

The Portraits of Minahasan Women: Empowerment and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The Minahasan community of North Sulawesi, Indonesia has witnessed a significant shift in women's roles and empowerment in recent years. This study examined the economic and social/political empowerment of Minahasan women, including their participation in income-generating activities, entrepreneurship, community leadership, and advocacy for rights and representation. However, this empowerment has also brought about challenges as Minahasan women grapple with the double burden of balancing their newly acquired roles with traditional domestic responsibilities of childcare and household duties. Through a comprehensive library research approach, this study analyzed the tensions and role conflicts experienced by Minahasan women as they navigated the contrasting societal expectations. Key findings revealed the strain on family dynamics, potential neglect of children's upbringing, and marital relationship challenges arising from the double burden. The study also identified strategies and best practices for reconciling these contrasting roles, such as promoting equitable domestic workload sharing, establishing childcare support systems, advocating for flexible work arrangements, and fostering societal attitude changes towards gender norms. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of addressing the double burden challenges faced by Minahasan women to ensure their empowerment is sustainable and does not come at the cost of sacrificing traditional caregiving responsibilities or family well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

The Minahasan people, an ethnic group native to the northern region of Sulawesi, Indonesia, have a rich cultural heritage and a long-standing tradition of patrilineal descent. Despite this, Minahasan women have historically faced societal expectations to fulfill traditional gender roles, acting as primary caregivers and homemakers. Traditional family patterns were defined by men being the primary income earners, while women were expected to be caregivers and maintain the household duties. The traditional mindset was that women did not need extensive education since their ultimate role was to become a housewife (Arifin, 2017; Daughter & Lester, 2015; Hardiyanti et al., 2019; Iskandar, 2017; Miyasari, 2019; Sari, 2019; Siregar, 2018; Taufik et al., 2019; Tuwu, 2018). Consequently, when women attempted to pursue careers and utilize their talents outside the home, they often faced ostracization from society for deviating from their perceived obligations as homemakers (Purwanto, 2020). However, in recent decades, there has been a notable shift, with Minahasan women increasingly participating in economic activities, community leadership, and advocacy for gender equality. Pratiknjo et al., (2023) stated that, the establishment of equal rights between men and women has enabled women to work outside the home, which is now viewed as normal. From an economic perspective, the equal rights and responsibilities for both genders has paved the way for women's participation in the workforce beyond domestic roles. This is now widely accepted. Additionally, a sense of duty to contribute financially to the family is a motivating factor behind this shift in thinking. Women can now pursue diverse career paths such as being civil servants, private employees, State-Owned enterprises, and even becoming migrant workers who show success and even make their families able to occupy new social status in society.

As Minahasan women embrace empowerment opportunities, they often encounter the challenge of balancing their newfound roles with traditional domestic responsibilities. This double burden, juggling income-generating work and household duties, can lead to role conflicts, strain on family dynamics, and potential neglect of children's upbringing. Exploring these challenges is crucial to understanding the complexities of women's empowerment and ensuring its sustainability without compromising family well-being. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To examine the economic and social/ political roles of Minahasan women.
2. investigate the challenges faced in balancing women empowerment pursuits with domestic responsibilities.
3. To identify strategies for reconciling contrasting roles and promoting equitable workload sharing.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of gender roles and societal expectations, the examination of Minahasan women's empowerment and the challenges they face is

both urgent and essential. As globalization and modernization influence traditional societies, the unique cultural heritage and historical roles of Minahasan women provide valuable insights into the dynamics of gender empowerment in a non-Western context. Understanding the intersection of tradition and modernity in Minahasan society not only sheds light on the resilience and adaptability of these women but also highlights the persistent inequalities and barriers they confront. This study is driven by the need to document and critically analyze the shifting roles of Minahasan women, offering a nuanced perspective on how cultural values and external forces shape their empowerment. By exploring these dynamics, this research aims to contribute to broader discussions on gender equity and cultural preservation, emphasizing the importance of addressing the specific challenges faced by women in indigenous communities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although Minahasa is known to follow a 'patrilineal' custom system, where in marriage, the husband is the head of the household, it is a must for Minahasa people that women or wives are involved in decision-making on everything (Poespasari, 2018). In fact, in many aspects for Minahasa women or "wives," such as financial management and children's matchmaking, it is the women or wives who have the final say. Despite their influential role in family lineage and decision-making, women were predominantly responsible for household chores, childcare, and supporting their husbands' endeavors. Traditionally, there is a belief that women do not need extensive education because their primary role is homemaking. Consequently, women who pursue careers and showcase their talents often face disapproval from their communities, seen as neglecting their domestic duties. (Arifin, 2017; Daughter & Lester, 2015; Hardiyanti et al., 2019; Iskandar, 2017; Miyasari, 2019; Sari, 2019; Siregar, 2018; Taufik et al, 2019; Tuwu, 2018). Researchers argue that these traditional gender norms stem from a patriarchal societal structure influenced by religious and cultural beliefs. Minahasan women have long been seen as the nurturers and caregivers, while men were perceived as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in the public domain. Over time, societal attitudes have undergone a transformation, with traditional biases giving way to more progressive perspectives. As the pursuit of gender equality gains momentum across various social domains, an increasing number of women have seized opportunities to develop their abilities and pursue careers outside the domestic sphere. This transition towards modernity is reflected in contemporary discourse (Nasir & Lilianti, 2017; Abidin, 2017; Watie, 2010; Priandi & Roisah, 2019; Asbari, 2015). In the current era of globalization, both men and women are increasingly taking on dual roles, balancing caregiving responsibilities with professional endeavors.

