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Exploring the Burden Behind the Mask of Siboan Goar's Identity in Batak Toba Culture: A Case Study

Menilik Beban di Balik Topeng Identitas *Siboan Goar* dalam Budaya Batak Toba: Sebuah Studi Kasus

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Abstract

Siboan Goar, the firstborn son in a Batak Toba family, carries significant cultural expectations as the successor to the family name and clan, potentially triggering psychological distress. This qualitative case study explores the identity and role dynamics associated with this position. Using purposive sampling, the study included three Siboan Goar as primary participants, three parents of Siboan Goar, and two traditional leaders as supporting participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflective thematic analysis with the assistance of NVivo 12 Plus. The results identified seven overarching themes: internal factors, external factors, expectations, marriage, impacts, coping mechanisms, and cultural reflections. The findings showed that cultural pressure can cause psychological and physical distress, which is more pronounced after marriage. To cope with these pressures, participants employed both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. The study also reveals a gradual deconstruction of male primacy toward gender equality through cultural reflection, encouraging awareness and change. Ultimately, this study advances the understanding of culture-based mental health issues in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Coping Mechanism, Siboan Goar, Role Fatigue*

Abstrak

Siboan Goar atau anak laki-laki pertama dalam keluarga Batak Toba mengemban ekspektasi kultural besar sebagai penerus nama dan marga yang rentan memicu tekanan psikologis. Penelitian kualitatif studi kasus ini mengeksplorasi identitas dan dinamika peran tersebut. Melalui *purposive sampling*, penelitian ini melibatkan 3 *Siboan Goar* sebagai partisipan utama, serta 3 orang tua *Siboan Goar* dan 2 tokoh adat sebagai partisipan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, lalu dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis tematik reflektif dengan bantuan *software* NVIVO 12 Plus. Hasilnya mengidentifikasi 7 tema final, yaitu faktor internal, faktor eksternal, harapan, pernikahan, dampak, mekanisme koping, dan refleksi budaya. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tekanan kultural dapat memicu dampak psikologis maupun fisik yang semakin menguat pasca-pernikahan. Guna bertahan, individu menerapkan *problem-focused coping* dan *emotion-focused coping*. Penelitian ini juga mengungkap adanya dekonstruksi *male primacy* menuju kesetaraan gender melalui refleksi budaya. Implikasinya, penelitian ini memperkaya literatur kesehatan mental berbasis budaya di Indonesia guna mencegah normalisasi beban psikologis adat secara turun-temurun.

Kata Kunci: Mekanisme Koping, *Siboan Goar, Role Fatigue*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society often regards firstborn children as the pillars of the family, entrusting them with dual responsibilities as both economic contributors and behavioral role models. This social expectation places firstborn children under considerable pressure to assume broad responsibilities, including maintaining financial stability and supporting the emotional well-being of family members (Sengkey et al., 2025). Consequently, firstborn children frequently bear a disproportionately heavy burden compared with their younger siblings (Freisya & Maryam, 2026).

The cultural expectations attached to firstborn children play a significant role in shaping both their character development and psychological experiences. Firstborns typically demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility, high achievement motivation, and a desire to serve as role models for their younger siblings (Muhaimin, 2025; Untariana & Sugito, 2022). At the same time, parents often use firstborn children as the primary benchmark when evaluating the accomplishments of their other children (Silaen, 2016). As a result, firstborns may face additional pressure to uphold an idealized image and consistently meet their families' expectations.

Birth order often shapes family dynamics and influences how families distribute responsibilities among their members. As firstborn, individuals typically assume responsibility for caring for and guiding younger siblings, serving as role models, and providing emotional support to both parents and siblings (Biruny & Latipun, 2021). Although families generally regard these responsibilities as positive, they can increase firstborn children's vulnerability to psychological challenges (Sengkey et al., 2025). Supporting this view, Ningtias and Andriani (2022) found a positive association between perceived parental expectations and psychological distress among emerging adults in Indonesia.

Parents often place higher expectations for success on their firstborn children (Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023). When parents impose expectations that exceed a child's capabilities while failing to provide sufficient support, they may inadvertently create psychological strain. As a result, firstborn children may experience anxiety, emotional distress, difficulties in making decisions, reduced self-confidence, and challenges in expressing their emotions (Budi & Hasibuan, 2025). They may also develop fears of failing to meet parental expectations (Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023; Adhity & Suminar, 2022). Novillasari and Mardhiyah (2021) further demonstrated that stronger perceived expectations are associated with a greater fear of academic failure. Similarly, Pangalila and Wibowo (2023) found that firstborn university students completing their undergraduate theses often fear failure as they strive to meet the high expectations and responsibilities associated with their role within the family.

The research of Subroto et al. (2017) further supports the tendency for firstborn children to experience elevated levels of anxiety. Their study revealed that firstborns ranked second in terms of anxiety levels, surpassed only by only children. Participants attributed this anxiety to a range of unpleasant experiences associated with birth order, including being compared with siblings (4.26%), being frequently instructed or expected to comply with requests (4.26%), carrying greater responsibilities (12.77%), facing numerous demands (17.02%), being blamed more often (17.02%), having to put others first (19.15%), and other related experiences (25.53%). The study also found that boys, particularly firstborn and youngest sons, reported higher levels of anxiety than girls.

One factor contributing to anxiety and psychological strain among firstborn children is the multiple role demands they face within both the family and the broader social environment. Hardavi (2023) found that many firstborn children experience role conflict, defined as a clash between two or more roles, as well as role overload, a condition in which individuals lack sufficient time and energy to fulfill all of their responsibilities. When individuals experience role conflict without adequate support, they may face increased time pressure and substantial psychological strain (Creary & Gordon, 2016). Lenaghan and Sengupta (2007) found that role overload among working university students reduced well-being by disrupting role balance. Similarly, Kulik (2025) reported a negative relationship between role conflict and well-being among students who simultaneously fulfilled multiple roles.

Family expectations often make it difficult for firstborn children to distinguish between their own responsibilities and their parents' demands. Although they may initially resist the responsibilities assigned to them, they often continue to fulfill these obligations out of respect for their parents (Biruny & Latipun, 2021). This pattern aligns with broader Asian cultural values, which frequently place greater importance on parental decisions than on individual preferences (Mun & Hertzog, 2019). As a result, many firstborn children are reluctant, fearful, or embarrassed to openly express their thoughts and emotions to their families (Madini, 2022). This situation compels them to maintain an image of strength, even while experiencing considerable anxiety internally (Sengkey et al., 2025).

The family's economic circumstances also shape the responsibilities borne by firstborn children. In middle- and upper-income families, expectations tend to focus more heavily on academic and professional achievement (Hardavi, 2023). In contrast, firstborn children in lower- and middle-income families often carry tangible financial responsibilities, including contributing to household income and helping cover the needs of their younger siblings (Sengkey et al., 2025; Hardavi, 2023). In some cases, firstborn children must even assume the role of the primary economic provider when their families face financial hardship (Sengkey et al., 2025). These findings suggest that economic status does not eliminate the burden borne by firstborn children; rather, it changes the nature of their responsibilities.

Asian parents often view their children as an investment for the future. They expect their children to reciprocate by enhancing the family's social and economic standing, reflecting the time, resources, emotional support, and effort invested in their upbringing (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011). This phenomenon is particularly evident in Indonesia, which has been identified as one of the countries with the highest levels of parental expectations for children (Peltzer et al., 2017). In this context, firstborn children often shoulder greater responsibilities due to their position in the family structure. Parents often regard these expectations as a means of fostering responsibility in their firstborn children (Biruny & Latipun, 2021). This belief rests on the assumption that pressure can effectively cultivate desirable qualities, such as obedience, respect, achievement orientation, and the ability to fulfill family expectations (Ningtias & Andriani, 2022).

More specifically, these expectations often stem from parents' desire to encourage their children's academic and career success to secure a better future (Imronah et al., 2024). However, placing disproportionately high expectations on a single child can sometimes lead to parental favoritism, a phenomenon characterized by the unequal allocation of parental attention, support, and resources to one child over others (Santos, 2021; Tasya, 2020).

Parental favoritism can have both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, parents may devote more attention, time, and effort to supporting their firstborn child's development (Ramadhani, 2024; Hardavi, 2023). On the negative side, such treatment may heighten the fear of failure, as individuals may feel ashamed when they are unable to meet family expectations and standards (Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023; Adhity & Suminar, 2022). As a result, the intensive attention directed toward firstborn children may become a significant source of psychological pressure (Novillasari & Mardhiyah, 2021; Subroto et al., 2017).

