



The Role of Majelis Taklim in Medan City: Institutional Growth, Religious Education, and Social Transformation

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Abstract

This study examines the historical and social development of Majelis Taklim in Medan City, focusing on its institutional evolution, the expansion of religious education, and its significant role in community empowerment. Using a qualitative methodology with a historical and social science approach, the research reveals how Majelis Taklim has grown from informal gatherings into structured institutions that not only provide religious education but also serve as centers for social and humanitarian activities. The findings highlight three key aspects: the social and political factors behind the establishment of Majelis Taklim, its formal institutional development, and the diversification of activities to include technology, social media, and targeted programs for different segments of society. Additionally, Majelis Taklim's collaboration with governmental and religious organizations has strengthened its role in promoting Islamic values while addressing contemporary social issues. The study also identifies challenges such as limited resources, leadership issues, and the need for modernization to maintain relevance. The research concludes that Majelis Taklim plays a crucial role in shaping religious understanding, fostering social cohesion, and contributing to the social welfare of Medan's Muslim community.

Keywords: *Majelis Taklim; Institutional Development; Community Empowerment.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perkembangan historis dan sosial Majelis Taklim di Kota Medan, dengan fokus pada evolusi kelembagaan, perluasan pendidikan agama, dan peran signifikan dalam pemberdayaan masyarakat. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan sejarah serta ilmu sosial, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana Majelis Taklim berkembang dari pertemuan informal menjadi institusi yang terstruktur yang tidak hanya menyediakan pendidikan agama tetapi

juga berfungsi sebagai pusat kegiatan sosial dan kemanusiaan. Temuan ini menyoroti tiga aspek utama: faktor sosial dan politik di balik pembentukan Majelis Taklim, perkembangan kelembagaan formal, dan diversifikasi kegiatan yang mencakup teknologi, media sosial, serta program khusus untuk berbagai segmen masyarakat. Selain itu, kolaborasi Majelis Taklim dengan lembaga pemerintah dan organisasi keagamaan telah memperkuat perannya dalam mempromosikan nilai-nilai Islam sekaligus menangani isu-isu sosial kontemporer. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan seperti keterbatasan sumber daya, masalah kepemimpinan, dan kebutuhan modernisasi untuk menjaga relevansinya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Majelis Taklim memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk pemahaman agama, memperkuat kohesi sosial, dan berkontribusi pada kesejahteraan sosial masyarakat Muslim di Kota Medan.

Kata Kunci: *Majlis Taklim; Perkembangan Institusi; Pemberdayaan Komunitas.*

Introduction

The presence of Majelis Taklim in Indonesia is seen as a development of recitations carried out at home, prayer rooms/langgar, mosques in the past. Although there are still many study activities in prayer rooms and mosques that are encouraged by the Majelis Taklim, the activities of the Majelis Taklim are now mostly carried out outside places of worship, especially in Islamic society or communities, both in rural and urban areas. In recent years, various models of Majelis Taklim have emerged with different activities. Some focus on preaching and spreading Islam, while others provide assistance to the poor, poor and orphans. In fact, there are those who are active in the environment by reforesting and planting trees.

In the Minister of Religion Regulation Number 13 of 2014 concerning Majelis Taklim in article 51 paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) it is explained that Majelis Taklim can be held by the community, by Islamic boarding schools, mosque administrators, Islamic community organizations and social religious institutions. other Islam. The Majelis Taklim can be held in a mosque, prayer room, classroom, or other learning space that meets the requirements. Furthermore, the Majelis Taklim is specifically regulated in Minister of Religion Regulation Number 2019 concerning the Majelis Taklim Article 2 Permenag 29 of 2019 which reads: "The Majelis Taklim has the task of increasing understanding, appreciation and practice of Islamic religious teachings.

The institutional role in society of the Majelis Taklim has become an important social and religious institution in various Muslim communities in Indonesia. The city of Medan, as

the center of economic and cultural activity in North Sumatra, has a long history of the existence of the Majlis Taklim. Therefore, this research is relevant to understand the role and function of this institution in the post-independence social and religious context. Majlis Taklim as a significant community preaching organization in society, has authority which is often linked to several interests such as: 1) government interests; Majlis Taklim are often used as a domain for the socialization of government programs and policies both in small and large scopes, 2) group or group interests; often the existence of Majlis Taklim and recitations held are used as a means of socializing the vision and mission of a particular group such as mass organizations, political parties, NGOs and so on, 3) individual interests; It is not uncommon for Majlis Taklim to be founded and formed by someone with the intention of engaging the masses for an interest. 4) educational interests; with the emergence of various variants of religious understanding, it is not uncommon for Majlis Taklim to be established with the aim of instilling a certain understanding in their congregations (Dahlan 2018).

