

# THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS STUDY GROUPS IN FOSTERING ANTI-CORRUPTION BEHAVIOR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN METRO CITY

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The Role of Religious Study Groups in Fostering Anti-Corruption Behavior and Its Implications for Local Democratic Practices in Metro City Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

## Abstract

This study discusses the efforts of *majlis taklim* management to instill a clean-living attitude and behavior in combating corrupt practices during political years, including local contests such as regional elections. Furthermore, it is considered important because the *majlis taklim* congregation consists of individuals constantly nurtured mentally and spiritually through long and regular periods of guidance. In the context of Metro City, there are suspicions of a high prevalence of pragmatic political behavior during campaigns. Therefore, the central concern revolves around the clarity of the role and roadmap of a *majlis taklim* managed by the DKM (mosque management board) in promoting sound political morality and its potential to diminish the prevalence of money politics during regional elections. This study takes the form of a qualitative and descriptive analysis approach, using interviews and questionnaires as the main data sources distributed to the managers and congregation members. The findings indicate that the *majlis taklim* in Metro City has regular studies cultivating social morality during elections. However, these initiatives are not yet integrated into a standardized printed curriculum that can serve as a comprehensive reference. A *majlis taklim* congregation is a group of people who are not easily swayed by money politics during regional elections but some members are still inclined towards such practices.

**Keywords:** Anti-Corruption; Democracy; Local Politics; Study Group.

## A. Introduction

The exploration of *majlis taklim* extends beyond the traditional focus on religious education and the cultivation of social awareness. This group is also recognized for its broader social potential, which can be expressed in diverse forms and interests (Asrinda Amalia, 2018, p. 18). Metro City has achieved significant accomplishments on the national stage, particularly in education, similar to Jogjakarta in Java. Metro City,

encompassing a land area of 68.74 m<sup>2</sup> and inhabited by a population of 160,729 people (with 116,239 registered voters), boasts five sub-districts and 22 villages (Simanjuntak, 2021, p. 11). Despite its limited economic potential, the city serves as a prominent destination for politicians seeking political prospects within its confines. Ascending to the esteemed position of mayor (M1) in Metro City carries a deep sense of pride and prestige for those who have held this distinguished office (Hawari, 2014, p. 13).

There are many thriving and active religious study groups in the realm of non-formal education, including *Majlis Taklim Ayo Cinta Masjid (ACM)*, *Badan Kontak Majlis Taklim (BKMT)*, *Majlis Taklim An-Nisa'*, *Majlis Taklim At-Taqwa*, *Majlis Taklim Al-Huda*, *Majlis Taklim Mujahidin*, *Majlis Taklim al-Jihad*, and more. These platforms of religious outreach were established to gather and organize all *majlis taklim* scattered throughout each sub-district in mosques or musallas. They facilitate coordination and enhance the propagation of study groups to create a significant impact. Several *majlis taklim* often come together for a grand study session, such as the *ACM Taqwa Mosque Community*, *Sentralan Majlis Taklim An-Nisa'*, sub-district and village-level BKMT gatherings centered in Metro City. Following the individual sessions of each group, a momentous gathering known as *Kajian Sentralan* takes place, exemplified by notable events such as *Majlis Taklim An-Nisa'* in Metro City, *Sentralan BKMT*, or *Tabligh Akbar ACM*. These grand-scale gatherings attract a substantial number of attendees, particularly the youth.

The various religious study groups in Metro, such as *ACM*, *BKMT*, *An-Nisa'*, as well as in mosques and musallas, have not only existed for a considerable period but have also rooted their activities in the community, specifically before the pandemic. Based on the testimony of Ummi Sakdiyah, an Honorary Religious Educator (PAH) from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Metro City, Islamic studies within the *majlis taklim*, such as *Majlis Taklim An-Nisa'*, *ACM*, *BKMT*, *Salimah*, and others, focus on faith, worship, and general morality, as well as frequently address ethics, social etiquette, and the importance of preserving dignity in politics during campaigns.

Hardi, a religious educator, stated that the spirit of sacrifice and defense grew strong and selfless when the proposed candidate was part of the community (Hardi, personal communication, 2022, p. 1). Similarly, Che' Ani, an activist and *majlis taklim* organizer, agreed with Umi Sakdiyah, considering that Metro was not a large city with many unfamiliar names. Individuals known by the community, specifically among the women involved in *majlis taklim* activities, became the center of attention. Heri, a local political observer, also mentioned that *majlis taklim* was often targeted by candidates during elections to have clear networks and solid voter base. Yulianto, an active member of the Council, stated that it can be the key to a candidate's victory in the council seat competition, serving as a gateway for recruitment through a simple and uncomplicated approach, specifically when endorsed by the *ustadz* or *majlis taklim* organizers (Yulianto, personal communication, n.d., p. 7).