The effects of parental favoritism extend beyond firstborn children to also influence the psychological well-being of their siblings. Unequal treatment may evoke feelings of envy and jealousy and contribute to sibling rivalry among children (Hariaji et al., 2025; Jumira & Khumas, 2025; Tasya, 2020). Understanding parental favoritism is particularly important in the Indonesian context, where families commonly have more than one child (Mufasirin, 2021).

Cultural values and social structures strongly influence the psychological burden experienced by firstborn children. For example, Chinese Indonesian families often assign the responsibility for maintaining the family's economic stability and overall well-being to firstborn sons. These cultural expectations encourage firstborn sons to assume roles traditionally associated with fathers, including sustaining family businesses, preserving family honor, and resolving family-related problems (Jap & Christiana, 2013). This example demonstrates how birth order and gender jointly shape the responsibilities that firstborn children carry.

Consistent with these broader patterns of social construction, Batak Toba society also maintains a strongly hierarchical family structure. Within this patrilineal system, firstborn children, particularly sons, receive greater attention and assume more responsibilities than their siblings (Simanjuntak, 2016). Within this patriarchal framework, the role of the firstborn child is defined primarily by gender rather than by chronological birth order. In line with Sianturi's (2017) findings, the firstborn son, *Siboan Goar*, assumes responsibility for leading the family and carrying forward the family name and clan lineage. This understanding is further supported by interview findings from key informants, who emphasized the substantial moral and social responsibilities attached to the position of *Siboan Goar* within Batak Toba culture.

"*Menurut adat Toba, anak pertama kalau dia laki-laki, maka dialah pengganti orang tua. Ketika nanti ayah ibunya meninggal yang bertanggung jawab kepada saudaranya adalah anak pertama laki-laki… Keputusan-keputusan apa yang mau diambil dalam keluarga didiskusikan dengan anak pertama laki-laki. Kalau di Batak Samosir, Batak Toba, yang wilayahnya di Samosir, itu rumah orang tua diwariskan kepada anak laki-laki paling besar. Kalau di Samosir, anak laki-laki paling besar, bertujuan supaya visi tadi tanggung jawab anak paling besar kepada keluarganya itu terwujud*." (LS, personal interview, August 13, 2025).

"*... Molo sakses siangkangan jadi manusia dia berarti adek-adeknya nanti mengikuti karena itulah gambaran keluarga, anak pertamalah yang menjadi gambaran dari satu keluarga… jadi singkola pe on tetap do adong perhatian orangtua lebih dari yang kedua ini, kuliah ni on pe tetap do artina lebih lah daripada yang dibutuhkan ima ala anak pertama dope ibana artina menopang karna dia nanti yang membawa nama di keluarga itu… jadi sude do hita mengharapkan anak pertama sakses…*" (OBL, personal interview, August 13, 2025).

"*... Kalau sukses anak pertama jadi manusia dia berarti adik-adiknya nanti mengikuti karena itulah gambaran keluarga, anak pertamalah yang menjadi gambaran dari satu keluarga… jadi anak pertama ini pun tetapnya ada perhatian orangtua yang lebih dari yang kedua ini, kuliah pun dia tetap nya artinya lebih lah daripada yang dibutuhkan karena anak pertama itu dia artinya menopang karena dia nanti yang membawa nama di keluarga itu… jadi semuanya kita mengharapkan anak pertama sukses…*" (Indonesian translation).

Interview findings revealed that Batak Toba society positions firstborn children, particularly sons, in a central sociocultural role as *Siboan Goar*, the bearer of the family name. This status carries substantial responsibilities. As *Siboan Goar*, a firstborn son not only continues the family lineage and inherits the parental home but also assumes responsibility for making important family decisions, ensuring the well-being of younger siblings (Interview with LS), and serving as a role model within the family (Interview with OBL). These findings align with Sianturi (2017), who highlighted the significant role of sons in Batak Toba society as bearers of the clan lineage, providers of economic support, and successors to family inheritance and responsibilities.

In Batak Toba society, the term *Siboan Goar* refers to the first son, who carries the family name and lineage (Situmorang, 1983). This cultural concept creates a unique family dynamic in which birth order does not necessarily determine authority in family decision-making. As LS explained in a personal interview (August 13, 2025), a son may retain a central decision-making role even when he is the youngest child in the family, while his older sisters continue to seek his opinion on important family matters.

"*Baik anak laki-laki itu si bungsu, tapi semua saudara-saudara perempuannya harus mengerti bahwa anak laki-laki itulah teman diskusi mereka. Keputusan-keputusan apa yang mau diambil dalam keluarga didiskusikan dengan anak pertama laki-laki*" (LS, personal interview, August 13, 2025).

The firstborn son, or *Siboan Goar*, plays a crucial role in a Batak Toba family. He becomes the family leader when his parents pass away and is responsible for his siblings (interview with LS). This finding aligns with studies by Hardavi (2023) and Sengkey et al. (2025), which highlight the burdens borne by firstborn children as the primary providers and protectors of the family.

Several studies have focused on firstborn children (Freisya & Maryam, 2026; Sengkey et al., 2025; Kotrunnada, 2025; Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023; Hardavi, 2023; Madini, 2022; Novillasari & Mardhiyah, 2021). Freisya and Maryam (2026) explored the subjective experiences of firstborn children who, due to economic pressures and family dysfunction, were compelled to serve as both primary providers for their families and members of the sandwich generation. Sengkey et al. (2025) found that the role of the firstborn as a family supporter often stems not from personal choice but from family crises that lead to parentification. Kotrunnada (2025) examined firstborn daughters and found that self-compassion positively influences psychological well-being. Similarly, Prahayuningtyas and Basaria (2023) found a positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among firstborn women in early adulthood. Hardavi (2023) indicated that many firstborn children experience role strain due to overlapping roles (role conflict), excessive responsibilities (role overload), and limited economic resources. Madini (2022) identified a positive relationship between self-esteem and assertive behavior among firstborn children. Meanwhile, Novillasari and Mardhiyah (2021) found a positive correlation between perceived parental expectations and fear of failure among firstborn children.

This study focuses on the experiences of the firstborn son in Batak Toba families, known as *Siboan Goar*. Unlike previous studies, which have primarily emphasized birth order, this study highlights the role of the patrilineal system in defining *Siboan Goar's* position. This gap in the existing literature underscores the need to examine how Batak Toba cultural expectations shape Siboan Goar's psychological experiences and role dynamics.

This study is important because the ongoing burden of role-related responsibilities and cultural expectations may contribute to various psychological challenges, including anxiety, role fatigue, fear of failure, and identity conflict when individuals do not fully understand these experiences. In addition, researchers have devoted limited attention to *Siboan Goar*, leaving this socioculturally grounded psychological experience largely absent from the scientific literature and discussions of culturally informed mental health in Indonesia. If researchers continue to pay limited attention to this issue, cultural expectations may normalize the psychological burden associated with the *Siboan Goar* role. As a result, these emotional burdens may continue to be transmitted across generations, while individuals neglect their own psychological needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the complex social and psychological dimensions of *Siboan Goar* identity and role within Batak Toba culture. The researchers selected the Batak Toba community because its members continue to uphold and practice customary values in their daily lives (Malau, 2024). Through the case study design, the researchers examined participants' experiences from multiple perspectives to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The researchers recruited participants through purposive sampling based on criteria specific to three participant groups. They collected data through semi-structured interviews with three *Siboan Goar* serving as the primary participants. To qualify for participation, individuals had to be firstborn sons and understand Batak Toba customs. The researchers enriched these accounts with perspectives from three Batak Toba parents who had sons and were familiar with Batak Toba traditions, as well as two traditional leaders who served as community elders or customary chiefs. The researchers analyzed the data using *reflective* thematic analysis using NVivo 12 Plus. The analytical process involved initial coding, the identification of initial themes, and the development of final themes. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers conducted source triangulation, peer review (debriefing), and member checking.