Apart from the four interests above, the Majlis Taklim also functions as a center for religious learning and currently many also function as places for entrepreneurial learning. The Majlis Taklim is able to provide religious knowledge, shape morals and morals, internalize noble religious values which in the end is expected to be able to become a problem solver for the problems faced by society (Sarhini 2020).

Through the Majlis Taklim, the congregation can obtain good knowledge and religious guidance because in general, as members of a particular Majlis Taklim, the congregation has routine activities in attending the recitations organized by the Majlis Taklim. Compared to studying religion by self-teaching from books, which sometimes results in wrong understanding, studying religion by joining a Majlis Taklim is considered appropriate because participant can directly receive teaching from religious experts who are capable in their field (Suherdi, Hidayat, and Abdurrahman 2017).

There are three elements that play a role in the organization of the Majlis Taklim to revive and advance the organization, namely the administrators, the congregation and the person who teaches. The management and congregation have a separate and special position, where the administrators are elected and appointed by the congregation through deliberations held specifically for that purpose. The congregation referred to here is a number

of people who declare themselves to have joined the organization and actively participate in various activities within it. Meanwhile, as an *ustāẓ* or *ustāẓab*, he is the one who gives lessons in Taklim or recitation of the Majlis Taklim.

Many Majlis Taklim in Java Island face the problem of limited resources and funding. This has an impact on the quality of activities and facilities available. According to Fadilah (2019), many Islamic educational institutions in Java Island experience constraints in terms of funding which affect the implementation of adequate programs and curriculum development. Several Majlis Taklim in Java Island face problems related to inadequate facilities and infrastructure. Purnama (2018) stated that the lack of facilities can affect the effectiveness and comfort of the implementation of Majlis Taklim activities. In big cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya, competition with various other activities reduces community participation in Majlis Taklim activities. This is a challenge in attracting attention and maintaining member participation, as explained by Adi (2020). These problems reflect the challenges faced by Majlis Taklim in Java Island and require attention and appropriate solutions to increase their effectiveness and contribution to Islamic religious education.

In contrast to the mosque taklim in the city of Medan, some Majlis Taklim may face limited funding and facilities, especially in the outskirts or sub-districts. However, as a large city, Medan also has several more established Majlis Taklim with good community support (Fadilah 2019). In Medan, the quality of teaching staff at Majlis Taklim can vary, with some having very competent and experienced teachers. However, in more remote or less developed areas, it may be difficult to find quality teachers (Yanti 2021). In Medan, the infrastructure for Majlis Taklim can vary. The city has some better facilities compared to rural areas, but there is still a lack of infrastructure in some areas (Purnama 2018). Community involvement in Majlis Taklim in Medan is often influenced by local ethnic and cultural factors. In a large city like Medan, participation can be influenced by local social and economic dynamics (Arifin 2019).

Thus, the researcher's interest in studying Majlis Taklim in Medan City shows that this institution plays a crucial role in Islamic religious education in the North Sumatra region, but also faces unique challenges. Through in-depth and comprehensive research, researchers can not only identify and analyze the challenges faced by Majlis Taklim in Medan City, but also

explore possible solutions and innovations. This not only provides insight into the dynamics of Islamic education in Medan City, but can also offer valuable lessons for the management of Majelis Taklim in other regions.

The urgency of the research objective is that based on existing phenomena, the Majelis Taklim has a significant impact on society in various aspects. Strengthening faith and morals, increasing religious knowledge, empowering women, strengthening social ties, increasing socio-economic welfare, and social control which are some of the important contributions of the Majelis Taklim. Therefore, it is important for the community and stakeholders to continue to support and develop the activities of the Majelis Taklim as part of efforts to build a better society (Zulkarnain 2023).

According to temporary observations, the development of Majelis Taklim in Medan City is so mushrooming, their activities have even spread to government offices, for example activities are held in the HT Rizal Nurdin building, at the governor's official residence. Other Majelis Taklim activities are also held in large mosques, such as at the Great Mosque on Jalan Diponegoro Medan, at the Grand Mosque on Jalan Sisingamangaraja Medan, as well as at the Al Amin Mosque on Jalan Perintis Independen/Jalan Serdang Medan. The activities of this Majelis Taklim are usually dominated by religious recitations or lectures, Commemoration of Islamic Holidays (PHBI), and Tasbih prayers. The involvement of Majelis Taklim is usually also when Tablig Akbar invites famous speakers, such as the presence of Ustad Abdul Somad (UAS), or other national figures. The number of Majelis Taklim in the Medan City area reaches (no less than) 426 groups. The numerous Majelis Taklim are under the coordination of the Medan City Majelis Taklim Contact Agency (BKMT). Currently the management of the Medan City BKMT for the 2018-2023 period is chaired by Hj. Nelita.

