

## The Struggle of *Sinden*: Female Artists, Family Economy, and Religious Identity in Art

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the role, contribution, and convergence of the *Sinden* (traditional female singer) profession in strengthening the family economy while navigating the challenges of religious identity in Solo, Central Java. This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm and a phenomenological approach. The data collection technique uses in-depth interviews with active *Sinden* informants with dual roles as housewives and artists. The results of the study indicate that the economic contribution of the head of the family includes the role of an economic safety valve, household financial manager, and teamwork builder in the family. The study also reveals a convergence between religious beliefs and their profession, as *Sinden*. Despite the ambiguity of this profession in religious communities, primarily due to stage performances that do not strictly adhere to Islamic guidelines, *Sinden* consistently upholds standards of modesty, religious principles, and their dignity as Muslim women. This study contributes to providing an overview of the dualism of women's roles in the context of Javanese-Islamic culture, which adds insight into the complex interactions between gender, economy, art, and religion in the lives of contemporary traditional societies.

**Keywords:** *sinden*, cultural heritage, family economy, religious identity

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## A. Introduction

The interplay between Islam and Javanese culture is characterized by a reciprocal influence, where Islam adapts to local customs, and Javanese culture is enriched by Islamic values (Malik & Maslahah, 2021). This fusion results in a distinctive blend, evident in various aspects of Javanese life (Liasari & Badrun, 2022). *Wayang kulit*, a traditional shadow puppet performance, exemplifies this cultural acculturation, showcasing interconnected yet distinct values and symbols (Mibtadin & Masfiah, 2023). This acculturation occurs when cultural values align with Islamic principles, leading to selective societal adaptation (Januar & Pranata, 2024).

The *Sinden* (female singer) plays a crucial role in Javanese cultural performances, conveying moral messages and bridging local culture with Islamic teachings (Saepudin, 2024). The *Sinden* fosters harmony between art, economy, and religious identity (Andes, 2024). The image of a *Pesinden* (another term for *Sinden*) is often associated with Javanese women's identity (Quail Mass, 2000), holding appeal and a crucial role in cultural performances (Munawir & Halimah, 2011; Setiawan, 2020). A *Pesinden* not only sings but also comprehends and appreciates the cultural roots of their art (Munawir & Halimah, 2011; Setiawan, 2020). *Sinden* are an integral part of *karawitan* (Javanese vocal music) and *wayang* performances (Apriliyanti, 2021; Putri Anjani & Supriaza, 2022; Supanggah, 1988; Walton, 1996).

Despite the UN's emphasis on women's economic empowerment and its inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Adefare et al., 2023; Amancio & Santos, 2021; Dias, 2021; Diouf, 2019; Ghouse et al., 2021; Klugman & particularly in traditional arts like *Sinden*, remains limited (Buvinic et al., 2022; Firmansyah & Sihaloho, 2021; Riyanto et al., 2023; Suminah, 2020). This limited participation may be attributed to social perceptions, gender stereotypes (Bhasin & Kamla, 1996; Su et al., 2023), and limited career choices for women in the arts (Sukmawati & Maryanti, 2021; Buvinic et al., 2022). Societal perceptions of traditional art professions as less popular and the belief that artistic talent is a prerequisite also contribute to this limitation (Firmansyah & Sihaloho, 2021; Riyanto et al., 2023; Suminah, 2020). The issues further exacerbate challenges in the arts, including a lack of artistic insight and societal stereotypes about women's roles (Bhasin & Kamla, 1996; Su et al., 2023). Economic empowerment aims to increase family income and welfare (Firmansyah & Sihaloho, 2021; Puspitasari, 2012).

Walton (1996), in *"Heavenly Nymphs and Earthy Delights: Javanese Female Singers, Their Music, and Their Lives,"* clarifies that while a *Pesinden*'s voice may stand out in gamelan music, this prominence does not equate to her being a leader or

primary reference point, differing from a vocalist's role in a Western orchestra (Walton, 1996; Putri Anjani & Supriaza, 2022). The *Pesinden* is a woman who adds a different nuance to the vibrant dominance of men over the gamelan (Walton, 1996; Putri Anjani & Supriaza, 2022). *Pesinden* offers honor and allows women to improve family welfare by earning extra income, contributing to household stability, and harmonizing their roles as housewives and income earners, thus advancing the entertainment arts (Ardanawati et al., 2018).