RESULTS

Participants' Profiles

The study involved eight participants: three *Siboan Goar* as primary participants, three parents of *Siboan Goar* as supporting participants, and two Batak Toba traditional leaders as additional supporting participants. A summary of the participants' profiles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

No	Initials	Age (years)	Occupation	Description
1	MNB	21	University Student	Firstborn child in a family of two siblings

2	ADY	21	University Student	Firstborn child in a family of three siblings
3	HDR	25	Vicar	Only child
4	PSS	73	Retired teacher	Parent of five children (eldest and youngest are sons)
5	HSL	53	Unemployed	Parent of an only son
6	ELS	53	Farmer	Parent of five children (the fourth and fifth children are sons)
7	MRH	73	*Church elder and customary leader (natuatua raja adat)*	Traditional Leader
8	OPB	64	Retired school supervisor and head of the traditional council	Traditional Leader

Thematic Analysis Results

The researchers analyzed the data and identified 24 initial themes, which they subsequently grouped into 7 final themes. A summary of the thematic analysis results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Initial Themes and Final Themes

No	Initial Themes	Final Themes
1	Parent-child relationships	Internal Factors
2	Parenting styles	
3	Parenting of *Siboan Goar*	
4	Extended family relationships	
5	Sibling relationships	
6	Society's expectations	External Factors
7	*Male primacy*	
8	Hierarchy of male roles	
9	Sources of social pressure	
10	Role expectations for *Siboan Goar*	Expectations
11	Role expectations for non-*Siboan Goar* children	
12	Intergenerational legitimacy	
13	Compensation and privileges	
14	Marriage prerequisites for *Siboan Goar*	Marriage
15	Role expectations of *Siboan Goar's* wife	
16	Role adaptation	Impact
17	Role dysfunction of *Siboan Goar*	
18	Transition of responsibility	
19	Manifestations of role strain	
20	Emotional responses	
21	Physiological responses	
22	*Problem-focused coping*	Coping Mechanism
23	*Emotion-focused coping*	
24	Paradigm changes	Cultural Reflection

Theme 1: Internal Factors

Internal factors are those that influence *Siboan Goar's* role through direct interactions among family members. Internal factors include parent-child relationships, parenting styles, parenting of *Siboan Goar*, extended family relationships, and sibling relationships.

Parent-Child Relationships

The initial theme regarding parent-child relationships was openness toward parents, as reported by participants MNB and ADY.

Iya langsung… Aku langsung kasih tahu. Kalau misal-misal aku itu kemarin itu juga aku dijauhin teman-temanku gara-gara enggak tahu kenapa… Aku kasih tahu ortuku semua [Participant MNB] [Reference 3 - 0.26% Coverage]

The experiences of MNB, ADY, and HDR as *Siboan Goar* revealed the diverse dynamics of family relationships. MNB emphasized the importance of openness with parents, but for ADY and HDR, such openness often conflicted with parents' doubts about their children's life choices. MNB and HDR also added that digital communication via WhatsApp and video calls was crucial for maintaining family relationships, particularly in ensuring family members' safety during emergencies, such as the disaster that struck North Sumatra. Additionally, all three participants highlighted the important role of the mother. For MNB, his mother served as a confidante and a bridge of communication among siblings. For HDR, his mother was his primary source of support, providing a strong, secure sense of connection. Conversely, ADY experienced communication barriers resulting from recurring value conflicts and feelings of rejection, which led him to become increasingly withdrawn. This situation was further exacerbated by financial burdens that often required him to sacrifice his own interest for others.

Similar to the perspective of the *Siboan Goar* participant group, *Siboan Goar* parents also emphasized the importance of digital communication in maintaining contact with their children living away from home. PSS noted that despite the physical distance, they strove to maintain a close relationship through regular video calls and by providing financial support to help their children continue their education. On the other hand, ELS highlighted the child's stronger emotional attachment to the mother, with filial piety toward the mother as the top priority. Interestingly, ELS intentionally maintained distance and limited interaction with his daughter due to the influence of gender norms and the views of the Batak Toba community, although their emotional bond remained intact.

OPB, a traditional leader, added that the parent-child relationship within Batak Toba families are also influenced by the concept of *anak hasian* (literally, "beloved child"). Unlike *Siboan Goar*, which emphasize traditional responsibilities, *anak hasian* refers more to the special affection and emotional bond between parents and a particular child. This status is not determined by birth order or gender; anyone from the eldest to the middle to the youngest can be an *anak hasian* within the family.

Parenting Styles

The initial theme regarding parenting styles was children's freedom, as reported by participant HDR.

Jadi ga ada paksaan harus jadi pendeta, harus jadi ini, harus jadi itu. Ga ada. Karena dari dulu, kayak seperti yang aku bilang, kan aku dikasih kebebasan [Participant HDR] [Reference 3 - 0.27% Coverage]

The parenting styles observed across the three *Siboan Goar* families reflected a tension between freedom and discipline. MNB's family demonstrated a supportive parenting approach that strongly encouraged education and

emphasized gender equality and equal opportunities for all children. In contrast, ADY experienced what may be described as functional neglect, as his parents viewed him as independent and unlikely to cause problems. Although he was granted considerable freedom, he received limited parental attention and emotional support because his parents focused most of their attention on his younger sibling, who frequently created difficulties. HDR, meanwhile, grew up in a more structured and protective family environment shaped by his parents' life experiences. His mother guided his behavior through persuasive communication, while his father adopted a more authoritative approach.

From the perspective of *Siboan Goar* parents, their parenting style emphasizes instilling religious values as a moral compass for children. PSS and HLS generally adopted a democratic parenting style that supported their children's interests, with PSS specifically prioritizing educational needs while instilling the value of simplicity. Meanwhile, HLS and ELS highlighted the importance of collaborative parenting between fathers and mothers.

The two traditional leaders highlighted different approaches to parenting. MRH tended to emphasize the value of equality, both in parenting style and in providing equal opportunities for every child. On the other hand, OPB offered a more traditional perspective, covering a set of customs for the firstborn child, the role of parents in addressing sibling rivalry, and the simplification of customs for subsequent children.

Parenting of *Siboan Goar*

The initial theme regarding *Siboan Goar's* parenting involved the transmission of the Batak Toba kinship system, as reported by participant HSL.

kita perkenalkan dia di dalam keluarga kita. Salah satunya kalau perempuan namborunya, kalau laki-laki udanya atau tuanya, kalau anak dari namborunya, kalo laki-laki laek, kalo perempuan itu. Nah, kita ajarin dia untuk mengenal dalam marga [Participant HSL] [Reference 1 - 2.57% Coverage]

In raising *Siboan Goar*, the three parents have different yet complementary strategic approaches. In this context, a strategic approach refers to the parents' conscious efforts to prepare *Siboan Goar* for his future traditional and social roles. PSS combines strict discipline with strong moral support to foster a leadership mindset. HSL emphasized economic independence from an early age, whereas ELS gradually introduced responsibilities so the child would not feel suddenly overwhelmed. However, HSL and ELS share a common vision of equipping *Siboan Goar* with a deep understanding of the Batak Toba kinship system and traditional customs, which would serve as his social capital in the future.

According to the *Siboan Goar's* experience, the distinctiveness of their role was evident in the often implicit nature of the responsibilities and expectations assigned to them. MNB had to adapt to a more flexible role due to health-related conditions. However, ADY described a parenting approach characterized by an "investment-oriented" perspective, in which parental support was often conditional, accompanied by material rewards, and shaped by comparisons with others. ADY also became the primary recipient of strict teachings regarding kinship and customary norms. For HDR, being a *Siboan Goar* involved strict upbringing and an emphasis on independence, although his parents still granted him a degree of conditional autonomy.

Extended Family Relationships

The initial theme regarding extended family relationships involved seeking advice from older family members, as reported by participant ELS.

dia tidak bisa sembarangan karna adik saya kan bapaknya. Tetap meminta petunjuk arahan dari bapaknya… bapak udanya [Participant ELS] [Reference 1 - 0.14% Coverage]

Extended family relationships and sibling relationships also shaped how family members distributed responsibilities. ELS explained that although the son of a *Siboan Goar* may eventually assume the role of family leader, he is still expected to consult his *Bapakuda*, his father's younger brother, when making major family decisions. ELS's account highlights the collaborative nature of *Siboan Goar* leadership.

The *Siboan Goar* participants also described generally limited communication with their father's extended family, particularly in the cases of MNB and HDR. MNB attributed this pattern to perceived differences in social status and reported maintaining closer communication with his mother's relatives. HDR highlighted a distinct cultural expectation within his family, explaining that family members often evaluated daughters-in-law based on their ability to bear a son who could continue the family lineage and clan name.

Sibling Relationships

Participant MNB reported experiences of jealousy among siblings, which formed part of the initial theme regarding sibling relationships.

Kek dimanja kalilah kan, ya walaupun sebenarnya biasanya dimanja, tapi kek ini lebih dimanja, gara-gara emang nggak pernah ketemu, udah jauh gitu. Keknya di situ sih adikku yang kemarin, kek iri gitu [Participant MNB] [Reference 1 - 0.08% Coverage]

MNB and ADY experienced sibling relationships marked by conflict and jealousy stemming from communication gaps, social comparisons, and disparities in parental investment. Conversely, HDR, as an only child, felt lonely amid the weight of *Siboan Goar's* expectations. To address these, both parents and traditional leaders agreed that family consultation and mutual support among siblings were the primary solutions. PSS and MRH emphasized the importance of maintaining harmony and collaboration among siblings in sharing the financial burden of traditional ceremonies to avoid overburdening *Siboan Goar*. Meanwhile, ELS and OPB cautioned that parenting focused primarily on *Siboan Goar* could still trigger jealousy among siblings.