Efforts to instill moral values and social ethics built through non-formal education processes deeply rooted in society have been carried out by *muballighin* and *muballighat*, specifically within religious study groups such as *majlis taklim*. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Metro City reported that there were 163 active institutions engaged in development activities (Kemenag, 2017, p. 5). Ahmad Mubarak, a staff member of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, stated that besides being renowned for its formal education achievements, Metro was also known as a small city vibrant with religious studies. The examinations conducted within religious study groups address vertical worship issues, ethics and social morality, including noble attitudes and behaviors during campaign seasons. H. Abdul Muluk and H. Ali Basyar,

in several casual conversations, admitted that religious studies in mosques and musallas often discussed the cultivation of moral values and social ethics, particularly in the lead-up to campaigns (A. Muluk, personal communication, April 14, 2022, p. 2).

There is an issue of the high cost of politics, which has been repeatedly mentioned by active and retired politicians and officials. Several politicians have commented on the political costs experienced in Metro City, including Anna Morinda, Ampian Bustami, Al-Muzammil Yusuf, Nasriyanto Effendi, Sudarsono (Former Chairman of the Metro City Regional Council), Abdul Hakim (Former mayoral candidate in 2015), and H. Zakaria Ahmad. They acknowledge that the political costs of the city are very high (A. Muluk, personal communication, 2019, p. 2). According to Rakata Institute, the Metro City communities are highly permissive, with the prevalence of money politics reaching 58.25% in 2015.

According to experts, the task of disentangling democratic practices from corrupt practices poses a formidable challenge, particularly in developing and impoverished nations. This serves as a crucial observation within the democratic system, prompting a reflection on the need for a more suitable electoral framework that can yield leaders committed to the welfare of the community. Meanwhile, money politics revolves around the pursuit of material gains, as articulated by Yusril and quoted by Indra Ismawan. This phenomenon has the potential to sway rational choices towards irrational ones. Johny Lomulus characterized this practice as a quid pro quo arrangement between candidates and voters, primarily aimed at buying votes, as elucidated by Gary Goodpaster (Ananingsih, 2016, p. 51).

Based on the above explanation, the roles of various community groups with their organizational apparatus are evident. The role of *majlis taklim* can be seen through the process of religious development and its impact on members, including the involvement of women during the hustle and bustle of elections. These concerns have led to a political study entitled "*Peran Majelis Taklim Dalam Pembinaan Perilaku Anti Korupsi dan Implikasinya Pada Praktik Demokrasi Lokal Kota Metro (The Role of Majelis Taklim in Cultivating Anti-Corruption Behavior and Its Implications on Local Democracy in Metro City.)*" The study poses two main questions, namely How is the concept of anti-corruption education instilled by *majlis taklim* in Metro City towards its members? and What is the impact of the anti-corruption education material on the local democracy practice in the city in 2020?

Previous studies explored the involvement of women's communities in local political competitions such as elections. For example, Amalia Safitri and Muhammad Adnan discussed the role of social capital and the election of Umi Azizah in the Tegal Regency election in 2018, which was published in the Journal of Politics and Government (UNDIP) Vol. 9 No. 2 in 2020. It was concluded that the active participation of women in these two NU organizations contributed to the victory of the candidate. However, Muzaeni's study did not address the role of Muslimat and Fatayat in reducing pragmatic political practices. Widdy Yusfita W's study titled "*Partisipasi Politik Kader Perempuan Dalam Bidang Politik: Sebuah Kajian Teoritis (Political Participation of Female Cadres in the Political Field: A Theoretical Study)*" published in the JISIPOL Journal Vol. 4 No. 2 in 2020 highlighted the limited role of women in the political arena and the potential space maximized for social change. Furthermore, Lutter Ariestino and Sri Kusriyah conducted a study titled "*Peran Partai Politik Di Dalam Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Politik Dalam Rangka Untuk Meningkatkan Partisipasi Dan Inisiatif Masyarakat Dalam Proses Pemilu Di Kota Semarang (The Role of Political Parties in the Implementation of Political Education to Enhance Participation and Initiative of the Community in the Election Process in Semarang City)*," published in the Khaira

Ummah Law Journal Vol. 12 No. 3 in 2017. It was focused on the role of several political parties in increasing citizen participation in elections in Semarang City.

