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**GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DA'WA:  
Study on the Role of Female Preachers in Samarinda****Diajeng Laily Hidayati<sup>1</sup>, Ida Suryani Wijaya<sup>2</sup>, Miftahur Ridho<sup>3</sup>**

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**Abstract:** Da'wa is one form of spreading religion in Islam. At present, the da'wa movement is not only dominated by the 30-50 years age group but also mostly carried out by the younger generation. In practice, da'wa activities are often dominated by male preachers. On the other hand, the phenomenon of da'wa shows that the target of da'wa (*mad'u*) is dominated by female. Therefore, recently many female preachers began to emerge in the community. This paper aims at looking at gender mainstreaming in da'wa by answering the following questions (1) how is da'wa movement among young people in Samarinda, (2) how is the role of female preachers in spreading Islamic teachings in the community in Samarinda. This research uses three data collection methods, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Qualitative descriptive data analysis is used to see the phenomenon of women in a comprehensive manner in the city of Samarinda.

**Keywords:** Da'wa, female preacher, Islamic teaching.

**Abstrak:** Dakwah adalah salah satu bentuk penyebaran agama dalam Islam. Saat ini, gerakan dakwah tidak hanya didominasi oleh kelompok usia 30-50 tahun tetapi juga sebagian besar dilakukan oleh generasi muda. Dalam praktiknya, kegiatan dakwah seringkali didominasi oleh pengkhotbah pria. Di sisi lain, fenomena dakwah menunjukkan bahwa target dakwah (*mad'u*) didominasi oleh perempuan. Karena itu, baru-baru ini banyak pengkhotbah wanita mulai muncul di komunitas. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk melihat pengarusutamaan gender dalam dakwah dengan menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan berikut (1) bagaimana gerakan dakwah di antara kaum muda di Samarinda (2) bagaimana peran pengkhotbah perempuan dalam menyebarkan ajaran Islam di masyarakat di Samarinda. Penelitian ini menggunakan tiga metode pengumpulan data, yaitu observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk melihat fenomena perempuan secara komprehensif di Kota Samarinda.

**Kata Kunci:** Dakwah, pendakwah perempuan, ajaran Islam.

**A. Background**

After the fall of the authoritarian regime of Soeharto in Indonesia, Islamic-based social movements seemed to find new momentum to reestablish their movement. The failure to create a theocratic model of State by placing Islam as the core values has pushed groups of political Islamic movements to resort to non-political paths. One of the most important paths that can be taken in connection with this is carrying out preaching activities at the grassroots level.

In carrying out da'wa activities at the community, the group of young people is one of the targets addressed by a variety of such relatively new Islamic movement groups. Preaching among

youth has a very significant role in determining the direction of national and state life in relation to practicing Islam as a religion and way of life. Da'wa among youth is also felt to be easier because this groups are basically in the phase of searching for identity.

In the other hand, the fact that the youth group in Indonesia is a population crux that is inhabited by more than sixty-four million people or thirty percent of the total population of 255 million is too large a number to simply ignore.

Da'wa among youth is an elegant articulation of one adagium in marketing communication that sounds "... catch them when they are young, and you'll get a number of long-life costumers". In relation to this statement, success in carrying out the da'wa agenda among youth can be assumed as a long-term success<sup>915</sup>

In this connection, the da'wa movement among youth is often associated with the phenomenon of moral panics that hit the community as a direct result of exposure to different cultures that are seen as incompatible with local culture. In the context of Indonesia with a majority Muslim population, social arguments for the spread of da'wa for young people seem to be very much in accordance with contemporary social environments today.

Moreover, theological and social justification for the implementation of da'wa among young people tends to be easier to formulate because preaching in this area is often identified with efforts to prevent young people from falling into dark valleys formed by the conspiracy of global capitalism to exploit the powerlessness of the State (government) to deliver welfare to its people. The combination of a strong Theo-Sociological justification with the target of da'wa with relatively high pragmatic advantages provides a perfect milieu for the implementation of da'wa among young people.

If the Theo-sociological justification in the of da'wa for young people is applied to reveal the Islamic da'wa movement in a local context such as Samarinda, East Kalimantan, many social problems that range from drug abuse<sup>916</sup> to juvenile delinquency in schools will certainly produce da'wa arguments.