Theme 2: External Factors

External factors refer to cultural norms and social pressures that shape the role expectations placed on *Siboan Goar.* These factors include society's expectations, male primacy, hierarchy of male roles, and sources of social pressure.

Society's Expectation

The initial theme regarding society's expectations involved perceptions of the ideal family, as reported by participant HDR.

Pokoknya, maranak dan ber boru. Ada anak dan ada boru. Itulah yang idealnya. Dia punya anak, dia punya boru [Participant HDR] [Reference 1 - 0.19% Coverage]

The Batak Toba community views the presence of male descendants as symbols of family prosperity and the continuity of family honor, a belief reflected in the concept of *Siboan Goar* as the bearer of the family name and clan lineage. HDR highlighted the expectation of an "ideal family," in which the firstborn child is male to ensure the continuation of the family line. He explained that community members often viewed the absence of male descendants as a threat to a family's lineage. PSS, a parent participant of a *Siboan Goar*, further explained that these social values are manifested in tangible inequalities regarding social status and inheritance practices. Batak Toba society follows a strong patrilineal system that grants inheritance rights exclusively to men, while women are excluded from the distribution of family property and inheritance.

Male Primacy

The initial theme regarding male primacy emphasized the importance of having sons, as reported by participant PSS.

dalam setiap keluarga harus ada anak laki-laki karena Siboan Goar dan penyambung garis keturunan [Participant PSS] [Reference 2 - 0.29% Coverage]

The patrilineal system of the Batak Toba people places male primacy at the center of family and customary traditions. In contrast, women's contributions to these traditions are often viewed merely as supplementary. PSS and ELS explained that this structure results in inheritance being transferred through the male line, as daughters adopt their husband's clan name upon marriage. The expectation of maintaining this lineage creates immense pressure on parents to have a son. This privilege extends to grandsons, particularly the sons of a *Siboan Goar*, as the torchbearers of family leadership. This perspective was further reinforced by traditional leaders, MRH and OPB, who explained that although women may participated in family decision-making, the priority is ultimately given to men. On the other hand, the *Siboan Goar*, namely MNB, ADY, and HDR, have begun to take a critical stance and reject this gender superiority.

Hierarchy of Male Roles

Participant PSS highlighted the economic contributions of younger sons as part of the initial theme regarding hierarchy of male roles.

kalau ada misalnya yang harus di, di apa namanya itu ditanggulangi bersama anak laki-laki yang nomor 2 dan seterusnya, ya, dia bisa memberi dengan sesuai kemampuannya kan gitu [Participant PSS] [Reference1 - 0.53% Coverage]

PSS, a parent participant from *Siboan Goar*, emphasized that families place primary responsibility for future economic and financial support on sons as a consequence of the inheritance rights and social status they receive. His account illustrates that *Siboan Goar's* position extends beyond social privilege. Instead, families associate this role with long-term social and economic commitment that binds *Siboan Goar* to supporting the extended family and fulfilling community-expected responsibilities.

As a key traditional figure, OPB, further clarified the hierarchy of male roles through the inheritance system. He explained that the Batak Toba culture designates sons as the primary heirs and are responsible for supporting the family economically. In contrast, *boru* (daughters) have no inheritance rights and are generally not expected to claim a share of the family's property. This system fosters strong expectations about the importance of having sons within the family and reinforces the preference for a male firstborn.

Sources of Social Pressure

The initial theme regarding sources of social pressure involved pressure from the extended family members, as reported by participant ADY.

nggak cuma dari keluarga bapak aja tapi dari keluarga mama juga tapi pressurenya nggak sebesar dari keluarga inti sih jadi kayak nanti kau bisa sukseslah terus kau nanti bisa kayak gini kayak gini bawa nama baik keluarga [Participant ADY] [Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage]

Siboan Goar participants identified multiple sources of pressure that originated from both modern and traditional contexts. MNB described social media as a contemporary source of psychological pressure, explaining that exposure to content portraying standards of success often triggered overthinking about his role as the firstborn son. In contrast, ADY experienced a more conventional yet equally intense form of pressure. He explained that expectations to succeed and fulfill the responsibilities associated with being a *Siboan Goar* came not only from his parents but also from extended family members and neighbors within the community. These collective expectations created a strong form of social monitoring, in which the failure of a *Siboan Goar* was often regarded as a source of family shame.

Theme 3: Expectations

The theme of expectations refers to the role demands placed on *Siboan Goar*. This theme encompasses role expectations regarding the role of *Siboan Goar*, expectations for non-*Siboan Goar* children, intergenerational legitimacy, and compensation and privileges.

Role Expectations for *Siboan Goar*

The initial theme regarding role expectations for *Siboan Goar* included serving as the bearer of the family name

and clan lineage, as reported by participant HDR, and serving as the family's economic provider, as reported by participant OPB.

yang namanya itu panggoaran, atau yang membawa nama dengan istilah, siboan goar, itu selalu dilimpahkan kepada laki-laki [Participant HDR] [Reference 3 - 0.21% Coverage]

kalo udah meninggal orang tuanya, dialah yang menyekolahkan ini semua adek-adeknya sama ee biarpun laki-laki, biarpun perempuan [Participant OPB] [Reference 4 - 0.37% Coverage]

As *Siboan Goar*, HDR, ADY, and MNB agreed that one of their primary responsibilities was active participation in family decision-making. HDR and ADY viewed this role as a mandate to carry the family name and clan lineage, serve as traditional leaders, and achieve success. MNB further described *Siboan Goar's* role as a supervisor within the family. ADY provided a more complex description, portraying Siboan Goar as a parental "investment" expected to shoulder economic responsibilities, safeguard family assets, assume paternal responsibilities when necessary, display authority, and marry at an appropriate age. He explained that this position creates a dilemma because family members expect *Siboan Goar* to voice opinions in family matters while simultaneously requiring obedience to parents and maintaining ties with the ancestral homeland. On the other hand, HDR emphasized the expectations placed upon him, namely that he must maintain a firm stance, act as a mediator within the family, maintain strong relationships, and be self-reliant.

These findings were consistent with the perspectives of traditional leaders and parents, who viewed *Siboan Goar* as the future head of the family, the primary breadwinner, and the successor to traditional leadership. PSS and ELS emphasized that *Siboan Goar* also serves as a role model and bears responsibility for his younger siblings. However, this father-substitute role carries considerable psychological burdens. OPB and PSS highlighted that during periods of bereavement, *Siboan Goar* often occupies an emotionally isolated position because family members rely on him to provide emotional support for his younger siblings. Finally, ELS explained that families often evaluate *Siboan Goar's* success and maturity through the traditions of *merantau* (outmigration) and marriage. Following marriage, he is considered ready to assume leadership of the extended family while continuing to seek guidance from the *bapakuda* (the father's brother).

Role Expectations for Non-*Siboan Goar* Children

The initial theme regarding expectations for non-*Siboan Goar* children involved the youngest child sacrificing for their siblings, as reported by participant ADY.

Mamaku pernah bilangin sama aku si Ingrid itu gak pernah jajan. Disimpan-simpannya uangnya karena ku bilang sama dia perlu uang untuk ngirim sama si Andre, sama si Koko [Participant ADY] [Reference 2 - 0.19% Coverage]

Interestingly, participants described that role expectations in Batak Toba families as extending beyond *Siboan Goar* and being systematically distributed among non-*Siboan Goar* children. MNB and ADY, both *Siboan Goar* participants, explained that household responsibilities are often allocated according to birth order. ADY further explained that social expectations encourage firstborn sons to excel beyond their siblings, leading families to assign responsibilities differently by birth order. ADY also described a contradiction within these expectations. While families expect younger children to remain obedient, they also are expected the youngest child to make sacrifices for older siblings when necessary. PSS and ELS, both parents of *Siboan Goar*, similarly described the distribution of responsibilities by birth order. For example, families often assign firstborn daughters the responsibility of caring for and supporting their younger sisters.