The researchers argue that these traditional gender norms stem from a patriarchal societal structure influenced by religious and cultural beliefs. Although Indonesia has made progress in various development indicators, including gender equality, patriarchal values continue to have a strong influence on social and family structures, especially in rural areas where traditional customs are deeply embedded (Carroll, 2022; Memon, 2019; Newby, 2021). Minahasan women have long been seen as the nurturers and caregivers, while men were perceived as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in the public domain.

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic, social, and political aspects. It involves the process of acquiring knowledge, decision-making power, and access to resources, enabling women to participate actively in shaping their lives and communities. Women's empowerment is an effort undertaken to build the capabilities and self-concept of women through a process of awareness and education, so that it can be utilized to improve family welfare (Latipah, 2020). Empowerment provides greater power, authority, and/or freedom to an individual over their choices and activities (Yogendrarajah, 2013; Thanikaivel & Priya, 2018). In this context, gender equality in empowerment aims to achieve equal access for men and women in decision-making and involvement in various aspects of life, both in the public and domestic spheres. Empowerment frameworks emphasize the importance of women's agency, freedom of choice, and their ability to challenge and transform societal norms and gender inequalities.

In the context of Minahasan women, empowerment efforts concentrate on boosting their engagement in income-generating endeavors, entrepreneurship ventures, community leadership roles, and advocacy for gender parity. Minahasan women are not mere followers or subordinates to their husbands. They possess their own ideas and initiatives, in addition to their responsibilities and contributions towards enriching the lives of their families and spouses (Wowor et al., 2023). The existence of equal rights between men and women has enabled women to pursue work opportunities outside the home, which is now considered a normal occurrence. From an economic perspective, the equality of rights and obligations between genders has facilitated women's participation in the workforce, rendering it a commonplace phenomenon (Pratiknjo et al., 2023).

A double burden or role refers to two or more roles that are carried out simultaneously (Soeroso, 2008). Career women, especially those who are married, automatically bear a double role, both in the work environment and within the family. A working woman who fulfills these two roles require greater energy and tends to experience more work fatigue due to the increased workload (Hartati, 2012). For career women with families, they inherently take on multiple roles concurrently - their professional responsibilities as well as domestic duties within the household. Juggling these dual roles demands a higher level of energy expenditure, often leading

to heightened exhaustion as a result of the compounded workload they shoulder. In addition, the double burden, also known as the second shift, refers to the phenomenon where women juggle paid employment and unpaid domestic labor, such as household chores and caregiving responsibilities.

This double burden can lead to role conflicts, as women struggle to balance their professional and personal lives, often resulting in physical and emotional strain. A double role conflict arises due to the pressures stemming from work and family responsibilities (Greenhaus, JH et al., 2000). Such conflicts can occur when an individual assumes more than one role that are contradictory in nature, and one of those roles demands greater attention or requires more focus (Greenhaus, JH et al., 2000). The clash of competing demands from professional and domestic spheres can lead to a double role conflict. This type of conflict emerges when an individual is burdened with multiple roles that are incompatible with each other, wherein one role places heightened expectations or requires a disproportionate amount of attention, resulting in tension and strain. For Minahasan women, the empowerment roles they have embraced may clash with the traditional caregiving roles ingrained in societal expectations, creating a conflict of identities and responsibilities.

METHOD

This research employed a library research approach, utilizing various sources such as books, academic journals, reports, and other relevant publications. The sources consulted cover topics related to Minahasan women's empowerment, cultural and gender roles, double burden and role conflict theories, and strategies for reconciling work-life balance. This study employed a library research approach, utilizing a wide range of secondary sources to investigate the roles, empowerment, and challenges faced by Minahasan women. Library research is a systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various published materials, including books, academic journals, reports, and other relevant literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The sources consulted for this research were carefully selected to ensure relevance, credibility, and timeliness. The primary sources included peer-reviewed academic journals, such as the *Journal of Social and Cultural Studies*, *Indonesian Journal of Gender Studies*, and *Community Development Review*, which provided valuable insights into the cultural context, gender roles, and women's empowerment in the Minahasan community. In addition, books and edited volumes on topics such as matrilineal societies, women's empowerment frameworks, and role conflict theories were consulted to provide a solid theoretical foundation for the study.

