
The Role of Siangkaran Cultural Values on Work-Life Balance and Performance: A Qualitative Study of Female Weavers at the Unnoni Tenun MSME in North Toraja

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how the cultural value of siangkaran in the Toraja community plays a role in creating work-life balance and influencing the performance of female weavers in the Unnoni community, North Toraja. Siangkaran, as a cultural value emphasizing mutual assistance in work, has become a social practice embedded in the daily lives of the weavers. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 22 participants who are members of the Unnoni weaving group, participatory observation, and documentation of weaving activities. The results indicate that the value of siangkaran allows for a fair distribution of workload, creates a sense of togetherness, and helps the weavers maintain a balance between domestic responsibilities and productive work. Furthermore, siangkaran contributes to improving collective performance, both in terms of timely completion of orders and the quality of the woven products. This study confirms that local cultural values can serve as effective social mechanisms to support the work well-being of women in the informal sector and promote the sustainability of community-based enterprises.

Kata kunci: Siangkaran, Toraja Cultural Values, Work-Life Balance, Performance, Weavers, Qualitative Study

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the traditional weaving sector not only serve as the backbone of the local community's economy but also act as guardians of cultural heritage. In Toraja, weaving is not merely an economic product but also a cultural representation and identity of Toraja that has been passed down through generations. Each woven piece reflects the beauty and complexity of traditional motifs rich with cultural meaning. The creation of woven fabric involves not only technical skills but also a deep understanding of local

cultural values. Therefore, the quality of weaving becomes crucial in preserving the unique cultural characteristics of Toraja amidst the growth of the modern creative industry.

With increasing competition in the creative industry and market demand, weavers are required to not only produce quickly, but also to make it a top priority to ensure product quality. Weaving production is still done manually, which means that the quality of the weaving results is highly dependent on the performance of the weavers in carrying out production.

However, there are challenges that must be faced in an effort to improve performance. According to the results of surveys and interviews that have been conducted, it is known that most weaving craftsmen are women. They carry out the production process in their respective homes. Given that the workplace and personal life often share the same space, weaving craftsmen are faced with the challenge of maintaining a work-life balance. Weavers, most of whom are women, not only have to complete their weaving work, but also face various domestic and social responsibilities in the household. Another challenge is when there are weaving orders that must be completed immediately or there are weaving orders in large quantities.

Maintaining work-life balance is a challenge in itself, considering the pressures of weaving work and family responsibilities often come together. Work-life balance is very important in this context, because maintaining a balance between work and personal life not only improves mental well-being but also supports long-term productivity. Someone who is able to maintain this balance tends to be more productive, more creative in creating quality products, and has higher motivation in working. Research conducted by Muliawati & Frianto (2020) explains that work-life balance has a direct impact on improving performance. A healthy work-life balance is needed to achieve optimal performance. Therefore, creating a work-life balance is important.

In Toraja there are cultural values that serve as guidelines for life that are passed down from generation to generation. One of these cultural values is reflected in efforts to maintain

harmony and peace and maintain community life with neighbors and the surrounding community. This culture is the culture of mutual cooperation which in Toraja society is better known as *siangkaran*. The *siangkaran* culture is not as simple as helping each other but more about how to lift each other up and work together in carrying out an activity. Values, personality, aspects related to work, aspects related to household, leisure time, social support are things that are considered to be able to influence work life balance (Pichler (2009). In this context, these cultural values are manifestations of social capital. In the writing of LJ Hanifan (1916) it is stated that the concept of social capital arises from the idea that individuals in society cannot possibly solve various problems alone, especially since they are social beings. Social capital is simply a series of informal values or norms that are shared among members of a group, allowing cooperation between them (Francis Fukuyama, 2002:22).

Cultural values are considered as a social capital. According to Francis Fukuyama (2002:22) social capital is simply a series of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that enable cooperation between them. According to Putman (1993) social capital is the nature of social life, networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to achieve common goals.