Intergenerational Legitimacy

Participant PSS highlighted the role of grandsons as future successors within the initial theme regarding intergenerational legitimacy.

pahompu pertama itu akan menjadi punya tanggung jawab lagi kepada keturunan itu, kepada keluarga itu dan memang dia selalu punya tempat tersendiri bagi orang Batak yang anak pertama Siboan Goar ini [Participant PSS] [Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage]

Participants described this structured distribution of roles as a mechanism for preserving the continuity of the Batak Toba family system, which relies heavily on intergenerational legitimacy. Within this system, grandsons (the sons of a *Siboan Goar*) are prepared to become the next generation of family leaders. PSS emphasized that these grandsons are expected to understand customary traditions and begin participating in extended family decision-making processes from an early age. Consistent with this view, HDR, a *Siboan Goar* participant, explained that the roles, responsibilities, and obligations carried by a *Siboan Goar* would eventually be passed on to his sons as the next generation of lineage successors. HDR further noted that families prepare these grandsons from an early age to develop influence within the extended family and to participate directly in family decision-making.

ELS, a parent participant in a *Siboan Goar*, further explained that marriage serves as the primary prerequisite for grandsons to attain full leadership legitimacy within the family. This practice helps maintain the continuity of the patrilineal leadership structure in the Batak Toba culture. At the same time, it reinforces a longstanding chain of expectations placed on successive generation of firstborn sons within the family.

Compensation and Privileges

Participant PSS highlighted the privileges associated with the *Siboan Goar* role as part of the first sub-theme under compensation and privileges.

Tapi warisan juga, dia lebih dapat banyak. Lebih dapat yang, yang wilayahnya atau lokasinya yang lebih cantik gitu atau yang lebih, kalau haumanya yang lebih subur lah, kalau sawahnya misalnya, dia selalu dapat sawah yang lebih subur yang lebih apa, dekat dengan jalan dan sebagainya [Participant PSS] [Reference 6 - 0.86% Coverage]

Participants described the extensive role demands and responsibilities associated with being a *Siboan Goar*, as well as certain privileges that serve as compensation. PSS, a parent participant of a *Siboan Goar*, explained that families and communities grant these privileges to balance the high expectations placed on the role. These privileges may include priority in meeting personal needs, access to specific inheritance benefits, elevated social status within the family, and strong familial support. OPB, as a traditional leader, further explained that these forms of compensation often take tangible forms. For example, families may provide the firstborn son with a house as a foundational resource to support his future responsibilities.

Theme 4: Marriage

For *Siboan Goar*, marriage represents more than a matter of personal romance, it is a significant customary event that determines his social status. Marriage marks a major transition that introduces specific prerequisites and expands responsibilities beyond the nuclear family to the extended family network. This theme encompasses marriage prerequisites for *Siboan Goar* and the role expectations of *Siboan Goar's* wife

Marriage Prerequisites for *Siboan Goar*

The initial theme regarding the marriage prerequisites for *Siboan Goar* was the expectation to marry within the Batak ethnic group, as reported by participant ADY.

harus kau batakan perempuan yang mau kau nikahi itu, yang mau orang luar pun dia, mau orang Indonesia pun dia, harus kau batakkanlah dia [Participant ADY] [Reference 1 - 0.15% Coverage]

For *Siboan Goar*, marriage represents more than a romantic relationship between two individuals; it is a significant customary event that validates his social status. As the bearer of the family name and the successor of the family lineage, *Siboan Goar* carries substantial responsibilities that create highly specific marital expectations shaped by both parental preferences and broader social expectations.

Participants described the ideal marriage for a *Siboan Goar* as one conducted according to the complete Batak Toba customary tradition with a partner from the same ethnic background. If the prospective wife is not of Batak descent (*boru sileban*), she must undergo a process known as "*mangain*", in which she receives a Batak clan name and is formally incorporated into the kinship system. Participants explained that this process is a prerequisite for conducting an "*adat nagok*" (full customary) marriage ceremony. Without a clan identity for the wife, the couple cannot carry out the full sequence of Batak Toba marriage traditions. Despite its importance in preserving cultural traditions, this customary expectation often creates an additional layer of psychological pressure for *Siboan Goar*. ADY, in particular, described how these requirements influenced his decisions regarding marriage and other major life choices.

Role Expectations of *Siboan Goar's* Wife

The initial theme regarding expectations for the role of a Siboan Goar's wife encompassed the responsibilities expected for her, as reported by OPB.

istrinya menjadi ibu dari adek-adeknya [Participant OPB] [Reference 1 - 0.11% Coverage]

OPB explained that selecting a life partner for *Siboan Goar* involves strict criteria, as *Siboan Goar's* future wife will also shoulder significant responsibilities in managing her role within the extended family, just as *Siboan Goar* does. She will also serve as a surrogate mother to *Siboan Goar's* younger siblings and as her husband's primary supporter in fulfilling his role as *Siboan Goar*.

In addition to being a social prerequisite, marriage for *Siboan Goar* is also a requirement for the legitimacy of intergenerational leadership. As the son of a *Siboan Goar* and the grandson in the main line of descent, he is the heir to the extended family's leadership throne. However, he can fully exercise this authority only after he is married. If he remains unmarried when his father (*Siboan Goar*) passes away, the center of leadership is temporarily shifted to the *Bapakuda* or to a full brother of equal rank to *Siboan Goar*.

Posisi anak saya kan masih kecil. Dalam arti belum berkeluarga. Tentunya, jatuhnya ke bapak udanya, adik saya. Kecuali udah berkeluarga, tetap pimpinan itu ke anak saya, yang paling besar laki-lakinya dan itu pun, dia tidak bisa sembarangan karna adik saya kan bapaknya. Tetap meminta petunjuk arahan dari bapaknya… bapak udanya [Participant ELS] [Reference 1 - 0.53% Coverage]

After the son of a *Siboan Goar* gets married, family leadership of the extended family is formally transferred to him. This position reinforces his status as the primary decision-maker for his extended family. Nevertheless, cultural norms still require him to follow a consultative process by seeking advice from *Bapakuda*. *Bapakuda's* role in this context does not serve as the decision-maker but rather that of a senior advisor who provides strategic guidance. Ultimately, although the elders' input is highly respected, the final authority and absolute responsibility for every decision remains with *Siboan Goar's* son, the new leader of the family lineage.

Theme 5: Impact

The theme of impact describes how *Siboan Goar* experiences and responds to the pressures arising from cultural expectations and role demands. The impact theme consists of role adaptation, role dysfunction of *Siboan Goar*, transition of responsibility, manifestations of role strain, emotional responses, and physiological responses.

Role Adaptation

The initial theme of role adaptation that emerged was internal resistance, as reported by participant ADY.

without you tell me that thing, aku udah tau gitu, aku bakal ngelakuin hal itu, tapi dengan kamu ngefokalkan itu sama aku langsung, itu jadi kayak nge-pressure aku gitu, I don't really like it [Participant ADY] [Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage]

The three *Siboan Goar* participants demonstrated distinct patterns of role adaptation in response to their position within the family. ADY described experiencing considerable internal conflict, particularly when the expectations associated with being *Siboan Goar* conflicted with his personal goals and aspirations. He reported resisting these expectations when he perceived them as incompatible with his desired life trajectory. In contrast, MNB appeared to internalize these demands and viewed them as personal responsibilities originating within himself. Meanwhile, HDR demonstrated the highest level of acceptance toward the role. He regarded the responsibilities associated with being *Siboan Goar* as opportunities for personal growth and approached them with a generally positive, composed outlook.

OPB, as a traditional leader, added that when the *Siboan Goar* fulfills his role, he should be open with his family about his limitations so that family discussion can be held when making important decisions.

Role Dysfunction of *Siboan Goar*

The initial theme of role dysfunction of *Siboan Goar* involved difficulties in fulfilling role-related responsibilities and withdrawal from customary ceremonies due to financial constraints, as reported by participant OPB.

Tapi ada juga yang tidak mampu. Kenapa tidak mampu? Ada alasan. Alasannya tidak mampu dia, contoh, dia cacat mental. Cacat mental anak pertamanya [Participant OPB] [Reference 1 - 0.24% Coverage]

When *Siboan Goar* fails to fulfill his role, whether due to mental health difficulties or dysfunction within the marital relationship, various psychological consequences may arise. OPB, a traditional leader participant, explained that failure to meet these expectations can generate considerable pressure, including stress, feelings of inadequacy, and withdrawal from social interactions and customary ceremonies because of shame.

Consistent with OPB's perspective, ADY, a *Siboan Goar* participant, also reported that an inability to meet role expectations often results in stress. HDR, meanwhile, emphasized the emotional consequences of such situations, particularly feelings of disappointment toward one's parents.

