

Social Construction of Ideal Wife (Wife Material) in the Minangkabau Society in Nagari Lubuk Basung, Agam Regency

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Abstract

This research is motivated by an understanding of the obstacles to women's material well-being in society, especially in Nagari Lubuk Basung, Lubuk Basung District, Agam Regency, which is transforming in line with the times. This research aims to describe the social construction of wife material in Minangkabau society in Nagari Lubuk Basung District, Lubuk Basung, Agam Regency. The research method employed is qualitative research, utilizing qualitative descriptive methods. The informants in this research consist of 3 (three) involved informants, namely traditional leaders in the form of Niniak Mamak and Bundo Kanduang, as well as one of the community leaders, and the support of 5 (five) resident communities. In Nagari Lubuk Basung. The data collection method involves observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis method involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Meanwhile, data validity sources, techniques, and time. The research results show that the social construction of 'wife material' in Minangkabau, especially in Nagari Lubuk Basung, remains valued; society views women who possess good education, skills, and a career as being considered 'wife material'. A combination of domestic, educational, and career is considered the key to creating an ideal woman who not only plays a role in the family but can also contribute to society and advance the family economy.

Introduction

In modern society in Indonesia, the concept of a *material wife* or ideal wife often refers to the characteristics and qualities that are considered suitable for a woman to become a wife. This term reflects society's role and expectations of women in the concept of marital relationships because women must be perfect in the eyes of men. Every man has his own criteria in choosing a future wife. A *material wife* is a woman who shows a strong commitment to family life and marriage, not only focusing on domestic responsibilities, but also supporting and inspiring her husband and other family members with dedication and love. A woman who is considered the ideal wife has extraordinary abilities in managing the household. It includes budget management, time management, and efficiency in completing daily tasks, making it a stable and organized center at home. *Wife Material* is known to have excellent communication skills. In this context, women who meet expectations as *material wives* are not only considered successful in fulfilling household responsibilities but also earn high status and respect in their communities. This shows that domestic roles and household skills are considered to be determining factors in assessing a woman's social value and contribution to the family and society. (Firanda, 2014)

This research is necessary because the phenomenon of the ideal wife (*wife material*) is directly related to social construction regarding the role of gender in society, especially Lubuk Basung. How the Society for Women was formed, and how it affected social, economic, and cultural life, especially among the Minangkabau people, who have matrilineal traditions. This research is also helpful as a reference material for academics, social practitioners, and the wider community to be more critical of the growing gender stereotypes. (Diana, 2018)

This research has several limitations. *First*, the data used only focuses on the Minangkabau community group, especially the people in Lubuk Basung. So the results may not be fully generalized to all communities outside Minangkabau. *Second*, this research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The primary focus of this study is only on the social construction of the ideal wife (*material wife*) in a particular community, by taking data through interviews, observations, and documentation. (Ulfatun Nurul, 2022)

Based on initial observations of the study on August 12, 2024, it is known that *wife material* in the Minangkabau community in Nagari Lubuk Basung, Lubuk Basung District, Agam Regency, is greatly influenced by the concept of Bundo Kanduang, which is the figure of a mother or woman who is an example in maintaining family harmony and customs. In the view of the Minangkabau people, a woman who is considered a *material wife* must be able to carry out the role of a wise, loving mother and maintain the honor and dignity of the family. In addition, Bundo Kanduang is also seen as a strong household manager who can carry out domestic tasks well and plays a role in educating children with strong traditional and religious values. Quality is one of the critical measures in assessing whether a woman is worthy of being chosen as a life partner in Minangkabau society.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which allows researchers to gain an in – depth understanding of the phenomenon, which aims to facilitate information about the topic to be studied. Data will be collected through various in – depth interview data collection techniques, observation, and documentation. The location and time of the research are activities carried out by the researcher, starting from the beginning, and also when the research ends. The place and time of the study are helpful in limiting the time of the variables. The researcher chose the location of the survey in Nagari Lubuk Basung, Lubuk Basung District, Agam Regency, because this location is a cultural context that upholds the customs and material norms of Bundo kanduang to provide unique insights into how local cultural values affect the perception of being the future wife of the dream. So it is interesting for researchers to raise the problem of the social construction of *material wives* in Minangkabau society.

