

THE ROLE OF THE AT-TAQWA MAJELIS TAKLIM IN SHAPING SOCIAL INTERACTION PATTERNS AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN SIDOREJO, NORTH SUMATRA

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Abstract : This study aims to explore the presence of community-based organizations and their role as beneficial instruments within society. *Majelis taklim* (Islamic study groups) are closely intertwined with the social fabric of the community, as every religious gathering (taklim) fosters social interaction either between individuals and congregants or among the congregants themselves. These social interactions frequently lead to broader social activities, both within the taklim community and the general public. However, social interaction and behavior are not always consistent among members of the wider society. It is recognized that when taklim serves as a space for learning and interaction, its participants tend to adopt a more refined and ethical way of life. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using action research methodology, aimed at generating a consistently positive understanding of the research object. Such an approach aligns well with the broader societal perception of Islamic education. The research seeks to identify the methods of Islamic preaching (da'wah) used in the sermons, analyze the content delivered, and examine how the audience (mad'u) applies these teachings in everyday life. The descriptive qualitative method is used to explain phenomena without altering the variables under investigation, relying primarily on discreet interviews for data collection. The primary goal of taklim is to deepen the understanding of its participants. Understanding, in this context, reflects the extent to which an individual comprehends a concept, situation, or fact that is clearly conveyed. This comprehension extends beyond verbal transmission to include mastery of the core issues or facts discussed. The existence of *majelis taklim* in this regard cannot be simply interpreted by the general public as a mere representation of religious ritual. Its integration into community life has become intrinsic to the participants. In this context, the enthusiasm and awareness of the congregants are evident through their active involvement in various religious activities.

Keywords: Majelis Taklim, Organization, Da'wah, Interaction

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Introduction

Majelis (مَجْلِسٌ) originates from the Arabic root word related to the act of "sitting" (jalasa - جَلَسَ). Practically, majelis means "a place of sitting," "an assembly," or "a council." In this context, majelis refers to a place or forum where people gather. Taklim (تَعْلِيمٌ) is derived from the verb 'allama (عَلَّمَ), meaning "to teach." Taklim is a verbal noun (masdar) that denotes "education," "learning," or "the acquisition of knowledge." In simple terms, Majelis Taklim can be described as a space or forum for conducting Islamic education. Essentially, it is a form of non-formal Islamic educational organization that functions as a means of da'wah (Islamic proselytization) and a place to convey Islamic knowledge. Common activities in a Majelis Taklim include religious lectures (pengajian), sermons, discussions, and Qur'anic recitation (Acep Mamat, 2024).

Da'wah is an effort aimed at enhancing religious understanding in order to elevate human life. It seeks to guide individuals who have deviated both in their inner disposition and external behavior back to the prescribed path. It emphasizes the existence and applicability of divine laws, inviting reflection on human actions in relation to these laws. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) offer a framework for ethical human life, aligning with principles that have existed since time immemorial. There are various interpretations of how humans ought to live, and these interpretations warrant in-depth elaboration (Saeful Lukman, 2019).

Islam is a religion founded upon education, and one of its most fundamental principles is da'wah. Every Muslim is expected to participate in da'wah by guiding others toward the path of Allah, with the ultimate goal of attaining happiness both in this world and the hereafter. One of the most effective means of doing so is through the dissemination of both general and religious knowledge, especially via the activities of Majelis Taklim. These assemblies serve as vital agents of societal transformation, fostering positive change within communities.

Majelis Taklim plays a significant role in enhancing the overall welfare and development of community members. It is expected that through such activities, individuals will gain a deeper understanding of Islam, learn to appreciate its teachings, and share their acquired knowledge with others. Community collaboration is facilitated when members demonstrate care and responsibility in maintaining social cohesion. Social concern, in this regard, refers to the community's collective capacity to overcome challenges and extend mutual support an attitude highly valued in Islam (Munawaroh, 2020).