The emergence of various women's-based religious organizations such as Muslimat NU, Fatayat NU, Aisyiah, and Nasyiatul Aisyia provided space for women preachers to take part in society. Various social problems related to women's problems such as promiscuity, abortion and so on provide fresh air for women preachers to take a role in society.<sup>917</sup>

Like the majority of Indonesian people in general, the preaching movement among young people in Samarinda is also dominated by male preachers. This is inversely proportional to the many *majlis taklim* in Samarinda City which are dominated by women's groups. This phenomenon is seen not only in the assembly which is followed by the 30-50 age group but also in the recitation group which is attended by young people. For this reason, this paper aims to explore the role of young women in the spread of Islamic da'wa and how the community's response to the movement of young women preachers in the city of Samarinda.

## B. Da'wa Movement among Youth

Literatures relate to preaching activities among young people can be seen at least in two ways. First, da'wa among young people is generally discussed as an Islamic da'wa activity aimed at responding to moral panic in the community. Secondly, the discussion about the Islamic da'wa

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<sup>915</sup> Several studies have shown that the da'wa movement of certain student organizations has been shown to play an important role in boosting the vote acquisition of political parties which are considered affiliated with these student organizations. Read Noorhaidi Hasan, "Islamist Party, Electoral Politics And Da'wa Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 6, No. 1 (June 1, 2012): 17, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2012.6.1.17-47>.

<sup>916</sup> Samarinda is in the second rank in Indonesia in terms of drug trafficking. Look "BKKBN," n.d., [www.bkkbn.go.id](http://www.bkkbn.go.id).

<sup>917</sup> Rachel Rinaldo, "Envisioning the Nation: Women Activists, Religion and the Public Sphere in Indonesia," *Social Forces* 86, no. 4 (2008): 1781-1804.

movement in this area is discussed as part of efforts to understand radicalization among young people.

In the first discourse, the Islamic da'wa movement among young people is usually discussed by placing youth groups in school settings as the main subject. Then, the da'wa strategy of a da'wa organization will be assessed by analysing its effect on increasing the degree of wellbeing of the subject group. In this way, the da'wa movement among young people can be understood as an effort to help them in dealing with their psycho-socio-cultural problems better by utilizing Islamic theological arguments as the main foundation.

A number of studies conducted by undergraduate students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga show that there is a positive influence resulting from participating in missionary activities in the Rohis framework in schools. These studies basically try to map the influence of religious activities initiated by Rohis in schools by observing how the actors involved in these activities adapt better to their social environment.<sup>918</sup>

In many studies within this genre, the conclusions that are generally produced show that preaching activities in these schools can help young people to actualize themselves in a better way. In addition to that, through their involvement in these da'wa activities, young people are equipped with better abilities to avoid the negative effects of the globalization of information

In the second way, the da'wa movement among young people is generally discussed as part of efforts to understand radicalization in young people. Studies on radical Islamic movements in Indonesia have been carried out by many experts in Islamic Studies.

The topics that emerge in this area of study are also very heterogeneous. This is quite a sign that the radical Islamic movement in Indonesia as a social phenomenon has received proper attention. Even so, studies on radical Islamic movements targeting young people in Indonesia can be said to be still minimal. The reason is because the phenomenon of radicalism among young people, especially young people in the school and campus environment, only received significant attention later.<sup>919</sup>

Young people with good education is not immune to the influence of the radical Islamic movement. Continued indoctrination in the context of specific preaching communication in the setting of educational institutions (schools, campuses) can encourage groups of young people to take actions that are more or less contrary to the democratic values that are upheld by their alma mater.<sup>920</sup>

In the high school setting, some authors mention that 'Rohis' affiliation to radical Islamic organizations made an important contribution to the future of students' religious attitudes. Hayadin, for example, states that 'Rohis' has the opportunity to become a 'breeding ground for terrorism' if the school does not interfere in overseeing the interaction of their students with Islamic groups entering the school through various work activities proposed by students. According to him, the involvement of two young men who were suspected as alumni and members of a 'Rohis' in Klaten some time ago could be considered an indication that 'Rohis' in schools had the potential to spread radicalism.<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>918</sup> A quick survey on cataloging sites like <http://www.scholar.google.co.id> also shows that the majority of research conducted by undergraduate students in Indonesia regarding the 'Rohis' phenomenon leads to a near-single conclusion; i.e. 'Rohis' plays an important role in saving the lives of teenagers, both in the spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral sense.

