



**A FEMINIST ISLAMIC REVIEW OF ABDUL BASIT'S THOUGHTS  
ON OPTIMISING WOMEN'S MAJELIS TAKLIM**

**Khikmatun Rahmadhani**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*khikmatunrahmadhanihairaaa@gmail.com*

**Dewi Ayu Narasati**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*dewiayunarasati05@gmail.com*

**Nadia Milatalia**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*nadiamilatalia@gmail.com*

**Aulia Nur Indah**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*aulianurindah8@gmail.com*

**Lugas Legi Diana**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*lugaslegidiana@gmail.com*

**Tegar Baehaqi**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*tegarbaihaqi3@gmail.com*

**Sofiatun**

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia  
*sofiatunsofia59@gmail.com*

**ABSTRACT**

Women's Majelis Taklim have not been fully utilised as a means of empowerment with transformative impact. Women's Majelis Taklim have not been fully utilised as a means of empowerment with transformative impact. This qualitative research, in the form of a literature review, aims to identify Abdul Basit's thoughts on the role of Majelis Taklim as a space for developing women's capacity in the social da'wah movement. Through an Islamic feminist approach as an analytical framework, this study concludes that, according to Abdul Basit's thoughts, the professional management of women's Majelis Taklim can be synergised with social empowerment programmes, so that women's Majelis Taklim can play an active role as agents of change. This research contributes to the existence of women's Majelis Taklim as a strategic space to strengthen women's participation and leadership roles in actively transforming Islamic teachings in social life.

**Keywords:** Abdul Basit, Islamic Feminist, Women's Majelis Taklim



## A. Introduction

Technology development in the modern era has changed how people access religious knowledge. If previously Islamic learning relied more on the role of the ulama, now the sources of information are increasingly diverse. People can learn the teachings of Islam through media such as television, radio, books, magazines, and the internet. These various channels make it easy to gain an understanding of Islamic issues, both basic and those that require more in-depth study (Basit, 2013). The internet is often used as the main reference in understanding Islamic teachings. Despite its convenience, using the internet as a source of religious information also brings its challenges. Not all of the information circulating can be scientifically accounted for, as much of it is conveyed by those who do not have adequate scientific backgrounds. This can lead to misunderstandings and deviations in religious practice. Therefore, the existence of majelis taklim is very important as a learning space that presents religious knowledge with clear sources, and can instill moderate Islamic values over time (Nurhasanah, 2021).

Women-only taklim assemblies also play an equally important role. Apart from being a place to learn religion, these assemblies are also a space to strengthen each other and empower themselves. In it, women can explore Islamic knowledge, discuss women's issues from a religious perspective, and strengthen their role in the family and community. Not only that, the women's majelis taklim is also a forum to strengthen the bond of brotherhood and encourage women's involvement in social and religious activities. With competent teachers and materials that are in line with the needs of the times, this assembly can become an antidote to narrow-minded views that can endanger the community. The presence of women is expected to play an active role in shaping the figure of Muslim women who not only understand religion but are also smart, tolerant, and empowered in the community. (Husna et al., 2025).

Majelis taklim not only serves as a space for Islamic sciences but also as a medium for strengthening the social role of Muslims more broadly. One important dimension that is now getting more attention is the active involvement of women in taklim assemblies. Women are no longer positioned as passive objects in religious activities, but rather as subjects who can develop a contextual understanding and practice of Islamic values. (Wadud, 2021). In Siti Ma'rifah's study published in the journal *Yin Yang: Journal of Islamic Studies on Gender and Children*, majelis taklim is a space for social transformation that allows women to build self-awareness, broaden their religious horizons, and strengthen their contribution to family and community life. Thus, the women's majelis taklim not only functions as a forum for recitation but also as a means of empowering Muslim women holistically.

In line with these developments, the uniqueness of women's majelis taklim lies in its role not only as a space for religious education but also as a medium for

empowering women amid social dynamics and the times. In the digital era, when women are increasingly active in the public sphere and face complex religious identity challenges, women's majelis taklim becomes a safe space to strengthen moderate and contextual Islamic understanding. Through a communicative approach and based on daily experiences, this majelis taklim can answer the spiritual and social needs of Muslim women, such as child education, family ethics, and involvement in social activities. According to Siti Ma'rifah's research in *Marwah Journal*, women's majelis taklim not only transmits religious knowledge, but also forms women's critical awareness and independence in religion, which is very important in the face of digital information flows that are often biased and misleading (Ma'rifah, 2020).

