

The Transformation of Majelis Taklim in Digital Literacy and Women's Economic Empowerment: A Study of Islamic Community Development in Metro City

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Abstract

This study examines the institutional transformation of grassroots socio-religious institutions, specifically highlighting the shifting role of Majelis Taklim in Purwosari Subdistrict, Metro City. This shift occurs from a mere space for doctrinal transmission into an arena for socio-economic empowerment. Amid information disruption, women who constitute the primary demographic base of the majelis are often marginalized by asymmetric access to technology. Therefore, this study aims to dissect the nature of this transformation, identify the strategies and structural constraints experienced by female congregants in adopting digital literacy, and formulate a participatory Islamic community development model oriented toward economic self-reliance. The analytical focus is allocated to observing how religious values negotiate with digital economic rationality to address structural poverty. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. Its theoretical framework synthesizes Participatory Community Development Theory, the concept of dakwah bi al-hal, and social agency empowerment theory. Empirical data was gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis. Data analysis utilized an interactive model encompassing data condensation, systematic presentation, and conclusion drawing, with trustworthiness strictly maintained through source and technique triangulation. Research findings confirm that Majelis Taklim has successfully transformed into an epicenter of social innovation through the convergence of religious literacy and vocational skills. The acceleration of digital adoption is driven by peer mentoring supported by religious social capital, despite being shadowed by infrastructure constraints and cultural barriers. As a final synthesis, this research formulates a model integrating community spiritual and digital capital, wherein the implementation of Islamic business ethics serves as a foundation for micro-enterprise resilience, while offering an alternative blueprint for modern Islamic community empowerment governance.

Keywords: Institutional Transformation, Majelis Taklim, Digital Literacy, Women's Empowerment, Islamic Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of digital transformation during the Disruption 4.0 era have fundamentally altered the socio-developmental landscape in developing countries. Non-formal religious education institutions like Majelis Taklim are no longer merely expected to fulfill the role of doctrinal transmission; rather, they must act as socio-cultural agents of change that effectively respond to modern challenges (Schwab, 2016). The presence of Majelis Taklim within the social fabric of Indonesian Muslim communities is deeply rooted in

history, serving as a vital pillar for religious articulation and the enhancement of social cohesion at the grassroots level (Mansurnoor, 1990). From the perspective of Islamic Community Development, repositioning the role of this institution is crucial for bridging religious literacy with the enhancement of local communities' living standards (Latief, 2012). The acceleration of information technology presents both opportunities and structural challenges for the revitalization of these traditional religious institutions. The effectiveness of Majelis Taklim in the contemporary era is largely determined by its capacity to integrate religious spiritual values with the practical skills required by society.

Academic discourse surrounding the socio-cultural role of Majelis Taklim continues to provoke theoretical debate among Islamic scholars. Certain social scientists argue that Majelis Taklim tends to be confined to the role of a passive religious ritual space, oriented solely toward individual piety (Rahmat, 2010). This perspective suggests that its normative-textual teachings frequently fail to address the tangible socio-economic realities faced by its congregation. Conversely, an alternative view from the perspective of transformative Islamic sociology asserts that Majelis Taklim harbors immense latent potential as an arena for consolidating social capital and empowering communities (Nakamura, 2012). A synthesis of these academic debates highlights an urgent need to reconceptualize Majelis Taklim. The institution must transition from being merely a routine religious study forum to a community-based, participatory learning institution that is adaptive to the dynamics of the digital economy.

The engagement of Muslim women in local religious activities harbors highly strategic potential for economic agency, yet it is frequently overlooked in national development discourses. Qualitative research within Islamic gender studies demonstrates that domestic and religious spaces managed by women can serve as avenues of resistance against economic inequality through the strengthening of solidarity networks (Mahmood, 2005). The penetration of digital technology into the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector provides acceleration opportunities for Muslim women in suburban areas to develop community-based independent enterprises (Smith-Hefner, 2019). However, the digital literacy gap and restricted access to economic resources remain structural barriers that overshadow local women's groups (Robinson, 2009). Consequently, there is a pressing need for digital literacy incubation integrated with local institutions such as Majelis Taklim. Equipping women with technological and entrepreneurial capacities through these religious assemblies holds the potential to sustainably dismantle the boundaries of economic marginalization.