The selection of the research location in Nagari Lubuk Basung, Lubuk Basung District, Agam Regency, was carried out methodologically because this area is one of the areas that still firmly practices Minangkabau customs, especially the matrilineal system, which is closely related to the role of Bundo Kanduang. This provides a unique and relevant cultural context to examine how local values affect the social construction of the role of wives in Minangkabau society. By choosing this location, researchers can obtain more specific and contextual data with the focus of the study.

Observation known as observation is a human daily activity that involves the use of the five senses, especially sight, but also involves other senses such as hearing, smell, feeling and touch. Observation allows a person to gather information by observing behavior, situations or events directly. The observation method is a way to collect research data where the data can be observed by researchers. Observations not only reinforce and complement the data obtained from interviews, but also provide in – depth insights that are not achieved through interviews. In this study, the author used participant observation techniques. This observation is an observation that places the author as a spectator or witness in an event that is the topic of research. In this observation, the author only sees and listens without actively participating in the activities carried out by the community. (Hanani, 2020)

The Concept of Social Construction

Social construction has a very broad meaning in the social sciences. It is usually related to social influences in an individual's life experience. The basic assumption that

"reality is a social construct" is Barger and Luckmann's. Social construction is also a statement of belief (*a claim*) and a viewpoint that the content of consciousness, and how to relate to others, is taught by culture and society. Meanwhile, according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, social construction is defined as the arrangement (model, layout) of a building or the arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence or group of words. Peter L Berger is the main actor in a theory of social construction who says in his book *entitled "The Social Construct Of Reality"* that reality is socially constructed when a person or group interacts together in a social system. Individuals and society are formed in a process of interaction that is always continuous. Society is not only a product of interaction between individuals but can also influence individual behavior in it. (Bager, Petter L dan Lucman, 1966)

Social construction has a comprehensive meaning in the social sciences. It is usually related to the social influence in the life experience of an individual. A person can be said to have some powerful strengths, which play a crucial role in the centralization of language and provide a very concrete mechanism by which culture influences thoughts and behaviors in an individual. Social constructs can also represent the complexity of a single culture that assumes uniformity. It is also consistent with society and time. Social construction is a statement of belief and also a point of view that there is a content of awareness about how to relate to other human beings, and it results from the study of culture and society. In other words, social consciousness reflects how our view of the world and our social relationships are shaped through processes of social interaction, communication, and collective understanding in a particular cultural context. This concept emphasizes that social reality, such as societal norms, values, and structures, is not something fixed or natural, but the result of dynamic and continuous social processes that occur within the social environment.

Concept of Wife Material

In Indonesian, the meaning of a *material wife* is better known as the ideal wife. This term is used to describe women who have qualities that are considered good to be a wife. Wife *material* does not have an absolute and standard definition. Every man has his own criteria in choosing a future wife. In general, *wife material* is associated with several positive traits and characteristics that a wife is expected to have. These traits and characteristics are not only limited to attractive physical appearance and good cooking skills, but also include personality, communication, and commitment in the household. A *material wife* is an ideal woman to be used as a wife. A woman must have qualities and characteristics that are considered necessary in building a harmonious and stable long-term relationship. The characteristics of a *material wife* often include maturity, wisdom, and the ability to face various challenges in life, together with understanding and support. In addition, a woman usually shows a caring attitude, loyalty, and commitment to her family and partner, which makes her a good choice to build a future together. (Komariddun, 2024)

Becoming a dream wife for a husband is the dream of every woman. The ideal wife for a husband is a woman who is noble and pious in the eyes of Allah SWT. Therefore, wives must be able to carry out their roles well by carrying out their obligations as wives according to Islamic teachings, where their presence must be able to make the atmosphere of the house peaceful, safe, and comfortable. So that the ideal wife is a wife who is true in faith, simple, patient, faithful, maintains her honor, and maintains her household in difficult and happy times, and also invites her family to praise Allah SWT.