This study focuses on the unique Torajan cultural value of *siangkaran*, which has not been studied in depth in the context of work-life balance (WLB) in traditional sectors such as weaving. This study raises the context of the weaving industry which is a hereditary business in Toraja. Directly linking

how Torajan cultural values affect the performance of weavers through WLB management provides a new contribution to the management literature, especially in the context of SMEs in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study reveals that cultural values, which are often considered as social or moral factors, can also play an important role in improving SME performance.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, this approach focuses on deeply understanding the meaning and role of the cultural values of *siangkaran* in the lives of weavers, especially in relation to their work-life balance and performance. The study was conducted in the Unnoni weaving community located in North Toraja, South Sulawesi. The selection of this location was carried out purposively because this community is known to actively apply *siangkaran* values in their daily practices. The study lasted for approximately three months, namely from January to March 2025. The subjects in this study were 22 female weavers who were members of the Unnoni weaving group. They were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) have been actively weaving for at least two years, (2) live around the Tongkonan Unnoni environment.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques, namely In-depth interviews: Conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore participants' experiences, views, and meanings of the values of *siangkaran*, work-life balance, and their performance. Participatory observation: Researchers conducted

direct observations of weaving activities and social interactions during the collective work process. Documentation study: Includes documents related to the group's history, production records, and photographs of joint weaving activities.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

1. Siangkaran as a Cultural Value that Binds Work Practices

The concept of *siangkaran* holds significant value in the cultural system of the Toraja people, particularly in the context of the Unnoni weaving group. This value goes beyond being a mere symbol of solidarity; it is embedded in the daily work practices of the weavers, playing a crucial role in the way they operate and collaborate. The practice of *siangkaran* involves the mutual assistance of weavers when facing heavy workloads or tight deadlines. It becomes evident that *siangkaran* is not only an ethical guideline but also a strategy for survival in running the joint weaving venture. This sense of collective work stems from the deep bonds of kinship and community closeness among the weavers, emphasizing a communal spirit that transcends individual responsibilities.

Although weaving is performed within each weaver's home, the principle of *siangkaran* ensures that no member faces difficulties alone. When one weaver is struggling due to illness, family obligations, or a high workload, other members voluntarily contribute their time and effort to help. This communal approach creates a safety net for the weavers, ensuring that their personal lives and work responsibilities remain balanced. Such practices reflect the essential values of mutual aid, which serve as both an ethical foundation and a critical strategy in the

pursuit of shared goals. As a result, these practices significantly enhance the overall sustainability of the group and its work output.

The value of *siangkaran* not only improves the immediate performance of the weavers by ensuring a more even distribution of workload, but it also reinforces their collective social capital. Social capital, as defined by scholars such as Fukuyama (2002), refers to the informal values or norms shared among members of a group that enable cooperation and collective action. In the case of the Unnoni weaving group, *siangkaran* functions as a form of social capital, fostering cooperation and trust among the weavers. This social bond ensures that the weavers support each other not only in achieving economic goals but also in maintaining personal well-being.

The practice of *siangkaran* is particularly important for the women weavers, as they are expected to balance work with various domestic duties. Weaving is primarily done from home, providing a certain level of flexibility, but this flexibility also creates the potential for overlap between work and household roles. In this context, the mutual aid system of *siangkaran* acts as a buffer, allowing weavers to maintain a healthy work-life balance. When the demands of weaving intensify, either due to an increase in orders or tight deadlines, the assistance of fellow weavers ensures that personal lives are not compromised. If one member is unable to fulfill her tasks due to illness or family commitments, others willingly step in to share the load. This support system prevents the burnout of

individuals, thereby promoting sustained productivity.

The notion of work-life balance, especially in the informal sector, is closely tied to the social fabric that *siangkaran* creates. Research has shown that when individuals receive social support from their peers, they experience less stress and are more likely to achieve a sustainable balance between work and personal life (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). In this light, *siangkaran* becomes a crucial social mechanism that underpins the well-being of the weavers, allowing them to manage both domestic and economic responsibilities without sacrificing one for the other. The value of collective work, therefore, is not merely an abstract cultural ideal but an essential component of the weavers' ability to perform their roles effectively in the community.

Furthermore, the practice of *siangkaran* directly influences the performance of the weavers. It ensures the timely completion of orders, the consistent quality of woven products, and the maintenance of a positive working atmosphere. The assistance of peers helps prevent delays and ensures that the quality of work remains high, even under pressure. Additionally, the mutual respect and sense of shared responsibility that *siangkaran* fosters contribute to higher motivation and morale. The weavers feel appreciated, supported, and motivated to perform their best because of the collaborative environment in which they operate. This shared effort is critical for ensuring the success of the weaving group and the sustainability of their craft.

This collective approach to work performance aligns with theories of

organizational behavior that emphasize the importance of a supportive work environment. Robbins and Judge (2015) suggest that an environment that promotes trust, cooperation, and mutual respect leads to higher individual and collective performance. In the case of the Unnoni weaving group, the cultural value of *siangkaran* creates such an environment, fostering high levels of intrinsic motivation and a sense of communal responsibility for success.

