a source of conflict if not managed wisely. In the study of contemporary multiculturalism, Kymlicka argues that the formation of a shared civic identity does not have to come at the expense of the existence of diverse cultural identities. Rather, an inclusive citizenship system needs to provide space for minority groups to maintain their cultural characteristics through adequate recognition and protection. In this way, social cohesion and respect for cultural diversity can develop in harmony in the life of a pluralistic society. (Kymlicka, 2011)

These two sides reflect a shared determination to foster a sense of nationalism and a sense of pride in their differences, as part of efforts to maintain the integrity of these diversity. Indonesia expressly carries a vision to build a prosperous and just society within the framework of social justice. Existing differences should not be the cause of division or social segregation. On the contrary, this diversity can be a fertile ground for the development of the value of tolerance and mutual respect, as a form of recognition of the life choices of each individual in society. (Masyhuri, 2019) Harmonization is a form of individual or group behavior that shows balance, as a result of harmonious and suitable relationships between others. This harmonious condition has a significant positive impact on people's lives.

Some of these impacts include the growth of mutual understanding, acceptance of diversity, and the creation of a peaceful atmosphere of religious life. In addition, the values of tolerance, respect for beliefs and social differences, and cooperation in building

communities also develop. In addition to the term harmonization, there is also the term harmony, which describes the state of people who live in tranquility, peace and harmony with each other. (District *et al.*, 2024) The differences that exist in this country reflect the character of a multicultural nation. Multiculturalism itself is a view that respects cultural differences in society and encourages mutual acceptance between different groups. In a multicultural society, diversity is not considered a barrier, but an important part of a common identity.

In a pluralistic society, the relationship between religion, culture, and education has an important role in shaping mutual respect and strengthening a harmonious multicultural life. (Anis *et al.*, 2024) According to Will Kymlicka, the existence of a multicultural society is not enough to guarantee through equal rights as citizens alone. A pluralistic society also requires the recognition of the cultural identity of minority groups through the granting of special rights that are in accordance with the characteristics of each group. In his view, justice in a pluralistic society requires the protection of minority groups so that they can maintain their cultural identity while still having equal opportunities to participate in social and political life.

Therefore, this idea is an important foundation in understanding the relationship between majority and minority groups in a multicultural society. (Kymlicka, 2017) Actually, almost all nations in the world have elements of multiculturalism. The existence of a diverse society actually provides its own wealth for a country. This uniqueness can be seen from the differences in race, ethnicity, ethnicity, and religion. Indonesia is a real example, with a very diverse community background in terms of ethnicity, religion, and race. Multicultural life in Indonesia is rooted in the principle of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," which is the foundation in building an inclusive and harmonious social structure. (Saripudin, Diah Ernawati, 2023)

ARTICLE CONTENT

The Practice of Social Relations between the Minang and Mandailing Communities Jrong II Nagari Lubuk Layang

In daily life, social relations between the Minangkabau and Mandailing people in Jorong II Lubuk Layang generally run in a fairly harmonious condition. The two ethnic groups coexist without showing any meaningful social friction in their interaction activities. The differences in cultural backgrounds that exist are not positioned as a barrier in building social relations, but rather give birth to a pattern of relationships that are mutually adjusted in social life. One form of difference that is quite visible in these interactions is the use of language in daily communication. However, these language differences are not a significant obstacle in the communication process between communities. In various situations, the Mandailing people tend to make adjustments by using the local language, namely the Lubuk Layang language, when interacting with the Minangkabau people.

This condition shows that there is a process of social adaptation that takes place reasonably in daily life, so that communication between groups is maintained well without causing significant social distance. (Uldi, 2025) The process of adaptation that takes place through daily communication strengthens social cohesion because relationships between groups are built gradually through continuous interaction, not just through formal rules. (Syamsidar *et al.*, 2026) In addition, the social relations that are built are also strengthened by joint involvement in various community activities, such as mutual cooperation activities, the implementation of religious events, and traditional activities involving the two ethnic groups. Joint involvement in these activities also strengthens social ties among the community, so that ethnic differences are not seen as a firm boundary in daily life. (Refki, 2025) In addition, the social relations that are built are also strengthened by joint involvement in various community activities, such as mutual

cooperation activities, the implementation of religious events, and traditional activities involving the two ethnic groups.