<sup>919</sup> Masnun Tahir, "Wacana Fikih Kebangsaan dalam Penanggulangan dan Pencegahan Radikalisme di Lingkungan Kampus Di NTB, ", 49, no. 2 (2015): 298-314.

<sup>920</sup> Arifuddin Ismail, "Pemikiran dan Gerakan Keagamaan Mahasiswa: Memahami Merebaknya Radikalisme Islam di Kampus, " *Dinamika Penanganan Gerakan Keagamaan*, 2012, 55.

<sup>921</sup> Hayadin Hayadin, "Tragedi Kecelakaan Rohis Keterlibatan Alumni Rohis SMKN Anggrek pada Aksi Radikalisme, " *Al-Qalam* 19, No. 2 (2016): 231-240.

### C. Role of Women Preacher in Da'wa Movement among Youth in Samarinda

In Indonesia, aspects of modernization and the expansion of Islamic understanding through educational institutions encourage middle class women to better understand Islam in depth. This encouragement is one form of piety displayed in the midst of society.<sup>922</sup> The public's desire for understanding Islam is one of the reasons for the emergence of various majlis taklim in Indonesia.

The connection between the opening of democracy after the collapse of the Suharto regime in Indonesia and the emergence of women's movements in the public sphere formed a new understanding of how women began to show their roles openly in various forums. The emergence of various women's organizations gives a new spirit to women's groups to contribute in the public sphere.

The development and openness of understanding of Islam in the midst of society also provides space for women to participate in conveying their ideas in the form of da'wa in the community. The availability of space for women in public space is inseparable from the role of religious-based women's organizations in building community understanding. The engagement of women in Indonesian culture which is dominated by patriarchal culture which places women in the domestic sphere is a challenge for various women's organizations.

Da'wa movements of women cannot be separated from da'wa movements in the general public. This is a logical consequence of the socialization process that they are going through in social life in the community. In this case, young people play an important role in determining the course of national life in the years to come. This is a national social phenomenon that cannot be denied or ignored.

In Samarinda, the women preacher movement among young people is interconnected to social movements in a broader sense. With a population that reaches more than one third of the total population, young people are targets as well as actors who cannot be underestimated. Thus, the da'wa movement among young people in the city of Samarinda can be compared sociologically with efforts to mobilize voluntary masses to affiliate to certain entities where the da'wa subjects are expected to base their identity construction on that particular idea.

Basically, there are two characteristics of the majlis taklim in the city of Samarinda. First is majlis taklim which is dominated by the 30-50 years age group. And the second is the majlis taklim which is dominated by young people of school age to university students. The results of observations in this study indicate that women preachers do not show their existence in the first recitation model. Women preachers have more roles and places in the second model of study.

People in Samarinda city follow the da'wa studies by considering the main actors who lead the da'wa movement and the theme of the da'wa. Based on the results of the interviews, several majlis taklim of mid-aged women groups in Samarinda, dominated by the 30-50 years age group, explained that they had difficulty finding women in their age range. They tend to link the age factor with one's experience and knowledge. Based on this understanding, the majlis taklim coordinators often only find men preachers who fit their criteria. The explanation from the majlis taklim coordinator is in line with the findings from the field where women preacher in the Samarinda generally have an age range of 20-28 years.

Da'wa themes of the da'wa movement carried out by women preacher among young people can be grouped into two major themes, namely da'wa as an effort to make improvements that are outgoing and da'wa as an attempt to reform inward. Two themes in the context of the da'wa movement among young people in the city of Samarinda produce a quite different style of da'wa.

Da'wa as an effort to improve the overall live quality of the society refers to the awareness that the wider community, especially the youth group, is in danger caused by a moral crisis. That way, young people who are perceived as being in dire need of guidance, one of which can be done through preaching activities.

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<sup>922</sup> Pieternella Van Doorn-Harder, *Women Shaping Islam: Reading the Qu'ran in Indonesia* (University of Illinois Press, 2006).

Da'wa that is internally oriented, on the other hand, refers to the assumption that young people need moral guidance to navigate a life full of moral crisis by following the guidance of the generation above them.

Broadly speaking, this study shows that there are at least three important themes that can be underlined with regard to the da'wa movement of women preacher among youth in Samarinda City. First, the da'wa movement as a synthesis of entertainment activities. Second, the da'wa movement as an effort to reform the subject of preaching, among young people, itself. And finally, the da'wa movement as a clear manifestation of the command of *Amar Ma'ruf-Nahi Munkar*.