A careful examination of these studies leaves many questions unanswered and room for further analysis, particularly regarding anti-corruption behavior. In Metro City, with a small number of eligible voters and high turnout, there is a significant opportunity for massive money politics. A study published by the local survey institution, Rakata Institute, in 2015 stated that the political pragmatism level reached 58.25% (Pangkey, 2015, p. 9). Therefore, the relevance of the social penetration theory proposed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor was examined. The theory described the interpersonal closeness between two or more individuals, achieved through intentional social interaction, which led to mutual satisfaction, appreciation, and sacrifices. Similarly, it suggested that interpersonal relationships progressed through several stages, including orientation, affective exchange, and stable exchange, where both parties were fully committed to minimizing conflicts.

The theory developed by Altman and Taylor aligned with the message of the Prophet Muhammad regarding social relationships, as summarized in the hadith "*Tahaadu Tahaabu*" (Bukhari, 1998, p. 309), meaning "Exchange gifts, as that will lead to mutual love." The social principles highlighted that emotional and personal closeness between communicators strengthened their relationship. These social principles were applied in Medina when the Prophet established a brotherhood between *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*.

## B. Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach with the main object of investigation being the *majlis taklim* in Metro City, primarily attended by 122 and 41 groups of women and men. Furthermore, it explored the perceptions and attitudes of *majlis taklim* administrators and members when confronted with pragmatic behaviors during local elections, which contradicted the teachings of religious leaders in the groups. The study also utilized questionnaires and structured interviews as primary data collection tools, which were analyzed in-depth using an inductive approach. This included ACM, BKMT, *Sentralan An-Nisa'*, *Majlis Taklim Al-Huda*, *Majlis Taklim Al-Jihad*, *Majlis Taklim Al-Mujahidin*, *Majlis Taklim At-Taqwa*, *Majlis Taklim Bebay Metro*, and study groups affiliated with the Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI) in Metro City. Meanwhile, a total of 250 questionnaires were distributed among these groups. The initial assumptions derived from data analysis were then weighed against the social penetration theory and the concept of "*Tahaadu Tahaabu*" to generate findings and address the core question.

## C. Findings and Discussion

### 1. Findings

#### Majlis Taklim, History, Social Role, and Development

The term "*majlis taklim*" has become widely popular since it is frequently mentioned in various places, both urban and rural, and among women and men. Etymologically, *majlis taklim* originates from the Arabic language. "*Majlis*" is derived from the verb "*jalasa*" (to sit) and is used as a noun indicating a place (*ism al-makan*) that signifies a sitting place, while "*taklim*" (*ta'lim*) is from "*allama yu'allimu ta'liman*," meaning teaching, education, or religious study. Therefore, *majlis taklim* refers to an activity where teaching, religious study, and the transfer of knowledge occur from a teacher to students or a speaker to the audience (Munawwir, 2002, p. 965).

The naming can vary depending on the local customs and practices. In some Middle Eastern countries, the tradition of Qur'an study is referred to as "*halaqah*," which means a circle. This is because students typically sit in a circle around the teacher. In the Sufi tradition, there is the term "*zawiyah*," which describes a corner or a room filled with a group of people engaged in learning. In Indonesia, a prevalent practice known as "*Yasinan*" takes place on Friday nights, where Muslims gather to recite Surah Yasin and engage in spiritual sermons. These gatherings embody the collective pursuit of religious knowledge, encompassing various dimensions such as theology, philosophy, mysticism, and practical jurisprudence. In addition, discussions on life skills, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and fostering successful family relationships occasionally find their place within these gatherings.

The origins of *majlis taklim* can be traced back to the early history of religious study, beginning with the time of the Prophet Muhammad, who carried the Islamic message. Since the early days of the mission in Mecca, religious study took on a distinctive form and became a primary focus. The house of *Al-Arqam bin Abi Arqam* stands as a historic location that signifies teaching and instruction during the early days of Islam. The dissemination of knowledge and teachings then spread from small groups, households, villages, and cities. This historical chain of Islamic education, known as "*majlis ilmu*" or knowledge gathering, has informally persisted to this day (Al-Mubarakfury, 2001, p. 55).