The role of a *Pesinden* extends beyond artistry to encompass economic contributions to the family (Ardanawati et al., 2018). This role aligns with sociological concepts of roles, where individuals fulfill functions based on their positions (Soerjono, 1997; Suhardono, 1994). These dual roles—wife, mother, and career woman—coexist with domestic responsibilities (Singh & Pattanaik, 2020; Tumbaga et al., 2017). Studies on the wives of fishermen and farmers have similarly highlighted their economic contributions (Nurulmi, 2017; Rostiyati, 2018). While existing research touches on magical aspects (Rosyadi, 2015) or cultural representation of *Pesinden* in media (Dewi, 2013; Kurniawan & Pradita, 2014), a specific analysis of the *Pesinden's* dual role in strengthening family economies is lacking, particularly in the Solo.

Addressing this gap, research aims to examine the Role, Contribution, and Convergence of *Pesinden* in Strengthening Family Economics in Solo. Solo was purposefully selected due to its rich cultural heritage and tourism potential, particularly concerning historical and cultural sites. The research aims to inform policy development and support systems for female traditional artists, contribute to the preservation of *Sinden* art, offer a gendered perspective within art and economic studies, and provide a case study of the resilience and adaptability of these female artists.

## B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytic design to explore the multifaceted roles of *Sinden* within the context of family economics and religious identity in Solo. Qualitative research is particularly suited for examining complex social phenomena and understanding the perspectives of individuals within their natural settings (Sugiyono, 2021; Yusuf, 2017). The descriptive-analytic method allows for a detailed examination of the *Sinden's* experiences, followed by an in-depth analysis of the underlying themes and patterns (Masyhuri & Zainuddin, 2011; Noor, 2012).

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on *Sinden* residing in Solo and its surrounding areas who actively perform dual roles as artists and contributors to their family's economic well-being. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers rely on their judgment to choose participants with specific characteristics relevant to the research questions (Azwar, 2004). Seven *Sinden* (N=7) were selected based on their experience, willingness to participate, and ability to articulate their experiences. The informants' identities and codes are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Research Informants*

Informant Identity	Age	Informant Code
EA	28	N1
R	36	N2
RVO	32	N3
YS	34	N4
RI	29	N5
NW	35	N6
MK	28	N7

Data collection primarily involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the selected *Sinden*. Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible framework for exploring key themes while allowing emergent topics to be discussed (Masyhuri & Zainuddin, 2011). The interview guide covered topics such as:

1. Motivations for pursuing a career as a *Sinden*.
2. The *Sinden*'s contribution to the family economy.
3. Strategies for balancing artistic pursuits with domestic responsibilities.
4. Experiences in navigating religious beliefs and cultural expectations.
5. Perceptions of the *Sinden*'s role in preserving cultural heritage.

Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded (with informed consent), and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Field notes were also taken during and after the interviews to capture contextual information and non-verbal cues.

The data analysis followed a thematic approach, as Braun and Clarke (2006) described. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The process involved the following steps:

1. Familiarization: Transcripts were read and re-read to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data.
2. Coding: Initial codes were generated by systematically identifying meaningful segments of text related to the research questions.
3. Theme Development: Codes were grouped into broader themes based on shared meanings and patterns.
4. Theme Review: Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness.
5. Theme Definition and Naming: Each theme was clearly defined and given a descriptive name.
6. Report Writing: The final step involved writing a detailed narrative of the findings, supported by illustrative quotes from the participants.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed (Yusuf, 2017):

1. Triangulation: Data was triangulated by comparing information obtained from different informants and cross-referencing it with relevant literature.
2. Member Checking: Preliminary findings were shared with the participants to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences.
3. Peer Debriefing: The research process and findings were discussed with experienced qualitative researchers to obtain feedback and identify potential biases.
4. Thick Description: Detailed and contextualized descriptions of the participants' experiences were provided to allow readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other settings.