Among young people in the Samarinda. The three features of the da'wa movement are basically inseparable. Instead, the three often overlap with each other. The da'wa movement as a synthesis of entertainment activities that are often suspected of being immoral and futile and religious activities that are often seen as boring, basically, are dynamic processes that arise as a result of the fusion of traditional boundaries that distinguish between sacred life and profane life.<sup>923</sup>

Young people in Samarinda basically want to live a religious life where sacred values are maintained well without losing the opportunity to enjoy life as youth as projected by modern popular culture.

Such interest has basically been facilitated for a long time by the emergence of Islamic popular culture phenomena in the form of religious music, Islamic fashion trends, and finally, halal lifestyles that span from the veil to halal cosmetics. In the context of the city of Samarinda which is a melting pot of various religions, beliefs, ethnicities and other identity markers. An interest in following trends without losing what is perceived as identity naturally emerges in different ways from other regions with different social constructions.

Among young people in the city of Samarinda, the missionary movement which is able to offer a synthesis between two things - sacral and profane - is the type of propaganda that is most widely followed. In this case, the arena of displaying religion in parallel with elements of popular culture is generally carried out in mosques and other Islamic centres.

Young people in the city of Samarinda recognize this phenomenon by linking it with readings of praise to the prophet who is widely known as "habsy". Habsy in this context provides an adequate platform for the building of a da'wa model that is able to synthesize conventional modes of da'wa characterized by delivering lectures with popular cultural elements characterized by the absence of religious sense.

The second type of da'wa movement most sought after by young people is the da'wa movement as an internal reform effort. That is, the young people involved in this study showed that the ideal da'wa movement for young people is a movement that enables young people to obtain religious lessons.<sup>924</sup>

This da'wa movements are represented by groups of young people who follow what the Sufism propaganda movement is, or what the young people themselves call "tarekat". In the da'wa movement with this model, the role of young people involved in it can be considered passive. The group of young people will generally try to get as much knowledge as they think is exclusive. That is, for young people, the teachings circulating among the Sufism groups are things that they might not get outside the Sufism circle or Sufism study group that they follow.

In this context, the da'wa movement that emphasizes self-development that is internal among young people in the city of Samarinda, by the young people involved in it, is considered to be able to allow themselves to continuing to behave well when interacting on social media.

Interaction on social media, for all respondents involved in this research is basically one of the most important ways of expressing themselves with regard to their cultural and religious identity. For young people who follow movements that emphasize internal coaching such as the study of

<sup>923</sup> Mircea Eliade and Willard R. Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion; [the Groundbreaking Work by One of the Greatest Authorities on Myth, Symbol, and Ritual]*, A Harvest Book (San Diego: Harcourt, 1987).

<sup>924</sup> FGD in Samarinda, July 2018.



Sufism, social media basically plays a more moderate role. That is, if among those who take an interest in the movement oriented to the synthesis between profane and sacred spaces in the form of prayer stages the role of social media plays an important role in spreading the image of young people who are modern and pious, in the context of the da'wa movement as a coaching effort internal in the form of social media Sufism study basically only provides space to display the piety of figures who are considered important in their internal circle.<sup>925</sup>

This psychosocial difference in this term is something that is quite important to be seen further. This is because there are different modes of expressing godliness. Displaying piety by displaying images that illustrate the piety of others, however, is one of the side effects of the expression of piety that is represented by young people who are interested in movements with the theme of internal reform.

Young people who are interested in the da'wa movement as an internal improvement in themselves generally realize that outside the circle of Sufism they follow, there are da'wa movements that marginalize them for reasons that share religious values.

One of the most common discourses that emerged during this research was the assumption among groups of young people who were interested in preaching movements oriented to internal reform that this kind of preaching movement could not be fully considered as preaching because it was not active and called out. This is also generally associated with the assumption that those who are considered as such do not fully practice the command of *amar ma'ruf-nahi munkar* which is the essence of da'wa.

The next form of movement which is also widely followed by young people in Samarinda and becomes the main area for women's preacher is the da'wa movement which explicitly emphasizes the need to carry out the mission of preaching in an external sense. In this case, da'wa is usually understood as a way to change society to be in accordance with what is considered to be a society in accordance with Islamic law.