Seeing the above phenomenon, the existence of the Majelis Taklim as a non-formal educational institution deserves attention and is managed well so that the implementation of activities can take place effectively and efficiently. However, the existence of the Majelis Taklim cannot be separated from the people of Medan City. In fact, its importance in the community is becoming clearer, because regional officials can collaborate with this institution as part of promoting their positions and figures in the community. So far, things like this

have become something commonplace for the people of the *Majlis Taklim*, becoming "sparing partners" for the government in building the diversity of the people of Medan City.

This article aims to describe and analyze the background of the social and political aspects of the emergence of the *Majlis Taklim* in Medan City, the institutional development of *Majlis Taklim* in Medan City, and the development of *Majlis Taklim* activities in Medan City. *Majlis Taklim* is an important forum in the life of the Muslim community, functioning as a forum to improve religious understanding, strengthen friendship, and build social awareness. In the context of Medan City, which is known for its cultural and ethnic diversity, *Majlis Taklim* not only plays a role in the spiritual aspect, but also becomes an integral part of the social and political dynamics in the area. The importance of *Majlis Taklim* as a space for discussion and reflection on current issues shows how relevant this institution is in responding to the challenges of the times. Through this article, it will be explained how *Majlis Taklim* has developed along with the social and political changes that have occurred, as well as its impact on society. This analysis is expected to provide deeper insight into the contribution of *Majlis Taklim* in shaping the character of Medan society and its role in promoting religious values amidst the challenges of modernization.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a historical approach. The social sciences approach is also applied to understand the social, political, and cultural contexts that influence the development of the *Majlis Taklim* in Medan City. Through a historical approach, this study focuses on the institutional evolution and activities of the *Majlis Taklim* post-independence.

The research locations were six *Majlis Taklim* from several sub-districts in the Medan City area, namely: 1) *Majlis Taklim Perwiratan Hidayatul Ihsaniyah* founded in 1950, which is currently located in Medan Perjuangan District, 2) *Majlis Taklim Al-Ikhlashiyah* founded in 1950. 1960, which is currently located in Medan Kota District 3) *Uswatun Hasanah Majlis Taklim* was established in 1980, which is currently located in Medan Marelan District, 4) *Pujakesuma Women's Recitation Study* was established in 1998 in Medan Denai District, 5) *Perwiratan Raudhatul Hasanah* was founded in 2012, which is currently located in West

Medan, and 6) Pantai Women's Study was founded in 2020, which is currently located in Medan Belawan.

Data Sources consist of 1). Primary Data Sources, which are obtained through in-depth interviews with historical actors, six religious figures, six Majlis Taklim administrators, and six people who are directly involved in the activities of the Majlis Taklim in Medan City. This primary data also includes direct observation of the activities of the Majlis Taklim in various locations in Medan. 2). Secondary Data Sources in the form of documents, archives, books, journals, and articles related to the development of the Majlis Taklim. This includes reports, papers, and academic literature that discuss the history of Islamic educational institutions in Medan City and Indonesia in general. This Data Source is based on the research location as a sample of the total number reaching 426 groups. The reason for taking data samples in qualitative research is because there is an opinion that states that sampling in qualitative research aims to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied, not to produce statistical generalizations, which is a common concept in qualitative research methodology. This view does not always come from one specific source, but is often put forward by various qualitative methodologists (Creswell and Poth 2018).

Data collection was carried out through several techniques, namely: 1). In-depth interviews with primary data sources. Involving interviews with relevant figures to obtain data on the role and evolution of the Majlis Taklim since independence. 2). Documentation: Collecting important documents such as archives, historical records, books, and mass media that discuss the development of the Majlis Taklim and 3). Observation: Conducting direct observations of activities taking place at the Majlis Taklim today, in order to understand the changes and challenges faced.

Data analysis in this study uses a historical-critical analysis approach, where data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation are analyzed chronologically to identify patterns and changes that occur. Thematic analysis techniques are also used to find the main themes that emerge from the data, especially regarding the social, political, and cultural influences on the Majlis Taklim.

To ensure the validity and validity of the data, this study uses: 1). Source Triangulation: Comparing information obtained from various data sources, both primary and secondary, to

ensure consistency. 2). Extension of Observation: Taking additional time to conduct longer observations in the field, to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained. 3). Checking with Sources: Rechecking the results of interviews with sources to ensure the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the original intent of the source and 4). Discussion with Fellow Researchers: Conducting discussions and reviews with other researchers to evaluate the conclusions and analysis produced.