Preliminary survey results regarding the socio-economic conditions in Purwosari Village, Metro City, reflect the characteristics of a suburban area undergoing massive socio-cultural transition. Empirical data indicates that the majority of the Majelis Taklim congregation in this region are women running informal MSMEs, who face challenges in marketing efficiency and limited digital market reach. The Majelis Taklim in Purwosari is highly active in organizing weekly religious activities; however, the utilization of digital media remains confined to basic social communication and has not yet been leveraged for creative economic development. This strong social institutional potential has not been systematically managed to foster the financial independence of its members (Hasim, 2020). The social phenomena in Purwosari indicate a discrepancy between the residents' high religious participation and the level of information technology utilization for enhancing family welfare.

Previous studies on Majelis Taklim have generally focused on the reproduction of religious ideology, identity politics movements, or comparative studies of pesantren (Islamic boarding school) education (Nisa, 2018). Although some contemporary literature has examined the economic empowerment of Muslim women, analyses connecting Majelis Taklim participation, digital literacy, and Islamic Community Development interventions in suburban areas remain highly limited (Hassan, 2017). Studies exploring in-depth the

mechanisms of participatory transformation within Majelis Taklim as a digital-based economic incubator have not received adequate scholarly attention. This research gap serves as the fundamental basis for the present study. An in-depth evaluation of the functional reconstruction of Majelis Taklim from a cultural religious space into a hub for inclusive economic empowerment in Purwosari Village is crucial to enrich the existing body of literature.

This research offers conceptual novelty by integrating the theory of Participatory Community Development with the practical framework of non-formal Islamic education within a digital ecosystem (Ife & Tesoriero, 2008). The novelty of this approach lies in positioning Muslim women not merely as passive recipients of developmental aid, but as active subjects orchestrating the technological and economic transformation of their communities (Suharto, 2014). The utilization of a participatory approach enables the formulation of an empowerment model rooted in the distinctive local values of the village (Mubyarto, 1999). The theoretical significance of this study is expected to enrich the fields of Islamic sociology and Islamic Community Development by introducing a new formulation regarding local religious institutions. Furthermore, the findings of this research have the potential to serve as a conceptual reference for policymakers in designing community digitalization programs based in houses of worship.

Based on the aforementioned academic gap and empirical context, the main problem of this research is formulated into three fundamental questions. First, what are the forms and dynamics of the transformation in the role of Majelis Taklim in facilitating digital literacy and the economic empowerment of women in Purwosari Village, Metro City? Second, what are the strategies and structural constraints faced by female congregants in adopting digital technology for economic independence? Third, how can an effective and sustainable participatory Islamic community development model be formulated based on the Majelis Taklim institution? The investigation of these questions aims to map the trajectory of institutional transformation and formulate an empirical framework for the empowerment of suburban Muslim communities. The achievement of these research objectives is expected to make a significant academic contribution to the development of applied Islamic sciences in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to provide an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of socio-religious institutional transformation (Yin, 2018). The theoretical foundation of this research integrates the Participatory Community Development Theory framework with the concept of *dakwah bi al-hal* (preaching through action) in Islamic sociology (Ife & Tesoriero, 2008). A qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to elucidate subjective meanings, social processes, and institutional relations encompassing the digital literacy activities of the local community. The case study design enables the researcher to comprehensively explore the unique phenomenon of a traditional religious institution transforming into an arena for digital technology-based economic education. The Participatory Community Development Theory framework positions community members not merely as passive recipients of development interventions, but as active agents with the independent capacity to formulate their own socio-economic needs.