Among the young people who are interested in such da'wa movements generally come from students who have received education for secular educational institutions in Samarinda. In general, the number of devotees of such a da'wa movement is quite significant given the context of the da'wa movement in Samarinda which leaves little room for intense interaction on the level of religious discourse for ordinary people.

Women Preacher in Samarinda in this study explained that they often do their activities in majlis taklim where the participants are women. Very rarely do they fill out majlis taklim that are attended by male and female worshipers unless the worshipers have an age range far below them (eg. kindergarten students and elementary school students).

All of women preacher involved in this study explained that they had no objections if they preach on female only majlis taklim that were attended by female worshipers. In fact, they claim to be more comfortable with these conditions. For them the condition is an ideal condition of the majlis taklim where the speaker is a woman.

The places they use in carrying out da'wa are not tied to the mosque or the place of worship of the Muslim community in general. They carry out da'wa by choosing some locations that make their audience comfortable, such as in boarding houses, cafes, or city parks. According to them the selection of this location provides convenience in understanding the message of da'wa.

The women preachers also utilize social media that is familiar with young groups to convey information related to their preaching activities. They explained that effort could easily be accepted by young people in Samarinda.

In connection with the topics conveyed in the practice of da'wa, women preachers often convey topics related to the lives of teenagers such as: rules of dressing in Islam, the meaning of *ta'aruf* in Islam, ethical behaviour, obedience to parents, and topics that they adjust to the lives of young people.

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<sup>925</sup> FGD in Samarinda

#### **D. Community Response to Women Preacher in Da'wa Movement among Youth in Samarinda**

The ideal da'wa movement has long been the subject of much debate among scholars and academics in universities. The ideal da'wa movement has also long been placed as an umbrella term that oversees other important terms such as interfaith propaganda, preaching interfaith religious funds, internal da'wa, external da'wa and other terms related to the organization and definition of da'wa.

Among groups of young people, the ideal da'wa movement of women is also debated. The role of women in the scope of da'wa is not a problem for young people. For them, women have the same right as men to have a place in da'wa. However, the majority of young people feel that women preacher will be better if they deliver the da'wa material to women's recitation groups. For them the ideal da'wa movement is carried out in accordance with its portions. It means that the women preachers have the right to deliver their da'wa in majlis *taklim* dominated by female participants while the man preacher has more space to do da'wa in the group of men and women.

Furthermore, this study found that there are at least two main topics in relation to how a da'wa movement should run in the community. First, a da'wa movement must be built on the existing traditions and social norms. Second, the ideal da'wa movement should be able to show religious identity that is promoted firmly and without compromise by anything, including social values and norms that already exist in society.

The first version of the ideal da'wa movement emphasizes the importance of synthesizing existing values, traditions and social norms with the teachings of Islam so as to produce a da'wa that brings peace in society. In such contexts, horizontal conflicts that arise during the implementation of a particular missionary movement strategy can basically be considered as a mistake of the planning and implementation of da'wa in general.

A large number of young people involved in this research, regardless of the model of the preaching movement that they are interested in, agree that the ideal preaching movement is a preaching movement that is capable of bringing social change towards a better direction. However, a large number of respondents from important actors preaching among young people in the city of Samarinda also stressed that the term Islam or Islam as the ultimate goal of social change to be achieved by a da'wa movement must be placed as a central theme and cannot be reduced to some situation and/or better social conditions. In this case, conflicts regarding the politics of interpretation of Islam began to show symptoms that were quite observable.

The ideal vision of the da'wa movement as shown by some of the young people involved in this research lies in the adaptive ability of Islam as a religion perceived as a blessing for all humans regardless of their religion and beliefs. That vision, therefore, can only be translated in the form of missionary movements which carry out the mission of improving the internal quality of the da'wa actors themselves.

Thus, in the context of the ideal da'wa movement as perceived by some of the young people in Samarinda, the ideal da'wa movement should indeed be oriented inward. The external impact of carrying out preaching movements is basically considered to be a side effect of the ongoing efforts of individuals who are actors of da'wa itself.

However, some of the young people involved in this study also put forward different visions related to the ideal da'wa movement. According to this second group, the ideal da'wa movement is a da'wa movement that does not compromise with uncertain interests in line with what they perceive as the interests of Islam, even though it means that those interests are the interests of many people or the wider community. This is a logical consequence of the da'wa movement as a religious movement (Islam) which cannot be compromised at any cost.

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