The three parent participants of *Siboan Goar* also provided in-depth perspectives on the phenomenon of role dysfunction, highlighting various consequences that arise when the firstborn son is unable to meet cultural expectations. PSS explained that economic status strongly determines authority within the family. When a *Siboan Goar* has a low economic status, his voice is often not considered in family deliberations, and he has no choice but to defer to younger siblings in decision-making. This view was supported by ELS, who stated that failure to migrate for work (*merantau*) may reposition *Siboan Goar* as a burden on the family, eventually leading other financially stable family members to assume his responsibilities. From a different perspective, HSL interpreted role dysfunction in terms of individual capacity, arguing that not all children possess the "talent" or competence to fully understand customary obligations. This mismatch between expectations and individual ability may eventually lead to role fatigue when responsibilities exceed individuals capacity.

Transition of Responsibility

The initial theme of transition of responsibility involved the transfer of *Siboan Goar's* responsibilities to another male family member of equal standing, as described by participant MRH.

Satu contoh seperti Oppung sendiri. Abang saya udah dua-dua. Oppung kan ada tiga bersaudara laki-laki. Lima perempuan. Jadi saya yang, anak yang paling bontot. Kakak saya ini meninggal sama abang-abang saya. Jadi yang tanggung jawab jadi saya. Saya yang jadi tanggung jawab [Participant MRH] [Reference 3 - 0.76% Coverage]

Although the role of *Siboan Goar* ideally belongs to the firstborn son, in practice, there is room for flexibility. MRH described the possibility of transferring this responsibility to another brother with greater financial strength in order to maintain family stability. Nevertheless, OPB, as a traditional leader, also emphasized that *Siboan Goar's* status is permanent and, according to custom, cannot be replaced by anyone else.

Consistent with OPB's view, the parent participants of the *Siboan Goar*, PSS, emphasized that the status of *Siboan Goar* is permanent and irrevocable. Therefore, the transition is limited to a transfer of operational responsibilities, not to the removal of the traditional title. On the other hand, ELS added that in such dysfunctional situations, responsibility is usually transferred to a parallel male relative, such as his younger brother. Consequently, the younger brother of the *Siboan Goar* assumes a "dual father role," meaning he is responsible for his own family while also taking on the leadership burden of the extended family that his older brother should have borne. This mechanism demonstrates that, in Batak Toba culture, the family leadership structure must continue to function even when its primary figure has difficulty maintaining the family's stability and dignity in the community's eyes.

Manifestations of Role Strain

Participant ADY described feelings of pressure as part of the initial theme of manifestations of role strain.

jujur itu nge pressure juga apalagi aku cowok kan ya cowok anak pertama [Participant ADY] [Reference 3 - 0.08% Coverage]

The three *Siboan Goar* participants essentially viewed this role pressure as a profound moral burden and a sacred responsibility of a child toward their parents. However, the emotional weight behind this burden varied greatly from across individuals. MNB, for example, still felt a glimmer of pride in his role as the older sibling, the family's pillar of

support. This situation stands in stark contrast to ADY, who found himself trapped in a cycle of role fatigue, frequently feeling pressured, experiencing dilemmas, and perceiving the burden as unfair due to constant inner conflict. Consequently, ADY felt unable to enjoy life and experienced more of the sorrow associated with his status. Meanwhile, HDR faced unique psychological challenges as an only child, he often felt lonely and burdened by guilt when he was unable to fulfill his parents' expectations.

Emotional Responses

The initial theme of emotional responses emerged from participants ADY and HDR.

nangis atau ya diem aja gitu sampai kepalaku panas gitu, nanti dingin lagi dia [Participant ADY] [Reference 2 - 0.09% Coverage]

baru ya nangis lah mengadu ke Mama dan Bapak [Participant HDR] [Reference 1 - 0.02% Coverage]

ADY and HDR revealed that the pressure of being *Siboan Goar* sometimes became so overwhelming that it brought them to tears, helping them release their emotions.

Physiological Responses

Only participant ADY reported physiological responses within the initial theme.

Terus aku nanti jadi sering yang kayak asam lambung gitu. Mikirin gitu-gitu aku jadi sakit perut kan [Participant ADY] [Reference 1 - 0.11% Coverage]

Furthermore, this psychological burden does not stop at the mental level but also manifests itself physiologically. ADY specifically highlights how this role-related pressure affects his physiological response, where the recurring stress he experienced often triggered health issues, particularly increased stomach acid. These findings demonstrate that the crown of *Siboan Goar* has a tangible impact that transcends psychological boundaries and extends to *Siboan Goar's* physical health.

Theme 6: Coping Mechanism

The researchers identified coping mechanisms unique to the *Siboan Goar* participants: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.

Problem-Focused Coping

The initial theme of problem-focused coping that emerged was the prioritization of self-actualization, as reported by participant ADY.

Terlepas dari dilemaku itu, aku selalu mengedepankan harapan sama cita-cita aku. Bukan jadi ngedepanin keinginan orang tuaku. I respect them, cuman, I choose my way gitu [Participant ADY] [Reference 5 - 0.05% Coverage]

Emotion-Focused Coping

The initial theme of emotion-focused coping included emotional eating, which emerged only among participant ADY.

Itu sih salah satu reduce stress ku itu makan sih. Walaupun aku gak gemuk ya. Aku stress aku jadi makan gitu. Itulah yang selalu terjadi [Participant ADY] [Reference 1 - 0.15% Coverage]

The three *Siboan Goar* participants exhibited different problem-focused coping strategies. MNB internalized self-imposed limitations, ADY prioritized self-actualization, and HDR engaged in self-evaluation of missed opportunities that contributed to his failure, while also demonstrating a commitment to independence due to his employment. Unlike the other participants, ADY specifically described emotion-focused coping to alleviate the stress he experienced. When role pressures became too overwhelming, ADY released emotions through personal activities such as writing or watching videos. However, there is also a vulnerable side to this emotional coping, where ADY sometimes gets trapped in emotional eating, a tendency to avoid problems, and even a phase of denial. Additionally, confiding in friends (social support) served as an important outlet for him to release emotional burdens he was unable to share with his parents because of barriers to openness.

Theme 7: Cultural Reflection

The theme of "Cultural Reflection" concerns a shift in the roles of men and women within Batak Toba culture. This theme emerged among the parent participants (ELS) and traditional leaders (MRH and OPB). There is an awareness of the shifting gender roles in contemporary society, where daughters are viewed as being better at caring for their parents.

kalo cerita-cerita di adat, tah di lapo, tah di kede. Kadang udah cerita-cerita bapak-bapak, ah memang anak perempuan itu nya yang betul. Ah, udah ada yang bilang gitu. Karna apa… Karna memang, yaudah gitu lah perubahan sekarang. Jadi anaknya tinggal nggak merantau ya kan. Jadi anak ya di dipikir orang tua ini mungkin jadi menyusahkan lah nya anak ku ini [Participant ELS] [Reference 1 - 0.33% Coverage]

Amid the strong patrilineal traditions of the Batak Toba tribe, findings from participants ELS, MRH, and OPB indicate a significant shift toward greater gender equality in the modern era. Today, access to education has opened up for daughters (*boru*), in fact, they now tend to migrate more frequently to pursue careers and make greater economic contributions to their parents, while sons tend to stay at home. Although according to custom, sons still hold an important position as the bearers of the family name (*Siboan Goar*), current social realities increasingly recognize the superiority of women (*boru*), slowly deconstructing the dominance of the male role as the sole pillar of the family.

Kalo anak ai sadia do, sadihari do halak on anannon asa aha on inna on na do biar ada warisannya. Gitunya sebenamya tapi karena pentingnya nama ini, nama ini hehe maka anak ini, terutama zaman dulu, kalo sekarang sudah bisa hampir sama perempuan dengan laki-laki gitunya… (Kalau anak laki-laki, ee kapannya, kapannya orang ini biar apa ini, katanya nya biar ada warisannya. Gitunya sebenarnya tapi karena pentingnya nama ini, nama ini hehe maka anak ini, terutama zaman dulu, kalo sekarang sudah bisa hampir sama perempuan dengan laki-laki gitunya…) [Participant OPB] [Reference 2 - 0.81% Coverage]

OPB further explained that this paradigm change has been influenced by current realities on the ground, in which sons often expect an inheritance from their parents. The change allows women to assume the role of *Siboan Goar* as the family's breadwinner, a traditionally male role.