In the context of Indonesia, *majlis taklim* has become the best and the most effective means to introduce and propagate the teachings of Islam to the community. Through various creations and methods, it serves as a gathering for individuals interested in delving deeper into the teachings of Islam and facilitates communication among fellow believers. After this group was started, and planned, continuous teaching methods emerged, such as Islamic boarding schools and madrasas.

The involvement of the managers or members of *majlis taklim* in practical politics is not considered a disgrace or a violation of religious norms and laws. Therefore, any individual can be nominated for office provided the requirements are fulfilled. Several political parties formed during the reform era initially originated from religious study groups, such as the United Development Party (PPP), the National Awakening Party (PKB), the National Mandate Party (PAN), the Crescent Star Party (PBB), and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), as well as some that no longer exist currently, all have a similar historical background. The involvement of *majlis taklim* in politics is not limited to the initial nomination and selection process but can also serve as a mediator for the socialization and political campaigns of candidates, including the distribution of ammunition leading up to the voting and elections. This is often conducted by candidates or their campaign teams, considering the extensive network and widespread presence of *majlis taklim* members in every community.

According to Umar, there are at least four interest groups that often interact with *majlis taklim*, namely the government, specific groups or factions, specific individuals, and educational interests (al-Faruq, 2020, p. 44). The findings of Sumter, Wood, Adamczyk, and others, as affirmed by Rizky Ilmawan, indicated that it had potential and strategic positioning and benefited material, facilities, and other aspects (Ilmawan, 2022, p. 23).

The congregants, including women, who participated in *majlis taklim* activities will become more politically aware of the events in their region, and be able to distinguish between political parties and actors. The anticipated role of these religious institutions does not stem from their direct involvement in practical politics, as it contradicts the essence and principles of "*majlis taklim*," intended to remain neutral and

independent. However, the political significance lies in the ability to enhance awareness, knowledge, and insights among individuals (Sagala, 2019, p. 31).

There are many active *majlis taklim* groups operating in various study segments and communities in Metro City. These include the ACM (Ayo Cinta Masjid) community led by Haikal haris, as well as groups, focused on housewives such as *the Badan Kontak Majelis Taklim (BKMT) in Metro City, Sentralan An-Nissa'*, and managed by *Majlis Taklim Bebaya Metro* led by Hj. Aisyah, the wife of the former Deputy Mayor of Metro Johan, SE. The following is an overview of the active *majlis taklim* group in Metro City.

a) *Ayo Cinta Masjid (ACM) Community*

*Ayo Cinta Masjid (ACM)* community first emerged from the alumni of the 212 Movement in Jakarta in 2016. These alumni formed a WhatsApp group called Laskar Metro consisting of influential figures and youth representing individuals who share a common interest in gathering at Taqwa Mosque of Metro City. Over time, a growing concern arose regarding the transformation of this gathering from a mere ordinary assembly into a cohesive community infused with a profound sense of purpose in its preaching endeavors. This concern prompted the organization of a significant preaching event, widely recognized as *tabligh akbar*. To effectively facilitate these activities, a platform or catalyst became imperative. Consequently, the group, originally known as Laskar Pelangi, transformed and officially established itself as the ACM community on September 5, 2017. This momentous shift was marked by the proclamation of the ACM community within the premises of Taqwa Mosque precisely at 10:00 PM. The name was carefully selected to symbolize a moral movement, serving as an earnest invitation for the youth to actively contribute to the enrichment of mosques collectively.

The initial step involved the organization of a significant preaching event, graced by the presence of esteemed Adi Hidayat, an influential religious scholar in Indonesia, which took place on October 21, 2017. This momentous gathering garnered a remarkable attendance of over 15,000 devout congregants. Furthermore, the event garnered the participation of esteemed officials from Metro City, including the mayor, former Mayor, Chief of Police, and Chairman of the Regional Parliament. In the continuous pursuit of fostering a vibrant and united community, the ACM community was subjected to the establishment of various divisions aimed at invigorating the spirits of its members and facilitating routine preaching activities. These divisions, namely ACM Riders Subuhan, ACM Bolt, ACM Ukhti, ACM Peduli, and ACM Sport have played integral roles in the collective efforts of spreading the message of faith.

b) *Badan Kontak Majelis Taklim (BKMT)*

The history of BKMT traces back to its inception on January 1, 1981, in Jakarta, where it continues to thrive to this day. The organization's establishment came to fruition through the collective agreement of over 735 *majlis taklim* in Jakarta and its surrounding regions. Over time, BKMT has expanded its reach across Indonesia, with a membership that spans thousands of *majlis taklim*, encompassing millions of dedicated congregants across all 33 provinces, including Lampung.

