

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

### Menilik Beban di Balik Topeng Identitas Siboa Goar dalam Budaya Batak Toba: Sebuah Studi Kasus

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#### Abstract

*Siboa Goar, the first son in a Batak Toba family, carries significant cultural expectations as the successor to the family name and clan, which can trigger psychological pressure. This qualitative case study explores the identity and role dynamics associated with this position. Through purposive sampling, the study involved 3 Siboa Goar as primary participants, 3 parents of Siboa Goar, and 2 traditional leaders as supporting participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflective thematic analysis with NVivo 12 Plus. The results identified 7 final themes: internal factors, external factors, expectations, marriage, impacts, coping mechanisms, and cultural reflections. The findings show that cultural pressure can cause psychological and physical impacts, especially after marriage. To cope, individuals use problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. This research emphasizes gender equality and the mental health implications within the Batak Toba culture, encouraging awareness and change. The implication is that this study advances understanding of culture-based mental health issues in Indonesia.*

Keywords: Coping Mechanism, Siboa Goar, Role Fatigue

#### Abstrak

*Siboa 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 Siboa Goar sebagai partisipan utama, serta 3 orang tua Siboa 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 pernormalisasian beban psikologis adat secara turun-temurun.*

Kata Kunci: Mekanisme Koping, Siboa Goar, Role Fatigue

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Received 17/03/2026

Revised 01/06/2026

Accepted 01/07/2026



## INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society often regards firstborn children as the foundational 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 carry a heavier burden than 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 maintain an ideal image and consistently meet the expectations placed upon them by their families.

Birth order often shapes family dynamics and influences how families distribute responsibilities among their members. As firstborn children, 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 capacity and fail 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 Mardiyah (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 family roles.

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 give way to others (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 numerous 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 performed 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 feel 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 upper-income and middle-income families, expectations tend to focus more heavily on academic and professional achievement (Hardavi, 2023). In contrast, firstborn children in lower-income 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 on firstborn children, but it alters the form their responsibilities take.

Asian parents often view their children as a form of 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 parental expectations for children (Peltzer et al., 2017). In this context, firstborn children often shoulder greater demands 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 such high expectations on a single child can sometimes lead to parental favoritism, a phenomenon characterized by the disproportionate 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 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 and also affect 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). Under 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 reality 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 sukses 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 sukses..."* (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 the Batak Toba society places firstborn children, particularly sons, in a central sociocultural position as *Siboan Goar*, or 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 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 still ask for 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 “Sibohan 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 burden placed on 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 first son in Batak Toba families, referred to as *Sibohan Goar*. Unlike previous studies, which have primarily emphasized birth order, this study highlights the role of the patrilineal system in defining *Sibohan Goar's* position. This gap in the existing literature underscores the need to examine how Batak Toba cultural expectations shape *Sibohan 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 *Sibohan 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 *Sibohan Goar* role. Individuals may carry these emotional burdens across generations while neglecting their own psychological needs.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the complex social and psychological dimensions of *Sibohan 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 *Sibohan Goar* 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 with sons and 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 reflexive thematic analysis in 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 *Sibohan Goar* as primary participants, two parents of *Sibohan 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 <i>Siboan Goar</i>	
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 <i>Siboan Goar</i>	Expectations
11	Role expectations for non- <i>Siboan Goar</i> children	
12	Intergenerational legitimacy	Marriage
13	Compensation and privileges	
14	Marriage prerequisites for <i>Siboan Goar</i>	
15	Role expectations of <i>Siboan Goar's</i> wife	Impact
16	Role adaptation	
17	Role dysfunction of <i>Siboan Goar</i>	
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 in parent-child relationships was openness toward parents among the MNB and ADY participants.

*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* reveal the diverse dynamics of family relationships. MNB

emphasized the importance of openness with parents, but for ADY and HDR, that openness often clashes with parents' doubts about their children's life choices. MNB and HDR added that digital communication via WhatsApp and video calls is crucial for maintaining family interactions, particularly to ensure family members' safety during emergencies such as the disaster that struck North Sumatra. Additionally, all three participants highlight the mother's role. For MNB, the mother serves as a confidante and a bridge of communication with siblings. In HDR, the mother is the primary source of support, offering a strong, secure sense of connection. Conversely, ADY faces communication barriers stemming from recurring value conflicts and feelings of rejection, which have made him increasingly withdrawn, a situation exacerbated by financial burdens that often force him to yield.