This research aims to provide a subtle and insightful understanding of the *Sinden's* role in strengthening family economies and navigating religious identity in Solo by adhering to these rigorous methodological principles.

## C. Results and Discussion

The research data were obtained from qualified informants and experts in their respective fields. The researcher conducted interviews with *Pesinden* who have dual roles within the family, specifically from Solo and its surrounding areas. The

research data consists of the results of interviews collected by the researcher during the study, then processed and elaborated using data analysis. It is discussed in the following subsection.

### **Background of *Pesinden* Performing Dual Roles in the Household**

Economic conditions play a crucial role in determining a family's well-being. Limited resources and the ability to meet basic needs are common problems many families face (Friedline et al., 2021). Furthermore, the economy not only affects material well-being but also determines the harmony and stability of the family as a whole (Khan et al., 2021). In the context of the family economy, women play a multifaceted and strategic role in the household, including the roles of wife, mother, worker, and community member. Their contribution is significant in managing family finances, redistributing income, and allocating consumption, directly impacting the family's economic condition (Mulyanto, 2006).

The roles and responsibilities of women in the household generally have apparent differences compared to the roles of men, who are continually positioned as heads of households (Sear, 2021). These differences reflect the specific capacities and abilities possessed by women. Traditionally, the role of women in the family is divided into two main aspects: the role of a wife who focuses on serving her husband and the role of a mother who includes the responsibility to give birth, raise, care for, and protect all family members. In addition, women actively working in the public sector have an additional professional responsibility. Not only are women limited to the domestic and professional realms, but they also have an important role as members of society, where their existence and contribution are recognized as an integral part of the social environment in which they live (Ramadani, 2016).

Economic incentives are often the primary motivation for women to work, aiming to meet the family's daily needs, including food, children's education costs, installment payments, and various other needs. From the perspective of Maqashid Sharia, the role of women who contribute to improving the household economy can be categorized as a struggle to achieve a prosperous and sufficient life (Nirmalasari & Putri, 2022).

Socio-economic problems, especially those related to basic living needs, are complex fundamental challenges requiring comprehensive solutions. The significant involvement of women in the social sphere and control of family economic resources has the potential to open up opportunities for women's dominance in the decision-making process related to household management or control of available resources (Kusnadi, 2015).

Regarding domestic responsibilities, the role of the wife is not only limited to managing household finances but also includes the responsibility to provide additional funds for the family. Women work mostly because their husbands' income is insufficient to meet family needs or the husband's income does not meet expectations. In this context, wives, like female singers (*Pesinden*), tend to choose flexible jobs that do not interfere with their central role in taking care of the household (Adil et al., 2022).

The results of interviews with several female singers (*Pesinden*) indicate that several factors influence their dual roles within the household, including:

1. Economic Factor

The involvement of women in public sector jobs boosts household incomes (Junaidi, 2023). There are so many opportunities in the arts that can lead to greater economic productivity. The variety of roles within artistic professions allows women to explore different paths, helping to gain independence and empowering them to make meaningful contributions to the workforce. Economic pressure as a reason for the *Sinden* to work was expressed by research informants, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
*Matrix of Statements About Economic Factor*

Statement	Informant
<i>To meet the living needs and help the family's economy</i>	N2
<i>Besides being a wife and mother, she also wants to help with the family finances."</i>	N6
<i>Because of my background in the arts and the ability to help the family's economy, of course</i>	N4
<i>The demand for the family's economic needs</i>	N5

The interviews above show that wives who work to earn a living are motivated by the desire to assist the family's economy. They hope to meet household needs and save for a future life. The role of women in the arts sector is not simply driven by interest or talent but also by pressing economic demands. The insufficient family economic circumstances encourage women to pursue alternative additional income, where the profession of *Sinden* is seen as a realistic and potential opportunity.