Within Metro City, BKMT actively engages in collaborations with different local groups and *majlis taklim*. During specific periods, the head of the local government, namely the mayor, has shown involvement by serving as the chairperson or an active member of the organization. The dynamic nature of the activities carried out by BKMT is recognized, extending its influence to the sub-district and village levels within the vibrant Metro City community.

c) *Majlis Taklim An-Nisa (Sentralan An-Nisa)*

This study circle is usually held at one of the mosques in a specific village, involving all members in Metro City on a rotating basis every month. The activities include main lectures and social assistance to orphans, widows, and other disadvantaged individuals. *Majlis taklim An-Nisa* is highly active in organizing study activities for women at the village, sub-district, and city levels in Metro. Furthermore, the location of meetings and speakers are rotated regularly.

d) *Majlis Taklim al-Huda Yosorejo*

This study circle has been running for a long time from 2001 until the present. After the pandemic situation started to ease, the activities at Al-Huda Mosque have been intensified by the DKM (Mosque's Management Board) Al-Huda to cultivate the congregation's understanding of worship matters in the field of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In addition, regular *fiqh* studies are held every Sunday evening, with special studies on the last week of the month and rotating host responsibilities with *Sentralan An-Nisa* or BKMT Metro.

e) *Majlis Taklim Al-Jihad*

DKM Al-Jihad Mosque has consistently shown exceptional activity in conducting study sessions in its history. These sessions encompass a broad spectrum of topics and feature esteemed speakers who are graduates of local and international universities, Islamic boarding schools, and other renowned educational institutions. *Fiqh, hadith, ethics, muamalat, and morality* are among the actively pursued subjects by DKM Al-Jihad Mosque.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of *majlis taklim*, the Indonesian government has officially recognized its significance as an integral component of the national education system, as stated in Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003. Therefore, it is imperative to provide support through effective management, professional human resources, and a comprehensive and sustainable curriculum framework. It is also crucial to address the prevailing challenges faced by many *majlis taklim*, such as inadequate management, limited human resources, and the absence of systematic teaching and learning methods. Issues including conflicting schedules, repetitive materials, and problematic attendance of speakers and congregants are frequently encountered, demanding proactive measures for resolution.

Based on the above explanations, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a set of references or standard guidelines for a specific group to implement planned agendas related to *majlis taklim*'s topics. However, this often remains an unrealized dream several study agendas are conducted sporadically and spontaneously. The same situation applies to the majority of both long-established and newly formed *majlis taklim* in Metro City, which are focused on specific study fields or disciplines. For example, at Taqwa Mosque, DKM holds regular weekly studies every Friday after the Asr prayer. Abdurahman Hamdi, Fir'adi, Abdul Muluk, and Nadirsah Hawari, are the speakers assigned based on their expertise and areas of knowledge. Similarly, other *majlis taklim* mostly discuss topics such as Qur'an interpretation, *hadith, ethics, fiqh muamalah, and different subjects*.

According to Firman, *majlis taklim* should ideally have a transformative Islamic vision with the main characteristic of preventing wrongdoing (*an-nahyu 'an al-munkar*) (Nugraha, 2020b, p. 43). Furthermore, the community can acquire knowledge and religious guidance effectively since the participants of a *specific majlis taklim* have regular activities in attending the study sessions organized by the group. Compared to self-studying religion from books, which leads to misunderstandings, learning religion by joining a *majlis taklim* is considered more appropriate to directly receive teachings

from religious experts (Al-Faruq, 2020, p. 43).

The following is the distribution of study materials in *majlis taklim* that serve as references for the organizers, including in Metro. The distribution is based on the main areas of religious knowledge formulated within the fields of Qur'an studies and interpretation, *hadith ahkam*, worship *fiqh*, *muamalah fiqh*, family *fiqh*, political *fiqh*, books of ethics and Sufism, as well as *fadhilah* (the virtues) deeds. These study fields can be interconnected based on specific discussion topics, depending on the theme selected and discussed by a speaker in a *majlis taklim*. In study sessions organized by millennial groups such as ACM, common themes include issues related to *hijrah*, religious identity in the millennial era, political education during campaigns, and the concept of a just leader from an Islamic perspective. For *majlis taklim* attended by women, the themes revolve around marital issues, family provision, social ethics, simple living, worship *fiqh*, as well as halal and haram matters. For *majlis taklim* involving men, the topics usually cover worship *fiqh*, *muamalah*, family *fiqh*, the merits of seeking a livelihood, and the concept of a just leader in Islam (Yulianto, personal communication, July 20, 2021, p. 14).