However, this study also faces several limitations that affect the scope and depth of the analysis. Limited data sources, both in terms of the availability of historical archives and data obtained through interviews and observations, limit the accuracy and depth of the information. In addition, subjective bias in the data and changes in institutional structures can affect the understanding of the role and activities of the *Majlis Taklim*.

Findings and Analysis

Introduction to Development of *Majlis Taklim* in Medan City

The city of Medan, located in North Sumatra, has a rich and diverse religious history. *Majlis Taklim*, which are Islamic religious study groups, have played a crucial role in the religious, social, and cultural fabric of the city. The evolution of *Majlis Taklim* in Medan can be traced back to the post-independence era, where informal gatherings in homes, mosques, and prayer rooms served as spaces for religious education and spiritual growth. Over time, these gatherings evolved into more structured and formalized institutions, serving as a platform for religious learning, social activism, and community development.

Medan's diverse population, comprising various ethnic groups such as the Malay, Batak, Chinese, and Javanese, has contributed to the unique development of *Majlis Taklim* in the city. This diversity has also influenced the nature of the activities carried out by *Majlis Taklim*, as they have had to cater to a wide range of socio-cultural needs and interests. According to Dahlan (2018), the role of *Majlis Taklim* in Medan extends beyond religious education; it also serves as a tool for social cohesion and community building, particularly in a city characterized by ethnic and religious diversity.

The political context of Medan has also been instrumental in shaping the development of *Majlis Taklim*. The local government, recognizing the importance of

religious institutions in maintaining social order and stability, has provided various forms of support to Majelis Taklim. This includes financial assistance, provision of facilities, and collaboration in organizing religious events. Moreover, political figures in Medan have often utilized Majelis Taklim as a platform to engage with the Muslim electorate, as these groups offer direct access to large segments of the population. This intertwining of religion and politics is a significant feature of the evolution of Majelis Taklim in Medan (Ginting 2024).

Institutional Development of Majelis Taklim Early Formation and Community-Led Initiatives

The establishment of Majelis Taklim in Medan was primarily driven by community-led initiatives. In the early stages, these religious gatherings were informal, with small groups of people meeting in homes or local mosques to study Islamic teachings. The focus of these gatherings was primarily on understanding the Quran, Hadith, and basic Islamic principles. The need for spiritual guidance and religious education in an urban setting like Medan, where modernization and urbanization were rapidly changing the social landscape, made these gatherings popular among local Muslims (Sarhini 2020).

The early Majelis Taklim in Medan were often led by local religious figures, such as *ustāz* or *ulamā'*, who were respected for their knowledge of Islam. These figures played a central role in shaping the religious education provided in these gatherings. As noted by Suherdi, Hidayat, and Abdurrahman (2017), the presence of knowledgeable religious leaders ensured that the teachings were grounded in traditional Islamic scholarship, which helped to maintain the authenticity and credibility of the Majelis Taklim.

Formalization and Official Recognition

As the popularity of Majelis Taklim grew, many groups sought formal recognition to ensure sustainability and access to resources. The formalization process often involved registering with local religious authorities, such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) or larger religious organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. By obtaining official recognition, Majelis Taklim groups were able to receive support in the form of funding, infrastructure, and training for their teachers (Fadilah 2019). This formalization also

helped Majelis Taklim to better organize their activities, manage their finances, and expand their outreach.

The formalization process not only strengthened the organizational structure of Majelis Taklim but also allowed them to engage in broader social activities. With official recognition, many Majelis Taklim began to collaborate with local governments in organizing religious and social programs, such as charity events, disaster relief efforts, and public health campaigns. This collaboration between Majelis Taklim and the government reflects the institution's growing influence in the social and political life of Medan (Arifin 2019).

Organizational Structure and Leadership

The leadership and organizational structure of Majelis Taklim in Medan have evolved over time. In the early stages, leadership was informal, with prominent community members or religious leaders taking charge of organizing and leading the gatherings. However, as the Majelis Taklim became more structured, a formal leadership system was established. Most Majelis Taklim now have a hierarchical structure, with a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and other members responsible for specific activities. The involvement of women in the leadership of Majelis Taklim has also been significant, particularly in urban areas like Medan. Women often play a central role in organizing activities, fundraising, and managing the day-to-day affairs of the Majelis Taklim (Zulkarnain 2023).

Moreover, the leadership of Majelis Taklim often works closely with local religious organizations to ensure that the teachings and activities are aligned with broader Islamic principles and values. The involvement of religious scholars and teachers in guiding the educational content of Majelis Taklim is crucial in maintaining the religious integrity of the institution. This structured approach to leadership and organization has enabled Majelis Taklim to become more efficient in their operations and more impactful in their outreach (Munawaroh and Zaman 2020).