Joint involvement in these activities helps to strengthen social bonds among people, so that ethnic differences are not seen as a firm boundary in daily life.(Refki, 2025) How to adjust here is usually done by often interacting and building relationships with the indigenous people of Lubuk Layang. Through daily association, you can slowly understand how the habits, ways of communicating, and the rules that apply in the environment. From there, it also becomes easier to position yourself and adjust your attitude in social life. In addition, it also tries to actively participate in various activities in the environment, such as mutual cooperation, party events, religious activities, and other social activities.

The findings suggest that cultural diversity does not necessarily imply the emergence of conflicts in society. Banting and Kymlicka argue that the recognition of diverse group identities can be a factor that strengthens social cohesion, especially when each group has equal opportunities to participate and forge inclusive relationships in life together.(Kymlicka, 2016) These findings are in line with Farhan's (2023) research which shows that intensive social interaction and respect for diversity are important factors in building harmonious relationships in multicultural societies.(Farhan, 2023)

By being directly involved, the adjustment process feels faster because you can learn directly from the habits carried out by the local community. This involvement also makes the relationship with the residents closer and there is no distance. In that process, the Minangkabau community in Lubuk Layang gave a good response. They were open and accepted the presence of the community from outside without any problems with different backgrounds. This is very helpful in the adaptation process, because the atmosphere feels comfortable and there are no obstacles in getting along.(Hidayah, 2026)

Over time, because they often interact and carry out activities together, the relationship between communities is closer and full of togetherness. Social cohesion will be stronger if the relationship between citizens is based on mutual trust, open communication, and active participation in people's lives.(Mawardi, 2024) The sense of mutual respect is also getting stronger, so that differences in background are no longer a problem. These differences are actually considered as normal things in daily life. With such conditions, the adaptation process in Jorong II Lubuk Layang can run well. This is supported by openness, mutual acceptance, and active participation from the community, so as to create a harmonious and harmonious life in the midst of diversity.(Saputra, 2026) In addition, the informant also emphasized that in daily social reality there is a common understanding that immigrant communities or minority groups, in this case Mandailing, have a moral obligation to conform to the customs and social norms that apply in Jorong II Lubuk Layang. (Ruslan, 2026)

The adjustment process is not seen as a form of pressure or coercion, but as a social mechanism to maintain balance, order, and harmony in a pluralistic society. This is in line with the traditional expression that has long been known in people's lives, namely "where the earth is trodden, there the sky is upheld," which contains the message that every individual in an area should respect local rules, values, and culture. Thus, this principle serves as a moral guideline that helps to strengthen the creation of harmonious social relations, mutual respect, and minimize the potential for inter-ethnic conflicts in Jorong II Lubuk Layang.(Refki, 2025) During my stay in Jorong II Lubuk Layang, until now I have never encountered or felt any conflict caused by ethnic differences.

The life of the people here runs as usual, without any problems arising due to different backgrounds. Both the Minangkabau and Mandailing people can coexist well and there is no conflict between them. In daily interactions, it can also be seen that the relationship between residents is well established. Each respects each other and does not mind the differences that exist. Ethnic differences have been considered a natural thing in living together, so they are never used as an excuse to cause conflicts or disputes. When viewed from community activities, all residents participate without any restrictions.(Hidayah, 2026) In activities such as mutual cooperation, party events, religious activities, and other social activities, all can work well together.

There is no distance or separation between one group and another, because everyone is used to interacting and getting to know each other. With such conditions, the life of the people in Jorong II Lubuk Layang can be said to be running in harmony and conducive. Until now, there have been no conflicts in the name of ethnic differences, because the people themselves are used to living together, maintaining good relations with each other, and upholding a sense of togetherness in daily life.(Uldi, 2025)

Forms of Justice in the Multicultural Life of the Minang and Mandailing Jorong II Nagari Lubuk Layang Communities

The Mandailing community as a minority group is not directly involved in the formal structure of the traditional leadership, but still has the opportunity to participate in the social life of the community. They can participate in deliberative forums and various social activities related to common interests at the jorong level. This shows that there is a social openness that provides space for participation for minority groups, although it remains within the framework of the customary structure dominated by the Minangkabau. Although it is not included in the formal customary structure, on the other hand, in the context of the administrative and formal structure of the Mandailing community, the Mandailing community has shown more open participation. They can be involved in nagari institutions such as the Deliberative Body (Bamus) and other Kenagarian apparatus.