Much like the views of the *Siboan Goar* participant group, *Siboan Goar* parents also emphasized the importance of digital communication in maintaining contact with their children who have moved away. PSS noted that despite the physical distance, they strive 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 bond with the mother figure, with filial piety toward the mother as the top priority. Interestingly, ELS intentionally maintains distance and limits interaction with her daughter due to the influence of gender norms and the views of the Batak Toba community, although the emotional bond remains intact.

OPB, as a traditional leader, added that the parent-child relationship within Batak Toba families is also influenced by the phenomenon of the "favorite child" or "beloved child." Unlike *Siboan Goar*, which focuses on traditional responsibilities, the concept of the favorite child refers more to the special bond of affection parents bestow. This status as a favorite child is not limited to 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 among HDR participants regarding parenting styles was children's freedom.

*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 autonomy and discipline. MNB's family demonstrated a supportive parenting approach that strongly encouraged education and emphasized gender equality and equal opportunities for 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 they granted him 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 *Sibohan Goar's* parents, their parenting style emphasizes instilling religious values as a moral compass for children. PSS and HLS tend to adopt a democratic parenting style that supports children's interests, with PSS specifically facilitating educational needs and instilling the value of simplicity. Meanwhile, HLS and ELS highlight the importance of collaborative parenting between fathers and mothers.

Both traditional leaders highlighted different approaches to parenting. MRH tends to emphasize the value of equality, both in parenting style and in providing equal opportunities for every child. On the other hand, OPB offers a more traditional, more specific 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 Sibohan Goar

The initial theme of *Sibohan Goar's* parenting involved the transmission of the 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]

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

According to *Sibohan Goar's* experience, the distinctiveness of his role is evident in the often implicit nature of the responsibilities and expectations assigned to him. MNB has had to adapt to a more flexible role due to health conditions. However, ADY described a parenting approach characterized by an "investment-oriented" perspective, in which parental support was frequently conditional, accompanied by material rewards, and shaped by comparisons with others. ADY was also the primary focus of strict teachings regarding kinship and customary norms. For HDR, being a *Sibohan 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 of 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 *Sibohan Goar* may eventually assume the role of family leader, he remains expected to consult his *Bapakuda*, his father's younger brother, when making major family decisions. ELS's account highlights the collaborative nature of *Sibohan Goar* leadership.

The *Sibohan Goar* participants also described 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 feelings of jealousy among siblings, which formed part of the initial theme of 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]

The sibling relationship between MNB and ADY often involves conflict and feelings of jealousy stemming from communication gaps, social comparisons, and disparities in parental investment. Conversely, HDR, as an only child, feels lonely amid the weight of *Sibohan Goar's* expectations. To address this, parents and traditional leaders agreed that consultation and mutual support among siblings are the primary solutions. PSS and MRH emphasized the importance of harmony and collaboration among siblings in sharing the financial burden of traditional ceremonies to avoid overburdening *Sibohan Goar*. Meanwhile, ELS and OPB cautioned that parenting focused on *Sibohan Goar* could still trigger jealousy.

### Theme 2: External Factors

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

### Society's Expectation

The initial theme of 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]

Batak Toba society views 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 first child is male to ensure the continuation of the family line. HDR explained that community members often view 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 create tangible inequalities in social status and inheritance practices. Batak Toba society follows a strongly patrilineal system that grants inheritance rights primarily to men, while excluding women from the distribution of family property and inheritance.

### Male Primacy

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

*dalam setiap keluarga harus ada anak laki-laki karena Siboa 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 explain 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 male grandchildren, particularly the children of the *Siboan Goar*, as the torchbearers of family leadership. This perspective gets reinforced by traditional leaders, namely the MRH and OPB, who state that while women are involved in decision-making, the priority remains with 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 of hierarchy of male roles.

*kalo 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] [Reference 1 - 0.53% Coverage]

A parent participant from *Siboan Goar*, namely PSS, 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 obligations that require *Siboan Goar* to support the broader family structure and fulfill community-expected responsibilities.

As a key traditional figure, the 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 assigns them the responsibility for supporting the family economically. In contrast, *boru* (daughters) do not inherit and are generally not expected to claim a share of family property. This system fosters strong expectations about the importance of sons within the family and reinforces the preference for a male firstborn.

### Sources of Social Pressure

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

*nggak cuma dari keluarga bapak aja tapi dari keluarga mama juga tapi pressuranya 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 originating 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 led him to overthink 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 people often viewed the failure of a *Siboan Goar* as a source of family shame.