The outcomes of Majelis Taklim Musholla At-Taqwa over the years are visibly impactful. Initially, many community members were reluctant to adhere to Allah's commands, but over time, a growing commitment became evident for instance, regular participation in congregational prayers at the mosque and a strengthened sense of solidarity, especially in times of communal hardship. Preliminary observations indicate that prior to the establishment of the majelis taklim, the mosque was often empty during prayer times, mutual cooperation was minimal, and community behavior generally did not align with Islamic teachings. Since its inception, however, there has been a noticeable shift in both individual and collective life patterns. The impact includes increased attendance at congregational prayers, heightened communal spirit, and the revitalization of mutual assistance (gotong royong) among residents.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach combined with an action research method aimed at generating a consistently constructive understanding of the research object. Descriptive qualitative research is applied to explain existing phenomena without modifying the variables under investigation with discreet interviews used as a primary tool for data collection as noted by Siti Hanyfah (2022). Data were collected through field observations and literature studies. Field observation was conducted in a subtle and unobtrusive manner by identifying relevant information and recording everything related to the study. Interviews were used to obtain accurate data from relevant stakeholders such as the organizers or administrators of the Majelis Taklim Musholla At-Taqwa. The literature study involved reviewing various books in libraries and seeking references from both printed and online sources to support the conceptual framework of this research.

Results and Discussion

The methodology used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method, conducted at Jl. Perjuangan Gg. Langgar, Medan, particularly at the religious study group (majelis taklim) of Musholla At-Taqwa. The primary objective of the Musholla At-Taqwa study group is to enhance religious understanding among the general public. The term "understanding" in this context refers not to theoretical comprehension, but rather to knowledge that is relevant to daily life. The Musholla At-Taqwa study group serves as a forum or medium to meet the religious needs of the community. As a primary religious institution, it strongly emphasizes mutual understanding (ukhuwah islamiyah) among Muslims, characterized by a calm, egalitarian attitude and neutrality.

Majelis Taklim Musholla At-Taqwa is not affiliated with any political party or organization. Instead, it contributes positively and proactively to social activities that benefit the wider society. The spirit of brotherhood consistently expressed during its activities fosters a sense of harmony, solidarity, and concern among community members. The Musholla At-Taqwa study group continuously shapes and develops society to cultivate noble character, commendable morals, and righteous deeds (amal shalih). This is particularly emphasized for the youth, who are considered the future of the nation. They are expected to actively participate in regional and national development as part of the religious education ordained by Allah SWT (Eva Iryani, 2019).

The presence of the Musholla At-Taqwa study group among the wider society, especially among the youth, has inspired a renewed enthusiasm for seeking religious knowledge, even if they are still in the early stages of learning. However, the length and complexity of Islamic teachings do not deter their motivation and curiosity in understanding them.

As a result of their lifelong engagement in these activities, the physical demeanor of the participants improves, reflecting the moral influence of the majelis environment. Participants attend enthusiastically without concern for fatigue. They actively engage in every session of the religious study and some even bring books to better understand the presented materials. The primary goal of these materials is to raise self-awareness. Preachers (da'i) are not merely eloquent speakers; they must first understand the conditions and circumstances of their audience (mad'u). Delivering heavily intellectual content would be inappropriate for audiences with limited

background, just as overly simplified material would not suit more advanced audiences.

The success of da'wah is not determined solely by the content but also by the method of delivery. Material and method are two inseparable concepts that must be harmonized. Each mad'u will only comprehend the message if it is conveyed through appropriate methods. The content delivered by Ustaz H. Qardhawi, an active teacher, is unique and more engaging, making religious learning more dynamic. Furthermore, each sermon ends with a question-and-answer session, which is crucial for clarifying and deepening understanding.

One effective way to keep the mad'u engaged is to evoke a sense of awe and enthusiasm. Joy can emerge when a preacher delivers sermons in a light-hearted and relaxed manner, reducing tension. The use of humor by the preacher is appreciated by the audience. Even though sometimes a preacher may seem like a comedian, the ultimate goal remains the dissemination of beneficial knowledge. The researcher finds great satisfaction in the knowledge conveyed, enjoying every topic discussed. Participation in these studies is fulfilling not only because they provide religious insights but also because they foster interfaith harmony (interview, April 12, 2025).

The mad'u expresses happiness when receiving da'wah messages, especially as they are given the opportunity to ask questions related to the topic. Occasionally, debates occur between the da'i and the mad'u, but these are carried out ethically and without hostility. The da'i presents the material with joy, friendliness, and a warm smile, generating a sense of comfort and engagement in the audience. One of the main goals of da'wah is to help people become more self-aware. The better their attitude, the stronger the impact of the message. For instance, helping others, avoiding mistakes, and inviting toward good deeds. Wisely managing time also contributes to improved character. One crucial practice is ensuring that the mosque is open and ready when the call to prayer (adzan) is heard.