This choice also confirms that women are no longer limited to domestic roles but actively take on productive roles supporting the family economy. *Sinden* represents women's socio-economic adaptation to economic challenges and pressures. Women take advantage of the opportunities available in the arts to gain economic independence while contributing significantly to family welfare. This finding aligns with the research results of Junaidi (2023), who emphasized that women's involvement in the public sector, including the arts, can increase household income and strengthen women's economic position in society.

## 2. Career Women

In the present era, women are no longer restricted by traditional norms that confine them to domestic roles such as staying at home, remaining passive, and being solely responsible for childcare. Pursuing a professional career has become an aspiration many women share (Due et al., 2021). Women can generate significant income and achieve greater independence by leveraging their talents and skills. Moreover, this process contributes to their personal and economic empowerment. The city of Solo, recognized as a prominent epicenter of traditional arts in Indonesia, presents diverse opportunities for women to establish professional careers within the arts sector (Singh & Pattanaik, 2020). This evolving landscape reflects the increasing opportunities for women's self-actualization and active participation in various aspects of public life. It is consistent with the interview result with N7:

"There is a desire to become an independent woman or wife in terms of income." (N7, 2024)

The various interview results described previously show that the involvement of a *Pesinden* in earning a living is not solely driven by economic needs but also by a strong drive to build a career and self-actualization. In other words, job opportunities in the arts sector provide space for women, especially wives, to take an active role in the public sphere. It reflects a shift in the social paradigm, where women are no longer positioned as passive supporters of the family economy but also as subjects with professional aspirations and a desire to develop their potential. This phenomenon also indicates that women are taking advantage of opportunities to expand their contributions outside the domestic sphere, thereby strengthening economic autonomy and increasing their participation in society's social and cultural development.

## 3. Talent Utilization

Maintaining individuality is an essential aspect of marital life for both couples. In the context of a husband-wife relationship, it is imperative that both parties actively



express their identities authentically and optimally. In social construction, a wife comprehends and internalizes their social roles, constructively channeling their talents and abilities while adhering to normative expectations and embracing their inherent nature as a woman. Affirming individuality within domestic and public spheres can enhance familial harmony and facilitate healthy self-actualization. This process necessitates a critical awareness of the distinction between socially constructed roles and individuals' intrinsic needs. On the other hand, they navigate their dual responsibilities by striving for equilibrium between personal aspirations, familial obligations, and evolving social norms. This practice supports the creation of resilient families and encourages women to continue developing according to their potential and character within the corridor of values society upholds (Couprie et al., 2019). The interviews with respondents describe the dual role of women as singers and wives as follows. As stated by N7:

“Being a Sinden is not just about earning income; it is a hobby. Therefore, I gladly embrace the dual roles within the household. Sinden is my hobby, so my husband always supports and responds positively as long as what I do can benefit others. Of course, I must understand my limits and roles, namely my responsibilities as a wife and my professional duties.” (N7, 2024)

Similarly, N2 expressed their perspective on *Sinden* activities:

“As a way to develop or channel talents by pursuing a career as a Sinden.” (N2, 2024)

Based on the results of interviews with respondents, it was revealed that women in the *Sinden* profession actively integrate their dual roles in both the domestic and professional spheres by interpreting these activities as a form of self-actualization and an expression of individual identity. Respondent N7 emphasized that being a *Sinden* is not solely for economic income but as a form of personal hobby that gains legitimacy and positive support from partners so that they can adequately manage the boundaries between family obligations and professional activities.

In line with the perspective of Couprie et al. (2019), women's dual roles can contribute positively to creating resilient families and enable women to achieve self-actualization healthily and harmoniously. On the other hand, respondent N2 emphasized that the profession as a *Sinden* is a strategic means to develop one's professional potential. It is also in line with the findings of Nirmalasari and Putri (2022) that modern women can increasingly flexibly navigate traditional social expectations to develop personal aspirations as long as they get social support and a critical understanding of gender roles. Thus, women as *Sinden* demonstrate adaptability in balancing personal aspirations with social norms through a critical understanding of the limitations and opportunities that exist in their environment.