The theoretical framework of this study is reinforced by Digital Literacy Theory and Social Agency-based Empowerment Theory (Bawden, 2008). Digital Literacy Theory is utilized to map the community's level of communication technology mastery, encompassing the ability to access, evaluate, and utilize digital media for productive economic activities. Empowerment Theory from the perspective of transformative Islamic sociology analyzes how religious spaces are utilized by local communities to increase accessibility to economic resources and decision-making (Mahmood, 2005). This theoretical synthesis forms a cohesive conceptual

construct for analyzing the productive interplay between religious values and digital proficiency. This theoretical reasoning guides the empirical analysis of changes in the economic behavior of community members, shifting from a domestic scale to broader digital market networks.

The research location was determined purposively based on the presence of an active local religious institution and a high population of community-based micro-entrepreneurs. The selection of informants utilized a purposive sampling technique to ensure that the informant criteria aligned with the academic focus of the study. Key informants included institutional leaders, religious instructors, entrepreneurial community members, and local community figures directly involved in the empowerment process. The determination of the number of informants was based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection was terminated when no significant new information was discovered (Saunders et al., 2018). The varied characteristics of the informants in terms of age, educational background, and business experience allowed the researcher to obtain a comprehensive overview of the variations in digital technology adoption at the research site.

Empirical data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to explore the community's perceptions, experiences, and barriers in the digital transformation process. Participant observation was carried out by directly engaging in religious activities, digital literacy training, and the local residents' economic transactions (Spradley, 2016). Documentary studies involved collecting learning modules, institutional administrative records, community business profiles, and social media content used for product marketing. The use of this combination of data collection techniques aimed to gather rich, in-depth, and contextual primary and secondary data. This field data collection process was designed to objectively record genuine social interactions without manipulating the community's natural environment.

Data analysis adopted the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was performed through the processes of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and categorizing interview transcripts and field notes into relevant theoretical themes. Data display was realized in the form of systematic narrative texts, thematic correlation matrices, and flowcharts illustrating the transformation of institutional roles (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Conclusion drawing was conducted progressively from the onset of data collection through constant verification of the relational patterns discovered in the field. Qualitative software-based thematic analysis was also applied to enhance the precision of data coding. All stages of this analysis were designed to ensure that data interpretation remained objective, transparent, and strictly tied to empirical facts at the research site.

Data validity was rigorously maintained through the application of source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Patton, 2015). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from community members, institutional leaders, and community figures, while methodological triangulation compared interview data with observational results and written documents. The researcher also conducted member checking to confirm the accuracy of narrative interpretations with key informants prior to formulating the final conclusions (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Research ethics principles were consistently applied, including the provision of written informed consent, guarantees of informant anonymity, and the confidentiality of residents' micro-business data (Israel, 2015). This assurance of data validity and ethical compliance is crucial for producing high-quality scientific work that meets academic validity standards. This robust methodological framework provides a high validity basis for the conclusions of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results

This study explores the phenomenon of socio-religious institutional transformation in Purwosari Village, North Metro District, Metro City. Sociologically, Purwosari is an administrative area inhabited by a population characterized by high levels of religious participation. The village maintains a development vision centered on cultivating a religious, intelligent, and self-reliant community. The presence of numerous mosques and prayer halls (musala) in this area, such as the Al-Asy'ari Mosque, extends beyond serving merely as spaces for ritual worship (ibadah mahdhah). These grass-roots religious institutions are gradually transforming into dialectical spaces for community empowerment activities. This dynamic strongly aligns with the participatory community development framework, which positions community bases as the primary drivers of socio-economic change.

The Majelis Taklim (Islamic learning assembly) in Purwosari Village emerges as a central entity in driving religion-based empowerment programs. An in-depth interview with Jauharotun Nafisah, M.Pd., a Majelis Taklim practitioner, revealed that religious study activities have expanded their functionality significantly. Contemporary approaches to Islamic propagation (dakwah) no longer focus exclusively on the transfer of theological and doctrinal knowledge; instead, they adopt the principle of dakwah bi al-hal (transformative action in practice). The management of Majelis Taklim proactively integrates practical literacy content into the congregants' weekly learning syllabi. This integration demonstrates the institutional flexibility of socio-religious bodies in responding to contemporary challenges without severing their spiritual identities. This adaptive transformation serves as a strategic response to prevent community members from being left behind by the tides of information disruption.