The characteristics of women in the custom consist of hatred and affection. *First*, the nature of hatred of the traditional proverb says *"Beautiful speech but not pleasant to hear, good but not accepted, spoon big but not picked, chopsticks big but can't shoot, big bar but no one passes, big pot but empty, big clench but can't reach, big pocket but shameless, good head knows how to place himself, bad head is wrong in taking"* This saying illustrates, goodness will arise and be achieved with precision, diligence, thought, and careful consideration. Meanwhile, misfortune or failure and destitution occur by the nature of hasty, carelessness, without consideration, and lack of maturity. The nature of hatred referred to here is that in the human soul, there are already seeds for hostility, or the potential for hatred, revenge, and hurt. This is because humans have feelings and lust. If these seeds of hatred and resentment can be maintained and nurtured and defeated with the water of faith, then all these bad potentials will not be able to live and develop in the human soul.

Second, an Affectionate nature. A woman who bears the title of "Bundo Kanduang" must protect herself with a beloved nature. Being good at adapting to humans in all situations, not excessive and not diminished. Good at taking care of other people's feelings, good at appreciating friends, humble, sweet, and likable speech, good looking, polite, shy and reluctant, sensitive to emotions and situations, good at advising and receiving advice, if reprimanding does not hurt, if telling does not offend. Good at surviving in the midst of difficulties, wise in facing problems, able to take a middle path in accordance with customs and politeness, both behavior when sitting and standing, when eating and drinking, all limbs are used as they should be (with manners), like to uphold the orders of the king (leader), love customs and religion, follow the teachings of Allah through the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet, as well as faith and Islam. However, if a life does not accompany all of this in accordance with religious rules, no matter how much knowledge and knowledge one has — even though it is like a star scattered in the sky and as wide as an endless ocean — all of it means nothing, if it is not accompanied by faith in Allah SWT, love for the Prophet, and love and respect for Mother and Father.

If the customs in Minangkabau are known to be just lightning without delving into the true essence, then they cannot be used for the needs of life. But if it can be deepened and practiced through behavior, then it is a teaching that can achieve the purpose of life well. With various situations and conditions that are passed through and cultural influences that come from outside, Minangkabau customs have been forgotten by many Minang people themselves. So that sometimes others know more about the goodness contained in the Minang Traditional teachings than the Minangkabau people themselves. Because so far there has been a lack of guidance and development of customs in the community, so many people do not understand the pearls stored in it. Minangkabau customs contain a philosophy of life that is expressed in sentences that generally contain figurative words, which contain explicit and implicit meanings.

To be able to know the teachings of the custom, as well as to be useful for life in this society, it is not enough to memorize the rules, such as the saying *petitih*, without delving into the meaning and significance contained in it. (Jamil, 2016) "Allah said: "Indeed, your request has been granted, so stay on the straight path and do not follow the path of those who do not know." (Q.S. Yunus: 89) So stick to the right path, as it has been commanded to you and those who have repented with you, and do not go beyond the limit. Indeed, He is All-Seeing of what you do. "Then, we made you above a shari'ah (rule) of the affairs (of the religion), so that is the sharia, and do not follow the lusts of those who do not know. (Q.S. Al-Jassiah:18)

With the demikan, Bundo Kanduang, and the Minangkabau people must continue to implement the teachings of Islamic sharia and practice the customary rules that apply in the Minangkabau community. In order to create a community environment that holds the teachings of Islam and Minangkabau Customs, it has been designed as well as possible. It can be used as a handle in the daily life of the Minangkabau people.