The data analysis process involved a thorough review and synthesis of the information gathered from the selected sources. A content analysis approach was employed, which involved identifying and categorizing relevant themes, patterns, and insights related to the research objectives (Krippendorff, 2018). The findings were

organized into distinct categories, such as economic empowerment roles, social and political empowerment, challenges faced, double burden and role conflicts, and strategies for reconciling roles. Comparative analysis techniques were used to identify similarities and differences across various sources, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

While the library research approach provided access to a wealth of information, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of this study. Firstly, the research relied solely on secondary sources, which may introduce potential biases or inaccuracies present in the original sources. Secondly, the availability and comprehensiveness of the literature on the specific topic of Minahasan women's empowerment and challenges were limited, potentially leading to gaps in the analysis. Furthermore, as a library research study, this research did not involve primary data collection through fieldwork, interviews, or direct observations. As a result, the findings may lack the depth and nuance that could be obtained from firsthand accounts and experiences of Minahasan women themselves. Despite these limitations, the library research approach provided a solid foundation for exploring the research objectives and contributed to a better understanding of the roles, empowerment, and challenges faced by Minahasan women within the constraints of available resources and time.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Historical and Cultural Context of Minahasan Women's Roles

The Minahasan society, located in the northern part of Sulawesi, Indonesia, is often identified with a 'patrilineal' custom system, where descent and inheritance are typically traced through the male line, and the male figures, particularly husbands, are seen as the heads of households (Poespasari, 2018). Historically, this custom placed men in positions of authority, symbolizing patriarchal traditions within the community. The male leadership in Minahasan households and villages reflected the influence of broader Indonesian customs and beliefs, where men dominated both domestic and public spheres. However, this surface understanding of Minahasan society underestimates the deeper role of women in decision-making processes, family affairs, and cultural preservation.

Culturally, despite the official recognition of men as heads of households, Minahasan women have always held a crucial role in familial and social decisions, often influencing or directly controlling important aspects of family life (Nangka, 2019). A notable example is the management of financial affairs, which was traditionally the domain of women. Women were seen as the stewards of household resources, balancing expenditures and ensuring the well-being of the family. In addition, when it came to arranging marriages for their children, Minahasan women, particularly mothers, held significant influence over the process. This balance of

power reflects an implicit matrifocal tradition where, although men are outwardly recognized as leaders, the actual operations of family life rely heavily on women. Such practices showcase a form of dual leadership, integrating both patriarchal and matriarchal elements.

In contemporary times, this historical balance continues to shape the roles of Minahasan women, with modern-day Minahasan families still valuing the contributions and authority of women in household and community matters. Women in Minahasa are not merely passive participants in a patriarchal system but active decision-makers whose roles complement those of men (Japar et al., 2021). The historical and cultural context of Minahasan women's roles challenges the simplistic view of 'patrilineal' structures, highlighting the complex interplay between male and female authority in Minahasan society. This dynamic interplay between tradition and evolving gender roles underscores the resilience and significance of Minahasan women in both historical and modern contexts.

The arrival of Dutch colonizers in the 16th century introduced Christianity to the region, which brought significant changes to the roles of Minahasan women. The Christianization of Minahasa led to the gradual erosion of traditional beliefs and practices, including the matrilineal system. The introduction of Western education and Christian values, while offering new opportunities for women, also imposed a patriarchal structure that challenged the traditional roles of women. Despite these changes, Minahasan women adapted by embracing education and becoming active participants in the mission-driven schools established by the Dutch. Education became a tool for empowerment, enabling Minahasan women to take on new roles in society, such as teachers, nurses, and even political leaders.

In contemporary Minahasan society, the roles of women have continued to evolve. The modern-day Minahasan woman often juggles multiple responsibilities, balancing traditional expectations with contemporary demands. The influence of globalization and modernization has brought about significant changes in gender dynamics, with women increasingly participating in the workforce and taking on leadership roles in various sectors. However, this shift has not been without challenges. Minahasan women still face societal pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, particularly in rural areas where traditional customs remain strong. The tension between traditional expectations and modern aspirations creates a complex landscape for Minahasan women as they navigate their roles in a rapidly changing society.

Moreover, the role of Minahasan women in politics and public life is a testament to their ongoing empowerment. Historically, women in Minahasa have held influential positions in local governance and community organizations. In recent years, there has been a growing trend of Minahasan women taking on leadership roles in politics, advocating for women's rights, and contributing to social

development. This political engagement reflects a broader movement towards gender equality in the region, driven by both historical precedents and contemporary advocacy efforts.