Psychological Dynamics

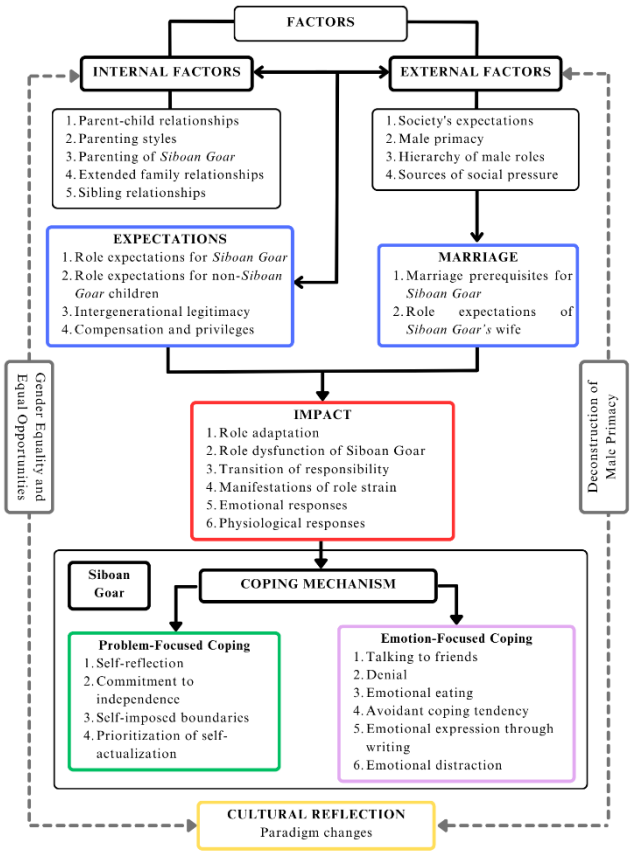


Figure 1. Diagram of Psychological Dynamics

The main flow of this psychological dynamics model is illustrated by black arrows connecting internal and external factors (black boxes), which subsequently give rise to expectations and marriage-related processes (blue boxes). These processes ultimately lead to various impacts (red boxes), which, in turn, give rise to coping mechanisms (green and purple boxes) observed only among *Siboan Goar* participants. This psychological dynamics model also highlights a cultural reflection process (yellow box) that triggers a transformation in cognitive perspectives. The reciprocal relationships, represented by grey dashed lines, form a feedback loop that illustrates how paradigm shifts mutually influence internal factors (gender equality and equal opportunities) and external factors (the deconstruction of male primacy).

NVIVO 12 Visualization

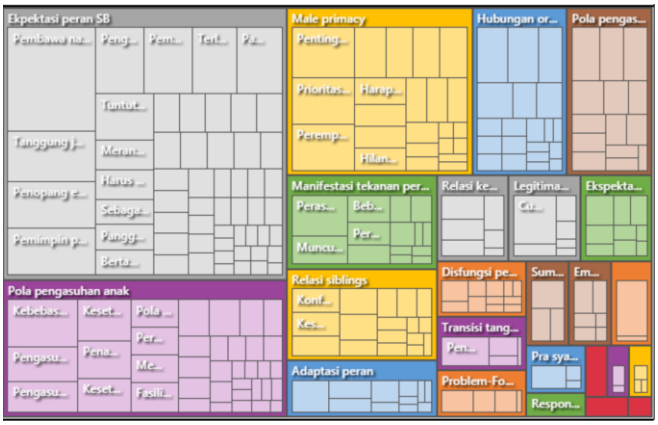


Figure 2. NVIVO 12 Plus Hierarchy Chart

The hierarchy chart generated by NVivo 12 Plus displays the theme contribution of each theme based on the number of coding references, with larger boxes indicating that the theme appears most frequently or is discussed most extensively in the research data. This data visualization shows that the theme of expectations regarding Siboan Goar's role, represented by the largest gray box, was discussed most frequently by participants. In contrast, the smaller boxes within it depict initial themes with lower discussion intensity.

DISCUSSION

Siboan Goar consists of two words, "*siboan*," meaning "bearer," and "*goar*," meaning "name." Linguistically, "*Siboan Goar*" can be understood as the bearer of a name. Culturally, the term *Siboan Goar* denotes a cultural identity that carries the weight of expectations and applies exclusively to the firstborn son within the Batak Toba social structure. This role is not merely a birth title but a traditional mandate that requires the individual to become the clan's successor, the economic backbone, the family leader, and the substitute for the father's role in various traditional and social matters. Psychologically, this substantial burden of responsibility triggers parentification, in which the child assumes parental roles through instrumental responsibilities, such as providing financial support, as well as emotional responsibilities as a mediator of family conflicts (Black & Sleigh, 2013). According to Family Systems Theory, an imbalance in family functions often forces children to assume parental roles to maintain the family system's stability (Freisya & Maryam, 2026).

The formation of this role burden is influenced by both internal and external factors. From an internal perspective, role internalization occurs through structured parenting from an early age. *Siboan Goar* typically receives an upbringing that emphasizes independence as preparation for his future role as the family's backbone (Sianturi, 2017). In addition, from an early age, *Siboan Goars* are taught about the traditional customs and *tarombo* (family genealogy), as confirmed by PSS, HSL, and ELS participants. The high expectations placed on *Siboan Goar* by parents often result in

preferential treatment, reflecting the phenomenon of parental favoritism (Santos, 2021; Tasya, 2020), where the investment of time and affection are viewed as a "life investment" aimed at securing future socioeconomic advancement for the family (Ningtias & Andriani, 2022). Conversely, non-*Siboan Goar* children are often raised to "yield" to support the older brother's authority. This preferential treatment ultimately risks having negative effects on sibling relationships, such as feelings of envy and jealousy, and can even trigger sibling rivalry (Hariaji et al., 2025; Jumira & Khumas, 2025; Tasya, 2020).

From an external perspective, this role is reinforced by the cultural norms of male primacy and social expectations. Batak culture constructs success around three fundamental values: *Hamoraon* (material wealth), *Hagabeon* (having descendants), and *Hasangapon* (honor or social status), which serve as absolute standards for evaluating an individual's achievement (Silaban et al., 2026). When individuals fail to fulfill any of these three values, they are considered unsuccessful in achieving culturally defined success (Simamora et al., 2015). Even when individuals accumulate substantial wealth and gain high social respect, they are still considered unsuccessful if they do not have children, as this is seen as a lack of *Hagabeon*.

The concept of *Hagabeon* emphasizes the importance of having children, especially sons, and even grandchildren. In fact, there is a well-known Batak saying, "*Anakkon hi do hamoraon di au*" (my son is my wealth), which indicates that a son is the greatest asset, surpassing material possessions. The absence of a son is often the greatest source of psychological stress for Batak Toba couples (Silaban et al., 2026). This finding is consistent with interviews conducted with participant from the *Siboan Goar* HDR, who shared the experience of one of his congregants who has not yet had a male grandchild from his firstborn son (*Siboan Goar*). Because of this, she always feels incomplete since she has not yet had a grandson through her *Siboan Goar*.

From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization in Batak Toba society manifests as an existential condition achieved through the fulfillment of these three fundamental values. Basic needs and a sense of security are met through *Hamoraon* (wealth), which serves as the basis for material stability, followed by the fulfillment of social needs and a sense of belonging through *Hagabeon* (progeny), where the presence of a son symbolizes the continuity of the clan and acceptance within the traditional structure. The need for self-esteem is validated through *Hasangapon* (honor), which provides social recognition and authority within the community. In this cultural framework, self-actualization is considered to have been achieved when an individual has fully fulfilled these three fundamental values, thereby realizing one's highest potential within the Batak Toba social order.

Within Batak Toba society, the presence of a son serves as the primary measure of an individual's life. Without a male heir, material achievements or high-ranking positions are often viewed as incomplete because dying without a clan successor is considered the severing of the lineage's continuity within the customary order, as emphasized by a PSS participant who stated that a son is a crucial element for the continuity of the family lineage.

The complexity of these roles and expectations triggers significant psychological stress. Individual responses vary, some are able to adapt to these roles and view them as a source of self-satisfaction and pride (Annisa et al., 2024), while others resist them because they feel they are not responsible for them (Biruny & Latipun, 2021). Despite internal conflict, the strong value of respecting one's parents leads individuals to continue fulfilling these responsibilities (Luthfia et al., 2017).

When the burden exceeds an individual's capacity, they become highly vulnerable to role dysfunction in the form of role fatigue, which manifests as stress, anxiety, and even physical disorders such as insomnia (Sari & Irawan, 2025; Evans et al., 2019). The pressure reaches a critical point when individuals perceive themselves as having failed to meet expectations. These feelings trigger a fear of failure (Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023; Adhity & Suminar, 2022), resulting in feelings of shame and withdrawal from both social activities and traditional rituals. Research by Silaban et al. (2026) found that when individuals are unable to meet their culture's ideal standards, they often experience psychological burdens, such as persistent anxiety, feelings of shame, and low self-esteem. In line with this, OPB explained that when *Siboan Goar* fails to fulfill his responsibilities, he tends to withdraw from traditional gatherings, which may even trigger stress.