Some interesting themes and interpretations are introducing Qur'an reading and writing, studying *tajweed* (rules of recitation), easy ways to read the Qur'an, memorizing short chapters, interpreting Qur'an verses (translation), miracles of the Qur'an, the Qur'an and science, interpretation of short chapters thematically, and other contemporary themes. In the field of monotheism (*Tawhid*) studies, themes include the meaning of faith and its influence on life, monotheism as the foundation of civilization, characteristics of the Islamic *aqeedah*, the dangers of polytheism, development of thought in Islam, articles of faith, obligations towards prophets and messengers, patterns of thought in Islam, the practice of sorcery, the unseen realm, therapy for jinn disturbances, *Aswaja*: characteristics and practices, and the virtues of monotheism.

Within the field of *fiqh*, there are many options ranging from worship, marital, inheritance, *muamalah*, politics, and governance in Islam. Worship *fiqh* covers the pillars of Islam, such as prayer, *zakat*, fasting, *Hajj*, and Umrah. Marital *fiqh* discusses the virtues of marriage, the qualities of an ideal husband and wife, family provisions, divorce, and reconciliation, including frequently asked questions about inheritance issues related to marital problems and inheritance rights. Meanwhile, *Muamalah fiqh* focuses on contemporary financial transactions from an Islamic perspective and the fundamentals of its economics. Political *fiqh* also explores the virtues of leaders, the concept and requirements of leadership in Islam, the rights and responsibilities of leaders, obedience, the process of selecting leaders, Islam and democracy, general elections, the legal perspective of participating in elections, Islamic parties, the dangers of corruption, the merits of a just leader, and the intersection of democracy and consultation (*shura*) (al-Mawardi, 2001, p. 114). Furthermore, the field of ethics and Sufism encompasses the importance of ethics in life, various types of ethics, the ethics of the prophets, the virtues of kindness towards others, the concept of asceticism (*zuhud*), controlling desires, faith, and ethics, various forms of ethics, as well as stories of conduct towards animals.

*Majlis taklim* discusses religious themes and addresses the topic of a healthy lifestyle according to religion and medical science. Some of the frequently discussed themes include the concept of health in Islam, factors influencing health, various diseases, symptoms and treatments, education on infectious diseases, women's health and related issues, food and health, mental health, spiritual health, Islam and preventive measures, preventive, curative, and educational attitudes (E. Yulianto, A.Md, personal communication, Agustus 2022, p. 3).



In conclusion, *majlis taklim* has good study materials and discussion themes in religious education. These materials are well-structured and cover various fields of knowledge, including the Qur'an, *hadith*, monotheism, ethics, *fiqh*, health, and other life skills, even though they have not been organized and printed in a permanent curriculum and syllabus for *majlis taklim*.

## 2. Discussion

### The Impact of Anti-Corruption Education Materials on Local Democracy Practices

Changes in attitudes and behaviors shown by students or members of *majlis taklim* can be observed in their outward aspects as well as inward attitudes reflected in daily interactions with other members and Ustadz. Typically, changes in worship style and manner of a student or member are influenced by the *fiqh* doctrines, including inward attitudes such as changes in ethics, spiritual attitudes, controlling desires and worldly ambitions, and even reaching the realm of Sufi practices rarely seen in society. Analysis conducted by Muhammad Amrillah in Central Lombok regarding the influence of a master teacher showed that the influence extended beyond worship aspects and directed the political choices of the followers toward specific candidates recommended by teacher (Amrillah, 2021, p. 81).

Amrillah's conclusion is particularly interesting when related to the current situation where society is facing increasing economic difficulties. Therefore, when Ustadz presents themselves in a *majlis taklim*, they bear a moral responsibility to uplift followers from a state of ignorance to enlightenment, and from a position of weakness in matters of religion and secular world to a more robust and upright stance. Within this context, there exists an opportunity for pragmatic stakeholders to capitalize on the prevailing circumstances by fostering a mutually advantageous interaction among Ustadz, followers, and interested parties. The situation becomes considerably intricate when the stakeholder with vested interests happens to be Ustadz, either directly or through their family members. Consequently, this leads to an extensive endeavor to promote political agenda before the followers, often accompanied by a more compelling narrative ("*piye-piye wonge dewe*").