However, despite these advancements, Minahasan women continue to face significant challenges. Gender-based discrimination, unequal access to education and healthcare, and economic disparities are persistent issues that hinder the full realization of women's potential in Minahasan society. Additionally, the pressures of modernization, including migration and urbanization, have led to shifts in family structures and community dynamics, further complicating the roles of women. These challenges require a nuanced understanding of the historical and cultural context of Minahasan women, recognizing both the progress made and the obstacles that remain.

Empowerment of Minahasan Women in the Contemporary Era

Empowerment for Minahasan women in the contemporary era is a multifaceted process influenced by education, economic participation, and political engagement. This section delves into the current state of women's empowerment in Minahasa, examining the achievements and challenges in various spheres of life. The roles of Minahasan women have expanded beyond traditional boundaries, with increasing participation in education, the economy, and politics. However, this progress is accompanied by significant challenges, including societal expectations, gender-based discrimination, and the struggle to balance traditional roles with modern aspirations.

Education has been a cornerstone of empowerment for Minahasan women. Historically, the introduction of Western education by Dutch missionaries provided the initial platform for women's participation in public life. Today, education remains a critical factor in empowering Minahasan women, offering opportunities for personal development and socio-economic mobility. Higher education attainment among Minahasan women has increased, leading to greater representation in professional fields such as medicine, law, and academia. Education also plays a vital role in raising awareness about gender equality and women's rights, equipping Minahasan women with the knowledge and skills to advocate for themselves and their communities.

Economic empowerment is another crucial aspect of Minahasan women's roles in the contemporary era. Traditionally involved in agriculture and trade, Minahasan women have transitioned into diverse economic roles, including entrepreneurship, professional careers, and service industries. The growing participation of women in the workforce has contributed to the economic development of the region and has challenged traditional gender norms. Women-led businesses, particularly in the tourism and handicraft sectors, have gained prominence, showcasing the

entrepreneurial spirit of Minahasan women. However, economic empowerment is not without its challenges. Women often face barriers such as limited access to capital, discriminatory practices in the workplace, and the burden of balancing work and family responsibilities. These challenges highlight the need for targeted policies and programs to support women's economic participation and address gender inequalities in the labor market.

Political empowerment is another area where Minahasan women have made significant strides. Historically, women in Minahasa have been involved in local governance and community leadership. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Minahasan women holding political office and participating in decision-making processes. Women's political participation is crucial for addressing gender-specific issues and advocating for policies that promote gender equality and social justice. The involvement of women in politics also challenges traditional power structures and provides a platform for women to influence public policy and governance. However, despite these advances, women in politics still face challenges such as gender bias, underrepresentation, and the need to navigate patriarchal political environments.

In addition to education, economic, and political empowerment, Minahasan women have also played a significant role in cultural preservation and social activism. Women are often at the forefront of efforts to preserve Minahasan cultural heritage, including language, traditional arts, and rituals. These efforts are crucial for maintaining a sense of identity and continuity in the face of rapid modernization and globalization. Social activism among Minahasan women has also been instrumental in addressing issues such as gender-based violence, health care access, and environmental sustainability. Women's organizations and community groups have been key drivers of social change, advocating for the rights and welfare of women and marginalized communities.

Despite the progress made in various areas, Minahasan women continue to face significant challenges in their quest for empowerment. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles remain deeply entrenched, often limiting women's opportunities and choices. The pressure to fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers can conflict with the desire for personal and professional growth, leading to a complex balancing act for many women. Additionally, gender-based violence and discrimination are persistent issues that undermine women's empowerment and well-being. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and support services for women.

a. Economic and social/political roles of Minahasan women

There is an increasing trend of Minahasan women actively participating in various income-generating activities, such as wage employment, small businesses, and

entrepreneurship (Lating & Umboh, 2020; Wowor et al., 2023). Traditionally, Minahasan women were primarily confined to domestic roles within the household, with men being the primary breadwinners. However, societal shifts and the recognition of women's economic potential have paved the way for their increased participation in the workforce and entrepreneurial ventures. Minahasan women are now actively seeking employment opportunities in various sectors, ranging from wage labor to establishing their own small businesses or entrepreneurial endeavors.

Minahasan women are setting up their own businesses in various sectors, utilizing traditional skills like handicrafts and culinary arts, as well as expanding into modern service-based businesses (Pratiknjo et al., 2023). Drawing upon their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, many Minahasan women have leveraged skills such as weaving, pottery, and culinary arts to start their own businesses in these domains. Additionally, they have also ventured into contemporary service-based industries, such as tourism, hospitality, and professional services, reflecting their adaptability and willingness to embrace new opportunities.