### Theme 3: Expectations

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

### Role Expectations for Siboa Goar

The initial theme of role expectations for *Siboan Goar* included serving as the bearer of the family name and clan lineage, as reported by participant HDR, and acting as the family's economic provider, as reported by participant OPB.

*yang namanya itu panggoaran, atau yang membawa nama dengan istilah, siboa 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, one of their primary expectations 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 family supervisor. ADY offered a more complex description by portraying *Siboan Goar* as a parental "investment" expected to shoulder economic responsibilities, safeguard family assets, assume paternal responsibilities when necessary, and demonstrate authority while marrying 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 emphasizes 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.

This view aligns with the perspectives of traditional leaders and parents, who expect *Siboan Goar* to serve as the family head, the primary breadwinner, and the successor to traditional leadership. PSS and ELS emphasized that *Siboan Goar* also serves as a role model and assumes responsibility for his younger siblings. However, this father-substitute role carries considerable psychological burdens. OPB and PSS highlighted that, during periods of grief, *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. According to ELS, marriage enables *Siboan Goar* 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 of expectations for non-*Siboan Goar* children involved the youngest child making sacrifices for 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 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, noted that families often allocate household responsibilities based on this status. ADY further explained that social expectations encourage firstborn sons to outperform 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 expect 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 of intergenerational legitimacy.

*pahompupertama 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 Siboa 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*) prepare to become the next in line to lead the family. PSS emphasized that these grandsons should 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 pass 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 is a key prerequisite for grandsons to obtain full leadership legitimacy within the family. According to ELS, 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 each 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 initial theme of 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 haumannya 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 of marriage prerequisites for *Siboan Goar* involved 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 batakanlah 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 lineage, *Siboan Goar* carries substantial responsibilities that give rise to 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 in accordance with the complete Batak Toba customary tradition and involving a partner of the same ethnic background. When a 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, 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 perceived by the OPB participants.

*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 a *Siboan Goar* is a requirement for the legitimacy of intergenerational leadership. As the son of a *Siboan Goar* and the male grandson in the main line of descent, he is the heir to the leadership throne of the extended family. However, this authority can be used only once he is married. If he is unmarried when his father (*Siboan Goar*) passes away, the center of leadership will temporarily shift to the *Bapakuda* or 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 formally transfers 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 here is not that of a policy-maker, but rather that of a senior advisor who provides strategic input. 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 head of the family lineage.

#### Theme 5: Impact

The impact theme describes how *Siboan Goar* experiences and responds to the pressures arising from cultural expectations and role demands. Participants reported a range of responses, which the researchers organized into six initial themes: role adaptation, role dysfunction of *Siboan Goar*, transition of responsibility, manifestations of role strain, emotional responses, and physiological responses.

##### Role Adaptation

The initial theme that emerged was role adaptation, the internal resistance ADY experienced.

*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 exhibited 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. Among the

participants, 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 must be open with his family about his limitations so they can discuss various matters together.

### Role Dysfunction of *Siboan Goar*

The initial theme of *Siboan Goar* role dysfunction 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]

Participants described several psychological consequences that may arise when *Siboan Goar* is unable to fulfill the responsibilities associated with the role, whether due to mental health difficulties or dysfunction within the marital relationship. 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, 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.

All three parent participants of *Siboan Goar* also provided in-depth perspectives on role dysfunction, highlighting various consequences that arise when the firstborn son is unable to meet cultural expectations. PSS explained that economic status strongly shapes authority within the family. When a *Siboan Goar* is in a low economic position, 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*) can 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 ability may lead to role fatigue when demands exceed individual capacity.

### Transition of Responsibility

Participant MRH highlighted the transfer of *Siboan Goar*'s responsibilities as part of the initial theme transition of responsibility.

*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 sees the possibility of transferring this responsibility to another brother with greater financial means to maintain family stability. Nevertheless, OPB, as a traditional leader, also emphasizes that *Siboan Goar*'s status is permanent and, according to custom, cannot be replaced by anyone else.