This research uses a qualitative approach by applying the description-analysis method. The research method includes three parts, namely: 1) approach and research methods, 2) types of data and data sources, and 3) data collection techniques through text or document analysis. The type of data in this research is qualitative data, which is not numerical data. The data source of this research is secondary sources, including relevant topics based on book references, journal articles, and other documents. The data collection technique was carried out through a literature study in the form of library research, the purpose of this research emphasizes the importance of women's existence, both in personal life, household, and society. Women's potential, both in the domestic sphere and as working individuals, is a major factor in shaping the dynamics of gender strategies.

Women's multiple roles emphasize the importance of their existence, both in personal, household, and community life. Women's potential, both in the domestic sphere and as working individuals, is a major factor in shaping the dynamics of gender strategies. Women's empowerment can be done through the application of innovative technology, protection for women workers, skills development, and the improvement of fairer regulations. Equal employment opportunities will encourage women to contribute more actively in various professional fields. (Haramain, 2019). In this context, the author Dyah Siti Nur'aini conducted research on the development of Nyai Ahmad Dahlan's activities and thoughts about the thoughts that existed in her environment, such as family, figures, and her husband's friends who were principled in women's educational institutions (Nur'aini, 2014). Umar, Husnatul Mahmudah, and Mei Indra Jayanti's study on the strategic aspects of developing Islamic da'wah among women conducted by Nasyiatul Aisyiyah (Umar et al., 2021). Previous research only focused on the existence of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah as a social religious organization that plays a role in empowering women. For example, research proposed by Indah Ahdiah discusses women's organizations as social media related to the role of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah in Central Sulawesi. In its critical analysis, it is described that the existence of the Nasyiatul Aisyiyah organization has existed since the

establishment of the Islamic women's movement (Ahdiah, 2016). In line with previous studies on the role of religious organizations in women's empowerment, other studies have also highlighted how pesantren become a strategic platform in increasing women's capacity, especially in the fields of education and economy. Some studies show that pesantren are not only centers of religious learning, but can also shape women's independence through skills education and social entrepreneurship (Maulidah, 2019).

In addition, studies confirm that women's access to entrepreneurship education and training has a significant impact on their economic independence. Previous studies have also emphasized the importance of community-based and hands-on learning models in supporting women's economic empowerment. Therefore, this research enriches previous studies by providing a new perspective on the integration between the roles of religious social organizations, pesantren, and social entrepreneurship in creating more sustainable women's empowerment. (Nurhayati & Yulianti, 2021). Many da'wah strategies have been carried out by preachers by targeting various aspects of life. Most preachers give da'wah calls with general themes and topics related to worship commands, such as prayer, fasting, zakat, haji, and other fiqh themes. However, da'wah strategies that emphasize aspects of people's economic empowerment are still very minimal, even though this is one of the important factors in human life as an inseparable part of religious activity and worship. Therefore, da'wah based on the economic empowerment of the people is very important to do.

Previous studies have shown that women's movements in different countries have different patterns, including in Indonesia. Especially in Java, women only have narrower social rights than men, especially in the areas of education, marriage, and social life. Islam played an important role in the women's movement in Java, with the emergence of faith-based organizations such as Aisyiyah within Muhammadiyah, which played a role in women's education and empowerment. (Sujati & Haq, 2020). This research focuses on the role of women in Islamic da'wah and the empowerment strategies applied, both in the aspect of worship and improving the welfare of the people. This focus is an important object to study in seeing the contribution of women in da'wah as part of the empowerment of the people.