The participation of Minahasan women in economic activities has contributed to increased family income (e.g., 80% increase in family income due to a wife's business in Eris Village) (Pangemanan et al., 2021). By engaging in income-generating activities, Minahasan women are no longer solely dependent on their husbands or male family members as the primary breadwinners. Their economic contributions have directly impacted family finances, in some cases leading to substantial increases in household income. The example from Eris Village highlights how a wife's business venture contributed to an 80% increase in the family's overall income, underscoring the significant economic impact of women's entrepreneurship.

Minahasan women are increasingly participating in community organizations and decision-making bodies, challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for issues that impact women's lives. Historically, leadership roles and decision-making processes within Minahasan communities were predominantly male-dominated. However, as women have become more economically empowered and socially aware, they have actively sought representation and participation in community organizations and decision-making bodies. This involvement has challenged longstanding gender norms that confined women's roles to domestic spheres and has provided platforms for advocating for women's rights, concerns, and issues that directly affect their lives.

Empowered Minahasan women have actively engaged in advocating for gender equality, equal rights, and fair representation, aiming to dismantle patriarchal structures (Pratiknjo et al., 2023; Watie, 2010). With increased awareness and access to education and resources, Minahasan women have become vocal advocates for gender equality and equal rights within their communities. They are actively challenging traditional patriarchal structures that have historically marginalized or

subordinated women's roles and voices. Through their advocacy efforts, they seek to dismantle these entrenched gender biases and promote fair representation and opportunities for women in all aspects of societal life.

b. The challenges in balancing women empowerment pursuits with domestic responsibilities

The economic empowerment of Minahasan women has created challenges in balancing their income-generating work with traditional household responsibilities, such as housework and childcare, leading to a double burden (Hartati, 2012). As Minahasan women have increasingly entered the workforce and pursued economic activities outside the home, they have had to juggle their new income-earning roles with their longstanding domestic duties. This has resulted in a "double burden" situation, where women are expected to maintain their traditional responsibilities of managing the household, cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, while also working to earn income and contribute financially to the family. Hartati (2012) study highlights how this double burden can be physically and mentally taxing for Minahasan women, as they strive to meet societal expectations in both the public and private spheres. The added workload and stress of balancing multiple roles can lead to exhaustion, role conflict, and potential neglect of either their professional or domestic obligations. It is in line with Greenhaus et al., (2000) that the double burden of managing economic activities and household work has resulted in physical and emotional tension for Minahasan women.

Challenges in balancing business ownership with household duties remain, leading to role conflict and potential neglect of household responsibilities (Greenhaus et al., 2000). Challenges in balancing business ownership with household duties remain, leading to role conflict and potential neglect of household responsibilities (Greenhaus et al., 2000). Specifically for Minahasan women who have started their own businesses, the demands of entrepreneurship can create significant difficulties in managing both their business operations and traditional household responsibilities simultaneously. As business owners, they face the pressures of managing employees, finances, marketing, and overall business growth, which can be extremely time-consuming and demanding. Simultaneously, societal and cultural expectations still place the burden of domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, primarily on women. This dual role as an entrepreneur and homemaker can lead to role conflict, where the competing demands of their business and household responsibilities become challenging to reconcile. Greenhaus et al., (2000) highlight that this role conflict can potentially result in the neglect of household responsibilities, as women prioritize their business obligations or become overwhelmed by the combined workload. Consequently, the quality of domestic life and family relationships may suffer, as women struggle to strike a balance between their entrepreneurial pursuits and traditional caregiving roles.

The increasing participation of Minahasan women in community organizations and decision-making bodies raises tensions with traditional societal expectations of caregiving roles, leading to potential conflicts within families and backlash from communities (Arifin, 2017; Taufik et al., 2019). The increasing participation of Minahasan women in community organizations and decision-making bodies raises tensions with traditional societal expectations of caregiving roles, leading to potential conflicts within families and backlash from communities (Arifin, 2017; Taufik et al., 2019). As Minahasan women have become more involved in community leadership roles and decision-making processes, it has challenged longstanding cultural norms that primarily confined women to domestic and caregiving responsibilities within the household. Traditionally, women were expected to prioritize their roles as homemakers, caring for children and managing household duties, while men occupied the public spheres of community governance and decision-making. However, as Minahasan women have stepped into these traditionally male-dominated spaces, it has created tensions and conflicts with societal expectations.