The primary focus of this institutional transformation lies in optimizing the capacity and role of local women. A comprehensive explanation from Dr. Eka Prastawati, M.Si., an expert in women's education, underscores that female congregants dominate the ecosystem of religious spaces in Purwosari. The presence of Majelis Taklim provides essential non-formal educational access that enhances both the cognitive capacity and practical skills of women. Women are educated to foster autonomy as critical social agents capable of addressing both domestic and public issues. This phenomenon aligns with empowerment theories that view female participation as a crucial indicator of development success at the micro level. Accessible knowledge positively influences a paradigm shift among women, transitioning them from passive objects into dynamic, active learners.

The integration of digital literacy serves as a primary instrument in realizing the vision of women's education within the Majelis Taklim community. Female congregants are guided to understand the foundational operation of smartphone devices and to utilize social media productively. This introduction to digital literacy focuses on selecting strategic information, accessing market opportunities, and establishing local community-based economic networks. These capabilities are vital for overcoming structural barriers related to information asymmetry, which have historically constrained the potential of household enterprises. Literacy practices within religious spheres transform the residents of Purwosari into competitive creators of creative content. This digital capacity grants women unrestricted access to optimize their socio-economic potential.

The direct impact of enhanced intellectual capacity and digital literacy culminates in the strengthening of the grass-roots Islamic community economy. Based on insights from Ambariyani, M.E.Sy., an expert in Islamic economics, Majelis Taklim congregants in the North Metro area demonstrate strong determination in converting their religious and digital skills into micro-entrepreneurial activities. An Islamic economic model is applied contextually, encompassing inclusive financial management, commercial

transaction transparency, and guaranteed product halal standards. The synthesis of Islamic business ethics and modern communication technology fosters an equitable yet competitive business environment. This achievement represents a tangible manifestation of religious spaces successfully facilitating increased access to material resources. The community's real economic sector is gradually rising on the productive foundation of these religious assemblies.

Majelis Taklim congregants in Purwosari have successfully consolidated into various micro-business clusters connected through a digital ecosystem. Residents' economic activities—which were initially subsistence-based and fragmented have evolved into a well-coordinated collective business network. Instant messaging applications are used intensively as virtual marketing showcases and as forums for consolidating business strategies. Empirically, this digital strategy drastically reduces conventional marketing overhead, thereby maximizing profit margins. Market expansion now transcends the geographic boundaries of the North Metro District due to efficient digital interaction between consumers and sellers. This emerging economic independence reflects values of mutual aid and solidarity rooted in religious brotherhood (*ukhuwah*).

Mosques in the Purwosari area serve a central function as epicenters for comprehensive community empowerment. Local neighborhood religious authorities consciously provide full support by offering physical facilities and moral legitimacy for productive Majelis Taklim activities. Such institutional backing is crucial in reducing potential cultural resistance toward modern technology in an environment that strongly adheres to religious traditions. The involvement of religious figures transforms conservative mindsets into a paradigm that is adaptive to the advancements of the information age. The synergy between mosque management and female community initiators creates an inclusive social ecosystem at the village level. This empowerment epicenter accelerates the self-sustaining distribution of community welfare.

This process of socio-religious transformation naturally faces several cultural and infrastructural obstacles in the field. Disparities in internet connection quality, limited access to adequate hardware, and lower adaptability among elderly demographics constitute the main constraints. Participant observation reveals that the learning curve for digital literacy among Majelis Taklim members varies significantly across generations. This gap necessitates the implementation of adult learning (andragogical) approaches that are patient, systematic, and continuous. Additional methodological interventions are essential to ensure that no members are marginalized from this religious education program, requiring curriculum adjustments tailored to the learning psychology of older congregants.