This involvement signifies that the nagari system of government provides a more inclusive space, openness in the structure of local government can strengthen the community's sense of belonging to the community as each group gains the opportunity to participate in public life(Reimer et al., 2021) Because it is not entirely based on indigenous lineages, but also considers the social representation of the people living in the region.(Ilyas, 2025) The Mandailing people still do not experience restrictions in expressing their opinions or in expressing their cultural identity. They are also given the opportunity to carry out traditional activities or ceremonies in accordance with Mandailing traditions. However, the implementation of these activities must still be through coordination and obtaining approval from the ninik mamak or local traditional stakeholders.(Uldi, 2025) It can be explained that the existence of the Mandailing community in Jorong II Lubuk Layang is still recognized as a Mandailing ethnic group, and until now there has been no rejection from the local community.

They are well received as part of the social life of the neighborhood. On the other hand, because they live in an area dominated by Minangkabau culture, in their daily activities they tend to follow Minang customs and customs. This is a form of adjustment to create a harmonious relationship with the surrounding community. Nevertheless, they still have the freedom to carry out the traditional traditions of Mandailing, with the note that they usually first get approval from the niniak mamak as the holder of the local customary authority. Furthermore, the Mandailing people have also been recognized as part of the residents of Jorong II Lubuk Layang. Thus, although their ethnic identity is still maintained, in practice they have blended and become part of the local community.(Ruslan, 2026)

If you pay attention to daily life, there are quite clear differences between the Minangkabau and Mandailing people, both in habits, interaction patterns, and cultural practices carried out. These differences are indeed visible in social activities, but they do not develop into conflicts between the two groups. This shows that the local people are used to living in diversity. On the other hand, although the Minangkabau people are the

dominant group in Jorong II Lubuk Layang, the situation does not cause social tension. The Mandailing community generally follows the applicable norms and rules, especially those related to Minangkabau customs. This attitude reflects more of a form of self-adjustment in order to create an orderly and harmonious life, not because of an element of coercion. In addition, the relationship between the two ethnicities is also characterized by mutual respect and understanding.

Although there are significant differences in cultural identity, they are not used as a basis for creating distance or conflict. On the contrary, these differences are part of the social dynamics that can be accepted in life together. (Ilyas, 2025) In terms of decision-making in the Minangkabau community, it is generally carried out through a deliberation process involving *niniak mamak* and other traditional leaders. They have a major role in determining the final outcome, so that the decisions taken remain under the authority of the *niniak mamak* as the holder of customary authority. Meanwhile, for activities that are social in nature, such as mutual cooperation or other joint activities, the people of Mandailing also take part. They are not only present, but also have the opportunity to express their opinions and participate in the deliberation process.

In this context, there are no restrictions for the Mandailing people to participate. Furthermore, in the implementation of activities such as weddings or other traditional events, the Mandailing people are also given space to express their views and proposals. Nevertheless, the final decision remains in the hands of the *niniak mamak*. This does not only apply to the Mandailing people, but also to the Minangkabau people themselves, because every customary decision basically must obtain the approval of the *niniak mamak*. (Refki, 2025)

An Analysis of Multicultural Justice in the Perspective of Will Kymlicka

In regulating the lives of the people in Jorong II Lubuk Layang, in general, it still refers to the system that applies in the local environment, especially those related to Minangkabau customs. Every issue related to common interests is usually resolved through deliberations involving traditional leaders such as *niniak mamak* and *nagari* officials. In these deliberations, people from various backgrounds, including Mandailing, are still present and given the opportunity to express their opinions. However, in practice, the final decision is still more determined by those who have authority in the customary structure. (Saputra, 2026) The dominance of the majority group in the institutional structure often results in the minority group gaining only participation space, not substantive authority. (Meer & Modood, 2012) As part of the community that lives in the environment, the people of Mandailing basically follow the social system that has been running. In daily life, especially in social activities such as mutual cooperation, party events, and other joint activities, there is no difference in treatment.

All communities can be actively involved without any restrictions. (Hidayah, 2026) However, when viewed in a more specific context, especially related to the management of customs and cultural value systems, the Mandailing people tend to be in a position to adapt to the system owned by the Minangkabau people as a majority group. This condition shows that although there is room for participation for minority groups, this space is not fully followed by the authority to regulate the lives of their groups independently. Recognition of minority groups will be more meaningful if it is followed by real opportunities to participate in policy-making that affects their lives. (Meer & Modood, 2012) In other words, the existing involvement is more participatory than autonomous. The Mandailing community can still participate in various social processes,

but do not yet have the power to determine rules that specifically reflect their cultural identity in the public sphere.(Uldi, 2025) If this condition is analyzed using Will Kymlicka's frame of thought, especially related to the concept *self-government rights* or the right to self-government, so there is a difference between the concept of the ideal and the reality on the ground.