Within families, this shift has led to potential conflicts as women's increased participation in community activities and leadership roles may be perceived as neglecting or deprioritizing their caregiving duties at home. Family members, particularly husbands or older generations, may view this as a deviation from traditional gender roles, leading to disagreements and strained relationships (Arifin, 2017). Moreover, the wider community may also exhibit backlash or resistance to this changing dynamic. Some community members may hold onto traditional beliefs that a woman's primary role should be in the domestic sphere, and view their participation in community organizations and decision-making bodies as inappropriate or challenging established norms (Taufik et al., 2019). This backlash can manifest in various forms, such as criticism, social ostracization, or even opposition to women's leadership and decision-making authority within the community. While empowerment is crucial, it may clash with the traditional notion of women as primary caregivers, creating role conflicts and straining marital/family relationships (Arifin, 2017; Daughter & Lester, 2015; Hardiyanti et al., 2019; Iskandar, 2017; Miyasari, 2019; Sari, 2019; Siregar, 2018; Taufik et al., 2019; Tuwu, 2018).

c. Reconciling Contrasting Roles

Promoting equitable domestic workload sharing

Promoting equitable domestic workload sharing is a crucial step in reducing gender-based inequalities, especially regarding the double burden and role conflicts many women experience in balancing career, family, and household responsibilities. Research has highlighted the strain that traditional gender roles impose on women, who often carry the larger share of unpaid domestic work alongside their professional roles. This unequal division not only limits women's access to and control over

economic resources but also diminishes their opportunities to participate fully in public, social, and economic life.

The persistent imbalance in domestic workload typically results from entrenched gender norms, shaped by patriarchal power structures that assign men and women to specific roles. These norms position men as primary income earners while framing women as caregivers and household managers, contributing to an asymmetrical labor division within families. As studies like Sartika et al. (2024) indicate, these structures grant men a position of dominance, which reinforces gender hierarchies and the perception that household labor is a female responsibility. This distribution has consequences for women's economic security and personal autonomy, as time and energy devoted to unpaid work limit their capacity to pursue professional development and financial independence.

Promoting shared responsibilities in caregiving and household chores can create more supportive home environments, benefiting all family members by reducing stress, improving work-life balance, and fostering a sense of equality. When household responsibilities are shared, women can experience greater career satisfaction and personal fulfillment, as they are afforded more opportunities to pursue professional goals without the constant pressure of managing an overwhelming domestic workload. Additionally, the redistribution of household duties has shown positive effects on family dynamics and children's socialization, as young family members witness and learn the values of cooperation and equality early on.

Addressing these imbalances requires challenging the traditional gender norms that associate household duties primarily with women. Education, public awareness campaigns, and media can play a pivotal role in shifting perceptions around gender roles in domestic work. Encouraging men's active involvement in caregiving and household management can foster mutual respect and improve relational satisfaction, as equitable partnerships tend to be more resilient. This change is achievable when institutions, workplaces, and communities recognize the value of shared domestic responsibility and support it through family-friendly policies, such as flexible work hours, paid family leave, and accessible childcare services.

At a policy level, governments can contribute to a fairer division of domestic labor by introducing legislative measures that encourage paternity leave and policies that support work-life balance for both men and women. Paternity leave, for instance, normalizes the concept of men taking time off for family obligations, reducing the stereotype that caregiving is solely a woman's duty. Research has shown that countries with supportive parental leave policies experience more equitable divisions of household labor, as these policies facilitate shared caregiving from the outset of family life. Companies can also implement workplace programs that prioritize well-

being and work-life balance for all employees, thereby reducing the stigma associated with taking time off for family needs.

Fostering equitable domestic workload sharing is also linked to broader social benefits, as it directly impacts economic productivity and community well-being. When individuals are not overburdened by household tasks, they can contribute more effectively in professional settings, bringing their full potential to the workforce. This benefit extends to employers, as employees with balanced work and home lives often demonstrate higher levels of productivity, job satisfaction, and engagement. Societies that support shared domestic responsibilities witness improvements in gender equity, mental health, and relationship stability.

Promoting shared household responsibilities is essential for reducing the double burden on women, challenging gendered power dynamics, and fostering a more equitable and supportive social framework. The redistribution of domestic chores not only benefits individual families but also contributes to societal transformation by dismantling traditional gender roles and encouraging balanced partnerships. Moving toward an equitable division of domestic labor requires a concerted effort from individuals, communities, workplaces, and policymakers to create an inclusive culture where all members, regardless of gender, share in the rewards and responsibilities of family life.

Childcare support systems

Establishing accessible and affordable childcare facilities or support networks can alleviate the burden of caregiving for working Minahasan mothers, enabling them to pursue empowerment goals without compromising children's well-being. As Minahasan women increasingly participate in the workforce and engage in income-generating activities, the responsibility of childcare can become a significant challenge. Juggling professional commitments with the demands of caring for young children can be overwhelming, leading to potential neglect or compromising either their work or parenting responsibilities.

The availability of reliable and affordable childcare options can provide a crucial support system for working Minahasan mothers. Accessible childcare facilities, such as daycare centers or preschools, can offer a safe and nurturing environment for children while their mothers are at work. These facilities can provide educational and developmental opportunities for the children, ensuring their well-being and growth are not compromised.