The acknowledgment of the congregation's awareness, particularly among women, to actively engage in religious studies, is undeniable. The act of attending religious assemblies is not driven by a desire to attract attention but rather a realization that with growth it becomes imperative to increase righteous deeds as provisions for the hereafter. The respondents' answers regarding their primary motivation for attending such gatherings and seeking knowledge held the highest position at 93.5%. The main objective is to acquire knowledge, foster social connections, and forge new friendships within the community. This outcome is not surprising since *majlis taklim* transcends specific age groups or geographical boundaries. Through these gatherings, individuals can interact with one another, and people from different neighborhoods in the East form close relationships with the west based on their participation in *majlis taklim* (B. Muslim, personal communication, September 22, 2022, p. 7).

The questionnaire also investigated the extent of the themes diversity discussed in *majlis taklim* to ensure that the core issue of anti-corruption culture during elections is addressed properly. About 90.01% of the congregation agreed that the speakers who lead the discussions often address social issues, including political matters, due to their sufficient abilities and educational background. Only 9% stated that the lecturers had a general education background. This further strengthened the opinion of Gus Sholehuddin conveyed during the Moderation TOT (Training of Trainers) activity by

the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Lampung, where radical ideologies became rampant because the preachers delivering the messages were not experts in religion (Sholehuddin, personal communication, Desember 2022, p. 2).

Based on the educational background of competent speakers, the study themes in *majlis taklim* were diverse and highly interesting, addressing contemporary needs, including social and political issues. A total of 58.3% of the respondents stated that their studies were not limited to *fiqh*, worship, and ethics, while the remaining participants focused primarily on worship-related matters. Furthermore, 84.6% explicitly stated that the diversity of themes included practical political topics, local election issues, and regional leadership. According to Imam Syaf'i, this trend differed greatly from the studies conducted by Salafi groups, which tended to avoid political and social discussions (Syafi'i, 2021, p. 31). Studying political issues in *majlis taklim* was taught by *Aswaja* scholars since the early days of Islam, and the concept was also practiced by the Prophet. According to (al-Mawardi, 2001, p. 7), engaging in politics, or *siyasah*, is not inherently wrong. The wrongdoing lies in the actions of the individuals involved. Politics involves the management of worldly affairs while upholding religious norms.

The inclusion of political discussions in *majlis taklim* by religious speakers can give rise to different issues and perceptions surrounding these gatherings. Some individuals may perceive *majlis taklim* as a political instrument used by opportunistic politicians to further their ambitions and gain traction in the electoral arena. Meanwhile, when respondents were asked about the presence of local election candidates or their campaign teams engaging in socializing and sharing activities during a *majlis taklim*, 24.2% confirmed such occurrences. About 75.9% stated that there was no distribution of promotional materials, candidate images, or groceries during the religious gatherings. A study conducted by Nuryanti et al. in Buakkang Village, Gowa, South Sulawesi, reported that the cultivation of an anti-corruption culture within the study group had yielded positive results without completely eradicating corrupt practices. According to Nuryanti, there were at least three discernible benefits, namely a shift in the perception of corruption, a reduction in the culture of accepting bribes during elections, and a discreet approach to money politics, characterized by shame and fear of rejection (Nuryanti, 2021, p. 128).

The survey data analysis of Nuryanti showed that the majority (75.9%) of the members and organizers of *majlis taklim* staunchly refused to accept corrupt practices linked to local elections. This indicated their adherence to ethical standards and firm rejection of such deviant behavior. However, it is important to note that 24.1% of minority groups did encounter or accept these practices. Abdul Muluk Lc supported the viewpoint of the minority group, suggesting that such practices often occurred within study groups. This perspective showed that the majority of members were women, and a few men who may have been more susceptible to their humanistic sides, particularly when adopting a pragmatic approach (A. Muluk, personal communication, April 14, 2022, p. 2). Abdul Muluk's opinion appeared to be in line with Perhat Alfaz and Suswanta in Tasikmalaya Regency regarding the 2019 legislative elections. According to the studies, many political parties and legislative candidates exploit religious figures (*kyai*) with extensive networks and congregations as objects for adventure to boost electability.