The strategic response to these technical constraints is actualized through a sustainable mentorship scheme based on a peer-learning model. Majelis Taklim members who possess advanced digital operational skills serve as direct mentors to beginner peers. Academically, this collaborative mentorship scheme effectively bridges individual competency gaps without creating intimidating social hierarchies that hinder the learning process. Dialogic interactions among congregants also serve as a mechanism to reinforce internal social cohesion. This organic approach exemplifies local community development theory, wherein internal agents act as both problem definers and problem solvers. This educational self-reliance minimizes community dependence on external trainers.

The dynamics of institutional transformation in Purwosari Village confirm the success of Majelis Taklim as a strategic vehicle for community economic empowerment. The empirical convergence of theological values, non-formal women's education, and technological literacy formulates an effective model of grass-roots, community-based economic self-reliance. This study recommends affirmative policy frameworks to strengthen synergies among local governments, academics, and religious authorities. Integrated regulatory support is crucial for sustaining such educational initiatives and enabling their replication across other villages

in Metro City. Ultimately, the success of this local initiative in Purwosari offers a new theoretical reference for urban poverty alleviation through a socio-cultural and religious approach.

B. Analysis of Research Results

The analysis of empirical data in this study was operationalized through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data condensation involved selecting interview transcripts related to Majelis Taklim activities in Purwosari to extract the central theme of women's empowerment. Data display systematically structured a comprehensive narrative of the socio-religious institutional transformation toward the arena of digital literacy. Conclusion drawing verified the correlation between theological understanding and the praxis of congregants' economic self-reliance. This analytical process ensured the objectivity of field findings, keeping them free from researcher bias (Miles et al., 2014). This framework was simultaneously integrated with a transformative Islamic sociology perspective to dissect the complexity of the social phenomena. This rigorous methodological approach yielded a solid theoretical abstraction regarding grassroots dynamics, while the validity of interpretations was maintained through extensive triangulation throughout the field research phase.

The dynamics of transformation in the role of Majelis Taklim in Purwosari Village are represented through a paradigm shift from conventional dakwah (Islamic propagation) to empowerment-oriented dakwah. This religious institution does not merely transmit eschatological doctrines, but rather articulates the concept of dakwah bi al-hal (action-oriented propagation) in a concrete manner. This practice aligns with the principles of Islamic community development, which situate material and spiritual well-being within a unified axiom of monotheism (tawhid). The assembly's leadership proactively reconstructs the study curriculum by marrying religious literacy with vocational skills. Consequently, the sacred space transforms into a socio-economic incubator that stimulates female congregants' critical awareness regarding structural poverty. This institutional transformation underscores the flexibility of local Islamic institutions in responding to modern demands without sacrificing cultural identity, marking the emergence of religious economic activism (Suharto, 2014).

The integration of digital literacy serves as an essential instrument in facilitating women's economic independence within the Purwosari community. Female congregants are directed to master communication technology as a means to expand market access and break through domestic isolation. This phenomenon confirms social agency theory, wherein women's participation in the digital ecosystem drastically enhances their bargaining position. The utilization of social media platforms facilitates the establishment of solidarity economic networks among Majelis Taklim members. Furthermore, the ability to select strategic information liberates micro-entrepreneurs from the traps of information asymmetry that have historically disadvantaged them. This strengthening of intellectual capacity directly deconstructs gender biases that often marginalize women from economic production spheres (Rasyid, 2015), allowing digital literacy to manifest as a catalyst for emancipation rooted in prophetic values.

The primary strategy of female congregants in adopting digital technology relies on a collaborative learning scheme grounded in religious social capital. A peer mentorship approach is applied organically, where tech-savvy members guide elderly congregants. This communal scheme effectively reduces psychological anxiety when interacting with unfamiliar digital tools. Instant messaging applications function as virtual classrooms as well as low-cost collective marketing showcases. Dialogic interactions within these groups foster micro-entrepreneurs' confidence to innovate their products. Social capital in the form of mutual trust among congregants massively accelerates the diffusion of technological innovation (Fukuyama, 1995).