In the digital era, access to religious information is increasingly widespread, so a critical attitude is needed in sorting out reliable sources. In addition, with women making up almost half of the total population, their empowerment is a strategic aspect in building the awareness and welfare of the people. Therefore, this study is important to examine the integration of da'wah, education, and social entrepreneurship in creating a more inclusive and sustainable model of women's empowerment. Apart from large organizations such as Nasyiatul Aisyiyah and Islamic boarding schools, women's taklim assemblies also play an important role

in da'wah strategies and community empowerment, especially at the community level. Majelis taklim is not only a space for religious learning, but also a medium for strengthening women's social and economic roles. With a communicative approach and based on daily experiences, Majelis Taklim can reach various levels of society and answer the spiritual and practical needs of Muslim women. This strategic role makes Majelis Taklim one of the main pillars in creating sustainable empowerment.

This research focuses on the strategic role of women's majelis taklim as a space for religious learning that is also a means of social and economic empowerment in Muslim communities. Amid the swift flow of digital information that is often biased, so that it can mislead or form a wrong understanding, especially in religion, Majelis Taklim is present as a safe space that can form moderate and contextual religious awareness for women. This focus is important to study considering that women are not only passive objects of da'wah, but as actors who can bring change within the scope of the family and society. In addition to deepening religious understanding, majelis taklim also strengthens women's capacity in facing social, economic, and religious identity challenges. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening majelis taklim as the main pillar of sustainable and inclusive women's dakwah. Thus, this study is expected to broaden the perspective in understanding the integration of da'wah, education, and women's empowerment at the community level.

## **B. The Islamic Feminist Paradigm**

Feminism is a movement fought by women to demand gender equality by questioning the injustice of women's rights with men. (Nazari & Musa, 2022). In its struggle, feminism rejects the patriarchal social system that places women in a subordinate position and encourages women's freedom to make life choices, including in education, work, and decision-making. Thus, feminism is a way to eliminate social inequality and build a more just and equal society. (Basyir et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Islamic feminism also criticizes some of the concepts of Western feminism that tend to place men above women. However, Islamic feminism fights for equal rights between men and women that are often ignored by traditional conservative groups. Thus, Islamic feminism acts as a mediator between conservative groups and modern feminism. (Putra et al., 2022).

Islamic feminism seeks to combine the values of feminism with faith, by forming a framework to fight injustice both from religion and the secular system, and encourage the creation of gender justice from an Islamic perspective. (Shahih, 2024). To understand the contribution of Islamic feminism in depth, it is important to examine the thoughts of figures such as Qasim Amin, Amina Wadud Muhsin, and Fatima Mernissi. Qasim Amin, an Egyptian pioneer of Islamic feminism, asserts that women have the same responsibilities and rights as men, both in this world

and the hereafter, and rejects interpretations of sharia that limit the role of women, despite facing resistance from conservative circles. In addition, Amina Wadud Muhsin, a Malaysian Muslim scholar, also criticized traditional gender-biased interpretations and proposed a holistic interpretation approach that is contextual and interdisciplinary. Amina rejects patriarchy and matriarchy, and proposes a true partnership between men and women. In line with Amina Wadud Muhsin's thoughts, Moroccan intellectual Fatima Mernissi interprets the hijab in the Qur'an as a special restriction in the context of the Prophet and calls for the reinterpretation of religious texts for gender justice. The thoughts of the figures above are in line with the role of Majelis Taklim as a non-formal education space that not only strengthens the position of women but also encourages their empowerment and active participation in social and religious life.

Majelis Taklim is a place of learning religious knowledge that functions as an educational institution, activity center, and communication and ukhuwah network. Not only religious issues, taklim assemblies can be a space for solving various socio-political problems. (Hasyim, 2021). According to Dra. Hj Tutty Alawiyah AS, majelis taklim also builds awareness in education that is self-help, flexible, and unstructured, and depends on the experience of the speakers by emphasizing the transformation of faith and Islamic values for the balance of life in the world and the hereafter. In addition to being a religious facility, Majelis Taklim is a medium for empowering women through improvements such as participation, religious space, and religious education. This activity encourages women to practice leadership, independence, and to strengthen in facing various challenges. (Maisaroh et al., 2020). This research is in line with the results of research by Randi Tamirano and Muhammad Zen in the journal *Hikmah*, which identifies women's empowerment through activities such as reading the Qur'an, fikh studies, friendship programs, and training in spiritual and economic skills to strengthen the role of women in society. (Tamirano & Zen, 2024). In the era of information technology, Majelis Taklim has a great opportunity to deliver da'wah and strengthen ukhuwah digitally. (Kurniati K., 2019).