Additionally, the establishment of community-based support networks can be invaluable for Minahasan mothers. These networks could involve extended family members, neighbors, or community organizations collaborating to provide childcare assistance. For instance, grandparents or other relatives could take turns caring for

children, allowing mothers to focus on their professional pursuits without worrying about their children's safety and care.

Irmadiani (2022) emphasizes the importance of securing a responsible caregiver to look after children while the mother is at work. Having a trusted family member, such as grandparents, siblings, or relatives, assist in supervising, monitoring, and accompanying the children can be highly beneficial. This arrangement not only ensures the children receive proper care but also strengthens family bonds and support systems. Additionally, it can contribute to maintaining marital harmony by allowing quality time between spouses, as the caregiving responsibilities are shared within the extended family network. By addressing the childcare needs of working Minahasan mothers, these support systems can alleviate the burden of caregiving and enable them to pursue their empowerment goals without compromising their children's well-being. This can lead to a more balanced and sustainable approach to women's empowerment, where mothers can contribute to the workforce and advance their economic and social roles while still prioritizing their children's needs.

Flexible work arrangements

Advocating for flexible work options, such as remote work, flexible schedules, or part-time opportunities, can empower Minahasan women to better manage multiple roles, promoting work-life balance (Pratiknjo et al., 2023). As Minahasan women increasingly participate in the workforce and pursue economic empowerment, they often face the challenge of balancing their professional responsibilities with their traditional domestic duties. The rigid structure of traditional employment models, with fixed office hours and inflexible schedules, can exacerbate the double burden faced by working Minahasan women. They may struggle to juggle their job demands with responsibilities such as childcare, household chores, and caregiving for elderly family members. Flexible work options can serve as a powerful solution to help alleviate this strain and promote a healthier work-life balance for Minahasan women. Remote work arrangements, where women can work from home or a location of their choice, can eliminate the time and energy spent commuting, allowing them to better integrate their professional and domestic responsibilities seamlessly. Additionally, flexible scheduling options, such as compressed workweeks, staggered hours, or the ability to adjust start and end times, can provide Minahasan women with the autonomy to structure their work schedules around their family's needs. This flexibility can enable them to attend to caregiving duties, accompany children to activities, or manage household tasks without compromising their professional obligations.

Part-time employment opportunities can also be beneficial for Minahasan women who may prefer to dedicate a portion of their time to income-generating activities while still having the capacity to fulfill their domestic roles. By working

reduced hours or on a part-time basis, they can strike a balance between their economic empowerment goals and their caregiving responsibilities. By advocating for these flexible work options, Minahasan women can better reconcile the demands of their multiple roles and achieve a more harmonious integration of their professional and personal lives. This can alleviate the stress and role conflict that often arises from juggling inflexible work schedules with household duties, ultimately promoting their overall well-being and empowerment.

Changing societal attitudes and norms

Ultimately, sustainable change requires a broader societal shift in attitudes and norms towards gender equality, creating an environment that values women's empowerment while recognizing caregiving roles (Watie, 2010). While practical strategies like shared domestic responsibilities, childcare support, and flexible work arrangements can help alleviate the double burden faced by Minahasan women, long-term and sustainable change requires a deeper transformation of societal attitudes and cultural norms surrounding gender roles. Historically, patriarchal mindsets have been deeply entrenched in many societies, including the Minahasan community, perpetuating traditional gender roles and expectations. These mindsets often undervalue women's contributions outside the domestic sphere and fail to recognize the importance of their caregiving roles within the family. To achieve true and lasting empowerment for Minahasan women, there needs to be a concerted effort to challenge and dismantle these patriarchal mindsets through education, awareness campaigns, and policies that promote gender equality.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and norms. By incorporating gender equality principles and promoting an understanding of the value of women's empowerment from an early age, future generations can be equipped with a more progressive and inclusive mindset. This can be achieved through revising educational curricula, providing gender sensitivity training for teachers, and fostering open discussions on gender roles and stereotypes.

Highlighting the achievements of Minahasan women, whether in leadership roles, education, business, or community service, serves as a powerful means of redefining gender norms. When campaigns bring attention to women who have succeeded in fields traditionally dominated by men, they provide the community with visible examples of what women can achieve beyond conventional roles. This approach can inspire young girls to pursue their ambitions without feeling constrained by societal expectations and also encourage men to become allies in advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

Moreover, these campaigns can serve as a platform for sharing positive role models and success stories, showcasing Minahasan women who have made significant contributions in diverse areas. By presenting these women as examples of

resilience, leadership, and determination, outreach initiatives emphasize the value of gender diversity and the importance of recognizing women's contributions to society. These role models show that success is achievable for women and that embracing equitable gender roles benefits not only individual families but also the broader community.