4. Relaxation

Kesselmen & Women (1999) stated that domestic work accomplished by women is tiring and time-consuming. Women's domestic workload requires special skills, which can drain energy and time. Meanwhile, men's participation in domestic activities is still relatively sporadic because, culturally, most men are still identified as the primary breadwinner. Therefore, women need to relax or have free time to lighten the burden of domestic responsibilities they carry. It was reflected in the statement of respondent N3:

“The economic support for the family, channeling a hobby, relaxation, or entertainment amidst the busy household duties.” (N3, 2024)

Based on what the respondents expressed, the factors that influence *Sinden* in performing dual roles to strengthen the family economy can be concluded, as described in Table 3.

**Table 3.**  
*Matrix of Factors Influencing Sinden in Performing Dual Roles*

Factors/Informants	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7
Economic Factor	v	v	v	v	v	v	
Career Woman							v
Talent Utilization		v	v				v
Relaxation			v				

*Source: Processed from research findings*

**Contribution of *Sinden* to Strengthening the Family Economy**

Working part-time or full-time means that women already contribute as income earners (production). Domestic tasks are still considered the wife's responsibility, and husbands rarely get involved in managing the household and children intensively. Today, many women earn more than their husbands and remain dominant in caring for the children and the family.(Parker et al., 1992) Women's participation in or role in the workforce has significantly contributed to family welfare, especially in the economic sector. It is reflected in the interviews with *Sinden*, where the contribution of wives in strengthening the household economy is as follows:

1. Safety Valve

A wife's contribution can be considered a support or safety valve for the household in fulfilling daily needs or unexpected expenses. The efforts of wives to

play a dual role have a positive impact on the household economy. The income earned by the wife adds to the family's income, which initially relied solely on the husband's income. The additional income from the wife increases the household's income and automatically raises the household's needs fulfillment. In this case, the household economy can improve, strengthening the household economy (Mandel et al., 2020).

Several informants also convey this regarding a wife's contribution, as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.**  
*Matrix of Statements About Safety Valve*

Statement	Informant
<i>Mutually strengthening and reminding each other to achieve the family's economic well-being.</i>	N1
<i>Her effort is to combine the primary salary (from her work as a traditional singer) and the husband's income for primary needs, such as monthly groceries, children's school expenses, home renovations, and insurance. Meanwhile, additional income, such as tips or earnings from my online sales (including hair accessories, cosmetics, and others), is used for secondary needs, such as transportation costs, outings, buying performance costumes, etc.</i>	N3
<i>Working (as a traditional singer) provides additional income. The wife works according to her role, meaning she is not dominant in the household to maintain harmony and fulfill her duties as a housewife.</i>	N5
<i>Saving part of the earnings from singing for the children's future</i>	N6

The contribution of a housewife's income to the family income highlights that the informants' earnings as informal sector workers are used to meet the family's needs. If the informants are not engaged in employment, the household's income will experience a substantial decline, which in turn may lead to the inability to fulfill essential family needs. Sugeng Haryanto concludes that women have the potential to contribute to insufficient household income (Haryanto, 2016). Other studies indicate that the income of female workers in the garment industry significantly contributes to increasing family income and serves as a safety valve or support for poor households to meet basic daily needs. Regarding women's contribution as workers, the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Report on Women's Economic Empowerment states that women still perform unpaid work, such as household

chores, and have limited access to paid jobs compared to men, often concentrated in low-value sectors.(Klugman & Tyson, 2016). The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that if women participated equally in the economy with men, global GDP would increase by up to \$28 trillion, or 26%, by 2025 (Others, 2015).

## 2. Financial Manager

Starting from the definition of management, the goal is to be achieved by utilizing the activities of others, and the activities of others must be guided and supervised (Stoner, 1996). The family is a prototype of how management can be run. Managing family finances is crucial because both the quantity and quality of family finances can maximize the family's prosperity materially and spiritually, and all family members can develop their potential according to their talents and abilities.