The first thing that comes to mind is self-awareness. A shift in behavior is observed among participants after attending these studies. For example, when the adzan is called, they immediately enter the mosque. Even children are taught to respond to the call to prayer promptly, ensuring punctuality in prayer (interview, April 13, 2025). As previously stated, the Musholla At-Taqwa study group does not only discuss morality but also includes teachings on worship and creed (aqidah). The character development observed in daily life is noteworthy, as it encourages people to reflect on their actions.

The strongest bonds are not only formed between mad'u and fellow mad'u, but also between mad'u and their da'i. This is a key achievement of the da'wah activities. The development of harmonious relationships among all parties involved is vital. Da'wah activities that lead to positive transformation also improve interpersonal relationships. Common practices such as polite speech, mutual respect, and avoiding hurtful comments indicate effective communication and healthy relationships between mad'u and da'i. "We are constantly reminded to maintain ties of kinship. Allah does not bless those who sever these ties. Disputes often arise from stubbornness. Personally, I prefer to act kindly and thoughtfully when making mistakes, especially when using words or phrases that others may misunderstand. What matters most is preserving harmony among residents" (interview, April 13, 2025).

Mr. Syaifullah, a participant of the Musholla At-Taqwa study group, explained that the sessions encourage attendees to maintain good relationships with family

members, neighbors, and the broader community. Thus, a lifestyle of social harmony begins with simplicity. It starts with understanding and empathizing with the people around us. By cultivating compassion, trust, and respect, a more positive social life can be fostered.

The actions or responses of the mad'u can be observed through their behavioral changes whether they improve, remain the same, or worsen. If positive changes occur, the da'i has succeeded in their mission. This means the mad'u has understood, internalized, and acted upon the teachings. If deterioration is observed, efforts must be made to restore and enhance the situation (Rahmatullah, 2016). Of the three key points discussed initial motivation, da'wah objectives, and the development of responsive behavior the final goal of da'wah is to initiate behavioral change. This change must come not only from the mad'u but also from the individual's own awareness and intent. Such changes, which require time, are evident in daily life and reflect the ultimate purpose of da'wah: to transform individuals from a state of wrongdoing to righteousness, or from good to even better.

Below are several examples of problem formulations related to the study group activities at Musholla At-Taqwa:

Weekly Program

Regular Religious Study: The religious study sessions (pengajian) are held biweekly after the Isya prayer, with a minimum contribution of IDR 2,000. A sacrificial savings (tabungan kurban) system and a commitment-based contribution mechanism are implemented for community members. Documentation includes photos/videos, meeting minutes, and attendance lists.

Monthly Program

The financial reporting of the majelis taklim is conducted periodically every few months to ensure transparency and accountability. Charitable donations for orphaned children (santunan anak yatim) are routinely organized as part of the group's social care initiatives. Every Islamic holiday (PHBI) event or Ramadan celebration involves invited preachers (mubaligh) and is carried out in collaboration with both male and female congregants (bapak-bapak dan ibu-ibu), promoting inclusive participation and communal unity.

Annual Programs

The annual programs of the majelis taklim encompass various initiatives aimed at enhancing organizational function and fostering community welfare. These include inventory control and management, which ensures that all equipment and resources are well-maintained and effectively utilized throughout the year. Program planning is conducted to organize religious, educational, and social activities in a structured and goal-oriented manner. Grand religious gatherings (pengajian akbar) are held as part of the annual agenda, often featuring prominent preachers and broad community participation to strengthen spiritual understanding and togetherness. The procurement of uniforms for members is also included to foster a sense of identity and unity among the congregation. Social care activities are reflected in the regular distribution of aid to orphaned children (santunan yatim piatu), as well as through a qurban savings program that enables members to participate in sacrificial rituals during Eid al-Adha. Furthermore, funds are allocated to support the development and maintenance of the musholla and similar religious facilities, demonstrating the group's commitment to improving religious infrastructure in the community.

Challenges Encountered

Several challenges have been identified in the implementation of majelis taklim activities. These include the lack of learning resources, media facilities, and educational tools, which hampers the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. The level of participation among congregation members varies significantly, with some actively involved while others show minimal engagement in religious activities. Differences in personal perspectives and attitudes toward religious programs also affect participation and acceptance. In some cases, the delivery of religious material tends to be relatively light in content and lacks emphasis on practical relevance to daily life. There is also a limited level of understanding and acceptance of the material among some members of the community. Additionally, the organization and management of majelis taklim events remain ongoing and require further development. Another concern is that public attention outside the religious community has not yet shifted toward active involvement in the majelis taklim, indicating the need for broader outreach and community engagement efforts.