The Role of Traditional Leaders in Constructing Wife Material

The role of traditional leaders in constructing *wife life* has a critical position in maintaining the sustainability and relevance of Minangkabau cultural values. As community leaders who have authority in terms of customs and traditions, traditional leaders play a central role in shaping society's views on the criteria for women who are considered ideal as future wives. The social construction regarding *material wives* not only refers to traditional values, such as domestic ability and maintaining domestic harmony, but also has to adapt to the dynamics of the growing times, including the importance of women's education, career, and independence in modern society. Traditional leaders, such as Niniak Mamak, with their authority, play a key role in balancing the preservation of customs and traditions with the demands of changing times. They are not only the guardians of long-standing values, but also facilitators who encourage society to accept and accommodate the increasingly complex roles of women in social and economic life.

In addition to playing a role in constructing *material wives*, Niniak Mamak also had a big role in deciding on marriage in Nagari Lubuk Basung. As a respected traditional figure and authority in society, Niniak Mamak functions as a mediator and advisor in the process of finding a life partner, both for men and women. Niniak Mamak's contribution to marriage can be seen through the process of issuing ANA (Customary Marriage Deed), which is prepared based on customary provisions that apply in the community. This deed is then supplemented by an Official Marriage Certificate issued by the KUA office, as a form of legalization of marriage by the State. Thus, Niniak Mamak ensures that marriage is not only carried out formally, but also in line with cultural norms that respect the balance between religion, state, and custom. (Asmara, 2024)

In this case, the social construction of *material wives* becomes more inclusive, namely open, where women are expected not only to master domestic skills such as cooking and housekeeping, but also to develop themselves through good education, careers, and even running their own businesses. The existence of Niniak Mamak in every stage of marriage is a guarantee that the marriage is not only carried out formally, but also in line with cultural norms that respect the balance between religion, state, and customs. This reflects the importance of the role of customs, in preserving the cultural values of the Minangkabau, where each marriage is not only considered as a personal relationship, but also as a social bond that affects the community as a whole. Through the participation of Niniak Mamak, marriage in Nagari Lubuk Basung, and generally in Minangkabau society, becomes a structured and meaningful process, which not only binds two individuals, but also strengthens the social and cultural bonds within the community. Thus, the role of Niniak Mamak in marriage shows how important it is to harmonize between personal life, social values, and customary norms that continue to be preserved and respected by the next generation. (Syahrinal, 2024)

Wife Material in Minangkabau Society

In the midst of the life of the Minangkabau people, the concept of a *material wife* is also influenced by customary norms and religious teachings that are very thick. As a society that adheres to the matrilineal system, the position of women in the family and society is highly respected. Still, the expectation to become a *material wife* or the

expectation to become a woman who is considered ideal as a future wife in a particular culture or society is very diverse in a series of criteria, both in social, economic, and cultural aspects. Women who are considered ideal as future wives in the eyes of the Minangkabau people are not only judged by their ability to maintain family dignity, educate children, and maintain good relations with extended families. (Ikrar, 2021)

As the times develop into modern times, the concept of being a *material wife* has also changed. If in the past values such as the ability to cook, take care of the household, and maintain family dignity were highly emphasized, now many people are starting to see *material wives* from a broader range of perspectives. Aspects such as education, independence, finance, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt to social and technological changes are also essential factors in the assessment of women who are considered ideal as future wives. In the midst of this modern era, expectations of a woman as a *material wife* are growing, reflecting the changing dynamics of gender roles and more complex social demands on women. (Wita, 2024)

In contrast to the old days, where the criteria for a wife of a *material wife* were more focused on domestic skills, such as cooking, taking care of the household, and taking care of the family. Now, in this modern era, the view of women and their role in the family and society has changed significantly. In this day and age, women are expected not only to master domestic skills but also to have a good education, the ability to work, and even the ability to run their own businesses, which allows them to be independent and contribute to the economic aspects of the family. Along with the development of the times and increasingly rapid social changes, women have the opportunity to balance the domestic role that has become a tradition with the achievements in the field of education and professional careers that women want in their lives. (Atikah, 2015)