Kymlicka explained that in a multicultural society, minority groups not only need equal rights as individuals, but also need recognition in the form of collective rights to maintain their cultural identity.(Kymlicka, 2019) These rights include the authority to regulate the internal life of the group, including in the aspects of customs, social institutions, and cultural practices that characterize them.(Innerarity & Kymlicka, 2003) In daily life in Jorong II Lubuk Layang, there are indeed differences between the Minangkabau and Mandailing people, both in terms of language, customs, and customs. These differences are quite clear, but in practice they do not cause problems.

The community continues to interact as usual and there is no separation between one group and another. The Mandailing people themselves continue to carry out their customs, but also adjust to the local environment. As long as these customs do not conflict with the prevailing values and rules, it is usually not a problem. The Minangkabau people also accept these conditions, so that each can still maintain their cultural identity without having to abandon existing customs.(Refki, 2025) In various community activities, there are no restrictions in displaying each other's identities, as long as they maintain togetherness and mutual respect.(Saputra, 2026) If it is associated with Will Kymlicka's thoughts on polyethnic rights, this condition can be understood as a form of recognition of cultural diversity in people's lives.

The Mandailing people still have space to carry out their customs and cultural identity, even though they are in an environment dominated by the Minangkabau people. This recognition is not manifested in the form of formal rules, but is more visible in the attitude of the community that accepts and does not limit differences as long as it does not interfere with life together.(Kymlicka, 2019) If you look at the involvement of the community in Jorong II Lubuk Layang, basically all residents play a role in the existing social life. There are no restrictions between the Minangkabau and Mandailing communities in terms of participation. In various activities such as mutual cooperation, party events, religious activities, and other social activities, all communities can participate and participate together. Participation that is open to all groups is an indicator of the development of a democratic life that respects cultural diversity.(Lim, 2018) In this case, each already feels part of the same society, so there is no difference in daily involvement.(Uldi, 2025)

However, if you look further, especially in terms of position or role in decision-making, there are indeed differences. For matters related to customs and leadership, this role is still more held by the Minangkabau people, especially through traditional figures such as *niniak mamak*. This happens because the system used does follow Minangkabau customs that have been in effect for a long time in the environment. The Mandailing people can still participate in deliberations and express opinions, but in practice they do not have the same position in making decisions, because the authority is still in the existing customary structure. However, this condition does not cause problems in daily life. The Mandailing people still feel involved, especially in social activities and interactions between citizens. In daily interactions, there is also no difference in treatment, equal social relations are one of the important foundations in building social cohesion in a multicultural society.(Joppke, 2018)

Because all societies interact well with each other and maintain harmonious relationships. Differences in positions in certain structures do not affect the social relationships that have been established. (Refki, 2025) If this condition is associated with Will Kymlicka's thoughts on *special representation rights* or the right of special representation, then it can be understood that the involvement of the community in Jorong II Lubuk Layang is indeed open to all groups, but it has not reached the stage of having special representation for minority groups. The Mandailing community does have the opportunity to participate in social life and express their views, but they do not have a position that specifically represents the interests of their group in the decision-making structure, especially related to customs and local leadership. (Kymlicka, 2019)

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, the life of the Minang–Mandailing people in Nagari Lubuk Layang shows harmonious and inclusive social relations. The ethnic differences between the Minangkabau people as a majority group and the Mandailing as a minority group do not cause conflict, but are accepted as part of social life characterized by mutual respect, openness, and non-discrimination. The Mandailing people are able to adapt to the Minangkabau social environment through participation in various community activities and acceptance of applicable norms. Nevertheless, they still have room to maintain their cultural identity and practices. This condition shows that there is social recognition of cultural diversity in people's lives. However, if analyzed through the perspective of Will Kymlicka, the multicultural justice that has been realized has not fully fulfilled the *self-government rights*, *polyethnic rights*, and *special representation rights*. The Mandailing community does not yet have autonomy in managing its internal life, the recognition of cultural identity is still socio-cultural and uninstitutionalized, and there is no special representation for minority groups in the decision-making structure. Thus, multicultural justice in Nagari Lubuk Layang is more visible in harmonious social practices than in the institutional recognition of the rights of minority groups.

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