Managing family finances means managing all income or receipts, both routine (continuous) and incidental (intermittent). The allocation or expenditure of financial resources should not surpass the total income earned, although funds may be supplemented through borrowing if necessary. However, it is important to recognize that debt can serve as both a safeguard and a potential risk. In situations with a surplus of funds, prudent financial management dictates that such excess should be allocated towards investment activities to secure future needs or retirement. However, it is important to be cautious of "fraudulent investments" (Whit et al., 2020). The allocation of financial resources should be harmonized with all available sources in alignment with established plans and intended purposes. Similarly, both the realization and targets of financial management should be set realistically. Regular evaluation and reflection on family financial practices are essential to ensure financial health and sustainability.

The importance of money in human life, especially in the family, is not simply about the amount of money owned but also about how to use the money earned for the family's happiness. Proper management of family finances is needed to maximize and optimize the money owned to benefit family life. By managing family finances, it is expected that the use of money within the family can be effective and efficient according to the family's needs, leading to a prosperous family with accepted methods for completing important tasks (Horton & Hunt, 2006).

The following statements from informants N4 and N7 are related to the contribution of a wife as a financial manager:

"In a household, the wife's role is as the treasurer responsible for managing household finances." (N4, 2024)

"Always maintain good communication with the husband so that the wife understands the economic goals of the household, and in turn, the wife will be more careful in managing the family's finances." (N7, 2024)

From the data above, the contribution of the traditional female singer (*Pesinden*) in strengthening the household economy shows that the wife contributes according to her proportion. Furthermore, in a household, the wife contributes to the household income and is also responsible for managing the finances.

The traditional singer takes on a public role as a manifestation of her responsibility to sustain her household. Harmonizing domestic and public activities contributes to the wife's optimal role as a wife, mother of the children, and economic pillar of the household (Kusnadi et al., 2006). Therefore, women are potential human resources that can be utilized for empowerment and community development (Kusnadi et al., 2006).

### 3. Team Builder

Addressing household needs as part of adaptive household strategies entails the implementation of a division of labor, which is typically established through mutual agreement between spouses. In this case, the wife's role in supporting household activities is proven to be quite significant, especially when considering the types of activities performed and the dominance in managing and organizing household activities (Keshavarz & Moqadas, 2021). Consequently, the socio-economic potential wives possess is substantial and should not be overlooked, given their dual role as economic contributors and homemakers (Kusnadi et al., 2006).

Interviews with Informants on the Wife's Role as a Team Builder are described in Table 5 below:

**Table 5.**  
*Matrix of Statements About Team Builder*

Statement	Informants
<i>Cooperation and good communication with the husband are required to determine goals.</i>	N4
<i>Cooperating with the family, especially the husband, to schedule in such a way that there are no problems when each performs additional income-generating activities</i>	N5
<i>Always maintain good communication with the husband so the wife understands the household's economic goals; this way, the wife will be more careful in managing the family's finances.</i>	N7

The interview findings indicate a collaborative approach to the division of labor between fathers and mothers, wherein the father predominantly assumes responsibilities within the public sphere as the principal provider for the household. In contrast, the mother occupies the domestic work domain, which some define as a mother with three functions: cooking, giving birth, and beautifying herself (Washfi, 2005; Dernberger & Pepin, 2020). The success of a family in creating a prosperous household is closely related to the role of a woman (wife). Women also engage in income-generating activities (Ichsan Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). This phenomenon arises due to the inadequacy of the husband's primary earnings to sufficiently fulfill household needs or enhance overall family welfare (Arsini, 2014).