Integration with Local Religious Institutions

Majelis Taklim in Medan has also benefited from their close integration with local religious institutions, such as mosques, Islamic schools, and religious organizations. This

integration has allowed Majlis Taklim to access resources, such as teachers, educational materials, and venues for their activities. In many cases, Majlis Taklim operate as extensions of local mosques, providing supplementary religious education to the congregation. This close relationship with religious institutions has helped to legitimize Majlis Taklim and ensure their long-term sustainability (Purnama 2018).

Moreover, the integration with larger religious organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, has provided Majlis Taklim with a broader platform to influence religious and social discourse in Medan. These organizations often provide Majlis Taklim with training for teachers, standardized curricula, and opportunities to participate in larger religious events. This institutional support has been crucial in ensuring that Majlis Taklim remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the Muslim community in Medan (Yanti 2021).

Development of Majlis Taklim Activities in Medan City

The activities of Majlis Taklim in Medan have undergone significant transformations over the years, evolving from simple religious study sessions into dynamic and multifaceted programs that cater to the diverse needs of the Muslim community. The expansion of these activities reflects the growing role of Majlis Taklim not only as centers for religious education but also as institutions that address social, cultural, and economic issues. This section highlights the key developments in Majlis Taklim activities in Medan, including the diversification of teaching materials, the integration of technology, social and humanitarian efforts, and special programs for different segments of society.

Diversification of Teaching Materials

Initially, the teachings at Majlis Taklim in Medan focused primarily on traditional Islamic subjects such as Quranic interpretation, hadith studies, and Islamic jurisprudence. These early sessions were geared towards providing basic religious education to the community, helping Muslims gain a better understanding of their faith. However, as the needs of the congregation evolved, so did the scope of the materials being taught.

In recent years, Majlis Taklim have broadened their curriculum to include more contemporary topics that address the challenges of modern life. These include discussions

on Islamic ethics in daily life, family and financial management according to Islamic principles, and children's education in the context of Islamic values. This shift in focus reflects the growing demand among the community for practical knowledge that can be applied in daily living. According to Sarbini (2020), the inclusion of topics such as Islamic entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and environmental stewardship is an effort to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant in the face of modern social and economic challenges.

The diversification of teaching materials also includes efforts to address pressing social issues, such as gender equality, human rights, and social justice, all framed within an Islamic context. For example, Ginting (2024) highlights how some *Majlis Taklim* in Medan have taken steps to incorporate discussions on gender equality, particularly in empowering women through Islamic education. This has made *Majlis Taklim* a progressive force in the community, promoting social change while staying grounded in religious principles.

Increase in Number and Frequency of Activities

As *Majlis Taklim* in Medan became more established and formalized, the frequency and variety of their activities expanded significantly. In the early stages, *Majlis Taklim* sessions were typically held weekly or monthly, focusing on religious study and spiritual reflection. However, the growing demand for religious education and community engagement led many *Majlis Taklim* to increase the number of meetings and diversify their activities.

Today, many *Majlis Taklim* in Medan conduct daily or near-daily sessions, with programs ranging from regular Quranic recitations and public lectures to special events during Islamic holidays such as Ramadan and Eid. These gatherings often feature prominent religious scholars, providing an opportunity for the congregation to learn from experts in the field. Additionally, *Majlis Taklim* are now involved in organizing large-scale religious events such as *Tabligh Akbar*, where thousands of people gather to listen to renowned Islamic speakers, including national figures like Ustad Abdul Somad (Fadilah 2019).

The increasing number of activities reflects the growing significance of *Majlis Taklim* in the social and religious life of Medan's Muslim community. These groups have become a

central hub for religious engagement, where members can deepen their understanding of Islam while building stronger ties within the community.

Integration of Technology and Social Media

The rise of digital technology has had a profound impact on how Majlis Taklim in Medan conduct their activities. In recent years, many Majlis Taklim have embraced social media platforms and digital tools to expand their reach and engage with a broader audience. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have become valuable resources for Majlis Taklim to share religious content, stream live lectures, and maintain communication with their members.

The use of digital technology has allowed Majlis Taklim to adapt to the changing needs of a more technologically savvy congregation. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Majlis Taklim shifted to online platforms to continue their religious studies and community outreach programs. This transition not only ensured the continuity of religious education but also opened new opportunities for Majlis Taklim to engage with people who may not have been able to attend in-person gatherings due to logistical or health constraints (Romli et al. 2021).