In managing role-related stress, individuals employ coping strategies that, according to Lazarus and Folkman's theory (Steiner & Fletcher, 2017), are divided into two categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. This study specifically highlights the use of confrontative coping, a problem-focused strategy involving risk-taking, aggressive approaches, and direct communication in dealing with the source of the problem (Suryana, 2022). Sudarji et al. (2022) explained that this approach risks triggering intergenerational conflict. This dynamic was clearly observed in participant ADY, who adopted an assertive stance in pursuing self-actualization amidst family expectations. He consciously provoked recurring conflicts with his parents; however, this pattern consistently ended with his father's passive acceptance, which may have resulted from exhaustion caused by ADY's persistent pursuit of his ambitions.

The emotion-focused coping observed in this study was reflected in the male participants' willingness to express sadness through crying, thereby challenging the stigma that men must always appear strong (Ramdani & Wisesa, 2022). This behavior suggests that, despite their outwardly calm demeanor, men still carry an emotional burden that they need to release through honest emotional communication (Humaira et al., 2023). Furthermore, sharing this burden with close friends (social support) plays a crucial role in reducing psychological stress (Amalina & Abidin, 2025; Pashazade et

al., 2024). Ultimately, individuals reach a stage of self-acceptance, where they stop protesting their circumstances and reframe cultural responsibilities as a means of maturation (Sudarji et al., 2022).

The burden of these expectations increases significantly when a *Siboan Goar* enters marriage. As emphasized by participant ELS, marriage serves as a gateway that formalizes an individual's position within the traditional structure. It is at this point that a drastic role transformation occurs. Participant HSL emphasized that the firstborn son is no longer merely a "bearer of the family name," but rightfully becomes the successor to the leadership baton for the next generation. Consequently, this individual's responsibilities expand significantly, extending beyond the nuclear family to encompass the entire extended family.

This transformation of the leadership role subsequently places *Siboan Goar* in the unique position of the "sandwich generation" (Kurnianingtyas & Kawuryan, 2026; Rari et al., 2021). This phenomenon is characterized by dual responsibilities, requiring them to support their children's needs while simultaneously caring for their parents (Sudarji, 2022). As the main pillar responsible for the physical, financial, and emotional aspects of the extended family, *Siboan Goar* must manage limited resources to meet intergenerational expectations. This crushing pressure creates vulnerability to physical exhaustion, psychological distress, and role conflicts that threaten their well-being (Noviantari, 2023).

These circumstances triggered drastic stress-coping efforts, as demonstrated by participant ADY, who planned to settle abroad to free himself from the sociocultural burdens associated with his status. However, this attempt at autonomy encountered strong resistance from his parents, who remained steadfast in their belief that ADY was a legitimate *Siboan Goar*. It is this clash between external expectations and internal desires that triggers deep frustration for ADY, who finds himself in an existential dilemma. His self-actualization was hindered because he could not reconcile his personal aspirations with the customary obligations he could not abandon. Maslow proposed that humans are driven by the desire to become the best version of themselves. If this need remains unfulfilled, even if other needs are satisfied, the individual may experience anxiety, dissatisfaction, or frustration due to an inability to optimally develop and utilize their innate potential (Sa'diyah & Gumilar, 2025).

Adherence to the *Hagabeon* philosophy requires the presence of descendants, particularly male children and grandchildren (Angraeni & Camellia, 2025). The absence of a son is the greatest source of psychological stress (Silaban et al., 2026) because it is considered a cultural failure. The burden is not borne solely by *Siboan Goar*, it also falls on his wife, who serves as the "*boru ni raja*" and is expected to uphold the family's reputation and fulfill social obligations (Sitorus, 2019). Other male siblings also share the family's responsibilities, as they are expected to contribute to traditional expenses and be prepared to assume the primary role if *Siboan Goar* becomes unable to fulfill his duties or passes away. In line with Wong and McBride's research, this reinforces the notion that norms of masculinity intensify a sense of heavy financial responsibility (Kurnianingtyas & Kawuryan, 2026). The distribution of these responsibilities indirectly creates complex relational dynamics among full siblings within the family.

Although cultural norms may seem difficult to change, data analysis reveals room for negotiation and cultural reflection. Factors such as personal health, modernity, education, and the tradition of migrating are beginning to erode the absolute nature of patriarchal thinking. As experienced by MNB, health issues and a family background rooted in migration meant he did not face significant role-related pressures.

Batak Toba society maintains a strong tradition of migration (merantau) to pursue the core values of *Hamoraon* (wealth) and *Hasangapon* (honor) through education and economic success (Simamora et al., 2015). In the context of migration, individuals undergo acculturation, in which elements of foreign cultures are gradually accepted and integrated into their own cultural system without erasing their original cultural identity (Firmansyah, 2016). This process enables cultural reflection within MNB's family, where modern values are adopted to challenge absolute patriarchal norms, thereby reducing the exclusive burden of responsibility and role expectations placed on sons.

The patrilineal structure in educated families is now undergoing a shift in understanding. The concept of *Hagabeon* is interpreted more broadly, recognizing daughters' capacity as guardians of family dignity and primary caregivers for their parents in old age (Silaban et al., 2026). This shift in values significantly strengthens the bargaining position of modern Batak women within the family, although they continue to face challenges posed by deeply entrenched traditional customs (Siregar & Amal, 2024; Situmorang, 2021). This finding is further supported by participant OPB, a traditional leader, highlighting a new reality. While sons sometimes wait passively for their inheritance, daughters often leave home and actively contribute to their parents' livelihoods. Although the Batak Toba culture is deeply rooted in customary values and traditions, it remains open to transformation, becoming more adaptive and accommodating gender equality in the modern era.

This research shows that *Siboan Goar's* role positions the firstborn son at the intersection of traditional honor and the psychological burden of being in the "sandwich generation." Although this role is prone to triggering parentification and role fatigue, the influence of education and modernity has successfully fostered adaptive cultural transformation. *Hagabeon* now has a more inclusive interpretation, as it begins to recognize daughters' capacity to support the family's economic well-being and dignity. These changes open up space for flexible role negotiation

within the Batak Toba patrilineal structure without abandoning its traditional roots. Nevertheless, this study has limitations regarding its scope of subjects; therefore, future researchers need to expand the scope to include *Siboan Goar's* wife, siblings, and even his first male grandchild (*Siboan Goar's* son), as well as conduct cross-cultural comparative studies and studies among the Batak Toba diaspora to better understand the *Siboan Goar* phenomenon amid changing times comprehensively.

To mitigate the psychological stress resulting from cultural demands, this study emphasizes the importance of culturally based psychological interventions, as the impact of such demands cannot be addressed solely through individual psychological approaches. One way to achieve this is to normalize open communication that creates a space for every family member to express vulnerability without fear of judgment. Furthermore, the collaborative distribution of financial and domestic responsibilities among siblings plays a crucial role in preventing the accumulation of burdens on a single individual, particularly among the sandwich generation. By transforming these responsibilities into a synergistic effort, families can enhance self-acceptance and maintain individual mental health stability without disregarding traditional values.

CONCLUSION

Siboan Goar represents a lifelong cultural identity within Batak Toba society and carries substantial responsibilities. As a "sandwich generation," *Siboan Goar* often experiences psychological pressure, including role fatigue and fear of failure, in attempting to meet cultural expectations defined by *Hamoraon* (wealth), *Hagabeon* (descendants), and *Hasangapon* (honor). These demands intensify once individuals form their own families, as they must fulfill *Hagabeon*, particularly the expectation of producing male descendants. However, this patrilineal structure is now beginning to show adaptive flexibility in the modern era, especially among educated and migrant families. Contemporary society increasingly recognizes daughters as equally important, both as preservers of family dignity and as key contributors to family economic support.

The ability of *Siboan Goar* to navigate these cultural expectations does not develop in isolation but depends on systemic support from wives and male siblings in maintaining family stability. This ongoing value transformation, which balances tradition and modernity, opens rich avenues for further exploration. Therefore, future research should focus on the following areas: examining the impact of *Siboan Goar* on the psychological well-being of Batak Toba youth, analyzing the role of family and community in shaping *Siboan Goar*, and exploring the role of education and migration in shaping *Siboan Goar*.

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INFORMED CONSENT

In this study, informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The informed consent forms were distributed to participants 1 day before the first interview, so they would have sufficient time to understand the research objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations before agreeing to participate.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

TRANSPARENCY OF DATA

All data generated and analyzed during this study have been included in this article. Additional contextual information may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, in accordance with ethical considerations and participant confidentiality.

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All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this manuscript.

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