The shift in the role of women in Minangkabau society is very felt, especially in terms of choosing a life partner. In the past, the main criteria in the selection of life partners were greatly influenced by strong customs and traditions, where women were more judged based on their ability to carry out domestic roles and conformity with existing cultural values. However, along with the times, women are increasingly given space to pursue education and careers, which has also changed the view of the criteria for choosing a life partner. Today's women are not only measured by domestic ability, but also by their understanding of the outside world, the development of science, and the ability to adapt to the increasingly rapid progress of the times. (Yolanda, 2025)

Masyarakat Nagari Lubuk Basung sendiri dalam menentukan *wife material* dilihat dari kriteria yang layak menjadi seorang istri, yang mencakup berbagai aspek baik fisik, material, maupun sosial. Kriteria tersebut antara lain, mencakup kemampuan dalam menjalankan peran domestik, seperti merawat rumah tangga dan mendidik anak-anak dengan penuh kasih sayang. Selain itu, perempuan yang dianggap ideal juga diharapkan memiliki kepribadian yang baik, seperti sabar, jujur, dan bijaksana, serta mampu menjaga hubungan yang harmonis dengan keluarga besar. Secara keseluruhan, masyarakat Lubuk Basung menilai *wife material* sebagai sosok yang tidak hanya mampu memenuhi kewajiban dalam keluarga, tetapi juga memiliki kriteria yang dapat mendukung kelangsungan hidup bersama dalam jangka panjang.

Wife Material based on a Religious Perspective

The Religious Criteria in Minangkabau society reflect a woman's understanding of the teachings of Islam, which is not only limited to ritual worship, but also includes the moral, social, and customary values that bind the community. One of the main criteria is the ability to read Al – Fatihah correctly, which is considered a basic form of understanding

of the teachings of Islam. Al – Fatihah, as the first surah in the Qur'an, has a vital role in the worship of Salat, seen as an essential indicator in assessing the extent to which a person understands and appreciates the teachings of religion in depth. (Muhammad, 2022)

A woman who is considered a *material wife* in Minangkabau society is not only seen from her physical beauty or ability to take care of the household, but also from the depth of understanding and practice of Islamic teachings, where the ability to read Al – Fatihah correctly becomes a symbol of basic mastery in worship. In addition, this criterion also shows that the ideal wife – to – be is expected to be able to maintain spiritual values in daily life, provide an example in religious practice, and teach and guide family members, especially children, to understand and practice religious teachings well in the family. (Handani, 2025)

This is very important in Minangkabau society, where the role of an *isti* is not only limited to domestic affairs, but also as the leading educator in the family, who is expected to instill religious values in children and other family members. As a woman who is expected to be a "*material wife*", the ability to integrate Islamic teachings in daily life, including in religious education to children, is the leading benchmark. In addition, a wife is expected to create a supportive atmosphere for worship and the practice of Islamic religious teachings in the household. Al – Fatihah, as a recitation that is very often chanted in Salat, is the basis for building strong spiritual relationships between family members, by having a good understanding of religion, mainly as reflected in the ability to read and appreciate Al – Fatihah. Thus, a woman is expected to be able to carry out her role with full responsibility and guide her husband and children to carry out worship and maintain harmony in the household in accordance with Islamic teachings. (Wita, 2024)

Peter L. Berger's Social Construction Theory

The social construction of the Minangkabau community in Nagari Lubuk Basung is the result of the interaction between customary, religious, and cultural values that have been established for centuries. In this Nagari, the matrilineal system, which is characteristic of the Minangkabau people, is still maintained, where the lineage and inheritance of property are passed down through the mother's side. This creates a social structure that prioritizes women's role in estate management and critical decision – making in families and communities. It is often known as a form of culture rather than as a form of state that has existed in history. (Bachtiar, 2021)

The name Minangkabau comes from the word Minang, which means to win, and Kabau, which means buffalo. The history that is often associated with this name is the legend of the fight between the buffalo and the tiger, where the buffalo is considered to have won the fight. This story became a symbol of courage and strength, which was later adopted as a name to describe the spirit and character of the Minangkabau people. The Minangkabau people form a family through the female lineage, which is called matrilineal, based on their blood relationship. This family system is what makes the Minangkabau tribe different from other ethnic groups. With this system, the Minangkabau people have provided the best place for women in the family environment. Women in Minangkabau society are called Bondo Kandung, who are given strong authority in managing Rumah Gadang.