Social media also plays a crucial role in the dissemination of Islamic teachings to younger generations. Bahari (2023) notes that platforms like TikTok have been used to share short religious lectures and inspirational messages, which have resonated particularly well with teenagers and young adults. This adaptation to digital media has helped Majlis Taklim remain relevant in a rapidly changing social and technological landscape, ensuring that they continue to fulfill their role as vital religious institutions in Medan.

Social and Humanitarian Activities

Majlis Taklim in Medan have also expanded their role to include a wide range of social and humanitarian activities. These initiatives reflect the growing recognition that religious institutions have a responsibility not only to provide spiritual guidance but also to address the socio-economic needs of their communities. Social outreach programs have

become a significant part of Majlis Taklim's mission, with many groups involved in charitable work, disaster relief, and poverty alleviation efforts.

For example, during the holy month of Ramadan, many Majlis Taklim organize food distribution programs, provide financial assistance to the underprivileged, and offer educational scholarships to children from low-income families. These efforts are often carried out in collaboration with local government agencies and charitable organizations, highlighting the close relationship between Majlis Taklim and broader social welfare initiatives (Zulkarnain 2023).

In addition to these seasonal programs, Majlis Taklim in Medan have become increasingly involved in long-term humanitarian efforts. Some groups have initiated programs focused on healthcare, providing free medical checkups and health education to the community. Others have launched initiatives aimed at addressing environmental issues, such as tree planting and waste management programs, in line with Islamic principles of environmental stewardship (Fadilah 2019).

These activities demonstrate the evolving role of Majlis Taklim as institutions that not only nurture spiritual growth but also contribute to the well-being of society at large. The emphasis on social justice and community service aligns with the Islamic values of compassion and charity, reinforcing the Majlis Taklim's position as a vital force for positive change in Medan.

Special Programs for Women, Youth, and Children

A key feature of Majlis Taklim's activities in Medan is their focus on providing specialized programs for different segments of society, particularly women, youth, and children. Women, in particular, have been instrumental in the success of Majlis Taklim, both as participants and as organizers. Many Majlis Taklim in Medan have established women's programs that focus on topics such as Islamic family law, women's rights in Islam, and practical skills such as home management and entrepreneurship (Ginting 2024).

The involvement of women in Majlis Taklim activities has empowered many to take on leadership roles within the organization, breaking down traditional gender barriers. These programs provide a supportive environment for women to deepen their religious knowledge

while gaining valuable life skills. Additionally, Majlis Taklim have increasingly recognized the importance of engaging with youth and children. Programs aimed at young people often include Islamic studies tailored to their needs, focusing on topics such as career development, ethical behavior, and relationships, all grounded in Islamic teachings (Faturrohman 2023).

Majlis Taklim for children typically focus on Quranic literacy, moral education, and fostering a sense of community from an early age. The goal is to instill strong Islamic values in the younger generation, preparing them to become responsible and informed members of the Muslim community. These specialized programs demonstrate the inclusive nature of Majlis Taklim and their commitment to serving the diverse needs of the Muslim population in Medan (Munawaroh and Zaman 2020).

Collaboration and Synergy between Majlis Taklim

One of the significant developments in the activities of Majlis Taklim in Medan is the increased collaboration between different groups. Many Majlis Taklim have recognized the value of working together to achieve common goals, particularly in organizing large-scale events and community programs. This collaboration has resulted in the formation of Majlis Taklim networks and associations, such as the Majlis Taklim Contact Agency (BKMT), which facilitates communication and cooperation between different groups (Purnama 2018).

Through these networks, Majlis Taklim are able to share resources, exchange ideas, and coordinate their efforts more effectively. For example, when organizing large religious events, such as public lectures or charitable drives, multiple Majlis Taklim often pool their resources to ensure the success of the event. This synergy not only strengthens the position of Majlis Taklim in the community but also enhances their ability to make a positive impact on society.

Challenges Faced by Majlis Taklim in Medan City

While Majlis Taklim in Medan have seen significant growth and development, they are not without challenges. These challenges stem from various sources, including limited resources, societal changes, and internal organizational issues. Understanding these challenges is crucial

for ensuring the sustainability and continued impact of Majlis Taklim as key religious and social institutions.

Limited Resources and Funding

One of the primary challenges faced by many Majlis Taklim in Medan is a lack of financial resources. Although some Majlis Taklim receive support from local government agencies and religious organizations, many rely heavily on donations from their congregations, which can be inconsistent and insufficient to sustain their operations. This lack of stable funding affects the quality and scope of activities that Majlis Taklim can offer, particularly in more impoverished areas where congregants may not be able to contribute regularly (Fadilah 2019).