Social media provides space for majelis taklim to deliver da'wah more interactively. Through two-way communication features, preachers and religious leaders can engage directly with congregants, allowing for real-time discussions, questions and answers, and sharing of insights. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter make it easy to disseminate da'wah material in the form of sermons, articles, and other religious information, while receiving responses and questions from followers. Meanwhile, YouTube has become one of the main means of presenting interactive visual da'wah content through comments and live broadcasts. In today's digital age, visual and audio-visual-based content dominates. Visual content has proven to be very effective in conveying complex religious

teachings, rituals, and concepts in an engaging and easy-to-understand form. (Ajmain, 2023).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that Islamic feminism not only acts as a critique of the patriarchal system but also plays a role as a bridge between Western feminist thought and conservative views. By carrying out the principle of equality within the framework of Islamic values, Islamic feminism contributes to fighting for women's rights fairly and according to the context of the times. The thoughts of figures such as Qasim Amin, Amina Wadud Muhsin, and Fatima Mernissi are an important basis in proposing the reinterpretation of religious texts to achieve gender justice.

In the context of this study, the idea of Islamic feminism is used as an analytical framework to examine and explore the role of majelis taklim in empowering women. Majelis Taklim is not only a place of religious learning but also a social tool that shapes women's awareness, leadership, and active involvement in various aspects of life. Therefore, the existence of majelis taklim can be an alternative solution in creating a just and equal society, especially in the midst of the development of the digital era.

### **C. The Existence of Majelis Taklim In Indonesia**

Majelis Taklim is a community-based Islamic education institution that is open to all levels, regardless of age, gender, or level of education. The learning process is carried out through various methods, such as lectures, group discussions (halaqah), questions and answers, and worship skills training (Khozin, 2020). In the context of national character building, Majelis Taklim has an important role as a non-formal educational institution that instills Islamic ethical and moral values. Values such as honesty, responsibility, trustworthiness, and discipline are continuously instilled in the congregation. Through direct interaction in the recitation as well as through digital platforms (Al Mutharahah, 2024). The use of digital media makes it easier for people to access various religious activities, such as sermons and prayers, without having to be physically present. This convenience provides flexibility for individuals to perform worship from home or other private places. Nevertheless, the implementation of digital worship still requires seriousness and solemnity, so that worship remains focused on Allah. (Abel et al., 2024).

More than just a place to learn about religion, majelis taklim also forms a moderate and tolerant religious awareness. This is important in creating interfaith harmony and maintaining social stability. As a strategic means of da'wah, taklim assemblies help people reject extreme and radical views by instilling the value of moderation (wasathiyah). Taklim assemblies also make a real contribution to improving the quality of community education and the formation of religious and

moral individual characters. In addition, the majelis taklim also strengthens the role of the family, especially in guiding parents to instill Islamic values correctly in their children. (Ridwan & Ulwiyah, 2020). The family is the first school that shapes the character and personality of children, as well as being a good example (*uswah hasanah*) through words and deeds. Parents motivate in ways such as giving gifts, advising gently, and inviting children to the mosque, as an effective method for guiding child development. (Sari, 2022).

The characteristics of majelis taklim can be different depending on the Islamic organization or mass organization that oversees it. For example, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) taklim assemblies have a da'wah approach that is inclusive, tolerant, and based on the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah. Activities such as *selamatan*, *tahlilan*, *maulidan*, and *haul* become a means of maintaining Nusantara Islamic traditions that strengthen local religious and cultural identity. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah's majelis taklim focuses on science-based da'wah and rationality. The teachings of Islam are delivered purely based on the Qur'an and Hadith and reject unsubstantiated religious practices. Muhammadiyah's preaching is comprehensive, not only in the spiritual field, but also in education, health services, and the use of technology. Now, they are actively preaching digitally through social media to reach the younger generation. This shows that Islamic organizations, including NU, are also responding to changing times by collaborating with young figures who have a large base of followers in the digital world. Hanan Attaki's affiliation with NU, for example, is a da'wah strategy that not only expands NU's reach to millennials but also strengthens NU's religious authority through digital platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. This approach helps NU remain relevant amidst the challenges of religious authority in the social media era (A'thoina & Al-Aboosi, 2024)