In line with the OPB's view, the parent participants of the *Siboan Goar*, namely the 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 adds that in such dysfunctional situations, responsibility usually passes to a parallel male line, such as his younger brother. Consequently, the younger brother of the *Siboan Goar* will assume a "dual father role," meaning he must care 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 if the primary figure faces difficulties to maintain 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 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 participants in *Siboan Goar* essentially view 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 varies greatly from person to person. MNB, for example, still feels 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 finds himself trapped in a cycle of role fatigue. He often feels stressed, faces dilemmas, and feels unfairly burdened due to constant inner conflict. Consequently, ADY feels unable to enjoy life and experience more of the sorrow associated with his status. Meanwhile, HDR faces unique psychological challenges as an only child, he often feels lonely and is haunted by feelings of guilt when he is 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 becoming *Siboan Goar* sometimes felt so overwhelming that it made them cry, 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 experiences often triggers health issues, particularly increased stomach acid. It shows 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 problem-focused coping strategy that emerged among ADY participants was prioritization of self-actualization.

*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

Emotion-focused coping included emotional eating, which appeared only among ADY participants.

*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 participants in the *Siboan Goar* study 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 led to his failure, while also demonstrating a commitment to independence due to his employment. Unlike the other participants, ADY specifically employed emotion-focused coping to alleviate the stress he was experiencing. 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) is a crucial outlet for him to release emotional burdens he cannot 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 groups of parents (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.

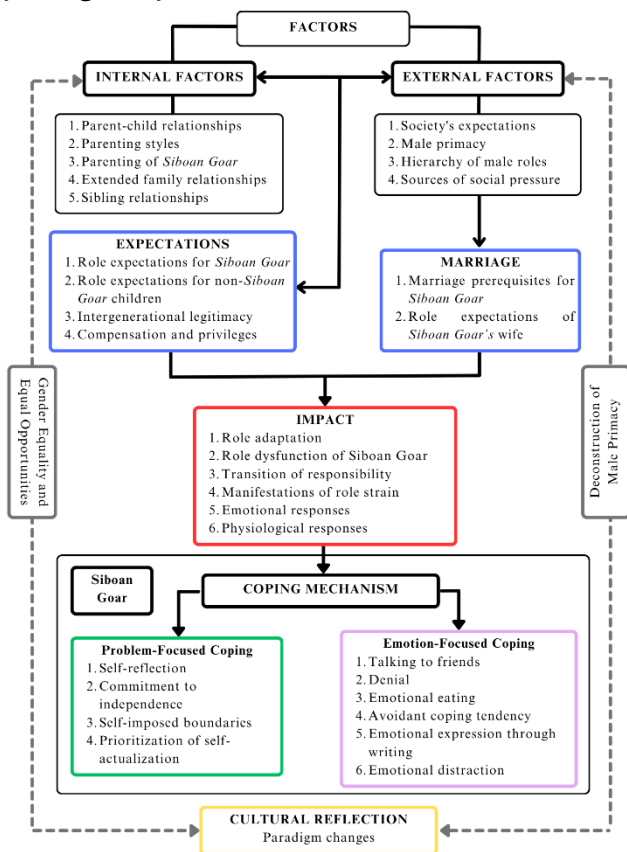
*kalo cerita-cerita di adat, tah di lapo, tah di kede. Kadang udah cerita-cerita bapak-bapak, ah memang anak perempuan itu nya yang betul. Ah, udah ada yang bilang gitu. Karna apa... Karna memang, yaudah gitu lah perubahan sekarang. Jadi anaknya tinggal nggak merantau ya kan. Jadi anak ya di dipikir 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 in gender equality in the modern era. Today, access to education has opened up for girls (*boru*), in fact, they now tend to migrate more frequently to pursue careers and make greater economic contributions to their parents, while boys tend to stay at home. Although according to custom, boys 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 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... (Kalo 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 notes that this paradigm change reflects current realities on the ground, where 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.

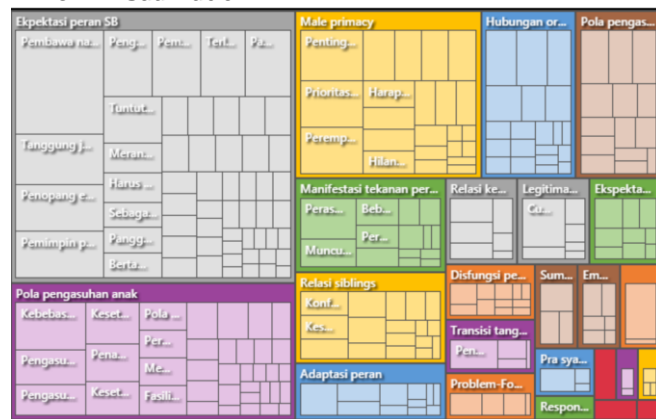
**Psychological Dynamics**



**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 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 theme contributions 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 demands the individual serve as the clan's successor, the economic backbone, the family leader, and the surrogate for the father's role in various traditional and social matters. Psychologically, this massive burden of responsibility triggers parentification, in which the child assumes parental roles through instrumental responsibilities, such as 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).