The challenge faced by congregations extended beyond fortifying their faith amidst the ever-changing trials of life. It also encompassed the examination of beliefs when confronted with social and political issues, particularly in the current era dominated by the pandemic. Nuryanti's study placed Lampung as the second-most-

involved province in cases of money politics during local elections, following South Sulawesi. This fact also aligned with the release from Rakata Institute regarding the permissive attitude of Metro residents towards vote-buying in 2015, which reached 58.25%. In an interview with Heriyanto, a member of a political party supporting a candidate during the 2020 local elections in Metro, it was affirmed that households with a certain number of voters received bribes from multiple candidates, with highly varied amounts. Therefore, the candidate who offered the largest bribe was selected (Heriyanto, personal communication, September 2020, p. 2).

The assumption made by Rakata Institute back in 2015 had changed over time, alongside the shifting dynamics and increasing political maturity of Metro residents. The evidence obtained from the questionnaire reported that a substantial transformation occurred, with 75.9% of residents, including respondents from among the members and organizers of *majlis taklim* in the city, rejecting the practice of money politics during local elections. This finding strengthened Nuryanti's assertion that genuine efforts to foster the mental and spiritual development of citizens regarding corrupt behavior had a positive impact. This was beyond mere rejection since the majority of respondents stated that such practices violated the constitution and disregarded the teachings delivered by religious speakers, while only 24.01% considered the concept acceptable. The perspective of the respondents regarding the effectiveness of *majlis taklim* in cultivating an anti-corruption attitude was positive, with approximately 91.4% expressing its efficacy, while only 8.6% held a contrary view. This robust evidence supported the notion that nation-building, including in the political realm, could not be separated from the role of religious scholars according to historical roots.

The truth of the social penetration theory or the approach based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad of "*Tahaadu Tahaabu*" appeared difficult to deny. This is because the intentional approaches from an actor to a specific object could bring about changes in paradigm, attitudes, and psychological state of an individual. However, this conclusion was relative since spiritual approaches contributed to reducing political pragmatism and permissive attitudes from 58.25% to 42%. Even though this figure was not yet significant, it represented a positive and continuous initial step. The position of *majlis taklim* needed to be strengthened and synergized with election organizers. According to Harrison, in addition to focusing on religious education regarding issues such as drugs, radicalism, and terrorism, *majlis taklim* also served as a channel to campaign for intelligent elections, prioritizing ethics, and concern, as well as avoiding falling into pragmatic politics (Dermawan, 2021, p. 1449). Firman Nugraha reinforced the idea that *majlis taklim* and mosques served as platforms for religious social movements within society (Nugraha, 2020a, p. 45).

The challenges presented were not easily overcome since the existing political system and mechanisms of election offered politicians opportunities to exploit loopholes. The considerable expenses associated with political campaigns also served as one of the contributing factors. Therefore, 61.6% of participants in the *majlis taklim* in Metro concluded that the winners of local elections were predominantly individuals of significant wealth.

#### D. Conclusion

The in-depth analysis of the gathered data in accordance with scientific principles concluded the following: Metro City, renowned for its educational prowess, excels in formal academic pursuits and actively engages in different forms of non-

formal religious education, as exemplified by the activities conducted by *majlis taklim* in every mosque and *musalla*. *Majlis taklim*, as an Islamic educational institution, intensifies its studies in every situation during the pandemic in recent years, showcasing its unwavering dedication to knowledge acquisition.

The religious study groups (*majlis taklim*) categorize their studies based on specific fields, but they do not have a printed curriculum as a common reference. The achievement of curriculum and field specialization can be attained based on the competency of the speakers, specifically since some are alumni of Islamic boarding schools and universities. The topics in *majlis taklim* cover the fields of Qur'an, Hadith, morality, creed, Islamic *fiqh*, *muamalah*, and life skills, as well as contemporary religious issues. The administrators, members, and speakers, including *ustadz* and *ustadzah*, who consistently engage in these religious study groups, have diligently imparted virtuous values. These include the promotion of social ethics, political ethics, the principles of Islamic leadership, and the perils of corruption, particularly during election seasons and other political junctures. There are still individuals who engage in money politics and receive support from political parties or candidates even though their numbers are insignificant. The social interaction theory of Darmas and Blumer are not entirely accurate, according to scholarly assessments. However, it is essential to correctly comprehend the concept of "*Tahaadu Tahaabu*" to remain consistent with religious and positive legal norms. The decrease in permissiveness towards money politics from 58.25% to 24.01% shows that the religious study groups (*majlis taklim*) played a positive social role in society, including the political arena. In addition, election organizers should collaborate with all community groups, including *majlis taklim*, to realize intelligent and high-quality elections.

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