As mentioned above, women often engage in informal jobs, such as working in the arts (traditional singers or "*Pesinden*") and their roles as housewives. It is accomplished as an effort to earn additional income for the family. Thus, when facing economic vulnerability and poverty, women are burdened with ensuring the household's survival (Kusnadi et al., 2006). In social sciences, a role refers to a person's function when holding a particular position, and they can perform their role because of their position (Suhardono, 1994). A role is a dynamic aspect of one's status, and when a person performs their rights and obligations according to their position, they are carrying out a role (Soerjono, 1997). A dual role means playing two or more roles simultaneously. In this case, the role refers to a woman's duties as a wife to her husband, a mother to her children, and a woman with a career outside the home. This dual role is performed alongside the wife's and mother's responsibilities in the family, such as being a partner to the husband in maintaining the household and taking care of and educating the children (Tumbage et al., 2017). The concept of dualism describes the existence of both a domestic sphere and a public sphere (Tumbage et al., 2017).

Women have important roles and positions as wives, mothers, workers, and community members. Women play a pivotal role in the dynamics of household management, exercising significant control over financial administration, the redistribution of income, and the allocation of household expenditures (Mulyanto, 2006). Within the household structure, women typically possess distinct spheres of authority and responsibilities compared to men, who traditionally occupy the role of the household head. These tasks correspond to the capacities that women possess. A woman's role within the family is divided into two: as a wife, she must serve the husband, and as a mother, her responsibility is to give birth to children, care for them, and nurture and protect the family members. Women who work outside the home also have responsibilities related to their jobs. Lastly, as a member

of society, a woman has a role beyond being a housewife or worker; she also plays a role in her community to ensure her recognition as a member of society (Ramadani, 2016; Kabullah & Fajri, 2021).

Based on data revealed by the informants, the researcher has created a matrix of factors underlying the traditional singer's (*Sinden*) dual role in strengthening family economics, as follows:

**Table 6.**

*Contribution of Traditional Singers (Sinden) in Strengthening Family Economy*

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>N1</b>	<b>N2</b>	<b>N3</b>	<b>N4</b>	<b>N5</b>	<b>N6</b>	<b>N7</b>
Safety Valve	v	v	v		v	v	
Financial Manager			v	v			v
Team Builder				v	v		v

*Source: Processed from research findings*

### **Convergence of Religious Beliefs with the Profession of *Sinden***

Performing arts generally involve three areas: the artist, the audience, and the spectators (Anoegrajekti, 2016). Notably, in traditional cultural performances such as wayang (puppet theatre), the presence and function of the *Pesinden* (female traditional singer) command particular attention from the audience, positioning her as a central subject of scholarly inquiry. Wayang performances fulfill multiple societal roles: they serve as a medium for enlightenment and education, embody and transmit aesthetic values, provide a source of livelihood for artists, and function as a form of social entertainment. Furthermore, these performances operate as a means of social guidance and order, offering spectacle and normative instruction to their audiences.

In religious societies, especially those that adhere to Islamic values, *Sinden* are often regarded ambiguously. The *Pesinden* occupy a crucial position as custodians of cultural heritage within traditional performances. Nevertheless, their appearance attracts scrutiny, particularly from those who assess conformity to Sharia norms, as many *Pesinden* do not consistently cover the aurat. This situation largely stems from the aesthetic and traditional demands of the stage, which typically do not require or encourage wearing the hijab or entirely modest attire. As such, the performance context frequently places *Pesinden* at the intersection of cultural preservation and religious expectation, generating ongoing debates regarding appropriate representation and religious observance in the public sphere. It is a challenge for Muslim women who want to remain in this profession but also want to be consistent

in fulfilling religious obligations. The absence of hijab in performances is often not merely a personal choice but part of the traditional art world's cultural standards and aesthetic expectations.

Islam does not reject any profession as long as it does not conflict with the basic principles of religion, one of which is the obligation to cover the aurat. However, in practice, a wiser and more contextual approach is needed. As mentioned in the study of Mutmainnah et al. (2023), Islam judges a profession not simply by its form but also by its intention, process, and benefits. It means that the space for compromise remains open if a Muslimah *Sinden* tries to maintain possible limits, avoid elements that directly contradict Sharia, and make the stage an educational and cultural medium.