In conclusion, the cultural value of *siangkaran* plays a pivotal role in shaping the work practices and performance of the weavers in the Unnoni weaving group. It serves as a mechanism for maintaining work-life balance, supporting the well-being of the weavers, and ensuring the efficient and high-quality production of woven goods. By fostering cooperation and solidarity, *siangkaran* not only helps to alleviate the challenges posed by the demands of weaving but also promotes a work environment that enhances productivity and social cohesion. In this sense, *siangkaran* is not just a cultural norm; it is a vital strategy that supports the economic and social sustainability of the weaving group, contributing to the preservation of Toraja's cultural heritage.

This cultural practice reflects the resilience and adaptability of the Toraja people, demonstrating how local values can be integrated into economic activities to improve both individual well-being and collective performance. It also highlights the importance of considering cultural factors in the management of small-scale enterprises, particularly in the context of women in the informal sector. Through *siangkaran*, the weavers are able to

balance their roles as caregivers, workers, and community members, ensuring the longevity of their craft and the continued vibrancy of Toraja culture

2. Siangaran in Maintaining Work-Life Balance

In the Unnoni group, the majority of weavers are women who not only engage in weaving activities but also bear the responsibilities of domestic roles, such as taking care of the household and children, in addition to participating in social activities. This dual role creates a dynamic where work and domestic responsibilities overlap, especially since weaving is often performed at home. Weaving from home provides a level of flexibility, but this flexibility can also lead to the challenge of maintaining a clear boundary between personal life and work.

In response to this, the concept of *siangkaran* plays an essential role in helping these weavers manage the delicate balance between work and personal life. *Siangkaran* is a social mechanism deeply rooted in Torajan culture, emphasizing mutual assistance among community members. This value is particularly significant for women in the Unnoni group, as it enables them to navigate the complexities of both work and domestic roles without having to sacrifice one for the other. When the workload increases, such as during peak production times or when one of the weavers is unable to work due to illness or family obligations, other members of the group step in to help. This mutual support ensures that no individual is overwhelmed, allowing the work to continue while still respecting personal commitments. For

example, if a weaver needs to attend a traditional ceremony, other weavers may take over some of her tasks, demonstrating the collaborative spirit inherent in *siangkaran*.

The presence of such a system reinforces the idea that work-life balance is not solely about individual time management. It is also about the support provided by one's social and cultural environment. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) highlight in their study that work-life balance is significantly influenced by social values and cultural norms, and this is precisely what *siangkaran* provides for the weavers. Rather than focusing solely on managing personal schedules, the cultural value of *siangkaran* ensures that support from the community plays a key role in achieving a balanced life. This cultural practice encourages weavers to share the burdens of both work and family, creating an environment where both productivity and personal well-being are prioritized.

The implications of *siangkaran* extend beyond just work-life balance. The value of mutual support directly impacts the overall performance of the weavers. Performance in this context is not only measured by the volume of woven products but also by the quality of these products and the timeliness with which they are completed. With the collective efforts of the group, the work becomes more efficient, and deadlines are more easily met, even when orders are large or urgent. This collective approach, where tasks are shared and distributed among the group, reduces the pressure on any single individual and ensures that the weaving process remains consistent and high-quality.

Moreover, the presence of *siangkaran* cultivates a positive social environment, which contributes to improved morale and intrinsic motivation among the weavers. When workers feel that they are not isolated in their tasks and that there is a shared responsibility for success, their sense of belonging and appreciation increases. This, in turn, leads to higher motivation and better performance. As Robbins and Judge (2015) argue, a supportive work environment can lead to more optimal performance, and this is evident in the way that *siangkaran* influences the productivity and quality of work within the Unnoni weaving group.

In summary, *siangkaran* serves as a vital cultural mechanism that allows weavers to effectively balance their domestic and work responsibilities while maintaining high levels of performance. This mutual support system demonstrates that work-life balance is not only a personal responsibility but also a communal effort that can be facilitated by cultural values. The ability of the Unnoni weavers to rely on each other, supported by the values of *siangkaran*, ensures that they can continue to produce high-quality woven products while also maintaining their family and social roles. Through this practice, *siangkaran* exemplifies how local cultural values can be harnessed to improve both individual well-being and collective performance in the workplace.