In the analysis of the social construction of material women in Minangkabau, Peter L. Berger's theory of the social construction of reality can provide a deep understanding of how social values and norms are formed and accepted in society. Based on Barger's theory, this social construction is the result of an internalization process in which women,

from an early age, are raised to fulfill roles determined by social and cultural structures. In theory, Peter L. Barger explains that social construction through the process is:

a. Internalization and Externalization

Barger's theory found that social reality is formed through the process of internalization, which is the absorption of social values in individuals. In Minangkabau society, women are raised with the expectation of being an ideal wife, which includes domestic skills (cooking, housekeeping, and maintaining family harmony) as well as social skills (communicating politely, maintaining relationships with extended family and society). These values are then internalized in women, which makes them part of their identity and role in the family and society.

b. Objectification of Social Norms

In Berger's theory, objectification refers to the process by which internalized values become something that is considered objective and accepted by society as a truth. In this case, the quality of *the material wife* becomes a "social reality" that is regarded as a standard by the Minangkabau people. Criteria such as domestic skills, understanding of customs, and the ability to maintain domestic harmony and social relations are seen as objective and unquestionable. The Minangkabau people, through customs and social norms, have made the quality of a woman as a *material wife* an inseparable part of the identity of women in the community. Therefore, a woman who does not meet these criteria may be considered incompatible with the expected social role, even though the changing times have provided greater room for women to develop in their careers and education.

c. The Role of Media and Social Renewal

Barger also explained that social construction can be influenced by the media and social change. In the Minangkabau context, despite the pressure to maintain traditional traditions and values, global media and influences are also beginning to influence people's perspectives on *material wife*. In an increasingly modern world, Minangkabau women began to have the opportunity to pursue education and careers outside the home, which later helped change the definition of a *material wife*. This concept began to transform to include women who were independent, educated, and career-independent, while still maintaining their essential role in the family. (Berger dan Luckman, 1996)

So women must try to fight for whatever dreams they have by following customary, religious, and social rules that apply in the community. These guidelines will affect a woman's process in achieving all kinds of her desires in a good and correct way. It must also be in accordance with the applicable rules and not violate the existing rules because these rules are agreements that have been passed down from generation to generation within the Minangkabau community.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the social construction of *material wives* in Minangkabau, especially in Lubuk Basung, it can be concluded that the role of women in society is shaped by traditional values and very thick social norms. The social construction of *material wives* not only prioritizes women's domestic abilities, such as cooking, taking care of the household, and meeting the emotional needs of their partners, but also requires women to understand and practice applicable traditional values, such as the 3K principle (being good at the kitchen, well, and mattress) and wise communication skills in integrating with extended families and society. The role of women in Minangkabau

society is also increasingly expanded with the demand to have a good education and a career that can support family welfare.

In the society in Lubuk Basung, although domestic roles are still valued, women are also expected to have additional skills and be able to adapt to the demands of the times. Therefore, the combination of domestic roles, education, and career is the key to creating ideal and respected women as *material wafi* in the modern context. The concept of *wife material* in Lubuk Basung suggests a balance between maintaining tradition and providing space for women to develop in terms of education and professionalism. Thus, women are not only seen as housekeepers, but also as independent, educated, and active individuals in building society and improving the family economy. This social construction continues to develop along with the changing times, but still maintains the traditional values that are the basis for shaping the ideal Minangkabau female character.

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