Solidarity rooted in Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah islamiyah) has proven capable of disrupting rigid, conventional learning methods. Nevertheless, structural obstacles continue to overshadow the process

of technology adoption among female congregants. Disparities in digital infrastructure and internet connectivity in peripheral areas of the village constrain the optimization of online marketing (Castells, 2010). Financial limitations to upgrade communication hardware also impede access to contemporary e-commerce platforms. Cultural challenges manifest as lingering patriarchal norms that occasionally question women's capacity to manage public businesses, while generational age gaps generate an asymmetrical learning curve that requires instructors to exert additional effort. These latent obstacles necessitate policy interventions from external stakeholders, as economic self-reliance cannot rely solely on internal initiatives without a fair structural ecosystem.

Formulating a participatory Islamic community development model requires a systemic integration of the community's spiritual assets and digital capital. This model demands active congregant participation across all phases: needs identification, program planning, and outcome evaluation. *Majelis Taklim* is positioned as a central aggregator of micro-economic interests operating on the principle of *syirkah* (communal partnership). This participatory approach eliminates the subordinate positioning of community members as passive recipients of charitable aid (Huda, 2010). Empowerment focuses on strengthening internal agency through the utilization of abundant local resources, ensuring that development interventions strictly align with the cultural preferences and real capacities of congregants (Chambers, 1997, p. 102). Authentic participation thus guarantees precise program relevance.

The sustainability of this development model is secured through the internalization of Islamic business ethics across the entire digital trade chain. Study modules are specifically designed to combine online marketing literacy with contemporary commercial jurisprudence (*fiqh muamalah*). A comprehensive understanding of transaction transparency, the prohibition of *riba* (usury), and halal certification serves as a competitive differentiator for congregants' products. The synthesis of religious morality and economic rationality creates a resilient business ecosystem capable of withstanding market fluctuations. Entrepreneurial practice is framed as an instrument of social worship (*ibadah sosial*) to reduce wealth distribution inequality at the grassroots level (Ali, 2005). These prophetic values prevent the exploitative commodification often driven by digital capitalism, establishing spiritual integrity as the foundation of micro-business resilience.

Institutional synergy serves as a foundational pillar for the long-term effectiveness of the *Majelis Taklim* empowerment model. Mosque administrators, religious leaders, and village officials must build strategic coalitions to provide both physical facilities and social legitimacy. The backing of religious authorities is crucial to neutralize potential conservative resistance against digital culture adoption. Cross-sectoral partnerships with academic institutions and local government agencies are necessary to supply technical assistance beyond the internal capacity of the *Majelis Taklim*. This Islamic community development model demonstrates that the convergence of local philanthropy and structural advocacy yields maximum socio-economic impact (Fauzia, 2013), where multi-actor collaboration ensures that the program can be broadly replicated.

The analytical findings of this study reinforce the central position of *Majelis Taklim* as an epicenter of social innovation for women in Purwosari Village. The transformation of *dakwah bi al-hal* through digital literacy successfully converts religious social capital into productive economic capital. Peer-learning strategies have proven effective in dismantling technological adoption barriers, although structural interventions remain necessary to address latent infrastructure constraints. The resulting participatory Islamic community development model offers an alternative paradigm for urban poverty alleviation with dignity. Community self-reliance can be realized when religious spaces are empowered simultaneously as arenas for intellectual and vocational emancipation, representing an ideal blueprint for revitalizing the role of religious institutions in the contemporary era of digital disruption.

CONCLUSION

The forms and dynamics of the role transformation of Majelis Taklim in Purwosari Village are realized through a paradigm shift from conventional dakwah (Islamic propagation) to an empowerment-oriented dakwah bi al-hal (action-oriented propagation) movement. This grassroots religious institution has successfully evolved from a mere center for theological doctrine transmission into a socio-economic incubator facilitating digital literacy for female congregants. The religious study curriculum is proactively integrated with vocational skills in online marketing and information technology mastery. This institutional transformation demonstrates the high flexibility of local Islamic institutions in responding to the challenges of modernity, effectively deconstructing structural poverty without severing the community's cultural identity.

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