Such campaigns can incorporate a variety of methods to reach different demographics within the community. Social media, local events, educational workshops, and collaborations with schools and religious institutions can help spread messages more effectively. Interactive discussions and storytelling sessions that involve both women and men can foster open dialogues about the importance of equitable treatment, allowing community members to express and address their views on gender roles.

Ultimately, promoting positive portrayals of Minahasan women's achievements contributes to building a community that values equal opportunities and respects the potential of all its members. As these stories are told and celebrated, they serve as a powerful counter-narrative to traditional gender stereotypes, gradually influencing societal perceptions and encouraging more equitable interactions in both personal and professional spaces. Through sustained awareness efforts and role model visibility, communities can foster an environment where gender equality becomes the norm, paving the way for future generations to grow up in a more inclusive society.

Furthermore, policies and legislation that promote gender equality and address discriminatory practices can play a vital role in creating an enabling environment for women's empowerment. These policies can include measures to ensure equal opportunities in education, employment, and leadership roles, as well as provisions for addressing gender-based violence and discrimination. The findings highlight the increasing economic and social/political empowerment of Minahasan women, but also the challenges they face in balancing new roles with traditional domestic duties, leading to double burden, role conflicts, and strains on family dynamics. While strategies like shared domestic responsibilities, childcare support, flexible work arrangements, and changing societal norms are identified as potential ways to reconcile these contrasting roles for sustainable empowerment, a broader societal shift in attitudes and norms towards gender equality is ultimately necessary to create an environment that truly values and supports women's empowerment while recognizing the importance of caregiving roles.

The roles of Minahasan women have evolved significantly over time, reflecting broader social, economic, and political changes. While Minahasan women have made remarkable strides in education, economic participation, and political engagement, they continue to face challenges that require ongoing efforts to address. Empowerment for Minahasan women is an ongoing process, one that involves

navigating the complexities of tradition and modernity, and advocating for gender equality and social justice. The future of Minahasan women's roles will depend on their ability to overcome these challenges and continue to push for greater empowerment and equality in all spheres of life.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research has shed light on the complex dynamics surrounding the empowerment of Minahasan women and the challenges they face in balancing their newfound roles with traditional domestic responsibilities. The key findings reveal a significant positive shift, with Minahasan women increasingly participating in income-generating activities, entrepreneurship, community leadership, and advocacy for gender equality. This represents a notable departure from the traditional gender norms that confined women primarily to domestic roles within the household. However, this empowerment has also brought about a unique set of challenges, as Minahasan women continue to shoulder the majority of domestic responsibilities, such as childcare and household duties, in addition to their newfound roles. This double burden of managing professional and domestic spheres simultaneously has led to role conflicts, straining their marital and family relationships. Furthermore, there is a potential impact on their children's upbringing, as the demands of balancing multiple roles may result in neglecting or compromising their caregiving responsibilities.

Addressing the double burden challenges faced by Minahasan women is crucial to ensure that their empowerment is sustainable and does not come at the cost of sacrificing their traditional caregiving roles or compromising family well-being. Failure to address these challenges may lead to physical and emotional strain on Minahasan women, neglect of children's developmental needs, and tensions within households, ultimately undermining the progress made in women's empowerment efforts. While this study has provided valuable insights into the economic and social/political empowerment of Minahasan women and the challenges they face, further research is recommended to delve deeper into the lived experiences of Minahasan women navigating the double burden and role conflicts. Qualitative studies involving interviews and focus groups with Minahasan women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds could provide richer insights into their personal challenges, coping strategies, and support systems. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of women's empowerment on family dynamics and children's well-being would be beneficial for informing targeted interventions and policies.

The findings of this research have significant policy implications for supporting the empowerment of Minahasan women while addressing the double burden challenges they face. Policymakers and community leaders should prioritize

the development and implementation of initiatives that promote equitable workload sharing within households, establish accessible and affordable childcare support systems, and encourage the adoption of flexible work arrangements for both women and men. These initiatives could include awareness campaigns, tax incentives, subsidized childcare facilities, and legislation promoting work-life balance.

Furthermore, there is a need for comprehensive awareness campaigns and educational programs that challenge traditional gender norms and foster a more supportive societal environment that values women's empowerment while recognizing their caregiving roles. These efforts should target not only Minahasan women but also their partners, family members, and the wider community, promoting a collective shift in attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality and shared responsibilities. By addressing the double burden challenges and implementing supportive policies and programs, the Minahasan community can create an enabling environment that empowers women to achieve their full potential while maintaining strong family bonds and ensuring the well-being of future generations. This holistic approach, combining practical strategies and societal transformation, can pave the way for sustainable and equitable empowerment of Minahasan women, creating a harmonious balance between their economic, social/political, and caregiving roles.

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