3. Implications of Siangkaran on Weavers' Performance

The value of *siangkaran*, a cultural value deeply rooted in the Toraja community, has significant implications for the performance of

weavers, especially in the context of balancing work and personal life. Siangkaran emphasizes mutual assistance and collective work, which directly influences the productivity and overall performance of the weavers. The influence of this cultural value extends beyond mere output; it encompasses the quality, timeliness, and consistency of the woven products. Weaving in the Toraja community is not just a technical skill, but a practice embedded in cultural traditions that require both individual and collective efforts.

In the context of weavers in North Toraja, siangkaran facilitates the efficient division of labor, particularly in situations when there is an overwhelming amount of work or tight deadlines. The system of mutual assistance within the community alleviates the burden on individual weavers, ensuring that the production process does not rely on one person alone. This practice is crucial, especially when large orders need to be fulfilled within short timeframes. Through siangkaran, the community ensures that the workload is fairly distributed, and the pressure is shared, thus improving the overall efficiency of the production process.

Moreover, the system creates a supportive and conducive work environment that plays a vital role in the psychological well-being of the weavers. They are not left to navigate the challenges of weaving alone, and this support system helps in reducing feelings of isolation. The mutual assistance not only enhances the work atmosphere but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the collective efforts. When weavers feel appreciated and supported, their

intrinsic motivation is heightened, which leads to better overall performance. This alignment with psychological theories of motivation, such as those proposed by Robbins and Judge (2015), demonstrates that a supportive, emotionally safe, and socially cohesive work environment encourages optimal performance, both individually and collectively.

In addition to improving performance, siangkaran contributes to maintaining a work-life balance, a crucial aspect of well-being for female weavers in the Unnoni community. Many of the weavers juggle domestic responsibilities with their weaving tasks, which often overlap. This dual responsibility can lead to stress and burnout if not properly managed. However, the cultural value of siangkaran helps mitigate this challenge. When weavers face difficulties, such as illness or family obligations, other members of the group step in to help with their tasks. This assistance prevents the weaver from having to sacrifice personal or domestic life to meet the demands of work. The work-life balance, thus, is not solely reliant on individual time management but is also supported by the social structure of mutual assistance within the group.

The significance of maintaining work-life balance extends beyond mental well-being; it is directly linked to enhanced productivity and work quality. Research by Muliawati and Frianto (2020) supports this view, stating that a healthy work-life balance improves an individual's performance. In the case of the Toraja weavers, the balance facilitated by siangkaran allows for a sustained level of motivation and creativity, which is

essential in producing high-quality woven products. The ability to fulfill domestic and work responsibilities simultaneously without excessive stress contributes to the weavers' continued enthusiasm and commitment to their craft.

Furthermore, the role of *siangkaran* as a form of social capital cannot be overlooked. Cultural values like *siangkaran* serve as informal norms and values that enable cooperation and trust within the community. As Fukuyama (2002) and Putnam (1993) suggest, social capital—comprising networks, norms, and trust—allows individuals to work together more effectively to achieve common goals. In the case of the weavers in the Unnoni group, this social capital is not only a cultural asset but also an economic one, as it contributes to the success and sustainability of the weaving business. The weavers' ability to work together in a cooperative, supportive environment enhances their collective economic performance, ensuring that they can meet market demands while preserving their cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the value of *siangkaran* plays an essential role in shaping the work practices and performance of the weavers in North Toraja. It helps to maintain a balance between their work and personal lives, encourages a positive and supportive work environment, and enhances both productivity and quality. As such, *siangkaran* not only contributes to the success of individual weavers but also strengthens the collective performance

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of the community as a whole. The cultural value of mutual assistance fosters an environment that is conducive to optimal performance, emotional well-being, and sustainable economic activities. Ultimately, *siangkaran* exemplifies how local cultural values can act as a catalyst for improving both the social and economic outcomes for small-scale, community-based enterprises.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Torajan cultural values, especially *siangkaran*, play a central role in shaping work patterns, maintaining life balance, and improving the performance of weavers in the Unnoni weaving group in North Toraja. *Siangkaran* is not just a form of mutual cooperation, but has become a life principle that regulates social and work relations in the community. In practice, this value is applied through the habit of helping each other in completing weaving orders, especially when the workload is high.

Working from home allows weavers to flexibly perform both domestic and work roles, but there is a risk of imbalance between the two. In this case, *siangkaran* becomes an effective cultural solution to maintain work-life balance, because weavers are not left to face work pressures alone.

This collective value also contributes to better performance, both in terms of time efficiency, consistency of weaving quality, and work spirit. Thus, *siangkaran* not only functions as a cultural norm, but also as a relevant communal work strategy in the context of a culture-based creative economy.

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