The majelis taklim has been known since the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. In the early days of Islamic propagation, this activity was carried out secretly in the house of Arqam bin Abil Arqam due to pressure from the polytheists. After Allah's command to openly convey the teachings of Islam came, learning activities developed more widely, both in terms of places and approaches. Over time, the curriculum and teaching methods have been reformulated. The principle of "*al-muhafadzatu 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wal-akhdu bil-jadid al-aslah*" becomes the main basis: keeping the good old heritage while adopting more relevant innovations to answer the needs of the times. Therefore, majelis taklim is not only understood as a religious forum, but also as a non-formal educational institution that is flexible, sustainable, and adaptive to developments. Majelis Taklim is not just a religious study group, but a flexible and inclusive non-formal education institution that can adapt to changes in society and technology. Its informal nature allows it to evolve and remain relevant in responding to community needs. This shows that Majelis Taklim has transformed its traditional

role by starting to integrate media literacy and digital da'wah to reach a wider audience. (M. Fadli, 2023).

#### **D. Abdul Basit's View on the Importance of Empowering Women's Majelis Taklim in the Social Da'wah Movement**

The existence of women's majelis taklim, which is widespread and active in various layers of society, has not fully succeeded in realizing its function as a critical and transformative means of empowerment. The dominance of numbers and participation is not a guarantee that this forum has become a significant instrument of social change for women. The activities carried out still dwell on repetitive patterns and a lack of innovation, both in terms of management and da'wah delivered. Abdul Basit responds to this condition by offering a systematic and professional da'wah management approach. However, this approach needs to be reviewed because it has not directly touched the roots of the structural and cultural problems of gender inequality. History has shown that the Aisyiyah organization and the NU Muslimat organization have taken progressive steps in fighting for access to education and social roles for women (Basit, 2010). Ironically, most of the participants of majelis taklim still have no awareness of the benefits and importance of attending majelis taklim, other than as a place to take a break from household activities. Majelis taklim can also be a strategic means to increase the capacity and role of women in society, as well as a space for social exchange that forms collective awareness and solidarity between women. (Putra. A. E, 2023).

The condition of women's majelis taklim in Indonesia, as described above, should not be left unchecked. This is because Majelis Taklim has an important role in transforming society through the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and character building of the people, especially women, in the context of non-formal education. (Hasyim, 2021). In addition, it is also a means of innovative social change and empowering women. Therefore, the da'wah management approach needs to be reviewed so that the activities of the majelis taklim are not stagnant and can increase the awareness of participants. Efforts to fight for gender equality, both structurally and culturally, are urgent and cannot be ignored, as has been exemplified by women's movements such as Aisyiyah and Muslimat NU. Thus, majelis taklim can be transformed into an effective space in empowering women and encouraging the realization of social justice.

Women's empowerment through education organized in Aisyiyah's majelis taklim in Bonto Lebong Makasar village contributes greatly to improving the quality of human resources in the community. Through recitation activities, book studies, and tahsin or tahfidz classes, women are given space to develop their intellectual and spiritual capacities. Active participation in these activities not only strengthens religious understanding but also shapes the character of women who

are more confident, independent, and ready to play a role in social life. Continuous education is an important foundation in building a society that is more aware of religious and social values.

However, empowerment is not without its challenges. Factors such as time constraints due to domestic responsibilities, lack of support from family members, and variations in education levels among participants are barriers that need to be considered. Overcoming these challenges requires a more flexible approach, innovation in learning methods, and strengthening networks at the local level. With the right strategy, Aisyiyah's majelis taklim can continue to contribute to creating empowered women, both in the family sphere and the wider community. (Rajab, 2023).

The uniqueness of Abdul Basit's journal lies in his approach that combines modern management with the empowerment of women's majelis taklim in the context of da'wah. Abdul Basit not only views majelis taklim as an institution, but also the organization of majelis taklim professionally. In addition, another uniqueness lies in the empowerment of women's majelis taklim. This assembly emphasizes the empowerment of women in overcoming social and economic problems. Abdul Basit focuses not only on the religious field, but also on economic strengthening and socio-political participation. Thus, the approach offered becomes relevant to the times, the needs of the community, and others. Majelis Taklim Aisyiyah empowers women through religious and spiritual education, improving the quality of human resources and shaping the character of confident and independent women. Despite challenges such as time constraints and a lack of support, with a flexible approach and innovative learning, Aisyiyah's Majelis Taklim can continue to contribute to creating empowered women. Not only focusing on strengthening faith, these assemblies also contribute to improving human resources and shaping the character of independent, confident, and empowered women.