Implemented Solutions

Several solutions have been implemented to address the challenges faced by the majelis taklim. One approach involves providing financial contributions from each participant involved in the program, ensuring shared responsibility and sustainability. Continuous efforts are made to engage the community using efficient and effective strategies that foster inclusive participation. The majelis taklim is firmly dedicated to delivering quality religious counseling that is accessible and meaningful. Preachers and facilitators are encouraged to ensure that religious materials are delivered in a manner that is easy to understand, using appropriate and context-sensitive methods. Emphasis is placed on the relevance of the content to daily life, and the material is adjusted to match the audience's level of comprehension. The delivery must also be accompanied by a lively and attentive attitude, especially during evaluations and follow-ups of events. Additionally, religious education is integrated with broader concerns such as environmental issues, social responsibility, ethical values related to environmental sustainability, and the integration of technological knowledge and awareness.

Public Perception of the Status of Majelis Taklim

Majelis taklim has become a popular and widespread activity among the general public, taking various forms across different communities. Its presence is no longer seen as a separate or exclusive religious practice but rather as an integral part of community life. The participation of congregants reflects their spiritual enthusiasm and growing awareness in engaging with religious activities. Human actions are often driven by what is commonly referred to as motivation an internal force that compels individuals to perform certain tasks or engage in particular activities. This also applies to participation in majelis taklim, where each attendee has their own unique reason for involvement. Recognizing this, further research is necessary to understand and enhance public motivation to participate in such gatherings. According to public opinion, majelis taklim activities vary significantly from one group to another. Many believe that participating in religious study sessions is a valuable way to gain deeper knowledge. Moreover, some view it as an opportunity to build a stronger sense of identity and community while collectively learning more about Islam.

Conclusion

Based on research conducted through a descriptive qualitative study on the role of majelis taklim in enhancing the public's understanding of religion, this study aims to identify the content delivered, the methods used, and the outcomes of the majelis taklim in improving religious understanding within the community. The findings can be interpreted as follows: First, the materials presented by the da'i in the religious study sessions at Musholla At-Taqwa are gentle and non-confrontational, adapted to the contextual needs of the preaching environment. Selecting appropriate material is a crucial step to ensure that what is conveyed can be understood and practiced by the participants. Given the socioeconomic and educational conditions of the surrounding community, which can be described as underprivileged, the materials delivered by the da'i primarily focus on creed (aqidah), ethics (akhlaq), worship (ibadah), and current social conditions.

Second, method refers to the means employed by a person to achieve a predetermined goal. One of the essential elements in any preaching activity (dakwah) is the use of appropriate methods. The methods used to deliver religious messages vary depending on the characteristics and classification of the target audience (mad'u). The mad'u is expected to be able to understand and accept what the da'i communicates. The At-Taubah method applied in this study is based on Qur'an Surah An-Nahl: 125, which outlines three primary preaching methods: hikmah (wisdom), mau'idzatil hasanah (good advice), and mujadalah (dialogue or debate in a good manner).

Third, Musholla At-Taqwa's majelis taklim actively participates in efforts to improve the religious understanding of the general public. It serves as a medium to meet the community's religious needs. The primary goal of this religious activity is to cultivate faith and piety (iman dan taqwa) toward Allah SWT. In its implementation, the majelis taklim has contributed to changes in both the social structure and individual character of the surrounding community, reflected in improvements in both work ethic and social awareness.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Musholla At-Taqwa's majelis taklim plays a role in carrying out dakwah activities that include teaching aqidah, akhlaq, ibadah, and promoting social engagement. The dakwah methods applied are derived from Surah An-Nahl: 125, namely bil hikmah, bil mau'idzatil hasanah, and bil mujadalah. The results of the majelis taklim activities, as shown in this study, demonstrate a positive influence and response from participants, as evident from the observations and conclusions drawn by the researcher. Some examples the researcher wishes to highlight in this paper include the increasing quality of the religious studies held at Musholla At-Taqwa. The lack of diverse da'i presenting sermons could be addressed as an opportunity to vary the delivery of messages. In addition, introducing new media platforms frequently used in surrounding religious gatherings could be beneficial. Therefore, by utilizing information materials that can be presented through visual or audiovisual media, and by producing bulletins, the mad'u would not only gain religious knowledge from live sermons but also have written content accessible anytime and anywhere, especially in public spaces.

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