The issue of funding also impacts the infrastructure and facilities available to Majlis Taklim. In certain districts of Medan, especially on the outskirts, Majlis Taklim may operate in inadequate spaces that are not conducive to learning or community activities. Poor infrastructure can discourage participation and limit the reach of these groups. Purnama (2018) highlights that in rural areas, the lack of appropriate facilities such as comfortable meeting spaces, access to religious texts, and teaching aids further hampers the ability of Majlis Taklim to effectively serve their members.

Additionally, the financial limitations of some Majlis Taklim affect their ability to attract and retain qualified teachers. In more established Majlis Taklim, there is greater access to experienced religious scholars and educators. However, in less developed or rural areas, finding well-trained teachers can be a challenge. This disparity in access to resources creates a gap between urban and rural Majlis Taklim in terms of the quality of religious education provided (Yanti 2021).

Competition with Other Activities and Social Engagements

As Medan continues to modernize and urbanize, Majlis Taklim face increasing competition for the time and attention of their members. The fast-paced nature of urban life, combined with the availability of alternative forms of social engagement and entertainment,

means that many people, especially younger individuals, may not prioritize participation in religious study groups. According to Adi (2020), the rise of competing social activities, including sports, entertainment, and professional engagements, has contributed to a decline in regular attendance at Majlis Taklim sessions.

This trend is particularly evident in urban areas, where the demands of work, education, and family life leave little time for religious activities. In response, some Majlis Taklim have attempted to adjust their schedules and offer more flexible programming, such as evening or weekend sessions, to accommodate the busy lifestyles of their members. However, despite these efforts, maintaining consistent participation remains a challenge (Arifin 2019).

Moreover, the growing popularity of digital content and online platforms also presents competition for Majlis Taklim. While some Majlis Taklim have embraced technology to reach their members, others struggle to keep up with the fast-evolving digital landscape. Younger generations, in particular, may find it more convenient to access religious teachings through social media or online lectures rather than attending in-person Majlis Taklim sessions. This shift in how religious content is consumed poses a challenge for traditional forms of engagement (Bahari 2023).

Organizational and Leadership Issues

The success of Majlis Taklim depends heavily on strong leadership and effective management. However, not all Majlis Taklim have the organizational capacity to manage their activities efficiently. In many cases, leadership roles are filled on a voluntary basis, and leaders may lack formal training in organizational management or religious education. This can lead to difficulties in coordinating activities, managing finances, and ensuring the quality of teaching (Sarhini 2020).

Additionally, internal conflicts and power struggles within the leadership of some Majlis Taklim can hinder their effectiveness. Disagreements over the direction of the group, financial management, or leadership succession can lead to fragmentation and loss of membership. Ensuring transparency and accountability in leadership is a key challenge that

many Majelis Taklim must address to maintain trust and cohesion within their congregations (Zulkarnain 2023).

Furthermore, as Majelis Taklim grow in size and scope, the need for professionalization becomes more apparent. Some larger Majelis Taklim in Medan have begun to adopt more formal structures, with paid staff and formalized processes for decision-making and administration. However, many smaller Majelis Taklim continue to operate on an informal basis, which limits their ability to scale and sustain their activities in the long term (Fadilah 2019).

Maintaining Relevance Amidst Social Change

Medan, like many other urban centers, is undergoing rapid social and cultural changes. The challenges of globalization, modernization, and secularization have led to shifts in how religion is perceived and practiced. For Majelis Taklim to remain relevant in this changing context, they must adapt their teachings and activities to address contemporary social issues. This includes addressing topics such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, and social justice, all within the framework of Islamic teachings (Ginting 2024).

However, maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity can be difficult. While some Majelis Taklim have embraced more progressive approaches to these issues, others remain more conservative and resistant to change. This tension can lead to divisions within the community, with some members feeling that the Majelis Taklim is either too rigid or too lenient in its approach. Navigating these ideological differences while remaining true to core Islamic values is a challenge that many Majelis Taklim face (Siregar and Rohman 2023).

Moreover, the rise of religious extremism in certain parts of Indonesia has created a need for Majelis Taklim to promote religious moderation and tolerance actively. The increasing influence of radical ideologies poses a threat to social cohesion, and Majelis Taklim play a crucial role in countering these narratives by promoting a more inclusive and peaceful interpretation of Islam. This requires careful engagement with younger generations who may be more vulnerable to extremist messaging, particularly through online platforms (Islamy 2022).

Social Impact of Majlis Taklim in Medan City

Despite the challenges outlined above, Majlis Taklim continue to have a profound social impact in Medan. Their influence extends beyond the realm of religious education, shaping various aspects of social life, community development, and individual well-being. This section explores the key areas where Majlis Taklim have made a significant social impact.