Both internal and external factors influence the formation of this role burden. From an internal perspective, role internalization occurs through structured upbringing from an early age. *Siboan Goar* typically receives an upbringing that emphasizes independence, reflecting their future role as the family's backbone (Sianturi, 2017). In addition, from an early age, *Siboan Goar* are taught about the traditional customs and *tarombo* (family genealogy), as confirmed by PSS, HSL, and ELS participants. The high expectations parents place on *Siboan Goar* often lead to

preferential treatment, reflecting the phenomenon of parental favoritism (Santos, 2021; Tasya, 2020), where the investment of time and affection is considered 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 sibling'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 (Harajati et al., 2025; Jumira & Khumas, 2025; Tasya, 2020).

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

The *Hagabeon* concept emphasizes the importance of having children, especially sons, and even grandchildren. In fact, there is a popular 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). These findings align with interviews conducted with participants from the *Siboan Goar* HDR, who shared the experience of one of their congregants who has not yet had a male grandchild from his first son (*Siboan Goar*). Because of this, she always feels incomplete since she has not yet had a grandson from *Siboan Goar*.

From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy, self-actualization in Batak Toba society manifests as an existential condition achieved through the fulfillment of 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 occurs when an individual fully embraces these three fundamental values, thereby realizing one's highest potential within the Batak Toba social order.

In Batak Toba society, the presence of a son is the primary measure of an individual's life. Without a male heir, material achievements or high-ranking positions are often viewed as incomplete, as death without a clan successor represents 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 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 respect for parents leads individuals to choose to fulfill these responsibilities (Luthfia et al., 2017).

When the workload 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 that they have failed to meet expectations. These feelings trigger a fear of failure (Prahayuningtyas & Basaria, 2023; Adhity & Suminar, 2022), leading to shame and withdrawal from social activities and traditional rituals. Research by Silaban et al. (2026) reveals that when individuals are unable to meet their culture's ideal standards, it often results in psychological burdens, such as persistent anxiety, feelings of shame, and low self-esteem. In line with this, OPB explains that if *Siboan Goar* fails to fulfill his responsibilities, he may withdraw from traditional gatherings, which may even trigger stress.

In managing role stress, individuals employ coping strategies that, according to Lazarus and Folkman's theory (Steiner & Fletcher, 2017), fall into two categories, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. This study specifically highlights the use of confrontative coping, which is part of a problem-oriented strategy that involves risk-taking, an aggressive approach, and direct communication to address the source of the problem (Suryana, 2022). Sudarji et al. (2022) explain that this approach risks triggering intergenerational conflict. This dynamic is clearly evident in the participant ADY, who chose to adopt an assertive stance to achieve self-actualization amidst family expectations. He consciously provoked recurring conflicts with his parents, however, this pattern consistently ended in his father's passive acceptance, which is presumed to have been exhausted by ADY's persistent pursuit of his ambitions.

The emotion-focused coping evident in these findings manifested 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) is crucial for 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).

This burden of expectation increases significantly when a *Siboan Goar* enters into marriage. As emphasized by ELS participants, 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. HSL participants assert 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 features the emergence of dual responsibilities, requiring them to support their children's needs while simultaneously caring for their parents (Sudarji, 2022). As the main pillar supporting the physical, financial, and emotional aspects of the extended family, *Siboan Goar* has to 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 is hindered because he cannot reconcile his personal aspirations with the customary obligations he cannot abandon. Maslow states that humans have a drive 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* but also involves 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 must assist with traditional expenses and prepare to assume the primary role should *Siboan Goar* be unable to fulfill his duties or pass 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 this burden 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 she 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 still face challenges posed by deeply entrenched traditional customs (Siregar & Amal, 2024; Situmorang, 2021). These findings from the OPB participants, who serve as traditional leader, highlight 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 making room for 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 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 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 offspring. 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 occur 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*.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all the participants who contributed to this study by sharing their experiences during the interviews. Their willingness to engage made this research possible. Additionally, the authors extend their appreciation to the traditional leaders and family members who offered valuable insights into the traditions of the Batak Toba community.

### 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.

### FUNDING

This research did not receive specific funding from any public, commercial, or nonprofit organizations. The authors independently financed the entire study.

### AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

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

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