Islamic work ethics prioritizing responsibility, sincere intentions, and contribution to social good become the meeting point between religion and culture. Research by Hadi et al. (2023) and Pasaribu et al. (2023) reveals that spirituality in the workplace can shape ethical professional behavior, even in environments that are not totally Islamic. In the context of *Sinden*, a Muslim woman can begin to form a cultural negotiation space by still showing a religious attitude through speech, self-presentation, and performance content with educational and moral values. The *Sinden* does not wear hijab in the performance, which does not necessarily mean that the *Sinden* profession becomes contrary to Islamic values. This challenge can be an inclusive cultural da'wah space, showing that Muslim women can become cultural artists without abandoning their religious identity.

Based on the above description, this study examines informants' responses regarding combining religious beliefs with their profession as a *Pesinden*. It is critical when considering that performances involving *Pesinden* prioritize spectacle, guidance, and order.

Interviews with Informants about the convergence of religious beliefs with the profession of *Pesinden* are described in Table 6 below:

**Table 7.**  
*Matrix of Statements About Convergence of Religious Beliefs*

Statement	Informants
<i>A wife does not need to work, but nowadays, many roles have shifted, making it more comfortable for wives to work than stay home.</i>	N3
<i>Art's perspective is different from religion's, especially in performance.</i>	N4



<i>I am still in a dilemma and want to migrate soon because when performing as a Pesinden, I have been unable to cover my aurat fully. I perform in wayang shows, and so far, my income is, InshaAllah, halal because it still adheres to norms of decency. My husband can provide for the family, but it is not enough, so I want to help him by working as a Pesinden and channeling my talents and education.</i>	N5
<i>Yes, but we must not forget the obligation to perform prayers, even if they have to be combined.</i>	N6
<i>In my religion, there is no prohibition for a wife who wants to work as long as the method does not deviate from religious teachings. It means that as a person, one must always maintain decency and the dignity of women, especially for those who are married. The songs performed by the Pesinden contain many moral teachings for humans.</i>	N7

A critical reflection on the responses provided by the *Pesinden* reveals a shared acknowledgment that their performance attire does not fully conform to the standards of aurat coverage, particularly concerning covering the head with a hijab. This admission highlights an ongoing negotiation between the aesthetic requirements of traditional performances and the religious expectations about modesty, underscoring the complex interplay between cultural practices and religious norms within their professional roles. It is due to the demands of their profession as *Pesinden*, which predominantly follows Javanese traditions with traditional Javanese clothing. However, they recognize that holding firm to their religious beliefs allows them to discern what is appropriate or acceptable to present. They focus on maintaining the norms of decency and the dignity of women in the performing arts profession.

## D. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion of the data on the dual roles of wives who work as *Pesinden* in strengthening household economies, it can be concluded that the factors behind their decision to take on dual roles within the family stem from various motivations. These include economic demands, the aspiration to become a career woman, the need to channel artistic talents, and the pursuit of emotional well-being and Relaxation. These roles are not merely a matter of survival but also an expression of identity and agency within a changing socio-economic landscape.

The contributions of *Pesinden* in strengthening the family economy are significant. They serve as a safety valve in times of financial difficulty, act as skilled

financial managers within the household, and function as essential team-builders, contributing to the family's material and emotional stability. Their work provides supplementary—and sometimes primary—income, which can be pivotal in achieving household resilience.

Significantly, the role of *Pesinden* cannot be separated from the socio-cultural and religious context of Java, where Islam is the predominant faith. The relationship between the profession of *Pesinden* and Islamic values is one of ongoing negotiation and reconciliation. While their public role as performers may be viewed with suspicion in some conservative circles, many *Pesinden* actively align their work with religious principles. This convergence is manifested in how they organize their behavior on and off stage—upholding norms of modesty, maintaining personal dignity, and striving to elevate the moral image of women in the performing arts.

The life of a *Pesinden* becomes a site of cultural struggle and spiritual resilience. They are artists, breadwinners, and women of faith who navigate complex expectations to preserve their family's welfare and personal integrity. Their journey reflects the broader experience of many Javanese Muslim women who balance tradition and modernity, faith and profession, devotion and expression.

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