As revealed in the research of the Ar-Ridwan taklim assembly, the application of effective da'wah management, including aspects of human resource planning, da'wah material, funding, delivery methods, and the use of simple media, can increase the benefits for the taklim assembly to be felt by most worshipers, with a level of satisfaction with the material focused on women's empowerment. In practice, women's majelis taklim now not only teach Islamic studies such as akidah and fiqh, but also integrate materials on health, economics, and life skills to broaden women's horizons. Although faced with obstacles such as time constraints and domestic burdens, women's taklim assemblies remain adaptive through the application of innovative methods such as participatory learning, technical guidance, and the use of simple technology. With this strategy, Aisyiyah's majelis taklim demonstrates its ability as agents of social transformation based on

women's communities that prioritize religious values and real empowerment. (Musodik, 2023).

Women's Majelis Taklim in the digital era does play a strategic role as a space for religious learning as well as women's socio-economic empowerment, and can enable people to obtain religious knowledge more easily without having to meet face to face (M. Fadli, 2023). Strengthening the analysis can be added by highlighting that the presence of majelis taklim in the digital realm not only expands access to learning but also requires increased digital literacy for members and administrators. This is important so that the majelis taklim can optimally utilize technology for da'wah, business, and strengthening the capacity of members, as well as being a filter against the massive flow of religious information that is not necessarily valid.

In addition, majelis taklim has now developed into an inclusive forum for social transformation, where women not only gain religious knowledge but also practical skills, social networks, and economic opportunities. As such, majelis taklim has become an agent of change capable of strengthening women's position in the family and society, and building social resilience amidst the challenges of the digital era. (Ridho et al., 2023). However, this development also presents new challenges, especially regarding religious authority in an open and unregulated digital space. (Uyuni et al., 2025).

Referring to the description above regarding the optimization of the role of women's majelis taklim da'wah, it can be emphasized that majelis taklim not only functions as a means of religious education, but also has great potential as an agent of social change. This role can improve the quality of life of women, both in spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. This view is in line with Siti Mu'awanah's research, which shows that women's involvement in the public sphere, especially through social media, is a strong indicator of the expansion of the role of women in contemporary da'wah. The utilization of digital media not only as a means of da'wah, but also as an educational space, confirms that women are now able to distribute Islamic knowledge widely, while at the same time showing their existence as active and progressive da'wah subjects. (Mu'awanah, 2022). Furthermore, Andi Eka Putra's research also reinforces that women's majelis taklim functions as a strategic forum for socio-religious transformation. In this context, women not only learn religion but also build critical awareness of the social issues that surround them. Their active involvement in various social, economic, and educational activities shows that Majelis Taklim has developed into an empowerment space that is adaptive and responsive to community needs. Thus, women's majelis taklim not only strengthens individual spirituality but also contributes significantly to broader social change. (Putra. A. E., 2022).

## E. Conclusion

Based on the main discussion of this study, it can be concluded that, according to Abdul Basit, the role of women is of significant importance in empowering majelis taklim as a medium for da'wah movements to transform Islamic teachings for social life. The systematic da'wah management approach proposed by Abdul Basit can transform Majelis Taklim not only into a place for religious learning but also into a social tool that fosters awareness, leadership, and active participation of women in various aspects of life.

This research contributes to the existence of women's Majelis Taklim as a strategic space to strengthen women's participation and leadership roles in actively transforming Islamic teachings in social life. This study has limitations in terms of data sources, as all analyses are based on literature studies and secondary literature. Reliance on written sources without field verification may limit the depth and diversity of information obtained. The actual conditions of women's majelis taklim in various regions may not be fully reflected in this study. Therefore, further research is recommended to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches by incorporating primary data to capture the dynamics of the role of Women's Majelis Taklim in social da'wah practices in a concrete manner.

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