Strengthening Religious Understanding and Moral Values

One of the primary contributions of Majlis Taklim is their role in strengthening religious understanding and promoting moral values within the Muslim community. Through regular study sessions and lectures, Majlis Taklim provide a platform for individuals to deepen their knowledge of Islamic teachings and apply these teachings to their daily lives. This has a direct impact on the moral and ethical behavior of the community, promoting values such as honesty, compassion, and social responsibility (Munawaroh and Zaman 2020).

In addition to enhancing religious literacy, Majlis Taklim also serve as a space for moral reflection and personal growth. The emphasis on spiritual development helps members cultivate a sense of purpose and fulfillment, fostering a stronger connection to their faith. This, in turn, has a positive impact on family life, as individuals are encouraged to live by Islamic principles in their relationships with others (Widiandari 2022).

Empowerment of Women

Majlis Taklim have played a critical role in the empowerment of women, particularly in urban areas like Medan. Women's participation in Majlis Taklim activities has provided them with opportunities for religious education, social engagement, and leadership development. Many women who participate in Majlis Taklim gain not only religious knowledge but also practical skills in areas such as family management, entrepreneurship, and community organizing (Ginting 2024).

The social empowerment of women through Majlis Taklim has had a ripple effect on the broader community. As women become more educated and confident in their roles as mothers, wives, and community leaders, they contribute to the overall well-being of their families and neighborhoods. This empowerment also challenges traditional gender roles, as

more women take on leadership positions within Majlis Taklim and other religious organizations (Faturrohman 2023).

Building Social Solidarity and Community Cohesion

Majlis Taklim serve as an important vehicle for building social solidarity and fostering a sense of community. By bringing together individuals from different backgrounds for a shared purpose, Majlis Taklim help to bridge social divides and promote mutual understanding. This is particularly important in a multicultural city like Medan, where ethnic and religious diversity can sometimes lead to tensions. Majlis Taklim provide a space where people can come together to share their experiences and build meaningful relationships based on common values (Kasim 2021).

The social cohesion fostered by Majlis Taklim extends beyond the Muslim community. In some cases, Majlis Taklim have played a role in promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation, contributing to a more harmonious and tolerant society. This is particularly important in Indonesia, where religious pluralism is a key aspect of the national identity (Siregar and Rohman 2023).

Contribution to Social Welfare and Humanitarian Efforts

As mentioned earlier, Majlis Taklim in Medan have increasingly engaged in social welfare and humanitarian efforts. Their involvement in charitable activities, such as providing assistance to the poor, supporting orphans, and contributing to disaster relief, has had a tangible impact on the lives of many people in the community. These efforts reflect the Islamic principles of charity and social justice, reinforcing the role of Majlis Taklim as agents of positive social change (Fadilah 2019).

Moreover, the ability of Majlis Taklim to mobilize resources and coordinate community-based initiatives has made them a valuable partner for local government agencies and non-governmental organizations. By working together on social projects, Majlis Taklim have demonstrated their capacity to address critical issues such as poverty, health, and education in a collaborative and sustainable manner (Lubis 2023).

Conclusion

Majlis Taklim in Medan City has evolved into a significant religious institution in the life of Muslim society, particularly since the post-independence era. This development includes the transformation from simple community initiatives into a more structured institution, supported by religious and community leaders, along with formal recognition from the government and major religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. This official recognition strengthens the position of Majlis Taklim as an important social and legal institution.

Over time, Majlis Taklim in Medan has continued to adapt, including the adoption of technology and social media to expand its reach and improve the quality of teaching. From being just a place for religious learning, Majlis Taklim has now transformed into a center for social and humanitarian activities. Majlis Taklim engages in various social activities such as community service, fundraising for disaster victims, and public health programs. With the adoption of modern technology, religious teaching can now be accessed more widely through online platforms, thereby achieving more inclusive participation from various groups.

Majlis Taklim plays an important role in maintaining social and religious ties within a diverse society and serves as a moral fortress in the era of globalization. In addition to providing religious education, Majlis Taklim has become the center of social life for the Muslim community in Medan. Support from the government and the involvement of local political figures show how Majlis Taklim also functions as a tool for building political support among Muslims. However, this role remains balanced with the commitment to maintain independence in religious teachings.

Overall, Majlis Taklim in Medan City has become a vital institution in the religious and social development of Muslims, with activities that continue to grow in line with the challenges and needs of the times. The sustainability and relevance of Majlis Taklim will largely depend on its ability to continue adapting and maintaining its function as an inclusive and dynamic educational and social institution.

This study makes an important contribution to understanding the role of Majlis Taklim in the historical and social context of Medan City. Despite its limitations, the findings offer valuable insights into how Majlis Taklim adapts to change and functions in society.

Further research addressing these limitations could deepen the understanding of the impact and development of Majelis Taklim and its contribution to society.

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